



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All

# Canada- GCC Relations





## 1. Key Domestic Developments

Canada’s government is a federal parliament and constitutional monarchy. Canada’s monarch is King Charles III as it is part of the British Commonwealth, the Governor General is Mary Simon, and the Prime Minister is Justin Trudeau. Moreover, Canada’s head of government, Prime Minister Trudeau, was elected in the House of Commons. On September 20, 2021, Canada held its 44th Canadian federal election in which Justin Trudeau was re-elected as Prime Minister. He has held office since 2015 and has been the leader of the Liberal Party since 2013. In the 2021 Canadian federal elections, the Liberals recorded their lowest vote share, winning only 32.6% of the popular vote, as opposed to the Conservatives’ 34.34%. However, Prime Minister Trudeau’s Liberal Party was re-elected by forming a minority government, only the second time Canada has been governed by a minority government (in addition to the one formed by Stephen Harper in 2008).



Socially, under Prime Minister Trudeau’s cabinet, Canada has implemented a “progressive” social policy. First, Canada witnessed a “resolutely pro-choice” party that prioritizes advocating for abortion rights and feminism. Second, Canada legalized the use of cannabis for recreational use on October 27, 2018. Third, Canada introduced

the medical assistance in dying (MAID) law, protecting end-of-life rights for patients following specific medical criteria. Most recently, Canada introduced a drastic new alcohol guidelines, including suggested mandatory warning labels for all alcoholic beverages. Economically, following the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada has relied on increased tax revenues to offset higher government spending. The 2021 Canadian federal budget introduced a new number of taxes, including one on forms of transportation, digital services, and vaping and cigarettes.

Recently, Canada’s government faced scrutiny after several controversial decisions. For one, the Prime Minister advocated for the Trans Mountain Pipeline System, a pipeline that carries crude oil and refined petroleum products. The decision was criticized as expanding the pipeline contradicts the country’s goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, there was a wave of protests in 2020 against constructing the Coastal GasLink Pipeline (CGL) that runs through 120 miles of unceded land in Wet’suwet’en First Nation territory in British Columbia. Most recently, in early 2022, there was a series of protests against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions called the Freedom Convoy.

### *Key Canada Economic and Social Data*

- GDP: \$1.988 trillion (2021)
- GDP per capita: \$51,987.94 (2021)
- Annual Growth Rate: 4.5% (2021)
- Inflation: 3.40% (2021)
- Population: 38.25 million (2021)
- Unemployment Rate: 7.51% (2021)
- Credit Rating: Standard & Poor: AAA with a stable outlook. Moody: Aaa with a stable outlook. Fitch: AA+ with a stable outlook. DBRS: is AAA with a stable outlook.

Canada has witnessed a decline in trade volume due in part to the crisis in Ukraine and the sanctions policy on Russia. By September 2022, Canada had imposed the Special Economic



Measures Act (SEMA) putting regulations on 257 entities and 954 individuals in Russia. Moreover, unemployment rates are expected to rise from their current low levels as high inflation has gripped Canada, as it has in other Western economies. The Bank of Canada is expected to hold a key interest rate at 5%, and economists expect that weakness will continue for the rest of 2023 and into 2024.

## 2. Canada's Foreign Policy

Canada is categorized as a “middle power” due to its role in international affairs. Canada's foreign policy is centered around multilateralism, international peacemaking and security, and cooperating with international organizations. Canada was a founding member of the United Nations and is a member of many international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the G20, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), international financial institutions (IFIs), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Organization of La Francophonie, the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).



According to Canada's Departmental Plan 2022-23, Canada's core foreign policy responsibilities include international advocacy and diplomacy, building and maintaining constructive relationships that advance Canada's interests, advancing Canada's feminist foreign policy, combatting antisemitism, helping in building and safeguarding an open and inclusive rules-based global trading system, facilitating and expanding foreign direct investments, improving physical, social, and economic well-being for countries affected by the pandemic, empowering women's rights, supporting low-income countries, and advocating for peace and stability.

### *Key Foreign Policy Initiatives*

- In January 2023, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Melanie Joly, announced that Canada would facilitate a peace process to resolve the ongoing crisis in Cameroon.
- In November 2022, Canada announced an additional \$500 million in military assistance to Ukraine amidst the crisis after pledging over 1 billion Canadian dollars.
- In June 2021, Canada signed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- On December 10, 2019, Prime Minister Trudeau signed the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), a free trade agreement between the three countries.
- On June 19, 2019, Canada signed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a multilateral treaty that regulates international trade in conventional weapons.
- On March 8, 2018, Prime Minister Trudeau signed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a trade agreement between Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.



- On September 21, 2017, Prime Minister Trudeau signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), a free-trade agreement between Canada and the European Union.

In terms of international relations, the current primary areas of concern are with China and Russia, who Canadian Forces consider the highest threats. Ties between China and Canada deteriorated in December 2018 when Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, the deputy chair and chief financial officer of Huawei, at the Vancouver International Airport at the request of the United States. Wanzhou was detained, questioned for three hours, and was subsequently arrested on a provisional US extradition request for fraud. Prime Minister Trudeau supported the 2019-2020 Hong Kong protests and called for a UN investigation into the Uyghur genocide. In response, China called for an investigation into human rights abuses against migrants in Canadian detention centers as well as the treatment of indigenous people in the Canadian Indian residential school system.

Since Russia’s attack on Ukraine in February 2022, Canada has supported Ukraine to ensure the security and stability of the country. Prime Minister Trudeau has announced sanctions against Russia, additional military contributions to support NATO, and new refugee policies to facilitate Ukrainian families’ immigration to the country. In January 2023, Anita Anand, Canada’s Defense Minister, made a surprise visit to Ukraine and announced additional aid in the form of 200 Canadian-made armored vehicles worth \$90 million. This deal is part of Prime Minister Trudeau’s announcement of an additional \$500 million in military aid for Ukraine in November 2022. Moreover, Canada purchased a National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System from the United States to donate to Ukraine, worth \$406 million. This builds on the \$3.4 billion in Canadian aid to Ukraine.

Canada’s relationship with India has also been recently tested. In September 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused the Indian government of potentially being involved in the assassination of a Sikh separatist in British Columbia. India denied the accusations and almost two-thirds of Canada’s formal diplomatic representation in India was expelled when New Delhi threatened to suspend their diplomatic immunity. To ease the diplomatic rift, India has decided to resume providing visa services to citizens of Canada, however some level of tension persists.

### 3. Canada-GCC Fact Sheet

- Canada’s trade in merchandise goods with GCC countries in 2021

Country	Exports	Imports
Saudi Arabia	\$1.91B	\$1.68B
United Arab Emirates	\$2.28B	\$555M
Qatar	\$135M	\$91.3M
Oman	\$55.4M	\$59.5M
Bahrain	\$173M	\$43.8M
Kuwait	\$109M	\$13.6M

Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC)

#### *Establishment of Diplomatic Relationship*

- Canada-GCC Diplomatic Relations: Kuwait (1965), Saudi Arabia (1973), Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (1974)

#### *Current Diplomatic Representation*

- Embassy of Canada in Riyadh: Ambassador Jean-Philippe Linteau
- The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Ottawa
- Embassy of Canada in Abu Dhabi: Ambassador Radha Krishna Panday
- UAE Embassy in Ottawa: Ambassador



- Fahad Saeed Al Raqbani
- Embassy of Canada in Doha: Ambassador Isabelle Martin
- Embassy of the State of Qatar in Ottawa: Ambassador Khalid bin Rashid Al-Mansouri
- Embassy of Canada in Kuwait: Ambassador Aliya Mawani
- Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Ottawa: Ambassador Reem Alkhaled

### *Key Canadian Officials with Responsibility for the Gulf Region*

- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Mélanie Joly
- Minister of International Trade: Mary Ng
- Executive Director of the Middle East Relations Divisions, Global Affairs Canada: Gregory Galligan
- Minister of International Development: Ahmed Hussien

### *Key Research Centers and Think Tanks*

- The Institute for Peace & Diplomacy: <https://peacediplomacy.org/>
- Fraser Institute: <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/>
- Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP): <https://irpp.org/>
- Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI): <https://www.cigionline.org/>
- Canadian Global Affairs Institute (CGAI): <https://www.cgai.ca/>
- Macdonald-Laurier Institute (MLI): <https://www.macdonaldlaurier.ca/>
- Brookfield Institute: <https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/>
- Frontier Centre for Public Policy: <https://fcpp.org/>

### *Selected Key Regional Experts*

- Robert J. Bookmiller, Millersville University

- Peter Jones, University of Toronto
- Houchang Hassan-Yari, Royal Military College of Canada
- Thomas Juneau, University of Ottawa




### *Key Recent Literature*

- [Now is the Time for Canada to Re-think Middle East Policy - April 2023](#)
- [Deconstructing the Changing Middle East Security Architecture – April 2023](#)
- [A Middle East Cooperation and Security Process: Has the Time Come? – March 2022](#)
- [The Middle East in Canadian foreign policy and national identity formation – October 2021](#)
- [Evaluation of Global Affairs Canada’s Contribution to the Middle East Strategy – February 2020](#)

## **4. Key Developments in Canada-GCC Relations**

### *Canada-Saudi Arabia*

- In May 2023, the two countries announced the restoration of ties to “their previous state” on the basis of “mutual respect and common interests,” according to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The decision to resume diplomatic



relations follows on the discussion between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum in Bangkok in November 2022.

- On July 14, 2022, Saudi Arabia signed the Artemis Accords, joining Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Accords aim to advance NASA's Artemis program response to space exploration.
- In 2022, Canada exported more than \$1.7 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia – an increase from \$1.3 billion in 2020, making Saudi Arabia Canada's top export destination for arms, following the United States.

#### Canada-United Arab Emirates

- In October 2023, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the first UAE-Canada Joint Committee meeting at its headquarters in Abu Dhabi, co-chaired by Reem Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, and Mélanie Joly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. "The Joint Committee serves as a testament to the growing bilateral ties between the UAE and Canada, which have continued to flourish, notably in the economic field. These strengthened relations reflect the shared commitment of both nations to foster cooperation, mutual prosperity, and an enduring partnership that also encompasses cultural, diplomatic, and people-to-people ties."
- UAE's Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayid Al-Nahyan received his

Canadian counterpart in October 2023 to discuss ways to enhance bilateral relations in several fields, including economics, trade, investment, and energy. The two foreign ministers "explored opportunities for cooperation in the environment and climate change, in the backdrop of the UAE hosting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) this year in Expo City Dubai."

- In December 2022, Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, visited the United Arab Emirates to enhance cooperation on international development. Key topics included climate change, food security, biodiversity, education, and health.
- In July 2022, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, welcomed the then Ambassador of Canada to the UAE, Marcy-Grossman. The two stressed that UAE and Canada have solid strategic relations.
- In April 2022, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, spoke on the phone regarding bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

#### Canada-Qatar

- In November 2022, Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, visited Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Minister Sajjan also met with Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, to discuss shared priorities.



- In October 2022, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs H.E. Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah met with Canadian Minister of National Defense H.E. Anita Anand during his visit to Canada, where they discussed the relations between the two sides and ways of enhancing and developing them.
- In August 2022, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, H.E. Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani, met with the UAE Ambassador of Canada, H.E. Stefanie McCollum.
- On April 4, 2022, the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke about the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The two agreed to cooperate toward mitigating the global economic impacts of the war.
- Canada's Governor General, Mary Simon, visited Qatar in March 2022. She also met with Canadian Armed Forces personnel stationed at the Al-Udeid Air Base.

#### Canada-Oman

- In 2020, bilateral trade ties between the two countries rose from about CA\$127 million (OMR40 million) in 2017 to CA\$145.5 million (OMR46.4 million).

#### Canada-Kuwait

- In October 2023, the two countries held the Canada-Kuwait Business Summit in Montreal and Toronto in Canada from October 1-5, 2023.
- In May 2023, Kuwait's foreign minister held talks with his Canadian counterpart during his visit to Canada to discuss increasing bilateral relations. The two foreign ministers also signed an MoU to establish a bilateral political consultation mechanism between the ministries.
- In December 2022, Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific

Economic Development Agency of Canada, visited Kuwait to advance the Canada-Kuwait partnership. Minister Sajjan and Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance development cooperation.

- Canada's Governor General, Mary Simon, visited Kuwait in March 2022. She also toured Camp Canada at the Ali Al Salem Air Base, meeting with members of the Canadian Armed Forces stationed in the country in support of Operation IMPACT in her capacity as Commander-in-Chief of Canada.

Overall, Canada's relationship with the GCC continues to be positive. In 2013, Canada and the GCC states established the Canada-GCC Strategic Dialogue, committed to a long-term strategic partnership and promoting mutual economic prosperity, security, and stability. The second ministerial meeting was held on May 23, 2016, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The meeting was co-chaired by His Excellency Dr. Nizar Bin Obaid Madani, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Excellency Mr. Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, the GCC Secretary-General, and Their Excellencies, the Foreign Ministers of the GCC Member States, also participated in the ministerial meeting. The ministers discussed various issues, including conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and cooperation on mutual humanitarian, political, and trade goals. Moreover, Canada also plays a political role within its membership of NATO, G7 and the G20.

Canada has also improved its relations with Saudi Arabia after the decision to re-establish diplomatic ties. There are numerous topics on which Saudi-Canada cooperation needs to be considered, including nonproliferation issues, nuclear safety, maritime security, cybersecurity, energy security,





environment and climate change, disaster prevention (i.e., pandemics and earthquakes), food security, counterterrorism, as well as humanitarian aid and donations. Additionally, Canada also has a lot to offer in terms of softer security issues, such as enhancing collaboration on humanitarian aid as well as advancing peace negotiations in conflict zones. The complete restoration of ties offers an opportunity to bring back the positive relationship between Saudi Arabian international students and Canadian institutions.

Canada is also cooperating with the Gulf states in mediation and diplomacy and contributing to conflict resolution efforts in the Middle East. This comes at a time where the GCC states are firmly establishing themselves as important political and economic power brokers at the international level. Canada's history of mediating conflicts makes it an ideal partner for peacebuilding and conflict-resolution efforts, both in the Middle East and abroad. For instance, Canada is working closely with Qatar on releasing the hostages in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Canada is also playing an

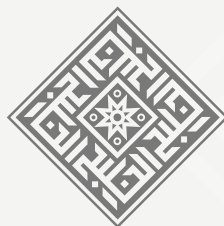
important role in providing aid for Palestinians. In October 2023, Global Affairs Canada announced that Canada would provide an additional \$50 million in humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and \$10 million designated previously. According to Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly, "it is critical that Palestinian civilians in Gaza who need life-saving assistance receive it as soon as possible," and "Canada will continue to work with its trusted and experienced humanitarian partners to make sure this funding reaches those who are suffering."

#### 4. GRC Material

- [Saudi-Canada Relations: Restoration of Ties](#) - Amnah Mosly - Gulf Research Center - July 2023
- [Discovering the Arabian Gulf: Canada's Evolving Ties with the GCC States](#) – Robert J. Bookmiller - Gulf Research Center – December 2006







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