**Celebrating the Saudi-Iran entente**

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The recent revelations about some backchannel endeavours to improve Saudi-Iran relations have indeed inspired a new ecstatic hope among the lovers of peace, prosperity and progress in the Middle East. “All we aspire for is a good and special relationship with Iran” remarked the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman recently. This certainly spells a new Mid East spectrum.

Iran likewise also admitted that it had not closed the door for dialogue. It appreciated the change in Saudi Arabia’ s tone adding that they could work together to ensure peace. Javad Zarif, its Foreign Minister even tweeted about the “new signs and indications on the horizon.”

The new momentum, according to media reports, emerged mostly from the initiative and contacts of Iraq’s Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, culminating into a meeting between the Saudi and Iranian nominees in Baghdad.

The urgency for a Saudi-Iran entente has been evidently quite overpowering as the proxy confrontations between these two powerful petro-Muslim protagonists, have already exacerbated the colossus loss of life, livelihood, economy and cultural heritage in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and several other Middle East states ravaged by the fascist and extremist scourge like the ISIS. Their conflicts and carnage seared the souls yearning for peace, ethnic and sectarian harmony, welfare and progress. About four to five hundred thousand were killed in Syria and over two hundred thousand in Iraq during the ISIS conflagrations. It also caused the worst-ever global refugee crisis since World War II. About a million of the 12 million rendered homeless in Syria braced the torturous trail to reach Europe while over 3000 of them perished in their desperate escape in decrepit dinghies and boats. A UNHCR report in 20018, recognised about 8.7 million refugees of Arab origin. Civil war and interventions have similarly swallowed over a quarter of a million lives in Yemen and torn its unity formalised in 1990. Libya and Lebanon likewise, also lost their stability, sources and lives to the proxy interventions.

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Aware of this devastation, the Saudi and Iran stalwarts certainly must have also realised that they happen to be the two greatest powers like France and Spain that fuelled and fought sectarian feuds, wars and vendetta in Europe for about three centuries. The fate of these wars, waged by European powers to enforce the supremacy and predominance of their denomination despite their deeper faiths, force, frenzy and strategies, was utterly opposite to their original espoused missions. They had to accept, accommodate and live with the diversity of sects and strands in their lands.

An evident illustrious initiative for them thus would be to stem the sectarian and strategic feuds and fights and follow a reconciliation as forged among the former European foes and combatants. Countries like France, Germany and Britain known for centuries of strife, bloodbath and devastation—rising to about forty million lives in WW1 and 75 million WWII—demonstrated an effulgent and futuristic vision to wind up into a union of 27 countries.

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A realistic rapprochement involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, the emirates and their allies could similarly heal their centuries’ old schism and spats, starting a new era of peace, stability and harmony and a Mideast Union. It would certainly also spur other Muslim countries to seek similar salutary alliances and strategies against every form of extremism and state and non-state coercion to create tolerant and democratic dispensations devoted to end deprivation, disease and promote human resources, research industry and development. Respecting human equality and treating individuals on the basis of their talent and skills eschewing the sectarian, tribal and ethnic affinities is the only route for the rise and the renaissance, that has been so long and so passionately pleaded by most Muslim preachers, leaders and thinkers.