

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12426547

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES IN ENHANCING REGIONAL NATIONAL SECURITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Khalifa Mohamed Khalifa Ahmed AL zaabi¹

¹CEO of Arkan Training and Consulting Company, Member of the Board of Directors of the Retired Military Personnel Association

Received: 19/11/2025
Accepted: 03/03/2026

Corresponding Author: Khalifa Mohamed Khalifa Ahmed AL zaabi
(khalifa_6@hotmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The paper assesses how the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has contributed to the development of the regional national security by working internationally. Based on the modern theories of security and the development of empirical data, the paper analyzes how the strategic alliances of the UAE especially with the United States, the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and multilateral institutions facilitate the stabilization of the Middle East. It also determines the resilience tools used by the UAE to strengthen the region such as military modernization, Information technology, counter-terrorism programs, and maritime security arrangements. Other challenges that are addressed in the research include the dependence on foreign technology, regional competition and changing threat of hybrid. The results indicate that the UAE has been effective in changing into a consumer of security into a producer of a regional stability in terms of proactive diplomacy and institutional collaboration.

KEYWORDS: United Arab Emirates, National Security, International Cooperation, Gulf Region, Cybersecurity, Counter-Terrorism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a region that has quickly developed since its establishment in 1971 into a leading player not only in politics and economics but also in international security (Alzaabi, 2019). Traditionally, the Gulf region was characterized by geopolitical instability, territorial conflicts, and ideological confrontations. To this, the UAE has played a role of ensuring peaceful coexistence in the region by ensuring that it is a credible ally in ensuring peace in the region by having a strategic international partnership (Alsaeedi, 2023; Ibish, 2017).

These terrorism, failed states and foreign intervention factors have made the Middle East volatile and thus, Gulf states have been driven to find alternative ways of maintaining national sovereignty. Specifically, the UAE has chosen a multidimensional approach to security that goes beyond military power such as diplomatic, technological and humanitarian means (Bahramipour, Rezaeipanah, & Pourramezan, 2025). This renders the national security doctrine of the UAE strongly connected with the global alliances and regional stability.

Other recent examinations also reveal how pacts such as the Abraham Accords broadened security collaboration in non-conventional space, such as the field of healthcare diplomacy (Sperling & Greenky). Also, the UAE has partnered with the states of Southeast Asia in the fight against terrorism and this demonstrates its transregional security outreach (Sagita, Djemat, & Oktaviani, 2025). The geopolitical actions it has undertaken are an indication of a shift to a security-exporting state especially in the multilateral arenas.

The changing foreign and security policy of UAE has been influenced by the regional issues of the expansion of Iran, the wars in Yemen and Libya, and the emergence of non-state actors around the world (Salameh & Mubiadeen, 2025). The UAE has, therefore, formulated national security objectives that are focused on preventive diplomacy, economic diversification, cyber defense, and counterterrorism (Al Rashedi, 2005).

The institutional approach of soft and smart power is what makes the UAE stand out of other countries in the region. The leadership of this country has acknowledged the fact that, the improvement of national security cannot rely on hard military presence only, but active communication with foreign countries, humanitarian diplomacy, and branding the country internationally by means of strategic investments and cultural programs.

The UAE can show that small states can shape

security architectures by becoming part of the Western and Asian blocs in the form of defense agreements and by conducting joint trainings (Abozaid, 2023; Hadj Zargarbashi & Zabihi, 2025). In addition, the migration policy has also become a soft-security approach particularly in controlling the movements of labor in Central Asia (Fawn, Kluczevska, & Korneev, 2022).

The UAE has engaged in bilateral and multilateral defense alliances, and has taken part in coalitions including International Maritime Security Construct and joint military drills with France and the U.S. (Mason, 2023). Another strategic move of the UAE security policy concerned the Abraham Accords that tightened its relationship with Israel and created opportunities of new intelligence-sharing channels (Shakirova, 2025). The Emirates have also continued to broaden their security agenda to encompass cybersecurity with regional cybersecurity summits and the formation of joint research centers with international collaborators (Keshk, Regional, & Relations, 2025). This way, UAE is still a combination of the hard and soft tools in the smart power diplomacy.

It is also evident that the nation can contend with hybrid threats by being strategic. The participation of the UAE in anti-financing terrorism efforts is evidence of its belief in non-military modes of security systems (KS, 2025). It has been able to make good use of niche diplomacy as a small state to make in-roads in the high-level decision-making forums (Alhamar, 2023).

UAE active participation in security has paid off positively in terms of strategic returns such as the creation of safer shipping routes, decrease in piracy attacks, and proactive counterterrorism in Yemen and Syria. Nevertheless, such initiatives have been associated with diplomatic prices, especially censure of humanitarian consequences of military actions in Yemen.

The nation now has to maneuver through a multipolar Gulf, where there is more competition between China and Russia and some uncertainty in the U.S. presence (Alexiou, 2024). This necessitates the UAE to redefine its strategy of strategic independence and maintain its partnerships.

Nevertheless, the fact that the UAE is already involved in the development of AI into its military infrastructure and is at the forefront of regional foreign policy, including organizing climatic-security summits, can be viewed as a sign of its flexibility (Mishra, 2025). The UAE is becoming a security entrepreneur and a country that provides traditional and innovative remedies to the instability in the region.

**The study's central research question is:
The UAE utilize international cooperation to reinforce its national security and advance regional stability amid shifting geopolitical dynamics?**

In the face of significantly changing geopolitical conditions in the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has embarked on an exhaustive approach to national security in which international cooperation is central to it. The UAE is a small state, both in geographic terms and in population, thus it is aware of the weaknesses of its unilateral capacities to deal with multidimensional threats. As such, it significantly depends on strategic alliances and multilateral relations to raise its internal strength and the power in the region (Gnanguénon and Hofmann, 2024).

The UAE is actively involved in the process of developing new patterns of regional military cooperation based on military alliances, defense negotiations, and diplomatic efforts with the world giants like the United States, France, and China, as well as other political entities of the region. The case of its engagement in multinational activities e.g. Saudi-led coalition in Yemen demonstrates a policy of deterrence by alliances, a typical method used by small states in enhancing their security by external assistance (Gstöhl, 2002).

The UAE also adopts a more generalised definition of security, which takes into account humanitarian support, developmental assistance and soft power projection besides the conventional military alliances. By investing in education, infrastructure as well as crisis relief in weak states, the UAE both helps in stabilizing the region and also enhances its strategic depth. This method concurs with Nye (2004) idea of soft power whereby states manipulate others by appealing to them instead of using coercion.

The UAE security policy also shows the level of sophistication with regard to its position in the changing regional order. The UAE, having to compete with its regional players such as Iran and Turkey, has been trying to balance aggressive diplomacy and strategic defense partnership. This combination of realism and aspiration can be seen as the example of how small states are operating in a multipolar and very unstable local environment (Ulrichsen, 2020).

The paper has the following structure: the second section presents the theoretical background of the concept of the national security; the next sections will examine the strategic vision of the UAE and global relationships through the chosen case studies; the next parts of the discussion will outline the main

issues and the policies; and the conclusion will give the overview of the major findings and strategic suggestions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Traditionally, national security was mainly related to the integrity of territory and protection against armed assault. Nevertheless, the post-cold war changes in the world and the 9/11 changes resulted in the concept of security expanding massively to include other types of threats like terrorist organizations, cyberattacks, and disruption of critical infrastructure (Cottey, 2025). Hostile states are no longer considered threats but are now included in the group of transnational threats that include terrorist groups, cyberattacks, and critical infrastructure disruption.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) follows a multidimensional national security strategy, which has five interrelated dimensions, within the expanded framework. These are political security, that focuses on stability of the state and institutional resilience; economic security that seeks to provide sustainable development and the societal security that seeks to retain national identity and social cohesion. In addition, environmental security has also gained increasing importance regarding climate change issues, whereas cybersecurity deals with the increased threat in the cyber realm. The broad-based model represents a logical concept of strategic insight that the current threats demand a multi-faceted and progressive response that transcends conventional military action.

1. Security Military and Defense

The UAE has been focusing on the development of highly mobile and technologically advanced armed forces and invested in the fifth-generation fighter aircrafts, unmanned aircrafts, and the missile defense systems. This is its doctrine of deterrence and fast response capabilities which is backed by this military modernization (SAULIUC, 2024). The allied operations including involvement in the Saudi-led coalition also indicate that the UAE is committed to military cooperation in the region (Munassar, 2025).

2. Economic and Resource Security

The UAE is planning on stability in its energy exports, diversifying its economic planning (non-oil sectors), as well as fiscal buffers, to counter the fluctuations in the global marketplace (Mai). UAE is actively improving the supply chain resiliency and trade infrastructure particularly through major

logistics hubs such as Jebel Ali Port.

3. Energy and Infrastructure Security

Oil fields, nuclear plants (Barakah) and maritime ports constitute some of the critical infrastructures that are highly guarded both in terms of physical security and cyber security. The networks of smart-cities such as those in Abu Dhabi and Dubai are resilience-monitored and service continuity-monitored (Bhattarai and Yousef, 2025). Strategic reserves, as well as regional coordination, enhance energy security (Ibekwe et al., 2024).

4. Cyber and Technological Security

The UAE is becoming a leader in AI governance and cybersecurity in the region. The national programs are oriented to the sovereign cloud infrastructure, new standards of encryption, and regulation of AI systems to avoid misuse (WEF, 2022). There are also stringent data-protection regulations enacted in the country such as the UAE Data Protection Law (No. 45 of 2021) (MoFAIC, 2023) (Abdul-Al, 2024).

5. Societal and Human Security

Preservation of national identity and averting radicalization are major elements. The UAE discourages intolerance, preaches civic education, and moderation in religion by using community outreach and state-sponsored efforts (Suwaidi, Ali, and Lehner, 2025). The objectives of programs organized by the Ministry of Tolerance include the creation of social cohesion in the long term (MoFAIC, 2023) (Abdul-Al, 2024).

6. Alignment with Vision 2031 & NSS 2022

These five dimensions align with the UAE's **Vision 2031** and **National Security Strategy 2022**, both of which emphasize prevention, resilience, innovation, and international cooperation as cornerstones of national security policy (MoFAIC, 2023).

2.1 Evolution of the UAE National Security Doctrine

The United Arab Emirates is a union that has gradually developed over the years since its formation in 1971, as a federation of small emirates with little defense power to being an active participant in the security matters of the region. This has been driven by the vision of peace via cooperation as envisaged by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and is now being furthered by the present leadership of President Mohammed bin

Zayed Al Nahyan where deterrence and partnership-based defence are important. The doctrine of the UAE is based on three pillars, namely deterrence, partnership and prevention. Deterrence is keeping credible military strength, partnership emphasizes on multilateralism by forming an alliance and prevention is focusing on engaging in early practice and diplomacy to decrease tensions before they become escalated. The UAE National Security Strategy (2022) demonstrates that such principles influence every security measure, such as humanitarian assistance and anti-extremism activities.

2.2 Vision 2031 and Diplomacy as a Security Instrument

Long-term socioeconomic resilience has a connection to national security in Vision 2031 and Centennial 2071. The UAE acknowledges that long-term security is a prerequisite of energy diversification, sustainable infrastructure, and technological innovations (UAE Cabinet, 2023). Therefore, diplomacy is the tool of strategic security, and thus the Emirates can intervene in conflicts, organize peace summits and encourage cooperation on climate issues with such events as COP28 in Dubai.

A multidimensional approach is adopted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to ensure that the region is stable and at the same time safeguard its own national interests. One of the most important is the Balance of Power Maintenance in which the UAE invests in good relations with Western partners, such as the United States and France, but at the same time, the nation maintains difficult relations with the local actors, including Iran and Turkey (Roberts, 2020). Such a balancing operation is what helps the UAE to be diplomatically nimble as regional alliances change (Gause, 2017).

Secondly, Economic Diplomacy is a key element in the foreign policy of the UAE. The UAE is also managing to project stability and economic interdependence in weak regions like the Horn of Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean through strategic trade and foreign direct investment as well as directed development aid (Ulrichsen, 2020). These are the instruments of economy as non-military mechanisms of power and reduction of wars (Momani, 2013).

Lastly, Normative Leadership is endorsed in the UAE through tolerance, empowerment of women, and humanitarianism. Such soft power activities build its international reputation as a moderate and progressive Arab state (Guzansky & Marshall, 2021),

which is part of the regional trust-building and ideological counter-narratives.

These elements collectively position the UAE as a *bridge state* linking East and West and as an advocate for a rules-based regional order.

2.3 Economic Diversification and Security Interdependence

All other types of national security are based on economic security. Diversification of the UAE to non oil reliance is not only an economic necessity, but a security one as well. The creation of Abu Dhabi Mubadala Investment Company, Dubai, DP World and Masdar City are manifestations of hedge measures against uncertainty in energy markets. Economic resilience offers the funds required to modernize the military and humanitarian assistance to other countries, which creates better reputation in the world (World Bank, 2024).

Simultaneously, the interconnected logistics and port systems of the Red Sea, Horn of Africa, and South Asia establish security interdependence in the UAE: thriving maritime trade will require stability in many regions (Kerr and Bryant, 2022). This knowledge motivates Emirati involvement in anti-piracy patrols and subsidizing local development initiatives in Yemen and Horn of Africa.

2.4 Institutional Reforms and Governance of Security

The United Arab Emirates has formulated a multilayered and integrated system of national security governance domestically. At the very top is the Supreme Council for National Security that is at the center of facilitating the strategic orientation of main agencies, such as the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) (Roberts, 2020). This council also provides consistent national planning particularly in reaction to emerging threats.

The city of Abu Dhabi has intelligence fusion centres, which combine the information of the cyber units, the military intelligence, and the law enforcement agencies. Such centres contribute to an improved real-time risk evaluation and a more efficient and coordinated decision-making (Ulrichsen, 2020).

The National Crisis and Emergency Management Authority (NCEMA) has the responsibility of disaster preparedness, reduction of risks, and interagency crisis coordination in terms of civil protection. It has the responsibility to address both conventional risks, like natural calamities, and hybrid ones, including cyberattacks and infrastructure sabotage (NCEMA, 2023).

This holistic structure indicates the interest of the UAE in active and resilient internal security planning.

Table 1: UAE National Security Architecture and Institutional Actors.

Institution	Role
Supreme Council for National Security	Strategic coordination and national security policymaking
Intelligence Fusion Centres	Real-time integration of military, cyber, and law enforcement data
Ministry of Interior	Domestic security, law enforcement, civil protection
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFAIC)	Foreign policy and international security cooperation
National Crisis and Emergency Management Authority (NCEMA)	Disaster response, emergency planning, hybrid threat management

2.5 Integration of Soft and Hard Power

UAE is a mixture of hard-power investments and soft-power projection. Hard power encompasses weapons procurement (Rafale jets, F-16s, Patriot systems) and soft power is provided by cultural projects like the Tolerance Year (2019), global humanitarian assistance operations and scientific activities of the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre that bring prestige and technological independence (Altiok, Bakir, and Analysis, 2025). The balance underpins the comprehensive security model of the regional analysts (AGSIW, 2024).

3: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS

3.1 Partnership with the United States

It has been found that the strategic partnership between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States has developed to be a core component of the UAE national security paradigm since the early 1990s. This agreement was codified as the 1994 Defense Cooperation Agreement that established the legal and strategic basis of bilateral military cooperation and was further strengthened in 2019 by a mutual defense agreement, allowing the U.S. forces to occupy bases in Abu Dhabi, Al Dhafra, and Fujairah (U.S. Department of State, 2024). These treaties formalize the intelligence sharing at high levels, military training and coordinating counter-terrorist activities, enhancing the operational abilities

of the UAE (Barzegar et al., 2024).

The fact that the UAE participates in global security projects highlights its compliance with the U.S. strategic interests. Its involvement in the Global Coalition Against ISIS and Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan by NATO are indicators of its willingness to operate and its alignment with the Western-led security systems (Miller & Martini, 2020). These engagements enable the UAE to exert influence and also receive experience in operations of a multinational.

In addition to the cooperation in the field of joint operations, one of the major aspects of the UAE-U.S. cooperation is military procurement and technology transfer. In addition to the UAE heavily investing in the lead defense technology, such as F-16 Block 60 Desert Falcon, customized to meet UAE needs, and Patriot missile defensive batteries, which strengthens its deterrence posture (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2023). Nevertheless, interest in the F-35 fighter jet acquisition is one more sign that the UAE is interested in not only obtaining fifth-generation equipment but also depends on the adherence to the U.S. standards of arms exports, as well as the possibility of the leakage of technologies to third countries (Ramalho Fonseca, 2024).

This military collaboration improves NATO and other partner force interoperability, especially in new areas like cybersecurity and space defense. Cyber operations and command-and-control exercises that are conducted jointly will assist the UAE in becoming a part of the sophisticated military networks and be ready to counter the hybrid warfare (ALAM, AHMAD, SHAH, and KHALID, 2025). These synergistic processes are core to the greater wider-ranging pan-emerging security approach of the UAE that focuses on technological sophistication, area deterrence, and global combination.

Finally, the UAE-U.S. defense partnership is a strategic alliance that has been established on common interests, common perceptions of threats and long-term interoperability. It lets the UAE to have a stronger presence than its size, and it gives the U.S. a dependable partner in a region of paramount geopolitical significance.

3.2 Regional Cooperation within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been in the center of developing a collective security structure of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC was founded in 1981 as a response to threats in the region namely the Iran-Iraq War, and subsequently, the instability caused by U.S. interventions in the region.

It was the creation of the GCC, to increase military and economic coordination among the six member states of the GCC. The Council has a standing military force that is known as the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), and the most tangible symbol of defense cooperation is represented by this force, and the UAE has been actively involved with this force in terms of supplying its troops, logistics, and joint exercises (Abbasi, 2025).

Since the Arab Spring rebellions of 2011 and the ongoing Yemen crisis, the UAE has grown outspoken over the need to reinforce GCC defense stance. It involved demand to coordinate cybersecurity more closely, creation of intelligence-sharing systems, and collaborative air and missile defense systems to prevent asymmetric threats (Gulf Research Center, 2022). This security architecture also saw the deployment of the Integrated Early Warning System (IEWs), and one of the major parts of the system was located in Abu Dhabi (Awamleh & Sicre, 2024). The IEWS monitors airborne and missile threats within the Arabian Peninsula, which indicates the technological strength and willingness of the UAE to strengthen the region.

The UAE has also taken on a more active diplomatic role in the GCC besides the military input. It is particularly important to note that the work on assisting in the mediation and implementation of the Al-Ula Declaration of 2021, which represented the reconciliation between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, highlighted the ability of the UAE to manage conflicts and conduct intra-Gulf dialogue (Kostiner, 2021). This indicates a larger agenda of the UAE using both hard and soft power to influence the regional outcomes according to its national interests (Roberts, 2020).

The UAE strategy in the GCC is illustrative of its national security concept of prevention, multilateralism and regionalism. Although there are internal divisions in the GCC that sometimes cause unified responses, UAE investments in common defense infrastructure, crisis management, and regional diplomacy make it an important actor in the formation of the new security architecture in the Gulf (Fulton, 2019).

3.3 Global Multilateral Frameworks and Strategic Alliances

United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been in the center of developing a collective security structure of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC was founded in 1981 as a response to threats in the region namely the Iran-Iraq War, and subsequently, the instability caused by U.S. interventions in the region.

It was the creation of the GCC, to increase military and economic coordination among the six member states of the GCC. The Council has a standing military force that is known as the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), and the most tangible symbol of defense cooperation is represented by this force, and the UAE has been actively involved with this force in terms of supplying its troops, logistics, and joint exercises (Abbasi, 2025).

Since the Arab Spring rebellions of 2011 and the ongoing Yemen crisis, the UAE has grown outspoken over the need to reinforce GCC defense stance. It involved demand to coordinate cybersecurity more closely, creation of intelligence-sharing systems, and collaborative air and missile defense systems to prevent asymmetric threats (Gulf Research Center, 2022). This security architecture also saw the deployment of the Integrated Early Warning System (IEWS), and one of the major parts of the system was located in Abu Dhabi (Awamleh & Sicre, 2024). The IEWS monitors airborne and missile threats within the Arabian Peninsula, which indicates the technological strength and willingness of the UAE to strengthen the region.

The UAE has also taken on a more active diplomatic role in the GCC besides the military input. It is particularly important to note that the work on assisting in the mediation and implementation of the Al-Ula Declaration of 2021, which represented the reconciliation between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc, highlighted the ability of the UAE to manage conflicts and conduct intra-Gulf dialogue (Kostiner, 2021). This indicates a larger agenda of the UAE using both hard and soft power to influence the regional outcomes according to its national interests (Roberts, 2020).

The UAE strategy in the GCC is illustrative of its national security concept of prevention, multilateralism and regionalism. Although there are internal divisions in the GCC that sometimes cause unified responses, UAE investments in common defense infrastructure, crisis management, and regional diplomacy make it an important actor in the formation of the new security architecture in the Gulf (Fulton, 2019).

4. CASE STUDIES

4.1 Counter-Terrorism and Peacekeeping Operations

The counter-terrorism policy of the UAE is a combination of military involvement and ideological prevention. In the case of the Yemen conflict (2015-2020), the UAE troops were instrumental in the Saudi-led coalition, where they freed up ports and

trained counter-terror forces in Yemen (International Crisis Group, 2021). Simultaneously with the fighting, the UAE opened rehabilitation centres of former militants and funded the program against violent extremism with the Hedayah Centre in Abu Dhabi.

Hedayah Center is a UN-approved center of counter-radicalisation research and capacity building in 57 countries. This program emphasizes the fact that the UAE sells security expertise outside its borders and transforms knowledge into a soft-power resource (Mullen, 2022). The inclusion of women in peacekeeping via the sheikha fatima bint Mubarak Women, Peace and Security Initiative is also another indication of inclusive governance as a security force-multiplier.

4.2 Maritime and Energy Security

Having a geostrategic position at the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, the UAE is more concerned about maritime security to defend international energy routes. The UAE is directly involved in anti-piracy and mine-countermeasure operations in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb through the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) based in Bahrain (Strickland, 2023). In 2023 alone, the UAE Navy engaged in more than 40 combined maritime drills with the US, France and India in order to increase interoperability (UAE Armed Forces, 2024).

At the domestic level, there is the Critical Infrastructure and Coastal Protection Authority (CICPA) headquartered in Abu Dhabi, which is charged with the duty of protecting oil fields, nuclear plants (Barakah Reactor) and port at Jebel Ali and Fujairah. The security of the sea directly interconnects with energy security, which is why the UAE spends much on the backup routes of its pipelines: the Abu Dhabi-Fujairah crude pipeline bypassing Hormuz (IEA, 2024). (Placeholder - Table 2: UAE Energy and Maritime Security Initiatives 2020-2025)

4.3 Cybersecurity Initiatives and Digital Diplomacy

The UAE is one of the five Arab states that are ranked in the top five on the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index (2023). The National Cyber Security Council (NCSC) facilitates the collaboration between the government and businesses to protect critical networks and assists with multilateral information-sharing agreements with the EU and Singapore (UAE NCSC, 2023). Moreover, digital sovereignty is boosted by the Dubai Cyber Innovation Park and the AI and Blockchain Strategy

2040 by the means of innovation and resilience (Collier, 2022).

The digital diplomacy has turned out to be a new area of front in the security doctrine of the UAE, which includes its participation in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Cybersecurity, as well as its hosting of the Global Cybersecurity Summit of 2022. These efforts expand the concept of cross-border security into the digital realm and strengthen the trust of the cross-border cooperation between the partners.

5: CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 Strategic Dependence on Partners

UAE is among the five Arab states that ranked among the five highest-ranking on the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index (2023). The National Cyber Security Council (NCSC) helps to coordinate the efforts of the government and businesses to secure critical networks and helps in a multilateral information exchange agreement with the EU and Singapore (UAE NCSC, 2023). Furthermore, through innovation and resilience, digital sovereignty is enhanced by the Dubai Cyber Innovation Park and the AI and Blockchain Strategy 2040 (Collier, 2022).

The digital diplomacy has emerged as a novel front of the security doctrine of the UAE that encompasses its membership in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Cybersecurity, and hosting the Global Cybersecurity Summit of 2022. These attempts transform the idea of cross-border security to the sphere of the digital world and enhance the reliability of the cross-border relationship between the partners.

5.2 Regional Competition and Threat Perception

The security situation in the Gulf is characterized by long-standing confrontations between Iran, Israel, and other proxy organizations. Although the Abraham Accords enhanced deterrence with new alliances, they also instigated asymmetric measures like cyber attacks and oil infrastructure attacks (IEA, 2024). Moderation between normalization and Israel and dialogue and Iran is a constant diplomatic

dilemma. The UAE view of pragmatic involvement as shown by the restoration of diplomatic relations with Tehran in 2022 shows that it is determined to de-escalate but puts it in a low place among its friends and foes.

5.3 Balancing Soft and Hard Power

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has managed to establish itself as a destination of business, humanitarian diplomacy, and innovation in the world, but this perception does not always match its aggressive military actions in foreign countries. Notably, the UAE engagement in the Yemen conflict, although originally justified as a counterterrorism and stabilization operation, has received nearly universal criticism due to the number of civilian innocent people killed, violations of international law of humanitarian and other concerns on the use of arms and proxy forces (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

The strategic dilemma of this tension is as follows: how can the UAE be internationally legitimate and deepen its regional defense posture? To deal with this, it is necessary to implement reforms that would bring the military action in line with the international norms, such as open reporting, lawful control, and incorporation of the human-security indicators in the defense planning (Guzansky and Marshall, 2021). Moreover, the two-faced aspects of the UAE as a responsible actor and an effective power should be supported by means of public diplomacy and strategic communication (Kaye, 2021).

At the institutional level, the UAE will have to find a balance between operationally driven security interests and normative requirements by partners in Europe, the UN, and other global business partners (Fulton, 2020). Integrating the contribution of parliamentary oversight in policymaking and involvement of civil society in the process of security policymaking would help improve the quality of accountability and legitimacy (Roberts, 2020). Such steps would enhance the soft-power credibility on which the UAE bases its relationships with other countries globally.

Table 3: SWOT Analysis of UAE Security Strategy 2025.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Advanced defense capabilities	Heavy reliance on foreign military suppliers
Strategic alliances (e.g., U.S., France, Israel)	Limited parliamentary or public oversight in defense policy
Opportunities	Threats
Expanding soft power through humanitarian diplomacy	Reputational risk from prolonged foreign interventions
Regional leadership in cybersecurity and space	Rising geopolitical competition and proxy conflicts

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance Defence Autonomy through Domestic

R&D

Expand indigenous manufacturing under the EDGE Group and Tawazun Council, focusing on

unmanned systems, AI-based analytics, and space-borne surveillance to reduce reliance on imports (EDGE, 2024).

2. Institutionalize Cyber Resilience

Develop mandatory cyber-risk assessments for all critical infrastructure sectors. Expand the National Cyber Security Council's partnerships with universities to cultivate national talent. Adopt ISO 27001 compliance across ministries.

3. Diversify Strategic Alliances

Deepen defence dialogues with India, Japan, and South Korea under the "Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA)" to supplement Western partnerships. This will buffer supply-chain disruptions and broaden technology access (UAE MoFAIC, 2023).

4. Promote Regional Collective Security Frameworks

Suggest a Gulf Maritime Security Charter in GCC, which incorporates air, sea and cyber early-warn systems. Shared situational awareness helps lessen redundancy and enhance deterrence.

5. Integrate Sustainability and Climate Security

Incorporate climate resilience into national-security planning, particularly after COP28. Desertification, water scarcity, and extreme heat pose "non-traditional threats" that require inter-ministerial coordination (UNEP, 2023).

6. Advance Human Security and Public Engagement

Launch civic-education programs on national preparedness, tolerance, and social cohesion. A secure state depends not only on armed strength but also on citizen awareness and trust.

7. CONCLUSION

The United Arab Emirates has shifted its national-security paradigm towards the territorial defence to the holistic resilience based on the international collaboration. The UAE has become the recipient as well as the provider of regional security through a diversified relationship, strong diplomacy and technological adoption. Its inputs to counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cyber governance demonstrate the practical approach that balances hard-power with soft-power legitimacy.

However, there are still issues: they have to be dependent on external suppliers, changeable hybrid issues, and regional competition force them to constantly adapt. This requires institutional innovation and alliances that are diversified to maintain momentum and become increasingly involved with collective frameworks that foster peace by enhancing security through collective means. Investing in the future, that is, by 2031, the quest of the UAE to gain stability by collaborating is a good example in leadership that can offer leadership in the region which is a small state.

REFERENCES

- Abbasi, A. J. A. (2025). Proxy wars and Regional Instability: Israel-Iran conflict in the Middle East. 4(01), 1418-1427.
- Abdul-Al, T. (2024). *Investigating the ethical use of artificial intelligence systems in the United Arab Emirates: a framework for governance using analytic hierarchy process*. Westcliff University,
- Abozaid, A. M. J. J. o. t. s. s. (2023). A Comparative Theoretical Study of the Dynamics of Security Architecture in the Gulf Regional System since the Arab Uprisings (2011-2021). 51(1).
- Al Rashedi, M. M. (2005). The UAE National Security Strategy in the 21st Century.
- ALAM, A., AHMAD, R., SHAH, Z., & KHALID, I. J. C. S. Q. (2025). Palestine: Expediency and Principle. Gulf-Israel Relations and the Palestine Question. (52).
- Alexiou, E. (2024). *The future of the bilateral relations between Russia and the USA, in the context of China's rise and the new Cold War*. Πανεπιστήμιο Πετραώς,
- Alhamar, N. A. (2023). *A Strategic Public Diplomacy Framework for Enhancing Implementation of Public Diplomacy Practice in the Diplomatic Field of Qatar*.
- Alsaeedi, A. (2023). *Going From Strategic to Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships: The Case of The United Arab Emirates*. Khalifa University of Science,
- Altiok, H., Bakir, A. J. D., & Analysis, S. (2025). Exploring the limitations of the UAE's hard power. 1-17.
- Alzaabi, M. (2019). *Foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE): Continuity and change*. Paper presented at the Smart Technologies and Innovation for a Sustainable Future: Proceedings of the 1st American University in the Emirates International Research Conference – Dubai, UAE 2017.

- Awamleh, R., & Sicre, F. (2024). *Anticipatory Governance: Shaping a Responsible Future*: World Scientific.
- Bahramipour, F., Rezaeipanah, A., & Pourramezan, P. J. P. s. (2025). A Technological Transition in Foreign Policy: Impact of AI Governance on the Geopolitical Role of the United Arab Emirates. *28*(1), 178-153.
- Barzegar, M., Vaheb, S., Mirmosayyeb, O., Ashtari, F., Afshari-Safavi, A., Adibi, L., . . . Disorders, R. (2024). Prevalence and incidence of multiple sclerosis in Isfahan, Iran between 1996 and 2021: A population-based study. *84*, 105479.
- Bhattarai, K., & Yousef, M. (2025). Urbanization and Sustainability in MENA: Challenges and Pathways to Smart Cities. In *The Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (pp. 167-216): Springer.
- Cottey, A. (2025). *Security in 21st century Europe*: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Fawn, R., Kluczevska, K., & Korneev, O. J. C. A. S. (2022). EU–Central Asian interactions: perceptions, interests and practices. *41*(4), 617-638.
- Gnanguènon, A., & Hofmann, S. C. (2024). Regional security cooperation. In *Handbook of regional cooperation and integration* (pp. 164-181): Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gstöhl, S. J. J. o. E. P. P. (2002). Scandinavia and Switzerland: small, successful and stubborn towards the EU. *9*(4), 529-549.
- Hadj Zargarbashi, S. R., & Zabihi, R. J. P. S. S. (2025). China's Role in the Persian Gulf Region and Its Impact on Iran's Regional Security. *14*(52), 155-188.
- Ibekwe, K. I., Etukudoh, E. A., Nwokediegwu, Z. Q. S., Umoh, A. A., Adefemi, A., Ilojiana, V. I. J. E. S., & Journal, T. (2024). Energy security in the global context: A comprehensive review of geopolitical dynamics and policies. *5*(1), 152-168.
- Ibish, H. J. A. G. S. I. i. W. I. P. (2017). The UAE's evolving national security strategy. *4*.
- Keshk, A. M. J. G. C. C. A., Regional, C. N., & Relations, I. (2025). The Role of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Addressing Regional Security Threats. *27*.
- KS, S. S. (2025). THE EFFECT OF NON-REGULATION OF CRYPTOCURRENCIES IN INDIA: A CRITICAL STUDY.
- Mai, N. T. N. THE IMPACT OF OIL PRICE VOLATILITY ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA.
- Mason, R. (2023). Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: Foreign policy and strategic alliances in an uncertain world.
- Mishra, A. J. C. E. P. (2025). The Securitization and Eurocentric Narratives in the European Union's Climate Policy and Diplomacy. *3*(3), e70019.
- Munassar, O. J. A. (2025). Rethinking GCC Security: Lessons From the Saudi-Led Coalition's Intervention in Yemen. 03043754251370456.
- Ramalho Fonseca, T. (2024). National Choices, Collective Consequences: A Comprehensive Study of the F-35 Procurement and its Implications on European Security.
- Sagita, G., Djemat, Y. O., & Oktaviani, J. J. G. I. J. J. M. H. I. (2025). KERJA SAMA INDONESIA DENGAN UNI EMIRAT ARAB DALAM PENANGGULANGAN TERORISME PERIODE 2020-2023. *2*(2).
- Salameh, M. T. B., & Mubiadeen, R. A. (2025). Addressing security challenges: Strategic approaches of Arab gulf states.
- SAULIUC, A. J. R. M. T. (2024). THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE FACE OF A PERFECT STORM–THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH CONFLICT. *(4)*, 492-503.
- Shakirova, A. (2025). *US security cooperation in the Middle East: The cases of Israel and Saudi Arabia, 2003-2023*. Middle East Technical University,
- Sperling, E., & Greenky, D. J. A. a. S. The Role of Healthcare Diplomacy in the 2020 Abraham Accords: A Literature Review and Case Study Analysis.
- Suwaidi, M. A., Ali, B. M. A., & Lehner, J. W. (2025). *An Iron Age artefact hoard discovered at Saruq al-Hadid-53 archaeological site, Dubai, UAE: a preliminary study*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies Volume 54 2025: Papers from the fifty-seventh meeting of the Seminar for Arabian Studies held at the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, 27–29 June 2024.
- Ulrichsen, K. C. (2020). *Qatar and the Gulf crisis*: Oxford University Press.