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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

How the Gulf-Iran Divide Pushed Arab States Towards the US and Israel

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

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CONTEXT

The Indian Express editorial examines how the **Iran-West Asia conflict** has accelerated the **Gulf Arab states' strategic alignment with the US and Israel**, fundamentally reshaping West Asian geopolitics. The editorial discusses implications for **India's balancing act** in the region — particularly regarding energy imports, diaspora interests, and the emerging Abraham Accords architecture.

THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

- 1 **Iran as the common enemy** — the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar) have historically viewed Iran as their primary regional threat; the current conflict has vindicated their security concerns
- 2 **Abraham Accords acceleration** — the UAE-Israel (2020) and Bahrain-Israel (2020) normalisation agreements have deepened; Saudi Arabia's normalisation (suspended after Gaza, 2023) is now back on the table
- 3 **US security umbrella** — Arab states see the US military intervention against Iran as proof that the American security guarantee remains credible, reversing the "US withdrawal from Middle East" narrative
- 4 **Energy market realignment** — with Iranian oil off the market (due to conflict + sanctions), Saudi Arabia and UAE have expanded production to fill the gap, consolidating their energy market dominance
- 5 **India's dilemma** — India has traditionally maintained balanced ties with both Iran (Chabahar port, energy imports) and the Gulf states (diaspora, energy, investment). The conflict forces harder choices



INDIA'S STAKES IN WEST ASIA

INTEREST	DETAILS
Energy imports	~85% of crude oil is imported; Gulf supplies ~60% of India's crude
Diaspora	~9 million Indians in Gulf states; ~\$50 billion in annual remittances
Chabahar Port	India's strategic port in Iran — connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia
Defence ties	India-UAE defence cooperation; India-Saudi Vision 2030 partnership
I2U2	India-Israel-UAE-US minilateral (2022) for food, energy, tech cooperation
Iran connectivity	INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor) passes through Iran

ABRAHAM ACCORDS AND THE EMERGING ARCHITECTURE

AGREEMENT	DATE	PARTIES	STATUS (POST-IRAN CONFLICT)
UAE-Israel	September 2020	UAE + Israel	Deepened — defence and tech cooperation expanded
Bahrain-Israel	September 2020	Bahrain + Israel	Continued — diplomatic ties maintained
Morocco-Israel	December 2020	Morocco + Israel	Continued
Sudan-Israel	October 2020	Sudan + Israel	Limited progress
Saudi-Israel	(Pending)	Saudi Arabia + Israel	Back on the table — Iran threat provides strategic cover

The editorial argues that the Iran conflict has created the **geopolitical conditions** for Saudi-Israel normalisation — something that was impossible during the Gaza crisis but is now viewed as a security necessity against a common Iranian threat.



INDIA'S BALANCING ACT

RELATIONSHIP	OPPORTUNITY	RISK
Iran	Chabahar port, INSTC access, energy diversification	US secondary sanctions if India buys Iranian oil
Gulf States	Energy security, diaspora, investment, I2U2	Over-dependence on Gulf for energy and remittances
Israel	Defence tech (drones, missiles), agri-tech	Perception management in Muslim-majority states
US	Strategic partnership, Quad, trade deal	Pressure to choose sides on Iran

India's traditional policy of **strategic autonomy** — maintaining ties with all parties — faces pressure when the conflict draws clear battle lines. The editorial suggests India should:

- **Maintain Chabahar engagement** regardless of the conflict (exempted from US sanctions historically)
- **Diversify energy imports** to reduce Gulf dependency (increase Russian, African, and renewable share)
- **Leverage I2U2** for tangible food and energy security projects

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 — International Relations

- India-West Asia relations: Iran, Gulf states, Israel
- Abraham Accords and West Asian geopolitics
- I2U2 minilateral framework
- India's energy security and strategic autonomy
- Chabahar port and INSTC

Mains Probable Questions:

- "The Gulf-Iran divide has forced India to make difficult strategic choices. Examine India's options for maintaining balanced ties in West Asia." (250 words)
- "Evaluate the impact of the Abraham Accords on India's West Asia policy." (250 words)



FACTS CORNER

- **Chabahar Port** — India invested ~\$500 million; operational since 2018; exempted from US Iran sanctions under a **carve-out** for humanitarian and connectivity reasons
- **I2U2** (India-Israel-UAE-US) was formalised in **July 2022** — its first deliverable was a \$2 billion food corridor project to address post-COVID food security
- India's **Gulf diaspora** sends approximately **\$50 billion annually** in remittances — constituting the single largest source of foreign remittance to India
- The **Strait of Hormuz** carries ~21% of global oil consumption daily; any disruption directly impacts India's energy security — India imports ~85% of its crude, much of it transiting Hormuz
- India has maintained the rare diplomatic position of having **good relations with both Iran and Israel simultaneously** — attending Iran's New Year celebrations and Israeli Independence Day in the same diplomatic calendar

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