

Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China: What Brokered Peace Means for the United States and the Greater Middle East

Featuring Dr. Robert Satloff, Executive Director
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

The Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations is excited to present a program on the recent reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In March, this historic moment reestablished relations between two countries “[which have been at each other’s throats for decades.](#)” However this event is not only newsworthy for the reestablishment of relations, but also because of nation who brokered this process. While the United States historically has taken the lead in peace negotiations, this deal was unique in that the People’s Republic of China was brokering party.



As the United States has historically been the leaders of these kinds of deals, this shift has “[left heads spinning in capitals around the globe.](#)” For years the U.S. was the central actor in the Middle East, with China playing a secondary role. However, this power brokerage by the Chinese may stand as a way the PRC has pushed themselves into the fold as a power player in the region. While it was not possible for the U.S. to even broker this deal, as they have no relations with Iran, the fact that China did is a “[big deal](#)”.

Following the agreement signed in March, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iran met in Beijing in early April, marking the highest level meeting between two senior diplomats from the two countries in more than [seven years](#). In this meeting the two governments affirmed the March agreement, and [detailed the resumption of flights between Saudi Arabia and Iran, reopening of diplomatic stations, commercial exchange, and the mutual granting of visas.](#) While this strengthening of ties represents a “convergence of interests” for Saudi Arabia and Iran, it continues to be a diplomatic victory for Beijing and comes after [deepening economic relationships](#) across the region. This meeting further showed how China’s engagement has “[underscored the diminished role in the Middle East of its rival, the United States.](#)” While this is a step forward for relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, analysts still believe that the history of rivalry and distrust between the two Middle Eastern countries could “[derail the agreement.](#)”

Join the Phoenix Committee on Foreign Relations virtually to discuss what this historic agreement means for the Middle East, and the United States' strategic role in the region.

The conversation will be led by Dr. Robert Satloff, Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Dr. Satloff is an expert on Arab and Islamic politics and U.S. Middle East policy. He has written and spoken widely on the Arab-Israeli peace process, the challenge of Political Islam, and the need to revamp U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East. The author or editor of nine books and monographs, Dr. Satloff's views on Middle East issues appear frequently in major newspapers such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times. A frequent commentator on major television network news programs, talk shows, and National Public Radio, he has testified on numerous occasions to Senate and House committees concerned with U.S. Middle East policy.

Speaker

Robert Satloff is Segal Executive Director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993. In that capacity, he oversees all Institute operations and leads the organization's unparalleled team of Middle East scholars, experts and policy practitioners. He also holds the Institute's Howard P. Berkowitz Chair in U.S. Middle East Policy.

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In addition, Dr. Satloff is the creator and host of Dakhil Washington ("Inside Washington"), a news and interview program that has appeared weekly since 2005 on al-Hurra, the U.S. government-supported Arabic satellite television channel that beams throughout the Middle East. In that capacity, he is the only non-Arab to host a program on an Arab satellite channel.



Dr. Robert Satloff
Executive Director of The Washington
Institute for Near East Policy