

# Riyadh's view on Iran-US talks 'positive': Envoy

## INTERVIEW

**Khalid bin Salman Al Saud, the Saudi defense minister, arrived in Tehran on Thursday, heading a high-ranking delegation. This rare visit immediately drew the attention of regional and international media. Beyond Khalid bin Salman's customary meetings with his Iranian counterpart and the president, his meeting with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution and the delivery of a message from the King of Saudi Arabia were interpreted as the beginning of a new chapter in Tehran-Riyadh relations. The timing of this visit — coinciding with ongoing indirect negotiations between Iran and the US to lift sanctions and the efforts of Islamic countries to unite in condemning Israel's relentless attacks on Gaza — signals the emergence of the political will in Iran and Saudi Arabia to focus on securing shared interests. Alireza Enayati, a seasoned diplomat and Iran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, sat down with IRNA to talk about the significance of Khalid bin Salman's visit to Tehran, its overt and covert messages, the reasons behind Tehran and Riyadh's focus on comprehensive relations development, the prospects of this relationship amid efforts to ease Iran-West tensions, and the opportunity for regional countries to reduce tensions with Tehran. The text of the key parts of the interview follows.**

**IRNA:** It seems Tehran and Riyadh are witnessing a new chapter in bilateral relations — one where shared interests and countering common threats have replaced mutual threat perceptions. In brief, what factors, in your view as someone closely following the comprehensive development of relations, have led to this new chapter? Many wonder what motivations have brought the two countries onto the path of bilateral relations development after years of tension.

**ENAYATI:** It is true that both countries have decided to embark on a new phase of ties, moving away from a past marked by stagnated or severed relations and building on cooperation and synergy. This has been clearly evident over the past two years, since March 2023. Of course, the 2000s also saw a flourishing period in Iran-Saudi relations, beginning around 1997 and lasting nearly a decade. Currently, we may be witnessing unparalleled progress in some indicators.



It is entirely accurate that the two countries have stepped into a new era of cooperation, some aspects of which are unprecedented. As for why this has happened, the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy has always been based on expanding relations with neighbors, repeatedly stating that its arms are open for cooperation and closer ties with regional countries. This was explicitly highlighted during the previous Iranian government as a principle under the framework of good neighborliness and neighborhood policy. The current government has also emphasized this at various stages. That is why prioritizing neighbors in foreign policy has come to fruition. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, with a fresh perspective on regional issues and within the framework of expanding neighborly relations, has prioritized economic and developmental outlooks. This shared understanding has led Iran and Saudi Arabia to move forward with expanding relations, paving the way for smoother ties.

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**We witnessed the rare visit of Saudi Arabia's defense minister to Tehran and meetings indicating a different relationship between the two countries. How do you view his meeting with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution? What do you think this meeting's message will be for the region and beyond, especially for the Islamic world amid heightened tensions due to Israel's crimes in Gaza?**

This visit was highly significant. This is actually the Saudi defense minister's second such visit; in 1999, Prince Sultan traveled to Iran, signing an air transport agreement that led to direct



flights between the two countries. Recently, this agreement was revived, with direct flights to Mashhad resuming months ago. In any case, Prince Khalid bin Salman's visit and meetings with top Iranian officials, especially the Leader, can set the stage for broader and elevated relations. During these meetings, the Saudi defense minister learned of Iran's resolve to expand international relations. God willing, this exchange of views and this visit — one of the most important bilateral trips in the past two years — will translate into actionable steps, furthering Iran-Saudi relations. Undoubtedly, amid regional turmoil and Israel's ongoing attacks on Gaza, Iran-Saudi cooperation carries greater significance than ever. Within the OIC framework, several meetings have been held in Saudi Arabia at Iran's request, with both countries holding continuous consultations in support of Palestine.

**Our relations with Saudi Arabia have seen many ups and downs, making public concern about the sustainability of this new chapter — and the risk of third-party interference — somewhat natural. What political or economic factors could deepen these ties today,**



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**and what threats must be cautiously managed?**

Yes, Iran-Saudi relations have indeed had ups and downs. We once referred to a "golden era" from 1997 to 2007, followed by two ruptures. While fluctuations are normal, Iran's policy — especially toward neighbors like Saudi Arabia — is to expand and strengthen relations.

We are on the right track, and statements by Iranian officials, along with the Foreign Ministry's actions, reflect unwavering commitment to this relationship. Both nations have repeatedly expressed their desire to deepen ties, institutionalizing brotherly relations to minimize vulnerabilities.

One way to shore up relations is to broaden them beyond the capitals and political-military spheres, making them people-centric through economic, cultural, and tourism exchanges. A stable relationship requires decisions at the top to trickle down, but the base and middle must also buy into these ties for institutionalized progress.

**Media speculation suggests Riyadh seeks a greater role in easing US-Iran tensions, particularly regarding JCPOA revival or a similar deal. Do you confirm this? How do you assess Riyadh's view of these talks?**

Such speculation exists, but beyond evaluating it, we see Saudi Arabia's genuine efforts to foster peace, stability, and regional order.

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Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman Al Saud (L) meets with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 2025.

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al countries aim to resolve lingering disputes, and Saudi Arabia's constructive stance aligns and helps with this.

**Will we soon see the president visit Saudi Arabia?**

I have no information on the president's travel plans, but high-level visits can yield significant fruits and further expand relations. We've taken many steps, though major decisions are still needed.

**Is Iran pursuing past proposals for a regional security pact, particularly among Persian Gulf states? Is the timing ripe?**

Beyond bilateral ties, which we truly regard as the first step, we may have to start considering multilateral cooperation. Iran and Saudi Arabia can later explore regional collaboration, which would undoubtedly bring economic, trade, and social benefits.

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What is referred to as the "Regional New Order" must be built by regional nations, free from external interference. Our eight nations must move together, rendering futile any misguided Israeli attempts to gain a regional foothold.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) meets with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, in the city of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on March 7, 2025.

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