

Iranian Policies on Arabian Gulf and Regional Security from the 1979 Revolution to the 2026 War

Dr. Ashraf Mohammed Keshk – Director of the International and Strategic
Studies Program, Derasat Center

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LAUNCH OF AN IRANIAN MISSILE DURING AN ANNUAL EXERCISE IN IRAN NEAR THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ, 2022

Many parts of the world are described as “regions,” consisting of geographically contiguous states despite differences in political systems or relative size. Geography remains the primary binding factor. In numerous cases, these states have developed enduring institutional frameworks for cooperation, and disparities in wealth, scale, or governance have not necessarily generated conflict; rather, geographic proximity has encouraged integration, as illustrated by ASEAN, the European Union, and the African Union.

In contrast, GCC–Iranian relations have been characterized by persistent tension from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 through the war of 2026. This pattern reflects Iranian policies that have instrumentalized geography in a destabilizing manner, alongside the adoption of coercive strategies aimed at asserting dominance over the Arabian Gulf. Such policies were evident in the prolonged Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988) and culminated more recently in direct military confrontations with the United States and Israel in June 2025 and February 2026.

This paper examines Iranian policy since 1979, arguing that the current war did not generate these adversarial dynamics but rather brought into sharper relief their underlying logic, strategic objectives, and far-reaching consequences. These effects extend beyond the Arabian Gulf, posing risks to global energy security and the international economy, particularly through disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

EXPORTING THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION SINCE 1979: A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE ARABIAN GULF STATES

While relations between states typically combine elements of cooperation and conflict, an ideal or stable equilibrium in international politics rarely exists. State interests evolve over time and require continuous strategic adjustment to preserve them. In most cases, conflicts arise over borders, resources, or roles—issues that, while contentious, can often be managed or contained.

By contrast, the conflict between Iran and the Arabian Gulf states is rooted less in such conventional disputes than in Iran's pursuit of regional dominance and enduring influence. In this context, Iranian policy has largely operated according to a zero-sum logic, whereby the gains of one party are perceived as losses for the other. The result has been a persistent condition of insecurity across the region[1].

This dynamic is particularly evident in the threat posed by the Iranian Revolution to the security of the Arabian Gulf states. Ayatollah Khomeini, the revolution's Supreme Leader, sought to establish a legal and political framework through which both state and society would be governed according to a new religious ideology, replacing the constitutional order in place since 1906.

A key dispute emerged between Khomeini and then-Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, who advocated for the establishment of either a democratic state or an Islamic democratic system. Khomeini, however, prevailed, declaring: "It will be the Islamic Republic, and there is no need to add any word beside Islam, as it includes everything." The issue extended beyond terminology to the institutionalization of Wilayat al-Faqih within the post-revolutionary constitution, alongside the extensive powers vested in the Supreme Leader. Together, these elements entrenched a distinctly ideological and religious model of governance[2].

The Iranian Revolution posed a direct threat to the Arabian Gulf states for three principal reasons. First, the promotion of Islamic identity, as articulated in Khomeini's vision, was conceived as transcending geographical boundaries. This outward-looking orientation is reflected in the Iranian Constitution itself: Article 152, which defines the principles of foreign policy, affirms the commitment to "defending the rights of all Muslims," while Article 154 emphasizes "supporting the just struggle of the oppressed against the arrogant anywhere in the world." [3] These provisions stand in tension with the principles of good neighborliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of states, and respect for sovereignty and independence as enshrined in the United Nations Charter and broader international law.

The second reason lies in Iran's explicit commitment to exporting the revolution beyond its borders. Khomeini articulated this clearly on the first anniversary of the , stating: "We are working to export our revolution to different parts of the world," referring to the adoption of programs and policies designed to extend ideological and political influence into other societies[4]. The Arabian Gulf states became the primary and most immediate arena for the export of this revolutionary project, as reflected in a range of political, ideological, and security indicators.

The third reason is that the nature of the conflict is not a conventional interstate dispute over specific issues that can be negotiated or resolved; rather, it carries an ideological and religious dimension. Iran has historically viewed itself as a "Shiite island" in a "Sunni ocean," a perception that has shaped its regional outlook and reinforced sectarian framing in its approach to Arabian Gulf security.

The concept of "revolutionary Iran," rather than "state Iran," has remained a defining principle of Iranian foreign policy, contributing to a sustained pattern of regional tension. In this framework, the Arabian Gulf has functioned as the primary arena for the projection and export of the revolutionary project[5]. These policies have varied according to the political elites governing Iran, giving rise to two main currents: conservatives and reformists. However, the objective of exporting the revolution has remained a constant feature of Iranian foreign policy, while its expression has shifted depending on which current was dominant.

Hashemi Rafsanjani viewed the export of the revolution as achievable primarily through force and strategic power projection. In contrast, during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, this objective was reframed through the language of dialogue and good neighborliness. Under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's posture emphasized the narrative of being a "protector of the oppressed," reflecting a more confrontational and ideologically assertive interpretation. These cases illustrate how both reformist and conservative administrations have maintained the underlying objective while differing in approach and rhetoric[6].

[1] Ashraf Mohammed Keshk, *The Gulf States and Iran: Issues of Conflict and Confrontation* (December 2016), accessed April 10, 2026, <https://rasanah-iiis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/>.

[2] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, trans. Magdy Sobhi (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, 2014).

[3] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, "Text of the Iranian Constitution," accessed April 10, 2026, <https://mauritania.mfa.gov.ir/generalcategoryservices/10461>.

[4] Ali Fayyad, *Exporting the Revolution and Transformations in Iranian Policy* (January 2021), accessed April 10, 2026, <https://egsaqit58cu.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01>.

[5] Ashraf Mohammed Keshk, *The Gulf States and Iran: Issues of Conflict and Confrontation* (December 2016), accessed April 10, 2026, <https://rasanah-iiis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03>.

[6] Ashraf Keshk, *In Light of the Results of the Iranian Presidential Elections and the Nuclear Agreement: Gulf-Iranian Relations, Reality and Future Prospects* (Manama: Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies "Derasat," 2014).



THE RETURN OF KHOMEINI FROM HIS EXILE IN FRANCE TO IRAN,
1 FEBRUARY 1979



IRANIAN DEMONSTRATORS RAISING A PORTRAIT OF KHOMEINI
IN IRAN, FEBRUARY 1979

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR (1980–1988): IRAN'S EFFORT TO ALTER THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER

First, the balance of power refers to a situation in which no single state—or group of states within a given region—possesses sufficient capability to dominate or compel others to submit to its will. This balance may be “simple,” involving only two states, or “complex,” involving three or more states.

According to proponents of the Realist Theory, when confronted with states that seek to disrupt this equilibrium, other states in the region tend to respond by restoring balance, either through direct resistance or by forming countervailing alliances[1]. Based on this concept, the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq can be interpreted as an outcome of Iran's attempt to alter the regional balance of power vis-à-vis Iraq. Several precursors contributed to the escalation toward war. These included Iran's support for Kurdish insurgent movements in northern Iraq through financial assistance and the provision of weapons against the Iraqi government, the broader geopolitical repercussions of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the explicit threats issued by Ayatollah Khomeini regarding the export of the revolution to Iraq[2].

Although the war was formally waged against Iraq—viewed by Iran as a key “barrier” to its regional project and ambitions for influence—Iran also sought, directly and indirectly, to draw the Arabian Gulf states into the conflict. This was reflected in several indicators.

The first was the targeting of Arabian Gulf States' security, including Kuwait. This included the 1985 attempted assassination of the late Emir of Kuwait, H.H. Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, as well as a series of bombings in Kuwait directed at civilian areas and oil infrastructure, in addition to reported attempts to hijack aircraft[3]. The second indicator was the onset of attacks on oil tankers en route to or departing from Arabian Gulf ports. These incidents prompted Kuwait to reflag its vessels under the United States flag in order to obtain protection. This development contributed to U.S. President Ronald Reagan's announcement of what became known as the “Coalition of the Willing,” a naval military arrangement involving several Western states under U.S. leadership, established to safeguard maritime navigation in the Arabian Gulf[4].

Some estimates indicate that reciprocal attacks on shipping between Iraq and Iran from 1984 to 1987 reached approximately 309 incidents, including 187 carried out by Iraq and 122 by Iran, resulting in the loss of 82 vessels[5].

In response to these Iranian threats to freedom of maritime navigation, the Arabian Gulf states succeeded in securing United Nations Security Council Resolution 552, adopted on 1 June 1984. The resolution called upon all states to respect the right of freedom of navigation in accordance with international law, affirming this principle in international waters and sea lanes for vessels traveling to and from the ports and facilities of coastal states not party to the conflict. It also urged all states to respect the territorial integrity of non-belligerent states, condemned attacks on commercial shipping bound for or departing from the ports of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and demanded the immediate cessation of such attacks as well as the non-interference with vessels associated with states not involved in the hostilities.

The preamble of the resolution also referred to the letter dated 21 May 1984 submitted by the representatives of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which contained their complaint regarding Iranian attacks on commercial vessels traveling to and from Kuwaiti and Saudi ports[6]. Meanwhile, the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council on 25 May 1981 represented a collective initiative by the Arabian Gulf States to coordinate their policies in response to the threats posed by the Iran–Iraq War, as well as the broader repercussions of the Iranian Revolution. The Council was not directed against Iran or any specific regional power; rather, it was founded in line with Article 9 of the Charter of the League of Arab States, which states:

“The States of the Arab League that are desirous of establishing among themselves closer collaboration and stronger bonds than those provided for in the present Pact may conclude among themselves whatever agreements they wish for this purpose. The treaties and agreements already concluded, or that may be concluded in the future, between a member State and any other State shall not be binding upon the other members.”[7]

From the above, three conclusions can be drawn.

First, the beginning of the actual U.S. military presence in the Arabian Gulf during the Iran–Iraq War resulted from attacks on Gulf shipping during the conflict, which posed a direct threat to the security of the Arabian Gulf States as well as to global energy security more broadly.

Second, the Arabian Gulf States generally pursue a policy of neutrality toward regional conflicts; however, this neutrality is not sustainable when other actors fail to respect it or directly undermine it.

Third, the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council as a regional organization comprising states linked by political, economic, historical, social, and cultural ties is fully consistent with the provisions of regional organization charters, including Article 9 of the League of Arab States Charter and Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, both of which emphasize the importance of regional security arrangements. The Council was not directed against any specific regional actor; rather, it emerged as a collective response to perceived threats aimed at altering the balance of power in the Arabian Gulf.

[1] Paul Robinson, *Dictionary of International Security* (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2009).

[2] Islam Mohammed Abdel Rabbo Al-Mughayir, *The Iran–Iraq War 1980–1988* (February 1, 2016), accessed April 10, 2026, <https://www.mobt3ath.com/uploade/book/book-1979.pdf>.

[3] Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, "Terrorist Incidents in Kuwait: Risks and Sources," February 7, 2016, accessed April 10, 2026, https://araa.sa/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3651:2016-02-07-08-05-51&catid=990&Itemid=172.

[4] Alaa al-Din Hussein Makki Khamas, *The Tanker War in the Arabian Gulf, 1980–1988* (Amman: Dar Al-Rimal for Publishing and Distribution, 2018).

[5] David Michael Priess, *Collective Security in the Gulf: An Analysis of the Development of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Regional Security as a Function* (October 5, 1993), accessed April 10, 2026, https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=polisci_honproj.

[6] United Nations, "Security Council Resolution 552 (1 June 1984)," accessed April 10, 2026, [https://docs.un.org/ar/S/RES/552\(1984\)](https://docs.un.org/ar/S/RES/552(1984)).

[7] League of Arab States, *Charter of the League of Arab States*, accessed April 11, 2026, <https://www.whatconvention.org/en/convention/1580>.



MEMBERS OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS (IRGC) FLASHING THE VICTORY SIGN AFTER THE END OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR (1980–1988)



IRAQI SOLDIERS IN FRONT OF A PORTRAIT OF KHOMEINI DURING THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

THE U.S. INVASION OF IRAQ IN 2003: STRENGTHENING IRAN'S REGIONAL INFLUENCE

If the Iran–Iraq War did not lead to Iraq's defeat, as Iran had sought, the subsequent decision by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait in August 1990—followed by the formation of an international coalition led by the United States to liberate it in February 1991—marked the beginning of a prolonged period of confrontation between Iraq and the United States. This was driven in part by concerns over Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction programs and ultimately culminated in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

These developments produced a new regional security environment, characterized by the erosion of Iraq's role as a geographically "buffering state" between Iran and the Arabian Gulf States. As a result, Iran's regional position was significantly strengthened, enabling it to expand the use of its military, security, and political instruments to influence Arabian Gulf security dynamics whenever it chose to do so, amid an evolving imbalance in the regional balance of power in its favor[1]. Perhaps one of the most significant consequences of these developments was the acceleration of Iran's nuclear program following the occupation of Iraq. While Iran's peaceful nuclear activities date back to the 1950s, disclosures in 2002 pointed to efforts to develop capabilities with potential military dimensions, with this trajectory becoming more pronounced after 2003.

At that time, Iran's broader strategic objectives included filling the regional vacuum created by the invasion of Iraq, modernizing its armed forces in a manner that would sustain its regional influence and enhance its deterrent capacity, preparing for the possibility of direct military confrontation with the United States, and continuing the export of the Iranian Revolution to neighboring states.

Statements by Iranian officials further reflected this expansion of influence in Iraq and the wider region. On 7 September 2007, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated: "Iran is capable of filling the security vacuum that would occur if U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq." In response, then-U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice remarked that "such remarks are evidence of Iran's ambitions toward Iraq." [2] The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 further expanded Iran's regional influence. Strategic analyst Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies described the outcome of the Iraq invasion as a "tactical victory and a strategic loss," for several key reasons.

First, U.S. negotiations with Iraq failed to produce an effective strategic framework agreement capable of advancing long-term American objectives in the region.

Second, the withdrawal took place without the establishment of a clear and stable structure for Iraq's political system, beyond the rapid drafting of a constitution.

Third, there was insufficient development of Iraqi armed forces in a way that would enable them to effectively deter Iranian influence.

Fourth, there was no coherent strategic plan between the United States, the Arabian Gulf States, and other Arab countries to create a viable security alternative capable of counterbalancing Iran[3].

[1] Abdulaziz bin Othman bin Saqr, "The Regional Security Strategy of the Gulf Cooperation Council over the Past Decade and Its Developments," in National and Regional Security of the Gulf Cooperation Council States: A View from Within (Manama: Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies "Derasat," 2012), 54.

[2] Mohammed Wael Al-Qaisi, "Iraq between U.S. Occupation and Iranian Intervention and Its Impact on the Regional Security System," July 1, 2011, accessed April 11, 2026, https://araa.sa/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=572:2014-06-22-22-33-16&catid=9&Itemid=172.

[3] Mohammed Madi, "The U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq: A Strategic Defeat and the End of a Superpower's Hegemony?" December 21, 2011, accessed April 11, 2026, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/ara/>.



U.S. SOLDIERS IN THE IRAQI CITY OF FALLUJAH, 2005

IRANIAN INITIATIVES FOR GULF SECURITY: REINFORCING HEGEMONY, NOT RESOLVING DISPUTES

By examining the initiatives proposed by Iran for security cooperation with the Arabian Gulf States, it becomes evident that they were not designed to establish genuine or sustainable foundations for cooperative security. Cooperative security, in this sense, refers to an approach aimed at reducing the likelihood of war through a range of measures, including arms control, confidence-building mechanisms, efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and support for economic development.[1] Rather, Iran sought to consolidate its regional influence through a series of proposals that did not constitute fully developed or realistic frameworks for regional security. These included, among others, the proposal by Iranian Defense Minister General Mostafa Mohammad Najjar in November 2006 for a regional defense and security treaty; the 2007 call by Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki for the establishment of a joint Gulf security system; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's 2007 proposal for an organization of security and economic cooperation between Iran and the Arabian Gulf States; the 2019 "Hormuz Peace Initiative"; and Iran's 2023 proposal to establish a maritime alliance to secure navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Several observations can be made regarding these initiatives.

First, these initiatives are often linked to the condition of the withdrawal of foreign forces from the region, while overlooking the fact that such a presence emerged in response to longstanding regional threats. Moreover, security remains a sovereign prerogative of each state, and Iran itself maintains security cooperation with several Asian countries.

Second, Iran has not demonstrated a clear willingness to engage in security cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council as a regional organization, as it does not formally recognize it, and instead tends to emphasize bilateral arrangements with individual Arabian Gulf States.

Third, these initiatives often move from general premises to broad conclusions by relying on abstract concepts such as neighborliness and mutual benefit, and by stressing the inevitability of cooperation without providing concrete mechanisms to ensure a balanced distribution of interests between Iran and the Arabian Gulf States.

Fourth, Iran has not shown readiness to address core sources of tension and chronic dispute with the Arabian Gulf States, including the naming and security of the Arabian Gulf, the continued occupation of the three Emirati islands, its nuclear and missile programs, the security of maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, support for non-state armed actors in the region, and interference in the internal affairs of the Arabian Gulf States[2].

[1] Robinson, Dictionary of International Security.

[2] Keshk, In Light of the Results of the Iranian Presidential Elections.



FORMER IRANIAN PRESIDENT MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD VISITS A NUCLEAR LABORATORY IN IRAN, 2007

THE MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL (JUNE 2025)

Contrary to many expectations that ruled out the possibility of a direct military confrontation between Iran and Israel, the period from 13 to 24 June 2025 witnessed reciprocal strikes between the two states. This escalation followed the expiration of the sixty-day deadline set by U.S. President Donald Trump for Iran to reach an agreement with the United States regarding its nuclear program.

During the conflict, the Arabian Gulf States individually, as well as through the Gulf Cooperation Council, condemned the Israeli strikes on Iran, describing them as a "violation of the rules of international law." This position was also reflected in a telephone call between the GCC Secretary-General, H.E. Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, during which AlBudaiwi affirmed that the "Israeli aggression constitutes a clear violation of international law and the United Nations Charter," stressing the rejection of the use of force and the necessity of resolving disputes through dialogue.

Although the Arabian Gulf States were not parties to the confrontation, Iran responded to the U.S. strike on its nuclear facilities by targeting the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on 23 June 2025 with short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, as part of an operation named "Bashayer al-Fath." A total of 14 missiles were launched; 13 were intercepted, while one fell in an area away from the base without causing any casualties[1]. Here is a more academically refined and accurate version of your paragraph, aligned with the evidence:

On the other hand, despite U.S. military strikes at the end of the confrontation targeting the Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan nuclear facilities, Iranian officials maintained that key nuclear assets had been preserved. Mohsen Rezaei, a member of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council, stated that all enriched material had been transferred to secure locations prior to the strikes. Estimates indicate that Iran possessed approximately 400 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60% at the time, a stockpile widely assessed as strategically significant[2]. This confrontation reflected three key points:

First, Iran remains committed to maintaining and advancing its nuclear program, which continues to be perceived as a potential challenge to the security of the Arabian Gulf and broader regional stability.

Second, the conflict demonstrated that the Iranian threat cannot be confined solely to the nuclear dimension, as Iran also possesses significant conventional military capabilities, including missiles and drones, which were actively employed during the confrontation.

Third, despite the consistent declaration of neutrality by the Arabian Gulf States during regional crises, they have nonetheless remained within the sphere of Iranian strategic calculations and, at times, targets of pressure and escalation.

[1] Asharq Al-Awsat, "Iran Launches an Attack on U.S. Forces at Al Udeid Air Base... No Casualties," June 23, 2025, accessed April 11, 2026, [موقع صحيفة الشرق الأوسط](https://aawsat.com), [1] 11 أبريل 2026, 2025. <https://aawsat.com> ولا إصابات. 23 يونيو. تاريخ الوصول، 11 أبريل، 2026.

[2] Asharq Al-Awsat, "Member of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council: All Enriched Materials Have Been Transferred to Safe Locations," June 19, 2025, accessed April 11, 2026, [موقع صحيفة الشرق الأوسط](https://aawsat.com), 2025. <https://aawsat.com> ولا إصابات. 23 يونيو. تاريخ الوصول، 11 أبريل، 2026. [1] 2026.



THE EFFECTS OF THE U.S. MILITARY STRIKE ON THE UNDERGROUND IRANIAN URANIUM ENRICHMENT SITE AT THE FORDOW FACILITY, 19 MARCH 2025

THE MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, ISRAEL, AND IRAN (28 FEBRUARY 2026 AND BEYOND)

Without entering into the detailed events of the war, which drew the attention of both regional and international actors for 39 days and concluded with a temporary fifteen-day ceasefire to facilitate an agreement between the United States and Iran, it is evident that the conflict did not generate Iranian threats to the security of the Arabian Gulf and regional stability. Rather, it exposed the underlying nature, scope, and dimensions of those threats from multiple perspectives.

First, although the Arabian Gulf States declared that they were not parties to the war, Iran targeted them, alongside Jordan, in approximately 6,985 attacks, in addition to 151 post-ceasefire incidents, using missiles and drones, according to the Gulf Research Center in Jeddah.

Second, Iran deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure in the Arabian Gulf States, including water and electricity facilities as well as oil and gas installations, indicating that the conflict took on the characteristics of an “economic war.” In this context, a recent World Bank report on growth trends in the Middle East projected that GCC economic growth would decline to 1.3% in 2026, compared to 4.4% prior to the war[1].

Third, among the most serious risks during the crisis were concerns over potential radiation leaks from Iranian nuclear facilities, particularly after the Bushehr reactor was reportedly targeted multiple times, prompting Russia to announce the evacuation of its personnel from the site. This development underscores growing international and regional calls for greater transparency in Iran’s nuclear program and for its full compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, given the potential risks of radioactive contamination affecting all aspects of life in the Arabian Gulf, including seawater resources on which GCC countries heavily depend for desalination.

Fourth, the war once again highlighted Iran’s use of the Strait of Hormuz as a strategic lever in regional conflicts. The Arabian Gulf previously experienced the “Tanker War” during the Iran–Iraq War in the 1980s, and similar dynamics re-emerged during the recent confrontation. This pattern indicates that ensuring the security of maritime navigation in the Strait cannot rely on temporary crisis management, but must instead be embedded in a comprehensive and durable regional security framework. Arabian Gulf States, whose economies are fully dependent on the Strait for global trade, were directly affected, while other states with alternative maritime routes experienced more limited exposure.

THE MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, ISRAEL, AND IRAN (28 FEBRUARY 2026 AND BEYOND)

Fifth, the war demonstrated that the issues identified by the United States prior to its outbreak—namely Iran’s nuclear program, missile capabilities, and support for armed non-state actors—constitute core components of Iran’s regional strategy aimed at expanding influence and achieving regional dominance. In addition, the instrumentalization of the Strait of Hormuz introduced an additional dimension to the perceived Iranian threat to the security of the Arabian Gulf and broader regional stability.

[1] Asia News Agency, “International Reports Monitor the Economic Losses Resulting from the War,” April 9, 2026, accessed April 11, 2026, [1]. 2026. موقع وكالة أنباء آسيا. 2026. تقارير دولية ترصد الخسائر الاقتصادية الناتجة عن الحرب 9 أبريل. تاريخ الوصول 11 أبريل 2026. <https://www.asianews1b.com/?page=article&id=199297>.



OIL TANKERS STRANDED IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ DURING THE
CURRENT WAR, 2026



IRANIAN "SHAHED-129" DRONES DURING A MILITARY PARADE IN IRAN, 2016

This paper has examined the objectives and mechanisms of Iranian policies toward the security of the Arabian Gulf and regional stability from 1979 to the present. It argues that Iran has continued to adopt a revolutionary paradigm rather than operating strictly as a state bound by the norms of international law and the United Nations Charter, which emphasize respect for state sovereignty and independence, non-interference in internal affairs, and the prohibition of threats against other states.

Within this framework, the eight-year Iran–Iraq War was driven in part by efforts to alter the regional balance of power in the Arabian Gulf. Subsequently, the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the ensuing regional vacuum created a major strategic opportunity for Iran to expand its influence without incurring comparable direct costs or engaging in a similar large-scale confrontation.

Furthermore, recent developments highlight the increasing use of advanced military technologies and the targeting of GCC countries, whether during the June 2025 war or subsequent escalation, including strikes on civilian and critical infrastructure. This occurred despite repeated GCC initiatives aimed at de-escalation and the promotion of good-neighborly relations.

In addition, the disruption or instrumentalization of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz remains a recurring element of Iran's regional and broader strategic behavior, raising concerns regarding compliance with the principles of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Overall, Iran's approach reflects an enduring pursuit of regional influence, often framed in terms of hegemony. This is also evident in many of its proposed initiatives for Arabian Gulf security, which tend to move from general principles to broad conclusions without providing clear implementation mechanisms or demonstrating a sustained commitment to inclusive regional security frameworks.



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