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The armies of the Arab monarchies in the Gulf are undergoing a major transformation...

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Engagement opérationnel

The armies of the Gulf monarchies have historically played only a subsidiary role in their national security strategy. As their combat capability ultimately remained very limited, the security of these states came more from international policies that were heavily fuelled by major arms acquisitions.

However, this dynamic is now changing, at least for some of these States. The unprecedented deployment of Saudi and Emirati forces, such as in Yemen, demonstrates a real willingness to use their own military capacity. Faced with an unprecedented diplomatic crisis, Qatar, for its part, is relying on its arms procurement policy to develop its military capabilities and strengthen international solidarity in its favour. As for Kuwait and Oman, they continue to increase their off-the-shelf purchases, as does Bahrain, which is also seeking to intensify its relations with Riyadh by systematically aligning itself with its regional policies.

Proposed translation of the foreword :

Introduction

Something is going on with the military forces of the Arab monarchies in the Gulf. For the first time in their modern history, some states are using their forces as actual combat troops, at the request of their leaders, to achieve broader political goals. This would seem absurd in many other countries, where troops are often deployed or used under the direction of the rulers to achieve broader political objectives. But despite the astronomical sums spent on procurement in recent decades - at least \$1.5 trillion among the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America - it would seem absurd to think that the money spent on procurement in the United States is not the same as that spent in Canada, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - these forces, often equipped with the latest equipment, have rarely been used in the traditional sense

for generations. ¹

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have undertaken major military operations in Yemen since 2015 with their own forces as a key element of a broader coalition.² The UAE has also engaged in a myriad of other operations in the fight against ISIS, unilaterally in Libya, and in support of NATO forces in Afghanistan.³ Both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates joined NATO in Operation Unified Protector over Libya in 2011.⁴ As with Bahrain and Kuwait, they joined the Saudi-led Yemeni operations in a more minor way in 2015.⁵

Much of this military activity is new. Indeed, the first thing to note is that nothing of this scale, complexity, and level of intervention has been undertaken before by monarchies and their military for generations. The second key point is that some aspects of these deployments have been surprisingly successful. "The broader understanding of the state of the art of Gulf armies tends to be relentlessly negative about the capabilities of these forces, often for good reason."⁶

But key vignettes such as the Emirati amphibious landing in a suburb of Aden in 2015 and their wider anti-terrorist campaign throughout 2016 and 2017 have highlighted the level of seriousness with which these campaigns were planned and a capacity to execute operations.⁷ Similarly, the combination of a dozen air forces in Saudi Arabia to launch a sustained military air campaign is logistically impressive.⁸

However, these difficult vignettes must be compared with the broader strategic outcomes of operations. In the south, the United Arab Emirates has so far been relatively successful. But in Saudi Arabia's air campaign and operations around its border in northern Yemen, there have been persistent failures. The air campaign has failed to such an extent that the Houthis - a fierce actor committing war crimes in Yemen - are now being used as a pretext for the war. ⁹ - sometimes look like a victim.

This broader topic is therefore ripe for discussion to examine what other assumptions about Gulf policy are not necessarily as important as they may have been in the past.

Although this document covers the six Arab monarchies of the Gulf, it discusses the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar individually and the other three (Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain) as a group. This division reflects the realities on the ground: not only are the military forces of the three former states in a state of flux, but the Gulf crisis of June 2017 focuses on Qatar and is led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman are being treated together, as these states have similar military procurement and training policies. In addition, those States have similar approaches to security and defence. In each country-specific section, the focus will be on the changing political and regional environment of the State or States in question. These discussions will be linked to the evolution of the armed forces and the type of role they play in politics, and conclusions will be drawn from the available evidence on the role of the forces.

This paper concludes by highlighting the commonalities and differences that emerge from the case studies. When it comes to the role and use of the military, divergent approaches among the six Gulf monarchies emerge. On the one hand, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are investing heavily in their military forces and have demonstrated their ambition to use their military forces as policy tools. On the other hand, Qatar's military procurement programme is mainly used as a means of diplomatic influence. It is also interesting to note that recently, Qatar's defence

spending has become inversely proportional to the health of its relations with its Gulf neighbours: the poorer the relations, the more Qatar spends on buying military equipment from the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Kuwait and Oman, and to a lesser extent Bahrain, are slowly investing in their military forces without any clear desire to use them in any significant way. They too would prefer to continue the proven policy of using large defence procurement contracts as a means of maintaining and deepening vital international alliances with important Western states (generally, if not always).

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