

A MONTHLY REVIEW OF EURO-GULF RELATIONS

A Euro-Gulf Information Centre Publication
September 2019

Escalation in the Gulf



2019, and the April-July period in particular, may be characterised by a dangerous escalation of tensions in the Arab Gulf. If uncontrolled such escalation could lead to an unprecedented military confrontation between

the US and the Islamic Republic of Iran. To contextualise, on 8 May 2018, US President, Donald Trump, announced Washington's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) a.k.a. the

Iran nuclear deal. Despite EU efforts to save the deal, in April 2019 Iran's President, Hassan Rouhani, announced that Tehran was ready to end limitations on its nuclear programme. Key Events - Arguably,

Continued PAGE 4

Gas Leak

The Story of Turkey's Theft of Cyprus' Gas

On 8 July 2019, the Turkish drilling ship, Yavuz, dropped anchor off the east coast of Cyprus' Karpasia Peninsula—in search of natural resources. This despite the fact that the area falls within the Republic of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), guaranteed by the

1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as an area of state's sovereignty over the use and exploration of natural resources below the sea level [1]. Yavuz is the second drilling ship dispatched by Ankara to Cyprus' EEZ over the past two months. The

first, Fatih, has been working off the west coast of the EU island state since May, prompting Nicosia to issue arrest warrants on the crew for breaching its sovereign territory. Legally, the Republic of Cyprus retains full sovereignty over the entire island and its territorial

Continued PAGE 7

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MARINE DISPUTES BETWEEN THE UK AND IRAN

Tensions between the United Kingdom and Iran have, again, been mounting over the past week. However, the two countries have a history of maritime tensions in the Arab Gulf. Here are a few of the more noteworthy episodes:

- 21 June 2004—Iran detained 8 British Royal Navy sailors in the Shatt Al-Arab waterway between Iran and Iraq on their way to Basra. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp Naval (IRGC-N) forces and held them captive for three days, claiming that they crossed into Iranian territorial waters. That claim was later disproved and evidence was provided showing that the British vessel remained in Iraqi waters.
- 23 March 2007—IRGC-N forces captured and interrogated — for nearly two weeks — 15 Royal Navy personnel from the HMS Cornwall which had been conducting a search operation of a vessel suspected of smuggling during their patrol in Iraq's waters. The Royal Navy sailors were paraded and

Continued PAGE 5



THE REPORT

Global Africa

Power Politics on the Continent

The event was held on 18 July 2019. An arabic version of this report is available at www.egic.info

Africa, often referred to as the continent of the future –characterized by a large youthful population, untapped mineral resources and conflict– is increasingly acting as an intersection of European and Gulf interests. Currently, the great and an assortment of other world powers, such as Italy, are increasingly focused on Africa in pursuit of their national interests. Periodically, this brings Europeans and Arab Gulf states directly into the military relations of African countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Mali, Nigeria and the wider Sahel region. On 18 July 2019, the Euro-Gulf Information Centre (EGIC) hosted Andrea Spinelli Barrile (journalist and Head of Communication at the Italia Africa Business Week and Co-Founder of Slow News) and Natalia Piskunova (Senior Lecturer at Moscow State University and an expert on Russian foreign policy). Spinelli Barrile began by discussing trade and investments as a fundamental component to understanding Africa's current economic importance. For instance, China-Africa trade reached \$170 billion (USD), Russia-Africa trade \$17.4 billion (USD), US-Africa trade hit \$39 billion (USD) and the intra-African trade is sitting at some \$77 billion (USD). In Africa, the US dollar is still used in Zimbabwe



and in Liberia and Spinelli Barrile deeply examined the US involvement on the continent. In terms of influence, the US has specific engagement methods with African powers, such as Nigeria and Ethiopia and, a more comprehensive approach to the African Union (AU). Nevertheless, over the years, African leaders became increasingly reluctant to accept US aid as it often came linked to political conditions. This may help explain Africa's interest in engaging with new partners. While the West worries about China and Russia –the latter is often underestimated in terms of its involvement in Africa– both the European Union (EU) and African countries struggle to fully exploit the diaspora communities which European countries host. Evidence of this formed the bulk of the speech by Nana Akufo-Addo, the

President of the Republic of Ghana, which he gave in Paris when hosted by the French President, Emmanuel Macron. Akufo-Addo explained how people from the Ghanaian diaspora in France are the best resource that Ghana has. In terms of political influence in Africa, France still retains an abundance of capital. Other countries are now joining the race for influence in Africa. Russia is certainly among them and is exploiting its Soviet past to rekindle relations with those African leaders who studied in the USSR. Meanwhile, China is deployed throughout Africa; building motorways and railroads in Ethiopia and Eritrea and developing industrial-sized farms throughout the continent. Interestingly, Africans are also self-investing; they significantly expanded their financial ties to other African countries over the past decade. For instance, Moroccan investments marks the country as the number one African investor on the continent and the third overall global investor in Africa. Additionally, there is a growing interest in establishing companies and private institutions for investment in Africa; for example, Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) has found fertile ground for development especially in Congo and Rwanda. However, while Africa



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might attract several external investors interested in its resources, Spinelli Barrile underlined the different approaches pursued by the various investors. He designated four distinct approaches towards the continent: an EU/US approach, a China/India/Russia approach, an Italian approach and the African approach. While the EU and US aim to create an economic, political, and military partnership, this method is conditional to democratic transition. The China/India/Russia approach, relies solely on economic and military means of engagement with no interest in the political sphere. The Italian approach is carried out through partnerships for cooperation and development. Finally, the African approach is considered the most effective method and depends upon cooperation, development and a partnership based on a future common market, currency, resources, passports and a political agenda. Piskunova, shed light on what followed the pre-1989 Soviet strategy of supporting decolonization across the continent and explained what is next for Russia in Africa.

Piskunova analysed the long history of engagement between Russia and the African continent in order to contextualize their current relationship. Historically, during the 1990s, Russia was isolated from Africa by its own economic conditions and political instability. Piskunova remarked that 'In 1993, Africa was not one of the priorities of the newly created Russian Federation, which changed ten years later when Africa became one of Russia's top foreign policy priorities.' After 2010, both the Middle East and Africa saw a surge in Russia's interest which resulted in increased influence from Moscow. Although the EGIC conference did not primarily focus on the Arab Gulf involvement in Africa, it is important to note that the Arab Gulf countries have heavily invested projects across the continent. Saudi Arabia brokered a landmark peace deal in the Horn of Africa on 17th of September 2018 in which both Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, and Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki, signed a peace agreement in Jeddah. The agreement formally concluded the war

which the two countries fought between 1998 and 2000, and paved the way to end tensions. Furthermore, the UAE has a long-track record of engagement across the Red Sea, where it hosts large diasporas from Horn countries some of which were integral to its founding in 1971 –the Arabic-speaking Sudanese civil servants helped build nascent ministries. Moreover, the UAE military presence in the Horn of Africa aims to ensure freedom of maritime navigation and to secure Bab al-Mandab, which is the narrow passage connecting the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea. It has joined the anti-piracy mission in the region. The Saudi-Eritrean agreement allows Riyadh to use Assab port as a support base for operations in Yemen. As a result, African countries are developing into major players in international politics, especially by way of cooperative arrangements. The Euro-Gulf Information Centre will continue to monitor Euro-Gulf as well as Gulf-African relations to best understand the developments of their mutual interests.

By MOHAMAD AL KAWATLI

IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY PUTTING THE NEWFOUND SAUDI-BAHRAINI COORDINATION COUNCIL IN CONTEXT

On 28 July 2019, Bahrain's King Hamed bin Isa Al Khalifa and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Dr Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf, unveiled a new form of bilateral cooperation by establishing the Saudi-Bahraini Coordination Council. The Council aims to cooperate in a more robust level in various fields including political, economic, development, and security, as well as in following-up on the progress of joint projects and initiatives. According to King Hamed, the establishment of the Coordination Council between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a new strategic initiative that will reinforce the mechanisms

of bilateral cooperation at all levels. King Hamed also hailed Saudi Arabia's policy of defending Arab and Islamic interests and strengthening mechanisms of peace, security and stability regionwide. Manama remains committed to its traditional alliances. In this case, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (among other allies, re: the United Arab Emirates) are facing an acute, and growing, challenge from the Islamic Republic of Iran and its many proxies such as Hezbollah and Houthi rebels. Riyadh shares, with Manama, the same visions of regional stability. In 2018, Riyadh pledged support to Bahrain's economy as part of an assistance package with other

Gulf states, including Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. This was in response to the deliberate dumping of the Bahraini Dinar as a way of damaging its national economy. More recently, the growing maritime tensions in the Arab Gulf together with Iran's repeated deployment of agents of disruption (re: Hezbollah and Saraya Al-Ashtar) and its continued attempts to export sectarianism to the Island, securing Bahrain remains atop the agenda of its closest allies. This Bahrain-Saudi Council is yet another step to rolling-back Iran's nefarious activities in and beyond the region.

By AHMAD SAS

Escalation in the Gulf

FROM PAGE 1

Tehran coupled its traditional post-1979 strategy—involving covert activities and infiltration of its proxies into other countries—with a series of direct attacks and threats against US interests and allies in the region, when Washington’s sanctions began taking a toll on Tehran’s leaders rather than on Iran’s economy in general. For instance a major turning point in the escalation of tensions between Washington and the Arab Gulf states on one side and Tehran on the other was the US Administration’s decision (8 April 2019) to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organisation. Trump declared that listing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation was in-line with the Administration’s policy to significantly expand the scope and scale of maximum pressure on the Iranian regime; to force the Islamic Republic to enter fresh negotiations for a new deal that would include the suspension of Iran’s ballistic missile programme and the IRGC’s interference in the internal affairs of other regional actors. The IRGC’s designation imposed wide-ranging economic and travel sanctions on the leaders of the Quds Force—the IRGC group responsible for training and directing Tehran’s Shiite proxy militias in the Arab Middle East. The first major Iranian attack in the Gulf targeted international Energy Transmission Infrastructure (ETI). On 12 May 2019, four oil tankers (2 from Saudi Arabia, 1 from the UAE and 1 from Norway) were damaged off the Emirati coast. The findings of an international investigation into the incident—led by Abu Dhabi and Oslo—described a sophisticated operation by divers from fast boats utilising limpet mines to breach the hulls of the ships. This was shortly followed by Iran’s announcement it was ramping-up its production of nuclear fuel, following through on the threat to begin walking away from the nu-



clear deal. Then, on 14 May 2019, attacks on Saudi Arabia’s oil pipelines in Riyadh province by Iran-backed proxies operating drones from neighbouring Iraq took place. Since June, tensions have been rapidly escalating; Yemen’s Houthis repeatedly attacked Abha International Airport, in Southern Saudi Arabia, with cruise missiles on June 12. On 14 and 17 June the Houthis targeted again Saudi Arabia’s Abha International Airport using Iran-made Qasef-K2 drones. The following day, 13 June, explosions crippled two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, (1 Japanese, 1 Norwegian) prompting the US military to release video footage showing a Revolutionary Guards’ patrol boat pulling up alongside one of the stricken ships, in the aftermath of the explosion, and removing an unexploded limpet mine. Following the attack, international crude oil prices rose some 3%, indirectly increasing the cost of isolating Iran for non-oil exporting countries. In response to increased activities by Iran, on 17 June, the Pentagon ordered the deployment of 1,000 troops to the Middle East, equipped with surveillance assets, missile batteries and fighter jets in addition to the bombers and to the Abraham Lincoln Aircraft Carrier Strike Group, already operating in the region for deterrence purposes. Crucially, on the same day, Tehran

announced it had been increasing its stockpile of low-enriched uranium and it was set to exceed what was originally authorised as part of the JCPOA in 2015—potentially enabling the Islamic Republic to build a nuclear bomb. On 19 June, Iran-backed Houthis increased the range of their attacks inside Saudi Arabia by targeting the Al-Shuqaiq integrated water and power plant complex with ballistic missiles. This event preceded what is, to date, the most significant incident in the recent escalation. On 20 June, an Iranian surface-to-air missile (SAM)—fired from the Islamic Republic’s Khordad-3 air defence system—downed a US Navy RQ-4 Global Hawk, an unmanned surveillance drone, flying over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran accused the United States of spying over its territorial waters while the Pentagon condemned the strike as an “unprovoked” act of hostility and declared that the aircraft was patrolling international airspace. On the same day the Houthis struck Saudi Arabia’s Jizan airport with Qasef-K2 drones. Washington responded on 23 June, with a cyber-attack targeting Tehran’s air defence rocket launch systems. Reportedly, this response came after Trump decided to abort a targeted air strike against IRGC installations inside Iran. The latest incident took place on 4 July, involving British Roy-

al Marines and customs agents in Gibraltar which seized an oil tanker transporting Iranian oil to Syria, at the request of the US and in violation of EU sanctions on the Assad regime. The mapping data of the ship showed it sailed a longer route around the southern tip of Africa instead of crossing Egypt's Suez Canal. On 5 July, Iran's IRGC threatened to seize a British oil tanker in response. Future Scenarios - Officials in both Iran and the US seem prepared to accept the risks related to a short, military escalation. In Washington, US National Security Advisor, John Bolton and others have repeatedly argued that the US should not refrain from using military force when dealing with the Ayatollah's regime. Likewise, in Tehran, the new IRGC leader, Hossein Salami, and the most hard-line clerics view a short military confrontation with the US as a unique opportunity to rally popular support behind them and discredit internal rivals regardless of the outcome of the war. On the other hand, while President Trump is reluctant to commit the US into a major military confrontation before running for a second term in office, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is aware that a war might bring about chaos and undermine his succession plans for Iran's leader-

ship. For this reason, in the coming days it is likely that both the US and Iran, despite continuing to engage in a war of words, will not seek further direct provocations. The situation remains extremely tense. Tehran's proxies continue to target US allies in the region while Washington's sanctions are hitting Iran's economy in an unprecedented way. In the coming months the IRGC can be expected to carry out further operations targeting US interests directly and the international oil trade to raise the economic costs of Iran's isolation. The EU, having spent considerable political capital on a peaceful relation with Iran, remains paralyzed between the unwillingness to condemn the Islamic Republic for its escalation and the fear that Tehran's future activities will target its own economic interests. A war would certainly hit many economic interests at a global level. Moreover, what are initially planned to be short conflicts can easily turn into long and complicated wars. The EGIC will continue to monitor the risk of a major conflict, which would almost certainly involve Iran's proxies such as the Houthis while being highly detrimental to the people in the entire region.

By ANTONINO OCCHIUTO



■ FROM PAGE 1

mocked on Iranian television. 28 April 2015—IRGC-N seized a crew of a Marshall-Island's flagged container ship, Maersk Tigris, including one British national, in the Strait of Hormuz allegedly because of a legal dispute between the Danish company, Maersk, which chartered the ship, and a private Iranian company. The latest bout of maritime tensions between the UK and Iran commenced on 4 July 2019, when the British Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker, Grace 1, near Gibraltar. The ship is suspected of carrying over 2 million barrels of Iranian crude oil to Syria, potentially breaching the European Union sanctions on Syria. In response, Iran summoned the UK's Ambassador in Tehran and demanded the vessel's immediate release. Iranian officials threatened to retaliate by seizing a British tanker if Grace 1 was not released. The UK government raised the warning for 15-30 British flagged ships operating daily in the Gulf on the highest alert following an attempt by three IRGC-N vessels to interdict a UK commercial vessel, the British Heritage, on its way to the Strait of Hormuz before they were ordered to leave the area by the Royal Navy's frigate, HMS Montrose, which fixed its guns at them. To guarantee the security of British ships, the United Kingdom decided on Friday, 12 July to despatch a second warship, HMS Duncan, to the Gulf. the Royal Navy's frigate, HMS Montrose, which fixed its guns at them. To guarantee the security of British ships, the United Kingdom decided on Friday, 12 July to despatch a second warship, HMS Duncan, to the Gulf. the Royal Navy's frigate, HMS Montrose, which fixed its guns at them. To guarantee the security of British ships, the United Kingdom decided on Friday, 12 July to despatch a second warship, HMS Duncan, to the Gulf.

By NIKOLA ZUKALOVÁ

THE DAY AFTER

JOHNSON, LAMONT AND THE ARAB GULF



On 24 July 2019, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson (a.k.a. Boris Johnson) became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK). This was a widely expected result given the ruling Conservative Party's increasingly hard stance on Brexit. However, the first foreign policy challenge that the new Prime Minister will have to face is not related to Brexit or Europe but to the Arab Gulf, a region in which the UK retains a traditionally privileged role for over 200 years and is regarded as a key strategic region for London's future outside the European Union (EU). When dealing with the Arab Gulf, the UK's new Prime Minister is likely to be forced to choose between the position of its main international ally, the United States (US), and the interests of the influential British Iranian Chamber of Commerce (BICC). While the former is keen to enlist the UK to pressure Iran into changing its foreign policy, the latter—founded and led by Lord Norman Lamont of Lerwick—continues to lobby for deeper UK-Iran economic cooperation.

Seized Oil Tankers

On 19 July, the *Stena Impero*, a British oil tanker transiting in the Strait of Hormuz, was interdicted by Iranian forces and is currently held at Bandar Abbas port in Iran. Tehran did very little to hide that the move came as retaliation fol-

lowing the UK's decision to seize the *Grace 1*, an Iranian oil tanker held in Gibraltar by UK authorities, for carrying oil to Syria in violation of EU sanctions against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. Johnson will likely be forced to decide between two different courses of action.

Atlantic Synergy

Johnson may decide to align the UK firmly with the US and to the Trump Administration's strategy of exerting maximum pressure on Tehran to force the Islamic Republic into reducing its aggressive regional stance and into negotiations with regard to its ballistic missile programme. This would signal a decisive shift from the past. Previous UK governments, along with Germany and France, advocated a softer approach towards Iran and criticised the US decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In immediate, practical, terms a stronger UK approach vis-à-vis the Ayatollah's regime in Tehran could result in a UK-led EU naval mission in the Strait of Hormuz to prevent what (former) Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, called 'future acts of state piracy.'

The BICC

Alternatively, Johnson could use the channel of communication opened by UK officials with Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ja-

vad Zarif, to find a negotiated settlement for the release of both tankers. This would certainly be the solution preferred by the BICC led by former Conservative MP, Lord Norman Lamont of Lerwick. Lamont lobbied for the development of a solid business relationship with Iran since the creation of the BICC in 1988, when Margaret Thatcher resided in Number 10. The power of the BICC grew significantly when Lamont became Chancellor of the Exchequer in John Major's government, remained unaltered during the Tony Blair era and continues to influence London's foreign policy decision making until now. For instance, the BICC was able to involve several UK companies such as British Petroleum, BVAA and Quercus in important projects inside Iran thus encouraging successive UK governments to support sanctions relief to Tehran.

The BICC has so far influenced to some degree all governments in the UK from 1988 onwards and, given the continued level of engagement of British businesses in and with Iran, is likely to retain leverage over the new cabinet. However, especially in case of a hard Brexit—triggered automatically in case London and Brussels do not find an agreement on the UK's withdrawal from the EU—there may be need to further develop the special relationship to the US. A firm response to counter the threat posed by Iran to the freedom of navigation in the Gulf and to the international oil trade would certainly enhance US-UK synergy in global affairs. This would certainly find consensus among the UK's traditional Arab allies in the Gulf—which feel increasingly threatened by Iran while maintaining an interest in stronger commercial, political, defence and security ties to London.

By ANTONINO OCCHIUTO

Gas Leak

The Story of Turkey's Theft of Cyprus' Gas

FROM PAGE 1

waters (including the EEZ), despite Turkey's 45-year occupation of the north (where it declared the still unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [TRNC]). Ankara's drilling in Cyprus' EEZ violates international law. Despite the chorus of condemnation from the international community, Ankara seems determined to further increase tensions and further alienate its traditional allies in the EU and NATO through its theft of Cyprus' resources.

Searching for Natural Resources Offshore Cyprus

The Eastern Mediterranean is believed to be rich in natural resources. Since its first gas discovery in 2011, Cyprus has been working to develop its offshore deposits to ensure economic profitability of the proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) onshore plant, which would turn it into a regional hydrocarbons hub. New gas reserves may also provide a diversification opportunity for the EU as it could supply southern Europe through the EastMed Pipeline; delivering gas from Cyprus and Israel to Greece and Italy. Since the 2011 Aphrodite Gas Field discovery by US Noble Energy, Cyprus has attracted the attention of major energy giants and it has awarded offshore exploration rights to companies such as Italy's Eni, France's Total and US ExxonMobil. Another significant discovery, estimated at 5-8 trillion cubic feet, was made



in early 2019 by a Consortium of ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum. However, the search for gas around the island has repeatedly met with protests from Turkey, which claims part of Cyprus' EEZ due to its illegal occupation.

Turkey's Claims and Escalation

Turkey is the only state not recognising the Republic of Cyprus and it has repeatedly warned energy companies working with Nicosia to stop drilling around the island. In early 2018, Turkish warships blocked Eni's drillship from entering Cyprus' EEZ. Ankara claims that it needs to 'protect' Turkish Cypriots' rights and justifies it by the 2011 exploration license granted to the state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) by the self-proclaimed Turkish Cypriot government, which is recognised only by Turkey and has no legal authority over

the island or its natural resources. Following reports about ExxonMobil's successful exploration in January/February 2019, Turkey sought to actively secure a share of Cyprus' potential energy wealth and deployed a seismic research vessel, Barbaros, to Cyprus' EEZ. On 28 March, the TRNC 'government' sent a letter through Turkey's Permanent Representative to the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, claiming a 'right' to have a share in the hydrocarbon resources in Cyprus' EEZ, arguing it would lead to a cooperation mechanism and interdependence between the two divided parts of the island, using the sensitive Cyprus issue for economic gains. However, for Nicosia, this would mean ceding sovereignty over its offshore natural resources and legitimising the Turkish occupation. It agrees that the natural resources should be



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FROM PAGE 1



shared by the entire island but only after the resolution of the Cyprus issue. The situation escalated with the start of Fatih's drilling operations in Cyprus' western EEZ in early May and strong rhetoric from the Turkish authorities that earned them international condemnation. Speaking at NATO's North Atlantic Council Mediterranean Dialogue in Ankara in May, Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said that he expected NATO's support for Turkey in the dispute, adding that '[t]he legitimate rights of Turkey and the Northern Cypriot Turks over energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean are not open for argument.' While Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, affirmed on 9 May that Turkey 'will continue to take all kinds of necessary steps without hesitation' to get its way. Indeed, Ankara has tried to enforce its own interpretation of international law and decided to continue the escalation by sending the second Turkish drilling ship reaching Cyprus on 8 July.

The Timing of Turkey's Actions

Turkey has threatened — over exploration around Cyprus — in the past but moved into offensive-

mode only recently. Ankara's increased assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean stems from its fragile domestic political and economic situation. Turkey decided to reduce its dependence on energy imports to limit the negative impacts of the 2018 currency crisis on prices and new reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean would add an extra boost to its domestic initiatives. Moreover, the episode also provided an opportunity to divert attention away from the country's domestic political issues and to flex muscles. The results of the March 2019 local elections confirmed the decreasing support for the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in major cities. Nevertheless, the AKP maintained majority due to an alliance with the conservative Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which also contributed to the hardening of Turkey's stances towards the West. Bullying Cyprus is a common manifestation of a hardened position in Ankara.

International Responses and the Changing Alliances in the Region

The episode provoked international outcry in support of Nicosia. EU officials denounced Ankara's

actions as 'illegal' and urged it to stop or face appropriate measures from EU28, suggesting the possibility of targeted sanctions. Options were discussed by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) on 10 July. The same day, Council President, Donald Tusk, Tweeted that the body agreed and the EU will respond in full solidarity of its member state. However, the measures remain to be specified. Meanwhile, Turkey rejected the assertion that the drilling was illegal and countered that the EU was biased. It vowed to continue its activities in Cyprus' EEZ. The arrival of the second Turkish drillship reinforced the wave of solidarity with Nicosia—officials from Athens, Cairo, Paris, Moscow to Washington urged Turkey to cease drilling in Cyprus' EEZ. Washington, seeing that Turkey has become an unreliable partner that will soon face US sanctions over the purchase of Russian S-400 missile defence systems, began enhancing ties with others states in the region. A bipartisan bill — set to lift a 32-year-old arms embargo on Cyprus, while authorising military assistance to Cyprus and Greece and supporting their Eastern Mediterranean partnership with Israel — is waiting for US Congressional approval. EGIC will continue to follow the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean as Turkey has shown no intention of easing tensions in and around Cyprus. What happens in Turkey will have resounding affects across the Middle East and Europe and understanding the origins of crises is vital for their deescalation.

By NIKOLA ZUKALOVÁ

DYNAMICS

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A Month in the Gulf

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BAHRAIN

Monday, 5 August—The United Kingdom announced that the Royal Navy and the United States' Navy will form a maritime mission to jointly patrol to enhance the security of commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz following the seizure of tankers by Iran in the strategic shipping lane over the past month. The UK's decision stemmed from talks with the US and European partners during the Gulf Maritime Security Conference in Bahrain on 31 July, which was held to deal with the regional situation and the repeated attacks by Iran and the terrorist groups linked to it.

QATAR

Monday, 5 August—The Qatar-state owned Al Rayan Bank, based in the United Kingdom, provided financial services to several Islamist-linked British entities, whose accounts were closed due to security concerns; an investigative report by The Times revealed. The bank's customers involved, for example, a charity designated by the United States as a terrorist entity. The bank is reportedly 70% owned by the Masraf Al-Rayan, Qatar's second largest bank, which is partially controlled by the state, and some 30% by Qatar's sovereign wealth fund's investment arm.

KUWAIT

Monday, 26 August—Poland's Foreign Minister, Jacek Czaputowicz, held talks with Kuwait's Crown Prince, Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of the Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly, Marzouq Al-Ghanim, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The officials discussed boosting cooperation in various fields, notably trade, investments, military and tourism. The focus was also on some key issues, notably security in the Middle East, particularly Syria and Yemen, and on further efforts within the Warsaw Process framework.

SAUDI ARABIA

Tuesday, 20 August—Saudi Arabia began to implement the changes to end the travel restrictions for women over 21, who can now obtain passports and travel abroad without the permission of a male guardian. Saudi Arabia's General Directorate of Passports said that all Saudi citizens studying abroad no longer need guardian's permission for traveling, even if they are under than 21. Women can also newly register marriage, divorce or child birth, obtain official family documentation and be recognised as guardians of their minor children. The changes came in line with the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the country's economy away from oil and envisages ambitious social changes.

OMAN

Monday, 26 August—Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, received Russian Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and North Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Bogdanov. They exchanged views on issues of common concern and on the importance of enhancing cooperation on security and stability. Later, the Russian envoy and Oman's officials held bilateral political consultations to discuss cooperation in economic and cultural fields. Bogdanov also met separately with leaders of the National Salvation Council, the Houthi-self proclaimed 'government' in Yemen.

UAE

Thursday, 29 August—The UAE carried out precision air strikes in Yemen's Aden against terrorist militias to prevent attacks against the Coalition forces as terror cells have increased their activity over the past few weeks, taking advantage of the chaos in South Yemen, where the UAE-backed secessionist Southern Transitional Council (STC) has fought the Yemeni government forces. The airstrikes came in retaliation for an earlier attack on the Coalition forces at the Aden Airport by terrorist-affiliated armed groups. Meanwhile, Yemen's President accused the UAE of targeting government forces.



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ALLIANCE REAFFIRMED: A BRIEFING ON THE BAHRAIN-US RELATIONSHIP

On the margins of the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom meeting (18 July 2019) the United States' Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, received Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, to discuss a broad range bilateral relations and regional issues, including ways to develop and protect religious freedom, tolerance and respect. Secretary Pompeo recognised Bahrain's commitment to promoting peace and prosperity in the Middle East and reiterated a thank-you to Manama for hosting the Peace to Prosperity workshop—which aimed to build confidence between the main protagonists in the Palestine-Israel conflict. Discussions between Pompeo and Shaikh Khalid also focused on the bubbling tensions and heightened security risks generated by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)—in the region and beyond. This meeting is one in a long-string of cooperative measures between Washington and Manama.

Bahrain has, historically, played a key role in regional security; the US considers it as a core ally. This alliance was formalised in October 1991 with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement that granted the US forces access to Bahrain's military facilities and ensured the right to pre-position military materials for future crises. In 1993,



the US based the headquarters of its Fifth Fleet in Al Juffair, Bahrain. Manama was also the first Arab state to lead a coalition task force patrolling Arab Gulf waters and has lent its support to major counter-piracy operations. Furthermore, as a result of its contributions to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, Bahrain was officially classified (in 2002) by the US as a Major Non-NATO Ally. Finally, Bahrain is an active member in the coalition organized to combat terrorism, it participated in the Global Coalition against ISIS, and it has proven to be instrumental in helping the US, and its NATO allies, interdict terror finance. With tensions in the Arab Gulf escalating the US-Bahrain partnership is crucial to securing the Sea

Lines of Communication and insuring the uninterrupted freedom of navigation. Secretary Pompeo's meeting with Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa corresponds with Bahrain's intentions to host a global maritime security conference, as a follow up to the International Conference in Support of Security and Peace in the Middle East held in Warsaw in February 2019. The Bahrain-US relationship is dynamic and mutually supportive since both Washington and Manama share the same fundamental beliefs in preserving stability in the Arab Gulf and restraining those entrepreneurial powers, like Iran, from plunging the region into perpetual chaos.

By AHMAD SAS



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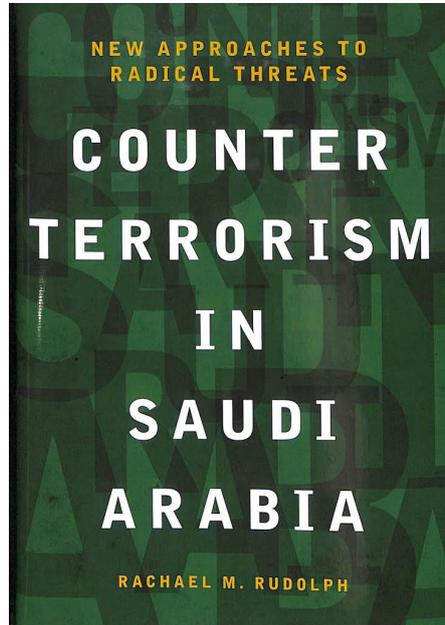
THE MONTHLY REVIEW

Counterterrorism in Saudi Arabia

New Approaches to Radical Threats

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With the resurgence of jihadi terrorism in its 2.0 form, Rachel M. Rudolph's work on Counterterrorism in Saudi Arabia provides readers with fresh insights into relevant counterterrorism strategies. The goal of this book is to raise awareness about Saudi Arabia's experiences with terrorism, and focuses on clashes with the Al-Qaeda network and, specifically, with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). As a result, Saudi Arabia has developed a counterterrorism and antiterrorism strategy based around 3 main pillars: Intelligence, Security and Public Diplomacy; Countering Terrorist Financing; Providing Psychological Security. The first pillar is built on the role of intelligence, security and public diplomacy and Rudolph traces it from the end of the 1990's until the first half of the 2010's. During this phase, Saudi Arabia adopted its strategy in intelligence gathering and analysis. Based on intelligence, security forces adopted a more proactive strategy, such as pre-emptive raids and tracking of potential terrorists. This chapter describes the legal reforms and the introduction of a special criminal court, tasked with judging terrorist cases. Through the use of public diplomacy, Saudi society, according to Rudolph, endorsed those changes and accepted the government's call for peace and stability. The second pillar is related to countering terrorist financing. Rudolph highlights the debate between analysts and academics about the importance of this element in any counterterrorist strategy. Nonetheless, the strategy revolves around targeting money laundering and increasing cooperation with financial institutions such as banks and the implementation of legislative reforms which would make the funding



more difficult or, ideally, impossible. The emphasis of the second pillar is on the long-term impacts, rather than short-term objectives. The final pillar is presented as psychological security. Its purpose is to combat the ideological and intellectual support for terrorism. It includes elements such as promoting a moderate interpretation of Islam through state-trained Imams, education, media campaigns and at some point religious debates between clerics, state officials and Muslim youth groups. Saudi Arabia also runs a deradicalisation and rehabilitation programme for convicts charged with jihadi-related crimes. The main institutional framework of the Saudi counterterrorism and antiterrorism model is in the hands of the Ministry of Interior, which is primarily responsible for the implementation of the strategy. At its conclusion, the book evaluates the success and limits of the strategy and it proposes continuing and deepening of counterterrorist cooperation as new groups, like the Islamic State, emerge. Rudolph does not only focus on the three pillars, but also provides

Rachel M. Rudolph is an assistant professor of Social Science for Bryant University-BIT Zhuhai Programs at the Beijing Institute of Technology Zhuhai in Guangdong, China and a member of the EGIC Steering Committee.

a historical background, which led to the development of this strategy. Rudolph describes the evolution of Al-Qaeda from its foundation – in the late 1980's as one of the products of the Soviet-Afghan war – throughout their operations in 1990's, the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent attacks in Europe. This background on Al-Qaeda is followed by a description of violence in Saudi Arabia in the 1990's, 2000-2002 and 2003-2006 waves committed by AQAP and other jihadi groups like the Tigers of the Gulf and Brigade of Faith. Rudolph also highlights the importance of the power of perception. Particularly the perception of Saudi Arabia in eyes of the United States before and after 9/11 since after the attacks on the World Trade Centre, the US public accusing the Kingdom of sponsoring terrorism. That misperception, of Saudi Arabia as a terrorism-sponsoring state undermines its counterterrorism efforts and can make international cooperation difficult. There are a few shortcomings to this work however, such as engaging in the dilemma of the limits of the strategy and the potential costs to civil society. This problem is shared by all those confronting violent terror groups and answers related to shortening balance are complex. Nonetheless, this book does provide a comprehensive insight into Saudi Arabia's counterterrorist strategy. This book comes highly recommended.

By ONDREJ NOVÁK

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A Special Project by
The Euro-Gulf Information Centre (EGIC)
Via Gregoriana 12, 00187, Rome
www.egic.info
info@egic.info

Edited by Arnold Koka
at The Euro-Gulf Information Centre
Printed at
Reggio Emilia Service di Antonio Fagioli

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Mitchell Belfer

Authors

Antonino Occhiuto
Nikola Zukalová
Ahmad Sas
Ondřej Novák
Mohamad Al Kawatli

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