



National Defence

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Khaled bin Mohammed bin Zayed:
We are building a robust culture of national security and leveraging all available resources to adeptly navigate the dynamic and evolving strategic landscape



Commandant's Message

In today's rapidly changing world, theories and strategies are constantly evolving. Simultaneously, the regional and international strategic environment is witnessing radical changes, escalating security challenges and geopolitical threats. Therefore, the role of the National Defence College, as a leading graduate institute for strategic and security studies, stands out.

The National Defence College Magazine seeks to provide a forum for leaders, researchers, and thinkers to present their ideas and analyses on pressing strategic issues at the highest scientific level. The magazine contributes to the enrichment of strategic thinking and understanding of complex challenges in strategic studies. Furthermore, it highlights the urgent need for highly competent leaders with strategic understanding who will be able to deal with these challenges wisely and with insightful vision.

In this context, the National Defence College renews its commitment to prepare and qualify both military and civilian leaders and hone their skills in identifying and assessing challenges to national, regional and international security as well as understanding the fundamentals and requirements for managing and employing state resources to defend national interests. This is achieved by improving their capabilities in research, analysis, critical thinking, evaluation, and dialogue skills within an interactive and research-based learning environment through integrated programs that combine theoretical and practical aspects.

The magazine's articles are varied in presenting matters as the authors address topics such as security challenges, regional and international threats, developments in military technology, foreign policy, strategic analyses, security risks, international cooperation, geopolitical transformations, arms races and international conflicts, climate change and a range of matters that require joint efforts to protect global security and stability.

I would like to congratulate the graduates of the 11th National Defence Course, and urge them to accept the responsibilities entrusted to them with competence and sincerity, and to work together as a team to serve the interests of our beloved homeland and protect its security and stability.

In conclusion, I extend my thanks and appreciation to everyone who has contributed to this issue with the sum of their knowledge and experience. I would also like to extend my profound appreciation and gratitude to the members of the editorial committee for their continuous participation, which reflects their academic roles, and dedication to sharing scientific achievements. We hope that our readers find great value in reading this eleventh edition of the National Defence College Magazine and enjoy its diverse and informative contents.



**Major General Staff Pilot
Salim bin Harmal Al Shamsi**
Commandant,
National Defence College



National Defence

A Specialized Yearly Journal on Strategic Affairs

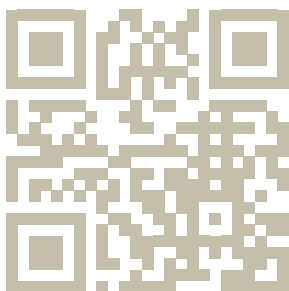
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Editor-in-Chief

We are pleased to present to you the eleventh issue of the National Defence College (NDC) magazine, expressing our commitment to disseminating knowledge and academic research in the fields of national security. In this issuance, we highlight some of the achievements achieved by the United Arab Emirates, a number of articles and topics that we hope they will contribute to understanding the current strategic issues.

In a dynamic world dominated by challenges and threats, along with opportunities, the importance of possessing knowledge and understanding is highlighted to keep pace with these changes, adapt to them wisely, and take advantage of emerging opportunities to the utmost level. There is no doubt that the United Arab Emirates is an inspiring model in this regard, as it has been able to confront challenges and threats. It turned them into opportunities, and today it occupies a leading position at the regional and global levels. Moreover, it enjoys a diversified and prosperous economy, and has achieved many achievements in various fields, including advanced infrastructure, vital economic sectors, human and social development, soft power, attracting foreign investments, and hosting many pioneering international companies. The country also plays a pivotal role in the cultural, sportive and touristic fields, as it hosts many important international events and forums, which strengthen its rank as a global hub for business and innovation. The country also pays great attention to education, academic and scientific research and invests in educational infrastructure and advanced research centers, which contribute to infusing knowledge, values of tolerance and openness to different cultures. These achievements embody the will and firm determination of the wise leadership and reflect the cohesion and coherence of the Emirati people around their wise leadership.

In this issue, we also address a variety of very important topics in the field of national security, including geopolitical challenges and threats, rapid technological developments, climate changes and their strategic implications. Through these topics, we aim to provide the experts' analyses and points of view in order to help participants and concerned parties better understand the current issues and challenges. We are in an era that requires us all to be prepared to confront upcoming successive changes, by raising and discussing issues as well as continuous learning and extracting lessons and objectives from our own experiences and others' experiences to build a more comprehensive view, joint work and mutual cooperation among effective actors to solve problems and collectively confront challenges.

Finally, I can only extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of this issue, including writers and experts who provided their valuable opinions and articles, to say nothing of the editorial board efforts. I also extend my special thanks to the leadership of the National Defence College for its continued support of our efforts to infuse knowledge, academic and scientific research. We hope that you will find in this issue useful material that is rich in information and deep analysis that meet your knowledge requirements and opens new horizons for thinking and inspiration, with my sincere wishes for an enjoyable and useful reading.



**Staff Brigadier
Faraj Mubarak Al Shamsi**
Editor-in-Chief



COP28 and the Defence Dimensions of Climate Change

Dr. Brooke Smith-Windsor
Dean of the National Defence College



Dubai's 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was remarkable for many reasons. One was the final agreement's commitment to a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels. Another was the 'Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace' on shared financial, technical and institutional support to build resiliency

in communities most affected by climate-related fragility and conflict. A third, less publicized, was the unprecedented level of military representation. On 7 December 2023, HE Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Bowardi, Minister of State for Defence Affairs, launched the 'UAE Armed Forces Climate Change Strategy,' the first of its kind in the region.

The US delegation included the Assistant Secretary of Defence for Environment, Energy and Installations (EE&I), the Defence Department's Chief Sustainability Officer, as well as the three EE&I Assistant Secretaries for the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance also attended. So, while defence and climate change might at first appear unrelated, the connection is the subject of a burgeoning policy debate.

EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The journey to the defence-climate change intersection at COP28 has been decades in the making. During the Cold War, defence and environmental policy connections occasionally appeared. One significant development was the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty prohibiting atmospheric, underwater and outer space nuclear tests with the goal to end environmental contamination by radioactive substances. Another was the 1970s' ban on 'weather warfare' through the UN 'Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.' For the most part, however, national security and defence policy discourse omitted environmental security considerations.

Things began to change with the 1989 entry-into-force of the Montreal Protocol and the (notably US) defence industry's phase out of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) just as the Cold War was ending. The policy debate advanced further in the 1990s with the pronouncements of the world's then unipolar power, the United States: 'environmental pressures will feed into immense social unrest and make the world substantially more vulnerable to serious international frictions' (Allenby 2000). By the time the 2010 US National Security Strategy was published, climate change had been elevated to a 'threat' akin to armed conflict with the link between the two expressly acknowledged. America's European allies followed suit. When NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept appeared after COP21 and the Paris Agreement, they jointly declared climate change to be the 'defining challenge of our time.' The reason? – Rising sea levels, wildfires



Sustainability is an integral part of the UAE's approach and efforts to support climate action.

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE

and more frequent and extreme weather events leading to resource conflicts, critical infrastructure vulnerabilities, and harsh operating conditions for the military. NATO has gone on to proclaim that it 'cannot remain a fossil fuel Alliance in a renewable age.' Sustainable technologies in future military capabilities and operations are prioritized (NATO 2023).

Where America's principal strategic competitors are concerned, however, China has been disinclined to the public association between defence and climate change. Concern with exposing vulnerabilities to national defence infrastructure or the People's Liberation Army's reliance on fossil fuels may be one explanation. Russia's official policy also seems reluctant to embrace the international 'securitization of climate change,' including overt linkages with armed forces. Nevertheless, Moscow acknowledges the national security implications for the Russian people at home such as a warming Arctic region (Stoetman et al. 2023).

Even if speaking of an international consensus on climate change and defence is premature, whether or not publicly acknowledged, there are three main policy considerations:

1. Climate change as a 'threat multiplier' (e.g. resource conflicts, natural disasters) eliciting military intervention;
2. Armed forces' operational adaptability and resilience in aggravated extreme weather conditions and
3. Building sustainable armed forces to increase operational efficiencies and reduce carbon emissions.

Of the three, the latter remains the most contentious on the subject of reporting requirements. It is widely known that the world's militaries are hydrocarbon dependent and thus significant CO₂ emitters—some estimates place them at 5.5% of the global total (McFarlane and Volcovici 2023). Wars and conflicts

only exacerbate the carbon footprint. The first year of the Ukraine-Russia war alone may have equaled the annual emissions of a country the size of Belgium (*What to expect on militarism* 2023). But the historic 1997 Kyoto Protocol and 2015 Paris Agreement largely exempted military emissions from the UNFCCC's accounting framework.

For reasons of operational security, few countries seem willing to publicly account for their military emissions and commit to a standardized, robust and international reporting metric and process. Nevertheless, this does not mean that individual countries are resigned to inaction. The new 'UAE Armed Forces Climate Change Strategy' is noteworthy in this respect.

UAE STRATEGY

In launching the new Strategy, UAE officials evoked the memory of the late Sheikh Zayed and the importance His Highness placed on the environment since the UAE's founding. So, it comes as no surprise that the third policy area of building a sustainable armed forces figures prominently, while in no way diminishing the significance of the other two considerations mentioned above. Strategic priority is given to sustainable acquisition, infrastructure, energy and waste management and cultivating an armed forces culture of environmental awareness. The Strategy recognizes the importance of striking the right balance between necessary climate action, while maintaining the capability to defend the national interests in the short and long term through a capable, resilient and adaptable military.



CONCLUSION AND WAY AHEAD



By spearheading the Armed Forces Climate Change Strategy at COP28, the UAE signaled its intention to be a leader in the enduring policy debate about environmental security and defence.

Going forward, the text emphasizes collaboration and communication with key strategic partners at home and abroad.

In terms of 'greening defence,' internationally there are several like-minded states with which the UAE could consider bilateral engagement. In

2022, for example, Abu Dhabi's core defence partner, the United States, launched the Defence Department's Sustainability Plan, which shares many of the same objectives as the UAE Strategy. Smaller states also have committed to sustainable defence. These include Singapore, which in 2021 set up the Defence Ministry's 'Sustainability Office' to ensure the armed forces meet or exceed the targets set in the national 'Singapore Green Plan 2030' (Jing Ting 2021). The Swiss Armed Forces similarly are equally committed to cutting operational missions. In 2023, for example, the Swiss air force pledged to power military jets with at least 50 percent of fuel requirements derived from sustainable sources (*Swiss Air Force* 2023). Multilaterally, advancing the UAE's climate-defence agenda could encompass cooperative regional approaches.

For example, by developing an annual, joint GCC 'Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment' similar to the one compiled by NATO member states for the Euro-Atlantic region. Or, exploring the development and fielding of more sustainable capabilities for the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force—for instance, the institutionalized sharing of energy-

efficient microgrid bases to improve operational efficiencies similar to NATO's Smart Energy Program (*Cormarie and Stephenson* 2023).

Aligning GCC positions on climate and defence ahead of the next COP29 in Azerbaijan likewise could help to solidify the Gulf leaders' stance on climate action. In sum, seizing regional opportunities would serve to build on the impressive achievements of COP28 duly acknowledged in the Doha Declaration of the 44th GCC Supreme Council on 5 December 2023.

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The Rise of 'Minilateralism' and its Impact on Global Security

The persistent fragmentation of the world order and escalated rivalry among global powers presents considerable obstacles to multilateral collaboration. One response to these challenges has been the growing popularity of 'minilateralism,'¹ a diplomatic approach that has gained considerable traction in recent times.

Amb. Grigol Mgaloblishvili
Faculty, UAE NDC



The formation of smaller groupings among like-minded parties is not a new diplomatic ‘gameplan’; it has a long history. Examples such as the ‘Five Eyes’ intelligence sharing alliance, originating during World War II, or other ad hoc groupings like the U.S.-Australia-New Zealand Security Treaty signed in 1951, highlight this longstanding tradition². What distinguishes the current geopolitical landscape, however, is the unprecedented proliferation of small group-based, ad hoc cooperation mechanisms worldwide. Many nations in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions, where the effects of global power rivalry are particularly felt, are increasingly favoring ‘minilateral’ partnerships as a means to counteract the failures of traditional multilateral collaboration. In this context, the emergence of the Quad security dialogue (Australia, India, Japan, the United States) and the formation of the I2U2 cooperation forum (India, Israel, UAE, U.S.) are just a few examples among many other initiatives of ‘minilaterals’ that illustrate this trend. Considering the resurgence in significance of ‘minilateral’ formats, particularly in the Gulf region, this article will explore the underlying factors contributing to the proliferation of such formats as well as their impact on global and regional security.

A sound starting point for this discussion is to define the concept and outline the characteristics of ‘minilateralism’. These types of cooperation networks in general, refer to narrowly focused, targeted initiatives intended to address a “specific threat, contingency or security issue with fewer states (usually three or four) sharing the same interest for resolving it within a finite period of time.”³ In other words, ‘minilaterals’ share at least three common characteristics: they have a small number of participants, they are ad hoc cooperation

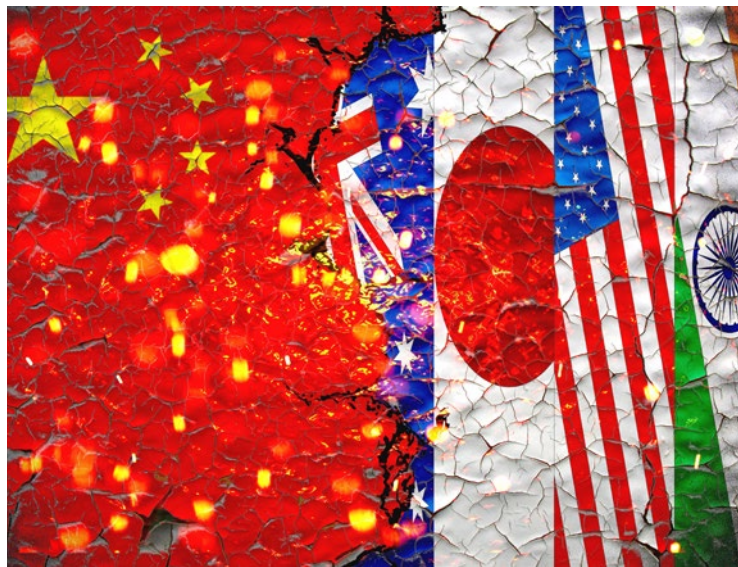
mechanisms, and their outcomes, in general, are non-binding and voluntary in nature⁴.

Therefore, these arrangements offer greater flexibility, fewer institutional constraints, and wider maneuverability for states seeking to address specific issues with the participation of a limited number of actors. Another notable characteristic of ‘minilateralism’, according to H.E. Nikolay Mladenov, Director General of the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (AGDA),

“is an emphasis on shared interests instead of shared values or ideological alignment”⁵. This important feature allows states to forge partnerships without necessarily sharing similar ideological or political perspectives on numerous international issues. With that in mind, understanding the

factors that have contributed to the proliferation of ‘minilaterals’ and comprehending why states currently favor these formats are subjects of inquiry for numerous policy experts and scholars.

One of the major contributing factors to the proliferation of ‘minilaterals’ is the emergence of a highly polarized and competitive world order, often referred to as an era of global power rivalry or strategic competition, where international institutions, such as United Nations (UN) or World Trade Organization (WTO), have evolved into the diplomatic battlegrounds among global powers. Such organizations are often used as tools to settle scores rather than foster consensus. More importantly, emerging powers view current international organizations as Western-centric institutions that reflect the realities of a bygone era which they are increasingly striving to undermine, while simultaneously building their own alternative arrangements. This trend further erodes the legitimacy of international institutions.



The level of polarization has reached an extent where global powers are incapable of cooperating even when confronted with common challenges. In this context, the near absence of concerted international action to the COVID-19 pandemic was another example that revealed the level of erosion of multilateral collaboration. The pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities and political divisions within international institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations, casting doubt on nations' capacity and willingness to collaborate multilaterally in tackling shared challenges⁶. The gradual erosion of multilateralism and the growing inefficiency of major international institutions have tended to incentivize individual states to gravitate towards less formal, ad hoc arrangements, thus contributing to the rising popularity of 'minilateral' networks. Therefore, the proliferation of 'minilaterals' is often viewed as a response to address the inefficiency of multilateral institutions⁷.

Another significant factor contributing to the proliferation of 'minilaterals' is the less formal and bureaucratic nature inherent in these alliance structures. Large scale institutions with established bureaucracies and formal structures require longer and more cumbersome decision-making processes to achieve consensus, which are largely absent in 'minilateral' groupings. According to Chris Brummer, a law professor from Georgetown University, the advancement of technology has paved the way to more informal modes of communication. Consequently, as formality in communication channels diminishes, there is also a decreased preference for formal, large organizations known for their complex procedures⁸. To put it simply, smaller, less formal, and more flexible ad hoc groups are better equipped to respond to crises or opportunities without being hindered by formal structures or lengthy bureaucratic procedures. Alongside this notable advantage, H.E. Nikolay Mladenov highlights another important factor explaining why states may prefer 'minilateral' networks. He stresses that the distinctive feature of this alliance structure lies in its emphasis on shared interests over shared values, "nations can collaborate on critical issues without having to agree on

everything or hold the same worldview."⁹ This allows states to establish temporary alliances without the need to align ideologically with their partners. Thus, 'minilateral' formats, in addition to bureaucratic simplicity, also provide ideological flexibility.

The continuous rise in popularity of 'minilateral' networks has already had and will continue to have a significant impact on the international system and global security. On a positive note, 'minilateral' networks provide a viable approach to addressing significant issues that larger international organizations may struggle with, due to either a lack of consensus or lengthy bureaucratic processes. Moreover, 'minilateral' networks have the potential to offer more prompt and innovative solutions to longstanding security issues due to their procedural and ideological flexibility. The Quad, I2U2 or Abrahams Accords are clear examples of such innovative initiatives. Consequently, these alliance structures have potential to complement the shortcomings of more traditional international institutions. In parallel, the increasing popularity of



‘minilateral’ networks will deepen the fragmentation of the international system and potentially jeopardize the legitimacy of traditional international institutions. While ‘minilateral’ settings can be effective in finding solutions to immediate threats or challenges that require the involvement of a few key players, they are less effective in addressing global issues that necessitate broader participation or consensus.

In particular, addressing global challenges such as climate change or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction requires the engagement of multiple stakeholders and a broader consensus, which can often only be achieved through the involvement of major international institutions like the United Nations and its agencies. Thus, ‘minilateral’ arrangements are not only ill-suited to effectively address global issues, but also they exacerbate divisions among major stakeholders by forming blocs within international institutions. Consequently, the proliferation of ‘minilateral’ networks, alongside the weakening of international institutions, may also impede or delay the formation of wider consensus on

longstanding global issues. This mixed record of benefits and drawbacks regarding global security will continue to fuel academic and policy discussions on ‘minilateral’ networks. Despite this ongoing debate, ‘minilateralism’ is likely to thrive in the years ahead, tending to remain the preferred diplomatic *modus operandi* for many countries, in the manner that ‘nonalignment’ gained traction during the Cold War era¹⁰.

¹ Nikolay Mladenov, “Minilateralism: A Concept that is Changing the World Order”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, April 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/minilateralism-concept-changing-world-order>

² Gedaliah Afterman, N. Janardhan, Mohammed Baharoon, Afshin Molavi, “Minilateralism and I2U2 – Refining Realpolitik”, *AGDA Insight*, September 2023. <https://www.agda.ac.ae/research/publications-multimedia-events/publication-details/minilateralism-and-i2u2>

³ Eric C. Chaffee, “Confounding Ockham’s Razor: Minilateralism and International Economic Regulation”, *Brooklyn Journal of Corporate, Financial & Commercial Law*, 10 (2016): 319.

⁴ Aarshi Tirkey, “Minilateralism: Weighing the Prospects for Cooperation and Governance”, *Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief*, No: 489 (2021): 5.

⁵ Nikolay Mladenov, “Minilateralism: A Concept that is Changing the World Order”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, April 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/minilateralism-concept-changing-world-order>

⁶ *Global Trends 2040: More Contested World*, The National Intelligence Council, March 2021:12.

⁷ Aarshi Tirkey, “Minilateralism: Weighing the Prospects for Cooperation and Governance”, *Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief*, No: 489 (2021): 4.

⁸ Aarshi Tirkey, “Minilateralism: Weighing the Prospects for Cooperation and Governance”, *Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief*, No: 489 (2021): 7.

⁹ Nikolay Mladenov, “Minilateralism: A Concept that is Changing the World Order”, *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, April 2023. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/minilateralism-concept-changing-world-order>

¹⁰ Husain Haqqani, Narayanappa Janardhan, “The Minilateral Era”, *The Foreign Policy*, January 10, 2023. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/10/minilateral-diplomacy-middle-power-india-israel-uae/>





The Salience of Naval Power

The disruption caused in maritime trade in the Black Sea and Red Sea due to the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts coupled with growing skirmishes in the South China Sea have underscored the critical importance of naval power. The focal point of global power competition is shifting to the seas.

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Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), an American naval officer, is hailed as the prophet of sea power and naval strategy.¹ Mahan's two great works, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*, were published in 1890 and 1892 respectively. They constitute a naval history of Britain towards the end of the age of sail. Mahan argued that control of the sea, a historically significant factor, had not been thoroughly understood or elucidated until his time². His writings coincided with pivotal moments in naval history, including Germany's decision to build a modern naval fleet, the Spanish-American War, and the consequent rise of the United States as a global power. Additionally, advancements in naval architecture and technology during the industrial revolution, such as the transition from sails to steam, wooden hulls to iron and steel, and cannons to rifled big guns, further underscored the relevance of Mahan's ideas. New weapons were introduced, and specialized naval vessels were developed for specific functions.

At the core of Mahan's works lies a simple yet profound thesis: throughout the protracted rivalry between England and France from 1688 to the fall of Napoleon, control of the sea through naval dominance, or the lack thereof, ultimately shaped the course of history. "It was not by attempting great military operations on land, but by controlling the sea, and through the sea, the world outside Europe," that English statesmen "ensured the triumph of their country."³ Mahan wrote that naval operations, especially those directed against trade and logistic supply or redeployment could be crucial to nations waging land wars. His main argument: "if navies...exist for the protection of commerce, it inevitably follows that the stoppage of commerce compels peace. Wars are won by the economic strangulation of the enemy from the sea... [Wars] are lost by failure to prevent such strangulation of one's own country. Control of maritime commerce through command of the sea is the primary function of the navies."⁴ "Here was the clue to the rise and fall of empires [and great powers]: control of the sea or lack of it."⁵ Conversely, the absence or loss of sea control and naval power led to national stagnation and decline.

Mahan's contribution to modern strategy lies in three areas: first, he developed a philosophy of sea power that won recognition and acceptance far beyond professional naval circles; second, he formulated a new theory of naval strategy; and third, he was a critical student of naval tactics.

Naval operations, especially those directed against trade and logistic supply or redeployment could be crucial to nations waging land wars.

According to Mahan, naval strategy and sea power are conditioned by certain fundamental natural phenomena, such as a nation's insular or continental situation, and by national policies related to navies, the merchant marine and overseas bases. Naval tactics, on the other hand, come into play after the beginning of actual combat. Tactics, being the art of using weapons forged by man, may change as weapons themselves change. Put simply, Mahan argued that technology makes a difference to naval tactics, not to strategy. This clear distinction between strategy and tactics was one of the things that raised Mahan above the level of earlier strategists. In Mahan's view, navies are better instruments of national policy than are armies. Why? Because "the influence of a navy could be felt where the national armies cannot go."⁶

KEY ELEMENTS OF SEA POWER

Mahan talked of a trinity of commerce, colonies and bases: “a combination of maritime commerce, overseas possessions and privileged access to foreign markets which produces national wealth and greatness.” For command of the sea through naval dominance, Mahan postulated six “general conditions” that he saw as universal and timeless in character:

1. The geographical location: a country must not be landlocked;
2. Its physical conformation: access to seas from interior via rivers and bays, coastlines, abundant natural resources, and favorable climate;
3. The extent of territory: extensive coastlines and deep harbors and ports;
4. The size of its population: those engaged in sea-going occupations;
5. The national character: an aptitude for the sea and commercial enterprise; and
6. The character and policy of the government: as needed to build a strong navy.

The main theme in Mahan’s writings is the supreme importance of sea power in the shaping of national destinies. The major source of his writings and teachings was Antoine-Henri Jomini, a French-Swiss strategist. It is said that Mahan applied Jomini to the sea domain. From Jomini’s *Art of War*, he learned the few principles of land warfare that are applicable to war at sea: the principle of concentration; the strategic value of the central position and interior lines of operations; and the close relationship between logistics and combat. Mahan insisted that concentration of force is “the predominant principle” of naval warfare ⁷. This, he said, is true of naval tactics as well as naval strategy.

Thus, the essence of Mahan’s strategic doctrine is the need to control the sea (i.e., command of the sea), which can be done only by a concentration of force that is capable of driving enemy naval and merchant ships from the seas. Command of the sea means the ability either to bottle up the enemy fleet in port, or to destroy it in battle if it put to sea. Such a naval battle might, like a land battle according to Jomini, achieve victory by directing concentrated force onto a weak section of the enemy – as Nelson did at the battle of

the Nile in 1798. Control of the sea by reducing the size of the navy is the primary consideration in a naval war. Therefore, both strategically and tactically, navies should be employed offensively. According to Mahan, “In naval warfare, coast defense is the defensive factor, the navy the offensive factor.” Like Jomini, Mahan also laid great stress on logistics: “Proper naval bases and access to them by the fleet are essential ingredients to a successful maritime strategy.” ⁸





MAHAN'S RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Mahan's contribution to modern strategy lies in many areas: the importance of sea lanes and chokepoints, the composition of fleets, logistics of war, a new theory of naval strategy and tactics, the interdependence of navies, commerce, resources and overseas markets, the use of navies as instruments of policy, of national greatness. No one could dispute Mahan's contention that the development of profitable economic interests overseas is dependent upon the possession of sea power. Nor can we deny that the possession of sea power is an essential prerequisite for great power status.

The intense jockeying for influence and forward presence among maritime powers seeking privileged access to ports, logistical facilities and other pieces of critical infrastructure along the vital sea-lanes and chokepoints bears remarkable resemblance to competition amongst naval powers of earlier periods in history. Nearly 80% of global trade is conducted through maritime transportation and 97% of the global internet traffic is carried by undersea cables. Much like America and European powers in the 20th century, China and India today seem to have fully embraced Mahan. The US naval dominance is weakening. Mahan's theories of sea power have

contributed to Chinese maritime strategy of overseas markets, resources and bases as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative. Interestingly, Mahan's prediction made in 1890 that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia... [and] that the destiny of the world would be decided on its waters" reverberates in the 21st century, as echoed by Chinese strategic analysts who conclude that "whichever country controls the Indian Ocean controls East Asia."⁹ However, sea denial is much easier to achieve than total sea control in contested seascape. We live in an era where even non-state actors possess the capability to assemble a makeshift naval fleet to challenge sea control. Technological advancements in unmanned air, surface, and underwater vehicles, combined with increasing investments in submarines, undeniably indicate a strategic shift towards sea denial.

¹ See my Chapter 2: "The Evolution of Strategic Thought," in C. A. Snyder (ed.), *Contemporary Security and Strategy* (NY: Routledge, 1999), pp. 13-52.

² P.A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), p. 450.

³ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," p. 452.

⁴ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," p. 455.

⁵ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," p. 450.

⁶ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," p. 462.

⁷ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," pp.456-7.

⁸ Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan," pp. 458-9, 460.

⁹ Shi Hongtao, "China's 'Malacca Straits,'" *Qingnian Bao*, June 15, 2004, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-CPP20040615000042.

Disruptive Technologies and Global Security

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Throughout human history, and particularly over the past two hundred years, the ability of states to secure their national interests has depended in part on their ability to capitalize on disruptive technologies. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines a disruptive technology as one that “completely changes the way things are done.” More specifically, disruptive technologies are tools that change fundamentally the way humans interact with one another economically, politically, and militarily. The ability to exploit new technologies has contributed to the rise of states. In 1820, China’s economy was 20 times as large as that of the United States. But by 1890, the American economy was larger, due primarily to industrialization, the replacement of human muscle with machines powered by coal. Machines enabled goods to be produced much faster, but also more precisely. This allowed the US, and European colonial powers such as Britain and Germany, to produce superior weapons, like naval artillery, which they used to force China to trade with them on favorable terms.

This short historical digression is relevant because a similar process is underway today. A wave of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), additive manufacturing, and quantum computing, is set to determine which states survive and thrive over the next hundred years. Foremost among these is AI, which has been likened to the discovery of electricity in its fundamental importance. Defined as “the ability of a computer to learn from data and experience and make decisions,” (Smith 2019) AI has emerged as a result of two related developments. First, this century has seen an explosion of data. Today there are more than 25 billion devices connected to the internet, all of which produce data in growing amounts. It is estimated that the total amount of data transmitted through global networks every day grew by 50% just between 2020 and 2022

(Scharre 2023). Equally dramatic, however, have been improvements in computer processing capabilities. These two trends have enabled advances in the ability of computers to identify patterns through the analysis of data, and make decisions based on that analysis. As this capability develops, it will have immense implications that extend well beyond ChatGPT or the facial recognition capability on our smartphones. At basis, AI will make it easier to create new knowledge, which will enable the development of other technologies. Just like harnessing electricity allowed societies to develop new tools such as radios, and capabilities like the ability to work after dark, harnessing AI will enable us to improve existing processes, in terms of diagnosing diseases, or develop entirely new processes for any number of tasks.

AI can contribute to national security in multiple ways. For example, the US Department of Defense (DoD) has used it to develop a predictive maintenance system for military equipment. By tracking how much a particular vehicle or aircraft has been used, and where it has been used, the system can schedule maintenance and part replacement, reducing unscheduled maintenance and increasing readiness. AI can also help produce useful military intelligence. In 2017, the DoD developed another program called Project Maven to aid in the analysis of thousands of hours of video footage collected by drones over Iraq. By detecting and flagging relevant objects and movements, the program drastically reduced the workload of human analysts. In addition, AI has the potential to enable increasingly capable autonomous weapon systems. Autonomous weapons already exist in the form of ‘loitering munitions’, which can detect and attack targets emitting radar signals without human intervention. Even more complex systems are under development, and they have shown the ability

to outperform humans in trials. Aircraft piloted by AI, for example, have defeated human pilots in combat simulations, because they can perform maneuvers that the human body cannot tolerate, and they can make shots that require split second timing that humans do not possess (Scharre 2023).

Unsurprisingly, states are racing to harness the rapidly developing capabilities of AI. China is implementing a comprehensive plan to establish itself as “the global leader in AI by 2030,” investing tens of billions of dollars in its chip manufacturing capabilities and recruiting thousands of engineers from the United States, Taiwan, and elsewhere (Scharre 2023). The CHIPS and Science Act, passed by the Biden Administration in 2022, seeks to maintain American primacy in AI, investing \$280 billion in scientific research and development over a ten-year period, including more than \$52 billion in subsidies for chip manufacturing. The US has also implemented restrictions preventing American and even some non-American firms from transferring advanced technologies to Chinese firms (Toh and Tausche 2023). Such measures may limit the spread of AI capabilities to America’s rivals, but they may also discourage companies from developing innovative methods and groundbreaking products.

Given the transformative potential of AI, particularly in the realm of national security, these initiatives are understandable. But their political and economic costs are high enough to exclude all but the wealthiest states from the race for AI primacy. In the meantime, cheap, complementary technologies such as missiles, drones, mobile phones and social media are having disruptive effects on global security today. In the Caucasus, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere, combatants have circulated drone and mobile phone footage on social media to illustrate their fighting power and attract recruits and funding. Even more significantly, since October 2023, the Houthis have used drones and missiles to attack commercial shipping in the Red Sea, using social media to broadcast these events to a global audience. Although the attacks have caused relatively little damage, their economic impact is significant. The Red Sea is a vital transportation conduit between Asia and Europe, with approximately 10% of global trade, and 30% of global container shipping transiting through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. In light of

the Houthi attacks, an increasing number of shipping companies are choosing to avoid the Red Sea, instead diverting their cargoes around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. This adds approximately 3,500 nautical miles and two weeks to the journey, driving up the cost of goods being shipped and disrupting global supply chains (NPR 2024). The resulting damage to the global economy has compelled a coalition of states led by the US to initiate military operations against the Houthis. These operations are far more expensive than the attacks they aim to prevent. While the drones employed by the Houthis each cost between \$2,000 and \$20,000, each missile used by the US Navy to destroy these drones can cost more than \$2 million. Moreover, defeating Houthi attacks will require the deployment of multiple naval vessels to the Red Sea for months, or possibly years on end (Seligman and Berg 2023).

Overall, disruptive technologies are creating multiple dilemmas for national security decision-makers. First, AI has the potential to transform all aspects of human activity, from business to healthcare to warfighting. But realizing this potential will require huge investments over an extended period, as well as requiring difficult decisions about whether to share such innovations with competitors and potential adversaries. At the same time, state and non-state actors are using cheap, complementary technologies to threaten the security of individual states and the global economy more broadly. Thus, decision-makers face a second dilemma: how to address a growing number of crises sparked by actors empowered by cheap technologies, while preparing for the maturation of a more transformative, but much more costly technology. These two tasks are not mutually exclusive, but they will require hard choices about how to use limited resources.

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Foreign AID

Development Assistance and Economic Statecraft: The UAE approach

For middle and small powers, the importance of economic statecraft cannot be underestimated. Such states often punch above their proverbial weight by successfully deploying economic instruments to achieve their national interests in multiple domains.

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While 'aid' broadly understood as both long-term development and short-term humanitarian assistance, is from the perspective of receiving states, both negative and positive, it is also useful to examine aid in the context of national security and how it can be a

'win-win' proposition. It is a win for funding states in terms of helping them achieve their national interests and for recipients to get the resources needed to meet development goals.

In recent decades, Gulf states have emerged as important aid actors on the global stage. The UAE, especially, has played a leading role in many aspects of development assistance, either meeting or exceeding the OECD aid spending target of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI). In the fiscal year 2021, the UAE dispersed US\$3.08 billion in various forms of development assistance¹.

This article will examine aid as an underappreciated tool of economic statecraft and the UAE's international development agenda and how the country successfully uses aid as a tool of economic statecraft.

UNDERSTANDING AID AS A TOOL OF ECONOMIC STATECRAFT

Economic aid or development assistance encompasses transfers that support the economies of recipient countries. The donor can be an independent country or a large international organisation. This aid can be in the form of loans, grants, or credits. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is the most common type of economic aid directed towards developing the recipient's economy. Humanitarian aid is often short-term and provided in response to natural disasters, offering emergency supplies like first aid, water, food, and clothing. In addition to ODA, the other major aid category is referred to as Other Financial Flows (OFF), which also plays an important role for both donor and recipient states. This assistance does not meet the conditions for eligibility as Official Development Assistance or Official Aid, either because it is not primarily aimed at development or because it has a grant element of less than 25 per cent².

While great powers have successfully leveraged development assistance as a function of economic statecraft (i.e., the US-funded Marshall Plan and Chinese-funded Belt and Road Initiative), its use by small and middle powers, particularly those in the West, remains less developed³. They tend to approach the provision of development assistance from a needs-based perspective, not national interest. In an age of resource scarcity and donor fatigue, states need to think clearly and rationally about allocating limited foreign development budgets. Given the

need for development assistance in various parts of the Global South, donors need to think strategically about how and where to allocate assistance, and how aid policy aligns with national interests – achieving better alignment with other economic statecraft tools.

THE UAE'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

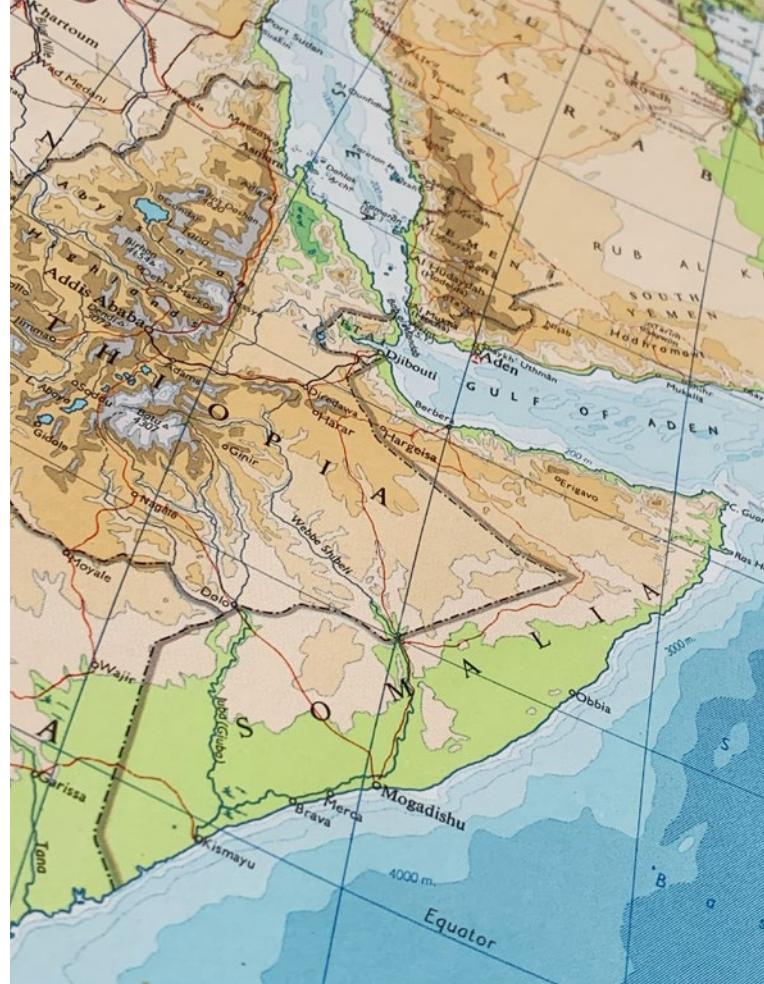
The UAE represents how a small state uses aid as an instrument of economic statecraft – having maintained robust development assistance programming and been consistently ahead of the OECD's recommended giving target⁴. Over the past two decades, the UAE's aid/development assistance policy has been progressively modernised, in terms of the institutionalism or formalisation of foreign aid provision. In 2008 the UAE Cabinet created the Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aid (OCFA). In 2013, the OCFA's mandate evolved, necessitating the creation of the Ministry of International Cooperation and Development (MICAD). In 2016, MICAD merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC). Changes at the institutional level have also been followed by policy shifts. In 2017, the UAE's Foreign Assistance Policy was launched to ensure the effectiveness of its assistance. More broadly, in the mid-2000s, there was a shift from MENA-focused to global aid/development policy, which included increased multilateral engagement – earmarked funding to multilateral organisations and lending institutions.

Regarding development priorities, unlike many Western donors who allocate funds at the sectoral or national level, the UAE maintains a more flexible approach – distributing funds to general or direct budget support, accounting for 32.1% of overall aid spending⁵. This means that the UAE prefers bilateral development assistance which recipient states can use it as they see fit. At the national level, the biggest beneficiaries of bilateral UAE-funded development include Yemen – AED959.7m; Jordan – AED664.1m; Mauritania – AED567.8m; Afghanistan – AED492.3m and Sudan – AED289.7m⁶. Other significant recipients of UAE-funded assistance

include Egypt (post-Arab Spring), Pakistan (2011-2020), Iraq and Lebanon⁷. Looking at the distribution of aid regionally, Asia receives 64.4%, Africa 19.7%, global and multi-regional efforts 12.2%, Europe 1.9%, the Americas 1.6%, and Oceania 0.1%⁸.

CASE STUDIES

Having examined the contours of development assistance and how aid functions as a part of economic statecraft and the UAE's development agenda, we now turn to some recent case studies of Pakistan, the Horn of Africa and Mauritania to highlight how the UAE has effectively used aid as a tool of economic statecraft. These cases show not only the scale of UAE's generosity but also the linkage between the provision of development and the UAE's regional strategic priorities.



CASE ONE: PAKISTAN

The long-term stability of Pakistan is a strategic issue for Gulf states. Over the decades, the UAE has applied multiple aid instruments, including humanitarian, ODA and F mechanisms⁹. In the OFF sphere, the UAE has used cash transfers (deposits) to help shore up liquidity in Pakistan's Central Bank and boost Pakistan's sovereign credit rating. ODA mechanisms have included long-term development assistance and humanitarian aid. In the latter sphere, in late 2022 the UAE dispatched aid shipments to Pakistan carrying 200 containers of food and medical supplies. This aid supported 500,000 Pakistani families affected by floods.

Over the past decade, Pakistan received the UAE's largest-ever multi-sectoral ODA endeavour, the UAE-PAP program. The program was launched in 2011 focused on the Swat Valley. Various ADFD-funded projects aimed to ensure the development of five main sectors – infrastructure, education, healthcare, water, and agriculture. The UAE-PAP's mission is to implement development projects that offer sustainable and long-term benefits to the resident population. The program's first and second phases saw a roll-out of 165 projects between 2011 and 2017, at a total cost of \$420 million¹⁰.

CASE TWO: HORN OF AFRICA

The stability of the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) is critical to the national security interests of Gulf states. Over the past decade, the region has emerged as a site of increased strategic competition between external state-based actors – Iran, Gulf states (UAE, KSA and Qatar) and Turkey. The latter has invested heavily in the region and financed the construction of the Camp Turksom base. In response to these dynamics and in keeping with the UAE's commitment to humanitarianism, it has funded development activities in many sectors, including security sector reform (SSR), large-scale Public-Private Partnership wind farm projects in Somalia and Ethiopia, and soft loans for port and infrastructure development¹¹. In Ethiopia, there has been extensive development, security and humanitarian assistance, including a UAE-funded air bridge to provide humanitarian supplies during the country's recent conflict.

CASE THREE: MAURITANIA

The case of Mauritania demonstrates the UAE's efforts in expanding sub-regional engagement in Africa – diversifying from its legacy interest in the Horn of Africa to the restive Sahel region. Within the broader strategic context of the Sahel, the UAE has focused its development efforts on Mauritania. In 2020, it funded a \$2 billion aid package that amounted to 35% of the country's GDP¹². As a result, the UAE has emerged as the country's most important non-European development partner. The UAE's efforts in Mauritania effectively use multiple economic aid instruments in both OFF and ODA categories. In addition, it has engaged in significant security sector reform activities, including support for the G5 Sahel Defence College.

CONCLUSION

Despite rapid economic development, many states in the Global South still face large-scale short and long-term development gaps which cannot be addressed through local resources. Global aid policy at the bilateral and multilateral levels balances both long-term development challenges as well as short-term humanitarian needs resulting from natural disasters, conflicts, and black swan events. Given the scale of need against donor fatigue and shrinking aid budgets, wealthy donor states need to think strategically about how best to approach the provision of aid. This must include some calculation about the national interests of donor states. Among small and middle powers, the UAE has emerged as a leader, not only in the provision of aid, but also in integrating development assistance into the broader conduct of economic statecraft. Thus, UAE-funded development assistance serves the dual purpose of humanitarianism as articulated in the “10 Principles of the 50th”, while also advancing the UAE's national interest in priority states and regions.

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⁷ United Arab Emirates Foreign Aid Report. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2022). Available online <https://www.mofa.gov.ae/Assets/UAE%20Foreign%20Aid%20Report/2022/en/mobile/index.html>

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¹⁰ Ibid

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AI will Accentuate Economic Power Concentration, but the UAE Stands to Benefit

At the 2024 World Government Summit in Dubai, artificial intelligence (AI), particularly Generative AI (also known as "GenAI"), was one of the most extensively addressed topics.

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With the recent adoption of new “Large Language Models” (LLMs)— and GPT-4 the type of GenAI that runs ChatGPT, there has been little else that the political and tech elite gathered in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) wanted to discuss. Since November 2022, when OpenAI made ChatGPT available to the public, there has been significant anticipation and excitement regarding the potential impact of AI on productivity and economic development. How will the growing velocity and prominence of AI systems impact the distribution of economic power and the economic outlook of the UAE?

A general-purpose technology (GPT) is a technology that is utilized across multiple industries, has the capacity for ongoing enhancement, and stimulates additional innovation in the industries where it is applied. AI is increasingly being utilized, showing continuous improvement and being implemented in various research and development settings. When will the accompanying economic revolution commence?

The recent advancements in new models have made AI closely resemble a GPT more than before. These models have the potential to change the way humans interact with computers, knowledge, and even themselves. AI could be considered a crucial element of production, similar to electricity or microelectronics, as described by the economist Joseph Schumpeter in the twentieth century. Advocates of AI claim for its capacity to address significant challenges by creating new medications, inventing novel materials to combat climate change, and unraveling the intricacies of fusion power.

If AI fulfills its potential and becomes essential to every sector of the economy, we can anticipate a future characterized by economic power consolidation and significant corporate political influence, surpassing anything seen previously. Collusion and coordination by a small group of participants practically guarantee that consequence.

The advancement of AI is expected to strengthen the dominant position of major technology companies in the economy, hence enhancing the technological superiority of the United States. As it stands, AI is likely to aid major technology firms in further consolidating their market power and political influence. They are quickly incorporating LLMs into their existing offerings, and they have the means to develop and maintain cutting-edge AI models. Companies such as Alphabet, Amazon, and Nvidia have developed their own LLMs named PaLM, Megatron, Titan, and Chinchilla. These advancements are occurring as anti-trust authorities worldwide are becoming more worried about the market dominance of tech giants.

In a recent paper, Eric Posner, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School, emphasized that almost all the leading tech businesses and their executives are linked through institutions and professional networks.

This fear may be exaggerated, since open-source LLMs enable anyone to enter the market, as pointed out in an article in Project Syndicate by Diane Coyle from



the University of Cambridge. Despite the emergence of new smaller competitors, the dominance of Big Tech appears to remain unchallenged. Xiao Liu and colleagues conducted an extensive analysis of application programming interface (API)-based LLMs

offered by top commercial firms and open-sourced (OSS) LLMs and concluded that the former outperform the latter on most measures. Maybe that will change. At the moment, the performance of the top LLMs is currently improving rapidly. They could soon approach critical thresholds, at which point they will be able to display previously unseen capabilities and consolidate their technological supremacy. In this context, strategic foresight and financial power matter.

The UAE is confidently embracing the AI revolution with the establishment of the world's first Ministry of AI in 2017, along with many academic and research centers, enterprises and museums focused on studying the future. The UAE recognizes that this new wave of innovation has the potential to result in substantial labor-saving and productivity improvements, following nearly two decades of sluggish global growth.

A context-based examination of automation and AI-driven efficiencies is necessary to understand the UAE's interest in technology. The ratio of domestic-to-international labor is significantly skewed in the UAE, as low as 11%. Due to the country's socio-political and demographic conditions, as well as its desert climate, the idea of substituting people with robots has become more appealing.

The UAE's economic growth model is state-led and involves the nationalization of natural resources, management of major industries, international trade, and distribution of surplus resources to society. Population increase and declining revenues from natural resources have recently posed challenges to the social contract between the government and its citizens. Technologies capable of producing and distributing the majority of products and services needed by a society that prioritizes the well-being of its citizens could potentially strengthen, rather than disturb, the current social contract.

AI is entering its industrial era, and the emerging future endorses the UAE's foresight. AI technology and future industries will surpass the existing GenAI models. The current revolution in robotics and automation will eventually result in the creation of robots that possess human-like characteristics, enabling them to learn and multitask similarly to humans. Tech



companies are striving to develop 'AI agents' capable of doing tasks independently or with minimal human oversight. One can also contemplate the impact that AI will have on biotechnology, medicine, and human health and longevity. The advances in quantum computing are equally fascinating and will combine with AI to provide sophisticated cryptography and cybersecurity tools.

A strong belief in technology and its investment potential ensures that the UAE will not be negatively impacted by the concentration of economic power driven by AI. It might be a positive indicator if individuals like Sam Altman are prepared to tap into the investment might of the UAE. Generative AI apps such as ChatGPT will spur more than just one kind of innovation, which is good news for the nation. Actually, they will pave the way for process and product improvements. The total impact of Generative AI may be beneficial if innovation in processes has a small net effect on employment and innovation in products has a large positive net effect. This scenario is more plausible. A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) study found that machine learning will boost employment by allowing for a wider range of products that are more personalized, appealing, and affordable in the long run. According to the PwC report, upgrades to products will drive consumer demand and account for 45% of the total economic advantages achieved by AI by 2030. This equates to nearly \$16 trillion, which is a 14% increase in global GDP.

Companies and nations who do not use AI run the danger of falling behind the competition and seeing their workforces eroded by more inventive competitors overseas. As Keun Lee, an economics professor at Seoul National University, pointed out, building on what South Korean businesses discovered in their struggle with Chinese businesses, AI should be welcomed, with governments undertaking a variety of policy efforts to boost innovation. The Korean government was previously cautious about automation due to concerns about job displacement, but now it actively encourages its industrial companies to use 'smart factories'. As a result of this change, companies have lowered expenses and boosted efficiency, ultimately restoring their ability to compete. They hired more people when sales recovered.

It is fortunate that the UAE has invested heavily in AI and made it a key policy consideration. A massive influx of tech workers since 2021 is helping fuel the Gulf state's AI ambitions. According to the Minister of State for AI, HE Omar Al Olama, as of September 2023, there were 120,000 people working on AI or AI-related industries — up from 30,000 two years previously.

In keeping with Prof. Sami Mahroum, we can imagine moving forward in time to 2071, the UAE's centennial year. In due course, the majority of goods will be produced by machines owned and run by the UAE government. The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) will have changed its name. Its processes and products will be very different from what it does today, being fully AI-powered and redesigned, this will free up more time for Emiratis to engage in recreational, artistic, and spiritual activities. All concerns regarding new taxes, oil prices, jobs for young Emiratis, and Emiratization will be relegated to the past.

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The Challenge of 'Phantom States' Within a Faltering International Legal Order

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In late February of 2022, Russia initiated a full-scale invasion of neighboring Ukraine. Are the United States and its European allies to blame for the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War owing to NATO's gradual expansion eastward and alleged intentions to bring Ukraine into the Atlantic alliance? Alternatively, is Russia at fault on account of its imperial ambitions pertaining to its so-called 'Near Abroad' and the Kremlin's hubris in assuming that Ukraine's government and military forces could be easily overrun within a matter of days? Perhaps neither of these interpretations concerning the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War are accurate. Arguably, the origins of this armed conflict lie with the unresolved statuses of the so-called Donetsk (DNR) and Luhansk Peoples' Republics (LNR) in the Donbas. For several years, Moscow tried to strongarm Kyiv into federalizing its political system, in furtherance of endowing these breakaway regions with autonomy. Yet Ukraine's refusal debatably set the stage for Russia's full-scale invasion, as Moscow grew increasingly frustrated with Kyiv's unwillingness to grant the DNR and LNR special status. From Ukraine's vantage, the DNR and LNR (which Russia illegally annexed along with portions of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts in the fall of 2022 (Sauer and Harding 2022) in the wake of Moscow's botched invasion) are renegade statelets propped up by the Kremlin, and consequently undeserving of autonomy vis-à-vis Kyiv. In looking at the Russo-Ukrainian War from an international legal perspective, the community of nations should thus respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Unfortunately, however, the prevailing international legal order is crumbling as Great Power politics enters into a new era of heightened tensions. As such, contested sovereignty issues will likely continue to play a role in (at least partially) triggering the onset of future wars.

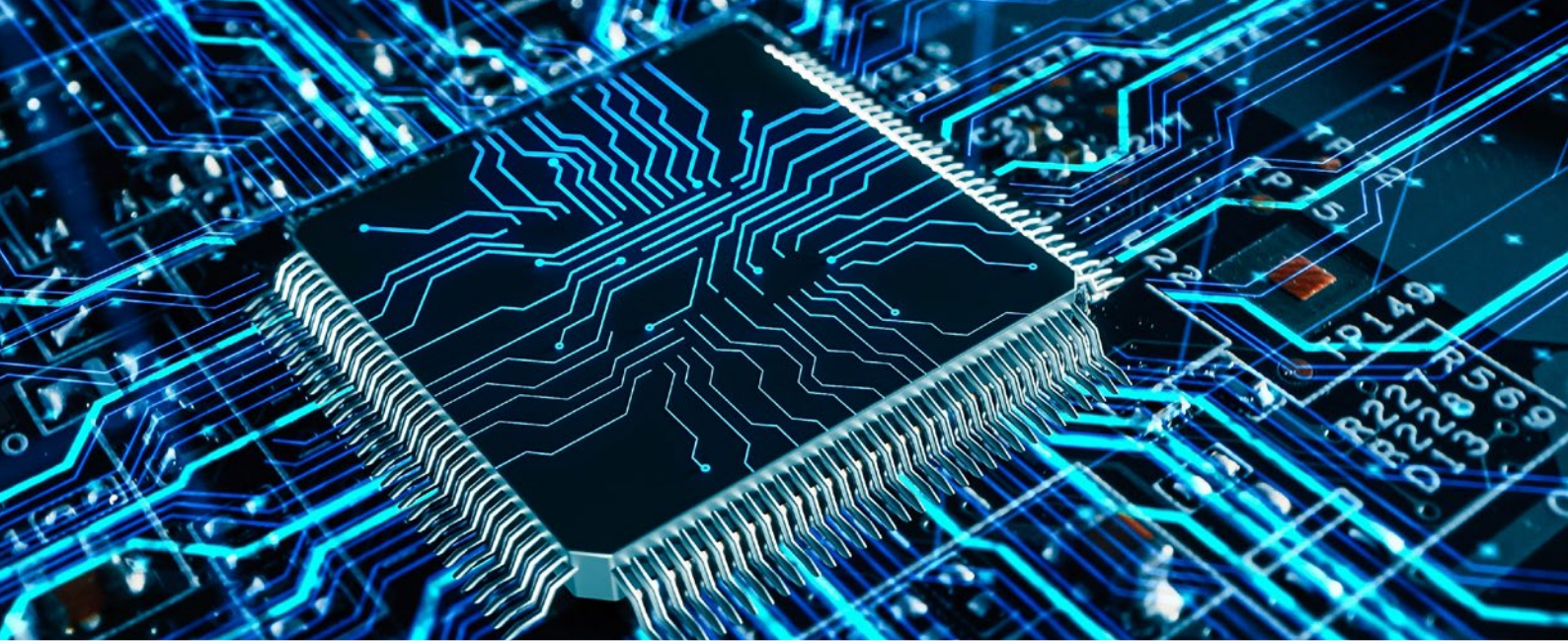
Issues of contested sovereignty reside at the core of many contemporary armed conflicts. Israel's missile strikes and ground assault into the Gaza Strip in retaliation for Hamas' deadly attack of October 7, 2023 reveal how a government can respond with military force against a 'phantom state' (Byman and King 2012) bent on waging a campaign of violence and murder to challenge the former's policies and existence. "Phantom states" – which "illustrate the disjuncture between internal and external sovereignty" and embody "political-administrative entities" that "may create broader security problems for the region in which the lie" (Byman and King 2012: 45) – have made news headlines across Eurasia and the greater Middle East in recent years. For example, Azerbaijan's military victory over Armenia in the 2020 Second Karabakh War paved the way for Baku to launch a one-day war in late September 2023, which led to Azerbaijan's reassertion of control over the breakaway territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and dismantlement of this renegade statelet (Higgins and Nechepurenko 2023). Turkey's military intervention in northern Syria during the autumn of 2019 to create a 'safe zone' – for (illegally) resettling Syrian refugees situated in Turkey – and simultaneously crush the aspirations of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava (Lang 2019); the U.S.-led coalition to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization in Iraq and Syria (The White House 2014); and the 2017 Iraqi-Kurdish conflict (that began following the Kurdish Regional Government's holding of an independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan and ended with the KRG surrendering substantial portions of territory – over which it had acquired control while fighting ISIL, including the city of Kirkuk – to Baghdad) (Chulov 2017) all exemplify the dangerous nature of these entities. Finally, some

'phantoms' such as the Afghan Taliban have recently asserted control over a country (Afghanistan) but still lack any official recognition. So, how should the community of nations address such 'apparition'-like polities that are "largely invisible to international legal institutions, multilateral organizations, and global trade regimes" (Byman and King 2012: 43) yet undermine the tenets of the international legal order and could potentially spark conflicts at any time?

The nature of contemporary geopolitics ensures that 'phantom states' will not disappear from the international system anytime soon, on account of heightened Great Power tensions across the world combined with certain states repeatedly violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations over the past generation. Bearing this in mind, states can choose to either ignore, confront, buttress, or engage with 'phantoms' that stand in contradiction to the aforementioned foundational tenets of international law. Ignoring 'phantoms' is tempting but also risky. Israel seemingly believed that it had confined the threat posed by Hamas to the Gaza Strip by constructing and reinforcing the Gaza-Israel barrier. However, Hamas' sudden attack caught Israel's Defense Forces by surprise, and Israel's retaliatory bombing and assault into the Gaza Strip could ignite a regional war that potentially spreads into the West Bank, Syria, and Lebanon (Kershner et al.). As such, directly confronting 'phantom states' (as Georgia also attempted in August of 2008 – on the eve of the Beijing Olympics – against the renegade statelet of South Ossetia) could trigger an interstate war that involves a nearby Great Power (King 2008). In this particular instance, although the 2008 Russo-Georgian War proved to be short-lived, Moscow effectively seized the breakaway statelets of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and retains control over them to this day. Alternatively, buttressing a 'phantom state' may serve the national security interest of a benefactor state, but offering political/military aid to such quirks of the international system may also tarnish a patron state's domestic legitimacy and/or global image, especially if such 'phantoms' carry out mass atrocities, partake in illicit activities, or pose a danger to a neighboring state. As an example, U.S.-Turkish relations became strained during the mid-2010s on account of Washington's provision of political-military aid to the Syrian

Democratic Forces in eastern Syria. Finally, some scholars (in referencing the success story of Taiwan to date) posit that it is best to engage with 'phantoms', in furtherance of "making them jointly responsible for the security and stability of their own neighborhoods" (Byman and King 2012: 55-56). Yet the possibility of a Great Power war involving the United States and China to decide Taiwan's ultimate political status remains a distinct possibility in the midst of an increasingly faltering international legal order. Moreover, engagement with 'phantoms' sometimes fails to gain any traction (as efforts by Türkiye to try to convince other states to engage with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus by officially recognizing its independence (Calli 2023) - which have not yielded any positive results to date – illustrate). Finally, engagement should not be construed as a panacea for encouraging 'phantoms' to become upstanding member states of the international community. After all, many states are engaging with the Afghan Taliban despite refraining from officially recognizing Afghanistan's new governing entity (Zelin 2022), seemingly because Kabul's powerbrokers have thus far refused to change their ways. In conclusion, issues of contested sovereignty constitute a defining aspect of today's armed conflicts, and will also likely shape the interstate disputes and wars of tomorrow.

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Quantum Computing: Implications for National Security Practitioners

Technological advancements have consistently played a pivotal role in shaping the field of national security. Over the centuries, drastic changes in technology have greatly altered the dynamics of conflict, cooperation, and diplomacy. Quantum computing is no exception to this trend.

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As quantum technologies advance and become more accessible they are likely to have a powerful impact on issues related to security. Quantum computing's capacity to process vast amounts of data and perform complex calculations at speeds previously unimaginable poses both advantage and challenges to national security¹. For instance, there are major advantages in quantum computing's potential to solve problems which have direct relevance to international security and defense. However, this capacity also raises concerns, as quantum computing can be harnessed to breach existing encryption standards, potentially undermining the security of classified information, communications, and

critical government functions². Given the pivotal role that quantum computing is likely to play in the future of national security, it is essential for strategic decision-makers to have a comprehensive understanding of its transformative nature and proactively integrate quantum computing awareness into their national security policy frameworks.

QUANTUM CRYPTOLOGY

The first area where quantum computers have the potential to outperform their conventional counterparts is in the realms of cryptography,

optimization, and simulating complex quantum systems³. Once available, quantum computers are likely to break the security algorithms commonly used in securing today's networks⁴. Because quantum computers are likely to threaten existing encryption methods, it renders all the data kept on computers vulnerable to outside attacks⁵. The day when fault tolerant quantum computers (FTQCs) will be able to break current asymmetric-key encryption and transform into cryptographically relevant quantum computers (CRQCs) is being referred to by many in Silicon Valley as 'Q-Day.'⁶ While experts disagree as to when CRQCs will become a reality, secure communications and classified information could be at risk if quantum-resistant cryptography and protocols are not adopted in by governments⁷. When quantum computers have the capacity to breach the prevalent cryptographic methods utilized in blockchain networks the security of data of the transactions within blockchain systems will be compromised.

It is also important to note that while quantum computers capable of breaking existing cryptographic systems are not widely available, "encrypted data can be captured today and decrypted at a later time."⁸ Because of this future problem, as quantum computing capabilities advance, there will be a growing need for post-quantum cryptology. Conventional encryption methods are vulnerable to quantum attacks, and a shift towards quantum-resistant cryptography is imperative to maintain the security of classified information and communication channels. Today, many national security agencies are investing in research to develop and implement post-quantum encryption standards to counter the potential threat posed by quantum computing to existing cryptographic systems⁹.

QUANTUM SENSORS AND MILITARY APPLICATIONS

Quantum sensor technology also presents a paradigm shift in military applications, offering both advantages and potential drawbacks from the perspective of nation-states¹⁰. On the positive side, quantum sensors have the capacity to revolutionize military intelligence gathering and reconnaissance, enabling the detection of previously stealthy threats¹¹. Quantum enabled

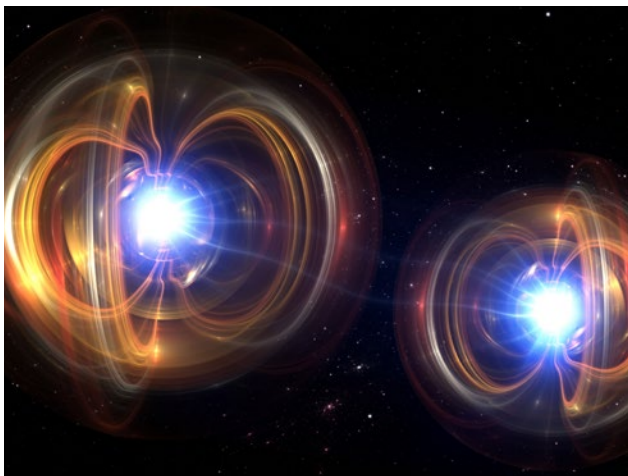
sensor technology could also lead to greatly enhanced position-navigation-and-timing (PNT) capabilities allowing militaries to greatly improve their situational awareness and location accuracy¹². However, this same technology poses challenges. Quantum sensors could provide adversaries with unprecedented abilities¹³. The risk of asymmetric advantages emerges as states with advanced quantum capabilities gain an edge in monitoring and countering emerging security threats, potentially changing the balance of power between nation-states.

THE RACE FOR QUANTUM SUPREMACY

Because quantum computing has the potential to be so transformative, the world is witnessing a quantum race unfolding on the global stage, which holds the potential to redefine international security. One crucial moment in this race is achieving "quantum supremacy," where quantum computers will outperform conventional supercomputers in tasks practically impossible to replicate within a reasonable time frame."¹⁴ This phenomenon marks a pivotal point where computational capabilities, particularly in cryptography, data analysis, and scientific research, will undergo a revolutionary transformation. The quantum competition primarily involves the United States, the European Union, and China—each striving to develop and harness quantum technologies for strategic advantages across various domains¹⁵. The Chinese have notably advanced in quantum research, making strides in quantum communication, sensing, and cryptography¹⁶. Simultaneously, the United States and the European Union, recognizing the potential security implications, have accelerated their quantum efforts to maintain global technology leadership¹⁷. Quantum supremacy will enable more efficient code-breaking, simulations of complex systems, and the analysis of large datasets, granting a considerable advantage from a national security standpoint. Therefore, attainment of quantum supremacy will signify a major shift in computing capabilities, which could have profound implications on the global balance of power.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

Lastly, the rise of quantum technologies has spurred discussions on the concepts of technological and digital sovereignty¹⁸. It is argued that the ability to develop, control, and secure quantum technologies should be regarded as a matter of national sovereignty¹⁹. As nations grapple with the challenges and opportunities presented by quantum computing, achieving technological and digital sovereignty in the quantum realm has become a strategic imperative. Nations are working to protect their sensitive information, intellectual property, and critical infrastructure from potential quantum threats, while simultaneously positioning themselves as leaders in the field to shape the future of national security in the quantum age.



Like the rest of the world, the United Arab Emirates is likely to be profoundly impacted by the rise of quantum technologies.

QUANTUM COMPUTING IN THE UAE

Like the rest of the world, the United Arab Emirates is likely to be profoundly impacted by the rise of quantum technologies. To address the rapidly changing technology environment, the UAE has made significant progress towards initiatives and investments in quantum computing. This includes progress within the government, academic institutions and in the industrial base. In Abu Dhabi, the government's Advanced Technology Research Council oversees the Technology Innovation Institute which hosts a Quantum Research Center²⁰. The center hosts labs, conducts research, and holds seminars to educate people on the potential for quantum technologies. Abu Dhabi emirate is also building its own quantum computer, which will be the first in the country²¹. In the educational sector, Khalifa University collaborates with both academia and industry in their Quantum Computing Research Group (QCRG). The QCRG is designed to be a globally recognized research initiative in



the UAE focused on quantum computing and its applications²². In Dubai, the Electricity and Water Authority has created a quantum computing training program in collaboration with Microsoft²³. Through this cross-sectional ecosystem, the UAE is strategically positioning itself to navigate the transformative impact of quantum technologies and be a leader in the sector.

CONCLUSION

Quantum computing stands as a beacon of innovation, poised to reshape the technological landscape. Yet, the disruptive potential of quantum computing, particularly its ability to breach encryption standards, has prompted significant concerns regarding data security and the safeguarding of sensitive information. The dual nature of quantum computing, both as a potential threat and a source of innovative solutions, emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and strategic approach and policy framework to navigate its implications within the realm of national security.



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Diplomacy 2.0: The Role of Social Media in Promoting Citizen Diplomacy in the UAE

Technological advancements and the prolific use of social media have revolutionized diplomatic practices over the past two decades.

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The two-way communication model, which assumes that media convergence and digital connectivity creates communication asymmetry, outmoded the linear communication model, which was introduced by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1949.¹ As a result, the sender no longer has control over information flows and social media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Against this backdrop, the emergence of digital diplomacy (otherwise known as e-diplomacy or diplomacy 2.0) presents both challenges and opportunities. The former includes information security risks and the risk of reputational damage whereas the latter includes cost effectiveness and the ability to reach larger audiences. In the regional context, the extensive debate about

the role of social media in Arab uprisings, and the repercussions thereof, have obscured the benefits of social media. By definition, public diplomacy is distinct from traditional, government-to-government (G2G) relations as it concerns government-to-public (G2P) relations or public-to-public relations (P2P). Joseph Nye, who coined the term 'soft power', argues that public diplomacy is an instrument of soft power and an important tool of smart power.² Thus, social media and digital platforms that facilitate communication with foreign publics are imperative for promoting foreign policy interests and national image and perception management.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Social media has become ubiquitous in the UAE. In May 2023, the UAE was named as the global social media capital by scoring 9.55 out of 10 according to Proxyrack.³ According to the study, the UAE was rated as the most connected country in the world, with registered Facebook users outnumbering the country's population.⁴ The '1 Billion Followers Summit', a two-day event bringing together social media influencers and content creators and social media companies, was held in Dubai on 10-11 January 2024. This event underscored the growing influence of the multi-billion-dollar social media industry, whose market size is comparable to the energy industry, which is estimated to have 67 million workers compared to 50 million content creators worldwide.⁶

This shows that social media is taken seriously by the UAE government given the rapid expansion of the industry and the communicative impact of social media platforms. In conjunction with the Summit, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced the allocation of AED 150 million to support content creators and influencers in the UAE, alongside the establishment of a permanent headquarters for influencers, which will be jointly presided over by the UAE Government Media Office and the New Media Academy.⁶ As the section below will demonstrate, the growing social media presence in the UAE fosters the synergy between digital diplomacy and citizen diplomacy.



The '1 Billion Followers Summit' was held in Dubai in January 2024.

TOWARDS TO A NETWORK-BASED APPROACH TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Communications scholar Rhonda Zaharna proposes a four-quadrant model of public diplomacy based on the paradigmatic shift from a geopolitical-centric approach to a strategic communication-oriented approach to public diplomacy. By doing so, Zaharna argues that in the domain of public diplomacy, the greatest threat to states are not other states, but adversarial publics.⁷ According to this model, the four quadrants are divided into state-based, state-centric and public-based, public-centric public diplomacy to differentiate between the communication initiatives led by and centered on state and non-state actors.

In public diplomacy literature, the advent of 'new public diplomacy' in the mid-2000s, which adopts a network-based, collaborative model of diplomacy between state and non-state actors, represents a break from the state-led and state-centric governmental public diplomacy.⁸ As shown in the diagram below, state-based, state-centric public diplomacy (Quadrant I) epitomizes the conventional model of public

diplomacy. By way of harnessing the power of social media and digital connectivity, public diplomacy in the UAE has gravitated towards collaborative approaches which are state-based, public-centric and public-based, state-centric models in Quadrants II and III.

The collaborative approaches advocated by Quadrants II and III are important levers for encouraging public participation in public diplomacy campaigns, especially in light of the communication asymmetry noted above.

	State-based	Public-based
State-centric	I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state-initiated project • state-driven needs, goals • state-controlled • state-public relations positive, neutral to negative • public largely passive, “target audience” • international broadcasting, nation branding assertive	III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public-initiated project • aligned to state needs, goals • public state relations neutral to positive • public-initiative, state co-opted to work with public • public active, participatory • networked approaches, empowerment, capacity building associative / collaborative
Public-centric	II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state-initiated project • aligned to public needs, goals • state-public relations neutral to positive • state-sponsor, public partnerships • public passive/participatory • ‘engagement’ strategies, relational approaches associative / collaborative	IV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public-initiated project • public-driven needs, goals • public-controlled • public-state relations neutral to negative • state targeted, state irrelevant / state attacked • network, social media campaign ‘crisis public diplomacy’ assertive

Figure 1. Rhonda Zaharna’s Four Quadrant Model (Source: E-International Relations)

NEW PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: NATION BRANDING AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The concept of ‘New Public Diplomacy’ was introduced around the same time period when social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (renamed X) were launched. As such, there are three forms of digital diplomacy initiatives that exemplify the collaborative approaches of Quadrants II and III. First, the UAE government agencies are collaborating with UAE-based creative content companies, Emirati nationals, and UAE-based influencers to produce content that promotes nation branding and place branding (Quadrant II); second, there is a cross-fertilization between digital diplomacy and celebrity diplomacy which features public figures and Emirati musicians for promoting cultural diplomacy (Quadrants II and III); and third, Emirati influencers and content producers are playing a key role in contributing to nation-branding and place-branding (Quadrant III).

The Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy (OPCD) at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs manages social media accounts that publish creative content that supports cultural diplomacy and nation-building by collaborating with locally-based content creation companies, such as Image Nation Abu Dhabi on the documentary screening of the history of *Saruq Al Hadid*, the Iron Age of Dubai, at Dubai Expo 2020.⁹ Ma3an, which is also a UAE-based content creation company, launched an advertising campaign in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism on the occasion of the Maritime Heritage Festival.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Abu Dhabi Media Office oversees social media channels for Abu Dhabi Stories on Instagram, YouTube, X, and Facebook, which publishes content that narrates the story of Abu Dhabi through the lens of Emiratis and UAE residents. Focusing on individual personalities and letting them recount their own stories through the ‘Faces from Abu Dhabi’ series enhances authenticity and lends credibility to the narratives recounted.¹¹

Moreover, wholesome content material produced by Emirati influencers, such as Khalid Al Ameri, who has over 3.2 million subscribers on YouTube, promotes Emirati values and fosters intercultural communication.¹² Celebrity diplomacy is also another avenue that emboldens cultural diplomacy and digital diplomacy. Emirati singer Hussein Al Jassmi, who is also a UN Goodwill Ambassador at Large, publishes songs on social media that are inspired by themes that promotes nation-building, with subtitles provided for foreign audiences. Not only was Al Jassmi one of the main singers featured in the Dubai Expo 2020 official theme song ‘*Hadha Waqtina*’, but he was also a speaker at the Cultural Summit held in Abu Dhabi in March 2024. As per the collaborative model of public diplomacy, these examples point to the importance of synchronizing the actions, messages, and images of public diplomacy initiatives while also tapping into local resources and engaging diverse actors in producing creative content material.

Emirati influencers and content producers are playing a key role in contributing to nation-branding and place-branding

CONCLUSION

Fostering digital diplomacy capacity in the UAE has profound implications for bolstering nation-branding and citizen diplomacy. While the assertive approach taken by public-based, public-centric public diplomacy in Quadrant IV remains a universal challenge in the information and diplomatic spheres, pursuing a collaborative model in public diplomacy by diversifying the range of actors helps produce impactful message for international audiences. Given that the UAE is ranked in the top 10 in Brand Finance’s Global Soft Power Index 2024, harnessing the power of social media is an important step towards taking a dynamic, forward-looking approach by being proactive rather than reactive in the field of public diplomacy.

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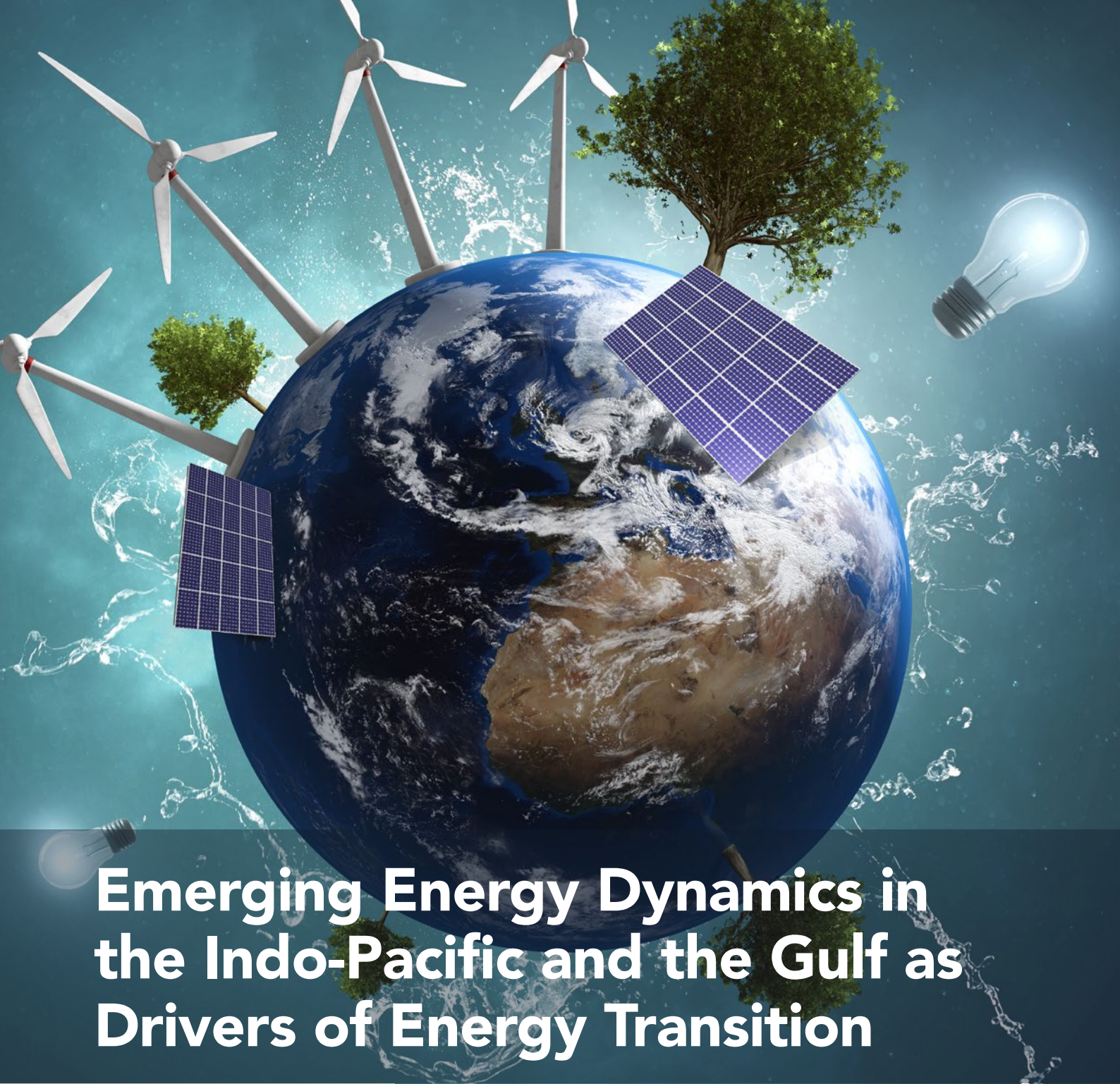
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Emerging Energy Dynamics in the Indo-Pacific and the Gulf as Drivers of Energy Transition

The Indo-Pacific region is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, with energy accounting for two-thirds of this amount. Thus, establishing sustainable economies and climate change mitigation efforts cannot be successful without energy transition.

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But does the transition imply a complete rejection of the conventional sources of energy? According to the IEA Sustainable Development Scenario, the oil and gas sector is forecasted to cover up to 50% of global primary energy by 2040.¹ The Indo-Pacific region will show several key new trends in the energy sector domain. First, the region will not only become the driver of energy demand but will also include major conventional energy suppliers, such as Gulf oil and gas exporters. Hydrocarbons will continue to determine energy security, geopolitics and geoeconomics in a broader Indo-Pacific region that will only strengthen existing ties between suppliers and consumers. Second, the transition to sustainable energy sources will shape the region's energy dynamics, opening up the opportunity for the Gulf to exercise a greater degree of agency.

The concept of the 'energy transition' encompasses the move away from fossil fuels towards a cleaner and more sustainable economy, as well as a shift from high to low carbon intensity. This transition involves transforming the energy sector, which includes integrating elements such as oil and gas, transportation, heating, and renewable energy sources, among others.² The widespread discourse surrounding energy transition indicates a general belief that fossil fuels are incompatible with the process's ultimate objective. However, empirical evidence suggests that the transition is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a nuanced understanding of the energy landscape. While the ultimate goal may be to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, this objective must be balanced against a range of other considerations, including economic, social, and political factors. Only by doing so can we hope to achieve a sustainable and resilient energy system that meets the needs of all stakeholders.³

In order to combat climate change, it will be imperative for countries to significantly reduce their reliance on coal. Although finding economically viable alternatives to oil and gas remains a challenge, decarbonizing the economies in the Indo-Pacific region can enhance countries' energy security and provide them with access to clean and affordable energy. This move can also help to curb environmental

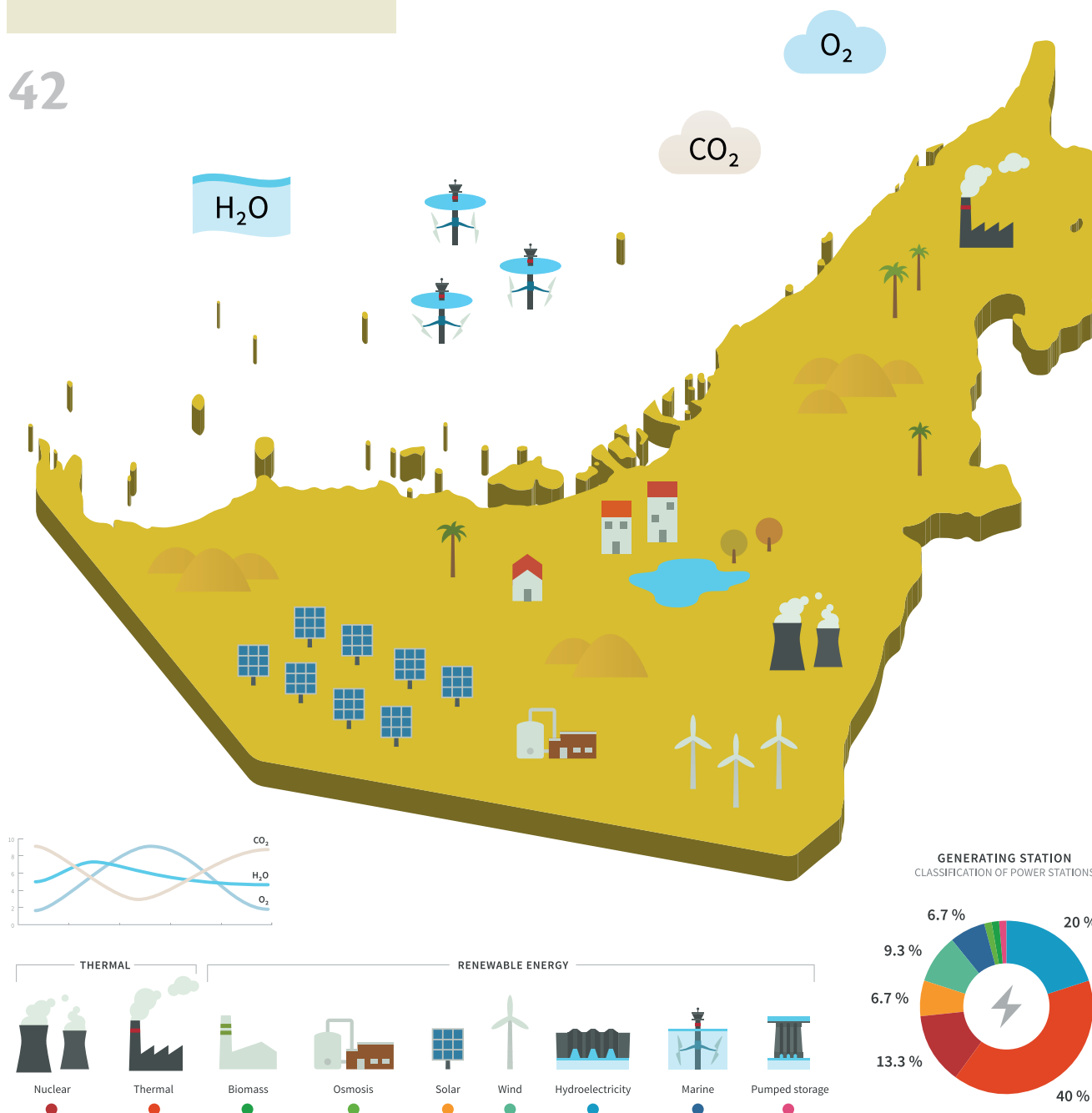
degradation and encourage sustainable development. Oil and gas industries, and consequently, oil and gas producing and exporting nations, will play an essential role in this process.

Energy transition for greater energy security and to combat global climate emergency for the Gulf countries does not imply a total reorientation away from the hydrocarbons. At the least, it would result in an inability to pursue sustainable transition initiatives, which are being financed by oil and gas export revenues.⁴

There is a difference between hydrocarbons as they are versus as they could be. The Gulf region is the richest region for oil and gas and still aims to work towards clean energy. The task of completely eliminating hydrocarbons for achieving sustainable development is a complex undertaking from technological, financial, and political perspectives, and not a feasible goal. Gulf hydrocarbon giants can help the Indo-Pacific make the energy transition by turning their oil and gas industries into one of the solutions. The shift towards sustainable economies necessitates the integration of energy security and hydrocarbon industry interests with the shared objective of transitioning to sustainable economies and reducing the impact of climate change.⁵

Without oil and gas-producing and exporting countries taking the lead in the transition, only part of the global energy system and the economy, overall, can be decarbonized. In the hydrocarbons-rich Gulf, oil and gas export revenues account for 80% of governmental earnings and one-third of the GDP. Oil and gas industries primarily drive development and social welfare programs in the region.⁶ With Gulf states' shifting away from hydrocarbons to embracing the energy transition with state-backed companies, this process singles them out as regional and global leaders in the energy transition away from oil and gas.⁷

Hydrocarbon-rich countries have always influenced, directly and indirectly, energy transition and climate diplomacy. With the world making a transition to sustainable sources of energy, the relationships between the traditional exporters and importers of conventional energy sources will be further altered. The traditional political and economic power of the oil and gas-rich countries may diminish with an



increasing share of the renewables in the Indo-Pacific countries' energy balance, considering that each country has some access to quality renewable energy sources. Evidence suggests, however, that Asian consumers still may not be able to become self-reliant with their energy needs in the foreseeable future.

Almost all Paris Agreement signatories have made voluntary commitments to limit global warming to less than 2°C by 2050. To achieve that goal, the CO2 emissions have to fall by 45% from the 2010 level by 2030 and reach 'net-zero' by 2050.⁸ Achieving this target will be impossible without energy transition. As one of the world's most important energy players, the role of the Gulf region in this path will be crucial. All Gulf countries are signatories to the Paris Agreement, with their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets to

mitigating greenhouse gas emissions announced as part of the transition.

The Gulf nations are presenting themselves as advocates of the international climate policy change by trying to embrace the transition sooner rather than later. Through this, they can position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities that this change presents.

Without oil and gas-producing and exporting countries taking the lead in the transition, only part of the global energy system and the economy, overall, can be decarbonized

Previously, major fossil fuel-producing and exporting countries disincentivized the development of renewables, now they are trying to position themselves as drivers of transition. Apparently, the consumption of fossil fuels will not be able to sustain the future's massive scale of demand.⁹ The relationships between the hydrocarbon-rich Gulf countries and energy-importing Indo-Pacific states will take two forms: a) continued dependence on oil and gas in their energy relations; and b) Gulf nations are trying to position themselves as leaders in the transition to sustainable energy. Gulf countries are actively investing abroad with a concentration in five main sectors, particularly coal, oil and gas, and renewable energy.

Developed Western nations have been investing in renewable energy sources and climate change adaptation measures in developing countries of the Indo-Pacific region. Considering the level of impact the developed nations have on climate change, they have agreed to provide funding to mitigate new environmental challenges and transition developing nations towards clean energy. It is the area for the Gulf states to not only explore and take advantage of, but also take a lead on this path.

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⁹ Eric Koons. 2022. "Asia-Pacific's Role in Climate Diplomacy." *Energy Tracker Asia*, February 1. <https://energytracker.asia/asia-pacifics-role-in-climate-diplomacy/>. <https://wam.ae/en/article/aq47pce-cop28-president-lauds-parties-success-delivering>



Dr. Sultan bin Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and COP28 President at the closing plenary of the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28)



The UAE has made remarkable achievements in its soft power influence. This was demonstrated through the country jumping five spots to be among the top 10 countries in the 2023 Soft Power Index – the highest in the Middle East.

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This success can be attributed to many factors, such as the country's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the organisation of mega events such as EXPO 2020. The Soft Power Index, however, looks at a range of indicators, such as reputation and influence, to

measure a country's soft power. Considering this, this article aims to examine the significance of the UAE's foreign aid, particularly its humanitarian assistance, in relation to the country's goodwill towards South Asia.

South Asia is the Middle East's neighbour. All Arabian Gulf states enjoy strong cultural, economic, and political relations with South Asian countries. Almost 90 percent of the UAE's workforce comes from South Asia. Among the most migrant workers in the UAE, there are 3.5 million Indians, and 1.7 million Pakistanis. There are also sizeable communities of migrant workers from other South Asian countries, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. While contributing to the UAE's economic development, these migrant workers also contribute to the economies of their home countries through remittances. As South Asia is mainly home to developing and least developed countries – often suffering because of natural disasters, conflicts, and economic difficulties – the UAE has never hesitated to extend its helping hand.



Before proceeding further, let us understand the concept of soft power. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is, “the ability to get others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies”.¹ Soft power is about gaining influence over other countries using a variety of tools such as the media, education, and public diplomacy. In the UAE's case, foreign aid is central to its soft power strategy. Through its comprehensive humanitarian assistance, the UAE has cultivated the image of being a generous nation. The UAE's humanitarian efforts are, however, not only limited to South Asia as it is ranked amongst the 10 largest donor states as it spent 0.52 percent of its Gross National Income in foreign aid in 2020.

The UAE's foreign aid programme started soon after the establishment of the country in 1971 through the initiative of the country's founding father, His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may his soul rest in peace). The first initiative in this regard was the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development. Due to the vision of the late founding father, the UAE has consistently been providing humanitarian assistance around the world. This vision is reflected in Sheikh Zayed's statement: *Foreign assistance is one of the basic pillars of our foreign policy. For we believe there is no true benefit for us from the wealth we have unless it also reaches those in need, wherever they may be, and regardless of their nationality and belief.*²

Central to the above statement is the idea of indiscriminately providing aid to people in need. South Asia with its sheer population size – almost one-fifth of humanity – and religious diversity, offers an ideal case to understand the UAE's humanitarian assistance. This is reflected in the UAE's humanitarian assistance to South Asia countries. Looking in terms of religious diversity, South Asia is home to two majority Hindu states (India and Nepal), two majority Buddhist states (Bhutan and Sri Lanka), and four majority Muslim states, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Pakistan.

The correlation of foreign aid with the UAE's foreign policy is also demonstrated through the fact that the Ministry of International Cooperation and Development was merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2016. There is also an alignment with the UAE's Soft Power Strategy. In 2017, the UAE established the Soft Power Council and later produced its first Soft Power Strategy. The strategy mainly aims to enhance the UAE's global reputation and humanitarian aid as a central pillar. As per the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed, the state continues to play a major role concerning peace and stability in the larger Middle East and beyond. In his keynote address at the 2023 Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, H.E. Dr. Anwar Gargash (Diplomatic Advisor to the UAE President), identified ‘stability’ in the region and beyond as a key pillar of the UAE foreign policy.³

Against this backdrop, it is important to understand the image that the UAE has built through its humanitarian aid. The UAE has displayed its humanitarian credentials through multiple ways such as its vaccine diplomacy in South Asia. In its swift response to Covid-19, the UAE sent 523 tons of aid to 47 countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.⁴ Below, we consider various dimensions of the UAE's humanitarian assistance to South Asia.

South Asia is believed to be one of the most vulnerable regions in terms of climate change. As the weather patterns continue to change, the region is experiencing floods, droughts, and heatwaves. During the monsoon season, the region regularly experiences flooding in the most populated countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. From the region, Pakistan has been the top recipient of the UAE's foreign aid, including humanitarian assistance. After the 2022 floods in Pakistan, the UAE led all humanitarian efforts by operating 16 flights from August to September. The UAE has also sent humanitarian aid to thousands of flood victims in other South Asian countries such as Bangladesh and India.

Being home to the Himalayas, South Asia regularly experiences seismic events through shifts in tectonic plates causing major earthquakes. Only in recent history, the region faced catastrophic earthquakes killing thousands. For instance, there were major earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005 and Nepal in 2015. In response to the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan that killed over 80,000 people, the UAE funded the creation of Khalifa City with 210 homes, two schools, a clinic, and a mosque in addition to donating Dh12 million in aid.⁵ Following the devastating 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the UAE responded quickly through the Emirates Red Crescent. A team of UAE humanitarian workers, comprising 88 members, was deployed immediately by His Highness Sheikh Saif bin Zayed, Deputy Prime Minister.⁶



“ Foreign assistance is one of the basic pillars of our foreign policy. For we believe there is no true benefit for us from the wealth we have unless it also reaches those in need, wherever they may be, and regardless of their nationality and belief.”

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

With a vision to improve stability in its immediate neighbourhood, the UAE has also been providing aid to conflict-affected states. In South Asia, this is most noticeable in the case of Afghanistan. While no state has recognized the Taliban regime or the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan', established after the withdrawal of foreign troops in 2021, the UAE leadership still understands the importance of supporting the victims of state fragility in Afghanistan. Following the 2023 earthquake in Afghanistan, the UAE sent two aircraft carrying 53 tons of relief aid.⁷ As millions of Afghans have been displaced by the situation in Afghanistan, the UAE has also been providing relief aid to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. During 2003-2020, the

UAE provided substantial humanitarian aid towards the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, including the construction of a refugee camp for 10,000 in Chaman, Balochistan.⁸ In 2023, thousands of Afghan refugees were deported from Pakistan to Afghanistan, and the UAE responded by sending a flight with 20,000 tents to the returnees.⁹

Through its foreign aid, the UAE has achieved recognition of being a generous friend, which is often acknowledged by leaders and officials of recipient countries. In 2012, Pakistan's ambassador to the UAE said, "Pakistan is a major recipient of the generosity from the UAE, and we are hugely grateful for the help given to us by the Emirates".¹⁰ The UAE has also been helping Pakistan through aid programs and a common expression in Islamabad for the UAE is that it is a generous state always helping Pakistan in times of need. Similar views can be heard in other South Asian countries such as Sri Lanka where the UAE provided aid for the reconstruction efforts after the 2004 tsunami by building a UAE village in the north of Sri Lanka.

Based on the assessment of the UAE's humanitarian assistance to South Asia, there are certain noticeable features. The UAE's humanitarian aid is not limited to its key bilateral partners like India and Pakistan, as it has been generously providing aid to whoever needs it as per the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed. The unwavering support from the UAE to South Asia has established its image as reliable friend. Hence, the UAE's foreign aid, particularly its humanitarian assistance, plays a key role in lifting the country's goodwill and soft power. Manifestations of that can be observed at the foreign policy front as the UAE enjoys strong relations with its aid recipients in South Asia.

¹ Joseph Nye, *The future of power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p. 11.

² *Promoting global peace and prosperity* (Abu Dhabi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates, 2017), p. 3.

³ "10th ADSD discuss trends, prospects of the global geopolitical landscape," *Emirates Policy Center*, 15 November 2023, <https://epc.ae/en/details/news/10th-adsd-discusses-trends-prospects-of-the-global-geopolitical-landscape>

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⁹ Fidel Rahmati, "UAE extends assistance to Afghan migrants expelled from Pakistan," *The Khaama Press*, 7 November 2023, <https://www.khaama.com/uae-extends-assistance-to-afghan-migrants-expelled-from-pakistan/>

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The construction of a geo-economics project in West Africa: The strategic partnership between the UAE and Morocco

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The strong bilateral relationship between the United Arab Emirates and Morocco has played an essential role in benefiting both countries both economically and politically.

Since 1972, bilateral relations have continuously grown, reaching new milestones in recent years (El Yattoui, 2023a). We recall that Morocco reaffirmed in October 2023, before the 4th committee of the UN General Assembly, its “firm and constant” support for the sovereignty of the UAE over the islands Tunb Al-Kubra, Tunb Al-Sughra and Abu Musa (MAP, 2023). The UAE continues to reiterate its constant support for Morocco and its territorial integrity, as during the vote by members of the UN Security Council on Resolution 2703 concerning the Moroccan Sahara – a clear position, illustrated with the opening, on November 4, 2020, of a UAE Consulate General in Laayoune (MAP, 2023).

There is a strong collaboration between the two countries in various sectors, including politics, economics, media, science, tourism, security, and culture. In December 2023, 12 MOUs were signed to enhance the bilateral corporations further. This confirms the determination of the two countries to move forward in strengthening and diversifying their partnership (Redondo, 2023). This December 2023 was the first visit made to the UAE by His Majesty Mohammed VI since His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan became president of the UAE (Badrane, 2023).

Multidimensional cooperation was reinforced with this royal visit, which provides a solid dynamic to the bilateral strategic partnership. Strategic partnerships

“are less formal than alliances. The essence of the strategic partnership lies in cooperation between the states that share common objectives. Though security issues are central to strategic partnerships, the ambit of such partnerships can be quite broad, including trade, economy, technology, and so on” (Kumar, 2022). Strategic partnerships “structure the international system, shape bilateral interactions and provide a venue for actors to achieve reputational and ideological goals” (Michalski, 2019). The expression ‘partnership’ therefore takes on its full meaning.

Bilateral cooperation proves that political stability makes it possible to build solid economic ties, while shaping a certain geo-economics dynamic. In 2001, the two countries signed a free trade agreement. The UAE and Morocco are centers of stability in an unstable MENA region. The UAE is therefore developing a strategy of economic diplomacy with Rabat. According to Linda Yueh (2020), economic diplomacy is “how a country manages its foreign economic relations, including trade and investment, must adapt.” This is what the UAE is doing with Morocco. She adds, “The framework for economic diplomacy should seek to balance commercial openness with strategic foreign policy aims, broadly defined” (Yueh, 2020). The desire to diversify sources of financing with innovative financing, donations, loans, and various mechanisms represents a positive step forward, underlining the commitment made during this summit meeting. This multidimensional approach should promote a significant acceleration of many projects, thus providing opportunities for substantial growth and progress for both countries.

Due to its strategic importance, West Africa presents the United Arab Emirates with various advantages such as new market potential, diversity in resources as well as a gateway to the whole of the African continent due to its strategic location, whereby the UAE aims to expand its economic influence and achieve its national interest (Ardemagni 2023). These goals align with Morocco's interest allowing for further grounds of strategic partnership between both countries.

The Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline project is ambitious. It offers ECOWAS countries opportunities and guarantees in terms of energy security, along with socio-economic and industrial development. It also has a geo-economics aim in promoting a certain perception of the world, explained through geography and economics. The role of the state is central, as King Mohammed VI's speech indicated, in any geo-economics strategy since it determines the mechanisms, identifies the threats, the methods to implement, and the means to allocate. An infrastructure of more than 6,000 km is necessary, crossing thirteen countries. However, risks persist. Firstly, the lack of stability in gas production due to security concerns generates supply problems. The second is financial. This colossal project is estimated at \$25 billion. The UAE, therefore, has a prime position regarding financing. This choice reflects Morocco's increased credibility and the United Arab Emirates' stated desire to invest not only in the Moroccan economy but also in the African continent as a whole (FNH, 2023). The two partners want to strengthen their presence in Africa. If Morocco wishes to focus heavily on its Atlantic coast and West Africa, the UAE has traditionally chosen the Horn of Africa, establishing various projects, partnerships, and economic ties with countries located in East Africa.

The king's strategy demonstrates a pragmatic Atlantic vision, making this space a geo-economics space of major interest for Morocco, now supported by the UAE. Maritime connectivity has improved considerably. Morocco is the second country on the African continent (after Egypt) and the 22nd globally, up from 81st in 2006. The investments of the last two decades have borne fruit as shown by the dynamism of Tanger Med. Now it is time for the port of Dakhla to boost the Southern Provinces, West Africa, and the Sahel (El Yattoui, 2023b).

The latest speech of King Mohammed VI shows that current projects, such as the gas pipeline, are the fruit of a regional strategic vision making the Atlantic space an important force for Morocco and its geopolitical identity in the 21st century. The United Arab Emirates understands this perfectly and wishes to play a significant role within the framework of a 'win-win' and 'South-South' partnership. Furthermore, we need "to recognize that all foreign economic policy is ultimately also domestic" (Yueh, 2020), which is positive for the UAE.

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Sovereignty of National Education: Response to Artificial Intelligence (AI) In Defence of National Identity and Values

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to rapidly spread around the world through all walks of life, without sufficient and meaningful consideration of its security impact and potential harm to sovereignty of national education and identity, values and academic integrity, despite AI offering enormous opportunities to enhance learning, productivity and effectiveness.

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AI is a sophisticated and dynamic computational system and AI-generated text is widely accessible and constantly evolving which has led to educators on various levels having to grapple with AI concerns in their classes. Therefore, educators must figure out how to adapt and what counter measures to enact.

In the modern age, state sovereignty lays out basic rules and customs for nations to interact with one another. Typically, this means countries have liberty to control what happens inside their borders without interfering in other countries' affairs. The term "educational sovereignty" is typically used to capture the need to challenge an arbitrary authority of a power structure to determine the essence of the educational experience including, in this context, authority and threats imposed by (AI). This "educational sovereignty" term in this article however is not used to recommend the placement of strict limitations and boundaries of separation, rather than to develop a national strategy that is inclusive and mindful of the potential impacts and threats of AI to national identity and to the sovereign national education enterprise.

Unlike traditional AI, which operates on pre-existing datasets to recognise patterns and make predictions, Generative AI can produce entirely new content by learning from existing datasets and generating new content, that is not necessarily accurate or credible, based on that information. This, in itself, is the real threat to national education and identity where a machine becomes capable of creating brand-new and alternative content and information, which are in some cases "alternative truth" that will reach a high majority of regular citizens and learners in multiple settings including traditional classrooms and school settings. Dissemination of inaccurate, false and misleading information is harmful to people's minds, history, nation's values and traditions. In the same way, it can damage businesses, products and induce market volatility. Moreover, such false content when disseminated will lead to disruptions in people's behaviour and loss of direction, and trust in their institutions including the educational enterprise. Manipulation of information and facts including disinformation, false information, fake news, deep fake, and hate speech, are becoming more frequent due to

the unlimited and unmonitored platforms and venues available for people to communicate their thoughts and positions on all issues concerning our daily livelihood. The real challenge is how to prevent, or at least, limit such state and non-state sponsored malicious actors from compromising state sovereignty over its history, education and values, while ensuring accountability and solid evidence-supported truths. The reality we are all faced with by the emergence of new technologies, particularly AI and AI enabled-technologies, has posed new challenges to state sovereignty and national security as a whole. AI-enabled technologies such as autonomous weapons and cyberattacks have the potential to bypass state borders and undermine traditional notions of state authority over its borders (Johnson, 2019).

SOVEREIGN IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN THE FACE OF AI

The UAE sets a clear vision through its AI strategy, to become one of the world leaders in A.I. by 2031. Implementing this vision requires rigorous dedication and clear steps that outline the path for success. The UAE Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy and Remote Work Applications was appointed in 2020. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, enhancing the government performance levels by investing in the latest technologies and tools of artificial intelligence and applying them in various sectors. The AI strategy will contribute significantly in education, economy, government development, and community happiness through various AI technologies implementations in different sectors to include energy, tourism, and education, and so on. (<https://ai.gov.ae/strategy/>).

The rapid development of AI is creating new security challenges for states. AI-enabled technologies such as social media and online platforms have given rise to new forms of power and influence, which can be wielded by non-state actors such as corporations, individuals, and machines (Horowitz et al., 2018). A more serious challenge of AI technologies is that they are invisible and transnational. In addition, AI-enabled algorithms can be biased towards certain groups, leading to discriminatory outcomes (LaBrie & Steinke, 2019). AI

also can manipulate historical facts and cultural norms related to national identity and sociocultural practices. Nations need to defend their sovereignty beyond the traditional sense of the term. This includes protecting national heritage and history, intellectual property, cultural identity, values and future generations. This requires the development of an information mitigation system that involves a 'digital shield' to defend not only against cyberattacks on national digital systems and state resources, but also against propaganda and dissemination of false information about the history and the values of the nation. Defending a nation against misinformation and disinformation is crucial to protect the past, support the present, and safeguard the path to the future, while maintaining the trust of stakeholders.

The responsibility to preserve the UAE culture, identity and education sovereignty requires a collective effort from all society members including, government, semi-government and private sector entities. This is no single entity's responsibility. Good parenting is the start. Parenting is crucial in playing a significant role in children's lives at a very early age. Raising a child in accordance with certain beliefs, values and traditions that are accepted by both, the society and the family is a difficult effort. Moreover, a parent-children relationship that is built on mutual trust and respect of one's culture and society should contribute positively to the development of the ideal citizen. Although the extended family might intervene and influence the child's growth, parent-child relationship is proved to embody a greater and long-lasting effect on the child's development as well as future accomplishments (Al Sumaiti, 2012; OECD, 2011). Parent- child relationship that is built on open dialogue and transparent communication should develop more confidence in children's belonging and sense of affiliation to their community, and ultimately their homeland.

Some strategies to help mitigate the impact of false information may compromise the following:

1. REGULATE, MONITOR AND VALIDATE ONLINE ACTIVITY

This requires regularly monitoring of social media, news outlets and online forums to identify potential fake information related to the UAE culture, history and values. We should build a reputation of credibility of information in the wider community, particularly in school curriculum. Developing software operations that are automated and self-sustained using AI based technology that can ensure overcoming AI-generated misinformation and fake news: (AI generated, AI validated).

2. TECHNOLOGY CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

We need to develop and monitor a well-defined and structured technology crisis response plan. This includes predefined actions and steps for addressing AI-generated false information supported by well-trained experts in tandem with technology solutions and machine learning-based features that can autonomously perform required tasks. This should help detect potential threats prior to their occurrence.

3. COUNTERING MISINFORMATION BY CREDIBLE INFORMATION

It is imperative to leverage media outlets and platforms available to counter misinformation by transmitting reliable and credible evidence-based information. It is vital to rebut false information as soon as it is identified and publish the countering facts promptly supported by validated evidence while maintaining active presence online. Building and implementing robust security will help prevent data breaches and unauthorized access / mishandling of data.



4. COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Community and school initiatives should focus on linking the application and use of AI to educational objectives and learning outcomes. Furthermore, organized dissemination and interpretation of national policies and guidelines to schools, students and parents should provide a sense of accountability of their actions and ownership of their accomplishments. Systematic utilization of AI-enabled technologies and sufficient training of how to best use them to support learning and efficiency are steps in the right direction to ensure safe use and credible productivity.

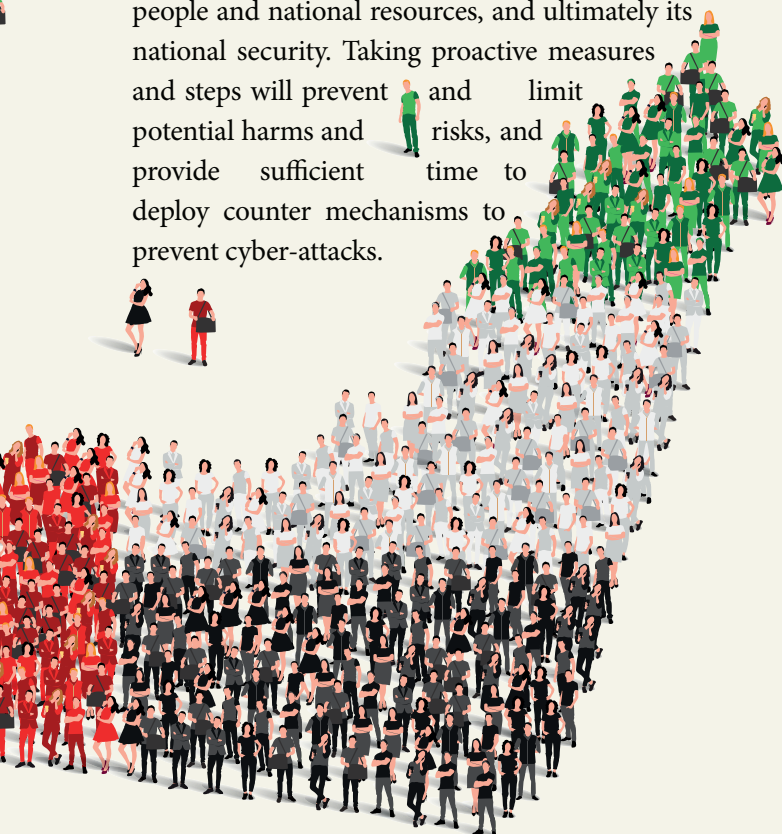
5. PERSISTENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

We should continue to invest in training and equipping human capital, and in reframing AI-enabled technologies and research to advance means and enable precision measures that can detect and mitigate AI-generated harms and risks to the nation, its people and national resources, and ultimately its national security. Taking proactive measures and steps will prevent and limit potential harms and risks, and provide sufficient time to deploy counter mechanisms to prevent cyber-attacks.

CONCLUSION

We must not forget that AI is human-made and human-enabled in the first place. While it shows significant superiority to humans in some decision-making areas and in identifying policies and practices in multiple fields such as engineering, science and economy, design and animation; human beings will always remain the agents and the intellect that drive AI technology. Purposeful vigilance is essential to defend against the tide of false information and targeted propaganda is a matter of national duty and resilience. AI is growing exponentially and we cannot be complacent. Cyber-attacks should be countered by cyber security and AI-enabled threats and risks should be countered by robust AI-enabled security tools and mechanisms.

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The Evolution of the UAE's Defense and Security Policies

Since its establishment in 1971, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has undergone developments in its defense and security policies, emphasizing national security to protect its independence and territorial integrity.

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Over the years, the UAE forged partnerships with countries like the USA and the UK, which served as a foundation for enhancing its military capabilities. The UAE has invested in modernizing its military forces, exploiting growth driven by oil wealth. A notable example of this is the creation of Emirates Defense Industries Company (EDIC) in 2014 (Ibish 2017).

The UAE's strategic approach includes power and soft power and focuses on cybersecurity, counter-terrorism measures, and regional diplomacy. This highlights its dedication to maintaining stability and security as a nation amidst a changing region.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOMESTIC DEFENSE INDUSTRY

The UAE has embarked on a significant mission to bolster its domestic defense capabilities, aiming to lessen its dependence on foreign arms and achieve self-sufficiency in its military needs (Borchert 2021). This strategic ambition led to the foundational development of its defense sector, initially highlighted by the establishment of the Emirates Defense Industries Company (EDIC) in 2014, which merged more than 15 defense industry-related entities. However, to consolidate its defense industry further and elevate its global competitiveness, the UAE transitioned from EDIC to creating the EDGE group. As a conglomerate, EDGE represents a significant leap towards self-reliance, focusing on producing a wide array of military hardware, including advanced armored vehicles, naval vessels, precision weapons, and sophisticated defense electronics. Marking its success and global footprint, the EDGE group has swiftly ascended to become one of the top 25 military suppliers worldwide (Zitnick 2014). This underscores the UAE's dedication to enhancing its defense production capabilities. It positions itself as a key player in the international arms market, showcasing its commitment to contributing to global security and defense innovation.

ENGAGING REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY

The UAE has consistently demonstrated its commitment to playing a pivotal role in shaping security dynamics within its immediate region and globally. This is evidenced by its active participation in international coalitions, showcasing its growing influence in regional and global arenas. Notably, during the Gulf War of 1990-91, the UAE was a key contributor to the coalition led by the United States aimed at liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation (Nonneman 2004). More recently, the UAE has aligned itself with Saudi Arabia in the complex geopolitical landscape of Yemen, reflecting its commitment to proactively engaging with regional security issues. These engagements indicate the UAE's strategic approach to diplomacy and defense, emphasizing its willingness to contribute to collective

EXPANSION: INVESTMENT IN MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE

The UAE has positioned itself as a leading figure in defense spending relative to its GDP, emphasizing the critical importance of military prowess for ensuring national security (Alzaabi 2021). This commitment to defense is evident in the UAE's focused efforts on the comprehensive modernization of its military forces. The nation has made significant strides in upgrading its defense capabilities by acquiring top-tier technology and equipment.

Highlighting this modernization drive, the UAE's procurement of F-16 fighter jets and implementing the advanced THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile system exemplify its determination to maintain a state-of-the-art military infrastructure. These strategic acquisitions not only boost the UAE's defense readiness but also serve as a robust deterrent, reinforcing its security framework against potential threats and enhancing its standing on the global stage.



efforts to maintain stability and address security challenges across the Middle East and beyond. This active participation highlights the UAE's dedication to fostering a safer, more secure region while positioning itself as a reliable partner in global security initiatives.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR SECURITY

The UAE prioritizes strategic alliances, especially with Western nations, as a fundamental security and defense policy pillar. This approach is epitomized by its partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), where the UAE actively participates in dialogues and cooperates on various initiatives, notably the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (Akbulut 2017). Such engagements facilitate mutual understanding and collaborative security efforts. Moreover, the UAE's regular involvement in military exercises, such as the 'Iron Union' drills with the United States and enhances its military readiness and operational capabilities. These activities solidify the UAE's defense strategies and fortify its relationships with key global powers, reinforcing its position as a significant player in international security dynamics. Through these deliberate partnerships and participation, the UAE underscores its commitment to contributing to global peace and stability, leveraging these relationships to bolster its security infrastructure and strategic defense objectives.

ENHANCING CYBERSECURITY AND COUNTERING TERRORISM

To strengthen cybersecurity measures, countering threats is a priority for the UAE. They understand that safeguarding against cyber threats is crucial for security. The aim is to fortify defenses against cyberattacks through efforts and initiatives while effectively combating terrorism by employing strategies and technologies. In light of the increasing complexity of cyber threats, the UAE established the National Electronic Security Authority (NESA) to safeguard its information infrastructure and ensure the security of its assets and communication networks. NESA plays a role in protecting security by defending against cyberattacks that could potentially disrupt essential services or compromise sensitive information (Alkuwaiti 2017).

The UAE has taken a stance in countering terrorism both at home and abroad. It actively participates as a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, contributing to efforts to combat extremism. The UAE has implemented counterterrorism laws within its borders to prevent activities and financing. These measures reflect the UAE's commitment to regional security initiatives, showcasing their determination to combat terrorism in all its forms. Furthermore, the UAE has collaborated with countries and organizations to share intelligence and carry out joint operations in the fight against terrorism.

Regarding diplomacy, the UAE has adeptly managed its relationships with powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, carefully balancing its alliances and regional interests. This has involved engaging in discussions to reduce tensions and foster regional cooperation (Al Saied 2024). One landmark diplomatic milestone for the UAE is its pivotal role in the Abraham Accords, signed in 2020. This historic agreement, facilitating normalized relations between the UAE and Israel, signified a transformative shift in Middle Eastern politics. Beyond establishing diplomatic ties, the UAE strategically envisioned the Accords as a means to halt new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. This move aimed to bolster peace efforts and thwart Iran's potential to exploit the Palestinian issue to destabilize the region. This was particularly relevant in light of Iran's influence over the Houthis to disrupt maritime navigation in the Red Sea, as well as during the last Gaza conflict (Notteboom 2024).

The UAE's involvement in the Accords reflects its nuanced and forward-thinking approach to diplomacy and regional stability. Through evolving defense and security strategies, from bolstering military capabilities and cybersecurity to countering terrorism and engaging in groundbreaking diplomatic initiatives, the UAE has proven itself a key proponent of peace and a stabilizing force in a volatile region. As demonstrated through the Abraham Accords, this commitment to strategic diplomacy and regional stability underscores the UAE's dedication to fostering a more peaceful Middle East, directly addressing the root causes of instability and promoting long-term security (Aldhaheri November 2021).



SUGGESTIONS AND GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

As the United Arab Emirates looks toward the future, its strategic direction in defense and diplomacy should be designed to enhance its regional and global standing. Firstly, a significant focus should be placed on the fusion of investing in cutting-edge military and cybersecurity technologies with the expansion of the domestic defense industry. This dual approach will maintain the UAE's leadership in defense capabilities and promote economic diversification and self-reliance.

Additionally, strengthening international alliances remains crucial for the UAE to foster stability and collaborate on global security initiatives effectively. Prioritizing diplomatic efforts to mediate and resolve regional conflicts will further underscore the UAE's role as a peacemaker, advocating for peaceful solutions. These goals collectively aim to sustain a balance of power and advanced defense technologies and secure the UAE's position as a pivotal contributor to a peaceful regional and international order. Through such strategic planning and execution, the UAE can continue to navigate the complexities of the modern geopolitical landscape while promoting peace and security.

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The United Arab Emirates' Strategic Ascendancy in Global Influence

Power is a crucial concept in foreign policy and international relations, indicating a nation's ability to achieve its external policy goals.

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History shows rivalry among nations in pursuit of power, influencing geopolitics and determining nations' ascendancy within the global order through various strategies, including military strength, maritime dominance, and nuclear supremacy. As societies faced the consequences of militaristic confrontations, nations shifted their strategies towards a subtler form of power, known as 'soft power', which combined diplomatic finesse, cultural resonance, and media prowess.

Here, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stands head and shoulders above any other Middle Eastern nation in terms of soft power. With its moderate values, smart investments, and success in attracting foreign investment, the UAE has come a long way since its foundation in 1971. There is political stability, economic prosperity, and economic competitiveness thanks to the UAE's type of government.¹ In addition, the UAE's leadership has identified achieving global

economic leadership status and elevating the country's international standing as its primary national priority for the next half-century.²

The UAE has grown from a minor royal federation and tribal sheikhdoms into a powerful state that competes with large nations in terms of soft power, attracting investment from around the world and becoming a prominent player on the international stage. As its soft power grows, the UAE's hard power indicators are climbing, and successfully competing economically by building alliances with regional actors and can interplay between China, Russia, and the US. It does this by promoting trade links globally and mitigating the influence of other regional powers.³

A plan to boost the UAE's international standing by showcasing the country's unique history, culture, and international achievements was unveiled in 2017 by the UAE Soft Power Council.³ This created a coherent direction for different sectors, strengthened the UAE's position as a regional gateway, transformed the UAE into a regional hub for culture, arts, and tourism, and promoted the UAE as a modern, tolerant nation, which comprise the four primary goals of this plan.⁴ The United Arab Emirates became the first Arab country to reach the tenth spot on the soft power index, proving that its soft power strategy was effective.

The UAE's success is the result of diligent work on six soft power indicators: Government, Culture, Education, Global Engagement, Enterprise, and Digital. In governance and political stability, it scored 67 out of 100 in the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index and was ranked as "very stable" in the 2023 Fragile State Index. In the transparency index, the UAE ranked 27th globally as one of nations with the lowest levels of corruption globally.⁵

Economically, the UAE boasts a competitive economy, ranking tenth globally in the 2023 IMD World Competitiveness Report, just behind the United States. This result encompasses several achievements: it achieved fourth place globally in the Economic Performance Index, eighth in Government Efficiency, sixteenth in Business Efficiency, twenty-sixth in Infrastructure, fourth in the sub-factor for

the domestic economy, sixth in Employment, and first globally in the sub-factor for International Trade. Additionally, the UAE ranked fourth globally in Tax Policy and ninth in Business Legislation. [6]. Some of the UAE's free zones and industrial areas include Sharjah Industrial Area, Dubai Industrial City, and Mussafah Industrial Area. Because of this, the UAE has established an interconnected trade network that guarantees a high flow of capital and intense economic activity while also providing specialization, efficiency, and a diverse labor force.⁷ According to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, the two biggest sovereign wealth funds in the world, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and the Dubai Investment Authority, were placed third and twelfth, respectively, in terms of assets.⁸

The UAE's leadership has identified achieving global economic leadership status and elevating the country's international standing as its primary national priority for the next half-century.

In the realms of education and cultural enhancement, universities are central to the UAE's soft power strategy. The UAE hosts 32 branches of foreign universities, including the Sorbonne and New York University. Dubai has established the Dubai International Academic City, a unique free zone dedicated to higher education. The role and significance of Sharjah as a center of knowledge, education, and a capital of culture should be emphasized. In 2019, Sharjah became the World Book Capital. Furthermore, the world's attention was drawn to the Louvre Museum Abu Dhabi, which opened in 2017. The state has heavily invested in reinforcing traditional cultural aspects, such as the construction of the Sheikh Zayed Mosque, and in attracting global cultural phenomena such as the Louvre Museum Abu Dhabi.⁹

Undoubtedly, the engagement of the United Arab Emirates in both regional and international arenas has been increasing significantly. Regionally, the UAE has recently taken a central political role in Middle Eastern events, such as its efforts to internationalize the Syrian crisis. Its reputation as a reliable peacemaker in global disputes has also improved. Under the leadership of Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the UAE helped bring an end to the decades-long conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018. This helped establish the UAE as a reliable diplomatic partner.¹

Simultaneously, the UAE is one of the largest donors of foreign aid in proportion to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), ranking among the most “generous” countries in the world, standing third globally in terms of foreign aid generosity.¹⁰

To ensure the effectiveness of its soft power, it was essential for the United Arab Emirates to develop a national brand, shaped by two key factors: influence and international reputation or attractiveness. This attractiveness can stem from various aspects such as lifestyle, arts, literature, and media.¹¹ When a country



The UAE's soft power strategy focuses on digital diplomacy, inclusive connectivity, sustainability, local skills development, and industrial digitization. Early adoption of 5G technology has made UAE a leading digital hub. Also, the country has made significant strides in digital skills development, integrating blockchain and AI into its educational curriculum, which saw the UAE emerge as the most digitally competitive Arab nation and the tenth most digitally competitive country in the world, as reported by the Global Digital Competitiveness Index.¹

becomes influential on both domestic and global stages, it is crucial to promote its model and build a strong reputation, making its authority internationally acceptable, especially through media tools.¹² The intersection of influence and international reputation forms the national brand serve as one of the pillars of the state's soft power. The importance of a national brand lies in its role as a catalyst for investment, attracting tourists, and a skilled workforce. The UAE's national brand strategy can be traced back to the 1980s when it began promoting itself as a financial gateway.

Dubai's transformation from a small entrepot to a global capital centre epitomizes this strategy. The promotion of the Emirates model was initially fueled by oil revenues, followed by a shift to economic diversification as a result of declining oil revenues. Consequently, diversifying the state's revenue streams became not a future plan, but a necessity.¹² Dubai's brand recognition in the tourism sector was highlighted when it ranked as the fifth most visited city in the world in 2023. In the National Brand Strength Index, the UAE secured the sixteenth position, reflecting its strong global standing.¹³

The United Arab Emirates has transformed from a tribal society backwater to a significant international player, showcasing the power of soft power strategies. By integrating government, culture, education, entrepreneurship, and digital expertise, the UAE has promoted economic prosperity, political stability, cultural power, and technology innovation. This strategic approach, alongside enhanced military capabilities, demonstrates the effectiveness of soft power in shaping global dynamics.

¹ O. & A. A. A. Antwi-Boateng, "The emergence of the United Arab Emirates as a global soft power: current strategies and future challenges.," *Economic and Political Studies*, no. 10(2), 208-227.1, 2021.

² The Principles of the 50, "About the UAE. The United Arab Emirates' Government portal.," 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/uae-in-the-future/initiatives-of-the-next-50/the-principles-of-the-50>.

³ D. Gołębiowski, "From Europe to the Arab Peninsula? – Cultural Diplomacy Practices in the United Arab Emirates." *Studia Europejskie*, *Studies in European Affairs*, Vols. vol. 24, no. 4, no. 151-173. , 2020.

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⁵ U. Transparency International, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/united-arab-emirates>.

⁶ J. M. P. Caballero, "An analysis of the 2023 IMD World Competitiveness World Competitiveness Center, International Institute for Management Development.," 2023.

⁷ F. R. A. Al Zaabi, "Determinants of Soft Power: The Case of United Arab Emirates. Actions and Insights," no. 7(57), 57–74., 2023.

⁸ R. b. T. Assets, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.swfinstitute.org/fund-rankings/sovereign-wealth-fund>.

⁹ A. Krzymowski, "Expo2020 Dubai on the journey to achieve the United Arab Emirates' Soft Superpower," *University of Sharjah Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vols. 17(2A), 1-21, 2021.

¹⁰ G. S. P. Global Soft Power Index, "The world's top 121 Soft Power nations, scored out of 100. Brand Finance.," 2023.

¹¹ J. S. (J. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics*, PublicAffairs, 2004.

¹² C. Zeineddine, *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, Vols. 12(2), 208-221, 2017.

¹³ T. P. Report, "Government of Dubai.," <https://www.dubaitourism.gov.ae/en/research-and-insights/tourism-performance-report>, 2023.



Modern Information Warfare: Deterrence Through Societal Resilience

Advanced technologies have played a significant role in reshaping and transforming modern warfare. Modern warfare can be defined as warfare that utilizes and weaponizes advanced technologies, strategies, and information between armed groups, evolving and transcending far beyond conventional direct military engagements.

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In doing so, it incorporates tools that are a fraction of what traditional military tools would cost and are widely accessible to the general public, enabling disruptions from within a state mainly focused on the society (Collins 2024).

Strategically designed to impact and influence the general public, the emergence of new and intangible threats such as information warfare, cyberattacks, and media-targeted campaigns have created complex and advanced battlefields where information manipulation, shaping public perceptions, and making unwanted narratives are a craft led by state adversaries not bound by territorial borders (Pratten 2021). In this manner, it creates alternative realities by misleading the general public into beliefs based on false and fast-traveling information through widely available technologies. The role of non-state actors in modern warfare has also increased the complexities of conflicts thus engendered; states' traditional deterrence methods may not necessarily be as effective when safeguarding their sovereignty (Ahmed Ijaz Malik, Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Nazish Mahmood 2021). New strategies and adjustments such as societal engagement to enhance overall national resilience are critical to overcoming those unprecedented challenges and threats as physical barriers have been transcended.

It is essential to understand the means and ways by which modern warfare is conducted, especially with attacks aimed at undermining and negatively impacting government efforts and legitimacy. The weaponization of social media, digital platforms, and the information realm is undertaken efficiently by adversaries to achieve their objectives and extend their influence at minimal cost. Increasingly, we see the ever-growing use of those tools by all age groups across the world – as research conducted in 2021 alone has shown that half a billion users worldwide have joined social media (Moravec 2022). Such methods were used during the Arab Spring uprisings to spread misinformation as well as creating alternative narratives (HEMPEL 2016).

Therefore, tactics such as building and strengthening societal resilience are crucial for governments to function alongside traditional military means for states to achieve national security goals and objectives, such as strategic communication campaigns conducted by the government to support security efforts.

The intense global impact of such tactics can be related to the size of information available online due to global interconnectedness as well as the diversity of sources. This is a result of this information consumption affecting individual judgment and ability to analyze the information provided. Such sources of information can be distorted by factors such as fake news, targeting information and media campaigns as well as deep fakes making it hard to establish personal opinions of specific matters by the general public. In addition, this limits individuals' capabilities to analyse information critically and hinders effective government communication with the general public, making it easier for adversaries to manipulate data and impact public perception. During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about vaccines and health measures proliferated across various digital media platforms, leading to widespread confusion among the general public. In response, governments like the UAE took significant steps to tackle this issue by appointing a spokesperson, Dr Farida AlHosani, to provide briefings and updates on governmental measures, aiming to ensure accurate information reached the public (Shurafa 2020).





Therefore, societal resilience is key when faced with multifaceted threats such as those of modern warfare. Due to its constantly changing nature and the rapid speed at which technology is being developed, societal resilience provides the necessary social cohesion needed to overcome the disruptive tactics used by adversaries.

In addition, it supports the government in providing information required to deter possible threats limit the impact of cyberattacks (Sciendo 2015). Also, such resilience reflects the power of unity and social cohesion presenting a challenging target for any adversaries, given that most of these information warfare attacks are aimed at indiscriminate, mass audiences.

Enhancing media literacy by educating society plays a critical role in countering tactics such as misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. For example, Finland has integrated media literacy education into their national curriculum, ensuring that citizens are equipped with the skills to critically evaluate information online (University of Washington 2023)

It is essential to understand the means and ways by which modern warfare is conducted, especially with attacks aimed at undermining and negatively impacting government efforts and legitimacy.

Individuals must have the required mindsets as well as the skillsets to evaluate the information due to their greater awareness of tactics used to mislead the public, as well as the ability to respond to or report to the authorities such attacks and the malicious intentions behind these information campaigns (Panakam 2022). It is important to note that some of the information and cyberattack driving factors are difficult to identify. This is due to the advanced nature of the technology or proxies used by adversaries to target audiences, which may delay the possible counter response by the government due to lack of accurate information. Another important factor in

societal resilience is sustaining national morale and cohesion, which reduces the impact of the expected aggression by the adversary. These offensive measures include using weapons in order to ignite internal disputes or inciting protests, thereby creating a shield against possible efforts of deception which can be later used to spread negative media either regionally or internationally. Moreover, limiting the negative impact on the state's reputation and image can adversely impact the national economy, harm international relations, and distort perceived stances on matters such as human rights. Despite being intangible in most cases, the impact of modern information warfare can extend to negatively affect the state's national security through the ripple effect of such information campaigns.

In conclusion, the advancement of information technology and its strategic utilization have transformed modern warfare, the emergence of new threats posed by information warfare, cyberattacks, and media-targeted campaigns inevitably has introduced complexities that challenge states' sovereignty and test their traditional deterrence methods. The accessibility and affordability of these advanced technologies in the 21st century have made it easy for malevolent actors to engage in such warfare, such as state and non-state actors, insurgent groups as well and multinational corporations which are managed by highly influential individuals. This unparalleled media access plays a critical role in increasing a state's vulnerability and capabilities to deter such threats that are mostly intangible and difficult to track and trace. In tandem, this amplifies the potential danger and possible negative impact of any possible attack, which renders adaptive strategies such as building societal resilience as essential for governments to deter and counter the information warfare threat and its continuously evolving nature and dimension.

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