

Private Military and Security Companies and Regional Security Governance: An interpretive perspective of the United Arab Emirates policies

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Abstract:

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are, currently, possessing huge potentials to be considered game-changers in international security. They have gained broader acceptance. However, they are controversial actors who could be indispensable in somewhere and risky in other where. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), is considered one of the Middle East region's states, and it has recently made remarkable use of PMSCs outside its boundaries. The Middle East region is the most troubled region, where many countries are undergoing uncertain transition, in addition to many conflicts. The UAE pursues to avoid sliding in the same situation and attain some benefits given the region's status quo. So, it seems like a window of opportunities that the UAE try to invest to enhance its influence. The theoretical framework for this article is underpinned by the concept of Security Governance as defined by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Regional Security Complex Theory developed by Barry Buzan. The article does not purport to make a judgment on the legitimacy of PMSCs, nor to evaluate the legal statute of their activities. Hereof this article focuses on two main parts; first, on reviewing the development of the relation

between the PMSCs and the Middle East security governance and the second, it analyses the perspective of the UAE toward the use of PMSCs in addressing its regional policy regarding the Middle East region and the implications of this perspective in formulating such policies.

Keywords: Private Military and Security Companies ‘Regional Security Governance ‘The United Arab Emirates ‘Security Complex ‘The Middle East

Introduction

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are, currently, possessing huge potentials to be considered game-changers in international security. They have gained broader acceptance. States employ them to carry out specific tasks within and outside their borders. Additionally, Businesses involved in conflict zones, especially those in the extractive sector, use PMSCs to protect their staff and facilities. Also, several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in conflict zones are using PMSCs to support humanitarian causes. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins sans Frontiers.¹

However, PMSCs are very controversial actors who could be indispensable in somewhere and risky in other where. Actually, this depends- to such an extent- on the environment that the PMSCs operate within, or the client who contracted them to work for their interest. But according to the events in our reality, we can say that it depends more on the state perspective which is the arbiter on the role played by the PMSCs as their existence, in the end, depending on permission from the state they work in accordance to its liability.

Additionally, PMSCs seek mainly to gain profits and states are the biggest clients to them. In this perspective, PMSCs perform tasks that states are unable or unwilling to still do. These tasks affected international relations if they were off the

state's borders. Therefore, PMSCs could play a critical role in formulating regional and global politics at different levels. That relies on who has contracted them, why they are contracted and, how much they influence on states' policies.

Meanwhile, the Middle East region is one of the most conflict-prone regions and due to its geopolitical significance, has the potential to affect global security as a whole. That made it a prime market for several PMSCs in the world. For instance, The International Stability Operations Association (ISOA); the only global interest group that promotes the proactive role of PMSCs in fragile environments and creates business growth opportunities for its members has established a comprehensive network of implementers called the "Middle East Chapter" to represent ISOA Members and industry partners with headquarters or offices in the Middle East region.²

One of the Middle East region's distinctive state actors is, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and it has recently made remarkable use of PMSCs outside its boundaries and it should be noted that the ISOA Middle East Chapter is located in its territory.

In this regard, the article does not purport to make a judgment on the legitimacy of PMSCs, nor to evaluate the legal statute of their activities. Hereof this article focuses on two sides; one on reviewing the development of the relation between the PMSCs and the Middle East security governance and the other analyses the perspective of the UAE toward the use of PMSCs in addressing its regional policy regarding the Middle East region and the implications of this perspective in formulating such policies. The **first** part of the article defines the conceptual and theoretical framework. The **second** part of the article briefly discusses the methodology. The **third** part analyses the role of the PMSCs in shaping the Middle

East Security Governance. The **fourth** part dedicated to investigate the UAE's perspective toward regional security governance. The **fifth** part analyzes the motivations of the UAE beyond contracting PMSCs. Finally, the **six** part analyses the Emirati regional policy and the PMSCs as a tool of its foreign policy in the region and its implications.

1- Conceptual framework

This part of the article defines the conceptual framework focusing on PMSCs and regional security governance.

1.1- Private Military and Security Companies

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are private businesses that deliver military and security services irrespective of how they describe themselves and these services include the provision of material and technical support to armed forces, also strategic planning, intelligence, investigation, training activities with military implications, satellite surveillance, guarding, and protection of persons and objects, whether armed or unarmed, and training of local forces and security personnel.

The corporate nature of PMSCs and the legal status they possess reflect a clear contrast with mercenary forces. While mercenary has traditionally operated outside of the law and without any kind of formal regulation,³ PMSCs are, on the contrary, legal business, possess a corporate structure, subject to the contract law, the property law, the industrial law: employers and employees.⁴

Trends demonstrate that the use of PMSCs is increasing with States, business actors, NGOs, and International Organizations (IOs). It could be mention to three key pillars evolving the utilization of PMSCs; first, the domination of liberal

economic policies; second, the commodification of security and the knowledge about security, and finally, the incorporation of PMSCs into "hybrid" Security networks.⁵

Nowadays, there is a more increasing acceptance of PMSCs' status as market actors who provide a "service" that can be purchased and sold on a free market. This acceptance gave them legitimacy to work in different areas and that could back to the states which helped them through the recognizing of their contribution to security and developed their status into domestic and international law.

PMSCs are currently operating in a variety of contexts;⁶ yet, their role is notable in the unstable or conflict-ridden areas, in terms of providing the parties; support services, such as the logistical, non-lethal, and lethal, or participating in the IOs peace operations, including peacekeeping, peace-support, and post-conflict operations.⁷

1.2- Regional Security Governance

Security Governance is all of the formal and informal processes, actors, and values that shape security provision. In this regard, Christopher Daase and Cornelius Friesendorf,⁸ described three Security Governance structures according to the role of national governments⁹ in these structures: (a) **Governance by Government**, where governments make policy decisions, develop strategies, and allocate resources, for example through the organizations or regimes. Additionally, there is (b) **Governance without Government** in which non-state actors behave independently in ways that also affect the security provision— for example, when communities create self-protection groups or develop self-regulation such as codes of conduct. Furthermore, (c) **Governance with Government** refers to joint action between state and non-state actors, such as public-private partnerships.¹⁰

Security governance is apparent at three different analytical levels: global, regional, and national. At the **global** level, the fundamental casing of reference is the United Nations System, which offers the most all-inclusive mechanisms for addressing security issues, ranging from arms control, disarmament, and nuclear non-proliferation, to conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace building. At the **national** level, security governance alludes to the organization and the management of the security sector, including all the institutions whose key responsibilities are the protection of the state and its people. Whereas security governance at the **regional** level implies the development and dynamic of security arrangements in a given region, institutionalized through regional and sub-regional organizations whose members share security understandings, rules, and practices.¹¹

2- Methodology

This article focuses on Barry Buzan's theoretical logic of "security" from the perspective of the regional security governance concept. In 1983, Barry Buzan introduced the concept of "Security complex" which means a group of states whose primary security concerns are so closely linked together that their national securities cannot be considered realistically apart from each other.¹² In 1986, with Ole Wæver and Jaap De Wilde, he developed his narrative as they made it clear that Security Complex is specifically defined by the interactions among units in security.¹³ Therefore, the links that tie together a security complex may be geographical, political, strategic, historical, economic, or cultural.¹⁴

In this regard, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver molded the "**Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)**" where regions are substructures of the international

system and characterized by power relations and patterns of amity and enmity.¹⁵ RSCT theory has four levels of analysis; **first** is looking at the vulnerabilities of the region's states domestically. As state's specific vulnerabilities define the kind of security fears that it has, and sometimes make another state or group of states a structural threat even though they have no hostile intentions. The **second** level is the state-to-state relationships which the region as such generates. The **third** level is interactions with neighboring regions. This is supposed to be relatively limited, given that the complex is primarily defined by its internal interactions. The **final** analysis level concerns the role of global powers in the region.¹⁶

After all, maintaining the status quo would imply that the essential structure of the security complex has not been static, in other words, it has undergone both a domestic and external transformation and therefore its structure has been changed.¹⁷

In that respect, **Regional Security Governance (RSG)** might ascend as a reaction to common regional potential security perils, such as the need to manage, reduce, and resolve inter-state and intra-state conflicts, adjust to the regional crises, and maintain at least a minimum level of negative peace. As well, it seems to be created as a need to contain a regional actor, such as a specific state, terrorism networks, and pirates. Besides, it stems from a transnational shared interest of the political elites in the region to advance or protect a certain type of political regime, whether democracy or authoritarianism.¹⁸

3- PMSCs and Middle East Security Governance

The Middle East region is called the “powder keg” of the world. For example, The protracted Israeli-Arab conflict. Iraq and Syria have descended into armed

conflict, with diverse groups occupying large parts of their territories. Yemen's civil war and regional interference. The armed conflict in Libya stimulated regional and global powers from outside the region to interfere with their own interests in the conflict. Piracy at the Horn of Africa threatened regional global trade.

Due to the dynamics of the conflicts in this region, and the involvement of major powers, PMSCs gained a very favorable opportunity to market their services. PMSCs provide those who deploy them with a tool to manage fighting beyond their own borders, and another method of projection power while reducing official losses. In this context, PMSCs are valuable instruments for governments as they can evolve countries' security and military capabilities, and that all contribute to the Regional Security Governance.

Middle East countries, who relied on foreign contractors, most of them were a part of the Gulf sub-complex, and this can be attributed to internal factors including demographic conditions, political realities, and security challenges, alongside huge wealth, that helped the Gulf states to use those contractors for police, defense, and intelligence gathering. To make this more obvious, the oil discovery intensified the need for advanced security standards for the Gulf states that were not existing at the local level. Furthermore, these countries transformed into rich countries after the oil purchases, which enabled them to pay for the services rendered by those contractors. Such services were rendered by individual private contractors as well as western corporations which is connected to their national governments; for example, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Vinnell Arabia offers industry-leading, specialized US military training, maintenance, and logistical support services.¹⁹ Western countries regarded PMSCs in this respect as

an instrument to protect their economic interests in the region, while the Gulf countries consider them an effective solution to their security challenges.

PMSCs were increasingly being used as a legal entity in the Middle East countries in the context of the war on terror that began after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Several states from outside the Middle East region have been involved in the war on terror, including among others, the United States and the United Kingdom. Such countries have entered into contracts with many PMSCs to fulfill their safety and maintain their influence. For illustration, during the war in Iraq (2003- 2011), privately owned, for-profit contractors were equivalent to U.S. Troops.²⁰ Moreover, a British private company reportedly trained a private security force to guard government buildings and other important sites initially protected by US soldiers, while the Iraqi army itself was trained by the US-based company Vinnell, a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman.²¹ DynCorp, also, received a contract to perform a local security assessment and to recruit and train a large security force of one thousand.²²

In this respect, some of the contractors who worked for these PMSCs and were active in this war committed human rights abuses against civilians in middle east countries. For example, the Four Blackwater personnel who were responsible for the 2007 massacre of seventeen Iraqi civilians in Nisour Square in Bagdad. As a result, many middle east countries established a national legal framework to regulate the work of PMSCs,²³ particularly as those countries endured the impacts of the invasion of Iraq that jeopardized stability for all the middle east countries.

Several countries have used PMSCs at their national level as partners who provide security and defense services and, in such manner, there was a sort of limitations in some of these countries to prevent the foreign control of corporate

shares such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain. However, some other countries such as Iraq have suffered from the lack of institution building in law enforcement and the continuing situation of generalized violence, which made it difficult to rely solely on Iraqi companies or to regulate the activities of PMSCs on their territory. Moreover, many of the militias in war-torn countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan were with sectarian interests and were commercially transformed into security companies. These sorts of companies have adversely affected the stability of the countries they operate in its territories and have had an impact on the stability of the region as a whole, especially with the ramifications of the conflicts between Sunni and Shia in Iraq on most of the region's countries.

Since the end of 2010, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen have undergone an era of chaos and rapid domestic adjustments. Stabilization in this respect was appeared to be a priority and a target for middle east countries' domestic policies. Regional Stabilization, however, could be said to have different meanings among countries in the region. Particularly, such countries have witnessed the emergence of new different kinds of groups who seek the ruling and some of these groups have adopted foreign global and regional political agenda.

PMSCs have become a game-changer for the conflict, in such as factions use them to boost their fighting strength against their enemies, particularly in the weak and crumbling countries, which were handled political instability and the downgrading of police and military establishments. For example, numerous Western PMSCs have been contracted to train the Syrian opposition against President Bashar al-Assad in Jordan, Turkey, and Qatar²⁴ while Russian PMSCs contracted to support the Russian-Syrian military operations.

At the other hand, countries have struggled not to fall into this turmoil, some of them had used PMSCs to retain their rule and protect their authority from spillover regional conflicts, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar who assumed that preserving their rule and authority is by expanding their presence in the middle east region. Therefore, after securing relative stability at home, these countries sought to reshape the region, according to their own needs and interests, supporting certain regimes and seeking to topple others. In the following part, the article will discuss on the perspective of the UAE as a model for those countries.

4- United Arab Emirates' regional Security perspective

The UAE's perspective towards regional security governance has been influenced by two main traditions: the UAE sense of vulnerability in the region and the representation of the UAE as one of the rising regional powers.

The UAE narrative depicts all transformational threats as a major challenge that it has to address in order to maintain its stability and to be able to continue on the path of development.

UAE was founded, in 1971, by the six states - Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, and Umm al-Quwain, and in 1972, Ras al-Khaimah joined the confederation. In this regard, it seems that the UAE's main target focuses on preserving this unity.

According to the theory of Regional Security Complex, five domestic determinants have an effect on the UAE's regional policy. First, the UAE occupies a strategically important geographic location spanning both the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, adjacent to the Hormuz Strait. This made the UAE an important hub of international trade and a key player in strategic regional considerations.

Second, the country's wealth of petroleum, which can be extracted at a low cost. The UAE has sought to play a role in the region in particular, since the 1970s, when its oil resources enabled the government to fund an activist regional policy that revolved on a good image worldwide. Third, as compared to its natural resources, the UAE has a comparatively small indigenous population besides an increasing number of foreigners from various ethnicities and cultures, which generated a sense of insecurity concerning the identity and the harmonization. Fourth, the fact that the UAE citizens are almost entirely Arab and Muslim have naturally influenced the country's self-image and foreign policy, so that its citizens appear to be more closely aligned with other Arabs and Muslims. Fifth, tribal ties between the UAE's citizens and the other Arab Gulf States appeared to lead the UAE to look for alliances and cooperation with those states.²⁵

At the regional level, the UAE is part of the Arab security complex on the macro level, which extends between western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa, the most troubled areas, where many countries are undergoing an uncertain transition with many conflicts. The UAE is also part of the gulf sub-complex on the micro-level. Traditionally, the UAE's perspective on its security fears was related to the Gulf neighbors, and mainly, Iraq and Iran. But with the American occupation ending Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq, Iran is appeared the most notable threat to the UAE security. Iran has occupied the islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, and it claims its inalienable rights to those islands.²⁶ In addition, Iran is continuing its programs to develop a conventional military arsenal and possibly weapons of mass destruction, and it is seeking to extend Persian political hegemony and to control the Gulf region as the sole power.²⁷

Though the UAE has not been associated with any significant military role in the region, it has, in fact, helped liberate Kuwait, participated actively in peace missions in Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, etc. Besides its involvement in the peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

As a result of Iran's spreading influence, and the UAE's economic interests, which are expanding across the middle east countries, the UAE came to realize that they need a strong military to protect and boost its financial power and expanding its activities beyond the gulf security complex to the Levant, the North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

On the other hand, after the widespread uprising that began in Tunisia in 2010, which spread to other middle eastern countries and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the UAE rulers sought alliances across the Levant, the North Africa and the Horn of Africa both to prevent the spillover of these changes against their regime, and to stop the spread of Muslim Brotherhood politics in the region which they see as an existential threat.

In this regard, it's worth mentioning that since 2012, following the Arab Uprising, the UAE launched operations against the Al-Islah movement, which has been the branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UAE. The UAE accused Al-Islah of "attempting to overthrow the regime". In 2014, the UAE listed the Muslim Brotherhood as a "terrorist organization". The UAE described the movement as a threat to national and international security and started a war against an extensive frontline of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁸ That stance has been contributed to a significant rift with Qatar since 2016, as the UAE has declared that it considers Qatar's policies a security threat. Notably, Qatar has shaped its power around supporting the Middle East Muslim Brothers groups, whether political or military.

In the framework of the UAE perspective on national stability, it participated in putting down the Shiite Uprising in Bahrain and was at the forefront of mobilizing the Arab League for intervention in Libya on behalf of the opposition, and they also fought in Yemen alongside Saudi-led forces against Shiite rebels known as Houthis who are backed by regional rival Iran, and finally, it has attained significant presence against piracy in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

Later on, the UAE supported politicians with anti- Muslim Brotherhood agenda; thereby they are supporting the House of Representatives in Tobruk and provided General Haftar with weapons and air power in his efforts to drive the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Libya out of Benghazi and Eastern Libya.²⁹

UAE security activities in North Africa and the Horn of Africa as neighboring sub-complexes to the Gulf sub-complex are driven by a desire to protect economic interests, improve power projection capabilities, and also enhance international reputation.³⁰ These activities are more reliant on the UAE's military presence, and due to the UAE's small manpower base³¹, most of these activities are indirect or proxy.

5- UAE'S motivations beyond contracting PMSCs

Following the global trends, the UAE began, in 2001, to outsource and privatize a range of security-related tasks, which were previously part of the police remit. This policy was driven by a wider commitment to delivering efficient public services and restructuring government ministries within the context of Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The first such tasks were traffic control, vehicle assessment, and driver licensing. Subsequently, privatization included the protection of people, companies, and organizations, such as banks and embassies, as well as public

events. Private sector police training services companies have engaged in the delivery of training.

In 2002, the first Emirati law, on the work and licensing of private security companies, has been passed by Abu Dhabi. This regulation on the work and licensing of Private Security Companies (PSCs) formed the basis for the subsequent Federal Private Security Law No.37 of 2006, which became enforced in the UAE since 2009. The legal framework now in place requires that all PSCs adhere to high operational standards and strict staff training and licensing.³² As an immediate result of Federal Law No. 37 of 2006, the private security regulatory authority became the Federal Regulatory Authority is now known as the Private Security Company Organization Department (PSCOD) responsible for oversight of the private security industry at the national level. This led to the establishment of the National Security Institute (NSI), which was given the responsibility of creating training standards for security guards in the UAE, and which considered as a training arm to PSCOD.³³

In October 2001, the UAE called on Canadian Experts in the fields of security legislation, security training and, the Middle East culture to conduct research on the private security industry in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, simultaneously with the establishment of the “Private Security Business Department”; The regulatory agency for managing, organizing, training, examining and licensing to regulate and oversight the private security industry.³⁴

Several Global PMSCs had registered in the UAE After 2011. According to the Emirati Laws, the share of UAE citizens in the company’s capital must be at least 51% and the company must emiratize at least 5% of its security administrative and supervisory positions annually, and, if the company does not comply with that

percentage, it must pay a fine of five thousand dirhams, and the license shall be annulled until it reoccurs.³⁵ Some PMSCs, however, remain largely staffed by ex-military western personnel.

Remarkably, the UAE cabinet, in 2018, has approved 122 economic activities across 13 sectors eligible for up to 100% foreign ownership. However, the government excluded security and military sectors from changes in the foreign investment law.³⁶ This reflects the structure of governance by the government, where the state makes laws and puts policy decisions by which PMSCs operate on its territories.

Globally, the USA State Department revealed during the Bosnia-Herzegovina war in ninetens that the UAE paid PMSCs to support Muslim Bosnians, and ensure that the influence of Iran did not spread. In this case, the Bosnian Federation was directly hiring MPRI and the UAE paid for MIPRI.³⁷

Further, in 2011, UAE has begun to increase its active interactions with neighboring sub-regions and has played a prominent role in reshaping the region's conflict-torn states' structure in a way that shifts the regional power balance in its interest. In this context, the UAE is using PMSCs to improve its presence in the regional balance of power by filling the security vacuum in post-conflict states.

Additionally, the UAE has hired senior foreign military officers to modernize its army, such as Australia's former top special forces general, Mike Hindmarsh, who reports to Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al- Nahyan. Hindmarsh oversees the Presidential Guard, the unit responsible for directing the UAE campaign in Yemen.³⁸

Moreover, the UAE confirmed on May 15, 2011, that it had retained the US private firm Reflex Responses (R2), to provide "operational, planning, and training

support” to the UAE military.³⁹ As the UAE’s contract with R2 stipulates, the Emirati Armed Forces as a client, have been interested in “obtaining manpower” and “personnel”, to be assigned to relevant unites. Based on its wording, the contract seemed to revolve around procuring capacity and capability the UAE Armed Forces could not independently generate.⁴⁰

In 2011, Eric Prince, one of the most popular contractors in this industry, reportedly had the UAE government’s backing to develop two private security projects. He helped create a security antipiracy force in Somalia, the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), which has been financed by Zakat contributions mainly from high-ranking officials of the UAE. He was also involved in the creation of a private army through R2.⁴¹ Notably, Prince was never an R2 employee,⁴² he officially worked for a company called Assurance Management Consultants, which shared a floor in an Abu Dhabi office tower with Reflex.⁴³ Later, he launched in 2012 a private equity firm⁴⁴, Frontier Resource Group (FRG), a logistics and transportation company that’s working across the African continent with funding from Asian investors. FRG is a member of the ISOA and according to the ISOA website, it serviced at the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya in addition to many countries in Africa.⁴⁵ Currently, FRG is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and the investors included both the UAE’s Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammed Al Nahyan and Abu Dhabi’s Crown Prince Court.⁴⁶

In this regard, it worth noting that contractors who were operated under the flag of the UAE, usually, were affiliated to companies established in accordance to the Emirati laws, then they were supervised by the UAE to minimize any risk that might occur due to the nature of the PMSCs as private entities seeking for profits at the first, not the regional goals of the UAE.

6- Emirati regional foreign policy and PMSCs

Several sources have been written about Emirati funding of PMSCs in a number of Arab countries such as Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. This part will discuss the implications of using PMSCs for achieving regional objectives of the UAE.

Concerning **Yemen**, it is located on the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, across from the Horn of Africa. With Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east. It is part of the same sub-complex that UAE belongs to, so it represents a near neighbor to the UAE, which means a direct part of its security complex. This explains why the UAE considers that Yemen's crisis would affect its security somehow. Therefore, it is understood why the UAE is interacting with the conflict in Yemen in all the methods. The UAE engaged in a wider coalition intervention in Yemen to curb Iranian influence in the Gulf sub-complex, and also to prevent Muslim Brotherhood groups, namely, the Islah Political Party, from gaining power in Yemen.

Five years ago, specifically in 2015, the UAE was a leading force in a coalition that launched an intervention on behalf of the internationally recognized government headed by President Abdu-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. In this respect, it had led the ground offensive in the South of Yemen⁴⁷ and deployed some 4,000 special operations troops and other forces. However, after a missile strike in the Yemeni governorate of Marib in September 2015 killed more than fifty Emirati troops, the UAE pulled down some of these troops and sent a Unit of Southern American was trained by Mr. Prince, to operate with the UAE troops under the UAE flag.⁴⁸ Notably, an attack on PMSCs forces will not have the same effect as an attack on the regular forces, so it would have a lower political cost and incur fewer risks of escalation. This explains why the UAE used PMSCs to minimize any public

pressure on the UAE government, which will perhaps influence regional security governance.

In the case of **Somalia**, it has a strategic location in the Horn of Africa, along the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. However, historically, it has been a fragile and unstable state. In this respect, one of Somalia's biggest challenges is the maritime piracy attacks on international shipping and private vessels off its coast in the absence of a government capable of enforcing the rule of law and deterring piracies.

Therefore, Somalia is considered a risk area to the UAE, where a threat to its maritime safety, especially oil shipments and cargo containers. In this context, the UAE offered support for counter-piracy operations in early 2010, which ultimately developed into counterterrorism efforts to defeat al-Shabaab in Somalia.⁴⁹ In this respect, Abirahman Mohamud Farole, the incumbent president of Puntland in 2010, decided on setting up the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), as a new law enforcement force to oppress piracy off the shore of Puntland. The UAE financed the project by \$50 million, which was a new way of funding. In November 2010, the government of Puntland contracted with "South African Saracen International" to train and mentor the PMPF. The company was headed by Lafras Lutingh; who is considered to be a former officer in the South African Civil Cooperation Bureau, which was an internal security force in the apartheid era, besides the company has an affiliation to Mr. Prince and the controversial Blackwater. This caught the attention and the concern of the UN and due to the UN pressure, the government of Puntland first suspended the contract with Saracen International and later terminated the deal in early 2011.⁵⁰

In 2012, Dubai-registered Sterling Corporate Services was designated to conduct the training of the PMPF's troops. Despite the company's efforts to start with a clean history, the UN claimed that it has also violated the arms embargo on Somalia, besides several cases were documented in which Somalia trainees were mistreated and killed in some occasions. Moreover, Lodewyk Pieterse, one of the South African trainers was shot and killed by the Somali trainers in April 2012. Not long after this incident, in June 2012, the UAE froze the funding for the PMPF, leading partly to the exit of Sterling Corporate Services and the temporary halt of operations.⁵¹ By the end of June 2012, the company whisked the rest of its trainers and their equipment out of the country, leaving the Puntland force alone.⁵² Since then, no news has been reported about a relationship between the UAE and PMSCs in Somalia.

In 2014, the UAE signed a memorandum of understanding with the federal government of Somalia, training personnel, and building infrastructure for the Somali army, marine police, and police forces throughout the country. The UAE had trained hundreds of Somali troops as part of an effort boosted by an African Union military mission to fight the al Shabab jihadists. However, a dispute with the Somali government had already arisen in 2017 after the UAE had set up a base in the port of Berbera in Somaliland.⁵³ The UAE responded to Somali government protests by terminating its training mission for the Somali military.

Under the terms of the deal, the UAE was to have a presence there for 30 years. Berbera is less than 300 km (190 miles) South of war-torn Yemen, where the UAE troops have been fighting the Iran-aligned Houthi group since 2015. Remarkably, after the UAE announced the withdrawal from Yemen in 2019, the Somaliland region President, Muse Bihi Abdi, had announced that the Berbera airport that was

built by the UAE and designed to be a military base will become a public airport for civilians.⁵⁴

In this case, it is remarkable that the UAE paid for foreign PMSCs that had been contracted with a representative of the Somali authority without the potential to control the companies' real activities. Then, when the criticisms of those companies' behavior escalated and were further associated with the Emirates' financial support that brought these companies, the UAE became alarmed about its image and suspended the funding.

Similarly, **Libya** is lying beyond the Gulf sub-complex in the middle of North Africa's Mediterranean coast, bordered by Tunisia and Algeria to the west, and Egypt to the east.⁵⁵ Much like the UAE, Libya's economy is one of the most oil-dependent in the world. However, Libya's 2011 political change incurred a collapse in political and economic governance with two competing parties and some militias controlling oil production. That power is divided between the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Fayeze al-Sarraj and based in the capital city of Tripoli, and the competing Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Libyan General Khalifa Haftar and based in the Country's east.

In this context, Libya has been at the center of a proxy war between various regional powers. Turkey and Qatar – backed militias and groups who called themselves Islamists- in the west of the country support GNA prime minister al-Sarraj, while the UAE support general Haftar's campaign from 2014 that target extending his control from Eastern Libya to the entire country, against militants who called themselves as Islamists.

Notably, Haftar's fight against Islamist factions in Libya is a part of the UAE's political agenda in the region that aims at combating Islamist groups, particularly

the Muslim Brotherhood. Therefore, the relationship between the UAE and Haftar is based on mutual interest.

The UAE provides Haftar with military assistance to fulfill his pledge to “cleanse” the country of radical Islamist militias. In this regard, a UN report accused the UAE of breaching the UN arms embargo on Libya by supplying Haftar’s forces with financial assistance and military equipment such as helicopter aircraft, and armored vehicles.⁵⁶

Bloomberg newspaper reported, based on a non-public report from the UN Panel of Experts shared with the sanctions committee of the Security Council, that a team of western “contractors” linked to two Dubai-based companies was briefly deployed to Libya to assist Khalifa Haftar. The report said that the “contractors” were affiliated with LanCaster 6 DMCC⁵⁷ and Opus Capital Asset Limited FZE, both registered at free zones in the UAE. The contractors traveled to Libya in June 2019 for a “well-funded Private Military Company Operation” to support Haftar. Opus and Lancaster 6 have financed and directed an operation to provide Haftar’s forces with helicopters, drones, and cyber capabilities through a complex web of shell companies.⁵⁸

In January 2020, the UAE was reported to have sent thousands of Sudanese men who traveled to work for a security services company as guards to Ras Lanuf oil terminal in Libya, before returning to the UAE after protesting about their case in Sudan. Ras Lanuf is one of the oil ports that has been blockaded since January 18 by groups loyal to Khalifa Haftar.⁵⁹ In this regard, Faisal Mohamed Salih, the information minister, announced that the UAE uses security contractors to guard petrol fields in Libya.⁶⁰

In addition, many reports uncovered on the UAE financing Russia's Wagner Group, and at the same time, President Vladimir Putin confirmed on 11 January 2020 that the Russian companies did not represent the interests of the Russian state or receive funding from the Russian state.⁶¹

In this case, it is noted that the UAE did not deny that it has a relationship with PMSCs, however, there are no official statements announced in this regard. This shows that using PMSCs allows the UAE the ability to deny its involvement in Libya, where there is no official accusation to an Emirati involvement in the ground conflict, as the investigations of the UN reports couldn't confirm such a relation between the PMSCs and the UAE. However, there is no doubt that these PMSCs have a particular role to play in security governance in Libya and that affects regional security governance.

Conclusion

This article focused on the relationship between PMSCs and Regional Security Governance with a specification from the perspective of the UAE toward three cases that are geographically distributed across three main areas; Western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. The article clarified that within the tri-security complex, there is enough crossing of boundaries. This is, any interstate and intrastate conflict in any of the region's countries has the potential to upset the regional balance of power and affecting global security. Actually, this has become more visible since 2011, with the increasing effect of the Gulf sub-complex on the other complexes.

The UAE as a part of the Gulf sub-complex addresses several internal and external challenges from its perspective toward regional security governance, including the Arab domestic chaos, Iran's growing regional influence, the Libyan civil war, piracy emanating from Somalia, and the war in Yemen from 2015. In such an environment, each regional security sub-complex appeared interlinked and affected by the other complex. That has created opportunities for revisionist states like the UAE to seek greater influence and to extend its strategic depth.

In this respect, PMSCs have become critical actors in regional security governance, particularly after the shift to "new wars" where the distinction between the current armed conflict and post-conflict phase is blurred.

During the current regional dynamics, many proxy conflicts raised with internal protests, which shaped regional security complex and made it blurry. In this environment, the UAE uses PMSCs as one of its tools to reshape the regional power balance on the ground that keeps its presence in regional politics.

The article presented three types of using PMSCs. A first case concerning Yemen as a part of the same gulf sub-complex, PMSCs were under the Emirati governance to a great extent. The second case was concerning Somalia, which could be near the UAE territory, but part of another sub-complex, which is the Horn of Africa. The final case was Libya, which is far-flung from the UAE and belongs to the North Africa sub-complex.

PMSCs facilitated the UAE to influence the regional system by exploiting regional power vacuums through its existent on the ground, which allowed the UAE to take a seat at the table negotiations in these cases and establish regional and global alliances reshaped the regional balances.

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