

China leaps into Saudi-Iran diplomacy as nuclear talks move

Iranian official says next move on prisoner exchange depends on US.

It's hard to understate the impact of resumed diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia — and that it was China that made it happen.

China has until now had a business- and energy-first approach to the Middle East, preferring to abstain from the diplomatic and security charge held, mostly unchallenged, by the United States.

Not anymore.

A Saudi-Iran rapprochement is one for the diplomatic A team. It's a major step to de-escalate the most critical fault line between the Gulf's largest and most powerful countries. It opens the door to more progress to end the war in Yemen.

The agreement followed weeklong meetings between Saudi national security adviser **Musaad Al-Aiban** and his Iranian counterpart **Ali Shamkhani**, mediated by **Wang Yi** of the Chinese Communist Party's Political Bureau. Iraq and Oman had sponsored earlier talks between Iranian and Saudi officials.

It all happens the week the US released its "Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community," in which China has the starring role as global adversary number one, and as the Chinese People's Congress gave **Xi Jinping** an unprecedented third term as president.

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