US-Saudi Relations

Why in news?

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- US President Donald Trump visited Riyadh on 21st May.
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- He addressed leaders from over 50 Muslim countries in Riyadh.
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What is the previous stand of US President?

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- During the American presidential campaign, **Donald Trump was particularly critical of Saudi Arabia.**
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- He attacked its treatment of gays and women and slammed the Washington establishment for taking “their money”.
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- He had also vowed to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. and, upon becoming President, actually issued an executive order banning people from seven Muslim-majority countries from coming to the country.
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What is recent stand of the president?

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- By **choosing Saudi Arabia as his first overseas destination** as President, Mr. Trump has signalled that his administration will retain the Washington establishment line towards West Asia.
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- He called for unity in fighting terrorism and **said “Islam is peace”.**
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- He noted Saudi Arabia’s attempts at “empowering women”.

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- He signed a $110 billion arms agreement with the Saudis.
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- **His administration will re-endorse Saudi Arabia, along with Israel,** as a key pillar of America's West Asia policy and ignore criticism of Riyadh's human rights violations at home and interventions abroad.
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- America will also supply its rich Arab allies advanced weapons: the defence industry at home will obviously benefit from such deals, creating more jobs.
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What is the way forward?

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- Despite reservations from Saudi Arabia and Israel, his administration went ahead with the Iran nuclear deal.
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- The logical next step of the nuclear deal should be bettering ties between Washington and Tehran.
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- The major cause of instability in West Asia is not just Iran, but also **the cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.**
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- If Mr. Trump wants to be peacemaker and make West Asia a more secure place, he has to reach out to both sides and appeal to them to dial down the tensions that have already spilled into Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq.
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- The Saudi petro- dollar muscle is hard to resist for an American President desperate to create more jobs at home.
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- But merely supplying weapons to Riyadh and its allies will not bring peace to West Asia, or help defeat terrorism.
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Source: The Hindu

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