

Khalid bin Salman's visit to Tehran affirms Iran's regional power

ANALYSIS

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The visit of Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud to Iran and his meeting with Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has reshuffled the geopolitical deck in West Asia, much like the 2023 Beijing Agreement. This visit carries implications and signals that starkly contradict recent media narratives portraying Iran and its allied Axis of Resistance as weakened. Instead, it reaffirms Iran's enduring regional clout while highlighting Saudi Arabia's desire for strategic hedging in a volatile environment. It also sends a clear message to global powers: regional states are increasingly inclined to collaborate and align their interests. Whether motivated by fear of war, anticipation of a US-Iran deal, or a sober reassessment of Iran's regional role, this high-level engagement reflects the Saudi leadership's prioritization of pragmatism and national/regional interests above all else in foreign relations. Should bilateral ties continue on this upward trajectory, such interactions could herald a new era of multipolar equilibrium benefiting the region's nations and peoples.

According to Alkhanadeq, Muhammad Shams, an Iran affairs expert, explained that there is no doubt that the Saudi defense minister's visit to Tehran — accompanied by a high-ranking delegation and his meetings with Ayatollah Khamenei and Iran's top military and political leaders — significantly affirms Iran's status as a regional power. This dialogue between influential actors comes at a critical juncture, "with the region facing heightened sensitivities and Iran confronting military threats from the United States and Israel."

Shams emphasized the visit's role in dispelling rumors about Iran's diminished strength, stating that this trip and its



accompanying meetings prove Iran's resilience. Contrary to hostile media claims that Iran weakened after the Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023, the reality is that Iran has grown stronger, and influential regional powers now seek closer ties with it. The primary loser here is the Israeli regime. The only party aggrieved or enraged by this visit is the Zionists. Cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia — two major regional powers — will positively impact regional stability while undermining Israel's interests:

First: Framework and significance — Meeting with Iran's Leader

A meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei is an honor reserved for the highest-ranking foreign officials, with exceptions made only for leaders of regional resistance groups and movements. Ayatollah Khamenei embodies the Islamic Revolution and leads the Axis of Resistance, making this encounter particularly significant for bilateral relations.

A closer look at the significance of this meeting for the relations between the two countries is evident, as the Saudi defense minister conveyed a message from his father, King Salman, to

Ayatollah Khamenei. The Leader stressed that stronger Iran-Saudi relations benefit both nations, though he acknowledged external adversarial forces seek to obstruct this progress.

"We believe that the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia will be beneficial for both countries and the two countries can complement each other. It is much better for brothers in the region to cooperate and help each other than to rely on others," the leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized that the expansion of relations between the two countries has enemies. "These hostile motives must be overcome, and we are ready for this," he said.

Referring to some of Iran's advancements, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The Islamic Republic is ready to help Saudi Arabia in these areas."

The Saudi defense minister expressed great satisfaction with the meeting, saying, "I have come to Tehran with the agenda of expanding relations with Iran and cooperation in all fields."

"And we hope that the constructive talks will provide for stronger relations between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran than in the past," he added.

This reaffirms that Saudi officials view Iran — despite years of sanctions and isolationist campaigns — not merely as relevant but as indispensable to regional stability. If weakness breeds isolation, strength attracts others to one's doorstep. Iran's sustained influence in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, alongside its ties to resistance movements, has solidified its position as a pivotal regional actor. Thus, Khalid bin Salman's visit validates what many in the region now acknowledge, Engaging Iran is not merely a priority — it is a necessity.

Second: A message to Washington

As one of the pillars of US hegemony in the Persian Gulf and the broader region, Saudi Arabia may be using this visit to signal to Washington that it does not seek war with Iran — given the repercussions such a conflict would have on the Kingdom and regional stability. Instead, Riyadh prefers to pursue a path of cooperation that serves shared interests.

This visit could also be interpreted as a preemptive Saudi maneuver. Sensing the looming possibility of a US-Iran agreement — which would carry significant regional consequences

— Riyadh aims to avoid being sidelined. By strengthening ties with Iran before Washington formalizes any accord, Saudi Arabia positions itself to integrate into future arrangements, ensuring its security and economic interests are accounted for.

Third: Implications for Arab states

Khalid bin Salman's visit will likely resonate across the region, particularly among Arab states striving to improve relations with Iran. The trip serves as a green light for deeper engagement with Tehran.

The visit will also impact Arab nations closely aligned with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, such as Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Consequently, the coming period may witness bilateral cooperation that helps halt aggression against Gaza and ushers in an era of restored calm and stability for the region. Undoubtedly, the Zionist regime will emerge as the primary loser in such developments. It remains the sole party invested in perpetuating regional instability and chaos, which enables its expansionist occupation agenda.

The article first appeared in Persian on ISNA.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman in Tehran, on April 17, 2025.
● IRNA



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