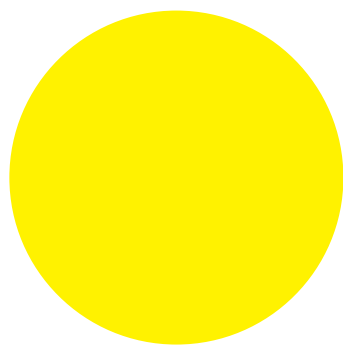


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# Iran Daily

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### President pledges staunch support for domestic industry, production

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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting with a group of political activists of Qazvin while visiting the city on November 20, 2025.  
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### Change of mediator won't break deadlock between Iran, US

INTERVIEW  
EXCLUSIVE



Talks between Iran and the United States have traditionally taken shape either through third-party mediation or within multilateral frameworks. Now, with discussions after the 12-day war waged by Israel against Iran hitting a stalemate and former mediators losing their ability to move the needle, Saudi Arabia appears to be stepping in as a new player. The Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman has recently told US President Donald Trump that Riyadh stands ready to help facilitate dialogue between Tehran and Washington. Iran, however, has stressed that its communication channels with the US still run through its traditional mediators, Oman and Qatar. Unlike its predecessors, Saudi Arabia lacks balanced relations with both Tehran and Washington, a gap that inevitably casts a shadow over its potential role. International affairs analyst Abbas Aslani told Iran Daily that although the rise of a new mediator may look promising, it cannot play the savior given the fundamental rifts between Tehran and Washington.

**IRAN DAILY: What capacities and limitations do Riyadh have in acting as a mediator, and how effective could its role be?**

**ASLANI:** Saudi Arabia, as a heavyweight regional actor with ties to various influential states and major powers, does have a degree of potential to take on a mediating role. Its close relationship with the United States, highlighted by the recent meeting between bin Salman and Trump, also adds to that capacity. Beyond this, Riyadh's considerable economic resources could, in theory, provide an additional lever in exploring such a role.

But major limitations also come into play, creating real challenges. First, Saudi Arabia is an exceptionally close partner of the United States. During the crown prince's recent trip to Washington, it was even stated that Saudi Arabia is a major "non-NATO ally" of the US. This means the balance in Riyadh's foreign relations tilts heavily toward Washington, and such closeness may skew any mediation process.

Another structural obstacle arises from the long-standing regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Despite recent improvements, the two countries have traditionally competed over various regional issues. This raises an obvious question: can a country viewed, at least to some extent, as a rival truly step into the role of mediator?

Additional concerns include issues like the "Abraham Accords," which Iran views with sensitivity and which could further complicate the mediation landscape. Overall, the scales are anything but balanced. Riyadh's alignment with Washington remains too pronounced to allow for an impartial process.

Countries like Oman and Qatar, by contrast, have a track record of mediation. Oman, in particular, has been relatively successful at times, and Qatar has also played limited mediating roles in certain periods. Even if such efforts fail, they do not damage Tehran's relations with those capitals. Saudi Arabia, however, lacks this historical foundation. Moreover, although Saudi Arabia has economic strength, Iran-Saudi ties have historically centered more on regional matters and issues such as the Hajj. Even before the 1979 Revolution, bilateral trade never carried significant weight, meaning Riyadh has little economic leverage to draw on in a mediation role.



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## Trump-MBS deal could disrupt Mideast balance of power



By Nader Entessar  
International relations expert

OPINION

In the recent meeting between Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and US President Donald Trump in Washington, several agreements were reached, including a one-trillion-dollar investment by Saudi Arabia in the United States, the sale of F-35 fighter jets to Riyadh, a defense pact between the two countries, and talks regarding the normalization of Saudi-Israeli relations. These agreements signal the deep-

ening of political, security and economic ties between Washington and Riyadh, and they have the potential to reshape the balance of power in the Middle East.

However, although bin Salman expressed readiness to mediate between Tehran and Washington, there was little indication that Iran's red lines had been taken into account.

Saudi Arabia has long placed the strengthening of security cooperation with the US at the top of its priorities, and Iran's red lines matter only insofar as they do not clash with the kingdom's interests, particularly its security ones.

What Saudi Arabia prioritizes is reinforcing cooperation with the United States to position its capital as the region's leading power. If the promises Trump made to bin Salman are implemented not remain only at the level of words, they will have a negative impact on Iran's balance of power in the Middle East. This comes at a time when relations between Tehran and Washington, despite constant fluctuation and the difficulty of predicting their future, can be described as being at their lowest point since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The 12-day war launched by Israel against Iran in June, which the United

States also joined, has effectively disrupted the negotiation process, and a return to diplomacy now appears almost unlikely.

The only circumstances under which such a process could succeed would be if both sides believed in it. In Trump's political culture, diplomacy has been turned into an instrument of bullying, threats and coarse language. Within such a framework, a return to what is erroneously labelled diplomacy today — and which is far removed from classical diplomacy — would only be achievable through the capitulation of one side, namely Iran.

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