

► Washington ‘may pose obstacles to pact’s implementation’

US sour grapes as Beijing brokers Saudi-Iran deal

By Xu Keyue and Wan Hengyi

Almost all the major media in the US and other countries said that the landmark agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran mediated by China to resume ties with an utter lack of US involvement can be regarded as a watershed in the Middle East, signaling the waning of Washington’s influence and China’s diplomatic philosophy, which aims to promote peace and development, being well-received across the region.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have agreed Friday to re-establish relations and reopen their embassies within two months after a meeting in Beijing, news that made headlines around the world and became the most asked question at the White House on the day – How does the US feel about China doing what the US failed to do?

While saying it “welcomed” the deal and Beijing’s efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region, Washington sought to downplay the development, underscoring that the US has also worked on de-escalation through its own deterrence and diplomacy, the VOA reported.

The deal, which came after years of grueling negotiations, was met with “sour grapes” in Washington, Russian media outlet Sputnik News pointed out in its report on Saturday.

Chinese analysts said that it is very likely that the implementation of the agreement will encounter pressure or obstacles from the US.

“Iran-Saudi Pact Is Brokered by China, Leaving US on Sidelines,” the New York Times headline read before being revised to “Chinese-Brokered Deal Upends Mideast Diplomacy and Challenges US.”

The US government is actually worried about the development, which has lit up most other powers around the world, analysts said. They believe that Washington is afraid of the rising sense of pursuing independent diplomacy in the region as it could lose its dominant role there.

Different from the US in building an alliance system to influence Middle East affairs, China has never formed a clique but has actively improved its relations with countries in the region and sought common development, said Ding Long, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

It is clear that China’s approach has been widely welcomed, said Ding, noting that the decline of US influence in the region is being caused by the US itself, not by China.

PLA launches two new Type 052D destroyers: media

By Liu Xuanzun

China reportedly launched two new Type 052D guided missile destroyers in Dalian, Northeast China’s Liaoning Province on Friday, a move analysts said will contribute to the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy’s aim to become a blue-water navy.

The two warships, believed to be the 27th and the 28th Type 052Ds ordered by the PLA Navy overall, were launched from the Dalian Shipyard, with three additional hulls of the same type still under construction in the yard, news website Wenweipo.com reported.

This new batch of Type 052D destroyers could receive major upgrades to their radar systems, Wenweipo.com said.

In August 2022, foreign media reported that the Dalian Shipyard and the Shanghai-based Jiangnan Changxing Shipyard had restarted mass production of the Type 052D destroyer, after 25 vessels of the same class had entered service with the PLA Navy.

Wei Dongxu, a Beijing-based military expert, told the Global Times that the Type 052D has proven to be a reliable destroyer with mature technologies, so it is a good choice for mass production.

According to publicly available reports, the Type 052D is equipped with an advanced active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar system dubbed the “Chinese Aegis” and a 64-cell missile vertical launch system capable of firing munitions including surface-to-air missiles and anti-ship missiles.

It is normal that during the serialized production of a type of warship, newer hulls could receive upgrades due to technological advances and user requirements, another Chinese military expert told the Global Times on Sunday, requesting anonymity.

Some previous Type 052Ds were already built with new anti-stealth radars, extended helicopter flight decks and upgraded propulsion systems, among other changes, compared with the initial ships, media reports said.

The continued production of the Type 052D shows that the PLA Navy is satisfied with its performance and needs more of these ships to build up its far-sea capabilities and safeguard the country’s sovereignty, security and development interests, analysts said.

► Rescue work



Firefighters struggle to control a fire that broke out in a 16-story building at Shahr-e-Faisal in Karachi, Pakistan on March 12, 2023. Media reported that the fire has resulted in injuries to one person.

Photo: VCG

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HK students’ first field trips to mainland set for April; over 400 schools sign up

The first field trip of Hong Kong secondary school students to the Chinese mainland, part of the compulsory Citizenship and Social Development subject for secondary school students, will set off on April 3 with about 250 students participating, the city’s education secretary said.

So far, more than 6,000 students from 60 schools have signed up to participate in the study tour to the mainland in April, Secretary for Education of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

Christine Choi Yuk-lin said, the Hong Kong government news site reported Saturday.

In addition, about 16,000 students from more than 160 schools have signed up to depart in May. More than 200 schools have signed up to depart between June and August, Choi said.

She said the field trips will have one- to three-day itineraries that are primarily aligned with the school’s curriculum, with visits and exchanges focused on connecting with learning, and activities designed to

include more active thinking and interactive elements that are believed to be in-depth.

The trips are part of HK-SAR’s education reform, as the Citizenship and Social Development subject replaced the Liberal Studies as one of the four core subjects of senior secondary education from the 2021/22 school year, and it will be included in the Diploma of Secondary Education exams starting from 2024.

Due to previous travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2023 will see

the first Hong Kong students to participate in this expedition.

The field trips are organized and fully funded by the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB), and are compulsory for secondary four to six students in Hong Kong, according to the EDB’s notice in July 2022, Hong Kong media outlet The Standard reported.

According to a notice sent by the EDB to secondary schools in February, there are 22 routes available for study tours. The themes of the trips include the history of the Communist Party

of China, the development of China’s innovative technology and the contribution of world-renowned revolutionist Sun Yat-sen.

Choi said that students can learn about the latest developments, culture and history of the country from field trips, which will be extremely helpful for learning, noting that it is appropriate to include elements of reflection and interaction in the design of activities for students.

Global Times