

## ***Armed Forces of the Persian Gulf Countries***

*Qasem Ranjbar*

*Ph.D. Student, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran*

### ***Abstract***

*The armed forces and the army are main elements of national power. Military readiness gives real significance to the geography, natural resources, and industrial power. Military elements of national power include military purposes, military doctrines, military strategies and policies (defensive and non-defensive), forces, training, command, military technology, weapons and equipment, military organization, military budget, military stations, troop movements, and logistics facilities. Nevertheless, understanding the various elements of national power, especially military aspect, helps the analysis and evaluation of its use. The main question outlined here is as follows: How are armed forces in Persian Gulf countries? To respond the question, we investigated regional armed forces based on organizational structure, HR, strategic equipment, training, command, strategy, and budget.*

***Keywords:*** *Armed Forces, National Power, Defense Power, Persian Gulf.*

### ***Introduction***

*Nations in the history of humanity have had different reasons for military forces. The definition of these needs forms the basis of organization, equipment and the use of facilities. These definitions show the function of military force during the peacetime and wartime. All militaries, whether large or small, are organizations that must perform certain functions and take specific roles to qualify for being selected. The first forms of army emerged in the early farming*

communities where they were involved in conflicts with their surrounding communities. All empires of the ancient era had certain military organizations. In that period, the army was dependent on the landed aristocracy. In the Middle Ages in Europe, local governments formed small and dispersed armies. In the medieval time, princes used to give lands instead of cash to their troops. Landed aristocracy also had military roots in Europe. Military nobility was the main force defending the cities in the Middle Ages. In the late Middle Ages with the emergence of despotic states, kings began to attract the city's business and urban classes and weaken the military aristocracy. The manufacture of new weapons from 1550 to 1650 helped the formation of new armies in royal despotic states. Standardization of uniforms and equipment, hierarchy, grade appointments, and special insignia emerged in that era. Royal Prussian Army was the most modern army in the 18th century by Frederick II on the basis of completely new principles. In Prussia, army was described as a "school of the whole nation". In France, the Army was developed by the legislation of conscription in 1793. The National Army was coined by Lazare Carnot during the French Revolution. Conscription reinforced the relationship between the army and the nation. However, the new National Army was the combination of a professional army and conscription. All European governments called for national compulsory military service. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, non-European countries began to form national armies and conscription. In the Islamic civilization, civilian and military power has historically been intertwined. The usual way to form a government in this civilization was conquering new lands through the use of military (Azghandi, 1995: 263). Armed forces and armies are considered as the main elements of national power. Military readiness gives real significance to the geography, natural resources and industrial power (Morgenthau, 2005: 215). Preparedness and military power is a multi-faceted topic. It means the armed forces preparedness to defend national interests and national security. Since military power is more intuitive, practical and prominent than the other dimensions of power, it is of great importance. It means that it plays a key role in national security, especially external security and dealing with foreign threats. Military power plays a more obvious role in sensitive time and locations such as crisis, war, and riots and takes the service of other aspects of the power. Military elements of national power include military purposes, military doctrines, military strategies and policies (defensive and non-defensive), forces, training, command, military technology, weapons and equipment, military organization,

*military budget, military stations, troop movements, and logistics facilities. Military elements of national power are divided into five major categories as follows:*

- *Purposes, doctrines, policies and military strategies*
- *Military organization*
- *HR*
- *Military technology*
- *Weapons and equipment*

*Understanding the various elements of national power, especially military aspect helps the analysis and evaluation of its use. The main question outlined here is as follows: How is the condition of armed forces in Persian Gulf Countries? To respond the question, we investigated regional armed forces based on organizational structure, HR, strategic equipment, training, command, strategy, and budget.*

### ***Role of Army and Armed Forces in Political Systems of Persian Gulf Countries***

*Military intervention as one of organized social groups has always been an important topic in political sociology. Military intervention in politics is a global phenomenon seen in different countries in various forms and degrees. The involvement and influence of the military in politics varies based on the extent of consolidation of democracy in society. In some countries, military intervenes in politics directly through coup. However, civilian militarism indirectly influences the politics by overcoming military culture on society through the influence of politicians or indirect support of the political process. Military intervention in politics can be rooted in economic benefits and political decisions, resulting in maintaining the hegemony in power behind the scenes. Ideological and religious motivations and national interest defense are also responsible for the military intervention in politics in non-democratic countries. Military intervention in politics is mainly against democracy. Armed forces have always ruled by dictatorship. According to Huntington, the peak of martial law dates back to the second wave of democracy which began in the late 1960s. Military personnel in the second wave of democracy played a key role in the overthrow of authoritarian regime and parliamentary government.*

*United armed forces as an institution independent of the government are a sign of the growing military power in Third World countries. As a result, governmental supervision becomes difficult (Musavi, Mirtayeb, 2004: 197).*

*It must be acknowledged that most of the research and studies on military organizations and the political importance and role of military personnel in developing countries belong to the American sociologists. These studies have theoretically focused on intellectual form of modernization theory, which has dominated the social science institutes. Here, military personnel are evaluated as the supporters of modernization. Their ideology of nationalism is promoted as a political transformation of society (Azghandi, 1995: 75).*

*In Third World countries, especially in the Persian Gulf region, armed forces entered the political arena, while military personnel had returned to their barracks in most developed countries. Military intervention politics in Persian Gulf region is not in line with modernization. Armed forces in the Persian Gulf are barriers to reforms and democratic development and suppress modern and democratic forces as well as the middle class, political and cultural activists, university students, women, and workers. Armed forces are standing in the gap between tradition and modernity in favor of traditional forces, in the gap between the religious despotism and democracy in favor of religious despotism, and in the social class gap in favor of political-economic interest and security-security bourgeoisie.*

*In summary, the roles of armed forces in the Persian Gulf countries are classified as follows:*

- *Suppression of the opposition parties*
- *Commanding economics, politics, culture*
- *Military's role in creating a stable political system*
- *Military's role in the overthrow of the political system*
- *Establishing country's security and territory*
- *Supporting country's domestic and foreign policy*

### ***Army in Constitutions of Persian Gulf Countries***

*Here, we aimed to investigate the position of army and armed forces in the constitutions of Persian Gulf countries. Investigations showed that safeguarding the independence and*

*territorial integrity, membership of commanders in Supreme National Security Council (Supreme Defense Council), banned entry to political activities, and appointment of commanders by leader, Emir and King are similar in countries under consideration. Iranian Armed Forces are distinguished from other regional armed forces by three factors: A ban on the transfer of military bases to foreign countries foreign national recruitment ban in armed forces, and Islamic and supreme theological mandate.*

### ***Armed Forces in Persian Gulf Countries***

*As stated in introduction, armed forces were investigated in Persian Gulf countries through effective variables including organizational structure, HR, strategic equipment, training system, command, strategy, and annual budget.*

#### ***1- Variables***

##### ***1.1 Organizational Structure***

*Nations in the history of humanity have had different reasons for military forces. The definition of these needs forms the basis of organization, equipment and the use of facilities. These definitions show the function of military force during peacetime and wartime. All militaries, whether large or small, are military organizations that must perform certain functions and take specific roles to qualify for being selected (Military Encyclopedia, 2005: 28).*

##### ***1.2 HR***

*Personnel are required for military tasks including soldiers, sailors, airmen or marines. They are capable of conducting specialized military operation (ibid, 30).*

### **1.3 Command**

*The first military mission is to provide military command. A military commander is responsible for interpreting military tasks and missions and stating them through understandable terms for subordinates. This is generally called order. Military command allows the military organization, which is as big as a military region and as small as a group, to become efficient by delegating the power to organizational structures (ibid, 25).*

### **1.4 Budget and Fund**

*Budget and funds are allocated for the maintenance of military equipment and armed forces personnel salaries. Fund allocation process and annual military budget are determined by a military finance organization within the political system. Military procurement organizations are responsible for purchasing and signing contract for goods and services in peacetime from certain organizations and local areas during wartime (ibid, 35).*

### **1.5 Military Strategy**

*Military strategy is commander in chief management of the forces involved in war and military campaigns using national and allied military forces or elements of the Army, Navy and Air Force such as armies, fleets and numbers of aircraft. Military strategy is mainly associated with the war support design rather than the management of forces involved in wars. The scope of military strategy can be limited to few weeks; however, it can last for months or even years.*

## **2. Armed Forces in Persian Gulf**

### **2.1 Saudi Arabia**

*Saudi Arabian Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, Navy and Royal Guard. According to the report by the Global Institute in 2016, Saudi Arabian Army has 235 thousand ready troops ([www.global.org](http://www.global.org)). Saudi Arabian Army has 1210 tanks, 432 cannons, 6 thousand armor units,*

322 missiles, 245 aircraft, 221 transport planes, 204 helicopters, 22 attack helicopters, 40 frigates and corvettes (Iranian Armed Forces News Bulletin, 2016). Training system of Saudi Arabian armed forces follows the western and American one. Military training is held both in Saudi Arabia and the USA and allied countries in Europe. Commander-in-Chief of the Saudi Arabian Armed Forces is the king who appoints four commanders among the military personnel of the House of Saud. Saudi Arabian defense policy is based on defensive deterrence. Saudi Arabia buys the latest and up to date weapons and military equipment, preferably from America and Europe to increase its defense power. The most important war strategy is based on airborne war and air superiority over traditional regional rivals. Annual military budget of Saudi Arabia is believed to be 57 billion dollars, which is among the highest military budget in the world.

## **2.2 Iraq**

Iraqi Armed Forces comprise Army and Air Force. According to the report by the Global Institute in 2016, Iraq has 272 thousand military forces. 302 thousand police officers also work for the Iraqi military system ([www.global.org](http://www.global.org)). Iraqi Army has 336 tanks and 100 helicopters (Iranian Armed Forces News Bulletin, 2016). Training system of Iraqi Armed Forces used to follow the Eastern system before Saddam Hussein; however, American training system has been used after Saddam Hussein and the American presence in Iraq. Saddam Hussein used to be the Commander-in-Chief of Iraqi Armed Forces; however, he is selected by the president. Army and Air Force commanders in chief follow the Commander-in-Chief of Iraqi Armed Forces. According to the Iraqi Constitution, Iraqi Defense Policy is based on defensive deterrence. Annual military budget of Iraq is believed to be 17 billion dollars.

## **2.3 Kuwait**

Kuwaiti Armed Forces are under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense, comprising Army, Air Force, and Navy. According to the report by the Global Institute in 2016, Kuwait Army has over 60 thousand military personnel. Kuwaiti Army has Abrams and M-84 tanks, British

*Warrior APCs, Russian BMP APCs, rocket launcher systems, and TOW missile systems. Kuwaiti Air Force has F-18 combat jets, Hawk training jet, Apache Helicopter, and patriot system. Kuwaiti Navy has no destroyer or warships; however, it has over 100 corvette-like small ships. Kuwaiti military training is American. Commander-in-Chief of Kuwaiti Armed Forces is Emir and commanders are appointed by him. Kuwaiti defense policy is defensive and invasive approach is not included in the policy. Securing against threats is followed through the alliance with the USA. Annual military budget of Kuwait is believed to be 7 billion dollars (Iranian Armed Forces News Bulletin, 2016).*

## **2.4 Qatar**

*Qatari Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, and Navy. Ruling Emir of Qatar is the Commander-in-Chief of Qatari Armed Forces. At the moment, Qatar Army has almost 15 thousand military personnel, of which 10 thousand are in the Army and the rest are in Air Force and Navy. Qatar has provided three military bases to the USA namely Al Udeid Air Base, Doha Base, and Al-Sailiya Air Base where there are over 4000 US troops and 100 different types of American fighter aircrafts. Qatar has also signed an 11 billion-dollar contract with the USA in 2014 to buy the patriot defense system and Apache attack helicopters (Annual Report of the Stockholm Peace Institute, 2015). Military training in Qatar is based on the American and French system. Emir is the Commander-in-Chief and appoints the commanders of Army, Air Force, and Navy. Qatari defense policy is defensive and invasive approach is not included in the policy. Securing against threats is followed through the alliance with the USA and France. Annual military budget of Qatar is believed to be over 10 billion dollars (Iranian Armed Forces News Bulletin, 2016).*

## **2.5 Bahrain**

*Bahraini Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, and Navy. The king is Commander-in-Chief. At the moment, the Army has nearly 12 thousand military personnel, of which 9 thousand are in the Army and the rest are in the Air Force and Navy. Bahrain has a weak military power due to limitations in terms of territory and population. However, United States Fifth Fleet is established in Bahrain and provides security. Bahraini military training is based on American system. Emir of Bahrain is the Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces and the commanders of the Army, Air Force, and Navy are appointed by him. Bahraini defense policy is defensive and invasive approach is not included in the policy. Securing against threats is followed through the alliance with the USA. Annual military budget of Bahrain is believed to be 5 billion dollars (ibid, 2016).*

## **2.6 United Arab Emirates**

*UAE Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, and Navy. At the moment, the Army has nearly 70 thousand military personnel, of which 60 thousand are in the Army and the rest are in the Air Force and Navy. UAE has different types of F-16 and F-18 Fighting Falcon, Eurofighter, Tornado, Patriot missiles, Abrams tanks and American armored cars. UAE Armed Forces also have different types of frigates and corvettes. UAE military training follows the American system. UAE Emir is the Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces. Commanders of the Army, Air Force, and Navy are appointed by him after the proposal by the Secretary of Defense. Offensive operation is the UAE defense policy and it is followed through the alliance with the USA. Annual military budget of UAE is believed to be over 25 billion dollars (ibid, 2016).*

## **2.7 Oman**

*Omani Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, and Navy. At the moment, the Army has nearly 50 thousand military personnel, of which most of them are in the Army. Omani Armed Forces have different types of Eurofighter, Tornado, Patriot missiles, Abrams tanks and American armored cars. Military training follows the British training. By early 1990, British officers used to command the Army, Air Force, Navy, and important military positions in the Armed Forces*

and the Ministry of Defense. Then, Pakistani officers took the positions. Recently, Omani commanders have taken the responsibility. Oman Emir is not the Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces. The commanders of the Army, Air Force, and Navy are proposed by the Minister of Defense and appointed by the Emir. Oman follows a deterrence and defense policy and increased military communications with neighboring countries especially Iran. Oman's policy is to avoid tension and interference in internal affairs of countries. Annual military budget of Oman is believed to be over 25 billion dollars (ibid, 2016).

## **2.8 Islamic Republic of Iran**

Iranian Armed Forces consist of two parts: Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. In addition to the common Army in the world, Iranian Armed Forces has Mobilization Resistance Force, Islamic Republic of Iran Air Defense Force, and Quds Force<sup>1</sup>. Note that Law Enforcement Force is not included in the Iranian Armed Forces. Iran has the highest number of military HR by over 600 thousand personnel. Due to continuous and successive sanctions by the USA, Iranian Armed Forces has managed to increase its defense power by modernizing the equipment. HESA Saeqeh<sup>2</sup>, Sukhoi Su-24<sup>3</sup>, MiG-29<sup>4</sup>, F-14, Shahab-1, 2, and 3 missiles, Jamaran Iranian frigate, and Qadir submarines are some of the most important military equipment (ibid, 2016). Prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, military training used to follow the American system. When US military attaches left Iran, committed army personnel began training the personnel in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Now, training is done in Iran. Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist is the Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces. Highly-ranked commanders of the Armed Forces in the Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are appointed by him (Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, 2007: 25). Iranian defense policy is deterrence followed by the manufacture of new equipment and weapons, different exercises, missile defense improvement, and defensive capabilities ranging from operating and non-operating. Annual military budget of Iran is believed to be over 1.5 billion dollars.

---

<sup>1</sup> Quds Force is a special forces unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards responsible for their extraterritorial operations.

<sup>2</sup> The HESA Saeqeh, alternatively spelt Sa'eqeh; Saegheh, or Saeqeh-80, is an Iranian built single-seat jet fighter, derived from the American Northrop F-5.

<sup>3</sup>The Sukhoi Su-24 is a supersonic, all-weather attack aircraft.

<sup>4</sup> MiG-29 is a twin-engine jet fighter aircraft

## **Conclusion**

*Military intervention in politics can be rooted in economic benefits and political decisions, resulting in maintaining the hegemony in power behind the scenes. Ideological and religious motivations and national interest defense are also responsible for the military intervention in politics in non-democratic countries. Military intervention in politics is mainly against democracy. Evidence has shown that Armed Forces in Persian Gulf countries are protecting the continuity of governance, as the first priority, and administration and territorial integrity, as the second. Based on variables employed to evaluate the Armed Forces in the Persian Gulf Countries especially military strategy, Persian Gulf Countries have always felt the threat. Therefore, they are always trying to buy weapons for the deterrence purposes. The total annual budget allocated for Armed Forces is approximately 150 billion dollars for all Persian Gulf Countries. This is greater than the annual budget of some developed countries. The continuation of this trend has made the Persian Gulf region an arsenal. Fear of explosion is felt due to the fundamental ideological differences and territorial disputes. Therefore, it seems that an international mechanism based on cooperation of regional countries can reduce tensions and increase interaction and accordingly sustainable security.*

## **References**

1. Aghasi Isfahani, M.H. (1992). **An Introduction to Sociology of War and Military Forces**, Journal No. 3 and 4.
2. Azghani, A. (1995). **Army and Politics**, Tehran: Ghomes Press.
3. Bottomore, T.B. (1990). **Elite and Society**, Trans: Tayeb, A. Tehran University Press.
4. Hashemi, F. (2016). **Persian Gulf pleadings at PhD Course**, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch.
5. Huntington, S. (1991). **Political Order in Changing Societies**, Trans: Mohsen Salasi, Tehran: Elm Press.

6. *Iranian Armed Forces News Bulletin (2016). Department of Military Intelligence of Islamic Republic of Iran*
7. *Iranian Military Encyclopedia (2005), Tehran, Iran.*
8. Lotfian, S. (2001). ***Army and Islamic Revolution***, Tehran: Publications Center for Islamic Revolution Documents
9. Musavi, M.T. (2004). ***Army and Politics: From Theory to Practice***. Tehran: Mardom Salar Press
10. Suleimani Dorcheh, M. (2000). ***International System of Military Policy: Role of Military in Turkey***, Shahid Beheshti University.
11. [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org)
12. [www.global.org](http://www.global.org)