

University of California, Berkeley
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War and Peace in the Persian Gulf Region

Course Description and Objectives:

This course will explore the complex dynamics of war and peace in the Persian Gulf region, focusing on the historical, political, economic, and strategic factors that have shaped conflict and cooperation among states in this critical area. Covering the period from the mid 20th century to the present, the course examines key events such as the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf Wars, the U.S. military presence, regional rivalries (notably between Iran and Saudi Arabia), and the role of international actors and institutions.

The course will analyze the causes and preconditions of conflict and some efforts at conflict resolution in the Gulf region, examining what has generated the major inter- and intra-state conflicts in the region. Sources of conflict (nationalist, ideological, ethnic/sectarian, economic, territorial, geopolitical, and foreign manipulation and intervention) will be delineated and scrutinized. Our task will be to identify and explain the factors and actors that have made conflict and conflict resolution more (or less) likely. Both endogenous and exogenous factors will be evaluated and assessed. We will also delve into the likelihood for more inter-state conflict and external intervention in the region, concluding with an assessment of the impact of Israeli and American attempts at reigning in Iran's nuclear program.

Through interdisciplinary readings and case studies, participants will be introduced to the causes and consequences of militarization, energy geopolitics, sectarian tensions, and the rise of non-state actors. The course also investigates diplomatic efforts, peace building initiatives, and the prospects for long-term regional stability in a rapidly changing global context. By the end of the course, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the geopolitical importance of the Persian Gulf, the interconnected nature of regional conflicts, and the challenges and opportunities for sustainable peace.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the historical and contemporary causes of conflict in the Persian Gulf region.
- Evaluate the roles of regional and international actors in both exacerbating and mitigating tensions.
- Understand the interconnection between energy geopolitics and security.
- Assess the prospects and challenges for sustainable peace in the region.
- Develop informed policy recommendations for regional stability and conflict resolution.

Schedule of Meetings:

Iran's transformation from a Conservative Pro-American Monarchy to a Revolutionary Islamic Republic

- "The Iranian Revolution" *Encyclopedia Britannica* - <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ruhollah-Khomeini>
- "Background and causes of the Iranian Revolution" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Background_and_causes_of_the_Iranian_Revolution
- "World Politics Explainer: the Iranian Revolution," *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/world-politics-explainer-the-iranian-revolution-100453>
- "Iraq vi Pahlavi Period, 1921 – 79," *Encyclopedia Iranica*. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iraq-vi-pahlavi-period-1921-79/#:~:text=IRAQ%20vi.-.PAHLAVI%20PERIOD%2C%201921%2D79.was%20swept%20away%20by%20revolution.>
- "End of Empire: Iran" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhCgJEIpQEQ>
- "Iran and The West - Part 1 - The Man Who Changed the World" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfkqf_wWEsM

The Iranian Revolution and the Middle East

- "How Iran's 1979 Revolution Affected Sunni Islamists in the Middle East," LSE Blogs. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2021/04/26/how-irans-1979-revolution-affected-sunni-islamists-in-the-middle-east/>
- "1979: Iran and America," *Brookings Institution*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/1979-iran-and-america/>
- "Iran's Revolution: Political Quake Still Shaking Middle East." <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-s-revolution-political-quake-still-shaking-middle-east/4780443.html>
- "Beyond proxies: Iran's deeper strategy in Syria and Lebanon," *European Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://ecfr.eu/publication/beyond-proxies-irans-deeper-strategy-in-syria-and-lebanon/>
- Ideology and Iran's Revolution: How 1979 Changed the World," *Blair Institute*

<https://institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/ideology-and-irans-revolution-how-1979-changed-world>

- "Bitter rivals: Iran and Saudi Arabia" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHcgnRI2xPM>

The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988

- "How the Iran Iraq War Will Shape the Region for Years to Come," *Brookings Institution*.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-the-iran-iraq-war-will-shape-the-region-for-decades-to-come/>
- "Lessons From America's First War with Iran," *Brookings Institution*.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/lessons-from-americas-first-war-with-iran/>
- "Case study: The Iran-Iraq War," *Oxford Learning Link*.
<https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/baylis-strategy7e-student-resources/baylis-strategy7e-case-study-the-iran-iraq-war>
- "The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuAJ35F235Q>
- The Iran-Iraq War: A Tragedy That Changed History -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOzWDbzqzJ0>

The First Gulf War 1991

- The Origins of the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait Reconsidered," *Texas National Security Review*. <https://tnsr.org/2023/06/the-origins-of-the-iraqi-invasion-of-kuwait-reconsidered/>
- "Gulf War: Its causes and social effects on the people," *World History Edu*
<https://worldhistoryedu.com/gulf-war-its-causes-and-social-effects-on-the-people/>
- "The Impact of the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: The View from Ten Years Later" *The Washington Institute*
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/impact-iraqi-invasion-kuwait-view-ten-years-later>
- "How Iraq's invasion of Kuwait dealt a lasting economic blow to the region" *Al Majalla*.
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/impact-iraqi-invasion-kuwait-view-ten-years-later>
- "The Gulf War" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vbFGn1QhVs>

September 11th and the US Invasion of Iraq

- "Iraq War," *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>

- "The US Invasion of Iraq: Failings and Consequences," *E-International Relations*.
https://www.e-ir.info/2011/08/01/why-did-the-united-states-invade-iraq-in-2003-and-what-went-wrong-with-the-subsequent-occupation-what-impact-has-the-war-had-on-us-foreign-policy/#google_vignette
- "The Long Shadow of the Iraq War," Council on International Relations.
<https://www.cfr.org/article/long-shadow-iraq-war-lessons-and-legacies-twenty-years-later>
- "The Iraq War's Catastrophic Consequences," *Boston Review*.
<https://www.bostonreview.net/reading-list/the-iraq-wars-catastrophic-consequences/>
- "Once Upon a Time in Iraq" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2L4jcVqo8s>

The Iran-Israel Rivalry: Ideological or Geopolitical?

- "Shifting Sands: From Alliance to Adversity Tracing Iranian Israeli Relations Before the Islamic Revolution" *Pakistan Social Science Review*.
<https://ojs.pssr.org.pk/journal/article/view/831/648>
- From Ideological Animosity to Strategic Rivalry, *Boundless Israel*, 2024.
<https://boundlessisrael.org/paper/487/details>
- "Understanding the War between Israel and Iran: Q&A with Amichai Magen and Abbas Milani" – *Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University*.
<https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/understanding-war-between-israel-and-iran-qa-amichai-magen-and-abbas-milani>
- The Israel-Iran Conflict: Q&A with RAND Experts.
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/06/the-israel-iran-conflict-qa-with-rand-experts.html>
- "The Iran Israel Conflict: A Historical and Geopolitical Analysis," *Forum for Global Studies*. <https://forumforglobalstudies.com/the-iran-israel-conflict-a-historical-and-geopolitical-analysis-with-legal-and-security-dimensions/>
- Iran-Israel Rivalry: Is It Ideology or Realpolitik? *Countercurrents*, 2024.
<https://countercurrents.org/2024/04/iran-israel-rivalry-is-it-ideology-or-realpolitik/>
- "An Endless War: Iran, Israel, and the US" -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p41oz5x0Dok>
- "Iran and Israel's Rivalry Explained" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07ow5-X99jA>