



THE GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POST-DIPLOMATIC NORMALIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST ON SAUDI-IRAN RELATIONS

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Abstrak

Arab Saudi dan Iran melakukan normalisasi dan dimediasi oleh Cina di Beijing pada 10 maret 2023 setelah beberapa dekade berada dalam hubungan yang rumit. Normalisasi ini tentunya berdampak khususnya di kawasan Timur Tengah. Normalisasi ini juga berdampak pada perubahan dinamika regional, stabilitas regional, dampak pada sekutu atau lawan, dan implikasi ekonomi. Penelitian ini membahas tentang perubahan dinamika politik, keamanan, dan kekuasaan di Timur Tengah seiring dengan normalisasi menggunakan teori geopolitik Kaplan. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian kualitatif yang memfokuskan sumber data dari berita. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa normalisasi tersebut berdampak signifikan terhadap Timur Tengah, antara lain peningkatan keamanan, berkurangnya konflik, politik yang lebih stabil, perubahan dinamika regional, meningkatkan aktivitas ekonomi, dan potensi solusi diplomatik. Normalisasi ini juga memfasilitasi hubungan yang lebih baik antar negara sekitar terutama dengan Tiongkok memainkan peran penting dalam tatanan ekonomi dunia baru ini.

Kata Kunci: Arab Saudi; Geopolitik; Iran; Normalisasi Arab Saudi-Iran; Timur Tengah

Abstract

Saudi Arabia and Iran normalized and were mediated by China in Beijing on March 10, 2023 after decades of complicated relations. This normalization certainly has an impact, especially in the Middle East region. This normalization also has an impact on changes in regional dynamics, regional stability, impact on allies or opponents, and economic implications. This research discusses changes in political, security, and power dynamics in the Middle East along with normalization using Kaplan's geopolitical theory. The method used is a qualitative research method that focuses on data sources from the news. The research results show that normalization has had a significant impact on the Middle East, including increased security, reduced conflict, more stable politics, changes in regional dynamics, increased economic activity, and the potential for diplomatic solutions. This normalization also facilitates better relations between surrounding countries, especially with China playing an important role in this new world economic order.

Keywords: Geopolitics; Iran; Middle East; Saudi Arabia; Saudi Arab-Iranian Normalization

Introduction

Due to its great complexity and intensity, the Middle East region has been the focus of attention on a global scale in recent years. The protracted geopolitical struggle has had a significant impact on both the countries in the region and the global population. The ongoing war between Saudi Arabia and Iran is one of the most significant wars in the Middle East. This Middle East region has seen numerous conflicts, regional disagreements, and substantial political transitions because of its distinct geopolitical complexity (Alghannam, 2023; Lynch, 2016).

One of the most recent occurrences in the region that creates expectations and shocks is the diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Due to this normalization, the relationships between these two nations have improved. Most people predict that the Middle East region will be significantly impacted by the geopolitical effects of diplomatic normalization, possibly leading to new regional dynamics (Mabon et al., 2021; Terrill, 2011). In this study, we will talk about the geopolitical repercussions of the diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as the motivations behind it.

Saudi Arabia and Iran's diplomatic normalization with Iran is a complex problem with far-reaching repercussions. This is because of the geopolitical impact of the Middle East. On the one hand, mending fences between the two rivals in the area can help lessen tensions and improve regional stability. Contrarily, it may also result in more rivalry for resources and influence, which may in turn spark violence (ELDoh, 2023).

A complicated geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been raging in the Middle East for some time, and this conflict is one of the most significant ones. They fought over a variety of issues, including sectarian animosities, regional concerns, and the desire to rule. The region as a whole has suffered as a result of the political, social, and economic pressures brought on by this conflict. The primary rivals in the Middle East have historically been Saudi Arabia and Iran. There are significant religious, political, and regional disparities between the two nations (Bibi, 2018; Kelkitli, 2016). Major opponents in the Middle East for a very long time have been Saudi Arabia and Iran. Regarding religion, political ideologies, and regional interests, the two countries have significant disparities (Fozia & Ali, 2018). The largest Sunni power in the world is Saudi

Arabia, while Iran is a Shia-majority nation that positions itself as the protector of Shia interests worldwide (Grumet, 2015).

The civil wars in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq are only a few examples of the several major regional conflicts that have been influenced by their rivalries and rivalries. Additionally, the two are in competition with one another to increase their influence in the area (Khalili & Schwedler, 2010). When Saudi Arabia and Iran announced diplomatic normalization in March 2023, the unanticipated development occurred. This is an effort to repair the official relationship between two nations that were formerly strained or at war (McDonald, 2008; Wardoyo, 2023).

Although it is still extremely early in the process, this normalization has involved actions like political discourse, diplomatic exchanges, and regional collaboration. The goal of this normalization is to enhance ties and ease tensions between the two nations. The objectives of this stage are to promote peace, prevent conflict from escalating, and start more fruitful political conversations. However, there are many concerns and rumors concerning the geopolitical ramifications of this diplomatic standard for the Middle East region (Ibrahim, 2023). There is a second cycle of diplomatic ties between nations that were previously at odds because of normalization (Sitaraman & Wuerth, 2015).

Saudi Arabia and Iran's diplomatic normalization with Iran is a complex problem with far-reaching repercussions. This is because of the geopolitical impact of the Middle East Normalizing the ties between the two countries has benefits and drawbacks. Monitoring the situation is essential, and in the meantime, efforts should be made to reduce the likelihood of confrontation. Even though the reestablishment of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran can be a big step toward Middle Eastern peace and stability, it's important to be aware of potential barriers and work to overcome them (Harb, 2023).

The purpose of this study is to examine the geopolitical consequences of Saudi Arabia and Iran's diplomatic normalization in the Middle East. This investigation will look at power dynamics, regional and global impacts, and changes in foreign policy. The impact of this normalization on the chances for peace, stability, and security in the region is something that researchers are deeply interested in understanding. Numerous variables will be the focus of this investigation. when examining the evolution of regional power

relations. Iran and Saudi Arabia have long played a significant role in the continuing power struggle in the Middle East.

The regional power structure may change as a result of this diplomatic normalization, which may also affect relations with neighboring countries and other regional players. It is uncertain whether this diplomatic normalization will increase Middle East stability or whether it will bring about a shift in power dynamics and a fresh wave of conflict escalation. It is also important to consider the roles played by other regional and global players in the Middle East, including the US, the EU, Russia, and Turkey.

Given that several past research looked at the topic of normalization between countries that were at war, this study was conducted. Studies that look at factors that support normalization between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, for instance (Reynaldi, 2021), the effect on security (Khaerunnisa et al., 2023), the goal of the normalization (Derajat & Kurniawan, 2020; Mas et al., 2020). As for research on normalization between the United States and Libya (Zoubir, 2006), normalization of relations between Türkiye and Russia (Nyoman et al., 2016), United Arab Emirates and Israel (Fulton & Yellinek, 2022), diplomatic normalization between Spain and the GDR (Ramos Diez-Astrain, 2022), Japan and China (Masaya, 2023), improvement of bilateral relations between Indonesia and Australia after the Conflict (Amalia & Hakim, 2017) and the factor of normalizing relations between Jordan and Qatar (Subchan, 2020) and research that discusses geopolitical issues such as research that describes the geopolitical implications between Korea and China for the US (Lee, 2020).

Will this normalization cause them to change their perspective and approach toward this area? Will this return to normalcy present a chance to ease tensions and look for diplomatic solutions to these conflicts? As a result of this normalization, it might also lead to increased tensions or other problems. It's crucial to examine how this diplomatic normalization affects the political goals and aspirations of Saudi Arabian and Iranian society. What is the internal response to this normalization like in both countries? Will the public support it broadly or will there be fierce opposition? What actions political parties, ethnic groups, and other regional power brokers will take in response to this normalization? Researchers aim to advance knowledge of the geopolitical effects of diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran on the Middle East area through

this study. The analysis of this research will be based on literature reviews, data, and information that is already available, as well as a multidisciplinary analytical approach including the domains of geopolitics, security, and foreign policy.

This research discusses changes in political, security, and power dynamics in the Middle East along with normalization using geopolitical theory. Geopolitical theory is an important basis for analyzing these developments. With normalization, relations between several countries in the Middle East have undergone a significant transformation, affecting several crucial issues in this region, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, regional cooperation, and the influence of global actors in this region.

Theoretical Review

Geopolitics

The study of how geographic, political, and economic factors affect the power dynamics between states is known as geopolitical theory in political science and international relations (Humaini, 2019). This idea acknowledges that a country's policies and behaviors can be significantly influenced by its geographic location as well as other physical elements. Fundamentally, geopolitics is to comprehend the relationships between power, political and geographic regions. Geographical considerations, such as place, terrain, temperature, trade routes, natural resources, and access to the sea or transit routes, can give countries a strategic advantage or present difficulties to them in pursuing their national objectives (Ramadhan & Iskandar, 2020).

According to geopolitical theory, governments fight for advantages over other states while acting in their national interests. Strategic positioning or control over important transportation arteries can provide a nation with power and sway. Geopolitics also acknowledges the distinct geopolitical dynamics and interests that exist in different geographical areas. For instance, the center East boasts a wealth of natural resources, including gas and oil, and is situated in the center of three continents. To influence trade routes for energy, regional power, and political conflicts that affect global stability, countries in the region compete with one another (Anggoro, 2017).

Geopolitical analysis involves taking a geographical viewpoint and identifying a country or region's advantages and disadvantages based on its location. Defense, security, trade, and the capacity to access national and international markets can all be

significant factors in determining a state's policies (Rafsanjani, 2022). Changes in geographic variables, such as power, climate, or resource access, are also acknowledged by geopolitical theory to have an impact on state-to-state power dynamics. As a result, a thorough understanding of geopolitics can aid in the prediction and explanation of power transfers and conflict at the world, regional, and local levels.

Geopolitical Theory According to Kaplan

The implications of diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East on regional power dynamics, regional influence, and political dynamics can be studied using geopolitical theory by Kaplan. Kaplan based his geopolitical analysis on the belief that geographic, topographic, and location factors are very important in determining political and security dynamics in the world. which is explained by the geopolitical interpretation according to (Putra et al., 2019) can help us understand how geographical characteristics such as location, resources, and trade routes influence the geopolitical dynamics of a region. In the Saudi-Iranian context, the geographical location of both plays a central role. Saudi Arabia is located on the Arabian Peninsula facing the Persian Gulf, while Iran is located on the other side of the Persian Gulf. Therefore, geopolitical theory believes that location, topography, and geography play a major role in world political and security dynamics.

Kaplan discusses geographical issues that make these countries conflict, but if you look at it from the perspective of demography and ideology, the conflict will be resolved and can be united because of the genealogical and ideological similarities of each country in conflict (Kaplan et al., 2012). According to Kaplan, the international order in more modern civilizations is largely determined by energy resources (Prasetyo et al., n.d.). Normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran will undoubtedly have a substantial impact on the global energy market, given that these two countries are among the world's largest oil producers. Kaplan also discusses changes in regional dynamics and regional stability (Lancu, 2014).

Method

This research uses qualitative research methods based on descriptive data to examine in depth the impact of normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East (Gunawan, 2022; Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). The researcher uses a qualitative approach involving primary data sources on news related to diplomatic normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In analyzing the impact of normalization in the Middle East, researchers used Kaplan's geopolitical theory. Kaplan's geopolitical theory provides an in-depth analysis of regional dynamics in various regions.

In this research, researchers analyzed the first stage, namely data collection techniques. In this stage the data is collected by reading and noting and then categorized thematically to highlight some of the effects of normalization (Rijali, 2019; Sari & Asmendri, 2018) which will then be reduced by selecting data related to Arab and Iranian normalization and its impact in the Middle East region according to research needs. The next stage is data presentation, where the researcher presents data regarding the impact of Arab and Iranian normalization on the Middle East region which was initially complicated until the data was easier to understand. The final stage is data verification, namely by carrying out correct accuracy (Helaluddin & Wijaya, 2019) from stating the impacts of normalization using trusted sources and discussing them with lecturers and colleagues.

A Brief History of the Causes of the Saudi Arabia-Iran Conflict

According to Grumet, Saudi Arabia and Iran were originally countries that had good bilateral relations as countries in the same region. In 1929, Saudi Arabia and Iran signed a bilateral agreement entitled "Saudi-Iranian Friendship Treaty" which discussed political relations, diplomatic relations, and economic relations which included bilateral trade cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Utami et al., 2022). This peace ended in 1979 just as the "Iranian Islamic Revolution" took place. Saudi Arabia considers that the Iranian revolution is a threat to them (Machmudi, 2021), so Saudi Arabia allied with Iraq, which at that time was a war between Iran and Iraq. The United States, Saudi Arabia, and Soviet Union are countries that considered the Iraqi Islamic Revolution a direct threat and sided with and helped Iraq in the war (Arsyad, 2022). Since then, the geopolitical ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran have always attracted international attention (Fraihat, 2020).

Saudi Arabia and Iran do not have an open conflict, but through a proxy war (Cohen & Hitman, 2021; Utami et al., 2022). Iran has no reluctance in asserting its ethnic and historical claims over Bahrain, which contributes to the animosity between the two nations. The conventional Sunni-Wahhabi-Saudi status as ruler of the Islamic world was challenged by the Iranian revolution of 1979 because Iran is the country where Islam first appeared (Cohen & Hitman, 2021). Saudi Arabia and Iran continue to argue over who is more deserving of leading Islam. According to Fraihat in his book "Iran and Saudi Arabia: Taming a Chaotic Conflict", the things that cause conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran are sectarianism, security, competition for global leadership, geopolitics, and even nationalism (Fraihat, 2020).

In 2002, after the 9/11 incident and the threat of Al-Qaeda provided an opportunity for Saudi Arabia and Iran to establish cooperation and sign an anti-terrorism agreement. But even though they have signed the agreement several times, this does not necessarily make Saudi Arabia and Iran push for peace between them (Nuruzzaman, 2012). The conflicts that occurred between Saudi Arabia and Iran were divided into two, namely conflicts between Sunni and Shia regimes and conflicts between countries (Hamid & Setiadi, 2021).

The relationship between state and religion is very common among Muslim-majority countries. Many countries are in conflict with ideological differences that have an impact on their international relations. The chaos in state-religious relations affected various state affairs. Many countries conflict because of religion, especially in Middle Eastern countries (Suntana et al., 2023). Moreover, both countries have a Muslim population of more than 90%.

Many researchers argue that the main conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a religious one, as both see themselves as representatives of the Islamic world. Both countries claim that both sides use their religious identity to form alliances and influence (Cohen & Hitman, 2021). Who is a true believer and who is not a believer? This exclusionist mindset is most clearly seen in the sectarian conflicts between Shia and Sunni Muslims, which pose a serious threat to the stability of regional nations and stakeholders in the wider world, including the United States and its allies (Abdo, 2017). In addition to sectarian conflicts, Rifa'i in his book "The Sunni-Shiite Meeting Point"

also added that the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran also has religious nuances that boil down to fiqh and schools of thought (Hamid & Setiadi, 2021).

According to (*CIA-The World Factbook*) Iran has a Muslim population of 99.6% that is divided into Shiites around 90% to 95% and Sunnis around 5% to 10%. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has a Muslim population which is divided into Sunnis around 85% to 90%, and Shia around 10% to 12%. (*World Population Review*) Sunni is the largest sect which has followers of 90% of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims. This percentage proves that Saudi Arabia and Iran are countries of one religion but have different views that give rise to sectarianism.

The conflict sharpened after "The Arab Spring" in the Middle East. One example is the case where in December 2012, the bodyguard of the Minister of Finance Rafa al-Essawi, a prominent Sunni figure, was arrested and Sunni followers also started a demonstration (Kompas, 2013) because Sunni followers felt that the government of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki, who comes from the Shiite group, has sidelined them (BBC, 2013). After "The Arab Spring" there have been many proxy wars, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen (Fraihat, 2020).

Impact of Saudi Arabia-Iranian Normalization

The tension in diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran was originally based on religion which continued into a political conflict in 1979, when there was mutual suspicion due to Riyadh's actions which closed the Shiite shrines in Mecca and Medina. Arabs and Iranians compete to become leaders of the Middle East and compete to become leaders of the Islamic world. Their rivalry is more of an ideological battle between Shiites and Sunnis that has never gone out of control since centuries ago. And it got worse when the diplomatic relations between the two countries were terminated in 2016.

Many Middle Eastern countries were affected by the termination of relations, especially in the economic and military fields. After seven years of disconnection of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, on March 10, 2023, the two countries agreed to an agreement to reopen embassies in their respective countries (Republika, 2023). The two countries agreed to restore ties in a deal brokered by China (Gritten, 2023). With the agreement that occurred between the two countries, through the geopolitical theory of Kaplan's perspective, many Middle Eastern countries have even

become a new trend in the Middle East to begin to unite political relations that were previously fractured (Sorongan, 2023). The normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran has had an impact on changes in regional dynamics, and regional stability, has had an impact on allies and opponents, and has had economic implications.

Changes in Regional Dynamics

The normalization of relations between Arabs and Iranians changed the power dynamics in the Middle East region (Wardoyo, 2023). Better relations between Arab countries and Iran can reduce rivalries, political tensions, and security in the Middle East and increase cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, and security. The accord certainly helped ease tensions in the larger Gulf area in addition to strengthening bilateral relations. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdullahian said, on Wednesday, the normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia was "a step forward" (Ajansi, 2023). This can create opportunities for political discussion, diplomacy, and the establishment of a more inclusive regional framework. In turn, this can generate stability and progress for countries in the region.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have been in a state of cold war for years. Saudi Arabia supports exiled countries, while Iran supports the Houthi uprising. Because of this, there is a proxy war between Riyadh and Tehran (Republika, 2023). Normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran can reduce the negative impact of the conflict and their rivalry with neighboring countries in the Middle East. Some countries such as Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon have experienced instability as a result of the conflicts between the two countries. With normalization, they can help reduce conflict and sectarian interference in these nations by improving relations between the two conflicting countries, and they can also promote peace and recovery efforts (Ardemagni, 2023; Chubin & Tripp, 2005). Saudi Arabia and Iran's animosity was lessened when Saudi Arabia assisted Iranians fleeing Sudan's civil war (Reuters, 2023a).

Regional Stability

Normalization of relations can aid in the creation of stability and security in the Middle East. The competition and struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran have created tensions that threaten regional security. By enhancing relations, they can lessen conflict and seek diplomatic solutions to their disputes. This can lessen the likelihood of military conflict and foster collaboration in combating common dangers like terrorism or instability in adjacent nations.

Normalization has the potential to increase stability in the region of conflicts and disputes between Arab countries and Iran that have been going on for decades. Normalizing relations between the two major countries can increase opportunities for communication and peaceful solutions, which will reduce the risk of conflict and increase stability in the Middle East. The normalization of Saudi Arabia-Iranian relations can affect important regional issues, such as the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Palestine. Through more open communication and better cooperation, progress can be made in conflict resolution, regional stability, development progress, and prosperity.

Some of the things that were done after the normalization were Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz inviting the Iranian president to visit Riyadh. On October 12, 2023, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi discussed with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman the latest developments in Gaza after Hamas counterattacked (MEMO, 2023). The rapprochement between the two countries increased at a remarkable pace, improving ties between Qatar and Bahrain by ending the Gulf divisions (Galeeva, 2023; Reuters, 2023b) due to differences in political views and regional issues. This normalization has helped restore long-disturbed relations between the two countries, opening the door to better cooperation in various fields.

One important example of normalization is between Saudi Arabia and Syria. After restoring relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria also normalized by restoring relations with the Bashar Assad regime in Syria (Bimo, 2023). On May 10, 2023, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad received an invitation from Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz through Saudi Ambassador to Jordan Naif Bin Bandar Al-Sudairi (Iran International, 2023) which proved that tensions in Saudi Arabia's relations with Syria also decreased (DW, 2023a). In recent decades, relations between the two countries have been tense due to various political and ideological differences. However, through diplomatic

efforts, the two have managed to restore their ties, which has helped reduce tensions in the region.

Apart from the conflict between these countries, normalization has also helped resolve the conflict between Syria and Tunisia. This normalization has allowed the two to restore diplomatic relations. The two countries resumed diplomatic ties after almost 11 years (DW, 2023b) and worked together to overcome common problems, including regional issues. (Jaramaya, 2023; MEO, 2023) And the normalization of Arabs and Iranians also seems to have had an impact on Israeli-Palestinian relations. The détente between Riyadh and Tehran also prompted the two to seek political reconciliation in Lebanon, which is facing an unprecedented financial crisis (Republika, 2023). Several regional conflicts have hurt the situation in Lebanon, and normalization between countries in the region has helped create a climate more conducive to finding political solutions to the country's problems. Thus, the normalization of relations between countries in the Middle East has played an important role in reducing several conflicts in the region.

Impact on Allies and Opponents

The normalization of Arab-Iranian relations surefire have consequences for allies and foes of the two countries. Some countries that previously took sides may need to change their policies and strategies to match the goals they seek to achieve. This may have implications for regional dynamics and the current balance of power.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and China due to this normalization have become closer because it has been four decades of Arab-US administrations to stop "Iranian terrorism in the Middle East," but they are not getting the results they are after. Therefore, Arabs choose an alternative by establishing relations with China as a mediator between Arabs and Iran. So that the Arabs can see the extent of Iran's optimism for peace (Shawkat & Wassef, 2023).

Saudi Arabia choose China as an intermediary between Saudi Arabia and Iran also due to reducing its country's dependence on the United States. This normalization is a shock to the United States, which is China's competitor in every way today (Liputan6, 2023). China was also chosen because the country is considered neutral and is a country that has close economic ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Israel considers that normalization between Arabs and Iranians is something that is not good. Israel considers that the existence of the normalization agreement is a victory for Iran. In particular, this normalization is opposed by Israeli politicians (Muhaimin, 2023). This crisis is considered to exist because Israel wants to build relations with Saudi Arabia. Israel considers that its country and Arabs are both against Iran's nuclear advances. (Erwanti, 2023).

Hearing that Saudi Arabia and Iranian normalization is increasingly close, America also continues to aggressively propose Israel to Saudi Arabia to carry out normalization. However, because the Palestinian and Israeli conflict became increasingly heated after the counterattack carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023, Saudi Arabia froze its normalization agreement with Israel. The conflict between Israel and Palestine seems to be making relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which are the Palestinian strongholds, even closer (Cahyani, 2023).

Economic Implications

The geopolitical impact of this diplomatic normalization must also be considered from an economic perspective. The Middle East region is a region rich in natural resources, especially oil and gas (Acharya & Buzan, 2010). Normalization between Saudi Arabia and Iran has a significant impact on global energy markets, given that these two countries are among the world's largest oil producers. Changes in their relationship surely affect the stability of energy supplies, oil prices, and the economic strategies of other countries that depend on the region's energy resources.

The normalization of relations can open up opportunities for wider economic cooperation between Arab countries and Iran. Working together to develop trade, investment, and infrastructure can enhance economic growth and prosperity in the region. After normalization is carried out, Saudi Arabia will continue to invest in Iran because this normalization is partly due to the Iranian economic crisis and Saudi Arabia's ambitions to develop (Shaeban, 2023). The announcement of the return of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the resolution of many outstanding issues between them, carries many indications. However, this still depends on making decisions regarding the relaunch of the economic, commercial, and cultural ties between the two countries (Almanjumi, 2023).

Economic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially Tehran, were cut off in 2015, even though Iran is not included in a series of countries that have economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia. With this normalization, trade and economic relations between the two countries allow the return of suspended transactions, in addition to new forms of cooperation, given the diversification of Iran's economy, and the possibility of Tehran exporting agricultural commodities and raw materials such as iron, to meet the needs of construction projects in Saudi Arabia (Alsaawi, 2023).

While decreasing the intensity of regional rivalry may help redirect political energy to core internal concerns, the chances of a speedy resolution remain remote. The reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia absolutely alleviates Arab Gulf countries' security concerns. However, this does not mitigate the potential of a crisis triggered by Iran's quickly expanding nuclear program and the threat it poses to Israel, as well as some of Iran's neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia (International Crisis Group, 2023).

In addition, the normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran may face many challenges, as follows:

1. Normalization of relationships can lead to greater competition for influence and resources. The two countries are major players in the region and have different interests, which can lead to conflict.
2. The normalization of relations can expand extremism. Saudi Arabia and Iran have been accused of supporting extremist groups in the region. The normalization of relations between the two countries has the potential to trigger the spread of extremism in the region, which will threaten peace and stability there (Marcus, 2019; Takeyh & Gvosdev, 2004).

Conclusion

The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has caught the world's attention since 1979, then continued into the Iranian Islamic revolution, the Arab Spring, and the severance of diplomatic relations in 2016 due to religion, sectarianism, security, competition for global leadership, geopolitics, and nationalism. The normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran on March 10 2023 has significant implications for the Middle East region, namely better security, absence of open conflict between countries, more stable politics, changing regional dynamics, and increased

economic activity. Normalization is an effort to build better diplomatic relations between countries that were previously at odds.

From a geopolitical perspective, as posited by Kaplan, the normalization of relations between two major nations can enhance the prospects for diplomatic discussions and solutions, reduce the risk of violence, and improve the stability of the Middle East. The normalization of relations between countries in the Middle East has played an important role in reducing several conflicts in the region. The normalization that occurred eased the conflicts that occurred between Saudi Arabia and Syria, Qatar and Bahrain Re-Establish Diplomatic Relations, Syria and Tunisia resumed diplomatic ties after almost 11 years, Riyadh and Tehran, and the two countries worked together to seek political reconciliation in Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia is also rapidly investing in Iran to improve economic relations. By using China as an intermediary between Saudi Arabia and Iran, America and Israel feel threatened because of this. And this normalization also has an impact on the economies of countries in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran are the two largest oil-producing countries in the world. Economic cooperation between the two will produce a new world economic order. Moreover, this cooperation involves China as the world's new Great Power.

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