

Security and Defense Policies of the Arabian Gulf Countries

Options, Crisis Management, and Challenges

By

Ashraf Mohammed Keshk

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Hopefully, the book will contribute to providing a regional vision concerning the security and defence policies of the Arab Gulf states.

About the Author

Dr. Ashraf Mohammed Keshk, is a research fellow and the director of the Strategic and International Studies Program at the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies “Derasat” since 2012. He is also the editor-in-chief of “Derasat” journal, a semi-annual publication comprising analyses and studies on strategic, political, international, economic, security, and energy issues, with a special focus on Gulf and Arab affairs. Dr. Keshk holds a PhD degree, with an excellent grade, in Political Science, Cairo University. His thesis was nominated by Cairo University as the best PhD thesis in Political Science in 2009. For more than thirty years, Dr. Keshk has been specializing in regional security issues of the Arabian Gulf, as well as defense issues, especially the regional and international alliances. He worked as an academic mentor at the NATO Defense College in Rome, as part of the Crisis Management Exercise (CMX) which was conducted from 2009 till 2018 and gave several lectures to the College students. Keshk holds also a Defence Studies diploma from NATO Defense College, which he accomplished during a four-month scholarship, He is the author of five books: Gulf Regional Security Development since 2003: A Study of the Impact of NATO’s Strategy, Western Policies towards the Security of the Arabian Gulf, and Egypt’s Water Policy towards the Nile Basin Countries in 1990s, NATO and the Gulf Countries: An Analysis of the Fifteen Year Strategic Partnership (Springer, 2021), and Maritime Security of the Arab Gulf states: Analysis of Current Threats, Confrontation Mechanisms, and Future Challenges (Springer, 2022).

Keshk has published dozens of papers in reputable regional and international journals which are issued in Arabic, English and Italian. He participated, as well, in a lot of international conferences on security of the Arabian Gulf and NATO policies, including the Gulf Research Center’s annual Gulf Research Meeting (GRM), at the University of Cambridge, and many other conferences which were held in Europe. Moreover, he gave many lectures and conducted several training courses on Crisis and Disaster Management; he has taught, for instance,

Bahrain's crisis and disaster management strategy to the MA students at the Royal Police Academy in Bahrain. He writes a weekly article in *Akhbar Al-Khaleej*, a Bahraini newspaper.

Foreword

Though disparity in size is a main feature of countries, and having many big countries adjacent to small ones which might be similar or dissimilar to them in their political, economic and social structures, history has proven that regional and trans-regional conflicts create hard challenges to small states. Consequently, these small states find that they are before three more difficult choices: non-alignment, partnerships, or self-security. Theoretically, non-alignment is a rational policy, but, unfortunately, it does not last unless the other parties want to adhere to it. Alliances, or, rather, partnerships, on the other hand, is the strategic choice which constituted the main base of many small states' foreign policies during the Cold War era. Yet, partnerships, also, cannot long last, being almost dependent on the conditions and variables which have created them, at the first place. Regardless of the first choice and the second one, the third choice; that is, establishing self-security capabilities in terms of quality and quantity, is, currently, the most strategic for small states. Nevertheless, population remains a hindering factor to these states' efforts to enhance their defense capabilities. In other words, small states cannot make an indefinite vertical expansion through 'armament', nor can they make horizontal expansion by annexing other territories. They are, rather, exposed or, even, subject to annexation if their locations were placed within a turbulent regional environment. This theoretical approach is, actually, the main framework governing the security policies of the six Arab Gulf states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Being small states, however, the dilemma of the Arab Gulf states, except Saudi Arabia, is that they face three levels of imbalance of power. The first one lies within these states themselves, as they are divided into big, medium, and small states. The second imbalance is found between the six countries, on the one hand, and their regional parties, "formerly Iraq", and "currently Iran", on the other hand. The third one is the imbalance between the Arab Gulf region as a whole and the major powers which have vital interests in the Gulf region; these interests drive them to intervene in its internal affairs. These three circles, or in another word, imbalances, have their ramifications being

reflected on the security policies of the Arab Gulf states.

Nevertheless, history has proven, also, that the predicament of small and medium states has not only to do with regional conflicts within their geographical space, but it rather lies in the fact that the structure and interactions of the world order itself determine the policies and paths of small states, especially in the event of a sudden international crisis, such as the Ukrainian crisis which forced many small states all over the world, including the Arab Gulf states, to adopt specific policies. Furthermore, the quandary of small states is not confined to formulating certain positions or status, such as non-alignment or partnership. The real quandary is embodied, indeed, in the ramifications, imposed by the international conflicts on their partnerships which might, not only, be military, but could also be economic partnerships. Moreover, the world's preoccupation with an international crisis, similar to the Ukrainian crisis, means a decline of influence on some regions. This, in turn, provides an opportunity to some regional powers to impose threats to their neighboring countries, thus, deepening their imbalance of power. Moreover, the dilemma, emanating from that lack of balance of power, becomes more complicated when these threats exceed the efforts to develop conventional armament and turn into tireless endeavors to develop nuclear weapons, as the Iranian case illustrates.

To this end, this book attempts to identify the security policies of small and medium states, having the Arab Gulf states as case studies. The book comprehensively defines the concept of small states, their security choices on both the theoretical and the practical levels, while the author illustrates how these choices were actually tested, in light of the Gulf states management of certain crises. Through four integrated chapters, the book analyzes the most imperative challenges, hindering the Gulf states' security policies, whether in terms of their self-security policies or their security partnerships with major countries.

Introduction

Within the multifarious goals to which countries yearn, maintaining national security is the essence of all aspirations. Yet, the countries' strategies and mechanisms to realize this essence, or in other words, this aspiration, differ. This disparity emanates, not only from their diverse economic and military capabilities or their political influence, but also from their different sizes which constitute a manipulating factor. The large countries have the power and all the required capabilities which could enable them to maintain their security, while their strength determines their foreign policy and formulates their role on the international arena. In other words, their capabilities determine, for instance, whether to militarily intervene in some crises alone or within alliances. Small states, on the contrary, do not seem to have these privileges; they are often mired by restrictions imposed on them due to their size. Small states cannot develop large national armies, nor can they proceed to unrestrained purchases of the latest Weapons. Their security policies remain closely linked to the regional and international balance of power. Actually, the Arab Gulf states, except Saudi Arabia, provide a prototypical case of small states, the security dilemma of which is heightened by the fact of their being oil exporters in a regional environment marred, for more than four decades, by chronic turmoil and instability. This, actually, raises four fundamental questions: First, what is the real security dilemma of small states and the possible solutions which could help them maintain their security? Second, what are the security policies which the Arab Gulf states have adopted in light of the three previously-illustrated security choices, self-security, security partnerships or alliances, and the non-alignment policy, as classified by the theories of international relations? Third, how did the Gulf countries apply these three choices during the crises they faced, for the past four decades, whether they were a direct part of these crises or were forced to be one? Fourth, what are the most prominent challenges facing the security policies of the Gulf states, as small states, and what are the suitable proposals to confront them? This book attempts to answer these questions through its four chapters.

The first chapter identify the concept of security policies and how small states employ various approaches in applying them. The author, in this chapter, argues that even if there is consensus among researchers on the concept of foreign policies, being closely linked to a country's national security, there would be, always, discrepancies in the content of these policies between major countries and small states. This is, certainly, due to the size of the latter, regardless of their economic capabilities, because what makes a difference, here, is the military power, not the economic potentials. The importance of the military power gains momentum if the small states are located in the midst of a region plagued with turbulences which might affect their own security attitudes. This is in addition to the impact of the world order structure itself on these countries' security policies. Hence, the security dilemma of small countries, which are sometimes described as weak states, is that they face a complicated security dilemma; they have to multiply their relative capabilities, on the one hand, and to preserve their existence as independent, sovereign states, on the other hand.

History has proven that small states were targets of other more powerful countries, or parties that sought to strip them of their physical existence, identity or independence. To this end, the small states might have three security options to handle this dilemma. First, they can resort to increasing their own security capabilities qualitatively and quantitatively, by purchasing the latest weapons and promoting new planes for building and developing their armies; this is actually achieved by applying certain mechanisms, including the necessary recruitment policies. Second, small states could establish several defense alliances and partnerships with major powers, or join regional security organizations, combining countries with which they have common historical, political, economic, social and cultural ties. The aim of this option is to create some sort of power balance, the core prerequisite for regional security. However, if regional security organizations are vital for small states, yet, alliances and partnerships are always subject to the circumstances that have created them, at the first place. Moreover, small states in alliances find themselves before two hard paths or choices, as they are either overwhelmed by the obligations imposed on them if

they became actual members, or get disregarded if they refrain from joining these alliances. The third option is the neutrality policy which has been adopted by many small states through history, and has its foundations in the international law. However, this policy does not last unless the other parties are committed to it. As for the Arab Gulf states, they have adopted the three afore-illustrated options. Out of economic, political, national and technological factors, the GCCs resorted to localizing defense industries through the establishment of national defense companies, so as to complement other governmental efforts, aiming at establishing a domestic defense industry. Nevertheless, this objective is still facing impeding challenges, due to lacking the human capabilities, needed for localizing these industries. This is in addition to the unprecedent acceleration of defense technology development, as well as the difficulty of obtaining it. On the other hand, the Arab Gulf states are keen to build national armies, depending on the compulsory conscription system, and to support it by legislations and the suitable institutions. However, the application of this system in only three GCC states, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, might negatively affect the future of defense cooperation among the Arab Gulf states, constituting the GCC. Within the same context, the Gulf states' defense expenditures have maintained, during the past years, a fixed share of the gross domestic product (GDP). Actually, this rate is bound up with the financial capabilities of these states, and with the Iranian defense expenditures which is increasing each year in spite of the foreign sanctions on Tehran. In addition, the Gulf states exert great efforts to set up a local defense base by proposing localization of military products as a prerequisite for signing defense deals.

The second chapter highlights the security options of the Gulf states, in light of their falling under the small states' category. Analyzing their first option; that is, the collective self-security, as a concept, it is found out that the Arab Gulf states have proceeded towards the implementation of the concept through the establishing, in 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council, as a result of several regional security threats, including the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Iraq- Iran war in 1980-1988. This is in addition to the other international conflicts which were getting

intensified at that time. Actually, enhancing self-security was one of the Gulf states' main goals which they sought to promote through two mechanisms. The first mechanism is embodied in "The Joint Defense Agreement of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf" (CCASG), in 2000, which consists of 12 articles, the same as the North Atlantic Treaty. The (CCASG) stipulates that the security of the Arab Gulf region is one whole unit, and, thus, "Member States consider that any attack on any of them is an attack on all of them and any threat to one of them is a threat to all of them". The Articles (5-8) specify certain approaches and procedures for achieving military integrity. The second mechanism is the establishment of the 'Joint Peninsula Shield Forces Command' in 1982, which was subject to incessant development since its establishment, until 2021, when its name was changed to the "GCC Unified Military Command". Despite comprising all types of land, air and sea forces, the Unified Military Command failed to form a real deterring force due to the divergent visions of the Gulf states regarding its size and mission; this divergence emanates, actually, from the diverse security policies of each Gulf state. This chapter also tackles the second security option; that is, the security alliances and the defense partnerships of the Arab Gulf states, being one of their most strategic options. It is note-worthy that this security path has gained momentum, and its importance was augmented in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. That is why it found its way to validation through a series of security moves, including the signing of several security agreements, in 1991, with a number of major powers. In spite of the importance of these agreements, which are renewed every several years, for maintaining the regional balance of power, they do not include any involuntary Western reaction if any of the Arab Gulf state gets exposed to direct menaces. On the other hand, these partnerships are not confined to the United States; NATO, for instance, has launched, in 2004, a security cooperation initiative, which was joined by four Arab Gulf states. Other partnership initiatives followed, such as, the European Union's "Strategic Partnership with the Gulf states" in 2022, Russia's Collective Security Concept for the Gulf Region, in 2019, and the Chinese initiative to achieve security and stability in the Middle East, in 2021. Though all these initiatives are critically crucial,

they do not include specific or practical mechanisms for maintaining the Arab Gulf states' security; this means that the United States will remain the primary guarantor of security in the Gulf throughout the near future. As for the policy of neutrality, the book presents in the part, tackling this option, a concept contrary to that policy. To illustrate, if the Gulf states have been always committed to adopting neutrality policy towards regional conflicts, yet the later changes in the security concept and the transformation in the concept of regions have necessitated a growing role for the Gulf states in both the Horn of Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean region. The Horn of Africa, on the one hand, represents a strategic importance for the Gulf because it overlooks the Indian Ocean and controls the southern entrance to the Red Sea through Bab al-Mandab, one of the most strategic waterways for the Gulf oil exports. Furthermore, a growing Iranian military influence has been noticed in that region, Iran's gateway to the Yemeni conflict; this has prompted the Gulf states to be present there. Alas, the agendas of the Gulf states in the Horn of Africa region differed and varied; some agendas focused on security, while others were economically-oriented. Unfortunately, there was no unified Gulf strategy. As for the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Gulf states have their presence, there, even before 2011, through economic cooperation. However, the changes which followed 2011, imposed challenges to the Gulf states which were keen to enhance their security and economic presence in that region, yet failed to adopt a unified Gulf policy; they, rather adopted unilateral, and even competitive, policies, which sometimes seemed like a sort of competition. Nevertheless, the main trait which characterized the Gulf cooperation with that region is that it does not take a defensive tint, but rather maintained a certain political and economic facet.

The third chapter assesses the Gulf states' adoption of the three previously clarified security options during crises, when they were not a direct party in the crises, but were, rather, forced to get involved, as with the Iraq-Iran war and the Yemeni crisis, or during other crises where the Gulf states were an actual party, such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The chapter starts with defining international crises, their types, and how the small states' security policies and behaviors differ

according to the type of the crisis itself. To illustrate; small states may resort to manipulation, but they might also get involved and be pulled to the brink of the abyss, to fall at the end in chaos. The author's analysis, in this chapter, focuses on three cohesive standards for assessing the three afore-mentioned crises. The first standard is describing the crisis, specifying the risks and perils they impose on the Gulf states' security as small states, and identifying the suitable mechanisms of managing these crises. During the Iraqi-Iranian war, for instance, the Gulf states were not a party; it has two belligerent parties only, Iran and Iraq, who sought to change the regional balance of power of either of them. However, as war got prolonged, both parties sought to involve the Arab Gulf states in it, through terrorist attacks which targeted their internal security, and then, by targeting the Gulf oil tankers. This has, actually, posed a hard challenge to the Gulf states which managed to overcome this crisis through diplomacy. They and resorted to mediation between the two warring parties, then to the United Nations to issue three UN resolutions, condemning hostilities from both belligerent sides and halting them through the UN Resolution 598. The International partnership was the second mechanism which helped the GCCs confront these threats. Kuwait, for instance, sought assistance from the United States to protect its vessels and maritime commerce, and the US responded by reflagging Kuwaiti oil tankers after 309 attacks against them. These attacks also prompted President Reagan's administration to establish an international maritime alliance consisting of 75 ships to protect oil tankers in the Arabian Gulf. It is note-worthy that putting an end to that war was not far from the Cold War context, as the United States and the Soviet Union resorted, at the time, to imposing pressures on both sides; this, actually, proves what was proposed in the previous chapters of the book; that is, the security behavior of small states is closely subject to the regional balance of power and the prevailing international context.

The crisis of Iraq's invasion and the liberation of Kuwait (1990-1991) was a real test to the self-security capabilities of the Arab Gulf states. It has, indeed, disclosed the Gulf states' vulnerability, as Iraq invaded Kuwait in only eight hours, unveiling the imbalance in the power balance, at that time, between the Gulf states and their neighboring coun-

tries. To liberate its territories, Kuwait has approached several legal foundations, including the UN resolutions and the resolutions of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League. The other GCCs' crisis management mechanisms varied. They resorted to the military mechanisms; the Peninsula Shield forces, despite their limited capabilities, have actually played a vital role in obstructing the progress of the Iraqi forces towards the Saudi territories, till the international coalition troops arrival was complete. This is in addition to the role of the Gulf states which provided logistical support to the international coalition forces; Saudi Arabia alone provided 300 aircrafts. Another mechanism which has been used in that crisis, was the financial mechanism; the GCCs pledged to financially support the coalition's operations. Actually, the Gulf financial aids to the coalition, at that time, exceeded \$40 billion. The political mechanism was present in the role which the Gulf diplomacy had played in order to mobilize international support for Kuwait, either through the UN, the Arab league, or the other major powers all over the world. This mission was not easy, especially as most countries were divided on the invasion; while some countries rejected the invasion, others seemed to have vague and undecisive viewpoints. As for the Yemeni crisis, it has multiple dimensions, given Yemen's strategic importance, as it overlooks Bab al-Mandab Strait and shares direct borders with both Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate Oman. In light of the developments of the Yemeni crisis, in 2015, and Iran's endeavor to crush the Arab Gulf states and get them stuck between the Strait of Hormuz, in the north, and Bab al-Mandab, in the south, the GCCs have adopted three mechanisms of crises management. The first mechanism is the military solution; Saudi Arabia declared a Saudi-led international coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen. The declaration was based on several foundations, including the request by President, Abd Rabbo Hadi Mansour, for intervention and the decisions by the Gulf Cooperation Council and those by the Arab League. The second mechanism was a political one, through proposing the Gulf initiative, in 2011, and supporting all stages of negotiations. The third mechanism is providing humanitarian aid, which exceeded 17 billion\$, on the part of Saudi Arabia, in addition to pledges, during the conferences of the donors, to provide more aids. This chapter concludes that the success of small

states in managing security crises has not only to do with their capabilities, but, rather, with the regional balance of power and the structure of the world order.

The fourth chapter tackles the challenges facing the security policies of the Arab Gulf states. In terms of self-security, the efforts to localize military industries, despite being vital, face tough challenges. Actually, the most prominent challenge, in this regard, is the Western defense companies' continued monopoly on the global defense market, placing difficult conditions and terms for obtaining technology. Even after these western companies have established a number of branches in some Arab Gulf states, they still maintain their anticompetitive policies. On the other hand, the Arab Gulf states are approaching multiple paths, not a unified one, to establish domestic defense industry. Each of these paths, actually, poses different requirements on the GCCs. To illustrate, the GCCs have to either establish a full process, from research to the complete production, in the same country, a requirement which is only available to the major powers, or to master engineering and reverse engineering, and, thus, reproduce weapons through advanced technology, using weapons which already exist. The third path is to purchase defense components from abroad and locally assemble them, adding some simple components which are manufactured at home. Nevertheless, there is still a controversy over the extent to which the Gulf states are able to localize military industries in light of their lack of the trained human resources, the means of technology transfer, and even the ability of Gulf military products to compete in global markets. All these challenges raise a pivotal question about the feasibility of defense industry in the Gulf in general. In this regard, this chapter presents practical proposals, including coordination between the Gulf states on arms purchases, allocating heavy governmental and private-sector investments for the military manufacturing sector, and opening direct dialogue between those persons responsible for in the Gulf and global defense industry officials. Concerning the modern military technology, drones are one of the most prominent challenges facing the Gulf states. There are, actually, various reasons, explaining why the Gulf states are keen to import them or to start manufac-

ing them locally. They do not need specialized pilots while their costs are low. Moreover, the drones have turned into an arena for qualitative competition and showing superiority, especially after targeting the oil installations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in 2019. This is in addition to Iran's accelerating efforts to manufacture advanced generations of these aircrafts, and, thus, deepening the gap of military capabilities with the Gulf states. Artificial intelligence, also, represents another challenge in light of its impacts on defense. It has rather reshaped both the international and regional balance of power, thus, limiting the supremacy of the traditional defense capabilities. Finally, the limited military capabilities of the Arab Gulf states are another challenge to their security policies. For the Gulf states' international security partnerships challenges, the author has devoted the last part of this book, where he analyzes the latest regional and international developments which signify a real test for these partnerships. In this respect, the author highlights, the Ukrainian crisis and its repercussions, including the decision of (OPEC Plus) to continue reducing oil production by two million barrels a day, then, the visit of the Chinese President to Saudi Arabia, where he held three summits: The Saudi-Chinese summit, the Gulf-China Summit, and the Arab-China summit. The three summits have given rise to tremendous economic deals. Finally, the author sheds light on the escalation of the Iranian threats to the security of the Arab Gulf states. These developments brought an official debate between the Gulf officials and their counterparts in the US. The conclusion of the debate, on the Gulf's part, confirms that the United States is still their most important and traditional ally for ensuring security. On its part, the US has emphasized that it is committed to the security of the Arab Gulf states, whether through its strategies, including the US Defense Strategy (2022), or through its practical plans, which were announced in 2023, to support the Gulf military capabilities. Moreover, the US announced that it is committed to protecting the Gulf's maritime security, using the modern technologies of the artificial intelligence.

Chapter 1

The security policies concept and the Arab Gulf states' strategies to achieve self-security

Introduction

Divided into two sections, this chapter deals with the concept of security policies and the strategies, adopted by the Arab Gulf states in their security policymaking. The first section outlines the Gulf's security policies and their implementation. This section, actually, serves as a theoretical framework for discussing the concept of security policies and their relation to the concept of states' national security, especially, in light of the changing content of security itself, in general, and the challenges which this incessant change imposes on small states, in particular. Actually, the small states which are facing security dilemmas are more vulnerable than others, as is illustrated in the realism and the neo-realism theories, which have elaborated on the dilemma of small states and the restraints they face in their foreign policies, In general, and in their security policies, in particular. These states have chronic fears concerning occupation or annexation. Therefore, the issue of survival remains their main drive for adopting certain security policies. For maintain their security, these countries have three options: The first option is achieving quantitative and qualitative self-security. The second option is establishing trans-national security partnerships, though, at the regional level, the establishment of these partnerships depends on the extent to which the objectives of the small states' political systems are compatible with their neighbors. The third option is adopting neutrality, but neutrality does not last unless the regional conflicting parties are willing to commit to it.

The second section of the chapter illustrates the small states strategies to achieve self-security through three means: localizing defense industries, the compulsory conscription, and allocating a reasonable percent-

age of the gross domestic product to military spending. It is argued, in this section, that although the Arab Gulf states rely heavily on importing weapons from abroad, this does not mean that they do never have domestic defense industries at all. These states have, indeed, paid much more importance to defense industries, and have, actually, established arms manufacturing companies. Though these companies' actual production is still limited, the Gulf countries, in this respect, rely on measured political foundations and wisely understand that obtaining domestic defense industries depends on their political relations with major countries, which, sometimes, suspend military deals; it also depends on economic factors, given the fact that localizing defense industries enhances strategies to diversify the national economy. There are also social motivations which drive the Gulf's defense localization efforts, as the Arab Gulf states aim at qualifying the local workforce, needed for promoting this sector. Technologically, localizing defense industries is mainly connected to the ability to obtain the military technology. The second section also tackles the compulsory conscription, which was implemented by only three Gulf states, namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar. The section also discusses the Arab Gulf states drives for adopting the compulsory conscription, and why the rest of the GCC states did not do the same, despite its being closely connected to self-security. Finally, the section outlines the military spending of the Arab Gulf states, based on the 2021 statistics, and the percentage of this spending out of the gross domestic production, as well as the number of troops, operating in the six GCCs. All what is illustrated, in this section, are factors which reflect the self-military capabilities of the Arab Gulf states, being classified as small states which experience an imbalance in the regional balance of powers.

1. The concept of security, the dilemma and options of small states: A theoretical framework

The concept of security policies and security policymaking

Security policies are mainly formulated in light of states' national security and its requirements. Most researchers agree on contents of this concept, which has developed with the evolving global order itself; exceeding the military dimensions to include energy and environment security, maritime security and even health security, with the threats, caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, there is no agreement among countries regarding the content and importance of security, nor do they agree on defining security priorities and the suitable mechanisms to address them.

Security policies, as afore-mentioned, are related to the concept of national security, which means protecting the nation-state from external and internal threats which endanger its interests. Despite the importance of this definition, there is an argument, even among academics, concerning the nature of these threats and how to confront them. Regardless of that argument, the core of states' national security is to safeguard their survival. Strong states, that have ensured their internal stability, focus mainly on protecting their national security from trans-border military threats. Weak states, however, focus on protecting their internal security from internal threats such as revolutions, military coups and rebellion. The first type of national security, as clarified in the strong states' case, is 'military security', while the second type is 'political security.' Nonetheless, it should be underlined that both types of states, the strong and the weak, depend on economic power, as a state is mainly responsible for providing its citizens an adequate standard of living. This makes economic security and energy security two important pillars of national security as well. Societal security, which is related to protecting national identity, is also one of the most important pillars of national security, given the high rates of immigration. Environmental security is another component of national security, given the close relationship between the impact of environmental degradation on

a country's economy and the decline in the standard of living.¹

If there is an almost agreement among researchers and academics on defining the concept of national security, it is not the case when setting the mechanisms of achieving it. During the Cold War era, the realism theory perceptions prevailed, underlining the state as the main player in the international order; its main task is to protect its sovereignty. With chaos prevailing the international scene, states need alliances, and may even engage in adventures, to enhance their security. However, this is not enough; for states to maintain their survival, they have to boost their self-defense capabilities. Although the realists underline the importance of many elements of power, including wealth and geopolitical advantages, the military power remains the most important element. This makes it inevitable for countries to develop strong armies which should always be ready to safeguard security and survival of the state. Within this context, major powers focused on the possibility of a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Therefore, concepts such as "deterrence", "the first strike", and "mutual destruction", dominated most of the realist theory's arguments. As the Cold War ended and the concept of security expanded to include, besides the military security, other security dimensions, up to the 'cooperative' security, arguments about security arrangements emerging in Asia and Europe began to prevail. The concept of security has undergone another qualitative change which added a humane dimension to the concept and dictated that security must be viewed from a humane perspective, not only from states' security perspective. There are, actually, two reasons for this qualitative change: First, although wars between states are still possible, the internal conflicts within states are the most violent. This means that the real challenge is not only to serve the national interest, but also to maintain the identity and safety of society. In other words, the military dimension of security has shortcomings. Second, there are non-military threats which affect states' national security, including environmental problems, population growth, epidemics, refugees and scarcity of natural resources.

¹ Robinson, Paul. 2009. International Security Dictionary. Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.

To this end, some countries are increasingly interested in adopting this new concept of security, i.e. the humane security. Canada, for instance, highly estimates the concept of human security in its foreign policy. However, debates are still raging among intellectuals concerning the issue of safeguarding that security, and whether this should be done within bilateral or regional interactions, or within a global framework.² Whether this debate gets resolved or not, there is an indisputable fact that the current security threats, such as climate change, illegal immigration, maritime security threats and cyber threats, all necessitate a close international cooperation.

The concept of small states and their security dilemma

Realism and neo-realism are two prominent theoretical frameworks in analyzing the concept of small states and their issues. Many international relations' researchers believe that small states are characterized by one or more of the following characteristics: "small land area, small total population, low gross national product, limited military capabilities.³ Consequently, the influence of small states on international affairs is so limited, as their behavior remains governed by the structure of the international order. Therefore, the behavior of small states is often a reaction to external developments rather than proactive policies which contribute to the development of the world wherein they exist. In spite of the criteria reviewed above regarding the characteristics of small states, there is no worldwide consensus on what can be called a 'small state'. Some researchers prefer to define these states as 'small powers', while others prefer to define them as 'weak powers'; a third group believes that 'weak states' is the most appropriate definition. Nonetheless, putting all the similar elements under one category, when defining small states may not provide a logical result, especially in light of the limitations of small states' foreign policy. Actually, one of the criteria which distinguishes small states is their gross domestic

² O'Callaghan, Martin Griffith and Terry. 2008. *Basic Concepts in International Relations*. Dubai: Gulf Research Center.

³ East, Maurice A. 1973. *Size and foreign policy behavior: A test of two Models*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

product. Israel and Papua New Guinea (PNG), for instance, have a similar 9-million population, according to the World Bank statistics, issued in 2020. However, Israel's total military spending, in 2018, was around \$15.5 billion, compared to Papua New Guinea's \$59.9 million; meaning a nearly 200%- difference between both.⁴

While some states face one of the two types of security threats, i.e., the military security threats or the political security threats, some states face both types of threats at the same time. These threats severely increase if states are classified as 'small states', on which a great deal of the international relations' theories have focused. It is worth noting that the development of these theories was linked to the development of the structure of the international order itself. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, and the rise of the US as the new dominating power in that order, proponents of the neo-realist theory argued that there are other powers which would force the United States to achieve balance. The small or weak states sought to establish alliances with major powers in order to maintain their independence. The neo-realists, hence, do not negate the possibility of cooperation between countries. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that the countries which seek that cooperation will have a permanent goal to increasing their relative strength and safeguard their independence.⁵

Yet, small states follow different paths in their foreign policy, compared to the big countries. They (small states) adopt either of the following stances: (A) Low levels of comprehensive participation in addressing global issues; (b) high levels of activity and interaction with intergovernmental organizations (IGO's); (c) high levels of support for international legal rules and norms; (d) avoiding the use of force as a method of rule; (e) avoiding behavior and policies that would alienate more powerful nations within the international order; (f) Demonstrating a

⁴ Willis, Jeffrey. 2021. Breaking the paradigm(s): A review of the three waves of international relations small: state literature. Accessed June 18, 2023. <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/101587/2%20Small%20states-final.pdf?sequence=5>.

⁵ Al-Sawani, Youssef Mohammed. 2013. Theories in international relations. Beirut: Al-Maaref Forum.

limited functional and geographic interest in foreign policy activities; and (g) frequently taking ethical and normative positions towards international issues.

A great deal of controversy has been raised among theorists and intellectuals concerning small states' behavior, including two approaches which these states could adopt. In the first approach, Robert Rothstein assumes that small states' behavior is similar to other countries', in terms of the foreign policy. Their stance is based on the ruling elites' perceptions which are based on a rational assessment of the international conditions as well as the internal conditions. The overall policies of these states dictate a reduction of potential risks, as well as diminishing the outflow of scarce resources such as, manpower, military capabilities and hard currency. The second approach, on the other hand, assumes that there are fundamental differences in foreign policy-making processes between the small states and the big ones. This, in turn, pushes for formulating an acceptable alternative model for the small states' behavior. Starting with the main traits of small states, it can be assumed that the total resources, available to be redistributed by the ruling regimes in these states, are limited and small, though demand, as well, may be relatively small. It can also be assumed that the 'economic surplus, an inaccurate tool for measuring the resources available for redistribution after meeting the minimum needs for maintaining the ruling regimes' main structures, is small. Moreover, the significantly higher cost of governing and managing people's affairs in the post-World War II era means, due to these factors altogether, that small states, unlike the big states, have small proportion of the already limited resources to be devoted to international affairs. If these assumptions are true, there may be some significant differences between the small states and the big ones, regarding the behavior and methods, used in dealing and interacting with foreign policy issues. The lack of resources available for foreign affairs, in small states, most likely entails some sort of limitedness in size and capability of the authority, entrusted with foreign policy management. This means having fewer participants who could monitor international events and implement foreign policy decisions. This, in turn, exacerbates states' inability to

adequately address the international issues they face. Moreover, the lower organizational capabilities which small states have for foreign affairs, make these states less active, especially in perceiving events and the developments which the international order experiences. Moreover, the lack of the afore-mentioned capabilities would result in these states' inability to perceive the so-called, early warning signals, which indicate the new dramatic developments and shifts, made by influential powers on the international level. This in turn, could have a profound impact on the behavior of small states and the approaches they adopt in their foreign policy. It is known that a state which gets aware of a potential situation, at an earlier stage, has a much greater chance to control the outcome of that situation, on the contrary to a state which realizes a situation, at a later stage, and has, then, fewer alternatives. A third result, or, rather, a third pattern of behavior which clarifies the difference between small states and big ones has to do with the relative lack of resources dedicated to foreign affairs; this, actually, pushes small states to search for less expensive and more economic ways of interaction. Finally, there is an important difference between small states and big states, that is the ability to realize the importance of different issues to world politics, particularly when it comes to the priority given to internal demands over external political decision-making; this is especially true to small states, due to their lack of an economic surplus and their limited resources. Small states, therefore, are not generally interested in some traditional international politics' issues, including the Cold War, the world status and influence, acquisition or maintenance of alliances or spheres of influence, regional expansion and other issues. They are, rather, interested more in international issues which directly affect their economic growth and development.⁶

Regardless of adopting a certain definition of small states, these states, truly, face more security challenges, in comparison with other states. A small state has, not only, to confront traditional and emerging security threats, but it also seeks to protect its existence, given the fears of occupation and annexation, especially if it is located within a turbulent

⁶ East, Maurice A., 1973. Size and foreign policy behavior: A test of two Models. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

region, or has the traits of a 'buffer state'. Therefore, the main challenge, facing small states is to achieve a balance of power, the basis of regional security. The concept of balance of power means that no state or group of states, in a region, possesses the sufficient power, required to dominate and compel other states in that region to submit to its will. There is a simple balance of power, i.e. between two states, and a complex one, i.e. between three or more states. The realists believe that the goal of achieving a balance of power is always a priority for states, but it gives rise to a resisting front which tries to overcome the dominant state or the one which seeks to be dominant. This case might appear clearer, at the regional level, but it seems different at the international order level. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, some small states, instead of achieving balance of power against the dominant power, namely the United States, they have regarded that engaging in an alliance with the United States is the best option. Nonetheless, this is not true to all cases. The establishment of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are important indicators of the moving towards establishing a new balance of power; this goes in line with the arguments of the realism theory. Nonetheless, achieving a balance of power to curb the hegemonic power and prevent it from practicing coercion and oppression against other countries that seek to challenge the hegemonic power, is important. In other words, the existence of mutual deterrence prevents wars. However, this is also not fully true, as the balance of power did not prevent the outbreak of World War I. Even, the Cold War era, during which a balance of power prevailed between the United States and the Soviet Union, witnessed a great deal of proxy wars between the two sides.⁷

If achieving a balance of power is one of the national security requirements for many countries, it is the core pillar of the small states' security, especially if they are located in a region where there is military capabilities' disparity, making these states, obsessed not only with security but also with their survival as independent and sovereign states that are safe from occupation and annexation by other more powerful regional

⁷ Robinson, Paul. 2009. International Security Dictionary. Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.

parties. Unfortunately, a small state is unable to defend itself. In other words, a small state faces a complex security dilemma; it seeks to ensure its security through several mechanisms, while facing the danger that a major country or any other militarily superior country may seek to strip the small state of its physical existence, national identity or independence. This means that external interference in the internal affairs of small states is inevitable.⁸

The security options for the small states

What is afore-reviewed raises a question concerning the options available for states, in general, and to small states, in particular to protect their survival on the one hand, and to achieve a balance of power, on the other hand. Many studies unanimously agree that there are three options for small states, namely:

Firth: Boosting self-power in quantity and quality,

As the current international order does not have a central authority, the policy of self-reliance and strengthening the self-power of a state is the main and the most crucial option. This can be achieved through considered plans and strategies which aim at localizing defense industries and developing weapons production. This is in addition to purchasing the latest weapons and military technologies. Nonetheless, a distinction should be made between the balance of power and the 'balance of terror'. The first means that the goal of the state is to reduce its power gap with other states, while the second means that the state sends a message to the other party that it has the ability to retaliate and cause harm, if the second party took any hostile steps.⁹ Many countries might be able to achieve a balance of power. However, it is a challenge to the small states which, despite buying the latest weapons and increasing the combating

⁸ Keshk, Ashraf Mohamed. 2015. The development of Gulf regional security since 2003: A Study of the Impact of NATO's strategy. Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies.

⁹ Al-Masry, Khaled Musa. 2014. Introduction to International Relations Theory. Damascus: Nineveh House for Publishing and Distribution.

capabilities of their armed forces, still encounter the obstacle of their small population. In other words, small states might have the capability to go on buying the latest weapons; nonetheless their ability to form a national army is still limited due to their small population.¹⁰

Second: Alliances: There are two types of alliances. *Defensive alliances*, such as, the current NATO and, the former Warsaw Pact are based on agreements, between two or more countries, under which member states pledge to confront any aggression against any of the alliances' members. The second type is the *collective security alliance*, such as the League of Nations or the United Nations. In this type, countries pledge to confront any aggression, even if it is from a member state of these two organizations.¹¹ However, the concept of alliances may seem different for small states; for them alliances are not necessarily similar to NATO. Alliances, for small states, could be created through signing security agreements with major powers. Yet, it is not certain that alliances provide comprehensive security for small states. Major countries might see that what a small state faces regarding a possible outbreak of civil war is not a threat which requires collective action to confront it. In addition, a small state might, at the end, find itself compelled to involve in a conflict, wherein it has no direct interests. Consequently, the small state would find itself stuck between two bitter options, either 'falling into the trap' or 'being ignored.' The more a small state relies on alliances, the greater it risks falling into a trap. To this end, small states could establish regional alliances through joining organizations of regional security or military cooperation. This option, despite its importance, seems to be extraordinarily ideal, as it requires having common identity and interests, whereas many regions lack these main requirements due to having different political regimes with conflicting interests. The situation becomes more complicated if there is a disparity in sizes of the states, and, in turn, in their military capabilities.¹²

¹⁰ Abdulsalam, Mohammed. 2007. "Problems of defending small states in the Arabian Gulf." *Al Siyassa Al Dawliya (International Politics)*, 91.

¹¹ Al-Masry, Khaled Musa. 2014. *Introduction to International Relations Theory*. Damascus: Nineveh House for Publishing and Distribution.

¹² Abdulsalam, Mohammed. 2007. "Problems of defending small states in the Ara-

In fact, when a small state seeks to secure its interests through joining a US-led alliance, for instance, the contribution of this alliance, at the beginning, comes from the small state's interaction with the overall structure of institutions of this alliance, which is taken for granted. This, indeed, seems logical; if the US-led alliance's system, as a whole, goes on providing the actual guarantees for achieving its security (the security of the alliance), in almost any case and under any circumstances, what, then, compels the small state to make sacrifices in order to strengthen its connection with this alliance, and what motivates it to commit to the actual and literal provisions of any agreement related to this alliance? The absence of insistence, on the part of the alliance, makes defiance a preferable course than enthusiastic cooperation and sacrifice.

Actually, any attempt by a small-state ally to influence the United States can take place at one or more of three specific levels. At the first level, the Foreign Ministry of the small state negotiates with the U.S. State Department through formal diplomatic channels; each government of the small states' acts with the other party as if it were a unit capable of formulating and implementing a coherent policy on the issues, on the table. At the second level, the small state's representatives attempt to develop close working relationships with the sub-units of the US administration; this could be carried out, for instance, through rapprochement with the Army, the Naval Command, Air Force, or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Cooperation, in this regard, may be tacit or explicit; but in both cases, common interests, in the first place, military power, assistance programs, or intelligence information, become the main linking that connects these two parties together. In fact, the success of this strategy largely depends on the extent to which the US department agencies rely on the small ally to carry out their mission. The third level of influence is achieved when the small state relies on organized collective support within the United States. Israel, here, is a clear example, even though it is not an official ally of the United States.¹³

bian Gulf." Op. cit.

¹³ Robert O. Keohane. 1971. "The Big Influence of Small Allies." *Foreign Policy* 161-182.