

UAE Military Alliances: Accessing the Challenges and Impacts Toward Regional Stability and Security

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive review of the United Arab Emirates' military alliances, examining their strategic objectives and drivers, while understanding the challenges and their impact over regional stability and security in the Middle East. By analysing key bilateral and multilateral defence partnerships, the research explores how the UAE leverages its military collaborations to strengthen national security, project influence, and respond to emerging threats. The study also identifies significant challenges, including geopolitical rivalries, alliance asymmetries, and the risk of overextension. Through a critical assessment of both the benefits and limitations of these alliances, the study offers insights into how the UAE's military strategies influence broader regional dynamics and highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates military strength with diplomatic and cooperative regional engagement. The study also focused over Neoclassical Realism and Balance of Power theory and integrate the two to cover the whole topic under discussion. The findings concluded that an interview approach is the most suitable one to conduct such kind of study and a continuous monitoring of the alliances is needed for their success.

Keywords: Military alliance, Regional stability, Balance of threat, Neoclassical realism

1. Introduction

Military alliances are cooperative agreements between two or more organizations that come together to achieve mutually beneficial goals. These partnerships can take various forms, such as joint ventures, licensing agreements, or distribution partnerships. In today's globalized business environment, alliances have become increasingly prevalent. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has formed alliances over the past two decades as part of a strategic shift to enhance its security, regional influence, and global standing. This transformation reflects both geopolitical necessity and ambition.

Defense alliances can take various forms, primarily categorized as bilateral or multilateral alliances. Bilateral alliances are sometimes more flexible in terms of decision-making and action, as they involve fewer parties. The Middle East has long been unstable due to wars, terrorism, sectarian conflicts, and rivalries (e.g. Iran-Saudi tensions). As a small but wealthy nation, the UAE lacks the population for a massive standing army, so alliances provide security guarantees. The most suitable examples of bilateral alliance are The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) started as a series of bilateral agreements between the United States and other European nations, later expanding into a multilateral alliance. On the other hand, multilateral alliances involve three or more countries joining together in a pact for mutual defense and cooperation.

The UAE has cooperated especially closely with United States in the form of defense pacts and arms sales. They also have the alliance with Saudi Arabia with the name of regional strategy and military operations. Likewise with Israel since the Abraham Accords (2020), intelligence and defense cooperation. So with France commonly known as military bases and joint exercises. Also with Egypt and Jordan which is named as Arab security coordination.



most suitable examples are again NATO, as it evolved, became a prominent multilateral defense alliance involving multiple countries from North America and Europe .

The UAE wants to be a regional power, shaping outcomes in Yemen, Libya, and Horn of Africa. With the help of military alliance, it projects power far beyond its borders, including via: Military bases abroad (e.g., Eritrea, Somaliland), Support for political factions (e.g., Haftar in Libya), and Naval presence in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. On the other hand, Iran is viewed as a threat due to its support for proxy groups and missile/drone capabilities. Forming military alliances helps counterbalance these threats through joint intelligence and military alliances .

The UAE is a small state in terms of territory and population but possesses advanced defense capabilities and significant economic power. Situated in a volatile Middle East, it faces persistent security challenges such as regional conflicts, terrorism, and maritime threats, but no imminent risk of direct invasion. The balance-of-power paradigm, rooted in neorealism, holds that states form alliances primarily to counter pressing external threats. Neoclassical Realism offers a way to explore this, as it recognizes that state behavior is shaped not only by systemic pressures but also by domestic political considerations, which together may explain the UAE's pursuit of alliances for both security and influence. The UAE faces various security challenges, including regional conflicts, terrorism, and maritime security threats .

Military alliances of UAE may play a crucial role in shaping regional power dynamics in the whole Middle East. By aligning itself with other militarily powerful nations, the UAE seeks to assert its influence and maintain stability in the region, particularly amidst ongoing conflicts and rivalries. In a real sense the need for the study can be seen from the regional instability including conflicts in Yemen, Syria, and ongoing tensions with Iran. These issues pose significant challenges to the UAE's security and stability as well. Military alliances with militarily capable partners serve as a deterrent against potential threats and provide support in times of crisis.

After reviewing the literature it can be seen that with the context of Middle east and especially UAE a clear gap exists in the literature especially regarding gulf countries because within the field of international relations, Neoclassical realism has frequently been assumed to comprise the pursuit of regional security and stability, however, hardly any study has been found catering Neoclassical realism and implement it over UAE especially with regard to military alliances for bringing regional security and stability. As the existing research on Middle Eastern alliances tends to focus on external threats, without fully considering how systemic pressures and domestic political factors interact to shape small-state strategies . This study addresses that gap by applying Neoclassical Realism to analyze the drivers and challenges of the UAE's alliances and using Balance of Power theory to assess their outcomes for regional stability and national security.

2. Literature Review

The literature review covered a detailed analysis of the available literature over military alliance of the armies and regional power stability with reference to internal and external threats. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has strategically engaged in operational military alliances with various Middle Eastern countries, playing a significant role in regional security dynamics . These alliances have evolved to address common security challenges, enhance military capabilities, and foster cooperation across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and beyond.

The UAE is a key member of the GCC, a political and economic alliance comprising six Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman) . The GCC states share common security concerns, primarily related to regional stability, maritime security, and countering external threats. Military cooperation within the GCC includes joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and coordination of defense policies to enhance collective security . The best example in this regard includes The Peninsula Shield Force, established in 1984, serves as a GCC collective defense mechanism to respond to external threats and crises in member states. The collective military presence and readiness of alliance members serve as a deterrent to terrorist groups, dissuading them from carrying out attacks and disrupting their operational capabilities.

Military alliances also provide political support and solidarity among member states in the global fight against terrorism, enhancing diplomatic efforts to isolate and sanction terrorist-sponsoring states or organizations . Sharing intelligence and conducting joint patrols can help address common security challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, and transnational crime. Establishing joint command structures and coordination mechanisms enables unified planning, decision-making, and execution of military operations . Coordinating military deployments, exercises, and presence patrols sends a clear signal of solidarity and resolve, deterring adversaries from challenging regional stability .

Developing joint crisis management protocols and communication channels enables rapid response to emerging threats or crises, reducing the risk of escalation . Collaborating on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations demonstrates solidarity and strengthens regional resilience in the face of natural disasters or humanitarian crises . The two alliances of UAE are most renowned with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The UAE maintains a robust military alliance with Saudi Arabia, driven by shared strategic interests and mutual security concerns. The most prominent example is that during the Yemeni Civil War, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been leading the military coalition against Houthi rebels, known as the Saudi-led coalition, aiming to restore the internationally recognized government of Yemen .

By promoting cooperation and coordination in military affairs, these alliances help mitigate conflicts and promote peace in the Middle East. However, despite the benefits, operational military alliances in the Middle East face challenges such as political divergences, differing strategic priorities, and regional rivalries . Maintaining alliance cohesion and navigating complex geopolitical dynamics are essential for ensuring their effectiveness in addressing current and emerging security threats .

The first strategy was through coordinating logistical support, rapid deployment of assets, and joint response efforts maximizes the effectiveness of relief operations and minimizes the impact of disasters on regional stability. However, it's crucial to ensure that such alliances are transparent, inclusive, and respectful of the sovereignty and interests of all participating states to maintain trust and credibility. Hence, there is a dire need to conduct further research over operational military alliances among armies for attaining regional stability because it will enhance cooperation, coordination, and capacity building to address common security challenges effectively faced by the middle east.

2.1 Drivers of Alliance Formation

There are certain factors which act as a driver of alliance strategy. These drivers confirm the benefits that the UAE will have after these military alliances. These drives include; geopolitical factors, economic factors, internal politics, and regional conflicts and interventions. The UAE's military alliances are primarily driven by the need to balance the regional threats posed by Iran, the power dynamics within the GCC, and the global influence of external powers. The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent rise of the Islamic Republic heightened security concerns in the UAE, making military alliances with global powers, especially the U.S., crucial for its national security . The UAE's involvement in the Yemen conflict since 2015 further complicates its military strategy. However, the UAE's approach to balancing relations between the U.S. and other global players, including Russia and China, introduces an element of strategic ambiguity to its foreign policy.

Secondly, economic considerations are a crucial factor in shaping the UAE's military alliances. The UAE's wealth, derived from its oil and gas resources, has enabled it to invest heavily in advanced military technologies and develop strong defense capabilities. The UAE has forged relationships with major arms producers, particularly the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, facilitating the acquisition of advanced weaponry, including fighter jets, air defense systems, and drones. These military investments, in turn, enable the UAE to project power in the region and secure its interests.

Third and most critical element is the UAE's internal political structure which also plays a significant role in shaping its foreign and military policy. The country is a federation of seven emirates, with the leadership primarily vested in the Emir of Abu Dhabi. National identity, shaped by both Islamic values and a desire for regional leadership, also influences the UAE's approach to military alliances. The UAE has long presented itself as a model of stability and prosperity in a tumultuous region . As such, its military alliances are not only a tool of security but also a means of projecting a strong national identity and influence within the Gulf and wider Arab world.

Fourth the UAE's military alliances have also been influenced by its participation in various regional conflicts. The most prominent example is the UAE's involvement in the Yemen Civil War, which began in 2015 as part of the Saudi-led coalition. The UAE's role in the Yemen conflict has been contentious, leading to debates over the long-term effectiveness of its alliances within the GCC and its standing in global diplomacy .

2.2 Challenges in Implementing UAE's Military Alliances

The UAE's foreign policy has been heavily influenced by its security concerns and its desire to establish itself as a regional power. The establishment of the UAE in 1971, following the British withdrawal from the Gulf, marked the beginning of a more robust foreign and defense policy. From the outset, the UAE sought military alliances to counter perceived threats from regional actors, especially Iraq and Iran. The GCC, established in 1981, represents one

of the most significant multilateral alliances for the UAE. The GCC's objective is to overcome the challenges including political, economic, and military cooperation among its member states . Over time, however, the GCC has faced internal divisions, particularly regarding foreign policy and military interventions, raising questions about the effectiveness of this alliance in securing long-term stability in the region. One major issue is the uncertainty of long-term commitment from powerful allies, particularly the United States, whose shifting foreign policy priorities such as the pivot to Asia and reduced dependence on Middle Eastern oil raise concerns about future security guarantees . Furthermore, balancing relations with competing powers—such as maintaining ties with both the U.S. and China—creates diplomatic friction and may jeopardize sensitive defense collaborations . These challenges complicate the UAE's efforts to use military alliances as a stable foundation for regional security and strategic influence.

2.3 Research Gaps

Military alliances between countries play a pivotal role in shaping regional power dynamics and stability . Military alliances typically emerge from shared security concerns among nations . Military alliances contribute significantly to regional stability by providing a framework for managing conflicts and crises. In regions where there are disparities in military capabilities among countries, military alliances can help balance power dynamics . Smaller or weaker states within an alliance benefit from the security guarantees and military support of larger or more powerful allies. This balance reduces the incentive for aggressive actions by stronger states and enhances overall regional security.

On the other hand, member states may become overly dependent on the alliance for security, potentially compromising their sovereignty in decision-making. Likewise, conflicting interests among member states can complicate alliance cohesion and decision-making during crises. Despite challenges, military alliances are crucial mechanisms for enhancing collective security and promoting regional stability. However, research is needed to identify the challenges such as divergent interests and sovereignty concerns to effectively maintain stability. Hence, based on the above discussion it is needed to explore the issue further and to identify the rational and the need for regional power stability for promoting military alliances in UAE.

2.4 Theoretical Support

The study is supported mainly by Neoclassical Realism theory . To cover the outcomes of this research which includes regional stability and security, the support of balance of power they have been taken . Both the theories are discussed below in detail to understand how these theories support the argument and how this study enrich the body of knowledge.

A. Neoclassical Realism Theory

Neoclassical Realism offers a more nuanced lens by integrating both domestic and external factors. Coined by Gideon Rose in 1998, Neoclassical Realism posits that a state's foreign policy is shaped not only by the international system but also by internal variables such as leadership perception, state institutions, and national identity . From a Neorealist perspective, the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to seek security through alliances . Through military alliances, the UAE attempts to balance against more powerful states (such as Iran) and shape regional order to reflect its strategic interests .

On the other hand, as far as the domestic factors are concerned, what distinguishes Neoclassical Realism is its recognition that external threats are interpreted and acted upon through domestic political structures and perceptions . While the UAE actively seeks security through alliances, it must navigate several external challenges that are amplified under Neoclassical Realist analysis. One major challenge is the uncertainty of alliance reliability, especially from great powers like the United States. Under Neoclassical Realism, this uncertainty stems not only from structural changes in the global order but also from the UAE's perception of shifting U.S. priorities . Neoclassical Realism helps explain how these overlapping commitments are filtered through UAE leadership priorities and institutional capacity, which often struggle to balance these tensions .

However, controversial alliances such as normalization with Israel under the Abraham Accords have provoked criticism across the Arab world, potentially damaging the UAE's soft power and regional standing . Neoclassical Realism highlights how these domestic social factors can constrain or complicate alliance maintenance.

B. Balance of Power Theory

This study must dimension, one related to challenges and opportunities and other related to regional power stability. One of the central theoretical frameworks that explains the UAE's behavior in the regional stability and

security is the Balance of Power Theory . Balance of Power Theory suggests that states act to prevent any one actor from gaining a preponderance of power, which could threaten the sovereignty or independence of others. The Balance of Power approach does not eliminate conflict but reduces the likelihood of domination and large-scale war . Thus, the UAE plays a middle power role, using diplomacy, defense cooperation, and economic partnerships to help stabilize a region often defined by volatility .

2.5 Theoretical Integration

The study is being supported by neo classical realism and balance of power theory. Theoretical integration is the addition in the body of knowledge when independently a theory is unable to cover the whole issue . According to the theory the countries make military alliances to strengthen their safety and security. The UAE military alliances can be effectively explained through Neoclassical Realism, which emphasizes that state behavior is shaped by both external pressures and domestic factors such as leadership perception, national identity, and institutional capacity. Facing regional threats like Iran's military influence, political instability in Yemen, and the rise of non-state actors, the UAE's leadership particularly under President Mohammed bin Zayed has perceived alliances with powerful nations such as the United States, France, and Israel as essential to its long-term security strategy. These alliances reflect not just a response to external threats, but also the UAE's ambition to project itself as a modern, proactive, and capable state.

Thus, simultaneously, Balance of Power Theory provides a structural explanation for the UAE's role in maintaining regional power and stability. By aligning with other regional and global actors, the UAE contributes to preventing any one state, such as Iran, from dominating the Middle East. Together, these two theories show how the UAE's alliance strategy is both a product of rational threat assessment and domestic strategic calculation, reinforcing its security and promoting broader regional equilibrium. Through its alliances, the UAE seeks to promote regional stability not only by increasing its military capabilities but also by fostering multilateral cooperation, economic interdependence, and diplomatic engagement.

3. Proposed Methodology

The objective of the study is to understand the role of military alliances of the UAE over regional stability and security. The nature of the study is exploratory; therefore, a qualitative study is supposed to be the most suitable option . Although the quantitative method may not capture many types of information , such as context and general statements, including qualitative data in the qualitative design widens the range of research . However, when data reduction takes place in qualitative design, many important data is lost . Thus, in the qualitative study data trimming is an art which need precision and quite good handling of the data received during the interviews.

In this study, the researcher intends to explore the influence of military alliances over regional stability, so the qualitative method is the most appropriate method. In this qualitative research methodology, the researcher will study things in their natural settings and will only attempt to make sense of the terms or meanings people bring to them . The study will employ qualitative methods to gather and analyses data. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with key informants, such as managers and executives involved in alliance decision-making and implementation. The purpose for choosing the top leadership is to get the insights from the challenges that they face and the objectives that they have behind military alliances. The sample size will be determined based on the rules of qualitative studies where it is recommended to conduct 5 to 25 interviews, however, if the data saturation didn't start at 25 interviews, then more interviews will be conducted.

3.1 Interview Guide

The objective of a qualitative study is to ask simple questions to answer complex things that need to be answered through research . Another critical part of qualitative method is managing both simplicity and complexity at the same time . The researcher will address this issue by asking questions and interpreting the data in a simple and understandable way. To conduct interviews, the researcher will develop an interview guide to list the questions and issues under investigation during the interview. The purpose of interviews will be to highlight the ideas of the interviewees about the issue under discussion .

The interview guide is developed to list the questions and issues that will be under investigation during the interview. Singular questions introduce only one idea within the question . Researchers should ask clear questions in a manner and form understandable by the participant. The questions will, at a minimum, be open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear. Open-ended questions allow a more detailed response on the part of the interviewee. Neutral

questioning helps researchers resist the inclination to lead participants toward a specific answer through the type of question asked.

The enquiry will be made regarding the overall impact of the military alliance over regional stability. Up to what extent can military alliances influence regional stability? What is the impact of operational alliances over regional stability? What is the impact of technological alliance over regional stability? And what is the impact of logistics alliances over regional stability?

3.2 Data Collection and Processing

The data for this research will be compiled using in-depth person-to-person interviews. In depth interviewing is the primary method of data collection wherein the researcher attempts to uncover the essence, the invariant structure, of the meaning of the experience . As compared to direct observation, written documents, and audio-visual materials, in-depth interviews assume that an interviewer and one or more interviewees participate in the process .

Although qualitative research allows researchers to alter interview questions as needed, the questions will be finalized at an early stage, thereby following the format of a structured interview . Spontaneous, naturally occurring statements are more authentic and more meaningful than the responses of structured interviews .

In this qualitative study the researcher will only try to interpret the truth that the respondents have observed. This analysis involves refraining from judgment and synthesis. In this study the researcher will eliminate personal judgement to obtain clear insight of the object being researched . The researcher will also go through the step of data reduction, which is the next step of research, which means to avoid multiple meanings of the words to avoid distraction from the main issue . Thus, the data will be reduced and synthesized. The final stage of research is synthesis of the structure.

The coding will be applied to each segment of the response received of the interviewee. The responses will be divided into fragments, and each fragment will be given a separate code. Coding will be done by the process of open coding . The basic aim will be to capture the meaning of the fragment. Later, the initial codes will be collected, and an analytical framework will be developed which will help in reduction of codes. Finally, a central idea will be given a code which is known as selective coding. In report writing, the data will be presented in such a way that it will help to understand the issue being studied. The participant selection process will include a nonprobability sampling format. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher will utilize member checks and a defined audit trail. Evidence of data saturation will be carefully monitored to ensure that sufficient information has been obtained from the target number of interviews . The researcher will collect the data and will arrange the data according to the theory of the research or theories regarding the issue.

4. Summary of the Key findings

Interviews from 20 officials from the ministry of defense were conducted. 14 interview questions were asked, and their responses were divided into various themes. All the questions have been discussed through free-flowing in-depth interviews. The findings are primarily linked with the objectives of the study.

4.1 Internal Factors Behind the UAE Military Alliance Endeavor

The people from the ministry of defense who were interviewed revealed that the decisions to strengthen partnerships with global powers, participate in multilateral frameworks, and invest in advanced defense technologies are influenced by internal assessments of operational readiness. Similarly, investing in indigenous capabilities was designed to enhance self-reliance ensuring the UAE retains flexibility in its military strategic choices. Therefore, the overall findings regarding the first research objective confirmed that domestic motivations were central drivers of UAE military alliances. These internal motivations include from perceptions and institutional priorities for technological capacity building. The findings also support the narrative of Neoclassical Realist interpretations of small-state security strategy.

4.2 External Factors Behind UAE Military Alliance Endeavor

The external factors that shaped the military alliance of AUE were regional power dynamics and relationships with global powers. The findings revealed that the perceived threats from neighboring states especially Iran act as a major driver of the military alliances. Moreover, to a lesser extent the UAE also faced some threats from Qatar as well as broader regional instability was the part of external threats. Additionally, UAE's engagement with multilateral frameworks like the GCC and Arab Coalition reduced this external threat. However, strategic partnerships with the

U.S., China, and Russia enforced and helped to create a balance. Global systemic pressures, such as shifting U.S. engagement in the Gulf, technological proliferation, and regional energy transitions, were argued as influencing both the scope and nature of military alliances of UAE. The analysis indicated that the UAE leverages external partnerships not only to enhance military capability and deterrence but also to strategically balance the regional power. Therefore, the overall findings regarding the second research objective confirmed that external factors were central drivers of the UAE military alliances. The analysis highlighted that the interplay between systemic external pressures and domestic strategic decision-making fulfilled the need of understanding the external determinants of UAE military alliance behavior.

4.3 Implications of Military Alliance Endeavor in the Middle East

The military alliances of UAE also improved deterrence of UAE and shifted the power dynamics. The findings highlighted that the partnerships in the form of military alliance and interventions such as those in Yemen and Libya served to project influence. These interventions strengthen coalition-based deterrence which resulted in stabilizing specific operational theaters. Meanwhile, the analysis clarified that potential unintended consequences have also been anticipated. These unintended consequences include the risk of regional tensions and may also cause misperceptions among neighboring states. These controversies may also increase the dependence of the UAE for security over external powers. These alliances helped UAE in gaining multilateral security coordination and technological advancements. Because of these benefits, UAE enhanced regional deterrence credibility. Therefore, the overall findings regarding the third research objective confirmed that UAE military alliances achieved successfully the targeted implications. These insights illustrate how the UAE's strategic choices both shape and are shaped by Middle Eastern security dynamics.

5. Discussions

The overall responses were divided into nine key themes. All the themes are discussed in detail below.

5.1 Global and Regional Alliance and Strategic Partnerships

Regarding the global alliance and strategic partnerships, the UAE has strong military alliance with U.S., China, Russia, and other Western powers. The objective of these alliances is to improve its deterrence by accessing advanced technology. This also ensures interoperability, as one of the respondents said;

“Our alliances, especially with the United States and Western partners, have strengthened deterrence by signaling that threats to the UAE will face a coordinated response.”

UAE thus believes that military alliances reduce the dependence over foreign support during the times of crisis and contribute more towards autonomous strategic posture. At the same time UAE has developed multilateral cooperation at regional level especially with GCC, Arab coalition, and regional frameworks. These regional alliances also improved crisis response capabilities of the UAE. As one of the interviewers said,

“Through multilateral frameworks, the UAE strengthens its political influence while supporting collective security and regional cohesion.”

Hence, the coalition between GCC and the Arab countries increased the capability for rapid response through joint exercises and operational coordination. UAE has also focused a lot over industrial collaboration in the defense and technology sector. UAE has focused over arms procurement and joint research and development. In this regard one of the interviewers said that;

“Collaborations in maintenance, upgrades, and R&D ensure our technological capabilities evolve alongside global standards.”

The objective behind the military alliances in defense and technology is to create deterrence through military modernization and operational flexibility.

5.2 Balance of Power and Regional Deterrence

The key purpose behind the military alliances by UAE was creating deterrence and balancing regional power. Military alliances of UAE have reshaped regional power dynamics and have created significant deterrence against potential aggressors. As one of the interviewers said,

“Operational partnerships with allies increase deterrence credibility, which is understood by Saudi Arabia as supportive but prompts Iran to reinforce its own defenses.”

These military alliances have helped UAE to prevent destabilizing power vacuums. They have achieved this by creating credible defense networks across the Gulf. The military alliance of UAE has provided a stabilizing role as these alliances act as a tool for strategic signaling in the region.

5.3 Military Interventions and Joint Operational Experience

One of the purposes of these military alliances by the UAE was demonstrating power. Additionally, these interventions affected regional perceptions as well. Supporting the same argument one of the interviewers said that;

“Our interventions are intended to stabilize conflict zones and counter extremist threats, signaling our commitment to regional security.”

This act provided valuable training to UAE armed forces. Additionally, it helped UAE in capacity building which enhanced long term regional stability. These interventions have also served operational, political, and strategic purposes. Likewise, another objective was joint exercises and collaborative trainings. This joint training helped UAE gain interoperability through rapid deployment capabilities. Regarding joint training one of the interviewees responded that;

“Joint training initiatives within the GCC and coalition frameworks help standardize procedures, enhance interoperability, and build mutual trust.”

Joint training being the part of military alliances helps in the integration of new platforms. These trainings regimes ensured that UAE military can operate in high-tech operational environment. This readiness has been realized just because of the joint trainings, which is the core component of the UAE’s defense posture.

5.4 Intelligence Sharing and Sustainable Security Policy

Intelligence sharing helped UAE to anticipate threats. Likewise, joint monitoring in coordination with the military allies improved the capabilities of UAE for anticipating unpredictable threats. In this regard one of the interviewers said that;

“Shared intelligence through alliances allows preemptive actions and threat mitigation, enhancing overall regional security.”

Intelligence sharing, especially during the interventions, significantly improved situational awareness about regional threats. This intelligence sharing reinforced the security planning. Moreover, strategic partnerships enhance both tactical and strategic intelligence capabilities which helped in achieving sustainable security. Military alliances of United Arab Emirates through multilateral engagements ensured long term peace and stability. One of the interviewers claimed that;

“Long-term security requires credible capabilities alongside cooperative engagement with regional and global actors.”

The United Arab Emirates military alliances have provided a balanced security for United Arab Emirates, and this policy is integrated with strategic autonomy. This has been achieved through strong partnerships for promoting regional stability. United Arab Emirates succeeded in it because the country has balanced independence with external support.

5.5 Risks and Challenges

While expanding military alliances United Arab Emirates has also attracted risks especially through interventions. These alliances have not only created deterrence but also have caused regional tensions. Military alliances have caused an arms race in the region which has developed perception of assertiveness. Regarding this aspect one of the interviewers said;

“While interventions strengthen deterrence, they also introduce risks of unintended escalation or long-term entanglement. Some partnerships may create dependency or provoke competition among neighboring states.”

Therefore, the country must realize that while seeking the benefits, the costs should not be forgotten. United Arab Emirates has recognized that strategic gains need to be compared against potential destabilization. The political backlash should not be ignored, which has gained significance because of the military alliances.

6. Implications of the Study

The implications of the study can be divided into practical as well as theoretical contributions. Both the ramifications of the study are discussed below in detail.

6.1 Practical Contribution

The study was conducted to understand the military alliance of UAE; hence, it is better to understand the motivating factors and the factors that triggered the outcomes of those alliances. This defense strategy shifted the influence of the country in the region. Additionally, the findings of the study will help the policy makers of the progressing countries that are not considered as leaders in the defense industry like United States, Russia, or France, to prioritize the military alliance for improving operational and strategic advantages. Moreover, the findings of the study will help the relatively less powerful countries to understand the role of military alliances for achieving technological and defense-industrial benefits. Considering the regional participation of UAE in GCC and Arab coalition the policy makers and the decision makers may seek the importance of interoperability.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

The study was based on two key theories the first was neoclassical realism theory and the second was balance of power theory. The study intends to integrate the two theories to provide a comprehensive framework. Initially, the research is based on the Neoclassical realism theory which posits that the foreign policy of a country and military alliance behaviors are shaped primarily by systematic pressures. The theory also supports the argument of having a balanced approach as is being followed by UAE. Thus, in line with neoclassical realism theory being a small state UAE exercise discretionary foreign policy within systemic constraints. The theory highlights that the interplay between international pressures and domestic strategic choice are the key reason behind alliances. Moreover, the alliances of UAE were not only about material gains but also for the creation of deterrence against Iran to reassure Saudi Arabia. Thus, in support of the narration of neoclassical realism perception management and signaling are integral to alliance behavior.

The second theory that is also very relevant according to the nature of the study is balance of threat theory. The theory emphasizes that countries enter military alliance to prevent dominance by a single actor or coalition. The theory is supportive of the narrative that is being built in this study. The partnerships of UAE with global powers and regional coalitions serve to counterbalance Iran's regional influence. Additionally, the military alliances of UAE also supported the stabilization of the Gulf's power distribution. Thus, in line with balance of power theory UAE through military alliances-maintained equilibrium and prevented relative power imbalances. Supporting the narrative of balance of power theory UAE demonstrated simultaneous balancing. This balancing made by UAE was between the global powers like United States, China, and Russia and regional powers like GCC and Arab coalition. This clearly shows that states pursue multilayered balancing strategies. Additionally, the findings that alliances and interventions as performed by UAE may also lead to unintended consequences, needs to be carefully managed. Hence, balance of power theory provides the key support in balancing the strategies which carry inherent risks.

In a nutshell, the integration of neoclassical realism and balance of power theory is best theoretical contribution which the study over military alliances has identified. The theoretical integration also highlights how small states can effectively leverage alliances, interventions, and modernization to achieve strategic autonomy while maintaining regional equilibrium. Thus, the integration of neoclassical realism and balance of power theory provided empirical support to explain small-state strategies in volatile regions, emphasizing discretion, perception, and capability alongside systemic pressures.

7. Limitations and Future Directions

Like any research study, this study also has certain limitations. The study was conducted in UAE, which is a highly controlled country and respondents feel insecure while speaking regarding the government policies. Secondly, the chances of respondent bias was also very high. All the chosen 20 participants were key officials from the Ministry of Defense, Army, Air Force, and Naval Force. While they provide invaluable insider perspectives, their responses may reflect institutional biases, personal loyalty, or strategic framing intended for public perception or political alignment. Thirdly, the study addresses global powers, regional alliances, interventions, and technological collaborations, but hardly captured the broader and rapidly evolving geopolitical context. Factors such as shifting U.S. engagement policies, China's growing influence in the Gulf, energy transitions, cyber warfare, and hybrid threats were discussed but not deeply explored. This limitation constrains the ability to fully assess long-term strategic implications. Finally, the study focuses on current perceptions and historical developments over roughly the past two decades only.

Rapid changes in regional power dynamics, technological warfare, or global energy transitions could alter alliance priorities.

Based on the limitations mentioned above this research opens several avenues for the future studies. The future research should include the neighboring states, regional partners, adversaries, and independent analysts. Additionally, triangulating internal defense perceptions with external assessments can provide more reliable findings. Policymakers can gain a more holistic understanding of how UAE alliances, interventions, and multilateral engagements are interpreted across the Gulf through triangulation. Similarly, integrating quantitative analysis like the trends of defense spending, procurement of arms data, developing indices for the operational readiness, and alliance-specific capabilities will certainly enhance the robustness of the analyses. In future there is also a need to identify the impact of interventions and the UAE's evolving strategic posture. This combination of qualitative and quantitative methods would strengthen policy recommendations and scenario planning.

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