

# Containment Strategy of the United States and the United Arab Emirates toward Iran

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## Abstract

The relationship between the United States and the United Arab Emirates is becoming increasingly complex and strategic. The two countries' strategic partnership in the fields of security, military, political and intelligence has also acted as a facilitating variable in this field. The UAE acts as the US financial arm in support of institutionalization and democratization and promotion of liberal values in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen and, Palestine. The article's main question is that, how and why the United Arab Emirates and the United States are trying to contain Iran in the middle East? In this regard, using the theoretical propositions of aggressive realism, the hypothesis is that the United States has defined a unique role for the UAE in transferring responsibility to regional actors to decrease Washington's balance cost in the Middle East and North Africa. The method used in the present article is based on descriptive-analytical approach and the data is collected through library

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researches, interview with experts and reliable internet sources.

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## **Introduction**

Since the UAE's independence from Britain in 1971, Abu Dhabi and Washington have had friendly relations. The two countries have gradually expanded their strategic partnership including defense, legal, energy, security and cultural exchanges. Bilateral cooperation between the United States and the United Arab Emirates is vital due to its physical and security presence in two critical parts of the world, namely the Middle East and North Africa. Economic relations between the two countries are also high, with the UAE being Washington's third largest export destination, with annual imports of \$ 15 billion to \$ 20 billion. From the US point of view, the UAE is like a regional headquarters to trade in the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia (US Department of State, 2020)

As a major opponent of Iran's growing influence in the Middle East, the United States, and Arab governments, including the United Arab Emirates, have organized and performed a series of countermeasures to control Iran's influence and curb its growing regional power. In the recent years, the growth of Iran's regional influence and power, especially after the US invasion of Iraq and the shift in the balance of power in Iran's favor, changed the perceptual and mental structure of the leaders of Western and Arab governments in the region. Iran's success in keeping Bashar al-Assad in power and helping to restore stability in Syria, the destruction of ISIS by strengthening the resistance axis, the attractiveness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the people of Bahrain and Afghanistan, and the emergence of a new power on the Arabian Peninsula called the Ansarullah movement; all shows

Iran's upper hand in determining regional equations. In addition to these factors, Iran's institutional and coalition-building power, especially its success in bringing Russia into the Syrian crisis and advancing the Astana peace talks in cooperation with Ankara and Moscow, highlighted the strategic depth of Iran's power.

This paper evaluates the strategies adopted by the UAE and the United States to counter Iran's strategic expansion and regional influence. In this regard, the main question of the article is that, how and why the United Arab Emirates and the United States are trying to contain Iran in the middle East? In response, using the descriptive and analytical method, the hypothesis is tested that the United States has defined a special role for Abu Dhabi in the context of transferring responsibility to regional actors in order to reduce the costs of Iran containment and Washington's balancing in the Middle East and North Africa. The article first presents a theoretical framework and then containment policy's place in the US national security strategy is explained. In the next step, the joint mechanisms of the UAE and the United States in controlling Iran will be examined, and finally, the strategies of Washington and Abu Dhabi in controlling Iran will be examined.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The division of realism into offensive and defensive realism offers interesting propositions about countries' motives, motivations, and strategies for gaining relative power and increasing power. The central issue in the debate between defensive and offensive realism is whether incentives from the international system will encourage countries to maintain and increase their security by trying to maintain the status quo, or whether they want to achieve maximum security by increasing their relative power and influence.

Offensive realists believe that anarchy forces governments to maximize their relative power or influence. Anarchy is a Hobbesian situation where security is scarce, and governments

strive to achieve it by maximizing their relative advantages. In his famous work, *The Tragedy of the Great Powers Politics*, John Mearsheimer presents five main assumptions of offensive realism. The first proposition emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system. There is no government above governments in the international system, and each government considers itself the highest authority. Second hypothesis; That the great powers inherently have a degree of offensive military capabilities that enable them to harm and possibly destroy each other. The great power is also a country that can significantly threaten the survival of neighboring countries and change global influence in its favor (Trevino, 2013: 384). Third assumption; That is governments can never be sure of the intentions of other governments. In particular, no government can be sure that the government will no longer use its offensive military capability against it. Fourth hypothesis; That the first and foremost goal of the great powers is to ensure survival. In particular, governments seek to preserve the territorial integrity and independence of their domestic political order. Finally, the fifth assumption; That is, governments are rational actors. They are aware of their external environment and choose the appropriate strategic behavior to survive in this environment (Toft, 2005: 383).

Based on these assumptions, aggressive realists argue that country leaders should pursue security policies that weaken their potential enemies and increase their power over other countries. In their view, if a country wants to survive, it must be a good offensive realist; Because from the point of view of offensive realists, the competitive nature of international politics is constantly intensifying, and therefore countries must increase their power to such an extent that no country can covet to attack them. Offensive realists believe that the great powers are striving to achieve four primary goals: First, they seek to become regional hegemonies. The second goal is that they intend to maximize the amount of wealth they control in the world. Third, achieving superior ground power. Given that the land force is the main and

superior form of military power, countries aspire to have the most equipped army in the region. Ultimately, the great powers seek to achieve nuclear supremacy, although this is very difficult to achieve.

War and blackmail are strategies that the great powers can use to increase their share of world power. In the blackmail strategy, governments try to achieve their goals without war and by threatening to use military force against their rivals. The great powers seek to gain power over their rivals, and prevent them from gaining power to their detriment. Balancing and buck passing is one of the main strategies used for this purpose. From Mearsheimer's point of view, the balance of power is the most crucial way to control potential competitors (Mearsheimer, 2001: 147-157).

According to Mearsheimer, governments are always trying to maximize their relative power. However, by considering the power and possible actions of their competitors, they estimate the costs and benefits of possible aggression. Only when the benefits outweigh the costs do they increase relative power. The great powers use two strategies of balancing and buck passing in order to control and contain their enemies and rivals. In the buck passing strategy, governments try to delegate the task of confronting the aggressor to another major power, instead of direct balancing. In a bipolar system, buck passing is less likely because there is no third power. In a balanced multipolar situation, buck passing is more likely because each power can be confident that the aggression of another major power can be controlled (Toft, 2005: 388).

In multipolar systems without potential hegemony and without a common border with the aggressor, the buck passing strategy is a common mechanism. Threatened competitors tend to use this strategy in situations where they face a dominant threat. As a general rule, the greater the potential for hegemonic power, the more likely a balanced coalition will be formed. Buck passing often takes place in unbalanced multipolar systems because

governments try to avoid containment costs (Eugen Preda, 2016: 93).

### **I- Containment Policy and US National Security Strategy**

The United States, in the form of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, countered European efforts to strengthen their presence in the Western Hemisphere. One of the most critical applications of restraint policy in American foreign policy was the Truman Doctrine, which was based on the idea of George Kennan. The goal of the strategy was to protect US interests from the Soviet Union's growing efforts to strengthen its influence in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Communism was controlled through various mechanisms, from proxy war (Korean War) to economic and political support. Various regimes and organizations during the Cold War, including the Marshall Plan and the NATO, SEATO and CENTO alliances, were implemented. Although he emphasized the use of containment through political and economic leverage and considered it part of diplomacy, the United States also used military, espionage, sabotage, and intelligence-propaganda tools in addition to these two levers (Nouri, 2019: 251-252).

The policy of "dual containment" became the official US policy toward Iran and Iraq during the presidency of Bill Clinton. Martin Indyk was the main designer of this strategy. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United States has repeatedly accused Iran of having "expansionist ambitions," "a human rights violator", "distributor of weapons of mass destruction", "the most active state sponsor of terrorism", "a major factor in regional instability", "the disruptive of peace process between the Arabs and the Zionist regime", "a member of the axis of evil" (Soltani Nejad and et al, 2013: 108). They have also focused the implementation of the containment strategy to prevent Iran from projecting its power in the region.

The containment strategy concerning the Islamic Republic of

Iran has been to counter nuclear power, missile power and regional influence. The 2017 US National Security Document states that "economic instruments such as sanctions, anti-money laundering and anti-corruption and anti-corruption measures (especially multilateral economic pressure) can be an important part of broader deterrence, coercion and Restrict America's Enemies" (Jahanian and Eslami, 2020:144)

## **II- Joint Mechanisms to Contain Iran**

The UAE's close ties with the Treasury Department, the Commerce Department and the US Federal Reserve to implement the policy of maximum pressure and anti-Iranian sanctions continue as the country struggles to play a new role in the liberal economic order. Such an approach has exposed the common economic leverage of Washington and Abu Dhabi in dealing with Iran. The following examines each of these common mechanisms:

In 2012, the US State Department signed an economic policy dialogue (EPD) with the UAE State Department to address various issues, including trade, investment, special cooperation and competition. EPD acts as a platform for developing new initiatives to strengthen economic and trade relations between the two countries. The United States holds EPD meetings with its most important trading partners (UAE-US Economic Policy Dialogue, 2020).

The Treasury Department handles federal finances through tax collection and billing, and manages government accounts and public debt through currency management. The Treasury Department also enforces financial and tax laws. In addition to its domestic mission under the auspices of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the Department, imposes economic and trade sanctions on foreign countries and actors based on US foreign policy and national security objectives (U.S. Department of The Treasury, 2020).

The UAE's cooperation with these ministries, especially in the implementation of the campaign of maximum pressure against

Iran, has paved the way for improving US-UAE economic relations. Recent meetings between Mohammed bin Zayed and Emirati officials with US Treasury Secretary Mnuchin aimed at strengthening the anti-money laundering regime and implementing the provisions of the Financial Action Task Force indicate an increase in the UAE's moves to limit Iran's strategic capability through international economic regimes. It should be noted that the UAE, with the establishment of an institution called IRPO, continuously reports all internal developments in the economic and political dimensions in order to counter Iran's nuclear and missile program (U.S. Department of The Treasury, 2018). For example, in 2018, the UAE, along with six member states of the Terrorism Financing Targeting Center (TFTC), imposed sanctions on members of Hezbollah's parliament.

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) provides the framework and strategic principles for trade and investment dialogue between the United States and other TIFA Parties. The United States and TIFA partners consult on a wide range of trade and investment issues. The agreement was signed in 2004 to facilitate and increase trade and investment between the UAE and the United States (Office of the United States Trade Representation, 2020). This agreement is crucial because it provided the first foundations for raising the level of economic relations between the two countries to a strategic stage.

### **III- US and UAE Strategies to Contain Iran**

By projecting and highlighting the UAE as a regional model and flagship of economic and technological development in the light of strategic relations with the West and encouraging other Islamic countries to move in this direction, Washington seeks to create a positive image of the UAE dependent model against Iran's Indigenous and independent approach. Utilizing Abu Dhabi as the US proxy arm in the region and facilitating US offshore balancing through Abu Dhabi's active presence in Islamic civil strife while fomenting dualism and multiplicity through Iran, Saudi Arabia,

Turkey and the UAE create a kind of security umbrella for the West and the Zionist regime. Under these circumstances, the puzzles of maximum pressure policy are strengthened by reducing the UAE's trade relations (ports, banking and transit, insurance) with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The following is a detailed review of the most important strategies adopted by the UAE and the United States of America to contain Iran's economic channels and resources and regional influence.

**Iran's Regional Power:** The primary political strategy to contain Iran in the region is the Iranophobia project, which intensified after 2016 and when Trump came to power. The joint strategy of the UAE and the United States can be clearly seen in the joint stances of the two countries' officials, and in talks and negotiations with other regional governments and international organizations. On this basis, Iran is portrayed as a significant cause of instability in the region. Holding the Warsaw Summit in 2019 and then the Manama Summit in Bahrain to review Iran's threats in the region and advance a common strategy to shape world leaders' perceptions of Iran's potential and actual threats are among the most important areas of US-American cooperation with Arabic, especially the UAE, in the region (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2019).

**Sanctioning:** In the previous period of sanctions, more than 50% of Iran's total foreign trade volume was conducted through the UAE according to available statistics. Being aware of this issue and the dependence of Iran's trade on the transfer of money and the settlement of currencies such as the dollar and the euro through the UAE channel, Washington and Abu Dhabi organized and implemented large-scale programs to increase economic pressure on Iran. The encouragement of UAE banks and financial institutions not to cooperate with Iranian financial institutions and businessmen in 2019 caused the exchange rate in the Tehran market to experience an unprecedented jump. The UAE's public and private institutions, in cooperation with US agencies such as the Treasury Department, OFAC, the State Department and the

Ministry of Energy, also act as a constraint on Iran's foreign trade. (Financial Times, 2019).

**UAE-US Military Cooperation:** Another strategy to contain Iran in the region is to expand military cooperation between the UAE and the United States. Under the new Washington-Abu Dhabi Partnership Agreement, 4,000 US Navy and Air Force will be deployed to protect Emirati ports and airports, including Jebel Ali Port and Al-Dhafra Airbase. To this must be added the purchase of more than \$ 15 billion worth of military equipment from American companies between 2014 and 2019, which shows the growing military cooperation between the two countries in the face of the military threat from Iran (BBC Persian 2013). According to available statistics, in 2018, the country has spent nearly six percent of its GDP on purchases and military operations in Libya and Yemen and balancing with Iran (Dudley, 2019).

**Reconciling Arabs and the Zionist Regime:** As mentioned, Iranophobia and the distribution of threatening perceptions among the Arab rulers of the region, especially the UAE, have led to the closeness of the Zionist regime with this country in recent years. The regime, as a permanent enemy and constant threat to Islamic countries, has given way to Iran as a hegemonic state in the discourse of Emirati rulers (Iran Press, 2019). In August 2016, the UAE participated in the Red Flag exercise alongside Israel, Spain and Pakistan. In March 2017, the Israeli regime and the UAE Air Force flew together in a joint Greek maneuver. Another operational manifestation of this issue can be seen in the cooperation of the Zionist regime and the US Naval force in the region, which will bring the regime closer to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. The UAE's support for the unilateral deal of the century, which was unveiled with the UAE ambassador to the United, revealed the increasing convergence on the Hebrew-Arab front against Iran. In addition to these cases, we should mention the role of the Action Group against Iran in the US State Department, which during secret meetings has paved the way for the proximity of the positions of the UAE and the Zionist regime

(Jakes and Wong, 2019).

**Claim of Ownership of the Three Islands:** Other strategies to contain Iran are claims to ownership of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington, 2019). In 2012, the UAE government made three diplomatic proposals to resolve the dispute over the sovereignty of the islands with Iran. First, referral to the International Court of Justice; second, the use of arbitration in international law, and third, intensive negotiations between the two parties.

The US media, with the financial support of the UAE government, has produced several programs on the UAE's sovereignty over the islands, aimed at convincing world public opinion that "these islands are occupied and the hegemonic nature of the Iranian government." which must be controlled or destroyed by creating an international coalition. In addition, Abu Dhabi has sought to use its institutional power in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League to reach a consensus against Iran.

**Elimination of Iran from Regional Trends:** Another joint action of the UAE and the United States is excluding Iran from regional trends and the exclusion of Iran from the future equations of the West Asian region. Not inviting Iran to attend the Oslo Peace Summit on the Yemeni crisis, excluding Iran from the list of countries invited to the Geneva II conference on determining Syria's future, and not inviting Iran to attend Persian Gulf maritime security meetings are three prominent examples of a joint effort by the United States and the United Arab Emirates to contain Iran's power (Keck, 2014).

Iran's exclusion from regional trends would mean Iran's non-participation in determining the future status of the entire region, especially in disputed areas such as Yemen, Syria and Iraq. (Younes, 2019). Following the United States, the Arab governments of the region, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have made Iran's presence in regional equations and meetings conditional on the full resolution of bilateral issues. Following the

US and the Foreign Ministry's 12-point statement on lifting sanctions, the UAE has set six basic conditions for re-establishing relations with Iran and re-introducing Iran to regional arrangements.

**Renewing Relations with the Syrian Government:** The UAE's foreign policy between 2011 and 2019, in the peak of domestic and foreign movements to overthrow the Assad government, was focused on following US foreign policy. It even financed part of the Salafist groups opposed to the Assad government (AL Mustafa and Fenton-Harvey, 2020).

Since 2019, with the growth of the Resistance Front's conquests in Syria and the certainty of Assad's continued presence in power, the UAE has sought to downplay Iran's role in shaping Syria's future by promising financial and political assistance in parallel with the Trump administration (IRNA, 2020). With Saudi financial support for Syria, the US-Emirati Comprehensive Plan has made financial assistance and a return to the Arab League conditional on a reduction in Iran's military presence in the country. Iran's domination of the ports of Latakia and Tartus, and the two countries' agreements in infrastructure and large-scale construction, have increased the level of concern of hostile governments such as the UAE and the United States to contain Iran. In the first step, the UAE reopened its embassy in Syria in 2018. In the next step, the Crown Prince of the UAE, Mohammed bin Zayed, expressed his solidarity with the country in the face of the coronavirus crisis during a telephone call with Bashar al-Assad.

Some analysts have called such developments a sign of the UAE's support for Damascus' reunification with the Arab League. Although UAE Minister Zaki Anwar has declared the nature of the call humanitarian, the political aspect of such an approach is particularly significant given the UAE's interest in actively participating in the Syrian reconstruction process and its concerns about Turkey's growing role. (Yeranian, 2020). The UAE's efforts to get closer to Russia, including calling Turkey's overthrow of

Russia's Sukhoi 24 terrorist attack in November 2015 and supporting Russia's position in Idlib, also serve as a behind-the-scenes goal to neutralize the Iran-Turkey-Russia tactical alliance in the Syrian crisis.

**Deepening the Crisis in Iraq:** The structure of the political system in Iraq, along with a 65% Shiite majority in the country and Iran's logistical and financial support in the fight against ISIS from 2014 to 2018, has brought most of the parties in Iraqi power closer to Iran's regional approach. To this must be added the \$ 12 billion annual trade between Iran and Iraq, which shows the extraordinary level of bilateral cooperation. This has led to the formation of an American-Arab coalition centered on the UAE and Saudi Arabia to counter Iran's structured influence in the internal power relations in Iraq (Almogbal, 2020). Supporting Sunni parties, encouraging Kurdish parties to secede, providing financial and logistical support to terrorist movements, and creating new Arabic-language media to lead the wave of protests against Iran and Shiite parties are among the coalition's most important measures to curb Iran's influence in Iraq (Hamasaheed, 2019).

In Sunni areas, the UAE's strategy has supported centrifugal tendencies, including diplomatic, political and financial support for the Sunni region plan. In addition to the UAE's regional goals of expanding influence and influence over Iraqi political processes, such measures seek to increase pressure on Iran's regional policy through leverage. In 2020, an UAE security team arrived in Erbil to meet with Sunni leaders. In this meeting, the preparations for the project of creating a Sunni region in the northwestern provinces of Iraq (Salah al-Din, Al-Anbar and Ninawa) and mobilizing them inspired by the Kurdistan region model were discussed. (Al-Minar, 2020).

In parallel, the UAE has made sectarian efforts to divide Iran's allies in Iraq, including through close ties with Muqtada al-Sadr (leader of the Sadr movement) and Sayyed Ammar Hakim (head of the National Hekmat Movement) (The New Khalij, 2019). In

this regard, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi intend to use Muqtada al-Sadr as a key lever to weaken Iran's influence in the regions. (Abu-Nasr, 2017).

**Closer Ties with the Kurds of Syria and Iraq:** At the heart of the UAE's strategy for establishing close ties with the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds is to increase the country's political weight in developments in Iraq and foment ethnic-religious divisions in the country. The UAE invests in Iraqi Kurdistan is the highest level of foreign investment in the region (Sputnik, 2019).

Abu Dhabi considers Iraqi Kurdistan as a stable region inside Iraq, which has a special place in drawing the subsequent scenarios of this country according to the political trends and the share of Kurds in the cake of power in Iraq (Al-Rabeai, 2019). During the referendum on the independence of Kurdistan, despite the UAE's diplomatic stance on refusing to hold the referendum, there were reports that Abu Dhabi sponsored the referendum and that the UAE consul in Erbil visited polling stations (Emirate Alyoum, 2017). Abu Dhabi's approach in this regard even provoked a reaction from Baghdad. The coincidence of these trips with the internal protests in Iraq (2019-2020) made doubts about the UAE's interference in the internal affairs of Iraq a reality. One of the goals of the Emirati project is to increase pressure on Iran and Turkey (two countries that include other Kurdish minorities in West Asia in their territory).

**Confronting the Ansarullah Movement in Yemen:** With US military and technical support, the UAE government, along with Al Saud, has been trying to reduce Iran's influence in Yemen in recent years. US-UAE cooperation in supporting separatist forces in southern Yemen and the suppression of the Ansarullah movement (Zaidi Shiites close to Iran) reveals another aspect of the two countries' strategic plan to cut off Iran's influence in the region.

In addition to the geopolitical importance of the efficiency of the government close to the UAE in Yemen, the country has another geostrategic goal in confrontation with Iran. The main

goal of the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia is to prevent Ansar al-Allah from taking complete control of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait in the Aden Sea, to use the capacity of Yemeni ports (especially Al-Hodeida and Ras Isa), and to prevent the UAE from diminishing in importance (Bender, 2015). Containing Iran's influence in the region will open the door for hostile governments to focus on the Strait of Hormuz.

**Supporting Al-Khalifa in Bahrain:** After the start of the Islamic Awakening in 2011 and the growing dissatisfaction with the Al-Khalifa government in Bahrain, the Islamic currents in the country, especially the Bahraini Shiites, formed nationwide protests to change the regime in Bahrain. The UAE and the United States saw the movement as dependent on Iran and part of a strategy to expand Iran's influence. Along with Saudi Arabia, the two countries provide security support to Al Khalifa by sending equipment and military forces in the form of island shield forces, navy and police to suppress the protests. In addition, a \$ 10 billion support package was provided to Al-Khalifa as part of the Cooperation Council (Cafiero, 2018).

On the one hand, the UAE supports the existence and survival of the Al Khalifa regime and the repression of its internal opposition by the regime. On the other hand, Bahrain supports the UAE's claims about the three Iranian islands and its ambitions in the region. It should be noted that the US Navy Command in West Asia is based in Bahrain with about 7,000 military officers. (Military Bases, 2019). Strategically, Iran's dominance in the region and establishing of an Iranian-affiliated Shiite state will lead to Iran's complete domination of the Oman Sea and the Arabian Sea.

**Institutionalization and Multilateralism:** Institutional confrontation with Iran's growing power in the region is another strategy of the United States and the United Arab Emirates to prevent Iran from expanding its influence. Efforts to integrate the anti-Iranian strategy of Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and other Arab states even after the boycott of the country in 2017 within

the framework of the P-GCC strategy, the creation of new institutions within the P-GCC such as Terrorist Financing Targeting Center in Riyadh, formation of US-led Gulf security arrangements, formation of Arab NATO and United Arab Army, Warsaw and Manama Initiative with the help of other Arab countries in the region are measures to confront Iran.

The scope of these institutions has also expanded to anti-Iranian meetings with Israeli officials. In December 2018, Yossi Cohen, the then head of Mossad, in a secret meeting with the heads of the intelligence agencies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, discussed the mechanisms of countering the influence of Iran and Turkey.

Another area that can be mentioned as a platform for cooperation between the UAE and the United States is their support for separatist and subversive movements, groups and currents in Iran. In the latest examples of this strategy, the Al-Ahwazi separatist group, formed with the financial and logistical support of the UAE and the United States, launched a sabotage and assassination operation in Iran in 2018, which some Emirati officials welcomed. This terrorist group even has a particular office in the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Parsi, 2018).

Supporting the terrorist group of MEK has also been on the agenda of the Emirati officials. In this regard, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the UAE, Anwar Gargash, supported and appreciated the presence of the former Minister of Intelligence of Saudi Arabia, Turki Al-Faisal, at the Conference of the MEK in Paris. Another example is the support of the Jundallah group, which was reduced after the arrest of the group's leader. Behind the UAE's support for the Kurds in Iraq and Syria lies increasing pressure on Iran and Turkey. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to push Iran back into the region and engage it in internal affairs instead of a direct regional presence (MashreghNews, 2018).

**Strengthening Salafi Movement:** The UAE supported the Afghan Mujahideen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with Saudi Arabia and the United States. The common goal of

these countries with the Salafi network active in Afghanistan and Pakistan was to prevent Iran's cultural influence. In 1996, along with other countries in the southern Persian Gulf, it recognized the Taliban and supported the group until the assassination of its ambassador to Afghanistan in 2017.

Abu Dhabi has allowed the Taliban to raise funds and has pursued a policy of silence regarding the supply of weapons to Salafist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan through UAE ports. The UAE and Saudi Arabia pursue a strategy of regional identity transformation and upsetting the balance of power to the detriment of Iran by supporting Salafist fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. (France 24, 2021). In the first few weeks of the fall of Kabul alone, the UAE sent more than 250 tons of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and opened its airports to more than 5,000 Afghan refugees. Mohammad bin Zayed is concerned that the Taliban seeking action against Abu Dhabi, so he has deployed special forces alongside US forces in Afghanistan. The UAE government is concerned about the growth and consolidation of violent extremist groups in Afghanistan. It is feared that the leadership's strong opposition to the country's religious extremism will become the target of these groups. Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv carry out their first joint missions after public relations in Afghanistan (Fontenrose, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Containing Iran's influence and strategic supremacy in the West Asian region has been a central focus of the Trump administration since 2016. Washington's goal is to balance Iran at the lowest possible cost, including transferring responsibility to regional actors such as the United Arab Emirates. Through its allies in the region, especially the UAE, the country has taken a series of measures to control and curb Iran's power. Despite having different maps Abu Dhabi, along with Riyadh and Tel Aviv, all constitute the executive pillars of America's telebalancing policy. At the geostrategic level, the confrontation with Iran's power from

the Bab al-Mandeb Strait to the ports of Latakia and Tartus, and the massive volume of American bases and the UAE's financial support for this project testify to the two countries' extensive efforts to exploit all levels, tools, governments and international institutions aim to curb Iran's growing power. Controlling Iran is a long-term strategy. The UAE government's renewed approach in some areas, such as Syria, should not be seen as a change in its strategy toward Iran and a review of cooperation with the United States. The normalization of Abu Dhabi's relations with the Zionist regime has also increased the scope of convergence and coordination between the two main sides of the US balance in the West Asian region.

The UAE's behind-the-scenes goal is to play a role in the US Middle East strategy, strengthen and deepen trade and economic relations with the US's increase pressure on Iran as a major regional competitor. The UAE has also taken this approach concerning Iran's regional deputies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarullah in Yemen. In this area, other goals such as economic development are also considered by the UAE. From this perspective, acting within the framework of the global monetary system and fulfilling the demands of the United States as the leader of such a system is to attract more investment and facilitate the process of integration into the global economy. This is important given the UAE's plans to diversify its economic resources and become a regional hub in various aviation, maritime, port, banking, transportation, energy and, tourism sectors.

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