

The Military Alliance of The United Arab Emirates: Threats and Opportunities

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to analyze the current state of military alliances of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). For the said purpose, military alliance including alliance in terms of governance, economics, political stability, and regional stability of UAE has been analyzed. Additionally, the types of military alliances being made by the country are evaluated followed by the threats mainly internal and external to the military alliance are analyzed. Afterwards, the role of strength of strategic alliance for getting maximum benefits from the military alliance have been evaluated. Finally, the two theories, balance of threat to cater internal and external threats and theory of alliance formation and cohesion to cater strength of alliance have been analyzed to develop a final framework for the study. Finally, the qualitative methodology has been proposed with convenience and snowball sampling. The conclusions highlighted the need for empirical testing of the framework qualitative data.

Keywords: Military Alliance; Strategic Alliance; Governance; Strength of Alliance; Threats to Alliance; Economic Stability.

1. Introduction

The military forces of Arab states have a less than exemplary reputation (Simón et al., 2021). The criticisms of the Gulf monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are highly noticeable. These states have purchased more than \$1.5 trillion worth of top of the line military equipment and have been sending cadets and commanders to the most esteemed military institutions in the world (Hurewitz, 2019). During the period of 2011-2012, the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) posed a challenge to the prevailing neo liberal authoritarian regime. In response, three countries belonging to the GCC - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar - swiftly intervened to stabilize their allies, weaken their adversaries, and assert their regional influence in terms of safety and economic stability (Abozaid A. M., 2023).

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are the two largest populations and militarily powerful countries in the GCC and the entire region. Their history of collaboration includes joint operations in Libya, Egypt, and Syria; their most recent foray into military action against the revolutionary Houthi rebels in Yemen is the most recent example (Darwich, 2020). The governance of Saudi Arabia and the UAE may already be exhibiting signs of fraying in their ostensibly perfect alliance front to the international community (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2021).

In the absence of military alliances with economically strong and diverse countries, the UAE cannot expand its market access, attract foreign investment, and foster technological exchange (Al-Suwaidi, 2023; Islam et. al, 2019). When countries do alliance's military or economic alliances, they do so because of a common threat, and those countries that face the threat commonly start planning. In this situation, the geographic locations, power, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions play a significant role (Sulaiman & Keling, 2022; Demir & Dalmis, 2022). Continuing with the economic, political, and governance sustainability objective, the government of the UAE has shifted its economic dependence from oil to the service sector and mainly the tourism sector (Alodadi, 2016; Antwi-Boateng & Jaber, 2022; Alketbi and Shariffuddin, 2025; Asad et al., 2025). For promoting tourism (Sulaiman et al., 2025), the government must have a strong diplomatic influence (Alketbi and Shariffuddin, 2025). For which strong governance is required, and military alliances provide the UAE with a platform to enhance its diplomatic influence on regional and international issues, catering to economic and political stability. By aligning economic, governance, and stability issues with like-minded countries, the UAE can strengthen its voice in multilateral forums, increase its bargaining power, and promote its interests and policies (El-Dessouki & Mansour, 2023).

By looking at the UAE scenario, it is important to clarify how military alliances will help the UAE to achieve regional power and stability (Al-Adwani, 2021). By forming alliances with neighboring countries, the UAE can build trust, facilitate dialogue, and address common challenges collectively (Jeong, 2020; Alketbi and Shariffuddin, 2025). The common goals for which the UAE wants other countries to collaborate in the form of a military alliance include, but are not limited to, security and defense, economic growth and trade, governance, diplomatic influence, and regional stability and cooperation (Al-Suwaidi, 2023; Alketbi and Shariffuddin, 2025).

A military alliance can facilitate the exchange of strategic know-how, capabilities, and intelligence, enabling member countries to align their defense planning and enhance their collective security capabilities (Wachholtz & Soeters, 2022). However, internal and external

threats are the key reasons for making alliances with other countries (Antwi-Boateng & Jaber, 2022). These alliances help deter potential internal as well as external threats and ensure the safety and stability of the UAE and its allies (Reiter, 2020), however hardly been researched by researchers.

Internal threats within a military alliance can significantly influence the alliance's cohesion, effectiveness, and overall stability because a lack of trust jeopardizes military alliances (Antwi-Boateng & Alhashmi, 2022). External threats like a lack of trust among member countries can undermine the alliance's unity and cooperation (Baabood, 2019). Divergent views on foreign policy, strategic objectives, or the scope of alliance commitments can lead to tensions and hinder the alliance's ability to inequality (Keling, 2011; Yabe & Ukkusuri, 2020). Differences in leadership styles, decision-making processes, or strategic cultures can also complicate coordination within an alliance (Canal Forgues et al., 2021). Thus, it would be right to claim that external threats can significantly shape and influence a military alliance (Hornuf et al., 2021; Antwi-Boateng & Alhashmi, 2022).

Thus, internal threats and external threats, if managed properly, can lead to the success of the military alliance; however, if the threats are not managed properly, then the military alliance may become useless and just a cost for the member countries in the alliance, therefore a very important missing element in strength of the alliance (Yetim & Telci, 2023). Considering the need for strength of the alliance and strengthening the propositions of the two theories that have been used to develop the framework, the strength of the alliance has been taken as a mediating variable between the components of the military alliance and its success (Roy et al., 2020). This study examines the UAE's military alliance using the theoretical framework of Walt (1985), along with it also incorporates concepts of Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and Triple Entente (Weitsman, P., 2003). Considering the needs mentioned above and the scarcity of research on the issues, it would be right to claim that military alliances are essential for the UAE to enhance its security, stimulate economic growth and trade, expand diplomatic influence, promote knowledge exchange, and foster regional stability and cooperation (Alketbi and Shariffuddin, 2025).

2. Literature Review

An assessment of the literature on Arab militaries is conducted to provide a contextual framework for the investigation. Challenges in accessing regional defense archives and a reduction in the intellectual scope available to scholars hinder their ability to conduct research (Abozaid A. M., 2020). Simple measures of population size, military spending, or new weapon acquisition have long been used as replacements for actual military power. Roberts (2020) emphasized two primary responsibilities of militaries that serve as the essential foundations of strategic effectiveness: fundamental tactics and complex operations (Asad & Asif, 2025). Furthermore, it simplifies the process of evaluating strategic effectiveness by determining whether the forces performed exceptionally well, successfully executing both basic and complex operations, adequately performing basic operations but struggling with complex ones, or poorly, unable to complete either type of operation (Watkins, 2020). The Persian Gulf stands out as a region of particular significance when it comes to the concept of strategic efficacy in the Arab world (Ahmadian & Mohseni, 2021).

However, since the inception of records, the six Gulf monarchs have allocated more than \$1.5 trillion towards the procurement of weaponry. Nevertheless, when evaluating their strategic efficacy, as Russell articulates, the states possess an abundance of physical resources but lack sufficient influence and authority (Sinkkonen & Elovainio, 2020). On the other hand, Pollack (2018) examined potential causes of this underperformance. He discussed and dismissed Soviet doctrine, politicization, and economic underdevelopment as particularly causative and refined his earlier theses, arguing that Arab culture is the core problem. He saw Arab cultural 'patterns and predilections' that act on strategic effectiveness as being conformity, centralization of authority, deference to authority and passivity, group loyalty, manipulation of information, atomization of knowledge, personal courage, and ambivalence towards manual labor and technical work (Pollack, 2018). Yet, they have not made the work by combining the two approaches simultaneously, like mixing alliance regional stability in terms of economic, political, and governance.

In contrast to that, a more plausible area of explanation as to the underperformance of Arab militaries is rooted in politics and associated civil-military relations, because autocratic leaders manipulate loyalties in their militaries (Lazin, 2023). Autocrats create duplicate, competing, and mutually suspicious forces to counterbalance each other (Mäkelä, 2023). Moreover, the literature also suggests that fostering international alliances can enhance the incumbent's power, since plotters would have to assume that status quo-oriented foreign powers would stand by their allies (Kaplan, 2020). Hence, this review identifies the issue in the existing literature using the example of the UAE undertaking successful paradigm-challenging operations, and then identifies how to progress the knowledge.

2.1. Military alliance of the United Arab Emirates

For the UAE, military alliances serve as a vital mechanism for deterring external threats, especially from regional rivals such as Iran, and for ensuring the security of critical maritime routes like the Strait of Hormuz. These alliances provide access to advanced military technology, intelligence sharing platforms, and joint training exercises, which collectively contribute to the modernization and professionalization of the UAE's armed forces and these alliances function as instruments of foreign policy, enabling the UAE to expand its diplomatic influence and actively participate in regional and international security initiatives (Rossiter & Bolan, 2022; Sullivan, 2024). By aligning with powerful nations' formal strategic agreements, the UAE reinforces its position as a proactive and reliable security partner, while simultaneously increasing its strategic depth and resilience against evolving threats (Samaan, 2024).

The historical development of the UAE's strategic military alliances has evolved significantly since its formation in 1971, reflecting the country's shifting security concerns, regional dynamics, and aspirations for global influence. In the early years after independence, the UAE heavily relied on the United Kingdom, its former colonial overseer, for military protection and training (Wachholtz & Soeters, 2022). However, as the geopolitical environment in the Gulf became increasingly unstable, particularly following the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (Baabood, 2019). The UAE began to diversify and strengthen its military alliances, most notably with the United States and France (Bianco, 2019). The U.S.-UAE defense partnership, formalized through defense cooperation agreements, allowed the stationing of American forces at Al Dhafra Air Base and facilitated the sale of advanced weaponry (Huwaidin, 2024).

Over time, the UAE expanded its alliance strategy beyond traditional Western powers by developing informal security partnerships with countries like Egypt, India, Greece, and, most recently, Israel (Abraham, 2023), following the Abraham Accords in 2020 (Mäkelä, 2023). Additionally, the UAE has taken a more assertive role in regional military coalitions, particularly through its involvement in the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and counterterrorism operations in the Horn of Africa and Sahel (Reiter, 2020). Meanwhile, this strategic trajectory highlights the UAE's transformation from a security-dependent small state into a proactive regional actor, using military alliances as a

cornerstone of its foreign and defense policy to secure its interests, project power, and counter both conventional and asymmetric threats (Karlsrud & Reykers, 2020).

The UAE is an ambitious state; the UAE relies on strong military alliances. Scholars argued that the UAE's proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint for global energy supplies, makes it highly vulnerable to geopolitical shocks (Rossiter & Bolan, 2022). The UAE is also an active member of multilateral military coalitions, particularly within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) framework. Though the effectiveness of the GCC's joint military efforts has been questioned, the UAE has participated in initiatives like the Peninsula Shield Force (Guzansky & Marshall, 2020). A significant portion of the UAE's military partnerships is rooted in bilateral agreements with major powers (Guéraiche & Kristian Alexander, 2022).

Academic literature highlights that military alliances have enabled the UAE to develop a highly advanced and professional military force, one of the most capable in the Arab world (Dana, 2023). The UAE Armed Forces' participation in joint exercises and operations has also improved its operational readiness and interoperability with NATO-standard militaries (Dana, 2023). Furthermore, military partnerships enable the UAE to participate in multinational peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and crisis response operations, thereby projecting power beyond its borders and reinforcing its image as a responsible and capable regional actor (Sullivan, 2024). On the other hand, the UAE's active military role in Yemen, Libya, and counterterrorism coalitions across the Sahel reflects an increasingly assertive foreign policy underpinned by military alliances (Alishahi et al., 2021). This shows ambiguities in the existing literature and calls for further research.

Scholars noted that military alliances have also enhanced the UAE's diplomatic leverage (Miller & Verhoeven, 2020). Its participation in coalitions like the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and the signing of the Abraham Accords with Israel have positioned it as a regional bridge builder (Lazin, 2023). The UAE's use of defense diplomacy, where military aid and training missions are used to build influence (Ulrichsen, 2025). Thus, based on the above discussion, it is evident that military alliances are central to the UAE's strategic posture in the Middle East and beyond to address economic, governance, and safety issues (ALBalushi, 2022). Whether through bilateral agreements with Western powers, multilateral coalitions within the Gulf, or informal alignments with emerging regional actors, the UAE has constructed a diverse and robust alliance network (Harry & Kia, 2025). As the UAE continues to evolve from a consumer to a producer of security, understanding the full spectrum of its military alliances remains essential for scholars and policymakers alike, and this research is an attempt to clarify the concepts by proposing a framework that needs to be tested empirically.

2.1.1. Types of military alliances of the UAE

The literature surrounding the UAE's defense diplomacy reveals a strategic shift from mere alliance participation to a more assertive, multi-dimensional alliance-building approach (Huwaidin, 2022). Scholars and policy analysts have identified several types of military alliances employed by the UAE, including bilateral defense agreements, multilateral coalitions, informal strategic partnerships, and defense diplomacy engagements (Khalid & Ahmed, 2024). However, Bilateral military alliances form the backbone of the UAE's defense architecture. Bilateral partnerships grant the UAE access to advanced military technologies, joint training, and intelligence sharing frameworks (Alme-zaini, 2024). These bilateral alliances are characterized by formality, mutual obligations, and long-term defense planning, offering the UAE a solid foundation for military preparedness.

The UAE's participation in multilateral military coalitions highlights its commitment to regional and global security initiatives, which include provisions for collective defense under the Peninsula Shield Force (Schiff & Kertcher, 2024). In contrast to it, the GCC's collective military mechanisms remain underdeveloped and politically fragmented; the UAE continues to support its evolution as a regional security framework (Mäkelä, 2023). Beyond the Gulf, the UAE has been an active member of international coalitions, such as the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, and naval security initiatives in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf (Reiter, 2020). These alliances are often issue-specific, temporary, and based on shared geopolitical interests, allowing the UAE to engage flexibly in joint operations while avoiding entangling formal commitments (Gueraiche, 2022).

A growing body of literature emphasizes the UAE's use of informal or semi-formal strategic partnerships, particularly with emerging powers and regional actors. The UAE has deepened military and security ties with Israel, India, Egypt, and Greece through defense dialogues, arms deals, naval exercises, and intelligence cooperation without formal alliance treaties (Agarwal, 2022). These alignments are often driven by shared threat perceptions, regional balancing, and economic strategic convergence (Guéraiche & Kristian Alexander, 2022). However, the Abraham Accords, signed in 2020, opened the door to unprecedented military cooperation between the UAE and Israel, including cybersecurity, air defense, and surveillance technologies (Dazi-Héni, 2020).

Another emerging category in the literature is the UAE's use of defense diplomacy as a tool for building indirect military alliances. The UAE is no longer just a consumer of security but increasingly a provider of security assistance, especially in Africa and parts of the Arab world (Mason & Rebello, 2024). The UAE has established military bases or training facilities in countries like Somalia, Eritrea, and Libya, and has provided arms, training, and logistical support to partner forces in Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen (Miller & Cardaun, 2020). These defense diplomacy initiatives, while often informal and sometimes controversial, reflect the UAE's intent to expand its strategic influence through security patronage networks (Miller & Verhoeven, 2020). They are distinct from traditional alliances in that they do not always involve mutual defense obligations but serve to expand the UAE's geopolitical reach and military presence.

Recent studies also point to the growing importance of military-industrial alliances and defense technology partnerships. As noted by Roberts (2020), the UAE is investing heavily in indigenous defense capabilities, supported by partnerships with global arms manufacturers and military R&D firms from the U.S., France, South Korea, and Israel. These alliances focus on joint development of drones, missile defense systems, and cybersecurity infrastructure, aiming to reduce the UAE's long-term dependency on foreign suppliers while promoting knowledge transfer and defense innovation (Mohamed et al., 2021). Hence, the military alliances of the UAE with different countries have different objectives, and there is a dire need to develop a framework that may clarify the stability covering economic, political, governance, and security together under the umbrella of the balance of power.

2.2. Threats to military alliances

While military alliances provide numerous benefits, they can also face internal threats that could potentially undermine their effectiveness (Ulrichsen, 2025). Another major issue is diversified national interests. If the countries in alliance have different national interest priorities, it might lead to conflicts. As sovereign states, alliance members may have different national interests that can diverge over time (Dunne et al., 2021). If these interests become too conflicting, it can strain the alliance's unity and compromise its collective decision-making (El-Dessouki & Mansour, 2023). It is crucial to ensure that leadership within the alliance is equitable, inclusive, and capable of guiding the alliance's actions effectively (Siri et al., 2022).

The most common challenge in the military alliance for defense and other activities is external aggression (Lukin, 2021). External threats can come in the form of territorial disputes, expansionist ambitions of other states, or non-state actors with violent agendas (Ajis et al, 2010; Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 2022). A cohesive alliance can provide a collective defense against such threats, but a lack of unity or commitment among members can weaken the alliance's deterrent capability (Reiter, 2020). However, these threats are not only related to terrorism of wars but also related to economic and governance threats.

Considering the differences in the technologies of the countries aligned in the military alliance, because of rapid advancements in technology can pose challenges for military alliances (He et al., 2020). If some members are unable to keep up with the technological advancements of others, it may create a significant capability gap within the alliance. This gap can limit interoperability, coordination, and joint operations, making it difficult for the alliance to effectively respond to emerging threats. Factors such as changes in geopolitical dynamics, economic instability, global pandemics, or climate change can all impact the stability and functionality of military alliances. Adapting to this unpredictability requires flexibility and agility on the part of alliance members (Attar & Abdul-Kareem, 2020).

Military alliances are primarily designed for traditional security threats, such as conventional warfare. However, non-traditional security threats, including cyberattacks, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and transnational organized crime, can also pose significant challenges (Shariffuddin et. al, 2023; Ajis et.al, 2019; Ajis et. al, 2009). Effectively countering these non-traditional threats requires cooperation, information sharing, and joint strategies among alliance members for economic stability, political stability, and governance.

2.3. Threats to military alliances

Military alliances are often built on shared security interests (Freedman, 2020). By pooling their collective capabilities, these countries aim to enhance their security and deter potential threats (Peterson, 2019). Mutual defense is a fundamental aspect of military alliances (Tariq, 2020). Member countries provide a commitment to come to each other's aid in the event of an armed attack. Military alliances work towards improving interoperability among their member countries (Farouk, 2019). By enhancing interoperability, alliance members can effectively coordinate their efforts and generate a synergistic force capable of a more robust response to threats (Van Wijk & Nadolska, 2020). Combined exercises allow alliance partners to practice coordinated operations, develop trust, and enhance operational readiness (Pejić Bach et al., 2023).

Additionally, joint training facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices among the member countries' armed forces. Effective intelligence gathering and sharing mechanisms are vital for successful military alliances (Dubey et al., 2021). Military alliances often involve sharing resources and burden sharing among member countries (Al-Saidi, 2021). It improves foreign direct investments among the alliance members, as economic benefits are always aligned with the same. Military alliances benefit from multilateral cooperation beyond their own membership (Hoffmann et al., 2018). Military alliances are strengthened through ongoing diplomatic engagement among member countries (Al-Adwani, 2021). Regular high-level meetings, diplomatic dialogues, and diplomatic exchange programs serve to deepen understanding, build trust, and foster closer bilateral relationships. However, hardly has till date analyzed all such date under a single umbrella, which calls for a comprehensive framework while integrating theories to cover stability in terms of economic, governance, and military.

2.4. Underpinning theories

Alliances traditionally fall under the security component of foreign policy (Gaub & Stanley-Lockman, 2017). Yet arguably, foreign policy is primarily a derivative of the state's domestic situation (Guéraiche & Kristian Alexander, 2022). The concept of alliances is as old as war itself (Boulding, 2019). Alliances are a critical component within the study of international politics because they are considered tools of the state that are created to maximize its security against perceived threats (Quinn & Gibson, 2017). Alliances can manage or mitigate the likelihood of interstate tension and conflict both inside and outside an alliance (Williams & Papa, 2020). Additionally, alliances can reduce the chance of conflict with non-member states by deterring aggression by combining the aggregate power and security of the alliance members (Dinöz & Erbil, 2021).

On the other hand, alliances may create a perception of threat to non-member states. This may, in turn, encourage states to form rival counter-alliances to balance against the perceived danger. Because of this behavior, a security dilemma may arise. Paradoxically, alliance formation can also promote instability and conflict (Burchill et al., 2022). Alliance theoreticians acknowledge that more than one image can shape a state's international interactions (Viotti & Kauppi, 2019). This study examines the UAE's alliance behavior using the theoretical framework of Walt S. (1985). It also incorporates concepts of Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and Triple Entente (Weitsman, P., 2003). The thesis draws primarily from Walt's balance of threat theory (BoT); however, alliance cohesion and welfare will be supporting theories.

2.4.1. Stephen m. walt: balance of threat theory (BoT)

Walt contends that there are four main factors (or variables) that determine a threat: power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions (Ta'Amnha et al., 2024). Walt notes that in most instances, a state facing an external threat will align with others to oppose the states posing the threat. This form of alliance behavior is called balancing of threat (Ambrosio, 2017). Walt's work holds value to this thesis for two additional reasons. First, his study primarily focuses on alliance behavior within the Middle East (Darwich, 2021). Second, Walt analyzes ideology, foreign aid, and political penetration as possible variables for explaining alliance behavior (Belcastro, 2019). Thus, Walt's theory is an important contribution to alliance theory and widely accepted among IR scholars (Dunne, Kurki, & Steve Smith, 2021; Burchill et al., 2022).

2.4.2. Weitsman's theory of alliance formation and cohesion

Building upon the seminal work of Stephen M. Walt, Patricia Weitsman's theory of alliance formation and cohesion is considered a contribution complementary to Walt's theoretical framework. Weitsman's central thesis posits that differing levels of threat can produce varying forms of alliance behavior and that the specific threat level will determine a state's alliance behavior. She notes that countries behaved differently according to the specific level of threat they experience (Weitsman, P. A., 2004). Her external threat factors are strikingly like Walt's four key variables, although she labels them differently (Weitsman, P. A., 2003). Nevertheless, Weitsman's theoretical concept of alliance's internal threat levels and the subsequent effects it may have on alliance cohesion enriches Walt's theory. Both variables are

useful for analyzing an established alliance because of the implications the relationship may have in shaping an alliance member's behavior and determining the fate of the alliance. Consequently, Weitsman's concept of internal threat levels and its relationship to alliance cohesion is considered in the examination of the UAE's recent alliance behavior (Miller & Verhoeven, 2020).

The four factors that Walt identified as constituting an external threat power, geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and projected intentions, are all ones with which Weitsman agrees (Sinkkonen & Elovainio, 2020). The significance of intents has been evident throughout this investigation, according to Walt S. M. (2018). Given the dual nature of power as a danger or an ally to other states, the perception of other nations' power dynamics takes center stage. Weitsman P. A. (1997) does not offer any methods for understanding or determining how states perceive threats and intentions. Thus, this study will use Stephen M. Walt's BoT as its main theoretical framework.

2.5. Theoretical integration and theoretical framework

Two prominent theories that are used to provide underpinning support to unpack the rationale and effectiveness of such alliances are Stephen M. Walt's Balance of Threat Theory and Weitsman's Theory of Alliance Formation and Cohesion. Both frameworks offer unique insights into alliance behavior, but when studied collectively, they provide a more comprehensive understanding of military alliances. The "strengths" of alliances do not merely exist as byproducts of diplomatic agreements but are integral mechanisms that determine the actual security dividends of the alliance (Walt S. M., 1985). Thus, the theory not only supports the logic of alliance formation but also highlights how enhanced alliance capacities directly correlate with increased deterrence and projection of power.

On the other hand, Stephen M. Walt's Balance of Threat Theory builds on traditional balance of power ideas but shifts the focus toward perceived threats rather than just capabilities. According to Walt, states align not merely against those with the greatest military strength, but against those they perceive as most threatening based on factors such as geographic proximity, offensive intentions, and historical behavior (Weitsman, P. A., 2004). While both theories are robust, neither fully captures the composite reality of the UAE's military alliances when taken in isolation. Balance of Threat Theory provides the motivation and psychological logic driving these alignments (Weitsman, P. A., 1997). Hence, based on the above discussion, it can be said with confidence that the outcomes of military alliances gain significant benefits because of the strength of the military alliance. Thus, the following framework has been developed by merging alliance theory with Stephen M. Walt: balance of threat theory. The theoretical framework of the study is displayed in Figure 1.

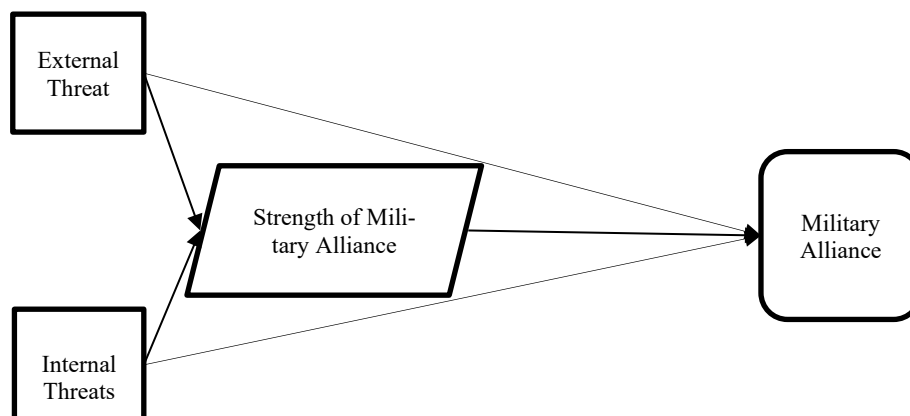


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework.

Referring to Figure 1, the two independent variables are the levels of internal and external threats. The external threat level will be evaluated using Walt's four elements of a threat: power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and perceived intentions. Meanwhile, the level of internal threat will be based on the research conducted by Weitsman. This study seeks to expand on the knowledge of the UAE's recent alliance behavior by integrating the works of the two experts.

3. Methods

A qualitative research approach can be used to explore any situation under discussion. Considering the 'how' questions raised in this study, it was determined that the qualitative research methodology would be the most appropriate technique to address these problems (Satar et al., 204). This is because qualitative research allows for the exploration of personal experiences (Awain et al., 2025), which cannot be adequately captured using the numerical measurements employed in quantitative research (Asad et al., 2024). Qualitative method approaches frequently incorporate secondary materials, non-participant observation, and in-depth interviews. For the qualitative study, it is important to conduct it through interviews (Asad & Ahmed, 2024). Hence, this research requires an interview-based approach because many critical aspects of alliance formation, threat perception, and cohesion are not fully captured in official documents or quantitative data. Decisions regarding strategic alignment, burden-sharing, and alliance management are often shaped by elite perceptions, informal coordination, and confidential security considerations. Interviews with policymakers, military officials, and defense experts allow researchers to uncover how the UAE interprets threats, evaluates partners, and balances autonomy with dependence within alliances, providing nuanced insights that are essential for understanding alliance behavior in a politically sensitive and opaque security environment.

3.1. Sampling

As stated by Floyd J. Fowler (2013), sampling in qualitative research seeks to gather information from the right person. The sample method used in qualitative methodologies is purposive sampling or snowball sampling, rather than probability sampling methods like simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, and stratified random sampling (Sulaiman et al., 2024). Hence, non-probability sampling strategies appeared to be more suitable for collecting the data through the interviews (Asad et al., 2025). Convenience sampling seeks to choose participants who are easily accessible (Mansour et al., 2025). Researchers have the option to select persons who are conveniently located or readily available, and who are willing to actively engage in their investigations (Kanaan et al., 2024). Another method used is

snowball sampling. Snowball sampling, also known as chain or network sampling, is a method used to recruit people from inside a buddy network (Asad, 2024). Upon completion of each interview, researchers have the option to request the participant to suggest additional individuals who possess relevant information and are open to being interviewed by the researchers (Sekaran, 2007).

3.2. Materials/instruments and data collection

The research procedure consisted of questions in two languages: English and Arabic. The questions were derived from inquiries employed by prior researchers in similar investigations. Those studies that focused on factors that strengthen military alliances between countries were identified and were questioned by the respondents (Fadol & Sandhu, 2013; Weitsman, P., 2003; Walt, S., 1985).

The researcher will collect primary data through in-depth interviews. Particularly, the interviews will be conducted using a research protocol that was composed of some main questions, and free-flowing interviews will be conducted to reduce any kind of avoidance in the data collection. Given that each level of analysis necessitates a distinct technique for data collection, personal interviews emerge as a viable way for gathering data from individuals. Similarly, personal interviews are suitable for this study because the unit of analysis of the study was the individuals. The data collection using in-depth interviews will be completed in six months.

4. Conclusion

The objective of the study was to analyze the current state of military alliances of the UAE. Based on the reviewed literature, it has been confirmed that the country is facing internal as well as external threats, which calls for empirical research. Additionally, the reviewed literature revealed that the success of the military alliances is highly supported by the strength of the alliance. Internal and external threats to the military alliance influence the success of the military alliance. Moreover, the strength of the military alliance, supported by mutual interests, diplomatic support, joint training, intelligence sharing, and combined research, may result in benefits for the military alliance.

These alliances may improve the country in terms of regional stability, economic stability, and improvement in governance of the country. Similarly, military alliances support the UAE's economic diversification by strengthening national security, enhancing international credibility, and facilitating access to advanced technology and global markets. Through strategic defense partnerships, the UAE builds long-term political stability, which reassures foreign investors and encourages multinational companies to operate in non-oil sectors such as renewable energy, aerospace, cybersecurity, logistics, and advanced manufacturing. Military cooperation also enables knowledge transfer, joint research, and local defense production, helping develop high-skilled jobs and innovation ecosystems. Additionally, strong alliances deepen diplomatic ties with major economies, expanding trade opportunities and supporting the UAE's broader transition from oil dependence to a diversified, knowledge-based economy.

The UAE's military alliances also play a major role in shaping its defense spending, foreign investment attractiveness, and soft power. Close security partnerships encourage sustained defense expenditure focused on interoperability, advanced technology, and joint operations, reinforcing the UAE's image as a reliable security partner. At the same time, participation in multinational coalitions, peacekeeping, and defense diplomacy strengthens the UAE's soft power by portraying it as a proactive contributor to regional and international security rather than a purely military actor.

Additionally, the findings of the study will strengthen the Balance of Threat theory and the Theory of Alliance Formation and Cohesion. The UAE's alliance aligns closely with the BoT's core claim that states respond not merely to power, but to perceived threats shaped by proximity, offensive capability, and intent. The findings will show that its defense partnerships intensified in response to regional instability, asymmetric threats, and non-state actors rather than traditional power balancing alone. This reinforces the theory by demonstrating how threat perception, rather than raw power calculations, drives alliance choices in the Gulf.

Moreover, research on the UAE highlights how alliances are sustained through shared strategic interests, institutionalized defense cooperation, arms interoperability, joint training, and host-nation basing arrangements. The UAE's consistent investment in coalition operations and burden-sharing strengthens alliance cohesion, supporting the alliance formation cohesion theory's argument that credibility, commitment, and mutual benefits, not just formal treaties, are critical to alliance durability. The findings will show how the UAE can actively shape alliance cohesion through capability development and diplomatic engagement.

The framework has been drawn based on the literature and by the theoretical integration of Balance of Threats theory and theory of alliance formation and cohesion, focused internationally and over the limited available literature on the Middle East and the UAE. However, the framework needs to be tested initially, through qualitative data, and once confirmed, then needs to be tested using the quantitative data. The findings of this study open the horizons for new studies. Additionally, once evaluated, the findings will be useful for the policy makers to bring even more stability in terms of economic, governance, and regional stability.

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