

GLOBAL UP-TO-DATE

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The world around us is changing rapidly. Wars, new turn in global politics, human rights issues are occurring every day, posing new challenges and concerns. Global Up-to-Date is an initiative by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) which will work as a hub for explaining the contemporary global issues.

The regular briefs will focus and explain the issues related to International Politics, Economy, Security, Human Rights, and Development. There will be a monthly printed version newsletter containing briefs of all the contemporary global important issues. The online version contains regular updates of the pressing issues along with the PDF version of the newsletter.



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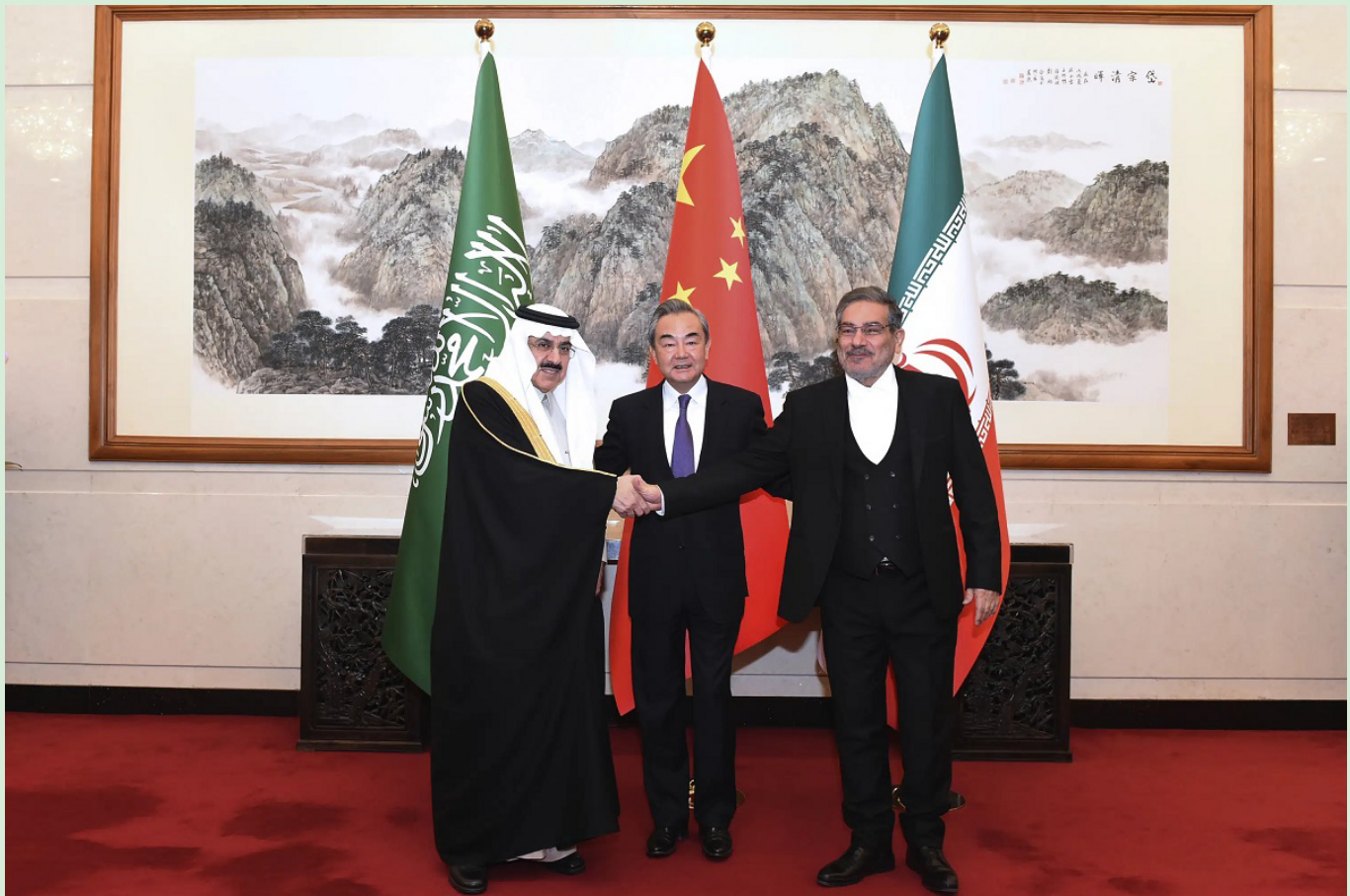


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Restoration of Saudi-Iran Relations: A Glimpse of Tensions and Balance

Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury

In the midst of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the world has experienced a new geopolitical switch with the restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. They are currently on the verge of establishing embassies and a security agreement. This historical bond was the result of diplomatic discussions held on March 17, 2023, in Beijing. The parties have agreed not to interfere with one another's internal affairs and to reactivate the security agreement signed in 2001.



Since the post-Iranian Revolution era, the two nations in the Middle East have been at odds, as Saudi Arabia viewed the emergence of another Islamic republic as a potential threat to their dominance. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia supported Iran during the Iraq-Iran war. In 2005, when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assumed office, the tension between them re-emerged. Later, the 2001 Arab Spring exacerbated the tension and led to multiple proxy wars between them. In Yemen, where Saudi Arabia supported Yemen's internationally recognized government and Iran supported the Houthi rebel group, the conflict reached a new peak. In 2016, Saudi Arabia severed ties with Iran, in response to which Iran suspended participation in Hajj. The rivalry reached its pinnacle in 2017 when Saudi Arabia and its allies imposed a blockade on Qatar, accusing them of their closeness to Iran.

Every year from 2011 to 2022 comes with new significant events, often proxy wars, that affect the relationship between these two countries. The Middle East has always been a field of interest for global powers, including China. There were and have been attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the Middle East countries by the dominant member states. The restoration would help in the process of establishing non-interference by external countries. As such, the two leading nations, Saudi Arabia and Iran, need to take responsibility for shaping and balancing all the tensions that exist in the region.

Many may view this agreement between these two leading Arab nations as an undeniable victory for Beijing. However, one fact that should not be overlooked is President Biden's announcement that the United States will no longer support Saudi-led operations in Yemen. The announcement was made in February 2021, and direct negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Iran began in April 2021. Consequently, it would be unjust not to consider the indirect effect that Biden's announcement had on the initiation of this negotiation process. Following this agreement, President Biden remarked, "Any improvement in relations between Israel and the Arab states of the region will benefit all." This is indeed a good sign of relief as far as the existing tensions are concerned. Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran will undoubtedly alter the current geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. In light of this, would it be unreasonable to expect a fair agreement between the United States and Iran despite the existing disagreement that affects their relationship and the Middle East as a whole?

Political Turmoil in India: Is the BJP Moving in the Wrong Direction?

Roman Uddin

India, known as the largest democracy in the world, has been experiencing political turmoil over the past few months. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been in power for the last nine years, with Narendra Modi serving as the Prime Minister. However, two recent incidents have led to criticism of the BJP both domestically and internationally.

The first incident was the release of the BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question,' which raised questions about Narendra Modi's role in communal riots in Gujarat in 2002. The BJP and Modi have faced criticism for disrupting the documentary screening, allegations of police violence against students, and ongoing raids on the BBC's Indian office. The second incident was the release of the Hindenburg Research report on the Adani Group, a prominent Indian conglomerate. The report alleged special treatment and support for Adani from the Modi government, with Modi's personal relationship with Adani coming under scrutiny. Modi's silence on the issue has further fueled criticism of the BJP.

However, the most recent incident, sentencing of Rahul Gandhi, a leader of the Indian Congress party, to two years in prison for criminal defamation has caused a political crisis in India. The verdict was issued by a Gujarat magistrate court on March 23, 2023, following comments made by Rahul Gandhi about the title of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a 2019 election rally.

Rahul Gandhi has already lost his membership of Parliament and is disqualified from contesting elections for the next eight years in accordance with Indian law. At first glance, this may appear to put Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party at a disadvantage in the political arena, potentially giving an advantage to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming national elections. However, political analysts believe that this could backfire for the Modi government.



In addition to the BBC documentary and the Adani case, the opposition parties have made various allegations, including the creation of religious conflicts across the country, the arrest of various political leaders, and the curtailment of freedom of expression. As a result, Rahul Gandhi's imprisonment sentence and disqualification from Parliament have united the mainstream political parties in opposition to the BJP. It has only served to strengthen the unity among opposition parties and political analysts see it as a detriment to the BJP.

India's oldest political party, the Congress, has not had a strong political position in recent times. However, following Rahul Gandhi's prison sentence, the party is once again being seen as strong in the political arena. Congress members have been protesting against the verdict in various states, and there has been an increase in the involvement of common people in the party. As a result, political analysts believe that the court's decision has breathed new spirit into Congress rather than benefiting the ruling BJP party.

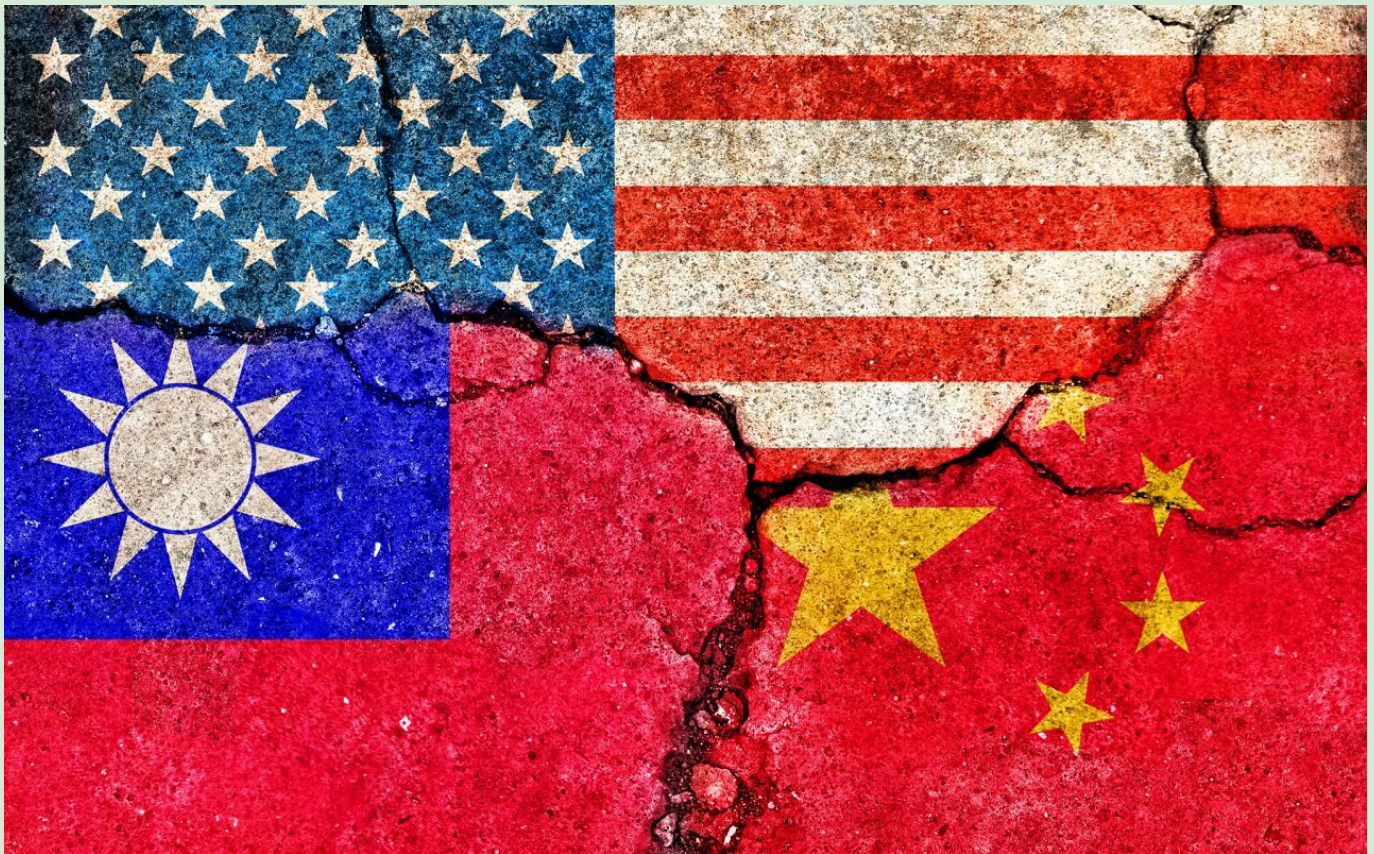
Many people believe that Rahul Gandhi himself has benefited the most from this incident. Although he is a member of the Gandhi family, Rahul Gandhi was not seen as a prominent leader by many. However, his recent criticism of the government, particularly regarding the Modi government's favoritism towards Adani's corruption, has helped to increase his popularity. Furthermore, Congress's 'Bharat Joro Yatra' led by Rahul Gandhi a few days ago has helped to boost his acceptance in the country. The court's verdict against him has made him appear as a strong political figure in front of the people of the country. People across the country have taken to the streets in support of Rahul Gandhi, giving him the chance to become a national political figure.

However, the BJP's actions may have an adverse effect on India's reputation as a democracy. The party has been accused of creating communal divisions and using state institutions for party interests, and if the allegations of destruction of the country's democracy are added to this, it may not bode well for the BJP in the upcoming elections. In light of these events, it raises the question of whether the BJP is moving in the wrong direction. The party needs to address the allegations and concerns raised by opposition parties and the public in order to maintain the country's democratic values and avoid potential consequences in the upcoming national elections. It will be crucial for the party, and its actions may determine its fate.

The “Mêlée à Trois” among China, the US, and Taiwan: Is the World Waiting for Another War?

Jubaida Auhana Faruque

Since Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022, there has been aggravating apprehension that the US might involve in a direct conflict with China over the issue of Taiwan. On the other hand, in contrast to China's aim of unifying the island with the mainland, the democratically elected government in Taiwan implies the independence of the island. In recent times, Chinese surveillance on the island using aggressive measures has increased and many analysts are looking at a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan—which might result in the US getting involved in a war with China. Despite acknowledging the One China Principle and severing its formal relationship with Taiwan, the US has been maintaining a robust unofficial interaction with the island. In fact, the US has been allegedly selling heavy weaponry to Taiwan, including the F-16 fleet, a radar system to track incoming strikes and anti-ship and anti-air missiles. This in turn is infuriating China and it is urging Washington to stop such activities that might worsen the consensus over peacefully advancing with the unification process. On the other hand, Director of US National Intelligence Avril Haynes has described the recent situation as challenging based on Xi's accusation of the US repressing China on this issue. This was proof of China's distrust on the US and the projection that Biden is trying to contain the capacity of China. As a result, a circumstance is coming up where no actor is being able to bring in complete trust in the other regarding the issue and each is spectating the other as a covert threat.



The situation is getting complicated continuously and with the US involvement in the scenario, China is moving more toward military implication on Taiwan. The US is trying to maintain a balanced position by acknowledging but not supposedly supporting the legitimacy of sole Chinese governance. Nonetheless, China has increased its military presence in the South China Sea with increased military rehearsal encircling Taiwan. Besides, regional stakeholders are getting involved in the phenomenon with the undeviating notion that China might attack Taiwan and everyone relevant to the consequences needs to be prepared for this. It's completely superficial and difficult to understand from where the rhetoric came that China might attack Taiwan and the US might get involved in a war with China. Though the US has historically tried to accommodate the whole situation in a peaceful framework that will ensure stability across the regions, the status quo between Beijing and Taipei, and its own balance between supporting Taiwan and preventing war with China—Biden has overturned the policy and committed full support to Taiwan in case China attacks.

With the changing world order, more prominently with China taking a clear position against the West by favoring Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war, tension has already been brewing. A direct conflict between China and the US might not be viable based on the factor that none of the powers will take that risk, but Taiwan might turn into another proxy ground where both actors exhibit their power intensity. There is a possibility that Taiwan might be the next Ukraine, but it depends on the policies the US takes in its interaction over the Taiwan issue and to what extent China can see those initiatives as non-aggressive measures.