



## THE PRACTICE OF THE "THREE INITIATIVES": SAUDI-IRANIAN RECONCILIATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCO

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### **Abstract:**

*Safety is the premise of development, development is the power of safety, civilization is the soil of development and safety, and development and safety are the means of continuous evolution and progress of civilization. The initiatives on global development, global security and global civilization have injected stability and positive energy into global governance and world order. The reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a representative example of the "three initiatives" in practice. Following the signing of the reconciliation agreement, Saudi Arabia also declared itself to be a "dialogue partner" of the SCO, which undoubtedly injected new strength into the future expansion and sustainable development of the SCO. Under the three initiatives, there will certainly be more converging interests and cooperation consensus among Saudi Arabia, Iran and China as well as among SCO member states. As more projects are signed and implemented, they will promote the development of SCO member states, observer states and even dialogue partners, improve people's livelihood, promote the building of a common destiny of the SCO and achieve sustainable development of the SCO.*

**Key Words:** Global Security Initiative(GSI) Saudi-Iranian rapprochement Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO)

### **Introduction**

#### **Great changes in a century and the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

The world today is faced with multiple crises and challenges. The sluggish recovery of the global economy and the widening gap in development have made matters worse. The Cold War mentality



has undermined the global peace framework. Regional security hotspot issues keep cropping up, local conflicts and turbulence occur frequently, unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, and hegemonism, power politics and bullying threaten world peace. Having just emerged from the pandemic of the century, human society is faced with new risks of interweaving traditional and non-traditional security. Global economic recovery is not only underpowered but also compounded by the widening gap between developed and developing countries. As an important and constructive force in international and regional affairs, the SCO needs to carry forward the Shanghai Spirit and build an even closer SCO community with a shared future as the international situation becomes more volatile and intertwined. There are complex bilateral and multilateral relations within the SCO framework. These complex networks include bilateral and multilateral relationships among member states, such as China-Russia, China-India, China-Pakistan, China-Central Asia; Russia-India, Russia-Pakistan, Russia and Central Asia; China, Russia, India, Russia, India and Pakistan; It also includes member states and observer States, member States and dialogue partners; Observer states and dialogue partners, such as bilateral relations between China and Iran, China and Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Saudi Arabia; Trilateral relations between China and Iran and Saudi Arabia. The sustainable development of the SCO, therefore, depends on the proper governance of these relations and the proper management of the many differences that exist in these bilateral or multilateral relations. Therefore, how to manage the bilateral or multilateral relations related to the SCO framework and how to manage the differences of interests in the various relationships of the SCO requires a new concept of global governance, and the "three initiatives" proposed by China exactly focus on the three important aspects of the global power structure, namely development, security and civilization.

## **I The “Three Initiatives” and Sustainable Development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

What are the "Three Initiatives"? It mainly refers to “Global Development Initiative”, “Global Security Initiative” and “Global Civilization Initiative”. How do these three initiatives relate to the expansion and development of the SCO?

**The Global Development Initiative (GDI)** . In September 2021, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative at the United Nations General Assembly, emphasizing the important principles of “prioritizing development, putting people first, promoting inclusiveness and common benefits, pursuing innovation-driven development, fostering harmony between man and nature, and pursuing action-oriented outcomes” to address the challenges of global development.(XinHuaNet, 2023) The initiative aims to promote global development, cooperation and exchanges among countries. This initiative is an important public good and cooperation platform proposed by China to the international community. More than 100 countries and international organizations have supported the global development initiative. The Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative was established at UN Headquarters in New York in January 2022 and has since grown to include nearly 70 countries.(UN, 2023) In addition, China has signed bilateral



cooperation documents on the Global Development Initiative with more than 20 countries. The original intention of the Global Development Initiative is to promote common development and build a common future. To this end, China has launched a series of major measures to implement the initiatives, including the Global Development Fund and the South-South Cooperation Fund and the Global Development Center. Efforts are being made to increase investment in the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund and build an open project bank. By aligning with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the global Development Initiative has identified eight key areas for cooperation, including poverty reduction, food security, pandemic response, development financing, climate change and the digital economy, said Luo Zhaohui, director of the China International Development Cooperation Agency.(CIDCA, 2023) We need to implement the statements on safeguarding international energy security and food security adopted at this Summit. China will provide 1.5 billion yuan worth of food and other emergency humanitarian assistance to developing countries in need. Cooperation documents on trade and investment, infrastructure development, supply chain maintenance, scientific and technological innovation, and artificial intelligence should be well implemented, and the Belt and Road Initiative should be more closely aligned with the development strategies of other countries and regional cooperation initiatives.(FMPRC, 2022) The global development Initiative emphasizes inclusiveness and independence, with particular emphasis on addressing the unique needs of developing countries, as well as unbalanced and inadequate development within and between countries.

**The Global Security Initiative (GSI)** was proposed by President Xi Jinping during the Boao Forum for Asia in April 2022, in response to the continuously complex and changing international security situation. Currently, more than 80 countries and regions have expressed their appreciation and support for the initiative. People are increasingly aware that security is not only a prerequisite for development, but also a basic condition for countries to seek prosperity and stability. It is an important guarantee for people to enjoy a better life, and an indispensable international public product for the world to achieve peace and tranquillity. On February 21, Lanting Forum "Global Security Initiative: China's Solution to Security Dilemmas" was held in Beijing. Foreign Minister Qin Gang attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech, announcing China's official release of the Concept Paper on Global Security Initiative. The document explains the core concepts and principles of the Global Security Initiative and defines 20 key cooperation directions and five cooperation platforms and mechanisms. Its core concepts and principles include: "Pursuing common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; Adherence to the Charter and principles of the United Nations; Pay attention to the legitimate security concerns of all countries; We should resolve differences and disputes peacefully through dialogue and consultation. We will maintain security in both traditional and non-traditional areas in a coordinated manner." Its priorities include: "Active participation in the work of the UN Secretary-General's report 'Our Common Agenda' on the development of 'a New Agenda for peace' and other recommendations; To promote coordination and sound interactions among major countries and build a pattern of major-country relations featuring peaceful coexistence, overall stability and



balanced development; We firmly uphold the consensus that nuclear war cannot be won or fought. Fully implementing the resolution "Promoting International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of International Security" adopted by the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly; Promoting political settlement of international and regional hotspot issues, for example, supporting the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis and other hotspot issues through dialogue and negotiation; Support and improve the mechanism and architecture of regional security cooperation centered on ASEAN, uphold the 'ASEAN Way' of consensus building and accommodating the comfort level of all parties, and strengthen dialogue and cooperation among regional countries."Its cooperative platforms and mechanisms include the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the BRICS cooperation mechanism. During the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, President Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of "welcoming all parties to participate in implementing the Global Security Initiative, upholding a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security concept, and promoting the construction of a balanced, effective, and sustainable security architecture." The initiative aims to crack down on "the three forces", drug smuggling, cybercrime, and transnational organized crime, effectively respond to non-traditional security challenges such as data security, biosecurity, and outer space security. In the next five years, China is ready to train 2,000 law enforcement personnel for SCO member states and set up a China-SCO training base for counter-terrorism professionals to strengthen law enforcement capacity building of all parties." The Global Security Initiative upholds the principles of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and the right of all countries to independently choose their development paths and social systems. Its goal is to enhance people's sense of security and promote the all-round development of mankind.

**The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI)** was proposed by President Xi Jinping for the first time at the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties Dialogue held on the evening of March 15, 2023. He summarized the main contents of the initiative using four "common advocacies" and provided a Chinese solution for promoting civilization exchanges and mutual learning and promoting human civilization progress. The Global Civilization Initiative proposes that "we should jointly respect the diversity of world civilizations, adhere to civilization equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness, and use civilization exchanges to overcome civilization barriers, civilization mutual learning to overcome civilization conflicts, and civilization inclusiveness to overcome civilization superiority. We should jointly advocate the promotion of common values for all mankind. Peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common pursuits of the people of all countries. We should understand different civilizations' understanding of value connotations with a broad mind, not impose our own values and models on others, and not engage in ideological confrontation. We should jointly advocate strengthening international cultural exchange and cooperation, exploring the construction of a global civilization dialogue and cooperation network, enriching exchange content, expanding cooperation channels, promoting mutual understanding and friendship among peoples of all countries, and promoting the development and progress of human civilization."(XinHuaNet, 2023) The Global Civilization Initiative advocates respecting cultural



diversity and recognizing their respective development rights, effectively responding to the urgent needs of the international community.

The "Global Development Initiative," "Global Security Initiative," and "Global Civilization Initiative" have successively injected certainty and stability into the expansion and development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. On May 5, 2023, Qin Gang attended the meeting of foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and proposed five suggestions: First, we must adhere to strategic independence and strengthen unity and mutual trust. We firmly support each other in safeguarding sovereignty, security, and development interests, oppose external forces' interference in regional affairs, and instigate "color revolutions." Second, we must deepen security cooperation and safeguard regional peace. We will continue to crack down on the "three forces" such as "East Turkistan," drug trafficking, and transnational organized crime, support Afghanistan in building a broad and inclusive political structure, and resolutely combat all forms of terrorism. Third, we must advocate openness and inclusiveness and promote linked development. We must resolutely resist any acts that undermine the international economic and trade order and market rules and maintain the stability and smooth operation of the industrial chain and supply chain. Fourth, we must adhere to fairness and justice and improve global governance. China is willing to strengthen coordination and cooperation with all parties to support the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's participation in implementing major initiatives such as building a community with a shared future for mankind, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, and work together to promote the international order towards greater fairness and rationality. Fifth, we must focus on long-term development and strengthen institutional building. We will complete the process of Iran and Belarus joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in an orderly manner, promote the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to better adapt to changes in the situation and development, enhance cohesion, increase action, and expand influence. (Qin Gang, 2023) It is fair to say that these three initiatives meet the demands of The Times and are of great practical significance and value in helping different countries and civilizations work together to meet the common challenges faced by all countries in human history.

## **II Iran, Saudi Arabia and China: A Review of Multi-Layered Bilateral Relations**

Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have multiple and complex bilateral and multilateral relations. This article focuses on Iran and Saudi Arabia; Iran-china and Saudi-China triple bilateral relations, through these three sets of relations to understand the Iran-Saudi Arabia diplomatic restoration of the move on the sustainable development of the SCO.

### **i. Iran and Saudi Arabia: From Antagonism to reconciliation**

#### **1. From "Unbridgeable Differences of Interests" to Refinding "Converging interests"**

The confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is not old. The relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia was quite warm from the 1950s to the 1970s, and both countries were allied with the United



States and became the pillar of the United States in the Middle East and the Gulf region during the Nixon era. However, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Khomeini established an Islamic government in Iran, and the internal and foreign affairs of the two countries had serious differences, and the structural contradictions between the two countries began to emerge (Zhao Jianming, 2018) First, the two countries began to differentiate themselves at the institutional level. After World War II, the monarchical system dominated the countries in the Gulf region, but after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Khomeini's political discourse denying the legitimacy of the monarch intensified the contradiction between Iran and Saudi Arabia and other monarchical countries in the Gulf region. Secondly, the religious and sectarian conflicts between the two countries. Religiously, Iran is a Shi 'ite power and Saudi Arabia is a Sunni power. Iran often accuses Saudi Arabia of suppressing Shi 'ites, which Saudi Arabia sees as interference in its internal affairs. From the perspective of sectarianism, the sectarian differences between ISIS are also reflected in the 12 Imam sect in Iran and Wahhabi sect in Saudi Arabia. Third, the conflict between Fakih statecraft in Iran and Wahhabi statecraft in Saudi Arabia. Khomeini believed that the Fakih regime in Iran was the only legitimate regime recognized by Sharia law. The combination of church and state in Saudi Arabia is the political alliance between the royal power and Wahhabi religion. And the Saudi king's self-appointed protector of Islam's two holiest cities. Fourth, the conflict in foreign relations with the United States. Saudi Arabia is an early ally of the United States in the Middle East. The US-Saudi alliance can be traced back to the "oil for security" secret treaty reached between King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia and President Roosevelt in 1945. (Aeron D. Miller, 1980) After 1979, Iran pursued a foreign policy of "No East, no West, only Islam", and believed that the setbacks and failures of Islam in modern times were all due to the invasion of Western colonialism in politics, economy, culture and other fields. Fifth, the two countries' competition for regional dominance. This is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council against the Shi 'ite alliance, namely the "three-ring stability policy" with the Gulf as the inner ring, the Arab as the central ring and the Islamic world as the outer ring; Second, the conventional arms competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The third is the rivalry over the Palestinian issue. The contradictions in the above five aspects have affected the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran for more than 30 years.

Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ayatollah Khatami pursue the detente strategy of improving relations with the Gulf countries, and the structural contradictions between the two countries have also been alleviated by the improved relations between the two countries. However, with the Iranian nuclear issue and the shrinking of Obama's Middle East strategy, structural contradictions between the two countries have been activated again. The chaos and turmoil in the Arab camp further intensified the contradiction between Iran and Saudi Arabia. After Salman took office as the king, Saudi Arabia began to actively participate in the hot war and proxy war against Iran. Wherever Iran supported, Saudi Arabia opposed. (Chen Xiang, 2019) Driven by the above factors, Iran has become the biggest security threat to Saudi Arabia and the obstacle that must be surmounted on the road of achieving the Arab leader. For this reason, starting from the execution of the Shia cleric in Saudi Arabia in 2016, the contradictions between the two countries escalated sharply



and began to compete in all aspects.

The reconciliation agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which ended decades of hostility and political rivalry after seven years, was hailed as "reconciliation of the century" by the world public opinion and was highly praised by countries in the Middle East as well. Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif Ali Zardari said, "The world has not had such good news for a long time." So what are the forces behind this reconciliation that are driving this consensus?

### **IRAN**

For Iran, this will help shift the country from its long-standing passivity under U.S. sanctions, from increasing isolation to openness. (Adam Gallagher; Sarhang Hamasaeed; Garrett Nada, 2023) The deal signals Iran's intention to ease tensions with Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. The two countries are on opposite sides of the conflict, particularly in Yemen and Syria. Iran's mission to the United Nations said the thaw with Saudi Arabia could produce a more lasting solution. Iran has reportedly agreed to stop supplying arms to the Houthis, although the commitment was not included in a brief joint statement by Iran, Saudi Arabia and China. Iran has long played a constructive role in the region, so the commitment to ease tensions with its regional rival is an important move. It is worth noting that Lacey is the first Iranian leader to pay an official state visit to China in more than 20 years, which is enough to illustrate the significance of this rapprochement for China, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The agreement will help revive the economy in the short term. By March 2023, the Iranian rial had lost half its value against the dollar since nationwide protests erupted following the death of Masha Amini in police custody in September 2022. Within two days of the settlement being announced, the rial appreciated by 12% against the dollar.

### **Saudi Arabia**

For Saudi Arabia, it helps Saudi Arabia achieve a diversified alliance in a complex and changing Middle East. Saudi Arabia needs a new approach to dealing with Iran's seemingly unstoppable and expanding regional agenda, which includes expanding and deepening Iran's direct and indirect influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere. Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries feel the US security guarantee commitment is inadequate because critical Saudi and Emirati infrastructure has come under attack and the US is seen as realigning its role in the region. Instead of buying expensive American defensive weapons systems, the Saudis believe they should use China's and Russia's influence on Iran to bolster their security. Saudi Arabia needs to scale back its military intervention in Yemen, stop attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthis, protect its borders and investment climate, focus on a positive agenda (such as its Vision 2030), and engage Iran through dialogue and de-escalation, rather than the well-worn path of tension and conflict. China's involvement is another sign that Saudi Arabia is serious about diversifying and hedging, even as it maintains its strategic alliance with the United States. China provides Saudi Arabia with leverage against Iran, an alternative to the United States, deepens its ties with China and provides the technology and other resources the kingdom needs.



## **China**

For China, brokering a rapprochement between the two longtime Middle East foes is strategically and symbolically important. Strategically, China needs to maintain the free flow of oil from the region. For years, China has been a major importer of oil from Iran and Saudi Arabia. It seeks stability in the Persian Gulf to ensure the safe passage of oil and cargo. China's imports of Iranian oil rose more than 130 percent in December from a year earlier, climbing to a record 1.2 million barrels per day, according to a January 2023 report by Vortexa, a London-based energy and shipping data firm. At the same time, what the agreement says about China's role in global affairs could be just as important, if not more so. With global energy markets in turmoil since the Ukraine crisis, China needs stability in the Gulf, which accounts for more than 40 percent of its crude oil imports. Iran and Saudi Arabia represent the two power centers in the region and support opposing sides in the conflicts in Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. Reducing bilateral animosity between them could help lower tensions across the region. During a closely watched trip to Saudi Arabia in December, China pledged to buy more oil and gas from the Gulf and to encourage countries in the region to use yuan for energy sales. Some observers have speculated that the Iran-Saudi deal could lay the groundwork for a broader use of the petroyuan, whereby oil transactions would be settled in yuan rather than the dollar, which has been the standard currency for energy transactions for decades.

Against the backdrop of increased competition between China and the US, the US has restricted China's access to Western technologies and markets. So China needs to find other stable flows of trade, technology and energy. In this context, the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation provides an effective solution to China's efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind, reduce the burden of conflict, and sow the seeds of peace for the coexistence and common future of mankind. In particular, the "Three initiatives" provide an effective solution to the problems of "development deficit", "peace deficit", "governance deficit" and "trust deficit". Despite being the pre-eminent extraterritorial power in the region for 75 years, the United States was unable to broker the deal because of poor relations with Saudi Arabia and Washington's decades-long antagonistic relationship with Iran. However, as China has gained ground in the Middle East in recent years, the United States remains the key defense and security actor in the region, even as its old ally Saudi Arabia has become increasingly inclined to diversify its alliance. The Biden administration says it supports efforts to reduce tensions in the region. The settlement agreement follows the release of China's "Ukraine peace Plan" and "Concept Paper on Global Security Initiative." Among the principles articulated in the two documents, China's emphasis on the importance of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs has made it the most attractive dialogue partner for Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the driving force behind these principles is the establishment of a new global order, which China positions as a more multi-lateralized approach to global security. Saudi Arabia and Iran have both expressed a desire to join the BRICS group, which China has also supported. Together, especially with the addition of Saudi Arabia and Iran, these countries could represent a powerful economic bloc and political force. Iran is about to become a member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, and Saudi Arabia wants to join. All these actions reflect the positive response and support of many countries to the three





Initiatives, especially the Global Security Initiative.

## **2. International coordination: Saudi-Iran rapprochement**

From 2021 to 2022, both Saudi Arabia and Iran held multiple rounds of talks in the Republic of Iraq and the Sultanate of Oman. In December 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia and attended the first China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, during which he met with several Arab leaders, including Saudi Arabian King Salman. In February 2023, Iranian President Raisi visited China and welcomed China's proposal to achieve Middle East security and stability and promote dialogue among countries in the Persian Gulf region. Wang Yi, Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs and Africa at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in an interview with People's Daily that Xi Jinping personally worked with the leaders of both countries during his state visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2022 and his reception of Iranian President Raisi in February 2023 to support Saudi Arabia and Iran in developing good neighborly and friendly relations. (People's Daily, 2023) The talks were initiated by the Government of the People's Republic of China and presided over and coordinated by Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. (Wang Yi, 2023) China's deal with Saudi Arabia and Iran could have big implications for the Middle East. What does this mean for the role of China and the US in the region and beyond? The rapprochement was hailed as a major development for the region after decades of hostility and the formal severing of diplomatic ties in 2016. Against the backdrop of America's retreat from the Middle East, China seeks a vision of a new global order.

The Saudi-Iranian agreement to restore diplomatic ties and involve China is a sign of the continuing changes in the two countries, the wider Middle East and other global dynamics. Negotiations to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran began as early as April 2021. Through the mediation of the then Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Qadimi, Saudi Arabia and the Revolutionary Guards held a number of dialogues in Baghdad and came close to reaching a consensus on how to normalize relations in the fall of 2021. Since then, a formal agreement has not been reached due to the delay in forming a new Iraqi government and the presidential election, but Saudi Arabia and Iran have been in contact in Oman and other places. They could have chosen any country to seal the deal, but instead chose China as its endorser, just after the Chinese leader's recent visit to Saudi Arabia and meetings with other Gulf and Arab leaders. Of course, this is partly because China is the largest buyer of oil from both countries, for example, 18% of China's crude oil needs in 2021 were provided by Saudi Arabia. Likewise, China is Iran's most important economic partner. On the other hand, as a major responsible country, China has always adhered to the basic principles of promoting economic development, improving living standards and respecting the national conditions of other countries. This argument resonates in the Middle East and around the world, because global power has traditionally rested with the Western alliance, which has often relied on military means. (Adrian Foncilla, 2023) China points out that many Asian and African countries did not participate in the creation of the UN Body and wants southern countries to act together to adapt to the new economic



and geopolitical realities. Of course, no matter what the intention of the parties behind the agreement is, it is good that an agreement can be reached through dialogue. This is also in line with the principle that China always advocates dialogue and consultation to resolve disputes. The next step should be to focus on new developments and results, and how to build on them to continue to reduce tensions in the region and achieve an acceptable regional security order.

### **3. Collective Intention: Joint Statement of China, Saudi Arabia and Iran**

The recent "wave of reconciliation" in the Middle East is the result of multiple international and regional situations. Countries in the region have increasingly realized that conflicts and confrontation are not conducive to regional stability, seriously affect their own development and transformation, and lead to interference by external forces. As a neutral, fair and friendly third party, China has played a very important role in promoting peace talks. It is a promoter of security and stability, a partner in development and prosperity, and a promoter of unity and strength in the Middle East. China's successful mediation of the Saudi conflict is a vivid demonstration of China's commitment to the global security initiative and the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, which has strongly promoted peace and stability in the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have agreed to restore diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and representative offices in up to two months, the three countries announced in a deal. Stressing respect for the sovereignty of all countries and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs; The two sides agreed to meet with foreign ministers of the two countries to launch the above work, arrange for the exchange of ambassadors and explore ways to strengthen bilateral relations. The two sides agreed to activate the security cooperation Agreement signed on 17 April 2001 (22 January 1422, Iranian Calendar) and the General Agreement signed on 27 May 1998 (2 February 1419, Iranian Calendar) in the fields of economy, trade, investment, technology, science, culture, sports and youth. The three countries expressed their readiness to make every effort to strengthen international and regional peace and security. (Joint Statement, 2023)

### **ii. Iran and China: From the establishment of diplomatic relations to the Comprehensive strategic partnership**

As two ancient civilizations, China and Iran have a history of exchanges dating back thousands of years. More than 2,000 years ago during the Western Han Dynasty, a Chinese envoy, Zhang Qian's deputy, visited Iran (Benin Dynasty) and opened the Silk Road, a communication line from China to Rome through Iran. Since then, exchanges between the two countries have continued. Zheng He of China's Ming Dynasty visited Hormuzgan in southern Iran three times in the 15th century. In the 13th century, the famous Iranian poet Saadi recorded an unforgettable trip to Kashgar, Xinjiang, China.

In modern times, both China and Iran suffered from the aggression and humiliation of the European



and American powers, and both fought hard to get rid of this fate, which made the emotions of the two countries complicated when facing the European and American powers. (Fan Hongda, 2020) In terms of historical development, the two countries are similar. Both Iran and China have had their own history of feats that have given rise to their own great power ambitions; Both countries experienced the bitter humiliation at the hands of European and American powers, and thus had similar struggles against external oppression and interference. [Ibid, p.145.] There are also differences between the two countries, with two points particularly outstanding: First, conflicts and wars between Iran and external powers in its prosperous period were the prominent features of its foreign relations, while China paid attention to non-conflict international exchanges and maintained relatively peaceful relations with external powers. Second, the Iranian civilization suffered severe damage due to the Arab conquest, while the Chinese civilization maintained continuous existence and development. From the perspective of the stage of contemporary development, after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, especially after China ended the War of "Anti-American aid to North Korea" in 1953 and the Shah Pahlavi was restored to power by the American coup in Iran during the same period, the development of Iran and China showed a relatively obvious time dislocation, especially in 1979. Before that, Iran had a comparative advantage in development. After that, China has a comparative development advantage.

### **1. Common interests: from opposing Soviet hegemony to opposing American hegemony**

On August 16, 1971, China and Iran established diplomatic relations. In the late period of the Cold War, the relations between China and Iran experienced ups and downs. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Iran was deeply worried about the expansion of the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and China also adjusted its diplomatic strategy to cope with the threat of the Soviet Union to China's national security, which made China and Iran share common interests in opposing Soviet hegemony.

From Iran's perspective, Iran has been subjected to more than 40 years of sanctions initiated by the United States and "maximum pressure" by the United States government in recent years. Iran also needs to develop better relations with China and has taken some measures. For example, Iran unilaterally waived visa for Chinese tourists, stepped up its research efforts on China, frequently sent high-level government delegations to China, and immediately provided active assistance to China after the outbreak of pneumonia in the new Chinese embassy. From the perspective of external factors between China and Iran, the United States is a factor affecting the development of bilateral relations between China and Iran.(Fan Hongda, 2019)Currently, the United States government is imposing "maximum pressure" on China and Iran at the same time, which gives the two countries a deeper understanding of the United States and gives China and Iran more common interests to consider.

On the one hand, getting rid of the Iranian nuclear crisis and the obsession of American repression constitutes the impetus for "higher level" relations between Iran and China, Iran and Russia, and Iran



and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The current Biden administration, although interested in returning to the Iran nuclear deal, has not changed its repressive measures against Iran. As the Iranian nuclear issue continues to simmer and the United States has imposed sanctions and strategic oppression on Iran for a long time, Iran has made adjustments to its geostrategic deployment and gradually strengthened its "look East" diplomacy. On the other hand, the SCO member states are slightly concerned about the negative impact of the Iranian nuclear issue and the bilateral relations between Iran and the United States, especially because of the UN sanctions that blocked Iran's accession to the SCO. So China and Iran have a strong push to move closer to each other, both now and for quite some time to come, because of their shared security, economic and energy interests.

## **2. International Coordination: Close bilateral exchanges at all levels**

In January 2016, President Xi Jinping visited Iran on a state visit, and the two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed a memorandum of understanding on "Belt and Road" cooperation. In June 2018, Iranian President Rouhani attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Qingdao Summit and visited China for work. In June 2019, President Xi Jinping and President Rouhani held talks in Bishkek, reaching important consensus on the development of China-Iran relations under new circumstances. On February 14, 2023, President Xi Jinping held talks with Iranian President Raisi, who was visiting China on a state visit at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. This was Raisi's first visit to China since taking office as President of Iran in August 2021 and received high attention from the two countries' governments and international society.

In addition to the interaction between the heads of state of the two countries, officials at all levels of both countries have had close exchanges in recent years. The Chinese officials who visited Iran mainly included Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Work Committee of the CPC Central Committee (visited Iran in March 2021 as State Councilor and Foreign Minister), Vice Premier of the State Council (December 2022), State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe (April 2022), and Vice Premier of the State Council Liu Yandong (April 2017). Iranian officials who visited China mainly included Speaker of Parliament Larijani (February 2019), Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Shamkhani (visited China in March 2023 for Saudi-Iran dialogue), Foreign Minister Abdullahian (visited China in January 2022, attended the third Afghan Neighboring Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting in March 2022, and held a meeting with the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister in China in April 2023), and others. The interaction between officials at all levels from both countries fully reflects China and Iran's "two-way visits" at the diplomatic level.

## **3. Collective Intention: A 25-Year Plan for Comprehensive Cooperation between China and Iran and a joint Statement between China and Iran**

During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Iran in January 2016, the two countries agreed to "hold necessary communication and consultation to reach a comprehensive cooperation agreement for 25 years." After more than five years of efforts, a clear result was achieved on March 27, 2021, when then Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif jointly



signed the China-Iran Comprehensive Cooperation Plan for the next 25 years. However, it should be noted that after the signing, China and Iran did not release the official text of the comprehensive cooperation plan. Therefore, the content and opinions of the international community, especially Western media, about this plan are often unverified. For example, media such as The New York Times and Bloomberg have reported that "although the specific details of the agreement have not been released, informed sources say that the details of the agreement are basically similar to the previously disclosed documents: China will invest in dozens of infrastructure fields in Iran, including telecommunications, banking, ports, railways, healthcare, and information technology, worth up to \$400 billion over the next 25 years, and will obtain Iran's conventional oil supply."(GuanCha, 2021) In addition, this includes China's proposal to promote 5G communication network infrastructure in Iran, provide the "Beidou" global positioning system, and call for military cooperation between the two countries to deal with regional threats such as "terrorism, drugs, human trafficking, and cross-border crime." The content and evaluation of this agreement need to be further objectively understood and analyzed in future cooperation practices.

From February 14 to 16, 2023, the heads of state of China and Iran exchanged views on a series of bilateral and multilateral issues and reached consensus and issued a joint statement.(people, 2023) In the political field, the two heads of state reaffirmed that developing close strategic relations is a historic choice made by China and Iran as two ancient civilizations in East Asia and West Asia, which serves the interests of the whole region. Firmly supporting each other on issues concerning each other's core interests; The two sides stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region to world security and energy transportation; The two sides spoke highly of the strategic significance of the meeting between the two foreign ministers and agreed to maintain close communication between the two foreign ministers. In the field of security and defense, the two sides condemn all forms of terrorism, oppose any terrorist attacks against civilians, oppose "double standards" on counter-terrorism, and oppose linking terrorism with specific ethnic groups and religions. They stand for eliminating the breeding ground for terrorism by developing and encouraging a moderate and middle-way mentality so as to reduce the space for the development of terrorist forces at the source. The two sides recognized each other's contributions and sacrifices in counter-terrorism and agreed to further strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation to safeguard international and regional peace and security. The two sides agreed to strengthen strategic communication between the defense departments of the two countries, carry out exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries at all levels and in all fields, and expand the scale of joint exercises and training and personnel training. In the field of economic and development cooperation, the two sides have made joint efforts to implement the China-Iran comprehensive cooperation plan and continue to deepen cooperation in trade, agriculture, industry, renewable energy and infrastructure.

### **iii. Saudi Arabia and China: From the establishment of diplomatic ties to the comprehensive strategic partnership**



### **1. Saudi Arabia and China: From the establishment of diplomatic ties to the comprehensive strategic partnership**

Joint cooperation in energy, trade, investment and climate. Saudi Arabia is rich in oil resources and China has a vast market. The two sides have a sound basis for cooperation in bilateral oil trade. It is in the common interests of China and Saudi Arabia to promote and consolidate bilateral cooperation in the field of oil. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia plays an important role in supporting the balance and stability of the global oil market, while China needs reliable sources of oil. On the other hand, China and Saudi Arabia agree to jointly explore investment opportunities in the field of petrochemicals and develop promising projects in the field of petrochemicals conversion technology, such as cooperation in the development of renewable energy sources such as electricity, photovoltaic, wind energy and related projects, innovative utilization of hydrocarbons, energy efficiency, localization of energy products and related industrial chains, etc. Cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as well as in the development of modern technologies such as artificial intelligence and energy industry innovation. All these are in the common interests of China and Saudi Arabia.

### **2. International Coordination: Close bilateral interactions at all levels**

On July 21, 1990, China and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations. Since then, the bilateral relationship between China and Saudi Arabia has developed comprehensively and rapidly. In June 2008, the two countries established a strategic friendly relationship. In January 2016, President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia and the two countries announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership. The two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly building the "Belt and Road" initiative. In March 2017, Saudi King Salman visited China. (In addition, as governor of Riyadh province in April 1999 and as crown prince in March 2014, Salman visited China.) In December 2022, President Xi Jinping attended the first China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and made a state visit to Saudi Arabia. The heads of state of China and Saudi Arabia signed the Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, agreeing to hold a summit meeting every two years in each other's country. The two sides also issued a joint statement and signed an implementation plan for aligning the Belt and Road Initiative with Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030".

China and Saudi Arabia have maintained close high-level exchanges. In addition to head of state diplomacy, the main Chinese officials visiting Saudi Arabia are: Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Foreign Affairs Office of the CPC Central Committee (visited Saudi Arabia as Foreign Minister in December 2013 and State Councilor and Foreign Minister in March 2021), Xu Qiliang, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (March 2017), Zhang Gaoli, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Vice Premier of The State Council (August 2017), State Councilor and Minister of National Defense Wei Fenghe (March 2019) and others. The main visitors to China are: Crown Prince Mohammed and Prime Minister (visited China as heir Prince and attended the G20 Hangzhou Summit in August 2016, and visited China as Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister in



February 2019), Foreign Minister Jubeir (visited China in July 2018 for the third meeting of the Political and Diplomatic Sub-Committee of the China-Saudi Arabia High Commission and attended the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum), Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal (January 2022, April 2023) and others.

China and Saudi Arabia have achieved fruitful results in trade, cultural exchanges and educational cooperation. It is worth noting that Saudi Arabia has been China's largest trading partner in the Middle East since 2001. (fmprc, 2023) China has been Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner since 2013. In 2022, our bilateral trade volume reached US \$116.04 billion, up 33.1% year on year. China's export volume reached US \$37.99 billion, up 25.7% year on year, and China's import volume reached US \$78.05 billion, up 37% year on year. Saudi Arabia became our country's first billion-dollar trading partner in the Middle East.

### **3. Collective Intention: To set an example of solidarity and cooperation among developing countries**

From December 7 to 9, 2022, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China made a state visit to Saudi Arabia. The two sides held formal talks and exchanged views on consolidating and developing the China-Saudi Arabia comprehensive strategic partnership and international and regional issues of common concern. Both sides emphasized the need to continue to work together in all fields within the framework of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, deepen their relationship, and bring it into a new and hopeful realm. President Xi Jinping and King Salman signed the Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (Joint Statement, 2022)

China and Saudi Arabia have reached consensus on the following aspects: First, we should continue to give priority to China-Saudi Arabia relations in our respective external relations and set a good example of solidarity, cooperation and mutual benefit among developing countries. Second, they reaffirm their firm support for each other's core interests, support each other in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and jointly safeguard the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and other foundations of international law and basic norms governing international relations. Third, the two sides stressed the need to strengthen cooperation through the China-Saudi Arabia high-level Joint Committee so as to achieve common goals and promote the development of bilateral cooperation in various fields. Fourth, strengthening energy cooperation is the embodiment of the important strategic partnership between the two countries. Fifth, deepen joint cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, strengthen Saudi Arabia's position as the regional core of Chinese enterprises' production and export of energy products, and make joint investments in energy projects in countries in the region as well as energy product consumers in Europe and Africa, so as to promote the development of Saudi Arabia's domestic industry and achieve self-sufficiency in China's petrochemical industry through relevant Chinese investment in Saudi Arabia. Sixth, they emphasize the importance of the principles set forth in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement, agree to continue to strengthen energy policy



coordination, use carbon circular economy to manage emissions to achieve climate goals, and urge developed countries to face up to their historical responsibilities. In addition, there are cooperation agreements on water resources and agriculture, communication and information technology, transportation and logistics services.

### **III Multilateral coordination: Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

#### **i. Contacts between Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

In September 2021, the SCO officially launched the process of admitting Iran as a member state, kicking off the second round of the process. Iran has been seeking SCO membership for a long time. On the whole, its path to integration into SCO has been moving forward amid fluctuations. There are multiple geopolitical forces behind this. (Guo Manruo, 2023) All these factors have brought Iran closer to the SCO.

#### **1. Common interests: The "coincidence" between Iran and major SCO members in the fields of diplomatic strategy and geo-security**

China's push for the resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran sets a good example for resolving conflicts through dialogue and consultation -- "A wave of reconciliation in the Middle East", *People's Daily*, April 25, 2023, Page 13. First of all, the Iranian nuclear issue, the relations between Iran and the United States, and the relations between major SCO member states and the United States have a direct impact on the motivation and process of Iran's accession to the SCO. Second, from the Ahmadinejad, Rouhani and Lacey administrations, Iran has been hoping to promote its "Look East" strategy through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, actively coordinating with China and Russia, and trying to build a multilateral cooperation framework to replace the existing international governance system. China's active advocacy of genuine multilateralism is in line with the international order of multilateralism promoted by Iran to a certain extent. At the same time, due to the continuous eastward expansion of NATO and the influence of the Ukraine crisis and other events, Russia also actively carries out the "look east" foreign policy and commits itself to developing the "Greater Eurasian Partnership". Therefore, Russia also hopes that the SCO will accept Iran to enhance the anti-American forces in the organization and strengthen the geopolitical attributes of the SCO against the United States. Of course, the United States has intensified its unilateralism, hegemonism and power politics. It regards China as a strategic competitor and Russia and Iran as targets of strategic repression, which has objectively promoted Iran's SCO process. Third, Iran and SCO member states share common security goals such as combating the "three forces" and stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan, which is also the basic driving force for Iran's integration into the SCO. Fourth, Iran has rich resources and a superior geographical location, connecting the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, as well as an important strategic position on the Eurasian continent. These advantages give Iran a strong need and willingness for economic cooperation with SCO member states. Fifth, Iran and the SCO member states have overlapping histories, cultures, languages and nationalities, especially the natural ties between Iran and Central and South Asia, which also





played a driving role in the process of Iran's accession to the SCO. Although the Central Asian countries had concerns about the expansion of Iran's religious ideology, on the whole, with the removal of the resistance, the path of Iran's accession to the SCO was smooth.

## **2. International coordination: from the expression of will in 2002 to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at the Samarkand Summit in 2022**

Iran expressed its desire to integrate into SCO as early as 2002 and applied for SCO observer status in 2004. The application was approved at the Astana Summit in July 2005, and Iran became an observer of the SCO along with India and Pakistan. In 2008, Iran began applying for full membership in the SCO, but was not unanimously approved by SCO members. The Regulations on the Admission of new SCO Members adopted at the Tashkent Summit in 2010 stipulates that "applicants for SCO membership shall not be subject to UN sanctions", a new guideline that excludes Iran, which is under UN sanctions due to its nuclear issue. (Nicole Grajewski, 2021) July 2015, Iran's entry into the SCO is back on the agenda after the UN Security Council unanimously adopted the Comprehensive deal on Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions were conditionally lifted. With Iran's announcement in October 2020 that the UN arms embargo against Iran was automatically terminated, the sanctions obstacles to Iran's SCO membership were completely removed. The Dushanbe Summit in 2021 marks Iran's formal entrance to SCO. The Markand Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in September 2022 signed a memorandum on Iran's obligations to join the SCO. Iranian President Raisi signed an order on 7 February 2023 calling for the implementation of the law on Iran's accession to the SCO. Iran is expected to formally become the ninth member of the SCO after a series of legal procedures.

## **3. Collective intention: to agree to Iran's formal accession to the SCO**

The 22nd meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in September 2022 signed a memorandum on Iran's obligations to join the SCO. (Memorandum, 2022) On November 27 last year, the Iranian parliament passed the SCO membership bill by a large vote. On January 28, Iran's Guardian Council announced that it had approved the bill. Iranian President Raisi on February 7 signed an order calling for the implementation of laws on Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). According to a statement posted on the Iranian presidential website, Raisi on the same day referred Iran's SCO accession law to the Iranian Foreign Ministry for implementation. The statement said the SCO carries out active activities in economic and other fields, and Iran's formal accession will be able to more effectively safeguard its interests in relevant fields. In addition, one of the importance of Iran's SCO membership is to facilitate Iran's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative.

## **ii. Contacts between Saudi Arabia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

Saudi Arabia's cabinet approved the decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on March 29, 2023, after China brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran, two rival Middle East powers.



Saudi Arabia's state news agency SPA said the kingdom had approved a memorandum, Grant the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the status of dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It can be said that the contact between Saudi Arabia and the SCO is accompanied by the reconciliation of Shai, and the occurrence of this trend depends on the development of multiple bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and China, Saudi Arabia and Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Of course, it cannot be ignored that the change in Saudi-US relations is one of the main reasons for the Shai rapprochement and Saudi Arabia's choice to become a dialogue partner in the SCO. Faced with the diode thinking of the United States, the Middle East countries represented by Saudi Arabia oppose zero-sum game and pursue diversified alliance.

**The edge of the crisis has made Saudi Arabia realize the importance of regional risk management.** The turning point in U.S. relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia came in 2019. In June of that year, Iran shot down an American drone flying from the United Arab Emirates, and the United States retaliated by preparing strikes against targets inside Iran. But then-President Donald Trump called off the operation at the last minute. In September of that year, key oil facilities in eastern Saudi Arabia came under missile and drone attack by the Houthis, a Shiite group in Yemen backed by Iran. The United States determined that Iran was involved in that attack, but it did not retaliate. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates seem to be well aware of this risk and have begun to rely more on their own security. The UAE began increasing government-to-government contacts with Iran to ease tensions. "If you can't be a friend, you can be an ordinary neighbor," explained Sheikh Gargash, then the UAE's foreign minister.(Yuzo Waki,2023) Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed, who has made many tough statements about Iran, has also begun to speak cautiously about the country.

**The rhetoric of "Cold War mentality, bloc politics and camp confrontation" disgusted Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries.** President Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia in July 2022 laid bare the gap in thinking. Biden stressed continued U.S. engagement in the Middle East, telling reporters, "Russia and China want to fill the void for the United States. The United States has to stay in the Middle East." Even during his visit to Saudi Arabia, where he attended a "security summit" with leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council, including Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, Mr Biden repeated a previous refrain that "we are not going to walk away and let China or Russia or Iran fill the void". Such comments are totally unacceptable to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. Because this narrative means that the countries in the region are divided into two camps, which are aligned with the United States and with China, Russia and Iran. It means that the Arab countries present at the conference are regarded as the power on the side of the United States. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal underlined the gulf between Arab and American perceptions when he said later: "We don't see the Middle East as a zero-sum game."

After Raisi's inauguration as Iran's president in September 2021, the world is watching whether the U.S. and Iran will reach a compromise on revising the nuclear deal. But the Raisi administration, whose mission is to safeguard the fruits of the Islamic revolution, seems less enthusiastic about the need to compromise with the U.S. and Europe in order to revise the nuclear deal, and more focused



on improving relations with Arab neighbors. China, which has been expanding cooperation with Iran, decided to intervene after confirming that Iran strongly hopes to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia. It can be said that China's ingenious way of handling relations with Middle Eastern countries contributed to the diplomatic achievement of the turnaround of Saudi-Iran relations. Therefore, although Saudi Arabia's contact with the SCO is only a small step, namely becoming a "dialogue partner", with the improvement of the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the consolidation and upgrading of the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and China, Saudi Arabia will not have to wait too long to become a full member of the SCO.

### **Conclusion: Saudi-Iran reconciliation and sustainable development of SCO**

The normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has eased tensions and promoted a "rapprochement wave" in the Middle East, a development that presents China as a reliable broker and supporter of multilateral dialogue. After the Ukraine crisis, the trend of global multipolarity is evolving. Most of the countries in the "global South" have stayed out of the Russia sanctions camp and have avoided conflict with China. America's Arab Allies such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are acting in concert with other countries in the global South. For their own good and bad, countries are trying to ensure that their security and economic interests are balanced.

As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, Riyadh and Tehran have always been rivals for regional leadership, a competition for regional dominance that was only reinforced by the Islamic Revolution of 1979, but not caused. Alliance with the United States is Saudi Arabia's choice to deal with the "threat from neighboring countries" in a specific period. Although this alliance has effectively and successfully fulfilled its mission for decades, however, as the United States gradually changes its Middle East strategy and abandons its traditional commitment to its Arab Allies, With Washington's lukewarm response to the September 2019 attacks on Saudi Aramco's oil facilities in Bukeg and Qurais as a turning point, Saudi Arabia realized the untenability of relying solely on the US alliance and began to diversify its security and military partners, including security cooperation with China and Russia. So the Saudi rapprochement with Iran is part of a relative shift in Saudi Arabia's diplomatic, security and economic diversification strategy. First, by restoring diplomatic relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia hopes that the rapprochement will help reduce its risk of direct Iranian attack and the spin-off threat of military conflict between Iran and the US, and between Iran and Islam. Secondly, China's "global security initiative" has been supported and recognized by Saudi Arabia. The real multilateralism followed by China coincides with the diversified diplomacy promoted by Saudi Arabia, which has prompted Saudi Arabia to choose China as an intermediary to jointly witness the "endorser" of the Saudi settlement agreement despite the opposition of the United States. Finally, Saudi Arabia's rapprochement with Iran is also important in ensuring that oil exploration, transportation and sales are not disrupted, especially in diversifying its economy.

In the case of Iran, first, the economic deficit increases the incentive to rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Second, the best way to reduce American influence and curb Israeli interference is to ease



relations with Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia. Third, Iran sees the United States as a country undermining regional and global security, depriving it of its most important weapon through a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia, America's most important ally in the region, and in addition, it is in Iran's interest to bring China into the regional security system as a mediator, reducing the U.S. monopoly. The Saudi-Iranian settlement coincided with an unprecedented wave of protests in Tehran late last year, with calls for regime change escalating against the backdrop of the killing of the young woman Masha Amini, which Iran believes its opponents in the West, particularly the United States, are seeking to fuel and exploit to undermine the regime, This is what motivates Iran to resolve its regional differences in order to provide an opportunity to address its internal challenges. Finally, cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iran could allow them to better control the price of oil, since the two countries together account for 35.5% of Opec's oil reserves, so price stability is a big deal for both economies and an important incentive for their cooperation.

The rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a major breakthrough in China's diplomatic history in the Middle East. First, China is capable of achieving diplomatic achievements on issues that the United States has long avoided talking about, because China has good relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, unlike the United States, which prefers to engage in clique and alliance diplomacy and only maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the fact that China has no historical baggage in the region has helped it establish itself as a neutral mediator. Second, China can play a constructive role in the international system and also provide reliable evidence for the practice of the Global Security Initiative, that is, China will not use force to impose its own values, nor will it follow the path of colonization and plunder of other hegemony. Finally, in this reconciliation process, Iraq and the Sultanate of Oman have played their part in balancing sectarian relations and containing regional tensions.

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Security is the premise of development, development is the driving force of security, civilization is the soil of development and security, development and security is the means of continuous evolution and progress of civilization. Under the three initiatives, there will certainly be more converging interests and cooperation consensus among Saudi Arabia, Iran and China as well as among SCO



member states. As more projects are signed and implemented, they will promote the development of SCO member states, observer states and even dialogue partners, improve people's livelihood, promote the building of a common destiny of the SCO and achieve sustainable development of the SCO.



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