

5. Saudi and Iranian

Why in News?

- Saudi and Iranian has recently held bilateral talks that concluded with an agreement to restore diplomatic ties which have been severed since 2016. The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated by China in Beijing.

Highlights

- The two countries plan to reopen their respective embassies in Tehran and Riyadh.
- They also vowed to respect countries' sovereignty and not interfere in internal affairs.
- They also agreed to activate a 2001 security cooperation agreement, as well as a general economy, trade and investment agreement signed in 1998.
- Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.
- Saudi Arabia has long portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation while Iran views itself as the protector of the Islam's Shiite minority
- Since US's withdrawal from Iran's Nuclear deal, Iran was blamed for a series of attacks including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019.
- Western nations and experts have blamed the attack on Iran though the latter has denied launching the attack
- Saudi Arabia and Iran – two powerful neighbours – are locked in a fierce struggle for regional dominance.
- Uprisings across the Arab world (after the Arab Spring in 2011) caused political instability throughout the region.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia exploited these upheavals to expand their influence, notably in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, further heightening mutual suspicions.
- Moreover, external powers like the US and Israel have a major role in exacerbating conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia are not directly fighting but they are engaged in a variety of proxy wars (conflicts where they support rival sides and militias) around the region.
- For Example, Houthi rebels in Yemen. These groups can acquire greater capabilities which can cause further instability in the region. Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supporting them.