

**PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S VISIT TO
RIYADH: DEEPENING OF TIES
WITH THE ARAB WORLD**

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Executive Summary

1. China's President Xi Jinping's visit to Saudi Arabia in December 2022 came on the trail of his third term as China's paramount leader at the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in late October 2022.
2. President Xi's visit to Riyadh, capital city of Saudi Arabia, is part of China's strategy to deepen relations with the developing world, amid US realignment with its allies and other like-minded partners under the Biden administration.
3. Saudi leaders' pursuit of a visible strategic relationship with China, the world's second largest economy, is part of their strategy to develop a global Saudi Arabia and expand ties with countries apart from the United States.
4. China sees Saudi Arabia as both an influential country in the Middle East and a rising power with strategic significance in a multipolar world.
5. It is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner and the largest consumer of Saudi oil and petrochemical products. Energy collaboration was the core of all discussions between Xi and his Saudi counterpart.
6. A series of non-binding bilateral commercial agreements worth up to US\$30 billion have also been signed. These agreements will doubtlessly strengthen the economic ties between Beijing and Riyadh.
7. The two countries are seeking to develop a partnership that goes beyond the traditional supplier-buyer relationship in terms of Saudi oil. Other areas of cooperation include telecommunication, cloud computing, nuclear technology, aerospace, finance, logistics and medical industries.
8. During his three-day visit to Riyadh, the Chinese president also attended the China-Arab States Summit and China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit. The

China-Arab States Summit, the first of its kind ever to be held, was attended by nearly 20 Arab leaders from the region.

9. This was China's largest and highest-level diplomatic interaction with the Arab world since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Xi's visit signals that there will be no slowing down in China's economic engagement with the world in the post-COVID-19 era.
10. The Arab states supply critical energy to power China's domestic industrial and economic development.
11. The Belt and Road Initiative has a role to play in expanding China's cooperation with Arab Gulf nations in areas covering infrastructure financing and construction, energy, finance, industrial parks, manufacturing, telecommunication technology, high-tech industry, tourism, education and cultural exchanges.
12. Beijing and Riyadh's bilateral trade while increasing, remains narrowly based. Saudi Arabia exports mostly crude oil and petrochemical products to China. Sino-Saudi Arabian defence ties remain limited in scope even with the rise in bilateral trade and the close political engagement.