



PERSPECTIVES

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Israel-UAE Peace Deal Challenges Iranian, Muslim Brotherhood Camps

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The [peace agreement](#) between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel takes Jerusalem's cooperation with Sunni Arab states out of the shadows. A boost to regional stability, the agreement will enable expanded cooperation on defense and intelligence issues, trade, investment, and joint technological development, and could foster a positive religious-cultural dialogue. The deal is a setback for Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood, two radical Islamist forces that are determined to destabilize the region and that threaten Israel and Sunni Arab countries alike.

The new [peace pact](#) between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel is a major boost to the formation of a strategic Middle Eastern alliance between Israel and moderate Sunni states. As such, it deals a serious blow to the Iran-Shiite axis and the Muslim Brotherhood. It threatens those forces' ability to control the region's dialogue about Israel's presence and about Islam, and it challenges their ability to promote a dark vision for the future.

Iran and its armed proxies—militant, well-armed Shiite militias deployed across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen—have [reacted](#) vehemently against the pact, reflecting Tehran's deep concern over its implications.

The Muslim Brotherhood camp, which is led by Turkey and includes Hamas, Qatar, and hard-line Sunni political Islamists across the region, is similarly alarmed.

"The [Iranian] regime fears the emergence of a new international alliance that will have greater power to contain its hegemonic regional aspirations, and there is a new urgency to the need to prove to the Iranian people that the

government's imperialist foreign policy works to their benefit," said Doron Itzchakov, an Iran specialist from the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

Itzchakov explained that the Iranian regime's leadership is "covering its embarrassment and apprehension with a stream of defamation and threats," including a statement by Iranian Parliament Speaker Muhammad Bakr Qalibaf, who called the agreement "despicable and a betrayal of human and Islamic values," and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who warned the UAE's leaders "not to open their gates" to Israel.

Israel and several Sunni Arab states share a vision of the threat that the Iranian axis poses, a fact that has helped push the Gulf states closer to Israel.

Cities and strategic sites in Saudi Arabia have come under [missile fire](#) from the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, who, like Hezbollah, are [armed by the Iranian Quds Force](#). The Houthis claimed to have fired a [cruise missile at the UAE's nuclear power plant in 2017](#) (though the UAE said no missile targeted its plant). Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been engaged in a bloody war with the Houthis, though the UAE withdrew its forces from southern Yemen last year.

Several ships docked at UAE ports were [sabotaged](#) last year in attacks widely attributed to Iranian forces, and the Islamic Republic has repeatedly threatened the Gulf states' ability to export oil in retaliation for sanctions on Iran's own oil exports.

The Gulf states clearly recognize that the threat posed by Iran's quest for hegemony is the same threat that is seeking to turn Syria into a network of missile bases that target Israeli cities. They see that the Iranian axis has already turned Lebanon into a frontline Iranian military attack post that threatens Israel with 130,000 projectiles, and is active throughout the region to subvert and threaten countries in its way. Iran has repeatedly sought to destabilize and [set up terror networks](#) in Bahrain.

This recognition of common interests led the foreign minister of the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to state in 2019 that Israel was justified in attacking Iranian targets in Syria. "Every nation has the right to defend itself when it's challenged by another nation, yes," he said, [when asked](#) about Israeli strikes.

The formation of a Middle East coalition of states that views radical Islamist actors as severe threats could mean enhanced coordination and the sharing of intelligence, as well as defense technology.

Israel is a world leader in the development and deployment of drones and cyber defense systems, while its intelligence-gathering capabilities on Iranian activities are well known throughout the region. Such assets could be shared with the UAE—a serious concern to nearby Iran. The possibility that a succession of other Gulf states, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, might eventually follow in the UAE's footsteps also worries the Iranian regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The regime appears to be fighting a losing domestic battle to convince the Iranian population that allocating resources to attacking Israel and supporting Hezbollah and Hamas are vital national priorities. Iranian protesters have [openly questioned](#) this rationale.

The Muslim Brotherhood camp, for its part, is also vehemently opposed to the agreement because it weakens its regional position. Sunni Islamists have long accused Arab governments of seeking normalization with Israel. Rather than denying the claim, the UAE has emerged to own it in a bold maneuver that pushes back against the radical rhetoric.

Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh condemned not only the pact but also Egypt's support for it, [describing the agreement](#) as “a violation of Arab and Islamic consensus as well as a stab in the backs of the Palestinian people.”

The UAE and Turkey are rival states, and Turkey, which has grown increasingly hostile to Israel and [hosts Hamas operatives on its soil](#), has [threatened](#) to suspend ties with the Gulf states. The UAE and other Gulf countries view Turkey as part of the Muslim Brotherhood club that rejects their moderate interpretation of Islam and their drive to create prosperity and stability in the Middle East.

Qatar, which is sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood but which also hedges its bets and maintains low-profile unofficial ties with Israel, has been involved in a two-year diplomatic crisis with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both of which accused Doha of supporting terrorism.

According to the Saudi-owned *Al Arabiya* news agency, Qatar has in recent days launched a [massive campaign](#) to influence Arab public opinion via media channels it funds, primarily Al Jazeera, against the landmark UAE-Israel agreement.

Ultimately, the UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel has alarmed Islamists and put them on the defensive.

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