

ise 2 and Israel's subsequent airstrike, Iran's foreign policy shifted focus to explaining the rationale behind the operation and building consensus against Israel's air aggression. With Trump's arrival in the White House and the restoration of the maximum pressure campaign and threats against Iran, the Islamic Republic announced a policy of no negotiations or dialogue with the

US government. However, as Trump's approach began to shift, so too did the Foreign Ministry's stance, making it clear that "anyone who talks to Iran in any language will get a response in kind." From early March, when Trump sent a relatively rational letter to Iran, Tehran chose to offer a diplomatic opening — but on its own terms. The letter was answered, but only via a media-

tor chosen by Tehran. Afterward, Trump again pushed for talks with Iran. This time, Tehran turned down direct negotiations under pressure and threat, declaring that diplomacy would be limited to indirect talks; Washington signed off on this, and Steve Witkoff, the US president's special envoy, and Araghchi held indirect negotiations brokered by Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi.

Iran's foreign policy doctrine, anchored in the three core principles of dignity, wisdom, and expediency, aims to make the most of its capabilities and global opportunities to look after the country's national interests. Accordingly, in the new round of talks, Iran will decide how to respond to the US from a rational standpoint, weighing up America's next steps and adjusting its ac-

tions to every signal received. With this approach, Iran's foreign policy has not put all its eggs in the American basket and will cement its future relations with partners and neighbors, whether an agreement with the US is reached or not.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

Small steps, but Iran wants giant leap

International Desk
P E R S P E C T I V E

On Saturday, April 26, the third round of indirect negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States took place in Muscat, the capital of Oman, with the participation of expert and technical delegations. The meeting, held in a serious and precise atmosphere, delved into the disputed details between the two sides and managed to set the stage for further steps on the path of diplomacy. Though these talks were still conducted indirectly, with Omani officials mediating, they carried signs of progress — signs that have revived hopes for a return to the path of agreement and taking practical steps toward lifting the sanctions.

Moving beyond generalities

Unlike the initial stages, the third round of negotiations moved to a more specialized level. The discussions went beyond broad statements and focused on a more detailed examination of key issues — issues that have remained contentious in recent months. The tone of the talks suggests that both sides, acknowledging each other's sensitivities, have tried to adopt a realistic approach toward their differences and take steps toward finding practical solutions. This time, Iranian experts and diplomats, with a precise approach based on national interests and the country's principled policies, stressed Iran's core demand: the lifting of illegal sanctions and the US returning to the path of international commitments.

Core demand

The Islamic Republic of Iran once again stood firm on its principled position: any agreement is meaningless without the real, effective, and verifiable lifting of sanctions. The memory of the US unilaterally pulling out of the previous deal (JCPOA) in past years remains fresh in the minds of the Iranian people — a bitter experience that imposed significant political, economic, and social costs on Iran. In this round of talks, Iran pointed out that a return to the agreement would only make sense if the US not only calls off the sanctions but also provides practical guarantees to prevent a repetition of past betrayals. Naturally, without credible guarantees, trust-building will remain difficult.

Path still requires persistence

According to the assessments of experts, this round of talks yielded more progress than previous sessions, and it can be said that a step forward was taken. The atmosphere of the talks showed a willingness to keep up the dialogue, with both sides coming to the conclusion that diplomacy remains the best and least costly solution to their disputes. However, it must be acknowledged realistically that the path to a final agreement still requires sustained consultations, patience, precision, and adherence to principles. In diplomatic negotiations, gradual progress based on goodwill matters more than anything else.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (sitting-L) holds a consultation session with the Iranian delegation in Oman. ● MEHR

Smart mediation

Oman's role in this process was once again highlighted. Muscat, with its long-standing policy of building communication bridges, provided a reliable platform for sensitive talks. The Omanis, maintaining neutrality and employing their diplomacy, which avoids fanfare, kept the negotiations free from tension and enabled the exchange of precise messages. Historical experience has shown that regional diplomacy and the role of neutral mediators can help break deadlocks and facilitate understanding. Oman's active presence in this process carries significant value that must be appreciated.

Logical principles have to be key

What matters more at this stage is the continuation of talks based on clear and logical principles. The Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently demonstrated its commitment to responsible and rational negotiations — ones in which national dignity, wisdom, and interests are upheld. At the same time, past experience has clearly proven that trusting Western parties — especially the US — without receiving practical guarantees is a mistake. If an agreement is to be reached, it must be sustainable in practice and must safeguard the legitimate interests of the Iranian people. Iran has once again stressed that playing for time and wasting opportunities benefits neither side. Any delay in lifting the sanctions will impose greater costs on the international community and further limit diplomatic opportunities.

Iran's clear message

Iran's message in Muscat was clear: if the US is ready to return to the path of rationality and responsibility, it must demonstrate this readiness in practice. The real lifting of sanctions, the provision of credible guarantees, and the abandonment of the policies of applying pressure and making threats are obvious prerequisites for reaching a lasting agreement. By reiterating its principled stance, Iran

has declared that it remains committed to diplomacy — but this commitment will not be one-sided. The other side must also prove its goodwill through action.

Global test for US

The third round of talks in Muscat took place as the international community closely followed the discussions. Many countries, particularly in the Middle East, welcome an agreement that could lead to greater stability and security. Yet now, the ball is in the US court. Is Washington ready to learn from past failed experiences and adopt a different approach? Or will it stick to misguided sanction policies and maximum pressure? The answer to this question will not only determine the fate of the current negotiations but also influence the future of regional relations and even some international equations.

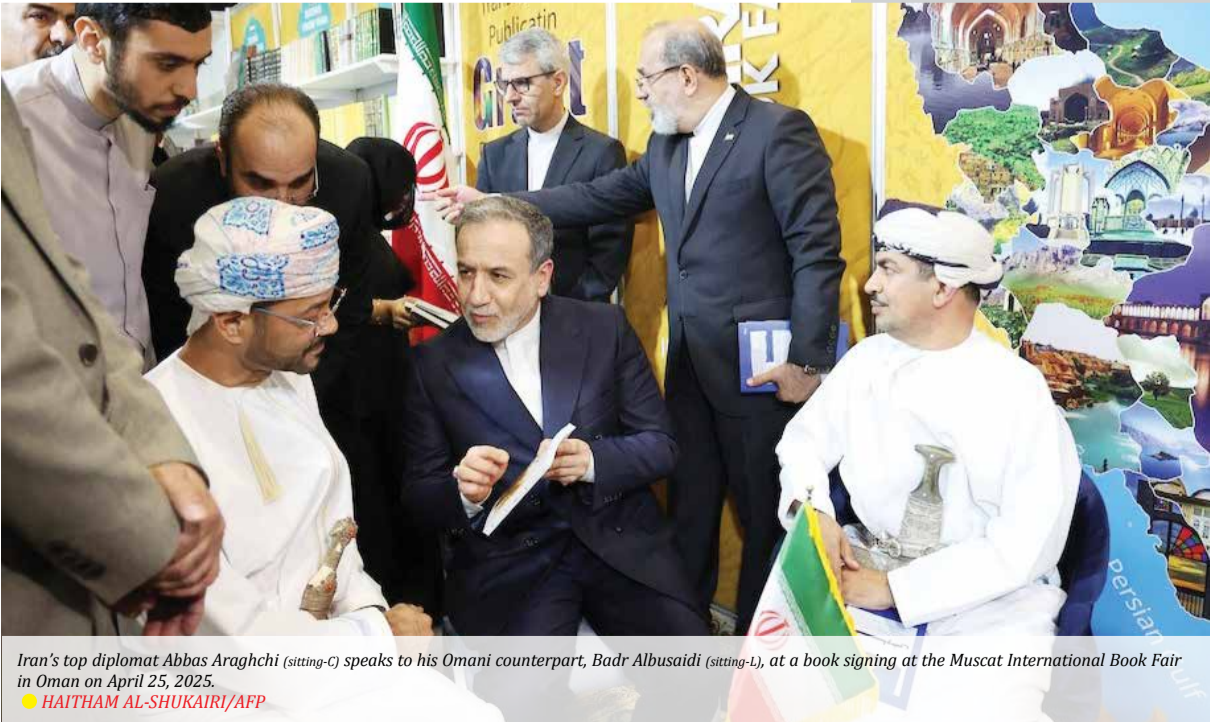
Small steps, big hopes

The third round of Muscat talks showed

that while differences persist, there is a will to move forward. The steps taken today, however small and gradual, could pave the way for major changes in the future. Ultimately, the success of these negotiations depends on the diplomats' wisdom, the experts' precision, the parties' goodwill, and respect for the legitimate interests of nations. As it has repeatedly stated, the Islamic Republic of Iran is prepared to keep up the diplomatic path until a just, honorable, and lasting agreement is reached — one in which the dignity of the Iranian people is preserved, unjust sanctions are lifted, and the bitter experience of past betrayals is not repeated. Now, we must wait and see whether, in the coming months, this determination to reach a win-win agreement will pay off — an agreement that can only be achieved through genuine adherence to commitments and respect for the logic of dialogue.

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Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi (sitting-C) speaks to his Omani counterpart, Badr Albusaidi (sitting-L), at a book signing at the Muscat International Book Fair in Oman on April 25, 2025. ● HAITHAM AL-SHUKAIRI/AFP