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Master Thesis Political Science-International Relations

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Word Count: 16,106

09-06-2013

Realists of the Persian Gulf

Offensive Realist Answers for the Persian Gulf Island Dispute

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Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad meets the U.A.E. Prime Minister Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum in 2008

Abstract

This thesis deals with the issue of the Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands. These islands are disputed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, who currently occupies them, and the United Arab Emirates, who to this day claim the islands as theirs. The strategic significance of the islands is not to be underestimated, as they lay directly in the main shipping lanes through which a significant portion of the world's oil is transported. This paper has looked at the historical events that shaped the situation today, with a focus on the period between independence of the United Arab Emirates and the mid-1990's. This timeframe is further divided in three parts, the events surrounding independence, the period of upheaval attempted détente during the late 1970's and 1980's and finally the reescalation of the issue after the First Gulf War of 1991. Using the theory of offensive realism as devised by John Mearsheimer and the associated concepts of power balancing, buck passing, off shore balancing and the role of the off shore balancer the events during this period have been analysed to answer the question whether this theory can explain the absence of warfare between the U.A.E. and Iran. Even though at times the situation seemed to be heading for war, the simple discrepancy between the capabilities of the U.A.E. and Iran resulted in a carefully balanced status quo that has been maintained since 1971 thereby weakening the key offensive realist assumption that the offensive is always profitable.

Keywords: Offensive Realism, Persian Gulf, United Arab Emirates, Islamic Republic of Iran, Power Balancing, off Shore Balancer, Buck Passing

Introduction

Research Question, Research Limits and Justification

The research question for my thesis proposal is *“How can offensive realism explain the absence of warfare between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands?”*

While doing my initial research on the topic of these disputed islands in the Strait of Hormuz I was immediately noticed that this dispute could have great implications on the wider Middle East. The second and academically speaking more important thing that struck me is that the dispute has remained just that, a dispute. Never have the United Arab Emirates or the Empire, later Islamic Republic of Iran ever clashed over these islands on the battlefield or at the negotiating table. Being a realist and perhaps a bit too cynical I was amazed at such a lack of open conflict over these islands I initially thought that perhaps I had chosen a wrong subject to study and that there is little of interest to be said on the dispute, but then I thought I should hold the theory of offensive realism to the test by using it as a lens to look closer at the dispute. Perhaps there is a logical, offensive realist, explanation why warfare has been absent over Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands. If I fail to find a solid explanation in the theory of offensive realism it would mean that realist assumptions on state behaviour and the occurrence of warfare might be not as strong as assumed by realists. The thesis will use the concepts of power balancing, offshore balancing, the role of the offshore balancer and buck passing extensively. These four concepts lie at the heart of offensive realism, as laid out by John Mearsheimer in his influential work “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics”. More will be said about each of the three concepts and how I plan to use them in the theories and concepts section.

The timeframe of this thesis is the period between 1971, the year in which the British withdrew from the Persian Gulf area and which also saw the start of the dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates and the mid 1990's, which is after the most serious recent dispute over Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands in 1992. This period saw three distinct phases; the first phase in the run up to British withdrawal from the Persian gulf in 1971 and the subsequent seizure of the islands by Iran, the second a period of relaxation of tensions starting in 1975 when the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between the various states in the Persian Gulf led to a de-escalation of the conflict. This period of lower tensions was disrupted by the catastrophic Iran-Iraq war but lasted until 1992 when the United Arab Emirates became more vocal in their claim on the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands which led to the final encounter between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The justification for this topic is three fold. First of all the issue has global implications due to the importance of the Persian Gulf in supplying the globe with crude oil and liquefied natural gas. The strategic nature of the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands will be explained in further detail in the historical background section. Secondly the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over these islands can be seen as a focussed case study for Iranian-Emirati or even Iranian-Arab relations. These relations have a history of tension and conflict and recent events have significantly complicated the situation. My third argument for justification is personal, as I have a great interest in the region.

Lastly I believe that the dispute over the Abu Musa and Tunb islands is very relevant to this day, not only in an academic sense but perhaps even more so in a "real" sense that the dispute might be one of the tinderboxes which can ignite the Persian Gulf and the entire Middle East. John Mearsheimer states that Offensive Realism is descriptive and at the same time normative, but I mainly use the theory to explain events that have happened and in no

way will I try to argue what the respective states should have done or extrapolate to predict events which might happen.

Background: strategic significance and history up to U.A.E. independence

The Persian Gulf (also known as the Arabian Gulf for political reasons, but I will refer to this body of water as the Persian Gulf for clarity's sake) is one of the crucial oil producing areas of the world. With the Strait of Hormuz being the only sea passage in and out of the Persian Gulf, and the majority of oil and gas exported from this region transported by sea, this area is both crucial and vulnerable. The United States Energy Information Administration reports that in 2011 17 million barrels of oil travelled through the narrow Strait of Hormuz every single day¹. The vulnerability lies not only in the fact that it is such a crucial transportation bottleneck, but it also a narrow strait with only two sea lanes, each two miles wide, usable for the large modern tankers the oil export of the region depends on. A second factor is the proximity of the Strait of Hormuz to Iran, a country which has fallen under the suspicion of harbouring ambitions of greater power and influence in the region, and has at several tense occasions in recent years threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz to all shipping. Iran has tried to do so previously as part of their tanker warfare strategy during the high point of the Iran-Iraq war². Located strategically in this already crucial link in the modern global economy are three islands which have effectively been occupied by Iran since 1971. The Iranian seizure of the islands is disputed by the United Arab Emirates (henceforth known as U.A.E.), who claim the islands as being part of their territory. The largest island is the Island of Abu Musa, followed by the Greater Tunb (Tunb el-Kubra) and Lesser Tunb

¹ WOTC Report, p 2 “*The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil chokepoint due to its daily oil flow of about 17 million bbl/d in 2011, up from between 15.7- 15.9 million bbl/d in 2009-2010. Flows through the Strait in 2011 were roughly 35 percent of all seaborne traded oil, or almost 20 percent of oil traded worldwide.*”

² Dilip Hiro in *Iran and the Arab World*, p 57 “*It [UN Security Council 598 calling on secession of hostilities] was passed against the background of rising tensions in the gulf where Iran had been concentrating on attacking vessels trading with Kuwait.*”

(Tunb el-Shagra). The Tunb Islands are located between the two sea lanes leading to and from the Strait of Hormuz. Abu Musa is located just south of the sea lanes, and is closest to the U.A.E.

Before U.A.E. independence in 1971 the Trucial States, as the U.A.E. were called at the time, were part of the British Empire. During the 19th century Britain had signed treaties (hence trucial states, the word trucial was derived from treaty or truce) with the local Sheikhs to protect British trade and geostrategic interests in the region. These sheikhs were sometimes aligned with the Persian Empire, being employed as administrators or local representatives but more often they acted completely independently and engaged in piracy and raiding along the Persian Gulf and deep into the Indian Ocean³. Since this harmed British trade the Royal Navy and the British Raj decided to act and coerced the local rulers of the Arab sheikhdoms to sign a series of treaties restricting their piratical operations. This resulted in the end resulted in a de facto British annexation of the southern littoral of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. The Abu Musa and Tunb islands were administered as part of the Persian Empire but under pressure from the Royal Navy the Persian Shah agreed to hand over control of the islands to the British in two treaties in 1904 and 1908. From then on the islands would be administered as part of the emirate of Sharjah (Abu Musa) and Ras al-Khaimah (the Tunb Islands), two sheikhdoms that signed a treaty with Great Britain. Persia at this time was in no position to resist the actions of the British Empire, which were aimed at breaking the influence of the Persian Empire in the Persian Gulf region and securing this area for British commerce and

³ Ahmadi, Kouroush, Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf, p 8 *“The chaos reigning in the Persian Gulf in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries resulted in increasingly frequent attacks on British and British protected vessels patrolling its waters. The combination of lack of political authority and depressed economic conditions on the lower gulf led to what the British termed piracy, which provided the British with a convenient pretext for advancing its scheme of dominating the area and entrenching its presence.”*

military and political interests⁴. Great Britain tried to weaken the Persian claim by urging the ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah to raise his flag on Abu Musa and the Tunbs and proclaiming that Britain would intervene against any hostile Persian counter reaction⁵. Britain's interests and presence in the Persian Gulf region was closely linked to the existence of British rule in India. After Indian independence in 1947 there was no apparent reason for the continuing presence of British forces in the region. The British realised this but remained in the region, mainly because of promises made to the local Arab rulers⁶. Ahmadi summarizes Britain's policy goals in the Persian Gulf as being threefold: dominate the local tribes, keep other colonial rivals away from the area and limit the power and influence of the only regional power Persia/Iran⁷. As will be discussed in later chapters the British were forced by the changing political balance in the world to reconsider their position in the Persian Gulf.

⁴ Ibid. p 31 "*Devised by Viceroy [of British India] Curzon and implemented in the early years of the twentieth century, the new strategy aimed at strengthening British control over the Persian Gulf and preserve it as a 'British lake' in the commercial as well as political and military spheres by eliminating the growing threats perceived from Germany, Russia, France, the Ottoman Empire and Persia to Britain's omnipotence there.*"

p 12 "*As a result, Britain adopted the policy of undermining the Persian influence already in force on the [Indian] subcontinent and curtailing Iran's sovereignty along its eastern and southern borders, and pursued this policy vigorously throughout the era of British presence in the area.*"

⁵ Ibid p 46 "*The Joasmis [as the Arab tribes of the Trucial States were called] do not fly a flag on the island [Abu Musa] and it is a question for consideration whether I should not advise the Chief of Shargah to keep his flag flying on the island as a sign of ownership.*" Kouroush quotes a January 1903 report from the British Resident, Colonel C.A. Kemball, to the government in British India and London in which he argues for putting greater pressure on Persia while at the same time stimulating the Arabs to lay their own claim on the islands. Britain had just lost a dispute over other islands closer to Persia and was not willing to lose these crucially located islands to the Persians.

⁶ Patterson, J.E. *Defending Arabia* p 60-61 "*The remaining British strongholds in the region had been acquired and then the effort made to defend them because of their strategic importance to India. The removal of India from the equation required a shift in security emphasis from defending India to fulfilling obligations to remaining colonial possessions, superseded by post-independence obligations.*"

⁷ Ahmadi, Kouroush, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf*, p 6 "*The main goals Britain pursued during its long domination of the Persian Gulf – from the early nineteenth century until its withdrawal from the area in 1971- can be summarized as follows. 1. Dominating local tribes as bases from which to carry out other goals 2. Keeping European*

Theoretical Framework: theories and concepts

Introduction

In this chapter consists of three main parts. I will first discuss John Mearsheimer's Offensive Realist theory, the main assumptions and the finer details of what exactly determines a state's position as a great power or regional hegemon. The second part will consist of an explanation of power balancing and the role of offshore balancer, the key concepts of offensive realism which will be used throughout the analysis of the dispute over the Abu Musa and Tunb islands. The final part will link the theory to the case and explain how I intend to apply offensive realism to the dispute.

Offensive Realism

Offensive Realism is a theory within international relations that was popularised by Mearsheimer in his book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". As can be deduced from the name Offensive Realism has its foundation in the older theories of Classical Realism and Defensive Realism. It therefore shares several features of these older theories. There are four basic assumptions that all realists theories share.

1. The nation state is the key unit of comparison in International Politics as it is the main actor in the field of global politics.
2. International Politics is anarchic in nature. There is no higher, supranational organisation which can mediate between states in case of conflict or protect weaker nations against the whims of greater powers. Therefore states cannot depend on any other nation than themselves.
3. States are rational actors and are driven by self-interest.

rivals as well as the Ottoman Empire, out of this body of water and off its shores 3. Curtailing the presence and influence of the major regional power, Iran."

4. The main concern for all states is survival in the form of greater security. This usually is achieved through military means.

Offensive Realism is closely aligned to defensive realism. Both theories believe that structure rather than human nature dictates states' aggressive and expansionistic behaviour. This separates them from classical realism and produces the label structural realism. The break from classical realism started with Kenneth Waltz' 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz discusses the notion that structure and the units that interact within the structure rather than human nature or the preference of a states' leadership⁸. Waltz distinguishes three elements to any structure: whether the structure is anarchic or hierarchical, whether the character of the units is similar or differentiated and how the capabilities within a structure are distributed⁹. Waltz distinguishes himself in another matter from classical realism which came before him and offensive realism which is seen as an evolution from defensive realism. Classical realism and offensive realism both see the state as a rational actor, while Waltz sees a wide plethora of influences on states' behaviour. States' behaviour may be explained by competition either because it is calculated to be the best way to survive or because states who fail to do so are quickly destroyed. A second explanation Waltz gives is the acceptance of certain norms, either because those norms are supposed to be the best

⁸ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* p 91 "*International political systems, like economic markets, are formed by the coercion of self-regarding units. International structures are defined in terms of the primary political units of an era, be they city states, empires or nations.*"

p 92 "*Except in deepest crisis, the system selects others to hold the highest office. One may behave as one likes to. Patterns of behaviour nevertheless emerge, and they derive from the structural constraints of the system.*"

Elman, p 18 "*Contra classical realism, neorealism excludes the internal make up of different states. As Rasler and Thompson note, Morgenthau's seminal statement of classical realism relies on the assumption that leaders of states are motivated by their lust for power. Waltz' theory, by contrast, omits leaders' motivations and state characteristics as causal variables for international outcomes, except for the minimal assumptions that states seek to survive.*"

⁹ Ibid. p18 "*Political systems are best conceptualised as having three elements: an ordering principle (anarchic or hierarchic), the character of the units (functionally alike or differentiated), and the distribution of capabilities.*"

assurance of survival or because these norms are internalised¹⁰. Defensive realism favours, as Mearsheimer would call the phenomenon, the status-quo state. In the anarchic and insecure environment of international politics Waltz argues that states prefer to maintain a strong defensive posture to prevent any escalation of conflict. Mearsheimer argues the opposite as will be explained in a short while.

In addition to the several new elements introduced by Kenneth Waltz in Defensive Realism John Mearsheimer notes that all states have, to varying degrees, an offensive military capability¹¹. States use their offensive military capabilities to increase their security. The competition for security is a zero sum game: the gains of one state is the loss of another. States can also never be sure of each other's intentions¹². This inherent flaw in the structure of the international system leads Mearsheimer to argue that fear one's security being violated gives states the incentive to maximize their power¹³. The arena of international politics is also dominated by the great powers who amongst themselves share the majority of military and economic power in the world. Offensive Realism is in itself a normative as well as a descriptive theory on the behaviour of all states, but it mainly deals with great powers. The question at what point a nation state becomes a great power and can begin its ascend to the position of regional hegemon can be answered by looking at two crucial variables: economic and military power. Military power is the main variable that determines the status of a state in

¹⁰ Ibid. p 18 *"In addition, whereas classical realism suggested that state strategies are selected rationally, Waltz is agnostic about which of several micro foundations explain state behaviour. States behaviour can be the product of competition among them, either because they calculate how to act in their best advantage, or those who do not exhibit such behaviour are selected out of the system. Alternatively, states' behaviour can be a product of socialisation: states can decide to follow norms because they calculate it is to their best advantage, or because the norms become internalised."*

¹¹ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p 3 *"[...] states always have some offensive military capabilities."*

¹² Ibid. p 3 *"[...] that states can never be certain about other states' intentions."*

¹³ Ibid. p 3 *"Given that this fear [absence of central authority, offensive military capabilities and uncertainty of other states' intentions] which can never be wholly eliminated, states recognise that the more powerful they are relative to rivals, the better the chances of survival."*

Mearsheimer's theory¹⁴. This military superiority can only be created and, more importantly, maintained by a healthy and strong economy¹⁵. It requires extraordinary levels of wealth for states to achieve the status of great power and even more; to achieve the desired position of regional hegemon.

The absolute necessity for maximum security is maximum power; the position of global hegemon. A global hegemon is powerful enough to dominate the entire world, ensuring absolute security for the hegemon itself and the ability to intervene abroad at will.

Mearsheimer states that it is extremely unlikely that any state ever achieves a global hegemonic status. The only method to achieve such a status is to gain absolute nuclear weapons dominance¹⁶. There are two main reasons why, according to Mearsheimer, global hegemony is unlikely to occur. The current maximum position of power a state can achieve is the position of regional hegemon. As the name implies a regional hegemon dominates the immediate surroundings of said state militarily and economically¹⁷. As of 2013 only the United States of America would qualify as a regional hegemon due to their absolute

¹⁴ Ibid. p 5 “Great powers are determined largely on the basis of their relative military capability. To qualify as a great power a state must have sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war against the most powerful state in the world. The candidate need not have the capability to defeat the leading state, but it must have some reasonable prospect of turning the conflict into a war of attrition that leaves the dominant state seriously weakened, even if the dominant state ultimately wins the war.”

¹⁵ Ibid. p 60 “Latent power constitutes the societal resources that a state has available to build military forces. Although there are a variety of resources, the size of a states’ population and its wealth are the two most important components for generating military might.”

¹⁶ Ibid. p 128 “I argue that in the unlikely event that a single great power achieves nuclear superiority, it becomes a hegemon, which effectively means that it has no great power rivals with which to compete for security.”

¹⁷ Ibid. p 40 “A hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all of the other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight to it. [...] Hegemony means domination of the system, which is usually interpreted to mean the entire world. It is possible, however, to apply the concept of a system more narrowly and use it to describe particular regions, such as Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. Thus one can distinguish between global hegemons, which dominate the world, and regional hegemons, which dominate distinct geographical areas.”

dominance of North and South America¹⁸. A regional hegemon has an inherent interest in preventing other states from reaching the position of regional hegemon elsewhere, as these states will be fierce competitors for global hegemony and a security threat to the regional hegemon itself. Other rival powers within a region will prevent the rise of one of them to the level of a regional hegemon. The second reason global hegemony is unlikely is what Mearsheimer calls the stopping power of water¹⁹. Each region is separated from other regions by water masses i.e. oceans. The Western Hemisphere is separated from the Afro-Eurasian landmass by the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Even at a smaller level this maxim holds true, as Mearsheimer demonstrates by using the historical example of Britain's invulnerability against invaders from the continent thanks to the English Channel. Crossing bodies of water is a logistic challenge and it is fairly easy for a defending force to intercept. Absolute naval and aerial superiority is required for such an operation to succeed and even when these conditions are met it is a hugely costly affair.

Since global hegemony is out of the question great powers will have four main policy goals. First of all they will try to reach the position of regional hegemon²⁰. As explained earlier this leads to greater security. Not only do regional hegemons try to maintain their own position, but they also try to prevent rivals from dominating other regions away from one's own region. Rival regional hegemons might become a security threat to other regional hegemons so rival powers should be stopped before they reach a regional hegemonic position²¹. Regional hegemons prefer a certain power balance in other regions namely one

¹⁸ Ibid. p 40 "*The United States has been a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere for at least the past one hundred years.*"

¹⁹ Ibid. p 41 "*The principle impediment to world domination is the difficulty of projecting power across the world's oceans onto the territory of a rival great power.*"

²⁰ Ibid. p 140 "*Great powers focus on achieving four basic objectives. First, they seek regional hegemony.*"

²¹ Ibid. p 141 "*Not only do great powers aim to dominate their own region, they also strive to prevent rivals in other areas from gaining hegemony. Regional hegemons fear that a peer*

without a clear power which can dominate the region and become a regional hegemon. In case such a power balance does not exist states have several options to create such a balance and prevent a power from rising to the position of regional hegemon. The second goal is to accumulate as much economic power (or wealth) as possible. As discussed earlier the status of great power and potential hegemon depends on a states' economic power²². Accumulating great reserves of old fashioned mainstays of economic power represented by the ability to manufacture steel, refine oil et cetera leads to greater power. The easiest way to compare the economic power of states in the modern era is to compare the gross domestic product or GDP. The ability to dominate the sources of these raw materials is even a more cherished power. The third goal for states is to dominate the region by creating a large and effective navy, air force and especially army²³. To this day it is the army, the proverbial boots on the ground, which win wars despite all the technological advances and importance of aerial superiority. One of the lessons from recent wars in the Middle East is that boots on the grounds are absolutely necessary to win a conflict, occupy a country et cetera. The defensive budget of aspiring hegemons is not only spent on these conventional military mans but also on nuclear weapons. Acquiring a significant nuclear capability is a great power's fourth goal in achieving hegemony²⁴. As explained earlier nuclear dominance, though unlikely to be ever achieved by any state, is the only method through which a state can become a global hegemon. The main reason that it is highly unlikely that any state will ever gain absolute nuclear superiority is that

competitor might jeopardize their hegemony by upsetting the balance of power in their backyard."

²² Ibid. p 143-144 *"Second, great powers aim to maximise the amount of the world's wealth that they control. States care about relative wealth, because economic might is the foundation of military might. In practical terms, this means that great powers place a high premium on having a powerful and dynamic economy, not only because it enhances the general welfare, but also because it is a reliable way to gain a military advantage over rivals."*

²³ Ibid. p 145 *"Third, great powers aim to dominate the balance of land power in their region, because that is the best way to maximise their share military might. In practice this means that states build powerful armies as well as air and naval forces to support those ground forces."*

²⁴ Ibid. p 145 *"Fourth, great powers seek nuclear superiority over their rivals."*

other rival states will never accept such dominance and develop nuclear capabilities themselves²⁵. This leads to one of the famous concepts of the Cold War period: MAD or Mutually Assured Destruction. If two or more states have sufficient nuclear weapons to effectively wipe out human life it seems that there is no reason for states to continue the development and deployment of nuclear weapons systems or to deploy countermeasures such as Anti-Ballistic Missile systems²⁶. Mearsheimer argues that this is a fallacy since the threat of human extinction is a great motive to achieve a position where no other state can threaten the nuclear hegemon with nuclear weapons²⁷.

War itself, according to Mearsheimer, is more often successful for the attacking party than it is not. He cites that out of 63 wars since 1815 the aggressor has won 39, so close to 60% of the wars²⁸. This simple statistic is ignored to often according by people who, unjustly in his eyes, claim that war is no longer effective in increasing the power of the state. Conquest is still profitable according to Mearsheimer. Another argument used against war is that in a

²⁵ Ibid. p 130 “Every great power would like to achieve nuclear superiority, but it is not likely to happen often, and when it does occur, it probably is not going to last for a long time. Non-nuclear rivals are sure to go to great lengths to acquire a nuclear arsenal of their own, and once they do, it would be difficult, although not impossible, for a great power to re-establish superiority by insulating itself from nuclear attack.”

²⁶ Ibid. p 146 “Some scholars, especially defensive realists, argue that it makes no sense for nuclear armed states in a MAD world to pursue nuclear superiority. In particular they should not build counterforce weapons-i.e. those that could strike the other side’s nuclear arsenal- and they should not build defensive systems that could shoot down the adversary’s incoming nuclear warheads, because the essence of a MAD world is that no state can be assured that it has destroyed all of its rival’s nuclear weapons, and thus would remain vulnerable to nuclear devastation.”

²⁷ Ibid. p 146 “Great powers, however, are unlikely to be content with living in a MAD world, and they are likely to search for ways to gain superiority over their nuclear armed opponents. Although there is no question that MAD makes war among the great powers less likely, a state is likely to become more secure if it has nuclear superiority. [...] A great power that gains nuclear superiority, on the other hand, is a hegemon and thus has no major rivals to fear. Most important, it would not have to face the threat of a nuclear attack. Therefore, states have a powerful incentive to be nuclear hegemons.”

²⁸ Ibid. p 39 “There is no question that systemic factors constrain aggression, especially balancing by threatened states. But defensive realists exaggerate those restraining forces. Indeed, the historical record provides little support for their claim that offense rarely succeeds. One study estimates that there were 63 wars between 1815 and 1980, and the initiator won 39 times, which translates in about a 60% success rate.”

nuclear age the risks of absolute destruction are too great to be even considered. As outlined above offensive realism disagrees with the principles of MAD and the banishment of war in a nuclear age. Two other arguments against war revolve around the cost-benefit question. Critics argue that war has become too expensive, not only because war itself is a costly affair, but also because maintaining conquests is very expensive and can lead to economic difficulties for the conquering power²⁹. Mearsheimer continues by saying that it is possible to extract economic profit from conquered territories via several means, including levying taxes, mobilizing the conquered territory's manpower or extracting natural resources. The main gain a state can get from winning a war is the removal of the conquered state as a political force.

The Key Concepts of Realism

Now that the wider theoretical background of offensive realism has been explained we shall now continue with the key concepts of offensive realism which will be used in this thesis. These concepts are power balancing, buck passing, offshore balancing and the role of the off shore balancer. Power balancing is one of two strategies proposed by Mearsheimer which is effective in stopping and containing aggressors or rival powers. The other strategy is buck passing which will be dealt with as well³⁰. Power balancing is not a new concept introduced by Mearsheimer or offensive realism as will be explained later with the help of an historical example. Mearsheimer divides the act of power balancing into several stages³¹. A

²⁹ Ibid p 148 *“The cost argument, which attracted a lot of attention in the 1980’s, is that conquest does not pay because it leads to the creation of empires, and the price of maintaining an empire eventually becomes so great that economic growth at home is sharply slowed. In effect, high levels of defense spending undermine a state’s relative economic position over time, ultimately eroding its position in the balance of power.”*

³⁰ Ibid. p 155 *“Occasionally, highly aggressive great powers that are more difficult to contain come on the scene. Especially powerful states, like potential hegemon, invariably fall in this category. To deal with these aggressors, threatened great powers can choose between two strategies: balancing and buck passing.”*

³¹ Ibid. p 156-157 *“First, they can send clear signals to the aggressor through diplomatic channels that they are firmly committed to maintaining the balance of power, even if this means going to war. The emphasis in the balancer’s message is on confrontation, no*

great power has to assume the burden of acting against an aggressor. First a great power may attempt to deter the aggressor by making it clear through public and diplomatic channels that any form of aggression will not be tolerated and will result in action by the deterring party. If this fails the great power may try to assemble a defensive alliance to act as a deterring force against the aggressor. Though the accumulative economic and military power may be greater when compared to the aggressor's, alliances are rarely efficient and effective when operating as a deterring force. Exemptions from this rule are the two alliances during the Cold War which were arguably dominated by one super power. If this fails as well a threatened great power may resort to the last option and that is to increase one's own military power which hopefully will impress the aggressor enough to stop pursuing greater power and the status of regional hegemon.

Due to the great cost associated with power balancing states, even great powers and regional hegemons, prefer to pass the buck to other states. The strategy of buck passing calls for a threatened state to pass the burden of confronting the aggressor to another state. States which prefer to pass the buck try to deflect the wrath of an aggressor by maintaining good relations with that particular state³². At the same time buck passers try to maintain normal, albeit cool relations with the intended buck catchers. This may seem strange but serves two purposes: first of all to prevent angering the aggressor and secondly to prevent getting involved in the war between the buck catcher and the aggressor that they so desperately try to avoid³³. Even if threatened states want to pass the buck they have to be prepared for a

conciliation. [...] Second, threatened states can work to create a defensive alliance to help them contain their dangerous opponent. [...] Third, threatened states can balance against an aggressor by mobilizing additional resources of their own. For example, defense spending might be increased or conscription might be implemented."

³² Ibid. p 158 "*First, they [threatened states who prefer to pass the buck] can seek good diplomatic relations with the aggressor, or at least not to do anything to provoke it, in the hope that it will concentrate on the intended buck catcher."*

³³ Ibid. p 158 "*Second, buck passers usually maintain cool relations with the intended buck catcher, not just because this diplomatic distancing might help fostering good relations with*

scenario in which this strategy fails and they have to go to war. Therefore buck passers as well have to build up their military capabilities out of fear that they have to fight the aggressor alone if the buck catcher does not succeed, or is not willing to succeed in catching the buck³⁴. Lastly buck passers can try to increase the power of the intended buck catcher by helping it expand elsewhere, in order to become strong enough to challenge and defeat the aggressor³⁵.

The balance of power and the intricate act of maintaining that balance has dominated British foreign policy for centuries. First the British fought the French during several wars during the 18th and 19th centuries, then Germany during the 20th century to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon which could threaten Britain itself. Britain assumed the role of the offshore balancer, the power which intervenes by supporting and fighting alongside other powers in the region to stop one particular state to achieve regional hegemony. In more recent times and especially in the Persian Gulf region the United States of America has assumed the role of offshore balancer. Off shore balancing mainly occurs when the powers present in the region do not have the ability to deter the aggressor on their own. The United States intervened during both world wars to restore the balance of power on the Afro-Eurasian landmass. Since the 1980's the United States has also acted as an off shore power balancer in the Persian Gulf, as this will be discussed during the analysis part of my thesis I will not explain this in great detail at this point. Offshore balancers have one advantage over great

the aggressor, but also because the buck passer does not want to get dragged into a war on the side of the buck catcher."

³⁴ Ibid. p 158-159 *"Third, great powers can mobilize additional resources of their own to make buck passing work. It might seem that the buck passer should be able to take a somewhat relaxed approach to defense spending, since the strategy's objective is to get someone else to contain the aggressor. [...] By building up its own defences, a buck passer makes itself an imposing target, thus giving the aggressor incentive to focus its attention on the intended buck catcher. In a world where two or more states are attempting to buck pass, no state can be certain that it will not catch the buck and have to stand alone against the aggressor."*

³⁵ Ibid. p 159 *"Fourth, it sometimes makes sense for a buck passer to allow or even facilitate the growth in power of the intended buck catcher. That burden bearer would then have a better chance of containing the aggressor state."*

powers present in the threatened region itself, they can afford to maintain a smaller military force and use buck passing while they build up their military forces³⁶. The United States during both world wars is a god example of a state that pursued such a strategy since they avoided entering the war until the very latest possible moment. Buck passing has advantages over balancing, in particular because, if successful, it delays a confrontation and allows for more time to prepare for such a confrontation. However Mearsheimer states that the risks of buck passing are great, as the costs of a conflict are tremendous and the risk of losing is greater if a conflict erupts earlier than expected. Furthermore the risk of the buck catcher failing is always present, leading to the buck passer to now face a much stronger aggressor alone³⁷. The opposite, a buck catcher who defeats the aggressor and then itself becomes extremely powerful, is also a risk a buck passer might want to prevent according to Mearsheimer³⁸.

Applying the theory

I believe offensive realism and the concepts outlined above have great value when trying to explain the absence of warfare over the disputed Abu Musa and Tunb islands. I will show by detailing the key events during the three periods, giving a careful historical overview of what happened and the reasons behind the decisions that were made by the respective states. Then I will use the elements and concepts of offensive realism as discussed above to analyse the situation and answer the research question “How can offensive realism explain the

³⁶ Ibid. p 157 “*There is, however, one exceptional circumstance in which a great power will increase defense spending to help deter an aggressor. Offshore balancers like the United Kingdom and the United States tend to maintain relatively small military forces when they are not needed to contain a potential hegemon in a strategically important area.*”

³⁷ Ibid. p 161 “*Buck passing is not a fool proof strategy, however. Its chief drawback is that the buck catcher might fail to check the aggressor, leaving the buck passer in a precarious strategic position.*”

³⁸ Ibid. 161 “*Furthermore, in cases where the buck passer allows the military might of the buck catcher to increase, there is a danger that the buck catcher might eventually so powerful that it threatens to upset the balance of power, as happened with Germany after it was unified in 1870.*”

absence of warfare between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands?”

Literature Review

Since the Persian Gulf region is of great importance to the west both economically and politically it is not surprising that a lot has been written on the political issues of the region. However it is harder to find previous work done on the topic of the dispute over Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands, offensive realist perspectives on the dispute or a combination of both. Three books deserve mention in this chapter. First of all there is Kourosh Ahmadi's fine work on the disputed islands, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf*. The book is an historic overview running from the late 18th century up to the end of the 20th century. Ahmadi bases his work on a wide array of primary sources, Persian, Arab and English or American which makes it credible as a source for those who do not have the ability or skill to consult the primary sources themselves. Being historic in nature the book gives an excellent overview of the events which led to the establishment of Britain as a great power in the Persian Gulf region, their struggle with the regional power Iran, the end of British rule and the turbulent decades after 1971. It places the issue of the disputed islands in the context of wider political issues in the Persian Gulf and even beyond. Rather than just a dispute between Iran and Great Britain, or later the U.A.E. Ahmadi shows how the dispute even plays a role in the Iran-Iraq war, for example. By making this dispute more than just a local struggle between two powers over some islands the author manages to create a useful tool to any student interested in the security issues that dominate the Persian Gulf. One major and serious criticism is his slight bias towards Iran. The book is written from the perspective of Iran, who has a legitimate claim on the islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunb. Other than this particular flaw in Ahmadi's work, the book can be used as an historical source together with other sources to balance out the bias. One such work is James A Bill and Robert

Springborg's book *Politics in the Middle East*. It devotes one chapter to the issue of power politics in the Persian Gulf. Their focus lies on the Persian Gulf during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990's. Bill and Springborg come from a constructivist approach, looking at the religious and ethnical aspect of the issues that trouble the Persian Gulf region. The constructivist approach is the polar opposite of realism, which focusses on states as basic units and considers everything at a sub-state level such as religion or ethnic identity not worth discussing. Nonetheless *Politics in the Middle East* remains a useful insight in the political events of the 1980's and 1990's that influenced the dispute over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands.

The Run Up

As mentioned earlier the dispute over Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb can be divided in three distinct phases. The first phase lasted from the late 1960's until 1975; a period marked by Emirati vulnerability following independence and the withdrawal of British troops. The Iranians took advantage of the situation and re-occupied the Tunb Islands and negotiated a deal dividing Abu Musa between an Emirati and Iranian part. The Second phase is a relative calm period which lasted from the mid-1970's until 1992. Iranian attention was focussed on the Northern Persian Gulf and the on-going Iran-Iraq war for much of the period while the Emirates did not have either the strength or the international backing to press their claims over the islands. This changed with the Gulf War in 1991, when Iraq was thoroughly defeated by an American led coalition. The United Arab Emirates joined the coalition against Saddam Hussein's Iraq and subsequently felt that it had American support in securing their interests. This support materialised through financial support and the sale of military hardware to boost the UAE armed forces. Bolstered by the prospect of developing military capabilities, the UAE pressed their claims on the islands by starting diplomatic movements in the United Nations and vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. To come back to the original thesis

question; ““How can offensive realism explain the absence of warfare between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands?””

It is interesting to see that power balancing and offshore balancing occurred before the independence of the United Arab Emirates in 1971, as outlined in the historical background section in the introduction. Great Britain tried to limit Persian, later Iranian, influence during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. They supported local Arab rulers in laying claim to the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands and at the same time restricted Persian influence.

British Withdrawal; Iran Seizes the Opportunity

In 1966 Great Britain announced that it will cut back its armed forces and reduce its commitments “East of Suez”³⁹. The Government under Harold Wilson was forced to reduce the armed forces and concentrate on European security because of the enormous strain the continuous imperial commitments had on the British economy⁴⁰. Simply said the British suffered from what might be described as imperial overstretch; the costs of maintaining the empire were greater than the benefits it provided. Initially the British presence in the Persian Gulf would not be affected by the budget cuts and withdrawals but in early 1968 Prime

³⁹ East of Suez is the colloquial term used to describe Britain’s imperial commitments in the Indian and Pacific oceans. The term itself is derived from a poem by Rudyard Kipling.

⁴⁰ Defence Review, the statement on the defence estimates 1966, part I p 221 “*Military strength is of little value if it is achieved at the expense of economic health. The defence plans of the previous Government would have involved an excessive burden both in resources and in foreign exchange.*”

Alvandi, Roham Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah p 339 “*However, by the 1960s the decline of the British Empire had dramatically accelerated, and on January 16, 1968 the Labour Government, led by Prime Minister Harold Wilson, announced that Britain would withdraw all its military forces from the Gulf by 1971 as part of a larger withdrawal “East of Suez.” The decision was motivated by the Cabinet’s desire to cut defense spending and achieve fiscal austerity in the face of a severe economic crisis, while avoiding painful cuts in social spending.*”

Minister Harold Wilson announced the complete withdrawal of all British forces from the Persian Gulf and subsequent independence of the Arab emirates by the end of 1971. This announcement had a drastic impact on the region as it upset the entire balance of power⁴¹. The local Arab rulers were shocked at this unexpected announcement and even offered to contribute to the cost of stationing British Forces in the Persian Gulf⁴². Looking at the military and economic power distribution at that time it is not surprising that the Arab sheikhs did not look forward to the withdrawal of British forces which had protected them for decades. Iran had experienced an economic boom fuelled by oil throughout the 1960's and the Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, used this money to expand the military strength of the Iranian Empire. Furthermore, with relations with the Soviet Union improving the Shah had announced in 1965 that Iran's military focus would lay in the South, in the Persian Gulf⁴³. The small Arab sheikhdoms on the Persian Gulf coast on the other side had depended on the British for protection for such a long time that their domestic military capabilities were non-existent. The British recognized the Arab weakness and proceeded to stimulate the different Arab sheikhdoms to unite as a federation which would result in the formation of the United Arab Republics⁴⁴. Britain's retreat east of Suez" was not only received with shock in the Persian Gulf region but also in Washington. The United States was deeply involved in Vietnam in 1968 and the minds of the politicians, generals and public were on the raging battles of Khe San and Hue rather than the Middle East. The United States could not afford to

⁴¹ Ahmadi, Kouroush, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf*, p 73 "*The announcement of the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf on 16 January 1968 set in motion a series of activities that prepared the Persian Gulf for a historic change.*

⁴² Ibid. p 75 "*Most Arab sheikhs in the Persian Gulf described the British announcement as shocking, The ruler of Abu Dhabi was reported to have proposed that the Arab littorals should offer to pay the entire cost of maintaining the British Forces in the area in an attempt to reverse Britain's decision.*"

⁴³ Ibid. p 78 "*The Shah declared in March 1965 that Iran's military preparation would henceforth be focussed on the Persian Gulf.*"

⁴⁴ Ibid. p 73 "*Britain's wish to see the small sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf pull together and organize themselves in a more defensible federation was at the centre of British efforts to establish a security structure that would survive the pull out of their troops.*"

get involved in another potential quagmire in the Persian Gulf. The Johnson administration, which was in its final year, was furious at the unexpected announcement as Britain had been the cornerstone in American policy for the Persian Gulf⁴⁵. The British refusal to acquiesce to American pressure meant that the Americans had to step in somehow. The United States had relatively good ties to the regime of Shah Pahlavi but up to that point they had depended on Britain, Saudi Arabia and Iran to contain possible Soviet expansion towards the Persian Gulf. Even though the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States had lessened compared the days of the Cuban Missile Crisis they both saw each other as rivals. Combatting the spread of each other's influence dominated foreign policy on both sides. The new American President Richard Nixon was a strong disciple in this typical black-white Cold War thinking, his focus was on the Soviet Union at all times. At the same time President Nixon, as Johnson before him, realised that he could not afford to get America involved in another region of the world. His famous Nixon doctrine promised American aid and support to regional powers to help them fight communism but the primary task of defending their territory against communism would fall on the countries themselves. In May 1971 The Shah scored a major foreign policy scoop by receiving the American President Richard Nixon and receiving American diplomatic and military support⁴⁶. This support was translated in the sale

⁴⁵ Alvandi, Roham Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah *"The Gulf had been a British sphere of influence and the United States had considered it Britain's responsibility to contain Soviet influence there. Johnson had agreed to subsidize Britain's global military presence, while concentrating his own attention on the Vietnam War.16 Although Britain had informed the United States in April 1967 that it would be withdrawing its forces "East of Suez," the announcement in January 1968 that the Gulf would be included in this withdrawal disappointed the Americans and their reaction was markedly bitter. When British Foreign Secretary George Brown traveled to Washington on January 11, 1968, to deliver the bad news, he reported to London that he had suffered through a "bloody unpleasant" meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who was furious at what he saw as Britain's shirking of its global responsibilities at a time when the United States was bogged down in Vietnam. Rusk resented what he called the "acrid aroma of the fait accompli" and contemptuously demanded, "for God's sake, be Britain!"*

⁴⁶ Ibid. p 369-370 *"Clearly alluding to the Nixon Doctrine, the shah emphasized that "Iran, like Israel, must be able to stand alone." The following morning, the shah finally received the*

of advanced weaponry, especially aircraft. These arms deals would turn Iran into the biggest power in the Middle East.

The situation for the soon to be independent Arab sheikhdoms was far from good, with their protector retreating from the region and their biggest rival dwarfing them economically, militarily and in terms of population⁴⁷. Even worse, the Iranians, as outlined above, had received American diplomatic and military support. On the 30th of November 1971, one day before the official final withdrawal of Britain from the Persian Gulf, the Shah sent troops to Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands and proclaimed that these islands would be part of Iran from then on⁴⁸. The deployment of military forces was preceded by negotiations between Iran, Great Britain and the Emirate of Sharjah, which controlled Abu Musa. All parties agreed to divide the islands into an Iranian section and a Sharjari section and the subsequent troop landings were unopposed⁴⁹. The Tunb Islands were administered by the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, one of the smaller emirates which fell under British protection. The Sheikh of Ras al-Khaimah refused to negotiate with the Iranians on the topic of the islands, reportedly because he saw the issue of sovereignty as a chance for him to gain more prestige, power and economic wealth⁵⁰.

American acknowledgment that all of Nixon's predecessors had denied him. In his minute of the May 31 meeting, Kissinger recorded that Nixon, "asked the shah to understand the purpose of American policy. 'Protect me,' he said. 'Don't look at détente as something that weakens you but as a way for the United States to gain influence.' The Nixon Doctrine was a way for the United States to build a new long-term policy on [the] support of allies."

⁴⁷ See Appendix B for a comparison of both states' economy, military manpower and population

⁴⁸ Ahmadi, Kouroush, Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf

⁴⁹ Ibid. p 93 "In accordance with the agreement, Iranian troops landed on Abu Musa on 30th of November. On the same day, the landing of Iranian troops on the Tunbs was effectuated as well. When they arrived on Abu Musa, the Iranian troops were greeted by the brother of Sheikh Khaled of Sharjah."

⁵⁰ Ibid. p 96 "There is a spectrum of views as to why the ruler of Ras Al-Khaimah, Saqr bin Muhammed al-Qasimi, resisted any understanding with Iran and Britain. Faisal bin Salman Al-Saud stated in his book that a combination of reasons were referred to as explaining Saqr's behaviour that range from his hope to gain more from oil exploration in and around

From an offensive realist perspective it is clear to see why there was so little resistance against the Iranian designs on the Abu Musa and Tunb islands. The little resistance that the Iranians encountered during their take-over of the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands was meagre and can best be described as token resistance. The distribution of economic and military power was clearly in favour of Iran, as can be seen in Appendix B. Furthermore the retreat of the offshore balancer, Great Britain, led to an enormous shift in favour of the greatest regional power: Iran. Great Britain had, from the 19th century straight up to its announcement that it would withdraw from the region in January 1968, continuously worked to minimize Persian/Iranian influence in the region and protect the local rulers from Iranian designs on their territory. The power that could have replaced Great Britain, the United States, chose for the moment not to do so for the moment. In its fight against the Soviet Union the United States saw Iran as a pillar of their Middle Eastern security structure rather than a potential threat which must be countered⁵¹. The United Arab Emirates stood no chance in confronting the might of Imperial Iran. They lacked the necessary resources and they lacked the backing of a strong offshore power like Great Britain or the United States. Iran finally managed to reoccupy the islands after decades of British imperial control over the islands and due to the massive imbalance of power the United Arab Emirates could do little to oppose such actions by Iran.

The Glimmers of Détente and the Reality of War in the Persian Gulf

It became apparent that the situation in the Persian Gulf would remain tense even after the initial dust of the events surrounding Emirati independence and the seizure of Abu Musa

the Tunbs, his tribal and religious belief and also hope in the Arab world rising against Iran.”

⁵¹ Wright, Steven M. *The United States and Persian Gulf Security* p 3 “*With Britain having decided to withdraw its presence east of Suez in the 1960s, Richard Nixon was prompted into developing a ‘twin-pillar’ security strategy of promoting Iran, and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia, as guardians of regional security and as bulwarks against Soviet expansionism.*”

and the Tunb islands by Iran had settled down. The United Arab Emirates were still powerless to resist Iran but the occupation of the islands had infuriated the self-proclaimed defenders of the Arab cause, Iraq in particular. Iraq had its own differences with Great Britain (resentment over the colonial past and rights to exploit oil fields) and Iran over the Shatt al-Arab (the waterway linking the Euphrates and Tigris with the Persian Gulf) and the predominantly Arab populated area of Khuzestan⁵². Iraq was the second most powerful state in the Persian Gulf region, with a large population of 10 million and a booming economy thanks to the extensive oil fields. It had aspired to become a leader in the Arab world, as Egypt's Nasser had been, and one way to do this was to oppose any Iranian, whether it was real or not, threat to the Persian Gulf Arabs. The islands and the uproar it caused throughout the Arab world benefitted Iraq's personal goals concerning Iran. It followed a harsh line in protesting against the invasion both at the United Nations and rhetorically by threatening with military action⁵³. It is interesting to see that Iraq received little support from other Arab states and even the United Arab Emirates was hesitant at this point to press their claims at the United Nations. Iraq's attempts failed, thus giving some ground to Thucydides' claim that mighty do as they please and force the weak to suffer as they must. One reason the other Arab states, in particular the Gulf States such as the newly independent United Arab Emirates trusted Iraq

⁵² Ahmadi, Kouroush, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf* p 101 "*Iraq was already in a state of political confrontation with Iran and Britain, and Iran's move and indications of British support [referring to the negotiations surrounding Abu Musa between Great Britain, Sharjah and Iran] triggered an explosive Iraqi response against those countries, including the breaking of diplomatic relations with Britain and Iran, the nationalisation of remaining British holdings of the Iraq Petroleum Company, sporadic skirmishes on Iran-Iraq borders and the expulsion of Iranians from Iraq.*"

⁵³ *Ibid.* p 103-104 "*On the multilateral scene Iraq and Libya, joined by Algeria and South Yemen, took the case of the three islands to the UN Security Council. In a letter dated 3 December 1971 and addressed to the President of the Security Council, the permanent representatives of these four member states requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to consider the dangerous situation in the Arabian Gulf [as the Arabs prefer to call the Persian Gulf] area arising from the occupation by the armed forces of Iran of the islands of Abu Musa, the Greater and the lesser Tunb on November 30 1971.*"

even less than they trusted Iran⁵⁴. Iraq had no choice but to give up and in 1975 it set aside its differences with Iran by signing a treaty that resolved most disputes between the two most powerful countries of the Persian Gulf region. Throughout the second half of the 1970's Iran tried to create goodwill amongst the Arab states in the Persian Gulf by practising a good neighbour policy. It supported the sheikhs and monarchs economically and militarily, sending troops to Oman to help fight an insurgency and help Dubai set up its security forces.

The relative calm and peace in the Persian Gulf was upset by two major events in Middle Eastern history: the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the start of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. These two events caused another dramatic shift in the regional balance of power. The Iranian revolution caused the United States to cease supporting Iran diplomatically and militarily as it had done throughout the 1970's. The seizure of the American embassy in Tehran by radical students did little in restoring American support for the new regime⁵⁵. The Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein saw the unrest as a sign of weakening and as an opportunity for Iraq to finally overtake Iran as the primary power in the Persian Gulf region⁵⁶. In September it launched an attack on Khuzestan, a province in the Southwest of Iran populated by Arabs and an area rich in oil. The new

⁵⁴ Ibid. p 110 *“Regardless of the rhetoric on the part of Arab radicals, led by Iraq, and despite the evidence of Iranian aggrandizement, the Arab Persian Gulf sheikhs and monarchs continued to feel more comfortable with Iran throughout the 1970's.”*

⁵⁵ Wright, Steven M. p 3 *“However, this twin-pillar strategy became defunct when Iran, the key pillar of the US security policy, experienced an Islamic revolution in 1979 that resulted in Muhammad Shah Reza Pahlavi being overthrown. The dramatic overthrow of the Shah ushered in a fundamentally new era for regional politics and US strategic policy towards the region. The subsequent seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in November 1979 and the ensuing hostage crisis was crucial in affirming the perception of the Islamic Republic as inimical to US interests. It was as a result of the anti-American position of the successor Islamic regime in Tehran that the revolution necessarily ushered in a reassessment of Iran's role in US policy towards Persian Gulf security.”*

⁵⁶ Woods et al. Saddam's War, An Iraqi Military Perspective of the Iran-Iraq War. p 5 *“From Saddam's point of view, the fall of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and the political chaos engendered by Khomeini's religious revolution provided a perfect opportunity for him to act against Iran. Moreover, a number of Iraq's senior officers (some, but not all, recently appointed to their senior positions by Saddam) believed that the apparent collapse of the Shah's army meant there would be easy pickings to the east.”*

regime in Tehran was surprised and unprepared for such an attack but they had two significant advantages: the attack united most of the population behind the regime and the new regime had inherited a large and capable military from Shah Pahlavi. The enormous defence expenditures during the 1960's and 1970's had created the most powerful air force, navy and strong army in the Persian Gulf. The revolution and subsequent executions had diminished the fighting capabilities of the Iranian Armed Forces somewhat but this was compensated by the enormous loyalty and sacrifices of the Revolutionary Guards. By 1981 the war had bogged down into a bloody stalemate, with neither side being capable of delivering a decisive blow⁵⁷. Iran's military might was slowly eroded away in costly battles of attrition, losses which could not be replenished due to the arms embargo installed by the United States after the Iranian Revolution. Iraq on the other had had evolved from a semi-pariah state to becoming one of the biggest benefactors of western (in particular French, American but also Soviet) military and financial aid. The United States in particular had made a dramatic shift in completely supporting Iran under Shah Pahlavi to embargoing Iran and aiding Iraq during a bitter eight year war.

Throughout the Iran-Iraq war the United Arab Emirates, as had most countries in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, supported the Iraqi war effort through various means. Covertly the U.A.E, together with other Arab gulf states, supported Iraq financially by providing huge loans which kept the Iraqi war machine going⁵⁸. Iraq's rhetoric of the early 1970's, that Iran was a threat and ought to be stopped, was finally taken seriously by the Persian Gulf Arabs after Iran slowly but surely started pushing back the Iraqi forces in

⁵⁷ Hiro, Dilip in *Iran and the Arab World*, p 47 "*Iraq continued to hold substantial territory, mostly in Khuzestan, but proved incapable of gaining fresh ground. A surge of patriotism in Iran had enabled the government to enlarge the military and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). While these forces, assisted by the air force blocked further Iraqi advance, they failed to lift the siege of Abadan.*"

⁵⁸ Pelletiere, Stephen P , p 72 "*The Gulf monarchs, who until 1982 had been relatively forthcoming in their assistance, now were put on notice that aid must continue. Consequently, in 1982 Saudi Arabia dispensed \$2.5 billion to the Iraqis; Kuwait, \$2 billion; the UAE, \$750 million; and Qatar, \$250 million.*"

Khuzestan⁵⁹. The revolution had upset the rulers of the Persian Gulf as they feared this might have implications on their own position of power. What is surprising is that the United Arab Emirates never used this momentarily weakening and distraction provided by Iraq to reclaim Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands. After all, an interesting albeit minor objective of Saddam Hussein was to liberate the island of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands and return them to Emirati control⁶⁰. From an offensive realist perspective this inaction on part of the United Arab Emirates is particularly puzzling.

Offensive realism would predict that the weakening of the major power in a region would certainly lead to other powers in the region trying to take advantage to claim the top spot for themselves. While the U.A.E. did not have the ambition to become the Persian Gulf's dominant power it did have the dispute over Abu Musa and the Tunb islands which could now be settled in their favour. Not only was Iran weakened by war and internal unrest, the United States had overtly and covertly supported the Iraqi war effort against Iran even though the Iraqi justification for war was extremely weak and their conduct of the war did not appeal to the democratic consciousness of western states. How could the United States ever condemn a return of territory which rightly belonged to the U.A.E? Ahmadi states that during 1980 and early 1981 the United Arab Emirates tried to reopen the debate on Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands by sending two letters to the UN Security Council. He puts this only deviation of a policy of no direct confrontation with Iran down to several causes. First of all the revolution

⁵⁹ Ibid. p 47 “As Iran began to show its muscle on the battlefield the support for Iraq from fellow Arab states became more open. In January, Jordan’s King Hussein announced that his long standing offer of troops for Iraq would be implemented soon. The next month, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-formed may 1981 by Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.-publicly committed its members to countering Iranian influence in the Gulf.”

⁶⁰ Dilip Hiro in *Iran and the Arab World* (1993) p 45-46 “Iraq’s declared war aims were: to recover the complete rights to the Shatt al-Arab and other ‘usurped areas’; to end Tehran’s interference in Iraq’s internal affairs and the return of the islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb near the Hormuz Straits (taken by Iran in 1971) to the United Arab Emirates.”

and subsequent chaos had created a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf. Iraq was already trying to take advantage of it and the U.A.E. felt that they at least should try to reclaim the islands. Secondly at this point an Iraqi victory seemed to be extremely likely. In the event of an Iraqi victory, and the subsequent chaos this would create in Iran, the U.A.E. should be ready to exploit the situation and recapture the islands. Thirdly Ahmadi adds that the pressure mounted by Iraq on the Arab Gulf States, including the U.A.E. should not be underestimated. Iraq's "star was rising" and the Arab Gulf states felt that they should jump on the bandwagon while it was still possible⁶¹.

Perhaps we will find an answer if we make another comparison of the main criteria for power as outlined by Mearsheimer: population, military strength/manpower and Gross Domestic Product⁶². From this comparison several things become clear considering the balance of power in the Persian Gulf. First of all the United Arab Emirates' wealth had greatly increased during the 1970's. This was mainly due to the new discoveries of oil fields in Abu Dhabi and the successful extraction of oil from older fields. Secondly that Iran was still the most formidable military power at the start of the Iran-Iraq war, having the largest armed force and spending a significant amount of its yearly budget on maintaining the armed forces. By 1985 Iraq had mobilized more men than Iran, but it has to be noted that the exact strength of their regular forces of the Pasdaran or Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps could never be registered properly due to their enormous losses and subsequent massive recruitment drive. The United Arab Emirates remained a minnow compared to both Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is very possible that the U.A.E. did not want to get involved in the war between Iran and Iraq as by the middle of the 1980's it had already proven to be one of the bloodiest and grimmest conflicts of the 20th century. The use of chemical and biological

⁶¹ Ahmadi, Kouroush, Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf p 137-138

⁶² See appendix C for a table of comparing the strength of Iran, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates.

weapons by both sides, the use of human wave tactics by the Iranians made it clear to the war that the fighting would continue to the very bitter end. The U.A.E. at this point was happy to sit back and watch as the two major powers of the region slowly erode their own power. As is clear from Appendix C the oil fuelled boom of the 1970's continued throughout the 1980's while Iran and Iraq suffered severe damage to their economy and oil producing capacity. The costs of joining the war and recapture the three disputed islands were too great, even though at first glance it seemed as if the opportunity to take advantage from Iran's distraction was a unique chance to do so.

A Changing World, a Changing Region

The war between Iran and Iraq ended in 1988 with a cease fire and return to the status quo ante bellum. Both Iran and Iraq had fought themselves to the brink of total destruction, the financial costs were immense and the number of casualties suffered on both sides equalled the losses of the Great Powers during both World Wars. Iran for the moment dedicated itself to rebuilding the country after a decade of internal unrest and war. Iraq had suffered severe losses on its own, but worse from an Iraqi point of view were the enormous debts Iraq had accumulated during the war. Most of the debts were owed to the Arab Gulf States, including the United Arab Emirates. Saddam Hussein felt that he had borne the brunt of the fight against Iranian expansion and had thereby protected the Arab states in the Persian Gulf from Iranian aggression. He therefore argued that the other Gulf States should cancel the debts owed by Iraq as Iraq had done them a collective favour. The subsequent refusal to accept his demands by the Gulf States infuriated Saddam Hussein who then turned his attention to the small neighbouring state of Kuwait. This small oil rich state had long been coveted by Iraq who based their claims on history (Kuwait was detached from Iraq proper in 1922 by the British) and was also the main financiers of Iraq's war effort. Saddam Hussein added to his list of

grievances the accusation of Kuwaiti theft of Iraqi oil and overproducing oil to decrease the price of a barrel of oil on the world market. With lower oil prices Iraq would have less revenue to repay the debts with. Saddam Hussein launched an invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, quickly capturing the small state within a day and officially annexed Kuwait. The other Arab states in the Gulf naturally were extremely worried by this turn of events. The United States, who had a minor military presence since the middle of the 1980's to protect oil shipments coming from the Persian Gulf against the random attacks by both Iran and Iraq on neutral oil shipping, quickly condemned the Iraqi invasion and promised to send troops to protect the world's main supplier of oil: Saudi Arabia. This surprised Saddam Hussein as he talked about his grievances versus Kuwait with the American Ambassador in Iraq days before the invasion and he was under the impression that he had American approval for this invasion⁶³. It took a six month military build-up which saw over half a million troops from the United States, various European states and also several units from Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia concentrated in the desert border region between Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait before the US commander Norman Schwarzkopf deemed the force ready to take on the Iraqi army. The Iraqi army was experienced from the eight year war with Iran and outnumbered the assembled the coalition troops. The extensive deployment of chemical and biological weapons by Iraq during the war with Iran conjured images of thousands of dead American soldiers on the minds of generals, politicians and the public alike. The quality of the Iraqi

⁶³ Bill and Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, p 296 *"Furthermore following the first Gulf War [the Iran-Iraq war] Iraq saw its financial position move from 35 billion USD in the black to 75 billion USD in the red. Much of this debt was owed to countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Having borne the brunt of the war against revolutionary Iran, the Iraqi government felt that these debts should be forgiven. Saddam became especially irate with the Kuwaitis, whose overproduction of oil had helped depress the price of petroleum, seriously threatening Iraq's economic wellbeing. This policy by Kuwait was, in Iraq's view, nothing less than a direct threat to Iraqi national security. In a controversial meeting on July 25th 1990 Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz, his foreign minister, met with April Glaspie, the United States ambassador to Iraq. During the meeting the two Iraqi leaders complained bitterly to Glaspie about Iraq's tenuous economic situation. In one exchange, Saddam Hussein complained that the drop in the price of oil had cost Iraq 6 billion to 7 billion USD, which was, in his words, a disaster. Ambassador Glaspie said I think I understand this. I have lived here for years. I admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country. I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait."*

troops however was not up to scratch. They were no match against the superior coalition air power and modern high tech equipment and after a six week bombing campaign and a ground offensive which lasted exactly 100 hours the Iraqi army was defeated and driven from Kuwait⁶⁴. Saddam barely managed to hold on to power as the Shi'a Muslims in the south and the Kurds in the north rebelled against his authoritarian rule.

For the United Arab Emirates the coalition victory was a great relief. It had sent a token force to Saudi Arabia to participate in the defensive phase (Operation Desert Shield) of the war. Its main contribution consisted of financial support to the coalition⁶⁵. The immediate strategic environment in the Persian Gulf was promising for the U.A.E. For the past two decades the U.A.E. had carefully managed to balance both Iraq and Iran, but now the situation had changed dramatically. Iran had suffered greatly during the war but had slowly recovered by early 1992. It had tried to normalise its relations with the Arab Gulf States including the U.A.E. but this policy failed because of the distrust of the Arabs against the Iranians. Iran even proposed a regional security framework, excluding the United States, which would have resulted in a de facto Iranian domination of the Persian Gulf. This proposal failed as well as protection offered by the Americans was seen as more beneficiary for the Arab Gulf States than a security framework with Iran⁶⁶. Iraq had just been defeated completely by the United States and was targeted by United Nations sanctions that hampered the economic and military recovery of Iraq. In short Iraq was no longer of concern to the U.A.E. The United States

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 298 *"The ground offensive that resulted in the liberation of Kuwait began on February 23rd 1991 and lasted exactly 100 hours."*

⁶⁵ Ahmadi, Kouroush, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf* p 158 *"The U.A.E. provided the United States with 6,572 billion USD in direct aid during the Persian Gulf war of 1991 and 218 million USD in goods and services"*

⁶⁶ Ibid. p 146-148 *"As an alternative [to deployment of American troops in 1990 in preparation for the liberation of Kuwait] a new regional security arrangement for the Persian Gulf that would include all littoral states and exclude foreign powers reappeared at the top of the Iranian priority list for the region. [...] And most of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, in fact, began looking elsewhere for security assistance, clearly preferring the permanent presence of foreign forces [mainly American troops] and fully reversing their favourable inclination to consider a regional security arrangement that could involve Iran."*

remained in the Persian Gulf after Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm⁶⁷. For the first time since the withdrawal of the British in 1971 an off shore balancer maintained strong military forces in the region. Moreover that off shore balancer was hostile towards Iraq and more importantly Iran. The hostage crisis after the Iranian revolution was not forgotten by the Americans, as was the American support for Iraq during their war with Iran not forgotten by the Iranians. The American presence in the Persian Gulf consisted of storages of supplies and equipment in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the deployment of the 5th USN Fleet to Bahrain and the stationing of 170 aircraft on the Arabian Peninsula⁶⁸. The United Arab Emirates played a crucial role in the American containment plans of Iran. It possessed territory that was close to Iran and the Strait of Hormuz and was a major oil and gas producer. The United States and the Emirates sign a security arrangement which provided bases for American naval and air forces. The United Kingdom and France were also involved in these arrangements⁶⁹.

Iran was unhappy with the developments and the reappearance of a western off shore balancer in the Persian Gulf. The Iranian government chose to set an example by introducing a new regulations concerning visits to Abu Musa. The Iranians escalated tensions with the United Arab Emirates over Abu Musa by announcing the introduction of special passes for those who wished to travel to Abu Musa. As was said earlier in this thesis Abu Musa had been divided between an Iranian part and a Sharjari/Emirati part since 1971. The Iranians demanded that these new regulations would include visits to the Emirati side of Abu Musa. The Emirates rejected and in August the situation escalated further when the Iranian Coast

⁶⁷ Wright, Steven M. p 4 “*Whilst the liberation of Kuwait was achieved, the military footprint of the United States remained. As both Iran and Iraq were considered as potential threats to the United States’ interests in geopolitical security in the Persian Gulf sub region, the administration of George H. W. Bush laid the foundations for a containment of both countries.*”

⁶⁸ Ahmadi, Kouroush, *Islands and International Politics in the Persian Gulf* p 156-157

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p 158 “*The U.A.E. negotiated a security arrangement with the United States in 1992 that offered the United States access to U.A.E. air and naval facilities. They signed a more comprehensive defence agreement on 23 July 1994. The U.A.E. signed similar deals with the United Kingdom and France.* “

Guard stopped a boat with Emirati passengers from docking at Abu Musa. This effectively meant a complete occupation Abu Musa⁷⁰. The United Arab Emirates angrily brought the case before the regional gathering of the Gulf Cooperation Council in September 1992 and the United Nations General Assembly held that same month. Negotiations between the U.A.E. and Iran followed, but these broke down after tough Emirati demands over the complete withdrawal of Iran from the Emirati part of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands⁷¹. The Iranians rejected this out of hand and the situation remained tense. An escalation to open warfare seemed imminent after reassurances from Iran that any military provocation or action would be met with a violent reaction⁷². The United States, as did most other countries in the region, backed the United Arab Emirates⁷³. The situation remained frosty but did not deteriorate further to the point of war between the U.A.E and Iran. While the United Arab Emirates had the backing of every other state in the Persian Gulf region and France, Britain and the United States it did not push Iran further on the issue and the islands remained under Iranian control.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 167-168

⁷¹ Ibid p 171-172 *“During these meetings, the U.A.E. delegation presented the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the following demands: 1. Ending the military occupation of the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb. 2. Emphasizing Iran’s commitments to the 1971 memorandum of understanding on the island of Abu Musa. 3. Refraining from interfering in any way and under any circumstances or pretext in the U.A.E.’s exercise of its full sovereignty over its portion of the island of Abu Musa, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding. 4. Cancelling all arrangements and measures imposed by Iran on the State organs on the island of Abu Musa, the State citizens and non-U.A.E. residents. 5. Finding an appropriate framework to resolve the issue of sovereignty over the island of Abu Musa within a definite period of time.”*

⁷² Ibid. p 173 *“As tensions grew over the islands, the Air Force commander General Mansur Satari announced that Iran was prepared to shoot down any aircraft violating its airspace. He said on Tehran radio on 21 September that his aircraft were stepping up their watch over the three islands and his pilots were ready to repulse any intrusion by mischievous foreigners. [...] Three months later President Rafsanjani warned that the Arab countries in the GCC would have to cross a sea of blood to reach the three island sin the Persian gulf.”*

⁷³ Ibid. p 174 *“In separate talks in New York with foreign ministers of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, it was reported that [US secretary of state] Eagleburger conveyed US support in their dispute with Iran over the Persian Gulf island of Abu Musa.”*

Why did the Emirates not push for return over the islands at a time when Iran would probably be forced to fight alone against an overwhelming coalition of regional states and great powers such as the United States? In offensive realist terms the U.A.E. had a clear military advantage. It had received advanced western weaponry and training for several years, it had a support of the only regional hegemon in the world and the target state was weakened by years of warfare and sanctions. It is at this point that offensive realism might show its first sign of not being able to fully explain the events surrounding the disputed islands in the Persian Gulf. As Appendix E shows the possible forces arrayed against Iran were staggering. Iran would have the capability to resist, but it could not have prevented the capture of Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands. What it could have done and the tanker war episode during the Iran-Iraq war showed that this was a real threat, was to attack the oil tankers passing close to their shores through the Strait of Hormuz. The United States in particular feared such an Iranian reaction to any attempt to retake the disputed islands⁷⁴. A blockade of the Strait of Hormuz or a series of attacks on shipping traversing the Strait would have disrupted the world economy as suddenly a huge portion of the world's oil reserves were unreachable. One could argue that the risk posed by Iran to the economic wellbeing of the world was greater than the benefit gained from recapturing the islands. Given the United States' vulnerability to any disruption of its oil supplies it is possible that the United States would not have supported a military operation to recapture of Abu Musa and the Tunb Islands. A hesitant off shore balancer combined with a lack of military capabilities to force their issue on their own resulted in inaction, once again, on part of the United Arab Emirates.

⁷⁴ Wright, Steven M. p 93 *"Regionally, Iran was seen by the United States as posing a potential threat to US allies in the Persian Gulf and also to the freedom of the seas through its potential ability to disrupt shipping access through the Strait of Hormuz."*

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to look at the dispute over Abu Musa and the Tunb islands through an offensive realist lens. The main focus lay on the ability of offensive realism to explain the absence of warfare over these disputed islands as expressed in the thesis question “How can offensive realism explain the absence of warfare between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands?” Offensive realism goes some way to explain the absence of war in each of the three periods discussed in this thesis. During the first period at the time the United Arab Emirates gained independence from Great Britain the discrepancy of power between the newly independent state and Iran was too great. The Iranians had just started a massive expansion of their military capabilities, fuelled by the wealth gained from the export of oil and natural gas. The U.A.E. had been under British protection for over a century, and with the withdrawal of their guardian there was no one to protect their interests. When the United States threw its weight behind Iran during the 1970’s the Emirates had little choice but to accept the situation. This changed with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the start of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. The first event turned Iran from a respected American ally to a pariah state while the second event severely affected Iranian military capabilities. The war with Iraq was extremely costly financially, in terms of manpower lost at the front and it created a huge distraction for Iran. The U.A.E. covertly supported Iraq during the by providing loans but remained officially neutral. It can be assumed that the horrendous nature of the war plus the intention of Iran to defend its territory prevented the U.A.E. from reclaiming the disputed islands. The third period was dominated by another shift in the Persian Gulf balance of power. Iraq was defeated by the United States in the 1991 Gulf War, which resulted not only in the de facto disappearance of a regional power but also the return of an off shore balancer. The United States made it clear that it would resume responsibility for security and stability in the Persian Gulf. This message was not only directed at Iraq, their

adversary during the 1991 Gulf War, but also at Iran which was still seen as a regional troublemaker by the United States. The United Arab Emirates became an important pillar in the Persian Gulf security structure that the Americans had in mind. Feeling emboldened by American diplomatic and military support the U.A.E. reacted fiercely to Iranian provocations in 1992. After a lot of rhetoric and diplomatic pressure the issue slowly subsided without any action being taken by the U.A.E. Once again the deterrent of Iranian threats to close off the Strait of Hormuz and attack oil tankers was enough to prevent the U.A.E. from pursuing a more aggressive policy in reclaiming the islands. Since 1971 the status quo of Iran occupying the islands and the U.A.E. trying through several methods to reclaim the islands has been preserved. The fact that status quo has held for such a long time even though the balance of power has shifted dramatically over the last four decades might be an indicator that offensive realism might be flawed as the perseverance of the status quo is a defensive realism idea rather than offensive realist which states that the offense is profitable in gaining more security than a defensive strategy.

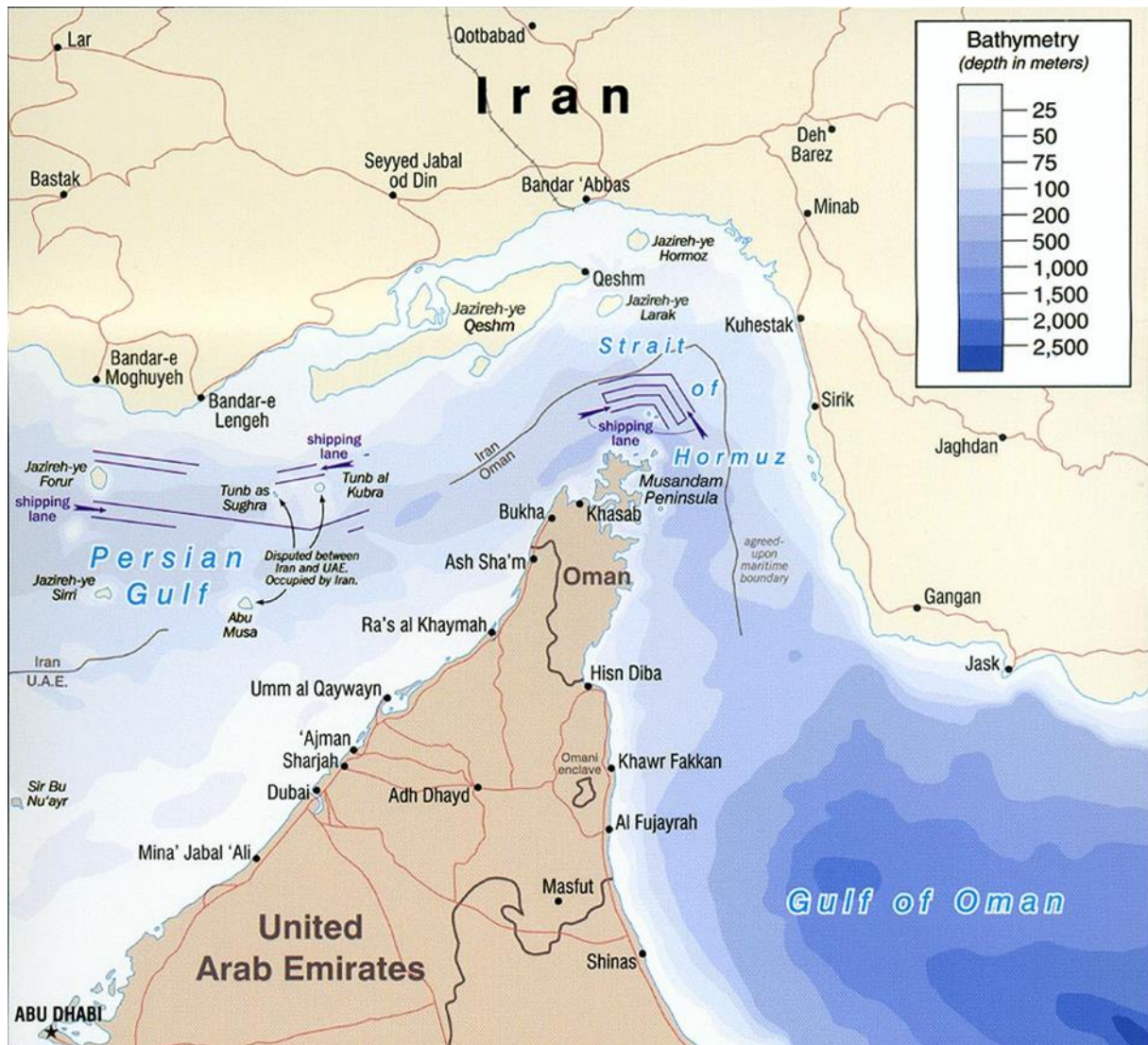
In all the essential fields that Mearsheimer lists in his book as being crucial to the power of a state the United Arab Emirates lagged behind Iran. The difference in population is enormous, especially when considering the fact that a significant portion of the Emirati population consists of foreign born workers and expats. In terms of wealth the Emirates have profited from their own oil resources, but the economy remains fragile and extremely depended on the export of oil and gas. The Iranian economy has suffered from decades of American sanctions, and just like the Emirati economy is largely depended on the export of oil and gas. The sheer size of Iran and its more diverse economy give it a minimal advantage in terms of economy. The armed forces of Iran are undoubtedly the strongest regional force in the Persian Gulf. Now that the United States has announced a shift in focus to the Pacific Rim the smaller states once again fear that they would be abandoned by their protector. In recent

years the United Arab Emirates, as have many other Arab Gulf States, has started a massive expansion of their military capabilities. At the same time Britain has announced a return of a permanently stationed force to the Persian Gulf region in April 2013⁷⁵. While this might not be a decisive force that can tip the balance of power in favour of the United Arab Emirates it ensures that the region will remain at the front of global political issues.

⁷⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22333555>

Appendices

Appendix A: Map of the Region



Appendix B: Population, Size of Armed Forces and GDP at the time of British withdrawal from the Gulf

	Iranian Empire	United Arab Emirates
Population ⁷⁶	27,892,000	243,000
Size of Armed Forces ⁷⁷	221,000	N.A.
Gross Domestic Product ⁷⁸	10 Billion USD	1.1 Billion

⁷⁶ Population data for 1970 UN Demographic Yearbook 1970

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybsets/1970%20DYB.pdf>

⁷⁷ Kourosh, p 78

⁷⁸ For information on Iran http://kushnirs.org/macroconomics/gdp/gdp_iran.html#t1

For information on the United Arab Emirates

http://kushnirs.org/macroconomics/gdp/gdp_united_arab_emirates.html#t1

Appendix C: population, manpower, military expenditure and GDP

	Gross Domestic Product ⁸²	Military Expenditure ⁸¹	Size of Armed Forces ⁸⁰	Population ⁷⁹
Iran 1979	86 Billion USD	5,462,930,000 USD	415,000	33,591,875
Iran 1985	75 Billion USD	14,091,000,000 USD	345,000	33,708,744
UAE 1979	31 Billion USD	1,180,300,000 USD	25,000	179,126
UAE 1985	41 Billion USD	2,043,000,000 USD	44,000	1,043,225
Iraq 1979	11 Billion USD	2,675,245,000 USD	444,000	12,000,497
Iraq 1985	12 Billion USD	12,870,000,000 USD	788,000	12,000,487

⁷⁹ Population data for 1979 retrieved from UN Demographic yearbook 1979
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybsets/1979%20DYB.pdf>

Population date for 1985 retrieved from UN Demographic yearbook 1985
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybsets/1985%20DYB.pdf>

⁸⁰ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

⁸¹ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

⁸² For information on Iran http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp_iran.html#t1

For information on UAE

http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp_united_arab_emirates.html#t1

For information on Iraq http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp_iraq.html#t1

Appendix D, Iraq and the USA during the Gulf War

	Iraq 1991	United States of America 1991
Size of Armed Forces ⁸³	1,390,000	2,240,000
Military Expenditure ⁸⁴	12,900,000,000	262,389,000,000

⁸³ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

⁸⁴ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

Appendix E, balance of power in 1992

	Population ⁸⁵	Size of Armed Forces ⁸⁶	Military Expenditure ⁸⁷	GDP ⁸⁸	
Iran	55,837,163	528,000	2,300,000,000 USD	99 Billion USD	
U.A.E	1,043,225	55,000	2,100,000,000 USD	54 Billion USD	
United States	248,709,873	1,920,000 of which 30,000 were permanently stationed in the Persian Gulf	286,892,000,000 USD	6,342.30 Billion USD	

⁸⁵ Population data for 1992 retrieved from UN Demographic yearbook 1992
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybsets/1992%20DYB.pdf>

⁸⁶ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

⁸⁷ Retrieved from Correlates of War National Material Capabilities database
<http://correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Capabilities/nmc3-02.htm>

⁸⁸ for information on USA <http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/year/1992/>
 For information on Iran http://kushnirs.org/macroeconomics/gdp/gdp_iran.html#t1
 For information on U.A.E.

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