



# Middle East Dialogue

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## GCC-Iran Relations

As the wider threat perception from Israel grows, there is a renewed sense of “geographical alignment” emerging between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Even as significant differences remain, the point of departure for most discussions, at this point, is the immediate need to mitigate the threats from Israel and prevent an Israeli attack on Iran. It is becoming a clearer narrative from across the Gulf states that Iran’s national security is closely tied to, if not intrinsic to, Gulf national security. While there remain suspicions that prevent such a policy from becoming state public diplomacy, there is a general convergence on these priority security issues.

Nevertheless, the Gulf states argue it is necessary to empower their role—both diplomatically and as mediators—through important confidence-building measures to overcome strategic and ideological differences that may yet persist with Iran, even if they are embarking on a new era of Gulf-Iran relations. Various areas already identified can be used to promote dialogue between the states, create more concrete interdependency, and support dialogue as a de-escalatory mechanism.

### Recommendations for confidence-building measures for Iran-GCC relations

- Economic and trade relations: Iran and GCC states share economic interdependencies, especially in trade, investment, and energy cooperation. Despite sanctions, countries like the UAE and Oman maintain robust trade ties with Iran. Iran and Qatar, for example, jointly develop the South Pars/North

Dome gas field, the world's largest natural gas reservoir, and many GCC countries rely on Iranian ports, such as Bandar Abbas, for regional trade and commerce.

- **Energy security and collaboration:** Both Iran and GCC states are major players in global energy markets, especially in oil and gas production. They share an interest in stable energy prices and cooperation within OPEC. They also face common challenges, such as transitioning towards sustainable energy and balancing production quotas to avoid market volatility.
- **Maritime security in the Persian Gulf:** Ensuring the security of vital shipping lanes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, is a shared interest. Since a significant portion of global oil trade passes through these waters, Iran and GCC states benefit from stability in the region. Both sides have engaged in occasional dialogues on maritime security to prevent disruptions caused by tensions, piracy, or external interventions.
- **Environmental and water cooperation:** The Gulf and surrounding ecosystems face environmental challenges such as rising sea levels, water scarcity, and pollution. GCC states and Iran have common interests in desalination technologies, conservation efforts, and managing climate change impacts.