



USD MATTER

THE MIDDLE EAST'S COLD WAR

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What is the Middle East?

The Middle East is a loosely defined region at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa. Normally included in the list of Middle Eastern countries are the countries of the Arabian peninsula, that is Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, as well as Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Iran.

The term Middle East can be used to refer to countries that are predominantly Islamic in culture. This usage expands the term to include the remaining states of North Africa as well as Afghanistan and even perhaps Pakistan.



WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

The main causes behind the conflicts in the Middle East can be boiled down to the following:

- 1). The way the Middle East was divided by foreign powers after the World Wars
- 2). The spread of Wahhabism across the region
- 3). The Israeli - Palestinian conflict
- 4). The regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and
- 5). American foreign policy

The Middle East's Cold War is not the only reason why there are so many conflicts in that region but this matter will focus more on point number 4.

What is the Middle East cold war?

The Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict is the ongoing struggle for influence in the Middle East and surrounding regions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The whole region is a battlefield. It's why the rivalry is being called: a Cold War.

What is proxy war?

Proxy wars are wars where competing powers don't fight each other directly but get involved in foreign wars, backing opposing sides.

SAUDI ARABIA

1990s

The Arabian peninsula was a patchwork of tribes under the control of the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, the empire collapsed, leaving these tribes to fight each other for power.

One tribe from the interior, **the al-Saud**, eventually conquered most of the peninsula.

1932

They were recognized as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

6 years later, massive oil reserves were discovered in Saudi Arabia, and, in an instant, the Saudi monarchy was rich.

IRAN

"PERSIA"
CHANGED
TO "IRAN"
IN 1935

1908

Oil were discovered in Persia
Since the 18th century, Iran had been invaded by the Russians and British twice. The Iranian oil industry was developed by the British who enjoyed the monopoly and sale of Iranian oil.

1952

Iranians had grown tired of the status quo and their democratically elected prime minister nationalized Iranian oil. In response the British and Americans organized a military coup to oust the prime minister.

In his place, they propped up a monarch, **Reza Shah**, who was aggressively reforming Iran into a secular, westernized country.

1970

By the 1970s, both Saudi Arabia and Iran had oil-based economies and had governments heavily backed by the US, but the feelings among each population were very different.

The Shah of Iran did not have the same control over his people or ultimately the same legitimacy and affection that the Saudi people felt towards their monarchy at that point in time. That's because Iran's Muslims felt stifled by the Shah's reformations. The rapid modernisation was an affront to religious values and the corruption of his government and brutal political oppression by his secret police fueled public resentment

1979 - IRANIAN REVOLUTION

All this culminated in the 1979 Iranian revolution, when the Shah was ousted and replaced by religious leaders, the Ayatollahs.

The Ayatollahs

Ayatollah Khomeini was a Muslim clergyman, who preached against Western-backed secular monarchies. The Ayatollahs denounced the US, refused to recognise Israel and argued against Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy

When Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic revolution overthrow the Shah, that the **real tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran begins.**

The Iranian Revolution terrified the government of Saudi Arabia. They were fearful that Ayatollah Khomeini would inspire their populations to rise up against them, exactly the way he had caused the Iranian population to rise up against the Shah.

There was another divide; Saudi Arabia's population is mostly Sunni, the majority sect of Islam, while Khomeini and Iran are mostly Shia

The Sunni-Shia split was never that violent. In much of the Islamic world, when Sunnis and Shia were living in close proximity, they got along famously well. So, while the Sunni-Shia split was not a reason for the rivalry, it was an important division.

In the conflicts across the Middle East, Saudi Arabia generally supports Sunni groups and Iran supports Shia groups

(Generally, but not always, sometimes one backed the government while the other backed the rebels even if it's not exactly Shia-Sunni groups)

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran soured after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

After the revolution, the Saudis' fears came to life when Iran began “exporting its revolution”, along with some conflicts regarding oil's price.

The CIA report from 1980 details how the Iranian started helping groups, mostly Shia, trying to overthrow governments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and they prompted the Saudis to redouble their efforts, to fight against Iran

IRAN-SAUDI ARABIA PROXY WARS

warning: may contains media bias because God knows how hard it is
to find unbiased media and untwisted narratives.

YEMEN

SYRIA

AFGHANISTAN



Iran - Shia
rebels Houthi

YEMEN

Yemen's civil war began in 2014 when Houthi insurgents—Shia rebels with links to Iran and a history of rising up against the Sunni government—took control of Yemen's capital and largest city, Sana'a, demanding lower fuel prices and a new government.



Saudi Arabia -
Government

Concurrently, a coalition led by Saudi Arabia launched military operations by using air strikes to restore the former Yemeni government. Although there was no direct intervention by Iran, who support the Houthis, the conflict has been widely seen as an extension of the Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict and as a means to combat Iranian influence in the region.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

is regional intergovernmental political and economic union that consist of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates All current member states are monarchies, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain) two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, which is composed of seven member states, each of which is an absolute monarchy with its own emir).

The ongoing conflict in Syria is widely described as a series of overlapping proxy wars between the regional and world powers, primarily between the US and as well as between Iran and Gulf countries.

The diagram consists of three main sections. The central section is a large white circle labeled 'SYRIA' in bold capital letters. To its left is a dark grey circle containing the text 'Iran - Hezbollah'. To its right is a dark blue circle containing the text 'GCC - Free Syrian Army'. The background is divided into two horizontal bands: a dark grey band on the left and a light brown band on the right.

Iran -
Hezbollah

Iran wishes to hold the Syrian regime in place to keep its influence in the region, whereas the Gulf countries want the opposite. They hope for change, and leverage the crisis as a catalyst in reducing Iran's hegemony in the region.

SYRIA

The interaction between Hezbollah fighters, the pro-Al Assad regime acting under the orders of Iran, and those of the Free Syrian Army, supported financially and militarily by the Gulf countries and Western countries such as Turkey, is the perfect poster child of the Syrian crisis.



Iran - Shia
Hezb-e Wahdat

AFGHANISTAN

Saudi Arabia was one of three countries to officially recognize the Sunni Taliban government in 1996, along with its allies Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.



Saudi Arabia -
Wahhabist
Ittihad-e Islami

During the Afghan Civil War, Iran and Saudi Arabia supported opposing militant factions. Iran assisted the Shia Hezb-e Wahdat, while Saudi Arabia provided financial support to the Wahhabist Ittihad-e Islami.

It's a Cold war that's becoming incredibly unpredictable. People in power will have their own agendas; be it an inherited sense of entitlement or a misguided attempt at nation-building.

As the Middle East continues to destabilize, its hard to say how far these countries will go.