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**THE RE-ORGANISATION OF INTERNAL AND  
EXTERNAL SECURITY**

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and the re-structuring of state power”  
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## THE RE-ORGANISATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY

by Paul Aarts

Today, in most GCC countries the paramount issue is security. Democratisation is much less on the agenda, the more so since external pressure has weakened and the US administration in particular seems to have given up its 'liberty doctrine'. These developments in the real world closely correspond to academic fashion which these days looks to be in transition, i.e. from crafting democratic theory to 'authoritarian theory'.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed high time to get rid of normative orientations in studying political processes and all the flaws that go with it.<sup>2</sup> Generally speaking, studying the security sector is obviously much less coloured by normative inclinations than the political and the political economy sector tend to be, so in that sense it is 'easier' to do.

**The Globalisation Factor: To What Extent?**

But, taking the 'Concept Paper for the Security Sector of the Research'<sup>3</sup> as a starting point for this specific contribution, I was struck by the fact that it is less easy than presumed. There are a few reasons for that. First, 'big words' like 'military globalisation' do not relate very much to the situation that contemporary Saudi Arabia is facing. I sincerely do not see how we can speak of a "Transformation in the security sector [that] includes a shift from traditional Clausewitzian interstate wars to postindustrial warfare and changes the way states organise their security apparatus, that is, from warfighting to crime fighting components and policing apparatus" (p. 1). To the best of my knowledge, the Saudi armed forces – though the largest in the Gulf region – have never been really military powerful, hence dependent on an outside (i.e. American) umbrella and, equally, they hardly have been able/willing to fight a "traditional Clausewitzian interstate war".<sup>4</sup> This is a constant factor, till this very day, notwithstanding changes in the 'special relationship' between the US and Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver Schlumberger, 'Arab Authoritarianism: Debating the Dynamics and Durability of Non-Democratic Regimes', first (draft) chapter in Schlumberger (ed.), *Debating Arab Authoritarianism*, Stanford University Press, 2007 (forthcoming), p. 22. Same perspective in the conveners' project proposal ('The dynamics of change in the Arab world: Globalisation and re-structuring of state power', pp. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Most of Schlumberger's recent work strongly emphasises this point. Actually he does so since his Winter 2000 article in *Democratization* ('The Arab Middle East and the Question of Democratization: Some Critical Remarks'), so two years before Thomas Carothers attracted attention with his 'The End of the Transition Paradigm' in the *Journal of Democracy*. An interesting recent addition to the debate comes from Benjamin Smith, 'Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960-1999', *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(2), April 2004, pp. 232-246.

<sup>3</sup> Authored by Karin Aggestam and Helena Lindholm Schulz.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1960s, during the civil war in Yemen there were no Saudi troops being sent by King Faysal. Saudi aid was confined to providing subsidies and weapons to the royalist forces. During the second Gulf War (in February 1991), a symbolic contingent of Saudi troops was sent into Kuwait.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Aarts, 'Events versus Trends: The Role of Energy and Security in Sustaining the US-Saudi Relationship', cf. Rachel Bronson, 'Understanding US-Saudi Relations', both in Paul Aarts & Gerd

Second, I would challenge the notion that Saudi Arabia *lacks* empirical (or positive) sovereignty as compared to judicial (or negative) sovereignty (p. 1 and p. 6), though it is true that (part of the) security apparatus (the National Guard in the first place) is mainly there to protect the regime from internal threats.<sup>6</sup> The legitimacy (or empirical-sovereignty question for that matter) is more complicated than often assumed.<sup>7</sup>

Third, as already referred to, there is less – and not “increasing” – Western pressure these days “to behave in accordance with normatively defined principles (e.g. democracy, adherence to human rights”, p. 2), though indeed the factors of “heavy foreign presence (such as in Iraq) and dependency in the form of arms trade, security cooperation, training, etc.” (p. 2) weigh considerably.

Fourth, and different in kind from the previous points, is the fact that there is lack of variation in written material on the subject. Apart from some of J.E. Peterson’s contributions, the field is almost ‘monopolised’ by Anthony Cordesman and his co-authors.<sup>8</sup> I was glad to visit the country recently and do some interviews on the subject, hopefully giving enough substance for a decent contribution to this workshop.

Taking these remarks into account, in particular the first one, I might argue [I am not sure about this] that there is much less a qualitative than a quantitative change in Saudi Arabia’s security policies. Though Saudi Arabia’s key aims in foreign policy always have been (1) domestic security and (2) external security, the way in which the second is pursued is to a large degree determined by the first.<sup>9</sup> For sure, there have been occasional external threats in the past (Yemen, Iraq) and in the present (Iran), and the regional environment has often been perceived as insecure, but the internal threat factor seems to be predominant. This becomes clear when having a look at the twelve-pages long “chronology of terrorism and counter terrorism” (starting in 1970 till early 2005) as documented by Cordesman and Obaid.<sup>10</sup> After the May 12, 2003 terrorist attack on several housing compounds in Riyadh it has become even more evident that the primary threat comes from internal Islamic extremists.

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Nonneman (eds.), *Saudi Arabia in the Balance. Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, Hurst, NYUP, 2005/2006, pp. 399-429, resp. 372-398. Also Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia, Power, Legitimacy and Survival*, Routledge 2006, pp. 143-170. Interestingly enough, Niblock presumes that “By the time the United States, in March 2003, launched its attacks on Iraq, therefore the close military coordination between the two sides *had come to an end*” (p. 167, emphasis added PA). Cf. Aarts, ‘Events versus Trends’, pp. 406-408.

<sup>6</sup> This touches on the question how ‘relative’ the notion of sovereignty can be.

<sup>7</sup> On that, see the useful remarks made by Niblock, *Power...*, pp.17.

<sup>8</sup> Cordesman’s books often read like “*The Military Balance on steroids*”, as John Peterson rightly remarks in his recent review essay ‘The Kingdom of Enigma’, *Survival*, vol. 48, no. 2, Summer 2006, p. 152. On the earlier period, see of course Nadav Safran’s *Saudi Arabia. The Ceaseless Quest for Security*, Cornell University Press, 1985/1988.

<sup>9</sup> Gerd Nonneman, ‘Determinants and Patterns of Saudi Foreign Policy’, in Aarts/Nonneman, *Saudi Arabia...*, pp. 315-351.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, *Saudi Counter Terrorism Efforts: The Changing Paramilitary and Domestic Security Apparatus*, CSIS, 2 February 2005, working draft, pp. 9-20.

### Interplay between State and Regime (In)security

It is a truism that there is an “intimate nexus between state state and the armed forces” in Middle East politics (p. 5 of the concept paper). More interesting is the question (1) how this nexus looks like in the case of Saudi Arabia and, more importantly, where it might be different from most of the other Middle Eastern states; and (2) whether there are any indications of qualitative and/or quantitative changes in this relationship.

On the first point, the ‘classical’ picture of politicised national armies – ‘symbol of institution building’, ‘modernising institution’, etc. – does not fully apply to the Saudi case.<sup>11</sup> The Saudi military’s role in politics has not moved from ‘revolutionary plot to authoritarian state’<sup>12</sup>, simply because of the fact that it never functioned as a revolutionary actor.<sup>13</sup> In most Arab states in the Gulf region control over the military is asserted by rulers through their families and tribes with which they are allied. The House of Saud has developed this method of familial/tribal control most fully. Hundreds of princes are in the Saudi army, navy, and air force. This does not mean that civil-military relations have always been cordial as wished by the ruling strata within the Al Saud. That is why the National Guard has been set up, separate from and as a counterweight to the regular armed forces. So what we have here is a ‘military-tribal complex’ *par excellence* and fully conforms to the much-discussed notion of patrimonialism (versus institutionalisation).<sup>14</sup>

On the second point, what does apply is the notion that, in recent years, the security sector has been re-strengthened vis-à-vis other spheres of society (as is noted on p. 5 of the concept paper). Strikingly, it took quite a while before the Saudi authorities realised the seriousness of the threats to internal security. The reaction against direct and indirect attacks by Islamic extremists were relatively limited until the events of September 11,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As Waterbury remarked, in many Arab states “...praetorians have dominated the political scene to a degree and with a technological impregnability that ‘tin-pot’ African dictators or Latin American caudillos could seldom boast.” See John Waterbury, ‘Democracy without Democrats?: The Potential for Political Liberalization in the Middle East’, in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, IB Tauris, 1994, p. 26. In the Saudi case, we have a special variety of a ‘mission-oriented state’, not focused on anti-imperialism, liberation or socialism, but on ‘Islamic justice’. That is also why the Saudi monarchs, at least since King Fahd, preferably label themselves as ‘Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques’.

<sup>12</sup> This refers to Elisabeth Picard’s ‘Arab Military in Politics: from Revolutionary Plot to Authoritarian State’, in Adeer Dawisha & I. Willam Zartman (eds.), *Beyond Coercion. The Durability of the Arab State*, Istituto Affari Internazionali/Croom Helm, 1988, pp. 116-146.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that there have been some attempted coups in the past decades. See Nazih Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State. Politics and Society in the Middle East*, IB Tauris, 1995, p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> As Ghassan Salamé once aptly remarked, “In short, no ministerial post related to national security is outside the hands of the sons of Ibn Saud, and it has always been this way.” Salamé, ‘Political Power and the Saudi State,’ *Merip Reports* 91 (October 1980), pp. 9-10. The concept paper also aptly speaks of “family affairs” (p. 8). More in general, see Eva Bellin, ‘Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders’, in Marsha Pripstein Posusney & Michele Penner Angrist (eds.), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East. Regimes and Resistance*, Lynne Rienner, 2005, pp. 21-41.

<sup>15</sup> For a catalogue of “failures to see the problems”, see Cordesman & Obaid, *Saudi Counter Terrorism...*, pp. 3-5.

And even then some Saudi officials reacted by going into a state of denial.<sup>16</sup> It was in May 2003 that Saudi Arabia experienced its 'own 9/11' when terrorism truly came home, this time on a different scale and in a different global atmosphere than in the decades before.<sup>17</sup>

### Developments in the Security Sector

Saudi security forces comprise a mix of regular military forces (divided into four major branches: the army, the navy, the air force and the air defense force), a separate National Guard, and various internal security and intelligence services. There is full civilian control over the security apparatus, be it through family and tribal bonds. Prins Sultan, Minister of Defense and Aviation (since 1962), is the actual decision-maker on everything related to the regular armed forces, while King Abdullah controls the National Guard (since 1963). Most of intelligence and internal security services are overseen by Prince Nayef, Minister of Interior (since 1975). He is bossing a wide range of institutes, more than anyone else.<sup>18</sup> Finally, there is a specific number of intelligence services, each controlled by one of the leading princes and the king himself: the Military Intelligence by Prince Sultan; the National Guard Intelligence Directorate by King Abdullah; and the General Security Service (GSS) or 'Mahabith' (the domestic intelligence service) by Prins Nayef. To top it all off, there is the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP), controlled by Prince Turki al-Faisal until he was replaced by Prince Nawaf bin Abd al-Aziz on September 1, 2001. It focuses on external affairs.

As the role of the regular armed forces is rather marginal in counter-terrorism activities, we will concentrate in the following on the intelligence and security services.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the Ministry of Defense's GSS – controlled by Prince Nayef himself and seconded by Prince Ahmed bin Abd al-Aziz and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef – has gained importance and strength to the detriment of the General Intelligence Presidency, which was much more successful in dealing with both internal and external threats in the period up to 2001. Since the departure of Prince Turki al-Faisal, the GIP

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<sup>16</sup> Here again, Cordesman & Obaid provide a list of intelligence and security shortcomings. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8. Both an interesting and controversial explanation for this rather lacklustre attitude is given by Thomas Hegghammer: "The failure of the Saudi authorities to detect and prevent the rise of QAP [al-Qa'ida on the Arabian Peninsula] in 2002 had much to do with the fact that Saudi Arabia lacked the culture of confrontational policing required to confront and preempt terrorist threats. [...] One might argue that in its modern form, the Saudi state has relied more on religious conservatism than physical power for social and political control"; see Hegghammer, 'Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Policy*, vol. XIII, no. 4, Winter 2006, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> An excellent survey of terrorist violence (and regime strategies trying to cope with it) is provided by Roel Meijer, 'The "Cycle of Contention" and the Limits of Terrorism in Saudi Arabia', in Aarts & Nonneman, *Saudi Arabia...*, pp. 271-311.

<sup>18</sup> See Figure 2, 'The Saudi Intelligence and Security Community', in Cordesman & Obaid, *Saudi Counter Terrorism Efforts*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> For a recent, critical appraisal of the regular armed forces, see Anthony H. Cordesman & Khalid R. Al-Rodhan, *The Gulf Military Forces in a Era of Asymmetric War. Saudi Arabia*, CSIS, 28 June 2006, working draft, pp. 19-64. [I have to look for figures which illustrate the – possible – shift in budget allocations from regular to intelligence forces after May 2003].

has played an almost negligible role in the global war on terrorism, and the GSS has increasingly come to the fore.<sup>20</sup>

### On the Asymmetrical Front

Almost 150 Saudi nationals and foreign residents and 120 militants have been killed since the May 12, 2003, attack in Riyadh.<sup>21</sup> Between this event and December 29, 2004, a series of violent clashes took place but since then it has remained relatively quiet. Some pundits, and Saudi officials in the first place, like to see the lull in insurgent activity as evidence that the government has a firm handle on matters.<sup>22</sup> Others think that the relative peace may not last and even see the quiet as the calm before the storm.<sup>23</sup> The latter designated the attempted attack on the Abqaiq oil facilities in the Eastern Province in February 2006 – the first major terrorist assault in the Kingdom since December 2004 – as a significant turning point. (So far they have been proven wrong).

It goes without saying that developments in Iraq – positive or negative – will have an influence on Saudi Arabia's security situation. At the moment of writing, it looks extremely unlikely that things will turn favourably in Iraq, but even if that would happen Saudi Arabia would be adversely affected (apart from obvious beneficial outcomes). Most probably it would mean that jihadis – Saudis and others – would leave Iraqi territory and look for safe havens elsewhere in the region, Saudi Arabia included. In the negative case, and this is what is generally expected, this 'jihadi effect' would be multiplied. In the worst-case scenario (a disintegration of Iraq into mini-states, the Americans being pushed out), the jihadis would claim victory, feel emboldened ('after Afghanistan now Iraq!') and turn their eyes and energy to the US supported monarchies and emirates in the Gulf region.

In the concrete case of Saudi Arabia, this latter scenario (not highly improbable) might have damaging spill-over effects.<sup>24</sup> Though nobody knows exactly how many foreign fighters, including from Saudi Arabia, are now in Iraq – and the guestimates vary widely – all countries in the region hold their breath for things to come. Their is a

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<sup>20</sup> Cordesman & Obaid, *Saudi Counter Terrorism Effort*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>21</sup> Cordesman & Al-Rodhan, *The Gulf Military Forces...*, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> Cordesman and Obaid certainly belong to the category of these 'optimists', though they remain surprisingly critical vis-à-vis the regime, pushing for a reform agenda: "It cannot be stressed too firmly that Saudi security is best preserved by broad progress and reform, and not by reforming the Saudi military or intelligence services. [...] True internal security is based upon popular support", Anthony H. Cordesman & Nawaf Obaid, *Saudi Military Forces and Development: Changes & Reforms*, CSIS, working draft, 30 May 2004, p. 36; and Cordesman, 'Saudi Arabia and the Struggle Against Terrorism', 11 April 2005, <https://www1.columbia.edu/sec/bboard/gulf2000/gulf2000-9/msg03694.html>. The optimist view was also expressed in several interviews I had in Riyadh, in particular with Abd al-Aziz al-Fahad (15 December 2006): "Jihadism is manageable".

<sup>23</sup> Shades of opinion here, varying from cautious pessimism (like *The Economist*, 19 October 2006; and Richard Russell, 'Insurgency in Waiting', *Foreign Policy*, November 2005) to outright warnings that the worst still has to come (like Michael Scheuer, Stephen Ulph and John C.K. Daly, 'Saudi Arabian Oil Facilities: The Achilles Heel of the Western Economy', The Jamestown Foundation, May 2006). Some of the interviews in Riyadh and Jeddah (December 2006) confirm the pessimist view.

<sup>24</sup> Though it should be stressed that opinions differ on that. Some interviewees clearly are more confident that Saudi intelligence and security forces can handle an increase of terrorism within its borders.

deep concern about the ‘home coming’ of these volunteers, well-trained and battle-hardened.<sup>25</sup> As Thomas Hegghammer recently commented: “...The Iraq experience has changed the jihadist’s notion of the enemy and placed the Gulf countries and Europe [*sic*] more clearly in the spotlight.”<sup>26</sup> Some Saudi reformist hold the rather rosy view that this kind of worst-case scenario might be a blessing in disguise: the regime feels threatened by the home-coming jihadis and only by installing serious political reform can they be isolated from the masses. Others label this view as wrong or flatly naive.<sup>27</sup>

For some, special concern goes out to the possibility that Saudi Sunni jihadists, when returning to their home country, will take the sectarian conflict into Saudi Arabia and start targeting the Shi‘a enemy on a new battlefield. According to some observers, there is an increased support for the anti-Shi‘a and anti-occupation violence in Iraq, as many Saudis see the US forces and the Shi‘a ascendancy as one and the same.<sup>28</sup> As a sign of the growing fear among Shi‘ites in the Eastern Province, some have already started taking security measures. In some al-Ahsa village mosques have set up cement barricades in front of their entrances to prevent cars carrying bombs to make fatal attacks on the mosques when people gather for prayer.<sup>29</sup>

Since the escalation of violence in Iraq in early 2006, there have been reports about Saudis going “to kill Shi‘as”.<sup>30</sup> There is no consensus on the question of ‘official’ support being given to Sunni brethren in Iraq – or the prospect of that if the sectarian conflict in Iraq deepens and Sunnis run the risk of being killed in huge numbers. Some would favour this kind of support, others abhor the possibility of “falling into the trap of sectarianism”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Much is written on that subject, sometimes not more than informed speculation. See Nawaf E. Obaid, *Fragmented Iraq: Implications for Saudi National Security*, Saudi National Security Assessment Project, 15 March 2006; International Crisis Group, *The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia*, Middle East Report no. 45, 19 September 2005; John R. Bradley, ‘Al Qaeda and the House of Saud: Eternal Enemies or Secret Bedfellows?’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 28:4, Autumn 2005, pp. 139-152; Daniel Byman & Kenneth Pollack, ‘Explosive Affinities. Cross-Border Consequences of Civil Strife’, *Number Thirteen*, Fall 2006, pp. 26-29; The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Iraq: The Regional Fallout*, Middle East Programme, Briefing Paper no. 2, February 2003; Chatham House, *Iraq in Transition: Vortex or Catalyst?*, Middle East Programme, Briefing Paper 04/02; Cordesman & Al-Rodhan, *The Gulf Military...*, pp. 91-99; James A. Russell, ‘Saudi Arabia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A New Security Dilemma’, *Middle East Policy*, vol. XII, no. 3, Fall 2005; Russell, ‘Insurgency...’; International Crisis Group, *After Baker-Hamilton: What to do in Iraq?*, Middle East Report no. 60, 19 December 2006, pp. 26-29; Toby Jones, ‘The Iraq Effect in Saudi Arabia’, *Middle East Report 237*, Winter 2005, pp. 20-25.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, ‘Global Jihadism After the Iraq War’, *The Middle East Journal*, Winter 2006, vol. 60, no. 1, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with reformists Matruq al-Faleh, Abdullah al-Hamid, and Khaled al-Dakhil. The more ‘realist’ view was given by Awadh al-Badi, Mohsen al-Awaji, Abd al-Aziz al-Fahad, Muhammad Salahuddin, and Eissam Basrawi (interviews in Riyadh and Jeddah, December 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Jones, ‘The Iraq Effect...’.

<sup>29</sup> Private conversation (in Riyadh, December 2006) with a researcher on the Saudi Ja‘fari Shi‘ites, who conducted several interviews in the Eastern Province.

<sup>30</sup> ICG, *The Shiite Question...*, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews in Riyadh and Jeddah (December 2006). Strikingly enough, some of the interviewees with a (Sunni) Islamist background would strongly disagree with lending official support, while some more secular-oriented interlocutors tended to take the opposite position.

## The External Front

Relations with Yemen, one of Saudi Arabia's southern neighbours, have in the past been worse than they are these days. The Yemeni threat – as perceived from Riyadh – seems to have changed from the possible use of direct military force to terrorist infiltration along the porous border.<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that Yemen suffers intermittent upheaval, acting as a reservoir and refuge for radical Islamist opponents of both regimes.

Iran, on the other hand, is considered to be Saudi Arabia's only significant external threat. There are less worries now than there have been about Tehran's 'long arm' among the Shi'ites in the Eastern Province and tensions seem to have diminished (though this may change if one of the above-sketches turns into reality). Obviously, most worries are reserved for Iran's nuclear program. The basic questions are summed up by Cordesman and Obaid: "...The country can a) live with a nuclear Iran by doing nothing; b) build an anti-missile defense system; or c) acquire its own nuclear weapons.<sup>33</sup> None of these choices is easy, but given that Iraq, as a military power, is gone for at least the next 10-15 years, with the US occupation, the only viable rival to Iran is Saudi Arabia. Doing nothing is not an option. [...] Although very unlikely, Iran could use its nuclear weapons to blackmail the Kingdom over its Shi'ite population, over its support of Bahrain, or over its control over the holy places, Mecca and Medina. Conventional weapons by themselves are not the answer. The question, however, remains, will the Saudis trust that the US will be there for their protection? Is this enough to deter Iran from blackmailing the Kingdom? Do they have to look somewhere else for their protection?<sup>34</sup> Do they try to acquire their own deterrence?"<sup>35</sup>

Saudi worries about Iran's nuclear ambitions are widespread and are not limited to government circles. This was clearly exemplified during interviews in Riyadh with scholars and political activists. Most recently, it was shown during the annual conference of the Gulf Research Center,<sup>36</sup> where some Arab scholars (from the Gulf region) held a diatribe against the Islamic Republic of Iran. What also was noticed during this gathering – not for the first time – was the much-discussed lack of any effective military and security coordination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Although the GCC has made some advances in military and security cooperation, it remains largely a hollow shell. Despite an apparent unity, GCC members have developed different, at times contradictory, defense doctrines. Taking a look at the wider Middle East region, one might even descry an emerging new regional security structure which seems to be managed almost totally by non-Arab regional hegemonies: Iran, Turkey, Israel, and a toned-down or over-the-horizon US. "Any Arabs who play a role will mainly be surrogates, subcontracted militias, or outsourced intelligence

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<sup>32</sup> More on this, see Nicole Stracke, 'Counter Terrorism and Weapon Smuggling: Success and Failure of Yemeni-Saudi Collaboration', *Security & Terrorism. Regional Security in the Gulf*, no. 4, November 2006, pp. 8-14.

<sup>33</sup> On the nuclear option, see Russell, 'Saudi Arabia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...'.

<sup>34</sup> More on this in Paul Aarts & Machteld van Rijsingen, 'Beijing's Rising Star in the Gulf Region. The Near and the Distant Future', paper for the Eighth Mediterranean Research Meeting of the European University Institute, Florence, Italy (21-25 March 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Cordesman & Obaid, *Saudi Counter Terrorism...*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>36</sup> 'Consequences of US Policy for the Gulf Region' (Dubai, 11-12 January 2007).



agencies to these front-line powers. Arab military systems that cost hundreds of millions of dollars to build will be relegated to being little more than local gendarmeries.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that some Saudi (and other Gulf states') officials see efforts to expand the role of NATO in the Gulf region as a way of "...both reducing de facto Saudi dependence on the US, and of using NATO as a more politically acceptable cover for Saudi military ties to the US... [At the same time] however, [the Saudis] are all too aware of the real political limits on European power projection capabilities, and as to the limits of the power projection forces NATO and the EU are trying to build."<sup>38</sup> So, again, don't expect anything from NATO.

Probably not all (sub)-themes that were paid attention to in both Guazzone/Pioppi and Aggestam/Lindholm Schulz have been treated sufficiently in the above exposé. Some may even not have been treated at all, such as the notion of an expanding 'economic wing' of the military. In this particular case, there is a good reason for that omission [though I must admit that my knowledge on this particular aspect is still weak]: Saudi Arabia has been extremely slow in developing its indigenous defense industry and there is nothing like a 'military-industrial complex'.<sup>39</sup>

More themes may be absent (or underrated). Comments are welcome.

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<sup>37</sup> Rami G. Khoury, 'The Arab States Drift into Irrelevance', *The Daily Star*, 6 January 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Cordesman & Obaid, *Saudi Military Forces...*, p. 1. Also see Amir Taheri's devastating critique, 'NATO Has Little to Offer the GCC States', *Arab News*, 16 December 2006.

<sup>39</sup> The only analysis I have seen is Yezid Sayegh's 'Arab Military Industrialization: Security Incentives and Economic Impact', in: Bahgat Korany *et al.* (eds.), *The Many Faces of National Security in the Arab World*, Macmillan, 1993, pp. 214-238.