



GCC & NATO: THE ISTANBUL COOPERATION INITIATIVE

Established in 2004, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) aims to promote political dialogue and security cooperation between NATO and partner countries in the Gulf region in order to enhance regional security and counter common challenges and threats.

MEMBERS OF THE ICI

- BAHRAIN
- KUWAIT
- QATAR
- UAE

Oman and Saudi Arabia are not ICI members but participate in some of its activities.

SIX CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE ICI

NON-DISCRIMINATION

all partners are offered the same basis for cooperation and discussion with NATO

NON-IMPOSITION

partners can choose the pace and extent of their cooperation with NATO

SELF-DIFFERENTIATION

ICI allows for a tailored approach to the specific needs of each partner

DIVERSITY

respecting the partners' specific regional, cultural and political contexts

A GIVE AND TAKE APPROACH

emphasises a regular consultation process and practical cooperation with NATO to ensure the success of the ICI

COMPLEMENTARITY

ICI complements initiatives of other organisations in the region

NATO-ICI KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION

- COUNTER-TERRORISM
- DEFENCE AGAINST CBRN WEAPONS
- ENERGY SECURITY
- CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- MARITIME SECURITY
- WEAPONS NON-PROLIFERATION
- CYBER DEFENCE
- DEFENCE REFORM
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- CIVIL EMERGENCY PLANNING
- POLITICAL DIALOGUE
- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
- SCIENCE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY (SPS)

NATO & PARTNERS

- NATO Members
- Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (est 2004)
- Mediterranean Dialogue (est 1994)
- Global Partners
- Enhanced Opportunities Partners
- Partnership for Peace (PfP)
- Suspended PfP

*The PfPs with Afghanistan, Belarus and Russia are suspended due to the security environment.

“ Security of Gulf countries is directly linked to the security of all [NATO] Allies. We face common security threats like terrorism, weapons proliferation, and cyber attacks. And we share the same aspirations for peace and for stability. So it is essential that we work more closely together than ever before. ”

– Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General (opening of the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait, 2017)



NATO-ICI REGIONAL CENTRE (NIRC) IN KUWAIT

INAUGURATED IN JANUARY 2017

born from Kuwait's initiative first proposed in 2009, and approved at NATO Summit in Chicago in 2012

A REGIONAL HUB

for political dialogue, education and training for NATO and ICI/GCC countries

NATO HQ'S FIRST OFFICE

in the Gulf and the wider Middle East and North Africa region

JOINTLY MANAGED

by NATO and Kuwait's National Security Bureau

PARTICIPATION

open to all ICI countries, the Gulf Cooperation Council and its members, NATO Allies and any other mutually-agreed upon nation

SINCE 9/2017 NIRC HOSTED

GCC PARTICIPANTS IN NIRC COURSES IN 2022

87 courses and events & 2423 participants

(NIRC, 2023)



SCIENCE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY (SPS) PROGRAMME

Promotes dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO members and partner countries in the field of scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge exchange. ICI countries can join SPS programme since 2008.

MULTI-YEAR PROJECTS | ADVANCED RESEARCH WORKSHOPS | ADVANCED TRAINING COURSES

PRIORITY AREAS:

- MARITIME BORDER AND PORT SECURITY
- CYBER DEFENCE
- CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION
- COUNTER-TERRORISM
- CBRN DEFENCE

ICI MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTION TO NATO-LED OPERATIONS

- Operation Allied Force in Kosovo
- Operation Enduring Freedom and International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan
- Operation Unified Protector in Libya

MILESTONES

2004



The ICI was launched at NATO Summit in Istanbul.

2005 (JANUARY-JUNE)

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) formally joined the ICI.



2006-2018

Agreements on security and protection of information exchange with NATO signed by: Kuwait (2006), Bahrain (2008), UAE (2009) and Qatar (2018).

2008

- Kuwait hosted the first NATO-ICI naval exercise.
- The first NATO-ICI meeting was held at the Ambassadorial level.

2014

- Brussels hosted the first NATO-ICI Foreign Ministers' meeting.
- Kuwait became the first ICI country to sign the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme with NATO.
- The first NATO-ICI Policy Advisory Group (PAG) meeting convened in Istanbul.
- Bahrain and the UAE joined NATO's Interoperability Platform.

2012

- The UAE became the first Arab country to open a diplomatic mission at NATO HQ.
- Kuwait was the first Gulf country to sign a transit agreement with NATO.



2016



Embassies of Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar in Brussels became accredited missions to NATO.

2017

The NATO-ICI Regional Centre (NIRC) in Kuwait was inaugurated, five years after the official approval of Kuwait's proposal at the NATO Summit in Chicago.



2018

Kuwait inaugurated its diplomatic mission at NATO HQ in Brussels.

2019

The North Atlantic Council visited Kuwait to honour ICI's 15th anniversary.

2023

Bahrain hosted the 5th NATO-ICI PAG meeting. The previous PAGs were hosted by: Kuwait (2018), Qatar (2016), Kuwait (2015) and Turkey (2014).

2022

The North Atlantic Council and the ICI held the first meeting on maritime and energy security.

2021

- Qatar signed an agreement to open mission offices and military representation at the NATO headquarters in Brussels.
- Qatar provided key support for the evacuation of NATO troops from Afghanistan.

2024



- NATO will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its establishment.
- The NATO Mediterranean Dialogue will mark 30 years.
- The NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative will mark 20 years.

Sources: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), NATO-ICI Regional Centre Kuwait 2023, Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme Country Flyers 2022

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