The Win-Win Commitment

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"China will continue to uphold the banner of peace, development and win-win cooperation, be committed to peaceful development, pursue a win-win strategy of opening up and promote the formation of a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation." – State Council of The People's Republic of China, 2016

This statement is very much the de facto attitude that China has so graciously maintained in the Middle East, the idea of "win-win", especially with the 4-month-old deal which has managed to restore diplomatic relations between two powerholders in the Middle East, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

China's patience and prudence first stem from its affinity for the region's resources and opportunity for investment. The Middle East represents the

largest exporter of oil to China with Iran and Saudi Arabia being the biggest players. KSA is the top supplier of oil for China with 87.49 million tons having been shipped in 2022, while Iran is a great source for discounted resources, due to the turbulent economic situation it faces. Investments in the MENAT region increased by 360% in 2021 alone, and this is just a surface representation of the picture.

How China has found itself at the helm of the negotiation talks also shows its very calculated approach. Iraq represented the talking stage for a considerable amount of time under then prime-minster Mustafa Al-Khadimi, but when the political change took place in the Iraqi government, Saudi Arabia turned east and found that China, after talks with Iran, would be open to facilitate the discussions. There is no doubt that the deal benefited China in terms of its public image in the Middle East, and, that it was willing to go after these perks because of the low-risk value its engagement represented.

While it is becoming more or less clear in terms of the vested interest of the East-Asian power broker, looking at Saudi Arabia and Iran, it is rather foggy. Some figures argue that Iran has won overall in terms of its influence over the region, and in fact, it is Saudi Arabia who looked forward to the resolution more than anyone else. The talk is an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to de-escalate and build upon its "Vision 2030" plan. Although slow to materialize, the prospect of de-escalation in Yemen and the change in public image aimed by the current regime can represent a great aid in this regard. I also think this is an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to build up its military and calculate its plans in terms of its position on the chess board. While this is purely speculative, the fact that there is renewed interest in nuclear energy infrastructure in the country could also be a sign of a shift in the regime's approach toward the issue of Iran and its nuclear program. Will uranium enrichment stay put just for sustainable energy exports, or is it something greater in the works?

What is happening in the Middle East is monumental, Syria re-joining the Arab League, the rising importance of China, and the novel optimistic expenditure plans of the Iraqi government all offer enticing chapters to explore. The US ought to maintain its importance, but for the moment, it seems that power holders in the region begin to look the other way when they see that their needs are beginning to be ignored. For now, what China assisted only added to the efforts exerted by the US but is a matter of time to see if it will stay the same.