



APPLICATION OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY FOR SECURITY ANALYSIS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

ZASTOSOWANIE TEORII REGIONALNEGO KOMPLEKSU BEZPIECZEŃSTWA DO ANALIZY BEZPIECZEŃSTWA W ZATOCE PERSKIEJ

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— ABSTRACT —

The aim of the article is to analyze security in the Persian Gulf through the prism of the theory of regional security complex. The Middle East is a conflict formation that refers to the model of security interdependence between the countries of the region, which is shaped by the fear of war and expectancy of violence. Distrust and ubiquitous threat prevail in the relations of the Gulf States. In response, these countries form alliances, which creates a security dilemma. In the article I will try to answer the questions: what determinants affect the security of the Gulf States and what role the U.S. play in security issues in the Persian Gulf?

Keywords: the Persian Gulf; the Middle East; Regional Security Complex Theory; securitization

— ABSTRAKT —

Celem artykułu jest analiza bezpieczeństwa w Zatoce Perskiej przez pryzmat teorii regionalnych kompleksów bezpieczeństwa. Bliski Wschód stanowi formację konfliktu nawiązującą do modelu współzależności bezpieczeństwa między państwami regionu, który jest kształtowany przez lęk przed wojną i prawdopodobieństwo wystąpienia przemocy. W stosunkach między państwami Zatoki Perskiej panuje nieufność i wszechobecne zagrożenie. W odpowiedzi kraje te tworzą sojusze, przyczyniając się do stworzenia dylematu bezpieczeństwa. W artykule postaram się odpowiedzieć na pytania: jakie determinanty wpływają na bezpieczeństwo państw Zatoki Perskiej oraz jaką rolę odgrywają USA w kwestiach bezpieczeństwa w Zatoce Perskiej?

Słowa kluczowe: Zatoka Perska; Bliski Wschód; Teoria Regionalnych Kompleksów Bezpieczeństwa; sekurytyzacja

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INTRODUCTION

After the Arab Spring, the center of gravity of major political events in the Middle East has moved to the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia, Iran but also, to a lesser extent, UAE and Qatar are building their power successively using a coercive policy or gunboat diplomacy. However, more significant seems to be the fact of building two competing blocs of states concentrated around Saudi Arabia (Egypt, Israel, or the U.S.) and Iran (Syria, Russia, the Houthi movement, Hezbollah or political parties and militias in Iraq). As a result of an escalation of political and military tensions between the two blocs, the Persian Gulf crisis broke out in 2019–2020. The U.S. was convinced that Iran had launched a campaign against U.S. forces and interests in the Persian Gulf and therefore began to strengthen its military presence in the region. This followed a rise in political (U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan and imposition of new economic sanction by the U.S. on Iran) and military tensions (Iranian sabotage attacks on regional and international tankers in the Persian Gulf waters, U.S. deployed more military assets to the Persian Gulf, shooting down a U.S. Global Hawk surveillance drone by Iran, drone attack on the state-owned Saudi Aramco oil processing facilities).

These incidents led to a destabilization of the situation in the region (especially regarding the production and supply of oil to global markets) and the threat of a broader conflict. The aim of this article is to explore the security interdependence between the Gulf States (Iran, Saudi Arabia) and the external U.S. authority using regional security complex theory which says that the structure of a regional security complex is determined by the countries of the region, their perception of security and interaction between them.

Based on this theory, the author puts forward a hypothesis that assumes that the level of interaction between Persian Gulf states is high and that their security interacts with the security of other states from the region. This means that Persian Gulf security is interdependent and is shaped by a fear of war and an expectation of the use of violence. While securitization (the process of transforming an issue into a security concern, usually through public discourse) of the Iranian threat for the region increased as a result of the Israeli-American anti-Iranian policy (“maximum pressure”), coercive power remains a major instrument that shapes relations between Israel, the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Iran, leading to the security dilemma¹.

In order to verify the hypothesis, the following research questions were posed: 1) What determinants affect the security of the Gulf States? 2) How does the US affect security in the Persian Gulf?

The structure of the article is as follows. First, a quick overview of the theoretical RSCT framework will be presented. RSCT and related categories will then be used for security analysis in the Persian Gulf. These categories include: amity/enmity, penetration, securitization and the societal security sector. Using amity and enmity categories, relations between major powers will be analyzed. A significant outcome of these relations is the regionalization and globalization of the Iranian threat and securitization of the Sunni-Shia conflict. It is linked to all the major regional powers and influences their national security. The last part of the article will contain the final conclusions.

REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY

The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) was developed and advanced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde who belong to the so-called Copenhagen School of security studies. This theory was created and developed in 1983–2003 and studied security as a social construction (securitization). The theory holds that international security should be examined from a regional perspective so to provide a theoretical justification for constructing world regions. The authors defined a security complex “as a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another” (Buzan, 1983). These regional security complexes are based on the distinct and stable patterns of security interactions between states called enmity and amity. Relations ranging from friendship to expectation of protection or support are called amity. Enmity, in turn, means a relationship based on suspicion and fear. These relationships might be a result of border or ideological disputes but historical ties as well.

Several years later, in 1998, RSCT was updated and defined as “[...] a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problem cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”. This meant that security is socially constructed rather than objective and that states can gain support for defining something as an existential threat that requires emergency responses (Buzan, 2003). The new definition emphasized the role of non-state actors in international relations and focused less on military security aspects, highlighting other security sectors (McSweeney, 1999). This is crucial for the Persian Gulf and the whole Middle East region where non-state actors hold significant influence over the regional

landscape security. Similarly, RSCT's highlighting of sectors other than military security gives an opportunity to study the influence of oil sector on the Persian Gulf security. Naturally, states remain the main objects of security, but in some regions other units may play key roles or even dominate. Hence the key elements of RSCT include the "relative intensity of inter-state security relations, patterns of amity and enmity and distribution of power" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Amity and enmity variables are useful research tools to assess which particular role (enemy, rival, friend) dominates sufficiently to assign an overall social structure to a system or subsystem (Jarzabek, 2019). Rivalry, amity and enmity among the Gulf States are usually a product of a distribution of power where states shift their alignments in accordance with the dictates of movements in the distribution of power (Stivachtis, 2018). Such a situation took place after the Iraq War in 2003, when the Saudi-Iranian rivalry intensified and Sunni-Shiite divisions deepened. But patterns of amity and enmity are influenced by such factors as history, culture, religion, or geography (Buzan, 2003). These patterns affect ties that can unite states and determine their cooperation, but can also justify political or military intervention.

Depending on the prevalence of patterns of amity or enmity, security complexes have been divided into three types. The first is a *conflict formation*, which refers to "a pattern of security interdependence shaped by fear of war and expectation of use of violence" (Buzan, 2003). In a *conflict formation*, relations between major powers in the region are accompanied by violence. This situation means that states consider each other as a potential threat and build alliances to reduce the security dilemma situation (Buzan, 2003). The second is a *security regime*, in which states still perceive each other as a potential threat but take certain measures to reduce the security dilemma and reduce mutual tensions. The third type is a *multilateral security community*, where states do not expect aggressive actions from other actors and do not plan to do so themselves. The creators of RSCT believe that cooperation and integration processes can eliminate the security complex by transforming an anarchic subsystem of states into a single actor (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Within an RSCT, security is examined as a social construction, which means that the securitization process affects the security of individual member states by linking them together. Securitization is a key concept of the Copenhagen School. Buzan and Wæver define securitization as "[t]he distinctive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object,

and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Securitization is a key theoretical term used to examine various aspects of security in a region such as threats to individual states or the whole region.

An RSC can be deeply penetrated by the global powers. Penetration means that an external power is involved in the security structure of the region and plays a significant role in creating such structures. Penetration occurs when outside powers make security alignments with states within an RSC. Amitav Acharya argues that external powers adapt and internalize the role of regional entities shaping the regional social structure. Such an external power’s policy affects the concepts and behavior of regional actors (Acharya, 2007). Because the Gulf Cooperation States (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman) have a security alignment with the U.S. and share common enemy, Iran (with the exception of Qatar and Oman to some extent), the Persian Gulf can be defined as penetrated by this global power.

Security sectors are another important part of RSCT. The Copenhagen School distinguishes five main security sectors: military, political, economic, social, and environmental. The dominant sectors in which countries strive to ensure security and face the most common threats are the military and political ones. But in the Persian Gulf, the social sector deserves special attention. The securitization of sectarianism (the Sunni-Shiite conflict) resonates in the relations between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East, but above all it is used as a source of legitimacy of power and interference in the internal affairs of other states. Due to the limited space of this article, I will focus only on the social sector because another identity, culture or religion is usually perceived as a threat and, as a result, affects the security of Gulf societies and countries.

AMITY AND ENMITY

The patterns of amity and enmity fundamentally refer to inter-state relations that show who fears who or is allied with whom. In the Persian Gulf, a crucial role in this matter is played by long-standing partial enmities between Shia and Sunni states and non-state actors. Patterns of amity and enmity are generated internally by history, politics, culture, and ethnicity. The history of mutual hatred, friendships and specific issues that lead to conflict or cooperation based on fears, threats and friendships define the regional security complex. Between the Persian

Gulf states, rivalry is evident but so is enmity. Beside amity and enmity, the relationships between the Persian Gulf states are defined by power relations. Based on these foundations, we can identify and assess the changes that have taken place in the Persian Gulf in recent years.

The structure and balance of power that was established in 1970s by the USA (the twin pillar policy²) have collapsed after the Iranian Revolution and the Persian Gulf War. In 1979, the pro-Western Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown and a Shia theocracy was established with the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini at its head. The new leader condemned Saudi Arabia for its pro-American views and called upon Muslims to overthrow the corrupt and unpopular dictators in the Middle East. This led to the Saudi Shiites' Qatif Uprising in November 1979 with the organizing of festivals, celebrating the Day of Ashura and strike action. In response to the protest, the Saudi government not only acknowledged the poor conditions in Qatif but also cracked down on Shiite opposition groups and continued its policy of intolerance and the discrimination of Shiites in further years. Iran began supporting Shiite minorities in Sunni countries, while Saudi Arabia supported a group opposed to the Shiites, leading to *proxy wars* in the region. The intention of both powers was to limit the influence of the rival *proxies* and fight through their representatives in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine.

The Iraq-Iran War and the first Gulf War were also key for relations in the Persian Gulf. In the first case, Iraq was supported by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, while during the Gulf War (Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait) it was defeated by coalition forces from 35 countries under U.S. command. Despite both wars, Iraq remained a buffer to balance revolutionary Iran in the following decade until 2003. With Saddam Hussein ousted from power and Iraq weakened by war, Iran became a dominant player in the Arab system. Moreover, the war in Iraq strengthened those states and non-state actors (Hamas and Hezbollah) that had been contained in the 1990s and were against U.S. presence in the region. As a result of the Arab Spring, Egypt and Libya became incapable of acting as influential powers and, together with Iraq, these states lost power. This power vacuum was filled by non-Arab states: Israel, Iran, and Turkey (Gervais, 2017).

But the 2003 Iraqi war not only broke the regional system but most of all increased sectarian tensions. Sectarianism was instrumentalized by regional states (securitization will be described later in the article) and non-state actors such as al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State which had been granted access to territory and territorial resources. Their terrorist campaign introduced

counter-terrorism to the regional state agenda and security policies became a function of foreign and internal state behaviors. Analyzing this through the prism of amity and enmity, these variations generated divisions between regional states. While the fear of Iran's hegemonic ambition and its Shiite support policy unite GCC states (the Bahrain uprising in 2011 and the military intervention in Yemen in 2015 were supported by the Peninsula Shield Force, the armed wing of the GCC), they have disagreed on the assessment of internal threats such as the Muslim Brotherhood and role they played at the outset of the Arab Spring. This also was a cause of amity and enmity relations between states and polarization. While authorities in Doha support the organization, the UAE arrested and sentenced dozens of Muslim Brotherhood supporters accusing them of plotting to overthrow the regime. This diplomatic spat resulted first in the diplomatic crisis of 2014 and the decision by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE to withdraw their ambassadors from Qatar. Qatar was accused by its GCC fellows of failing to commit to GCC principles and the Muslim Brotherhood was designated a terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia. These Saudi-Qatari tensions had been rising for decades and include territorial disputes, unsettled border tensions and accusations of espionage. The conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, however, concerned not only support for the Muslim Brotherhood, but also a struggle for leadership among Arab countries.

In the last decade, the Middle East Security Complex has undergone an internal transformation. These developments were caused by territorial disputes, power and ideological competition, and rivalry over leadership. The amity and enmity patterns among regional states have changed as well as the power balances. Amity can change very quickly and suddenly into enmity or something between amity and enmity (neutrality), and vice versa. Such a change occurred between Iran and Iraq, who became opponents in 1958 (when Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad Pact, an organization under British patronage, introduced an Arab nationalist policy and began diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union). Two decades later, in 1980, when the Iraq-Iran war broke out, they became real enemies and finally, after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, they returned to a friendly relationship. A similar shift occurred between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 1970s, who had cooperated under the American Twin Pillar policy in the 1970s, and who became archenemies after the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

PENETRATION

The Middle East is a penetrated regional system in which external powers play a decisive role. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver argue that regional security complexes are independent entities, but penetrated by external forces. As I mentioned, penetration usually occurs when external forces make security arrangements with powers inside the RSC. The history of the intervention of great powers in the Middle East stretches back centuries and includes Western colonialism and economic and military interdependence. The presence of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf from the mid-18th century to the early 1970^s (Pax Britannica), the involvement of France, Britain and the U.S. in the creation of Israel and then the American Carter Doctrine treating this subregion as a zone of its own influence, shape the dynamics of military and political security at the regional level (Pax Americana). Maintaining good relations with Western countries helped some Arab regimes remain in power against domestic opposition (Egypt, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Libya). But the U.S. penetration in the security issues of the region also contributed to the establishment of Al-Qaeda.

In general, the U.S. has played a key role in the Persian Gulf. Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the U.S. has been on the side of the GCC countries, counterbalancing Iranian influence and defending Saudi Arabia in particular, but also Kuwait in 1991 against the Iraqi invasion (Operation Desert Storm). These close U.S. relations with the GCC, the hostility between the U.S. and Iran and a different approach of the Gulf Arab States towards Iran (particularly Qatar and Oman) mean that the subregional security system is in constant conflict. Buzan and Wæver called this situation a penetration of the RSC by external powers. Indeed, U.S. involvement in Middle East is setting the region on fire and dividing its states, and American participation is evident in all major conflicts: the Israeli-Iranian, Israeli-Palestinian, and Saudi-Iranian. This situation makes the Middle East a territory of high conflict, where conflicts negatively affect the entire region (Koch & Stivachtis, 2019).

The assessment of the U.S.'s results is a subjective assessment concerning each country, but the U.S. is trying to preserve and secure such interests in the region as: 1) protecting energy production and transport, 2) counteracting Islamic radicalism and terrorism, 3) preventing the proliferation of weapon of mass destruction, 4) protecting Israel's security (Wang, 2009). The United States plays and implements these goals with the support of medium and small powers in the Persian Gulf. In return, Arab monarchies receive direct (arms sales) and indirect

(U.S. army, navy and planes in the Persian Gulf) U.S. support. While, during Barack Obama's presidency, U.S. support was limited to selling arms to the Arab Gulf states and some counter-terrorism actions, when Donald Trump came to power, policy towards the Middle East changed radically (Darwich, 2019).

Another sign of U.S. involvement in regional affairs is the process of Donald Trump creating the Middle East Security Alliance (MESA). MESA is a U.S.-sponsored alliance of Arab countries along the lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It is often referred to as the "Arab NATO". Prospective MESA members include Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, Jordan, and Egypt. Trump intends to reduce U.S. security presence in the Middle East and transfer more responsibilities to U.S. allies without losing strength in the region. But in this American bloc there is no agreement on whether to perceive Iran as a direct threat. While the U.S., KSA, UAE and Bahrain support this view and want to confront Iran – Egypt, Jordan and Qatar publicly oppose it (Farouk, 2019). Certainly the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf triggered off a considerable arms build-up, making this subregion the most militarized in the world.

SECURITIZATION

Securitization is defined as a process of transforming an issue into a security concern, usually through public discourse. This leads securitizing actors to transform conventional politics into emergency politics which refer to "extraordinary measures and the actors who call for them, how they do so, with whom they form relationships to achieve their objectives and what factors determine their success or failure" (Åtland & Bruusgaard, 2009). The understanding of threat is intersubjective and is constructed within a particular (political) community. Securitized threats can remain on the security agenda for decades (Shayan, 2017). The more recipients and political entities support securitization, the more effective it is. Effectiveness depends on the correct assessment of feelings and needs of audiences and on the use of a public discourse to make them resonate.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are securitizing actors who make securitization statements to protect a relevant object, convincing recipients to consider the problem as a threat to the security of the latter. Securitization statements are issued by political leaders and actors who try to convince the public at home and abroad to recognize revolutionary Shiism or Sunni dominance in the region as a threat (often overestimated) to national or regional security. The terms "existential

threat” or “Israel should be destroyed” used by these countries signify paranoia, prejudice and aggressive intentions rather than any real threat. Such state optics and the securitization of potential threats raise concerns and lead to inter-state tensions. In addition to these statements, extraordinary actions are taken, such as supervision, restriction of rights (discrimination), and even the use of armed forces. This presentation of certain groups or state policies as a threat to internal or regional security serves as a source of legitimacy for the Saudi and Iranian regime, but also serves the purposes and interests of regional powers. At the same time, regional powers present themselves as defenders of a Sunni or Shiite identity.

Saudi Arabia’s leaders present Iran as a threat to national and regional security. The threat from Iran is greatly amplified by the Wahhabi clergy who warn the Saudi authorities and society that Iran will surround the Kingdom from the south (the Yemen Houthi), the east (Iran and the Shiite community in Saudi Arabia), and the north (Iraqi Shiites and Alawites). However, with its security guarantees from the U.S., it is hard to see Iran as an existential threat to Saudi Arabia. It is difficult to speak about an existential threat if Iran has no nuclear weapons and only such weapons could destroy Israel or Saudi Arabia. Such extreme rhetoric leads to a security dilemma and accelerates the regional arms race. Securitization also serves to divert the attention of one’s society from unresolved internal issues related to unemployment, slow diversification and even economic problems.

The securitization mentioned above relates to the political and military security sectors. In the political sector, the state can be threatened both internally (i.e., the political struggle for the ideology of the state: secularism, Islamism, pan-Arabism as during the Arab Spring; resistance to the government or autonomy-oriented movements such as the Kurds in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran) and externally (i.e., supporting secessionism, putting pressure on another country in particular). Iranian Shiite ideology is seen as a threat to the Sunni identity and dominance in the Middle East. It is perceived through ideological lenses and this perception is especially acute between Sunni Wahhabism and revolutionary Shiism, which represent two extreme versions of Islam. Peaceful protests aimed at political, social and economic reforms are also securitized. Protesting societies are treated as opposition groups that threaten the legitimacy of those in power and who pressed for a change of power during the so-called Arab Spring of 2011.

In the military sector, the main goal is the survival of the state, and the main referent object of security is the physical basis of the state (territory and population). Military operations relate to the acquisition and control of territory through the use of force and the protection of territorial integrity (i.e., the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait or the Iraq War in 2003). The military threat may also concern the arms race and militarization that make the Persian Gulf the most militarized subregion in the world. At the center of the military threat and the arms race is the Iranian nuclear program, which has been securitized by Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Iran's nuclear program, whether peaceful or roguish, has been sufficiently put forward by Iran's regional rivals to give foundation for cooperation between Israel and the Gulf States.

SOCIETAL SECTOR OF SECURITY

The social sector of security refers to collective identity at the national, cultural or religious level. It therefore covers threats to communities and people at the national, cultural or religious level. The referent object is any collective entity that sees existential threat through the prism of identity (Shayan, 2017). In the Persian Gulf these entities form tribes, clans and nations (minority, civilization, religion and race) while threats to their security derive from migration or the suppression of community identities.

An example of social threat are tensions that arise between immigrants and citizens in Saudi Arabia. They are caused by the perception of the former as a threat to the latter's Arab identity, language and culture. This can be seen in the Saudi Arabian job market, where immigrants make up a significant proportion of the population. In response to this threat, the Saudi government has launched a labor market nationalization program (Saudization). Another societal threat is the problem of identity that is visible in the Persian Gulf, where citizens have many identities: national, religious, ethnic, regional (i.e., the Khaliji culture). Some citizens identify more with the state, while others want to fight it, which leads to social uncertainty. Loss of identity gives space to terrorist organizations that provide Salafi/jihad identity. This is a kind of transmission belt between those who lost their identity and "terrorist identities".

American culture is also perceived as a societal threat that affects the Middle East's identity in spite of local resistance (i.e., in the Persian Gulf, English is widely spoken by immigrants and residents, which threatens Arabic in public places).

This is seen in the U.S. support for Sunni GCC states, which may indicate that the U.S. can be considered a defender of Sunni identity. However, this support concerns protection against external invaders, not support for the Sunni identity, e.g., U.S. support for Kuwait to protect it against Iraq during the 1990–1991 Gulf War, even though both countries define themselves as Sunni. While political elites in Sunni Gulf countries see the U.S. as an ally, fundamentalists (e.g., Wahhabism) treat the U.S. as a threat to Islamic culture and values. Therefore, divergent security logic may exist within states (Shayan, 2017).

The most visible threat to societal security in the Middle East is the Sunni-Shiite conflict in the region. It has reemerged as a result of Iraq War in 2003. That year, Saddam Hussein and the Sunni-dominated Iraqi regime were overthrown. This political change strengthened Iran as a regional power, enabling Iraqi Shiites to come to power, and contributing to closer cooperation between Iran and Iraq. The conflict divided the Gulf States into two sectarian camps and, during the Iraq War in 2003, the Sunni GCC countries supported Sunni groups, while Iran as a Shiite state supported the Shiite majority. These political events played a decisive role in shaping the regional security complex. The Shia alliance started to be perceived by Sunni states as a societal security threat. However, Sunni-Shiite tensions are only a facade under which fierce struggles for power and dominance in the Middle East are hidden. Religious divisions are only a tool to mobilize supporters. Sectarianism, a form of discrimination, bigotry and hatred toward an opposite group, serves politicians as a kind of narrative or discourse that is used as a source of legitimization and persuasion. Shiites are portrayed as an internal and external foe and the securitizing state uses extraordinary measures to defend society from this threat (Grabowski, 2017, pp. 1–11).

The societal sector of security remains a vital part of the overall security complex of the region. Significant external threats on the societal level are often part of a larger package of military and political threats. In consequence, societal security threats might be difficult to separate from political or military ones (Koch & Stivachtis, 2019). A good example of this correlation can be seen in the field of societal security, which remains unmet by Middle Eastern countries that are underdeveloped in many sectors and areas. The authorities' inability to solve internal and external challenges leads to social uncertainty, which has benefited Al-Qaida and ISIS.

CONCLUSIONS

In the article, I have tried to prove the hypothesis that the security of the Gulf States is closely interrelated. To do this, I followed the amity and enmity patterns and securitization policy that captured the perceptions of threats in the subregion countries. One of the research questions concerned the security determinants of the Persian Gulf, and in response one may point to the Sunni-Shiite conflict I described, the competition for domination and penetration of the region by the U.S. Its presence in the region (the second research question) is directed at counteracting Iranian influence and supporting American allies, especially Saudi Arabia and Israel. In the presence of U.S. in the region, however, a camp formed to fight the country's influence, with Iran at its head (Katz, 2018).

The theoretical framework presented above provided a useful tool for security analysis in the Persian Gulf. The political, social and military threats to the Gulf states have been listed and assessed using RSCT. Speech acts, securitization and state-centrism have been highlighted as the primary function of the security policy of state entities in the Middle East. Buzan and Wæver's perspective allowed us to discuss the political, social and military aspects of security. RSCT shows how interactions between individuals, regional entities and U.S. penetration in the region affect the security of the Persian Gulf countries.

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