Regional Security in the Persian Gulf

Indications of change in a Regional Security Complex

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Abstract

Using the theoretical instruments given in Buzan and Weavers Regional Security Complex Theory, this thesis provides an updated analysis of the security dynamics in the Persian Gulf, a sub-complex in the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex (MERSC). The method used was to compare the authors' analysis of the core characteristics of the MERSC in general, and the Gulf in particular as perceived 2003[1], with the changes in the following decade. The aim is to see if preconditions for regional security is changing, and to provide an indication of in what direction security is unfolding.

The findings indicate that many relational patterns within the Middle East at large remain. Since 2003, the basis for amity and enmity in relations still prevail, but states transforming at the domestic level during the Arab together with the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, implicates changes in polarity. The outcome is a possible breakup of the MERSC Complex into smaller RSCs.

Within the Gulf Sub-complex, polarity may change from multipolar to bipolar, with Iran and the GCC countries balancing off each other in the Persian Gulf. External transformation is not likely in the short term, as interregional dynamics are increasing, but still are sparse.

Key words: The Persian Gulf, The Middle East, Regional Security, Regional Security Complex Theory, Securitization, Transformation.

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[1] The Year of Publication for Barry Buzan and Ole Waever's book "Regions and Power: The structure of International Security".

List of content

1 Introduction

Middle East is a perennial conflict formation. Security interdependence within the region is strong, connecting African and Asian regions in a web of security relations. Since 2002, new conditions for security relations may be unfolding, not least represented by the collapse of Saddam Hussein's Iraq after 2003 and the dramatic uprisings in northern Africa and eastward. The outcome in terms of security interdependence and regional stability is uncertain, and a change may be at the door.

To analyze the happenings and potential future implications, requires a specifics set of analytical tools. Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) provides one such tool. RSCT takes into its scope all levels stretching from the global level down to the domestic level, to understand how these shape the security milieu. It puts the regional level at the heart of analysis, adding higher and lower levels' dynamics to conditions stipulated by the regional relations and activities. As of 2003, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever concluded that dynamics in the Middle East was the result of a string regional and global level interaction, leaving the domestic and interregional level less influential. Given the development of the region since 2003, there is a need for updating their analysis to understand the present conditions for regional security.

Taking the offset in the RSCT, an updated analysis could with new empirical material possible result in a somewhat modified outlook for future security relations. This thesis aims at providing some of the options viable for such an outlook. The focus will be on the Gulf Regional Sub-complex, where security dynamics most certainly are of interest to, and may effect, the politics of the surrounding world.

1.1 Previous research in the field

Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver has in several books refined the RSCT as a mean to understand and grasp empirical material on regions and how they are connected security wise. They argue that no nation's security is self-contained, but rather implicate place their own state in the center of analysis, and that global analysis are often too general and lack relevance for most countries understanding of its own security. This is what accordingly motivated a security analysis taking its starting point, and putting its emphasis on the regional level.

Security politics of the Middle East is no field foreign to academic research. Security relations, processes and conflicts have been thoroughly analyzed in many cases, involving most countries also in the Gulf. This thesis aims humbly at

providing a new angle on security development from a regional perspective, possibly adding an interregional dimension, rooted in the theoretical framework of RSCT. Buzan and Waever's own analysis employing the RSCT was done prior to 2003, when presented in their book *Regions and Power*. The thesis following is built on that analysis, attempting to give an updated analysis for the Gulf region and the implications that change therein may have.

1.2   Research problem

As with all theoretical conceptualizations, their validity as to describe the present reality must be continuously assessed and reevaluated. A theory that has lost its validity and thus fills no function in describing, understanding or assessing the world and its phenomena, fills little function. Neither, conclusions and analysis drawn from a theoretical framework, that are out of date and thus does not apply to contemporary conditions, a of much help. Over time, conditions and thus the variables for any theory may change. In the thesis at hand, the RSCT analysis of the Middle East has become a decade old. It needs to be updated, and to some extent reevaluated.

1.3   Research questions

The research question for this thesis is:
- *Is there any indication of a transformation of the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex, with regard to the developments in the Persian Gulf since early 2000?*

To help answering the research question, two operational questions are used as follows:
- *Which are the material conditions for internal transformation of the MERSC in general and the Persian Gulf in Particular?*
- *What are the material conditions for external transformation of the MERSC in general and the Persian Gulf in Particular?*

1.4   Aim for study and motivation

The aim of this study is to analyze whether the Gulf is in for a change in regional security dynamics considering the development of recent years. As Buzan and Waever also saw their book as a way to identify a range of subjects around which more detailed studies could be organized, it is also an aim to provide some more

depth to the analysis, especially regarding the interregional-level of security relations in the Gulf which they hardly discuss.

The study is intended to describe the changing preconditions for security on the regional level in the Persian Gulf and thus point towards a possibly trans-forming RSC, and Regional Security Sub-complex. If such an transformation exists, the updated analysis of the RSC can be added to a complete analysis involving other RSCs as well as global- and superpowers, with subsequent implications for global security.

RSCT operates on a high level of generalization, and as indicators of securitization, they have used visible outcomes, as wars, mass expulsion, arms race, large-scale refugee movements and other emergency measures. The case studies in the book should be seen as templates, rather than full analysis.[2] Building on Buzan and Waever, this study will occupy itself with a highly aggregated analysis, rather than an in-depth study of the several states involved in the MERSC.

1.5   Method

The method used will be a something resembling of a comparative case study. By using a nearly ten years old analysis of the MERSC performed by political Scientists Barry Buzan and Ole Waever[3], and updating it with a contemporary based analysis, in which new updated sources are added. The theoretical framework for RSCT was developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, explaining that: "RSCT offers both a vision of the emerging world order, and a method for studying specific regions."[4] The referent object in this study, will be the analysis of the Gulf Region presented by Buzan and Weaver in their book which was published 2003, and thus includes an analysis prior to that time. By then employing the same theoretical concept, and analytical tools as Buzan and Weaver, the comparative analysis will somewhat reduce the risk of theoretical conceptualizations and selection of material that may be actualized when comparing two separate analysis of a case. The intention is thus to use the RSCT both as to describe the "before picture" of the Gulf, as well as an analytical tool for conducting the updated case study analysis. This close use the same analytical tool in the analysis as used in the analysis to which it is to be compared, should increase validity of conclusions. However, reliability is due the use of sources, which has been different from the original analysis. In order for the reader to grasp the content of RSCT, the thesis will include a theoretical chapter with a condensed explanation of RSCT and how it is to be used.

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[2] Buzan & Waever 2003:73
[3] Buzan & Weaver 2003:187-218
[4] Buzan & Weaver 2003:40

1.6   Delimitations

The RSCT is an analytical tool meant to cover the entire world, categorizing states and regions in accordance with the theoretical model. This model is far to extensive to be applied in a Master Thesis. Instead, the RSCT framework will be used for comparing Buzan and Waever's empirical description by on the Gulf sub-complex in the Middle Eastern RSC as of 2003, with the situation today. This may be somewhat criticized for excluding the dynamics of the Middle East RSC in general, of which RSCT would claim the Gulf sub-complex is a most relevant part. However, Buzan and Weaver themselves argue the Maghreb Sub-complex may somewhat be losing its connection to the rest of the Middle Eastern RSC already in 2003. With regard to the democratization processes ongoing in the region during spring 2011, it seems even more so.

The intention of this thesis is not to evaluate the empirical findings of Buzan and Waever or to evaluate the RSCT as such; rather, it is to use it as a foundation for the comparative analysis. Scholars that have forwarded remarks on their work, have not focused mainly at the somewhat limited the theoretical reach and relevance in a larger perspective.[5] Also, the RSCT has been criticized for being too centric and downplay the importance of non-state actors,[6] even though the authors themselves think they have stepped away from the state-centrism.[7] This will in turn limit the thesis at hand's possibility to make comparisons outside the state-centered context.

1.7   Sources and Material

Built basically on the book of Buzan and Waever, both theory and their analysis of the Gulf as of 2003. The empirical material used to update the description of the Gulf – to perform the comparison with the 2003 description - are secondary sources, mainly academics articles, information from official organizations websites and reports from agencies and think tanks. Using secondary sources leaves the conclusions vulnerable to the selectiveness and interpretations done by the secondary source author his use of primary sources. To increase precision in conclusions drawn, the use of secondary sources will aim to find acknowledged sources, with the data and facts used being corroborated by more than one source..

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[5] For a discussions on Buzan & Waever' s book "Regions and Power" and the RSCT, see Bashrur 2006: 419-426.
[6] For an alternative analysis of regional security and comparison with RSCT, see Tassinari 2004.
[7] Buzan and Waever 2002:45

1.8   Disposition

Chapter two gives a description of RSCT, the analysis used. Chapter three is a description of the history of MERSC. The fourth chapter contains the "before picture" with developments from Cold War's end to early 2000s, and chapter five holds the updated material and analysis. The executive summary highlights the main findings of the analysis and lay forward some suggestions for further research.

2   Theoretical concepts – RSCT

This chapter will provide a description of the Regional Security Complex Theory, its intended use and its main characteristics. It will also provide tools for a *Descriptive RSCT*, which will be employed in the empirical chapter when presenting the relevant data, and the *Predictive RSCT*, which will be used in the analysis to interpret the empirical findings and assessing its implications.

2.1   A theoretical background to RSCT

States may vary in importance as to how they affect the security dynamics in a region, and be broken up into three levels of power: the regional, the great and the superpowers. The RSCT emphasize analysis on the regional level. This is then complemented by domestic and Global level analysis to get a full picture. Instead of merely looking to the strongest actors in the global system as a whole, one should instead pay attention to the strongest actor in any given setting. For every state, that setting is according to RSCT, the "Regional Security Complex" (RSC) on the regional level. The regional level analysis assume that states' security cannot easily be separated from its regional neighbours. "Both the security of the separate units and the process of global power intervention can be grasped only through understanding the regional security dynamics."[8]

The framework of RSCT uses the state as a base for analysis, and then builds onto the analysis with non-state-centric refinements.[9] At the heart of the RSCT are the RSCs which is defined as:

> " a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another /…/ Regional Security Complexes are regions seen through the lens of security. They may or may not be regions in other senses, but they do not depend on, or start from, other conceptualizations of regionness."[10]

Some RSC have sub-complexes within their sphere. Sub-complex are firmly the same as a RSC, but a sub-complex is embedded within a larger RSC. Sub-complexes more often occurring when the RSC includes many states.[11] The Gulf

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[8] Buzan & Weaver 2003:43
[9] Buzan & Weaver 2003:45
[10] Buzan & Weaver 2003:44
[11] Buzan & Waever 2003:51

sub-complex in the Middle Eastern RSC (MERSC) can thus be seen as an RSC on its own, but with extraordinary links the other sub-complexes in the same RSC.

There are some basic assumptions given about RSCs. A RSC is foremost defined by "durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence."[12] The RSC and the relations between the states within, is founded on these patterns. The formation of a RSC derives from the anarchical structure within which the states – under the patterns of amity and enmity – engage in a balance-of-power dynamic. Geographical proximity is also relevant, since it implies more security interaction; many threats travel more easily over short than long distances. Adjacency is most prominent in military, political, societal and environmental sectors than in the economical sector.[13] It is the need to balance power that connects the regional to the global level. Stronger powers can penetrate the RSC, which occurs when outside powers make security alignments with powers inside the RSC. The balance of power logic calls for asking in external assistance when becoming inferior in power, and this way the global level actors becomes involved in the regional."[14] The engagement from external powers in any RSC is thus caused by the RSCs states' need to balance power, rather than the external powers' desire to penetrate the RSC.

Global powers with capacity of penetration are defined as either *superpowers* or *great powers*. Superpowers are: 1) states that are capable of, and also exercise, global military and political reach; 2) states that see themselves, and are accepted by others in rhetoric and behavior, as having this rank; and 3) states that are active players in processes of securitization, and desecuritization, in all, or nearly all, of the regions in the system. After the cold war, this rank was held only by the United States, according to the Authors themselves.[15] Great powers are those "that are responded to by other on basis of system level calculations about the present and near-future distribution"[16], that is they are by other perceived as possessing potential for superpowers. Regional powers then, "define the polarity of any given RSC." Their capabilities are respected in the regional context, but they are not included in higher-system calculations. As superpowers transcend the logic of geography and adjacency, a RSC will be affected by possessing superpowers, great powers or neither. Possessions of great powers in a RSC thus tends to override the regional imperative, and possessing only small powers to reinforce it. Mechanism of penetration links the global balance of power to that of the balance of power within the RSC. Relations from within the region to the global powers thus will affect, but not shape, the dynamics of a RSC.[17]

In summary, the constellation of powers within a specific region creates the preconditions for its security dynamics. If region possesses great powers, security

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[12] Buzan & Weaver 2003:45
[13] Buzan & Weaver 2003:45
[14] Buzan & Weaver 2003:46
[15] Buzan & Waever 2003:35
[16] Buzan & Waever 2003:35
[17] Buzan & Waever 2003:37

dynamics will be different from an area which do not. A region without great powers, hade instead regional powers defining its polarity. The RSCs may be unipolar, bipolar or multipolar; the kind of polarity affecting the security dynamics.

2.2   The descriptive RSCT

The *Descriptive RSC* is a matrix for area studies. It provides a framework organizing empirical studies on regional security, and specifies what to look for on four levels of analysis, which are all interrelated.[18] The analysis on each level should then be merged to get the picture of the security interdependence of a region, based on which the RSC is based.

On the domestic level, one should look for domestically generated vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities then defines the state's kinds of fears experienced. States may for example define others as a structural threat even though they have no hostile intentions. It is the process of securitization [19]that decide what is seen as a threat, and that process is unique to every state, and also non-state actor when applicable. On the interstate or regional level, analysis should concern relation between states, and see to which dynamics that generates the region itself. The Interregional level is supposed to be limited in as within-region relations are more important in RSCT. However, the interregional level may be relevant if security interdependencies change; if interregional activity is intense, this may imply ongoing change.

A region without a global power can have strong interregional links in one direction. Global level should look to the interplay between the global and regional security structures. Together, the four levels constitute the *security constellation*.[20] The expectation is that outside powers will be drawn into a region along the lines of rivalry existing within it.[21] The essential structure embodies four variables to identify and assess changes as the regional level:[22]

1. Boundaries of the RSC
2. Anarchic structure; an RSC is composed by two or more autonomous units;
3. Polarity, which covers the distribution of power among its units; and
4. Social construction, covering patterns of amity and enmity among its units.

The RSCT also goes on the classify security complexes, due to type of polarity and global power penetration.[23] Whereas this study will occupy itself with a

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[18] Buzan & Waever 2003:51
[19] For a elaboration of *securitization* and the in depth usage of the expression in the RSCT, see Buzan & Waever, 2003:71-76
[20] Buzan & Waever 2003:51
[21] Buzan & Weaver 2003:52
[22] Buzan & Waever 2003:53
[23] Buzan & Waever 2003:53-64

comparative case study, that part of the RSCT will not be explained here. Rather, we take with us that the Middle East is classified as a *standard security complex*, given its multipolar features.[24]

2.3   Predictive RSCT: Scenarios

There are many different kinds of developments that can happen within an RSC. Which forms it takes on depends on which changes that our world has to meet. The more likely a change is, the more likely a scenario following it is. There are though structural limits as to how a RSC can change. Any *standard RSC*[25], the form of RSC which the Middle East is an example of, can undergo internal or external transformation, or get overlaid. It is difficult to imagine it unraveling back to an *unstructured* region where no security relations exist between the neighboring states, though not impossible.[26] However, status quo is also an option for the progress of a RSC when neither transformation occurs.

A region getting *overlaid* implies that the security dynamics of the region is controlled and directed by outside powers. Normally this includes heavy military presence from an outside great power. Also, the overlaid RSC ceases to in reality be RSC, as the states within do not securitize each other anymore, but instead, it is the external power that decides what is to be securitized.[27] As this study is uses a comparative method to analyze the Middle Eastern RSC, we also use as our starting point the overlay is not a viable option for Buzan and Waever in their analysis of the MERSC as of 2003. In this study, then, there are three ideal ways that the RSC can progress.

The first option is *status quo*, meaning no significant changes in the *essential structure* has occurred. The boundaries, structure, polarity and social construction remains basically the same. Interpreting Buzan and Waever's meaning of the status quo ideal type, is does not mean no change has occurred on domestic, interregional or global level, but the effects on the regional level has not been significant. So, if change do occur, it may come from inside the RSC, or from outside.

Internal transformation, which concerns when changes occur within the RSC outer boundaries. Given the essential structure, the internal transformation could be due to change the *anarchic structure* (integration between entities), in *polarity* (change of unit composition – conquest, different growth rates etc), or in amity/enmity dynamics (ideological shifts, mutual enemies, war-weariness,

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[24] Buzan & Waever 2003:62
[25] Buzan & Weaver discusses different types of RSC depending on their constellation of superpowers, great powers and regional powers. The types available are Standard RSCs, Centred RSCs, Great Power RSCs and Supercomplexes. RSC categorization however lies outside the scope for this study. For a closer description of the different types, see Buzan & Waver 2003:55-64.
[26] Buzan & Waever 2003:66
[27] Buzan & Waever 2003: 64-65

leadership etc). The inside transformation can be monitored by checking material conditions for: (1) the possible changes (or not) of polarity; or (2) the discursive ones for possible changes (or not) of amity/enmity relations.

The *external transformation* simply concerns a change in the outer boundaries, either expanding or contracting. As a consequence of the trans-formation of boundaries - due to gain or loss of member, or transformation of previous member's domestic borders - the essential structure of the RSC will be changed. The potential for external transformation can be monitored by looking at the intensity of the interregional dynamics, which should act as a precursor to change. If these are sparse, no change of RSC is likely, but if they are thick, external transformation becomes likely. Applying the above makes possible for the analyst to focus on which possible transformations are possible, and which are not.[28]

Also, "If an RSC contains sub-complexes, these then serves as markers for a possible split if the overarching issues tying the sub-complexes together fade away."[29] As in the Middle East, a case of an RSC where sub-complexes are included, analyzing the change in the patterns mutual to the RSC, is also relevant.

Other sources of transformation may be *interaction capacity* (technological and social infrastructure for transformation and communication), *power differentials* (between regional and global level) and *system polarity*.[30] These are though more difficult to detect and will not be the focus of the analytical scope to follow.

As expressed by Buzan and Waver: "The three forms of security region (unstructured, overlaid and RSC), the main options within them, plus the possibility to exit to another level by regional integration, are all relevant as predictions because they are the only long-term stable forms."[31] By being able to say which conditions may change, and also knowing what a change in these conditions would imply, one can use the RSCT to predict new evolving forms of structures.

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[28] Buzan & Waever 2003:67
[29] Buzan & Waever 2003:66
[30] Buzan & Waever 2003:68
[31] Buzan & Waever 2003:69

3   The history of MERSC

The Middle East is a commonly used term which may be somewhat varying in its definition. According to Buzan and Weaver's definition, the Middle Eastern RSC stretching from Morocco to Iran, including all of the Arab states, Israel and Iran. Cyprus, Sudan and the Horn of Africa is not a part of it. Afghanistan is an insulator between it and South Asia, and Turkey between it and Europe.[32] The high number of states and its geographical widespread, has led to the formation of three sub-complexes within the Middle East: The Gulf, The Levant and the Maghreb.[33] The formation of the Middle East, and for the purpose of this thesis more importantly the Gulf sub-complex, will be briefly explained, using Buzan and Waever's own description. In Buzan and Weavers opinion, the Middle East has a strong autonomous regional level of security. It's a clear example of conflict formation and possesses distinctive cultural features. The insecurity of ruling elites within their domestic sphere plays a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the (in)security overall. The entities are postcolonial modern states, but with elements of clan, tribes and religion.

MERSC is according to Buzan and Waver remarkable for its cross-cutting character of amity and enmity relations. The two core dynamics are the ethnical and religious controversies. Most people in the region are Arabs, but not all, Jews and Iranians being two of the other national entities. Religion, which easy gets woven into the ethnical issue, is the other key dynamics. Iran being religious the only Shiite majority population, and Jews in Israel, live neighbours to the Arabs which are mostly Sunni or Christian.[34] Ethnical minorities in the region, as Kurds, are not more closely elaborated on in the description by Buzan and Waver.

Arabism and Islamism are two competitive as well as closely interlinked ideas in the region. For Iran, constituted by non-Arabs and non-Sunnis, the role within the RSC is quite different from many other pan-Islamic and pan-Arabic members of the Mid-East sub-complex. The situation is shared by Israel, however an antagonist to Iran. Arabism and Islamism has both unified, but also created competition in between the Arabic and Islamic brothers. This indicates inter-Arab and inter-Islamic relations. Relations between the countries are signified by competition for leadership, clan rivalries, resources, territory and ideology. Thus, inter-Arabism and inter-Islamism may be unifying as well as diversifying factors. Arabism and Islamism interlinked many countries taking a stand on the

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[32] Buzan & Weaver 2003:187
[33] Buzan & Waever 2003:188
[34] Buzan & Waever 2003:188

Palestinian side in the Israel-Palestine conflict.[35] This is an overarching phenomenon in the region.

3.1   Specifically on the Persian Gulf Sub-complex

With regard to the Gulf Sub-complex, it was formed after Britain's withdrawal 1971 and contains a triangular rivalry between Iran, Iraq, and the other Arab countries. The Gulf Cooperation council was formed in 1981, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirate and Oman, [36] and was a way to balance the other two actors. According to Bassim Tibi, the formation of the GCC deliberately excluded Iran-Iraq due to fear of them.[37] Within the Arab Community, there has also internal struggles, for example between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, complication the pan-Arab facade. Another recurring theme of enmity in the region is the oppositions between royalists versus radicals.[38]

The Iran-Iraq conflicting has many roots, including border issues and rival power ambitions in the region. The conflict can be understood as Arab versus Persians, or Sunnis versus Shiites, linking back to the opposition between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Shiites. The Iraq conflicting issues with the other Arab states were mainly other Arab issues was mainly over economic issues regarding oil, and the hegemonic ambitions, that is, a struggle for leadership. The failed invasion of Kuwait in 1990 may be seen in this light, as an attempt to gain momentum in 1991. The inter-Arab conflict pattern indicates that ethno- and religious polarity rule not always applies as explanatory source.[39]

Regarding the Levant sub-complex, it should be mentioned that it was built around Israel-Palestinian issue. The complex involves Israel and its neighbors, including both state- and non-state actors. The struggle for leadership among Arabs has often been expressed through the support for Palestinian. The national security concerns linking the Maghreb and Gulf states together, are the issues of pan-Arabism. According to Buzan and Waever, it is the Israel-Palestinian conflict, that creates the Arab/Islam-based security interdependence, around which the RSC is built; without this mutual cultural linkage, there would likely have been no large RSC, but rather three small ones.[40] The development of the cultural linkage will be returned to in the analysis section.

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[35] Buzan & Waever 2003:188
[36] GCC 1
[37] see Tibi in Buzan and Waever 2003:192
[38] Buzan & Waever 2003: 190
[39] Buzan & Waever 2003:192
[40] Buzan & Waever 2003:189

3.2 Linking the domestic to the global level

In the creation of the MERSC, both regional and global level were independently both very strong. On the domestic level, regimes wanted to make themselves secure within their states which in turn displayed post-colonial patterns of insecurity; the interregional level was at the time of only marginal importance.[41]

At the domestic level, most countries in MERSC are socio-politically weak. Strong links between authoritarian regimes, oil resources, international capital and great power allies with extensive internal force to oppress opposition, and thus distancing the regimes from their peoples. Oil state regimes have been rich enough to buy off populations instead of fighting them down, but these are vulnerable to price fluctuations. The effect of authoritarian regimes are that some are beneficiaries, and other not, which often divided society into rival fractions. Islam and its symbols are increasingly interwoven with nationalism and the state as key to identity. However, Islamist have not constituted a real alternative, as they are often to shattered internally or heavily oppressed.[42]

State formation was normally continuing, but not unchallenged. Sub-state entities, have used external actors to securitize issues, like for the Palestinians and Curds; Palestinians are supported by Arabs, especially due to the importance of Jerusalem, and Kurds are supported against their respective governments, by the neighboring countries.[43] It may be contested whether Kurds are supported for what they fight for, or because of whom they fight.

Pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism have not supplant or threatened the state system in the Middle East, but have effected how the state has operated.[44] Expressed by Buzan and Waver, "the cross-currents of Arab nationalism, Islamism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Westernism blur across the domestic and regional levels in complicated, contradictory and often potent ways, affecting attitude and opinion both in the streets and among the ruling elites."[45] Obviously, the Arab and Muslim identity is important both for identity and patterns of amity end enmity.

The domestic and Regional levels play into each other, as governments support domestic fractions in other states, *i.e. b*oth Libya and after 1979 Iran, have supported radical movements in other countries and Saudi Arabia conservative and Islamic ones, and as external powers have supported factions in Israel and Lebanon. In the long run, some regional aspects became domestic, when previously supported groups move, or change their cause. En example of the latter, is when Arab fighters returning from fighting in the Afghan war, directs their capacity towards the home country, or the US, earlier sponsoring the fighters in

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[41] Buzan & Waever 2003:194
[42] Buzan & Waever 2003:194
[43] Buzan & Waever 2003:195
[44] Buzan & Waever 2003:196
[45] Piscatori quoted by Buzan & Waever 2003:196

Afghanistan and Pakistan to oust Soviet.[46] Insecurity of the regimes at the domestic level in most states, spills over into becoming regional security politics. Regional organizations may in this sense be used not only to handle external, but also internal conflicts.

The Israel issue strengthens the domestic legitimacy of many regimes, and thus, the pan-Arab, anti-Zionist agenda set on a regional level is reinforced by the domestic agenda. There seem to be much resistance against Arab-Israel cooperation, and domestic opposition is raised against it when done. The fears that domestic problems would be more vividly opposed if Israel issue lost its salience, may in fact hamper the peace process in the region, as many states do need the external scapegoat Israel to redirect critic voices against their regimes.[47]

The global level penetration into The Middle East RSC stretches back centuries. It may be difficult to see pattern of great- and superpower intervention in Mid-East due to the cross-cutting nature of many issues at hand, but some have been important in defining the anti-western Arabism.[48] First, both France and Britain were involved in the creation of Israel, which is seen as extension of western colonialism. The desire from some regime elites – in their homelands oppressing the grand mass – to maintain good relations with western countries, may have spurred the anti-western elements of Arabism. Also crucial, is that the state system itself was inflicted on the Mid East by the west, and thus regarded as anti-Arabism by default. Maintained influence over economy, like the oil sector, from western powers also grew weariness among the Middle East population.[49]

MERSC is largely affected by the great powers intervention and interests in many ways. It changed economical conditions through its support and trade, changed military conditions through armaments and changes balance of power at large, both through material but also political strength, through becoming the ally of various regimes. It also helped regimes remain in power against domestic oppositions. However, they never managed to control the states and actors, and played a marginal role in shaping powerful military-political security dynamics at the regional level.[50]

There was according to Buzan and Waever little evidence of interregional level interaction prior to the cold war. Some interaction from Maghreb into Sub-Saharan Africa was seen, but not much the other way around, and the African region did thus not affect the MERSC that much. Linkage to South Asia (India and Pakistan) were mainly passed on US relations simultaneously with Pakistan and Iran, or India and Israel. These were though based on the global level, and inter-regional security dynamics were never really interdependent.

In a nutshell, the MERSC is deeply rooted in regional and domestic level, building on local politics and history, and culture and religion. Global level has played in, but not steered the regional security dynamics.

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[46] Buzan & Waever 2003: 196-197
[47] Buzan & Waever 2003:197
[48] Buzan & Waever 2003:190
[49] See Barnett as quoted in Buzan & Waever 2003:197
[50] Buzan & Waever 2003:199

4 The before picture: Buzan and Weaver's analysis

4.1 MERSC developments: From cold war to 2003

When the first gulf war was played out in 1990-1991, the structure of the Middle East RSC and its sub-structures changed from its cold-war settings. The analysis to follow will also focus on developments occurring between 1990s[51] until sometime before 2003. As a result of the war, Iraqi was weakened, which in turn changed balance of power. The triangular structure of Rivalry in the Gulf though remained. The new foreign policy of "double [or dual] containment"[52] of Iran and Iraq simultaneously, made them engage further with other states, as the GCC nations. The US engagement, mainly bilateral, changes the relative weight of global powers in security dynamics in the Gulf. The pan-Arabism linkages suffered from Saddam Hussein's pan-Arabism rhetoric motivating the invasion of Kuwait. Instead of the trans-border and trans-regional effects that the pan-Arab ideal had nurtured before, the importance of a Westphalian state like system grew, and the decreasing pan-Arab identity gave higher ground to radical Islamists.[53]

The new situation also opened way for a peace process between Israel and its surrounding states Syria, Jordan and Palestine, as well as more peripheral Arab states. The decrease in tensions surrounding the Israeli issue, which had functioned as a uniting factor, further disconnected Maghreb from the other sub-complexes.[54] Following the weakened Iraq, as well as increasing US influence, it became possible to ease of tensions surrounding Israel, leading to a weakened interdependence of Maghreb sub-complex's connection to the other two MERSC sub-complexes. Iraqi conflict – to which links from Maghreb were weak – gained importance at the expense of the Arab identity.

4.1.1 The global level intervention into MERSC at large

Historically, the global level has played into the regional level through mainly arms supplies (changing the distribution of power), by having moderated or

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[51] Buzan & Waever 2003: 88
[52] Saltiel & Purcell 2002:1
[53] Buzan & Waever 2003:201
[54] Buzan & Waever 2003:202

suppressed interstate conflict dynamics (but not the intrastate ones) and since it was seen as a threat in its own right. It has been argued that West has always tried to prevent the Mid-East from developing as a great power in its own right, and that the weakening of Egypt, or Iraq at different stages of the process can be seen as means to keep this policy intact.[55] This would then in turn prevent the MERSC from becoming a Security Complex centered around on regional power, thus changing from multipolar to Unipolar[56] , and thus also changing the preconditions for global intervention in the region. In general, other than the traditional issues of dispute has been absorbed into ideological and power rivalries that already make relations hostile.[57] Moreover, most issues has been absorbed into the Westphalian state system framework. Islamist have turned to more focusing on their domestic leaders than on wider issue-crusades. As an example, the traditional religious antagonism between Sunnis and Shiites has substantially defined Iran's relations with the Arabs.[58] The underlying religious antagonism is what creates the conditions for the interstate relations of amity and enmity. Maybe from other analytical perspectives, it could be argued that it is rather the political climate and power-balancing that benefits from using religion as a uniting or dividing factor.

As a natural effect of the collapse of the Soviet Union, both its military and political leverage decreased in the region which in turn changed the anarchic structure. Instead of a bipolar system, where two superpowers played into the regions security dynamics as they saw fit, the US gained a unipolar influence, which it used to dampen inter-security dynamics.[59] The US attempts to moderate the peacemaking process in the Levant, and suppressing regimes in the Gulf, ceased to amplify local interstate conflict in the beginning of the new millennium. Instead it seemed as if the global intervention had repressed and moderated the indigenous regional formation, becoming an example of global level leverage on regional conflict dynamics.[60]

When also domestic discontent with the regimes due to economical, political and societal deficits spread among the people, the relations with the US aggravated further discontent. The anti-US sentiments grew from the US relations with Israel, seen as an enemy by most; with Saudi Arabia being a corrupt autocracy with history of supporting radical groups; and Egypt, a corrupt, undemocratic regime, riddled with political tensions. It seemed as US allies and US itself mutually strengthened the negative image of one another by their interlinkage. Increased support and acceptance for terrorism may have been a result.[61] It is not in the Buzan and Waever analysis not explicitly expressed whether the US lost or gained influence, but it is implicated that discontent with their influence grew.

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[55] Lustick quoted in Buzan & Waever 2003:216
[56] see Buzan & Waever 2003:62 for elaboration on the different forms of security complexes
[57] Buzan & Waever 2003:217
[58] Buzan & Waever 2003:217
[59] Buzan & Waever 2003:203
[60] Buzan & Waever 2003:203
[61] Buzan & Waever 2003:203

4.1.2 The Gulf Sub-complex

Defeat of Iraq in early 90s was likely more important than the demise of Soviet Union.[62] It affected the regional dynamics more that a regional actor lost its influence, than that a global one did. It had four implications that changed things into the 21st century. Firstly, increased the pressure on Iraq, both internal and external. From within, uprisings challenging the Saddam regime grew, but was met with even bloodier revenges from the regime. It was assessed to hold.[63] Secondly, the outcome after the Iraqi war 1991 meant a shift from US policy to dual containment, containing both Iran and Iraq, being each other's enemies, and Israel on the other side. This tied the two sub-complexes more closely together. The dual containment also involved placing substantial numbers of troops in the region, in effect in Saudi Arabia. As of 1998, this was a policy likely to remain firm.[64]

Thirdly, as an effect of Iraq being weakened, Iran gained relative weight. During the 1990s, Iraq underwent a process in which the UN and IAEA locating WMDs and step-by-step disarming Iraq. Even though it was not fully disarmed, it lost in military strength. Iran at the same time, also subject to US containment, was instead rebuilding its strength. Purchasing arms from China and Soviet, as well as developing its own military materials, it grew its might. As a result of decreasing threat from its Iraqi nemesis, Iran increased its influence in the Central Asia. When Iran in 1992 re-engaging with UAE in an old dispute dating from 1971 over Tunb Islands and Abu Musa, it was met with resistance not only from UAE but from all of Arab members in GCC. GCC's overtly depended on US military support, which Iran in turn continued its hostile relations with. The tensions in region were also based on Iran's and Saudi Arabia's (also the largest GCC member) supported different factions in the Afghan civil war. Iran also supported radicals in many of the GCC countries, i.e. Bahrain, but refrained from such activities (officially) and relations improved towards end of 90s. Iran although still opposed US presence.[65]

Finally, another importance sequence of events was the GCC becoming more or less a protectorate of the West and especially the US. As a measure to balance power of Iran and Iraq, GCC aligned with the western countries, assessing that was the best option, compared to aligning for support regionally. Saudi Arabia ordered military material from Western countries to build up its own capacity and aligned with US on dual containment policy. However, as GCC became more dependent on the west, it internally lost cohesion in 2001. Many debates and issues regarding the domestic issues of its members has contributed to disagreements.[66] Possibly, it can be argued that the GCC's relation both among its

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[62] Buzan & Waever 2003:203
[63] Buzan & Waever 2003:203
[64] See Kemp in Buzan & Waever 2003:204
[65] Buzan & Waever 2003:204-205
[66] Buzan & Waever 2003:205

members, as well as its external relations vis-à-vis Iran and Iraq, was caused by increasing Interregionalism. When GCC became externally (by e.i . EU) recognized as an actor, this led both to the other regional powers further securitizing the GCC as western-influence, but at the same time became an example of regional integration of the GCC members.[67] This recognition can however be contested, as US still prefers bilateral relations with the GCC countries over interregional cooperations.[68]

Buzan and Waever also see that as a result of the increased western influence in the Middle East throughout the post-cold-war period, Al-Qaida (and other) organizations was given breeding ground for their anti-western and radical Islamist ideas. Based on the discontent with US interference in Middle East politics, as well as physical deployment of force into the region, they gained legitimacy by the unipolar global level penetration of the region.[69] The radical Islamist movements leading up to 9/11 are according to the RSCT authors the result of an interplay between regional-global dynamics.[70] It is based on the securitization of the US as a threat to a by Al-Qaida (and others) defined referent objects, and is made possible through the global level US presence, constituting a threat, and the regional even domestic level, where Afghanistan as an insulator provided safe havens due to it being a weak state.

4.1.3 Briefly on the Levant and Maghreb Sub-complexes

As with the Gulf, soviet withdrawal from the region had great implications. It meant an ended arms supply to Israel's enemies, which had endured as a way for Soviet to balance US influence. Instead, US influence increased. The Arab-coalition support for US war on Iraq was in part conditioned with a bigger US effort to solve the Arab-Israel conflict US presence initially served to suppress interstate conflict dynamics between the states but it failed to have input on sub-state actors, and groups as Hamas and Hezbollah worked to increased the domestic tensions.[71] Later, Al-Qaida came to play the same role.

The peace patterns of the process that was initiated by the 1993 Oslo accords, which connected Israel and PLO in direct talks, closely follows the shifts in domestic politics, especially in US and Israel.[72] After 2002, confrontation between Israel and Palestinians heated up again, following the events of the war on terror. The Palestinian issue made US search for support in the region more difficult; the Israeli interpretation of freedom fighter/terrorist in the war on terror was acknowledged by the US, increasing hatred and suspicion against them. The US dilemma was that they could not give in to meet the terrorists' demands, but

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[67] For a closer elaboration on functions on Interregionalism, see Hänggi et al 2006: 11-12.
[68] Hazbun 2010: 240
[69] Buzan & Waever 2003: 206
[70] Buzan & Waever 2003: 210
[71] Buzan & Waever 2003:210
[72] Buzan & Waever 2003:210- 211

was under strong pressure to do something to prove terrorists' charges against the US wrong.[73] Adding to the military-political issue, is the long-term problem of water. In the Gulf, water was a secondary issue but in the Levant, it was a primary issue. Not only for Israel-Palestine conflict, but also in relation between Israel and Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, as well as between Jordan and Syria. Water is an essential issue in the Levant security dynamics, but plays a lesser role in the Gulf. [74]

The events since 1991 increased the cross linkages in the region, between Gulf and Levant sub-complexes, likely complicated by the war on terror.[75] This was due to an increased prominence of US in both Sub-complexes, an increased Iranian and Iraqi involvement in confrontation against Israel and an increased terrorist networks woven by Al-Qaida. Also, when Turkey re-engaged in the Middle East, aligning with Israel, Arab states and Iran saw this as an increasing potential threat against them.

As the Gulf and Levant grew closer during the 90s, the Maghreb sub-complex drifted away, falling under EU sway. Also, Maghreb countries' passive attitude during 2nd Gulf war during the early 90s, further excluded them from the interconnectedness and the deepened relations that followed the war. As the war gained attention and the peace-process in the Levant started working, Maghreb countries instead focused on their own domestic affairs and focused on relations with the EU. Arab-Israel conflict is no longer the epicenter of violence in the MERSC, even though it is symbolically important. Yet, the number of fatalities in conflicts in the Middle East from fighting during years 1945-90, indicates that the RSC would remain even without the Arab-Israeli confrontation.[76]

It is difficult for any actor, whether local or global, to support a regional actor against a shared enemy without at the same time threatening a friendly third part, and this dynamic also shapes the preconditions for global engagement.[77] In their final conclusions, Buzan and Waever claim that to "understand this unusually convoluted RSC one has to see its full constellation as an interplay across the domestic, regional and global levels."[78] In the section to follow, these three levels, as well as the interregional level, will be examined as to which major changes has been experienced since Buzan and Waever's 2002 analysis.

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[73] Buzan & Waever 2003:211
[74] Buzan & Waever 2003:212
[75] Buzan & Waever 2003:212
[76] Buzan & Waever 2003:213
[77] Buzan & Waever 2003:218
[78] Buzan & Waever 2003:218

5   Comparison: What has changed?

Buzan and Weaver already in their 2003 analysis indicated a weakening of the MERSC as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict losing its role as the epicenter of the regions violence. Yet, other armed conflicts, and the continuing inter-Arab rivalry, still carried the RSC, and provided powerful and local sources of conflict and insecurity.[79] However, almost ten years later, dynamic changes in all arenas – ranging from the domestic to the global, has provided new preconditions for regional security and insecurity. Some are covered in the following, building up to an analysis on whether the MERSC is up for a change or not. The focus of analysis is mainly on the Gulf region, but some possibly changing conditions effecting the situation in the MERSC at large are also mentioned.

5.1   The MERSC in general

In the recent ten years the Middle East has experienced important changes, with implications for security relations and its status as one coherent RSC.

Already in their post-cold war analysis, Buzan and Waever indicated that the Maghreb Sub-complex seemed to be drifting away from the other two. Throughout 2010 and 2011, political turmoil has overthrown governments in Tunisia and Egypt and caused civil war in Libya. The unfolding domestic events leaves the question as of how the outcome may be, but seemingly Egypt is losing the leader position among the Arab community, for which it has aspired for (and possibly possessed) for long.[80] As the revolts have been called for under the paroles of democratization, possibly also the Al-Qaeda (and other Islamists) have taken a big hit.[81] In Buzan and Waever's description, al-Qaeda was the result of the US penetration into the regional security dynamics of the Middle East. US engagement, a global level interference on the regional level, has largely been securitized by many actors in the Middle East and the Gulf in particular.[82] But indications towards a decreasing breeding ground for anti-western-motivated Islamist has evolved. US presence in Iraq is expected to rapidly continue decreasing since 2008.[83]

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[79] Buzan & Waever, 2003: 215-216
[80] Baghat 2011:31
[81] Stevenson 2011:12
[82] Buzan & Waever 2003:210
[83] Belasco 2009:9

When Osama bin Laden was killed in early 2011, it was possibly an indication of the decreasing strength of Al-Qaeda, but not surely an indication of the organizations diminishing importance. The many democratization processes in the Middle East are fragile to setbacks and Islamists as the Muslim brotherhood may take advantage, especially where offering support to fighting fractions, as in Libya.[84] On the other hand, the announced defeat and expected marginalization of the Islamic resistance symbolic leading organization, may also entail that the "fighting extremism" argument is weakened. As the domestic uprisings in the many countries in the Maghreb Area (Libya, Tunisia and Egypt), in the Levant (Syria) and in the Gulf (Yemen, Bahrain) progress, the argument from the US to support democratization, leaves less space for supporting authoritarian regimes in the region, even those in favor of US alignment. As traditional allies of the US - like Egyptian Leader Hosni Mubarak[85] - fall, the US has both to accept the new situation, where their former allies are losing influence, but as they are losing it to democratic uprisings, the US can hardly continue supporting them. This then also connects to the by Buzan and Waever traditionally claimed theme of royalist versus radicals.[86] When Middle Eastern monarchies and other forms of US supported regimes fall due to peoples call for democratic reforms, supporting these non-democratic leaders seemingly becomes more difficult. This would then imply a weakened global level influence directly into domestic and regional politics. In turn, possible Islamists ambition to play on anti-western sediments decrease as the western presence do so. However, the US is firmly determined to maintain influence in the Middle East, and even previously deemed rouge states as Syria and Iran are viable for diplomatic relations.[87] This does not mean abstaining attempts to effect national politics. Both in the case with Iran, and Syria,[88] US administration has taken position against the political leadership.

Another example of a possibly weakened US leverage in the MERSC, is seen in the US-Israel relationship. Israel-Palestinian conflict, traditionally a determining factor for security relations in the middle East, has since long been attempted to be intervened by US official. Since 2009 when president Barack Obama demanded immediate ending of Israeli settlements on Palestinian grounds, relations have been more complicated.[89] Despite his reaffirmation of US-Israeli relations in his speech[90] on the Middle East in May 2011, President Obama seemingly has a careful balancing to handle: pleasing his strategic partner Israel, balancing off Iran and at the same time standing out as credible to the Arab community in the Middle East in looking out for their interests.[91]

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[84] Stevenson 2011:12
[85] Wall Street Journal 2011
[86] Buzan & Waever 2003: 190
[87] Güney & Gökan 2010:35
[88] Aljazeera 2011
[89] Allin & Simon 2010:33
[90] Obama 2011
[91] Allin & Simon 2011

The reasons as to why the MERSC composes one RSC, rather than its sub-complexes becoming RSCs in their own right, are the tying web of pan-Arabism and the inter-Islamic issues that has tied the sub-complexes together. These sub-complexes "serve as markers for a possible split if the overarching issues tying the sub-complexes together fade away."[92] Following the chain of events during the Arab spring 2011, many previously allied authoritarian regimes, under pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic paroles have fallen. The domestic political transformation within these countries is yet to be seen, and any conclusions would be highly tentative. However, it seems reasonable to assume that more democratic leadership would imply a weakening of another theme of relations, that of struggle between royalists and Islamists. The royalist regimes (or other authoritarian ruling elites) have been target for Islamist groups and repression has fuelled the resistance.[93] With democratic reform and increasing social cohesion, decreasing the distance between the rulers and the people, likely also Islamist opposition will be disencouraged.

As discussed above also with regard to the global level (US) influence, the Israel-Palestinian issue still lies at the heart of security relations in the regions. Following a Saudi attempt to include Iran in broader peace initiative, resulting in the Arab Peace initiative 2002-2007, the Israeli Hamas wars of 2008 and 2009 became a backdrop[94], and the Saudi-led peace-negotiation coordination failed. The conflict as such neither seems to be decreasing; as late as August 15th 2011, new settlements were announced from the Israelis.[95] Surrounding the issue is the fact that Israel still with claims nuclear weapons capacity, which in turn is securitized by most MERSC countries with enmity relations to Israel. This should however not be seen as a problem, or perceived as a real threat.[96] Though, as several countries also get twined up in domestic turmoil, possibly Israeli room for maneuver may be seen to increase, as coordination of the pro-Palestinian states gets weaker as national coordination fails. Even though the Israel issue still plays an important role, pan-Islamic and pan-Arabic linkages connecting to it is weakened due to the domestic level transformation. In turn, this may suggest a regional level change for the MERSC and the mutual minding might be weakening.

Building on Buzan and Waever's own suggestion that the MERSC was losing some of the credentials qualifying it for one large rather than three smaller RSCs, the Gulf Sub-complex will below be analyzed as a RSC in its own, given the indications that such might be the actual case. Not least is this motivated by the fact that connections between Maghreb and the other two sub-complexes were carried mostly by Tunisia and Libya[97], two states now caught up in domestic turmoil.

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[92] Buzan & Waever 2003:66
[93] Buzan & Waever 2003:194
[94] Kostiner 2009:429
[95] IMEMC 2011-08-15
[96] Baghat 2011:31
[97] Buzan & Waever 2003: 193

5.2 The Gulf Sub-complex

5.2.1 Inside transformation in the Gulf

The *Inside transformation* regards material conditions for: 1) possible changes or status quo of polarity, and: 2) the possibility for changes or status quo of amity/enmity relations.

Polarity

Traditionally, the Gulf region has experienced a power-balancing between Iran, Iraq and the other Arab countries. With Saddam Hussein ousted from power in 2003 and Iraq subsequently weakened, the polarity in the region has changed. The defeating of Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a part of the US policy following the 9/11 attack. Also included in such a policy was the reformation of Middle Eastern countries to be susceptible to western political and economical ideas, a policy that in 2009 seemed failed.[98]

A consequence of a failed attempt to transform the Middle East, but defeating Iraq, has been the emerge of Iran as a stronger regional power. Also adding to Iran's increasing role, was the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan.[99] An example, has been the challenging of the international community with their aspirations to acquire nuclear weapons. If succeeding, this may further change polarity within the region. "An Iran with nuclear weapons capability is likely to further destabilize the Middle East, but it is not likely to ignite a regional nuclear arms race."[100] With regard to the direct relations in the Gulf, the invasion of Iraq during 2003 and the removal of Saddam from power not only weaken Iraq, but has created new conditions for better political and economical relations between Iran and Iraq:

> "The invasion has resulted in an increased influence on the domestic development in Iraq. Iran's reasonably good relations with a Shiite friendly government in Iraq coupled with economic and trade incentives, will have an important impact in the future of the Iranian foreign policy towards Iraq."[101]

Possibly then, the previously so infected and securitized relationship between Iran and Iraq, indicates both a change in polarity, as possibly a indication of changed patterns of amity and enmity.

With regard to Iraq's lost role as one of the players in the tri-polar power-balancing, also its relation-building with the other Arab states in the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, seems to be de-securitized after the third Gulf war; already in 2004,

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[98] Hazbun 2010:240
[99] Perthes 2011:96
[100] Baghat 2011:40
[101] Atarodi 2009:4, 16-18

they were invited to join certain offices of the GCC, without though becoming a member.[102] An important common denominator is the religious interpretation of Islam – Sunni. Also other states, as Yemen, has been invited on similar conditions, indicating at least some friendly expressions.

The polarity in sum seems to be shifting towards Iran, with Saudi Arabia and the GCC providing a second pole of power in the Gulf. Other states in the region, including Iraq, will for the nearest future have to align with this bipolar environment. On the domestic level, Iranian and GCC power ambitions will also play in, likely supporting different sides in conflict evolving in states as Bahrain and Yemen, the latter with a traditional conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. The development in domestic turmoil, and the subsequent reaction from the regional actors, will be of importance for future securitization and regional security.

Amity/enmity in relations in the Gulf

The basis for relations of amity and enmity is the second indicator of internal transformation according to the Predictive RSCT.[103] Obviously, enmity and amity in relations do effect the inter-state relations, and thus also polarity. Here follows some observations made.

As described by Buzan and Waever, some revolving themes of amity and enmity in the MERSC have been foremost those of Arabism and Islamism, and in part also a struggle between royalists versus Islamists.[104] With regard to the Arab versus non Arabs, the new emerging bipolar Gulf is a contest between the Persian Iran and the Arab GCC. With the Arab Iraq collapsed but yet invited to join certain of the GCC forums, and Egypt – a former challenger to Saudi Arabia about the leadership over the pan-Arab community – caught up in a domestic transformation, the inter-Arab conflicts seems to have somewhat ceased, or at least paused, from overshadowing the Arab community's external challenges.

Also with regard to the Islamic theme on relations, the Iranian and Saudi bipolarity contains the traditional patterns. Both trying to claim legitimacy to represent a broader Muslim community,[105] their mutual power-balancing draws on the religious as well as ethnical connections, and the surrounding states are aligned accordingly. Also still differing between the two polar rivalries is the type of rule. Iran, an Islamic states, is seen with suspicion from the Emirates ruling elite families. This political view also plays into adjacent domestic conflicts, as Iran is seen as a threat by its neighbors as it may support Islamic grouping in the other countries, often in a domestic opposition.[106]

A theme not raised by Buzan and Weaver was the balancing between democratic versus authoritarian regimes in the MERSC. This may not have been a traditionally frequent issue of struggle, but domestic transformation processes

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[102] Pinfari 2009:18
[103] Buzan and Waever 2003:67
[104] Buzan & Waever 2003:190
[105] Zweiri & Wootton 2009:120
[106] Buzan & Waever 2003:190

throughout 2011 indicates this may be a returning theme in the future, as more states' population raise calls for democratic change.

5.2.2 The external transformation – Gulf in Focus

External transformation regards the outside forces of change, and can be monitored by looking at the intensity of the interregional dynamics." If these are sparse, no change of RSC is likely, but if they are thick, external transformation becomes likely".[107] The seemingly breaking up of the Maghreb from the MERSC, would be an example of a external transformation. The decreasing linkage between the sub-complexes is though already assumed here, and external transformation regards the Gulf sub-complex.

Interregional relations may include many forms of cooperations. In the tradition meaning, interregional required the involvement of two or more organizations or groups of states, but with new Interregionalism, only of the involved parties needs to be a group or more institutionalized organization.[108] GCC can in this light be seen as both a way to form an alliance against external threats, as well as a way to enhance domestic security of the anachronistic regimes.[109] The interregional tendencies seem strongest with the GCC.

Whereas US has attempted to maintain bilateral relations with most of its Gulf counterparts, the EU and GCC has since 1988 developed and deepened interaction.[110] Considering that "the GCC is the EU's fifth largest export market and the EU is the GCC's second trading partner after Japan"[111], it is no wonder they are attempting to more closely consolidate their interregional cooperation. However, failing to adopt a free trade agreement, the cooperation has cooled somewhat.[112] The GCC has also tried to establish interregional cooperation with other geographically bound partners, as with EFTA, ASEAN and Rio Group.[113] All these interregional cooperations are though fairly underdeveloped when comparing to larger interregional relations. Common for all of GCC's inter-regional relations is that they concern mostly economical and trade related issues, and rarely security issues.

Taking our offset in the polarity of the region, the Iranian interregional cooperation would then, if not the Saudi, be the indicator of an external transformation. As with the GCC, institutionalizing its inter-state relations, Iran has over the years also sought to find strategic partners. Since they have had scarce number of influential friends within the Gulf and even greater Middle East, they have searched elsewhere. Before Cold War's end, Soviet was the natural

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[107] Buzan and Waever 2003:68
[108] Hänggi 2006:41
[109] See Acharya 1992 quoted in Buzan and Waever 2003:197
[110] GCC 2
[111] Atger and Guild 2011:3
[112] Atger and Guild 2011:3
[113] Hänggi 2006:47

partner to balance US influence in the region, but since the fall of the Soviet Union, Iran has tried to counter US influence by membership in the non-aligned movement,[114] the Organization in the Islamic Centre (OIC) and the Organization of the Oil exporting countries (OPEC) . They have also gain observer status in the Arab League and Shanghai Cooperation Council.

In order to balance the GCC, Iran has been in search for another regional actor where they can leverage more influence, but using both the OIC and Economic Cooperation Organization[115] (ECO) for anti-US statements has repelled other members. ECO is otherwise a developing institutional base for mainly trade and economic cooperation. Iran has themselves suggested the foundation of Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization (CSCO) and the Association for Persian Language speakers, as responses to Turkish regionalist initiatives.[116]

As it seems though, Interregionalist ambitions do exist, but are fairly weak in terms of real impact, especially in the security sector. Most cooperations are of economical and trade character. The level of institutionalization is low, and even though cooperation with external actors exists for both GCC and Iran, there seems to be little indication a interregional trend that would imply an external transformation of Gulf RSC.

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[114] Iran will host the Non-aligned Movement's meeting in 2012.
[115] ECO includes 10 states: Afghanistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan.
[116] Herzig 2010:506

6 Executive summarize

Since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in 2003, polarity has shifted from a weak multipolar to a bipolar RSC, with Iran and the Arab countries represented through GCC balancing off each other. The domestic raveling throughout all of the Middle East may have further implications for polarity and how states will align themselves with either Iran or the GCC.

Even though polarity is slowly changing, and domestic arenas change in many countries, there seems to be little indication of change of the traditional patterns of amity and enmity. In accordance with Buzan and Waever's description thematic antagonism between Arabs and non-Arabs, as well as the struggling religious fractions, still sets the agenda for conflict patterns in the region. There are in terms of polarity some material conditions for internal transformation of a Gulf RSC, and most definitely for at Middle Eastern RSC if regarding it in the light of Buzan and Waever's 2003 analysis.

With regard to external transformation, interregional attempts are made, but progress is slow. Many external parties have been drawn into the region for many years, as with the EU and GCC, but no deeper cooperation is built. With regards to the GCC having some coordinative problems of their own, and Iran being seen as a dangerous partner due to their bad international reputation, the material conditions for interregional development, and thus external transformation, are seemingly weak.

As a final reflection on the topic, Buzan and Waever's RSCT moves on a highly aggregated level. This may serve their aim of providing templates for analysis, rather than in-depth research of their RSC covered. In turn, their provided predictive RSCT, give weak tools for fully conducting a in-depth analysis of a RSC. Given the case at hand, the structure of three sub-complexes made Middle Eastern RSC a difficult case to cover in limited in the given time frame.

Further research on the topic could include an expanded analysis covering also the Levant and Maghreb Sub-complex, or analyze the implications of internal transformation. Such a future study may build on and develop the material presented in this thesis.

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