**Saudi-Iran Rapprochement**

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Recent diplomatic progress between Saudi Arabia and Iran has raised hopes for lasting peace in the Middle East. Despite years of hatred, both states are willing to engage in talks and find common ground. This development could have positive implications for Pakistan, a key player in the region, which has historically maintained a delicate balance between its relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran. While Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed a strong bond due to shared religious and cultural interests, Saudi Arabia has also provided vital economic aid during tough times. Meanwhile, Iran has a long border with Pakistan and deep cultural ties, making it an important neighbour.

Additionally, the protracted hostilities in Yemen may be subject to the vicissitudes of the ameliorated relations between both states. Therefore, a new agreement, facilitated by China, for peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran recently strengthened the Yemen agreement. To reach an agreement that restores air connectivity between Riyadh and Tehran, re-establishes diplomatic missions, and strengthens economic cooperation, the two countries’ foreign ministers met in Beijing.

The erudite Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, engaged in a telephonic discourse with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, and conveyed his warm felicitations on the commendable normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as espoused in the “Trilateral Joint Statement.” The Foreign Minister lauded the sagacious leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in this positive development.

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Meanwhile, the Foreign Minister also held a telephonic discussion with the esteemed Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, and commended the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which is a testament to the sagacity and foresight of the leadership of both states. Furthermore, he applauded China’s instrumental role in facilitating this process, as expressed through the Joint Trilateral Statement signed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and China on March 10 in Beijing.

Moreover, a plausible convergence between Saudi Arabia and Iran has substantial implications for Pakistan’s foreign policy. Should the two regional powers reconcile their long-standing animosity, Pakistan could forge closer relationships with states founded on common economic and strategic interests. Closer ties with KSA could generate much-needed investment and bilateral economic collaboration. In contrast, improved ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran could grant Pakistan access to Central Asia, bolstering its energy security.

Enhancing bilateral relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia would yield significant economic benefits for Pakistan. As Iran and Saudi Arabia represent two of Pakistan’s principal trade partners, forging closer economic ties could unlock novel business prospects for the country. Moreover, a thaw in relations between these two regional powers would facilitate stabilizing crude oil prices, immensely benefiting Pakistan’s energy sector.

Despite Pakistan’s traditionally dispassionate position on the conflict, the progress of the friendship between Saudi Arabia and Iran could allow Pakistan to assume a more proactive role in the search for a resolution. However, Pakistan’s economy will benefit if the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran improve. Pakistan’s largest trading partner, Saudi Arabia, provides significant trade and investment opportunities in the infrastructure and energy sectors, particularly Iran. For businesses and entrepreneurs in Pakistan, a more stable and cooperative relationship between these two states may open up new opportunities.

Meanwhile, given the participation of Pakistan and India in important infrastructure projects in Iran, improved relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could benefit the region’s economic growth. One of these initiatives is the development of the Chabahar port in southeast Iran, which India has already committed to assisting as part of a larger connectivity corridor intended to reach Afghanistan and Central Asia. Similarly, another significant project that could provide Pakistan with the much-needed energy security it needs is the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, which is currently only partially built. Although there have been many obstacles in the way of this project’s completion in the past, such as sanctions against Iran and security issues in Pakistan’s Balochistan province, a warming of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia might make things easier.

However, if the long-standing conflicts between the two nations are not resolved, Pakistan’s security and stability may be in jeopardy. Pakistan has suffered significantly due to the ongoing proxy war in Yemen between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Any intensification of hostilities between the two countries could seriously impact Pakistan by escalating sectarian tensions and fanning the flames of extremism and violence.

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