**US dilemma in the Middle East**

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Reconciling the two archrivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and bringing them on the same page is a monumental breakthrough that China has achieved. The US, however, is uneasy with this latest development in the Middle East. Experts are of the view that the recent development serves as a warning for the Biden administration, revealing the limitations that have hindered the US’ Middle East policy. It also accentuates China’s efforts to position itself as a champion of global peace, a role that the US has largely neglected in recent times.

The US, unlike China has “special relationships” with selected countries in the Middle East. This has resulted in bolstering ties with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel, and with these countries taking US support for granted. The US attempts to isolate and overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran have largely been ineffective.

The recent détente is extremely likely to exacerbate complications for Washington in its attempts to prevent the development of Iran’s nuclear program. Despite Iran’s denial of seeking nuclear weapons, US President Joe Biden has repeatedly affirmed his commitment to preventing Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Since 2021, there have been several rounds of indirect negotiations between Washington and Tehran. The efforts to restore the 2015 nuclear agreement that required Iran to limit its nuclear program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions so far have been unsuccessful. The Biden administration has abandoned the idea of returning to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and is currently imposing additional sanctions on Iran which appears to be infeasible after the Saudi-Iran détente.

[SBP governor, secretaries attend WB and IMF spring meetings today](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Apr-2023/sbp-governor-secretaries-attend-wb-and-imf-spring-meetings-today)

The US has also been considering expanding the Abraham Accords to involve Saudi Arabia, as well as potentially using sanctions and regional pressure to impose a new nuclear deal on Iran. However, China’s involvement in the region through a new agreement could potentially disrupt these plans and prevent the creation of a pro-Israel and anti-Iran bloc. The reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran could assist Tehran in ending its economic isolation, and Saudi officials already discussing the possibility of investing in Iran once the agreement is enforced.

The recent agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia would make any potential military attack against Iran by the US or Israel more challenging. Saudi Arabia would not be participating in such an effort by either allowing military operations from its territory or allowing aircraft passage through its airspace. Any attack on Iran would become significantly more complex for the US and Israel.

Israel is becoming increasingly aware of the efforts being made by China to establish itself as a key player in both the Gulf region and Africa. This poses a complex situation for Israel, particularly as it has been forced by the US to disentangle itself from relations with Beijing over the past few years. According to a report by Breaking Defense, the US has warned Israel to take necessary measures when permitting Chinese companies to participate in major programs in Israel that relate to defense matters.

[ANP calls APC on May 3, confirms Hoti](https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Apr-2023/anp-calls-apc-on-may-3-confirms-hoti)

Amos Yadlin, a retired Maj. Gen. Israel’s former intelligence directorate maintains that “China pushes forward and achieves meaningful targets. All this while the US is losing its influence. According to Israeli sources, China’s efforts to increase its foothold in African and Gulf countries have reached a new high. It is believed that Beijing has recently intensified its ballistic missile program with Saudi Arabia. China sold ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, these have since been upgraded and Riyadh is now seeking new designs.

The US’ credibility has rapidly been declining in the region, forcing the regional countries to recognize that they must pursue their interests through their own initiatives without involving the US. Both the Obama and Biden administrations have stated their intention to reduce US involvement in the Middle East, shifting US policy “Pivot to the Asia-Pacific” with no military guarantee for countries in the Middle East. The US’ hasty and tumultuous withdrawal from Afghanistan has also conveyed a lucid message to Middle Eastern countries, indicating that the US will not provide them with security. China has emerged as the largest trading partner of Saudi Arabia, with a bilateral trade of $87 billion, and is increasingly perceived as a peacemaker in the region. The US on the other hand is viewed as a weapons supplier causing destruction in the region. As a result, regional countries are more drawn towards the actor playing a more productive role in the region.