



[Iran Continues Rapprochement Efforts with Iraq and Saudi Arabia](#)

Iran's continued diplomatic offensive in the Middle East has begun to show promise, as multiple visits between Iranian officials and officials from Iraq and Saudi Arabia have led to warming diplomatic and economic relations. Traditional adversaries in the region, and the warming relations between these countries are a sign of changing dynamics in the Middle East. Most recently, Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid met with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Rashid also meets with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Iran has been exploiting a mutual disdain for the United States to court Iraq and continues to broaden their security and economic cooperation. During a meeting between himself and President Rashid, Khamenei stated "The Americans are not friends of Iraq," and "even one American in Iraq is too many." Along with his emphasis on expelling the United States from Iraq, Khamenei also urged for the full implementation of the bilateral security and economic agreements that were signed last month. Both countries have a desire to deepen ties and resolve differences, however, rapprochement will still likely prove to be difficult. Iran and Iraq have long been at odds. Iran was invaded by Iraq in 1979 and those wounds are still felt on both sides. After Saddam Hussein was overthrown, however, the two have slowly begun to create a relationship. This relationship will have the potential to increase stability in the Middle East.

Iran has also made huge strides in reconnecting with Saudi Arabia. These efforts were applauded by Iraqi officials during their visit to Iran. Saudi Arabia is and will likely remain a powerhouse and the Middle East. The Iraqi president rightfully stated that it will "strengthen stability and security" in the region. If all goes well for Iran, Saudi Arabia will also likely prove to be valuable in reestablishing connections with other Middle Eastern countries Iran has quarreled with in the past.

A recently China-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia has also been paying dividends. The main key to this agreement, which was signed in March, was for Iran to stop further attacks on Saudi Arabia and curtail support for militant groups that have targeted Saudi Arabia. The agreement also came with renewed hopes that the proxy war in Yemen, where the two countries support opposing sides. An end to this conflict would mean increased stability in the region and allow much-needed aid supplies to flow more freely into Yemen. The growing relationship between the two countries was especially shown when Saudi Arabia helped evacuate 65 Iranian citizens from Sudan. This sign of cooperation signals a complete reshuffling of traditional alliances in the Middle East.

As Iran continues to fill the power vacuum left by the United States in Iraq, they gain a valuable strategic advantage in the region. Iranians have growing access to Iraqi oil and development and water purification projects. They also have growing access to many Iraqi military officials who were trained and supported by the United States during the occupation. This allows Iran to collect valuable intel, such as training techniques and strategies used by the United States. Iraq has also allowed Iranian tourists to come and visit the many sacred sites for Shia Muslims. Iran is beginning to have far-reaching political, security, and cultural influence in Iraq. This new influence, coupled with its increasingly positive relationship with Saudi Arabia could lead to an entirely different Middle East. It is essential for policymakers to not dismiss these actions as performative, but rather to take the changing dynamic into account when dealing with these countries. These alliances are likely to increase the power of the members and allow for greater autonomy in their actions and significantly alter America's ability to negotiate in the region