

“The Iran-Saudi deal is a fatal blow to the Arab-Israeli pact against Iran.”

Interview with Dr. Javad Masoumi

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The recent Chinese brokered agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran stunned the world. The Biden administration was among the most surprised, as they saw yet another example of the diminishing status of the US in the Persian Gulf region. Saudi Arabia and its oil-rich neighbors have watched as the US has walked away from the region.

Steven Sahiounie of MidEastDiscourse interviewed **Dr. Javad Masoumi**, a geopolitical researcher and analyst, to shed light on some key issues surrounding this new agreement.

Steven Sahiounie (SS): The Chinese brokered agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran surprised the world. In your opinion, will restoring full relations between the two have an effect of China’s Belt and Road project?

Javad Masoumi (JM): China’s Belt and Road Initiative was established in 2013. It connects China to Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa through rail, road and sea corridors. This road belt evokes memories of the ancient Silk Road. This plan has placed China in a position of physical, financial, cultural, technological and political influence at the international level. China is drawing the exact details of the world map with new railways and bridges and ports with different capacities and potentials. This project has affected 60 countries of the world including Iran and Saudi Arabia. In addition to economic effects, China can transmit political and cultural values. Initiatives such as the road belt provide an attractive perspective of China’s centrality. It requires the cooperation of other countries, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. Based on this, China is trying to highlight the world around it, including Iran, India, Saudi Arabia and Russia, in the new world order. In China’s mediation in the recent agreement, Iran and Saudi Arabia effectively demonstrated that it can change diplomacy anywhere in the world. By using economic leverage, China is trying to force countries to impose their own policies. By organizing joint financing, China has made it possible to implement large infrastructure projects. China is one of the largest and

most important trading partners of Iran, and is Saudi Arabia. Trilateral regional and extra-regional cooperation is at a common and turning point. Iran and China have a common point in the historical and ancient silk road belt. Also, Iran and China are fighting unilateralism in the world, and fighting against The United States of America with shared capacities and opportunities in West Asia. China's road belt initiative has benefits for all countries on the route of this ancient road, including Saudi Arabia. It also facilitates trade and economic relations. This idea can play a role in realizing the important goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as the important goals of the global development plan.

SS: The tension between Riyadh and Tehran was solved after decades by the recent Chinese brokered agreement to resume full relations. In your opinion, will this play a role in ending the suffering of the Syrian people?

JM: The reopening of embassies and the resumption of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia can have a positive effect on regional developments, including Syria. This agreement is considered a step towards reducing tension in Syria. Iran and Saudi Arabia are two powerful countries in the region of the Islamic world. These two countries have many capacities in the region in trans-regional issues. In addition, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have considerable influence in Syria. Following this agreement, regional tensions in Syria will definitely decrease. Of course, the necessary condition is that relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are formed in good faith. In this case, we can witness the solution of the Syrian case. In general, if this agreement is implemented with the implementation of constructive and executive strategic plans, in the future we can witness peace in the West Asian region, especially in Syria. The costs of the conflict in Syria will lead to the reconstruction and development of the Syrian economy. The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia can lead to peace and stability and an end to the suffering of the Syrian people.

SS: The media has been for decades fueling a war between Sunni and Shiite people. In your view, will the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran help to end this media war?

JM: The real meaning of the media war between Iran and Saudi Arabia was in the creation of news and television channels in Persian and Arabic languages by the two countries. Saudi Arabia was able to become a leading media power in the West and Southwest Asia by spending its oil dollars in the field of media and gaining the support of European and American powers. The emergence of Iran International news network in the form of Persian satellite TV is an example of this media war. What is certain is that the media war works like a very strong ballistic missile. In a short period of time, the Iran International network is in close competition with the BBC Persian network. In today's era, which is called global village and virtual world, media is one of the tools of interference in the politics and governance of countries. Soft power in the global village is one of the sources of authority of countries and great powers, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. The problems of Iran-Saudi diplomacy in the past are based on a misunderstanding but have deep roots in the religious history of Shia and Sunni. Saudi Arabia is Sunni and Iran is Shia. But due to the fact that both countries are Muslim, Iran and Saudi Arabia will never directly go to war with each other. But they have faced each other in proxy conflicts. In the meantime, the active role of some trans-regional countries, including Israel, The UK and the US, has used the gap between Shia and Sunni religious differences and fueled this division between the two Muslim countries. The strategic development is that after the agreement between Saudi

Arabia and Iran, the media policies of these two countries will be rearranged and adjusted based on identifying and defining the commonalities of each other's demands. It should be accepted that in the current situation of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the media of both countries will create a suitable opportunity for the development of strategic interactions. The most important factor affecting the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the West, especially the United States and Israel. So it can be said that Iran and Saudi Arabia represent two religious thoughts, Shia and Sunni. But both are Muslims who seem to be careful about this important agreement and avoid tension. The zeroing of tensions is conditional on applying changes and rearranging the strategy of extensive media policies in the intellectual and identity foundations, which seems necessary and necessary in the conditions of the recent agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

SS: The US and EU have seemingly approved this Saudi Arabia and Iran rapprochement brokered by China. In your opinion, will this bring life back to the Iranian nuclear deal negotiations?

JM: The restoration of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia will help the stability of the West Asian region. But the JCPOA is a different matter and this agreement may have more of a psychological effect. The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is considered relatively timely to break the JCPOA political deadlock. Certainly, this correct procedure of restructuring Iran's foreign policy will not be ineffective in completing the JCPOA. I hope there is a change of attitude in international foreign policy. It is important to note that Iran's nuclear activities, including enrichment at various levels, are completely peaceful and in line with Iran's rights based on the NPT and are under the supervision, verification and control of the Agency. Iran wants to continue implementing the JCPOA obligations. But some regional and extra-regional countries, especially Israel, have tried their best to hide the facts. Iran has been the most active delegation during the negotiations and has put forward many initiatives to clarify the negotiations.

What is certain is that countries and the United Nations do not pay attention to the important and extremely worrying issue of Israel's military nuclear program, which causes instability in the region and is a serious threat to world peace and security. In the current situation, the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is based on the strategic policy of reducing tension and improving the level of peace, stability and security in the region.

With the dictatorship of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel has become a more serious threat to the world with its temporary existence and the chaotic situation of the civil war. It seems that changes are taking place at the international level, which have also affected the JCPOA case. The issue of JCPOA is more of a political case than a technical case. Based on the political model of international relations, Iran's agreement with Saudi Arabia also has a psychological effect on the JCPOA case. But the JCPOA case is a different matter.

SS: The Israeli media have been calling the Saudi Arabia and Iran agreement to restore full relations as a big loss for Israel politically, and they are considering it a threat to their national security. In your view, how could this affect Israel?

JM: America and Israel were surprised. Israel relied on the continued hostility of Saudi Arabia against Iran. Above all, Israel does not want Iran to be powerful enough to effectively balance the power with Israel. Tel Aviv only looks at the world, especially Saudi Arabia, through the lens of its own benefit. Tehran's agreement with Riyadh is a fatal blow to Israel's Iranophobia project. The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a strategic

and double defeat for Israel and America and a fatal blow to their project to create an Arab-Israeli NATO against Iran. The new regional order has entered a new phase that is not in the interest of America and Israel. The former officials of the Zionist regime described the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume relations with each other as a complete failure of Tel Aviv's foreign policy and the collapse of the regional coalition against Iran. The recent agreement showed that there is a fundamental weakness in America and Israel towards Iran.

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