



RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ARAB COUNTRIES OF THE PERSIAN GULF AND  
THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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**Annotation:** *In this article, we can take information about relations between the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and the Islamic Republic of Iran.*

**Key words:** *Persian Gulf, islamic Republic, peaceful co-existence, ongoing, influence.*

Arab League–Iran relations refer to the political, economic, and cultural ties between the League of Arab States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The former is a regional organization composed of 22 Arab states in MENA with a combined majority of Sunni Muslims, whereas the latter is a country in Western Asia with a majority of Shia Muslims. Within the Middle East, historical conflicts have always coloured the perception of Iran by its neighbouring Arab countries, with the two sides' rotating between peaceful co-existence and open conflict from time to time. In the present day, the most prominent factor influencing the relationship between the Arab League and Iran is the ongoing Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, which began shortly after the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

After the Iranian Revolution the foreign policy of Iran changed dramatically. In many cases diplomatically inimical Arab nations became more cooperative with Iran, while some formerly supportive nations decreased their support.

Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the revolution, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and its first Supreme Leader, declared that "The concept of monarchy totally contradicts Islam." Therefore, Arab leaders developed a hostile attitude towards the Islamic Republic of Iran. Khomeini's idea of supporting the mustazafeen (those who are wronged or oppressed) – as opposed to the mustakbareen (those who are arrogant) – led to many problems with neighboring countries due to some Arab regimes being judged by Iranian jurists to be among the mustakbareen. Ayatollah Khomeini was open about his intention to export the revolution to other parts of the Muslim world. Thus, during the early 1980s, Iran was isolated regionally and internationally. This diplomatic and economic isolation intensified during the Iran–Iraq War in which almost all neighboring Arab states, except Syria, supported Iraq logistically and economically. According to some observers, Saddam Hussein fought on behalf of other Arab states that viewed Iran as a potential threat to their stability. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the revolutionary zeal cooled, and a degree of pragmatism was adopted by Iranian policy makers. During the presidency of Akbar Hashemi and Mohammad Khatami, Iranian foreign policy switched to reducing international tensions and Iran tried to normalize its relations with its Arab neighbors. When the United States attacked Iraq in the Gulf War of the early 1990s, it unintentionally promoted Iran's political influence in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Washington, Riyadh Tango in Front of Iran". Archived from the original on 15 August 2020.



Since the 2000s, the situation has changed completely. The most significant factor was the United States administration's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, which led to the fall of Saddam, a Ba'athist Leader with pan-Arab sympathies who was determined to balance Shi'a Iran's regional influence. With the deposition of Saddam,[2] Iran found a major obstacle to its expansion removed. This gave Iran a good chance to emerge as a major player in the Middle East. As Richard Haass stated in 2006, "Iran will be one of the two most powerful states in the region. ... The influence of Iran and groups associated with it has been reinforced." [3] Iran could find allies in Arab world comprising Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait and Iraq. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and United Arab Emirates united against Iran, with support from the United States. Other Arab countries continued to have normal relations with Iran.

Another aspect of tension between Iran and Arab countries has been sectarianism. During the early days of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini endeavored to bridge the gap between Shias and Sunnis by forbidding criticizing the Caliphs who preceded Ali. He also declared it permissible for Shiites to pray behind Sunni imams. However, the influence of Iran on Shiite communities outside its borders and the territorial disputes with Arab neighbors among other issues remain sources of tension in Arab-Iranian relations.

Diplomatic cables leaked in 2010 revealed Arab leaders singled out Iran as the greatest threat to regional stability, yet refuse to speak publicly, telling US diplomats in private, they would face domestic troubles if they were seen as siding with the West against a Muslim country.[5] The cables showed that Saudi Arabia and Bahrain supported a military attack against Iran aimed to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

On 4 January 2016, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain severed diplomatic ties with Iran. Saudi Arabia cited attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran following predominantly Sunni Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shiite cleric. Bahrain cited Iran's "blatant and dangerous interference" in Bahrain and other Arab countries. Following the Iranian Revolution, in 1981 Algeria's role was instrumental in the release of the US diplomatic hostages held in Iran.[8] In 1998, Iran became increasingly critical of Algeria's heavy handed security forces, especially during several massacres during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and led efforts to pressure Algeria to act more humanely through the international community. Algeria in turn blamed Iran for the massacre.

After a decade, in early September 2000, diplomatic and trade relations between Algeria and Iran were re-established in a decision made by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika on the sidelines of the United Nations Millennium Summit. The resumption of relations paved the way for number of agreements "on bilateral cooperation in the areas of judicial affairs, finance, industry, and air transport". Relations continued to strengthen rapidly after that to the extent that in 2002 Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani and Algerian Joint Chief of Staff Muhamed al-Imari Wednesday signed an agreement for military and technical cooperation in Iran.[13] In the recent 2006 UN vote on Iran's nuclear program, Algeria abstained from voting.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Tyler, Patrick E. (10 April 2003). "U.S. Forces Take Control of Baghdad". The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331. Retrieved 24 October 2023.



## Bahrain

### Bahrain–Iran relations

Iran had a historic claim to Bahrain until March 1970 when Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi abandoned the claim as a result of secret Anglo-Iranian negotiations.[15] Following this realignment of policy, the two countries signed a demarcation agreement in 1970. Following the Iranian Revolution, Bahraini Shia fundamentalists in 1981 orchestrated a failed coup attempt under the auspices of a front organization, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain. The coup would have installed a Shia cleric exiled in Iran, Hujjat al-Islam Hādī al-Mudarrisī, as supreme leader heading a theocratic government. The Bahraini Government unofficially regarded the coup as Iran attempting to overthrow their Sunni government. Iran denied all knowledge saying the fundamentalists were inspired by the Iranian revolution but had received no support from Iran. Fearful of a recurrence, the episode caused Bahrain to crack down on its Shia population putting thousands into jail and further souring relations with Shia Iran. Recently[when?] the countries are beginning to enjoy closer relations again and have engaged in many joint economic ventures.[citation needed] Iran has been severely critical of Bahrain hosting the US navy Fifth Fleet within the Persian Gulf. In August 2015, Bahraini authorities announced arresting of five members of a terrorist group which was linked to at least one bombing attack in Bahrain[17] and was believed to accept aid and training from Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran-based Revolutionary Guards. On 4 January 2016, Bahrain severed diplomatic relations with Iran, citing Iran's "blatant and dangerous interference" in Bahrain and other Arab countries. This directly followed Saudi Arabia's dissolution of diplomatic ties with Iran. Khatami met with the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Geneva. Khatami openly invited Mubarak to Iran, but Mubarak refused to make such a trip or normalize relations until all "public tributes" to Islambouli were "erased". In early 2004, Iran agreed to change the offending street name to Muhammad al-Durrah, a 12-year-old Palestinian boy.

In 2010, WikiLeaks leaked diplomatic cables which revealed that Mubarak expressed animosity toward Iran in private meetings, saying the Iranian leaders are "big, fat liars", and that Iran's backing of terrorism is "well-known". According to one American report, Mubarak views Iran as the primary long-term challenge facing Egypt, and an Egyptian official said that Iran is running agents inside Egypt in an effort to subvert the Egyptian regime.

## Iraq

Iran–Iraq relations. On 17 September 1980, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran settled down, Iraq under Saddam Hussein declared the previous settlement of border disputes with Iran null and void. Several days later on 22 September, Iraq invaded Iran in the Iran–Iraq War. Lasting until 1988, the brutal war killed over one million people and critically soured Arab–Iranian relations. In Iraq, the conflict was continually presented in a historical context as Arab versus Persian. The impact of the war was devastating to relations in the region; general Arab support for Iraq and a fear of Shia Muslims led to many disputes



between Iran and the other Persian Gulf states. The war was a primary cause for the rise of anti-Arabism within Iran, which had until then been largely insignificant. The war ended with an UN-sponsored cease-fire.<sup>16</sup>

#### Jordan

Iran–Jordan relations. King Abdullah II of Jordan and President Mohammad Khatami, Tehran, 2 September 2003.

In 1980, Iran cut all ties with Jordan after the outbreak of Iran–Iraq War. Relations between the two nations resumed in 1991. In September 2000, King Abdullah met with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on the sidelines of the Millennium Summit in New York.[citation needed] Shortly thereafter, trade between Jordan and Iran increased dramatically. According to figures from Jordan's Central Bank, "trade between Jordan and Iran reached \$20 million in 2001, up some 46 percent on the previous year's \$13.7 million." On 2 and 3 September 2003, King Abdullah II visited Tehran, making him the first Jordanian king to visit "Tehran since the launching of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979".

#### Kuwait

Kuwait and Iran share close diplomatic, economic, and military ties, which is unusual for a Sunni Arab state and even more unusual for a U.S. ally even if it is sporadic. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Kuwaiti Prime Minister then Sabah Al-Sabah (the future Emir of Kuwait) visited Iran and congratulated the Iranian Revolution. However, this quickly turned sour when Kuwait supported Iraq on its war against Iran, and there had been no official relations between Kuwait and Iran for nearly 10 years after it started to fear about the threat from the legacy of Iranian Revolution. In 1990, following the Gulf War, Iraqi–Kuwaiti relations suffered bitterly and consequently Kuwaiti–Iranian relations began to greatly improve and flourish. Bilateral relations were gradually strengthened, partly because Iran and Kuwait were both invaded by Iraq and with exchanges of Iranian and Kuwaiti political and economic delegations leading to the signing of several economic and trade agreements. In February 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Kuwait opening a new chapter in relations between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> The well reported visit was the first to Kuwait by a high-ranking Iranian official in 27 years. And we know some cities as these. If we write down these, we can't stop our article.

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