**The China-KSA partnership**

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The inherent contradictions in US foreign policy seem to be coming home to roost. Its ruthless double standards, in rank self-interest, have adversely affected its clout and assumed moral authority-superiority in the international community. This has created a distinct clash of interests with its allies and strategic partners who are now increasingly, audaciously and impertinently disregarding its diktat and interests to pursue their own. Its hold on allies and strategic partners seems to be waning. This is a new low for the US. The US has already declared China as its strategic competitor, (read “designated adversary”). Ideally, it would have liked to see its sphere of influence and concomitant strategic reach circumscribed to between the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) and the Himalayas/SCAR. To that purpose, it had already operationalised the QUAD and the (J)AUKUS in the IPR, mustered India to its ranks and created the I2U2 in the GMER. India, as a strategic partner, will expectedly have important operational roles in the Himalayas, Indian Ocean Region, IPR and the GMER. (The Strategy of Alliances, by this scribe, The Nation, 30 October 2021).

[GB Govt committed for development of all districts: Khalid Khurshid](https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2023/gb-govt-committed-for-development-of-all-districts-khalid-khurshid)

China however, has moved imperiously, beyond these supposedly US-mandated confines, right into the KSA, the centre of gravity of the GMER! India and KSA are two strategic partners of the US in the SCAR-GMER Complex, in addition to its ally, Israel. While India is a major defence partner and a member of the QUAD as well as the I2U2, the KSA has had excellent political, economic, energy, trade, defence and security ties with the US for decades. However, both these strategic partners (and the UAE) are showing signs of increasing independence, bordering on defiance, of late. India continues to emphasise its famed “strategic autonomy” and its ties with Russia and China. It has a whopping US $100 billion trade with China despite the punch-ups between their troops in the disputed Himalayan region along the LAC. It is importing vast quantities of discounted crude oil from Russia in addition to fertilisers, military equipment, nuclear power plants, etc. The US has turned a deliberate blind eye to this rank violation of its CAATSA. It is further overlooking majoritarian India’s blatant violations of human rights of all its minorities especially Kashmiri and Indian Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits (aka untouchables), Jains, Adivasis, etc. Ironically, it is the US that appears to be offering justifications and clarifications for India’s impudent disregard for its laws and values, international conventions and obligations—indicating the embarrassing compromises it has had to make in its drive to contain China.

[Cold, dry weather expected in most parts of country](https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2023/cold-dry-weather-expected-in-most-parts-of-country)

President Joe Biden’s engagement with KSA has been epitomised by some irksome issues which have adversely affected the once very strong ties between the two strategic partners. The Biden Administration’s assertions on turning the KSA into a pariah state, accusing MBS, the Saudi Crown Prince, of the Khashoggi murder, withdrawing US support in Yemen, castigating it repeatedly albeit selectively for human rights violations, etc have seriously roiled the Saudis. Unsurprisingly then, President Biden’s visit to KSA failed to convince the Saudis to enhance their production of oil to help bring down its international prices. KSA thus forcefully demonstrated its independence from coercive US diktat and is now striking out stridently to secure its own vital national interests. It is not only diversifying its economy but is also spreading its search for new allies, partners and friends. It is engaging China, a major power in its own right, France, the UK, Germany, etc to that end. Russia is a partner in OPEC+ and the two appear to be coordinating policies to keep the international oil market stable, vibrant and mutually beneficial. Some see it as the KSA moving from a monogamous relationship with the US to a polygamous one! The weakening US hold on the Gulf Arabs/GMER created the most opportune moment for China to manoeuvre deep into the region and tellingly engage KSA in most geopolitical, geo-economic and geostrategic domains, much to the US’ chagrin. China is now making meaningful strides to expand its outreach and sphere of influence in the GMER.

[Imran Riaz Khan arrested from Lahore airport](https://www.nation.com.pk/02-Feb-2023/imran-riaz-khan-arrested-from-lahore-airport)

President Xi’s visit to KSA will have far-reaching geopolitical implications. One, it is encroaching upon what was earlier solely US’ turf. Two, it reflects the contraction of the US sphere of influence while the Chinese expand theirs at its cost. Three, President Xi engaged a very large part of the Arab/Muslim World during this visit. Earlier on, the Chinese FM Wang Yi had addressed the OIC FM’s Conference in Islamabad. Four, President Xi has held three summits in KSA; one bilaterally with KSA, another with the subregional GCC countries and a third one with the Arab League including countries of the Levant and Africa. Thus, the Chinese have engaged the Arab/Muslim World quite meaningfully. Five, China and the KSA have forged a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which will alter the dynamics of the strategic environment in the GMER for good. Six, they have signed a number of agreements and MOUs covering energy including oil, green hydrogen, renewable and civil nuclear, trade, investment, technology, defence, security, counter-terrorism and other sectors. Seven, the Gulf states have been urged to trade their oil and gas with China in Yuan rather than the US dollar. Eight, a total of US $30 billion deals have reportedly been signed with the stage set for many more. Nine, most importantly, the two countries have agreed to harmonise the Saudi Vision 2030 with the Chinese BRI. This will imply that they will align their policies to achieve regional and extra-regional connectivity and economic interdependence, for mutual and regional benefit. Ten, China thus brings in the diversity that Crown Prince MBS wants to bring about in the Kingdom’s economy and international relations. Eleven, the regional countries will gravitate towards this economic colossus-in-being to partake of the potential bonanza to ensue. Twelve, the US now has serious competition in the GMER, where there was none. The US-Israel-India Combine will now feel compelled to restore the status quo. The SCAR-GMER Complex must brace itself for a vicious clash of interests of major powers.