The "Islamic Military Alliance":
Between Combating Terrorism and Maintaining Saudi Security (2015-2017)

Khier S. Diabat *

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the issue of "The Islamic Military Alliance" (IMA), which has been announced by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (henceforth KSA) on 15 December 2015, and has been linked to combating terrorism under the Saudi leadership. The study aims at explaining the impact of regional and international changes that affected the Saudi security perspective towards the establishment of this alliance - which includes 41 Arab and Islamic countries. The study also endeavors to explore the motives, objectives and interests that endorse the members especially KSA to join this kind of alliances. The study then attempts to analyze the nature of the security strategy adopted by IMA in achieving its objectives. The study sets out from the premise that there is a correlation between the growth of Saudi security needs and the maintenance of its security and national interests through the establishment of this alliance. To examine this hypothesis, the study poses a series of questions and has answered them. The study methodology is based on employing the historical, descriptive and analytical approaches to the research problem, objectives and questions to reach the research outcomes. Finally, the study concludes that KSA aims at achieving a range of national interests through this alliance besides the declared main goal on combating terrorism. The most important of these interests has been to balance the rise of Iranian power and restore the Saudi regional and international prestige in the region.

Keywords: Islamic Military Alliance; the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; security perspective; international terrorism.

Introduction

Due to the different regional changes in the Middle East and North Africa since the beginning of "Arab Spring" in 2010, KSA began to follow a new course in its foreign policy through presenting itself as a leading country on both regional and international level. On 15 December 2015 KSA announced under its leadership- the formation of an Islamic Military Alliance against terrorist activities whose threats affected the regional and international stability and worry the security of many countries of different political, economic, religious and social systems. It decided to confront international terrorism and the extremist's thought around the globe, particularly in Muslim countries, where the most active terrorist's groups (Al Qaidah and The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria: ISIS) intensively exist. Although the Saudi call has been met by many Arab and Islamic countries, many speculations have been going on about the nature of this new Islamic alliance, its goals and the timing of its establishment, as KSA is facing a growing security concern amidst regional and international changes in the Middle East and North Africa. This study attempts to address this international phenomenon from a scientific and academic perspective, with the aim of revealing the nature of this new Islamic actor (IMA) in the region and the potential interests that its members -above all KSA - seek to achieve through it.

Problem Identification:

The "Islamic Military Alliance" is a new intergovernmental player in regional and international interactions which is established since the end of 2015. It embodies counter-terrorist alliance of 41 Muslim countries under the leadership of KSA. The study investigates motives behind the establishment of this alliance, which seems to have other targets than countering terrorist activities. For this reason, this study will investigate **what are the real motives that prompted KSA**

to call for a military Islamic alliance under its leadership.

Questions of the Study:

The study attempts to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the nature of the threats that have been prompted KSA to call for this alliance?
2. What are the stated objectives that the alliance parties in general and KSA in particular, aim to achieve?
3. Are there any other interests that the alliance members in general and KSA in particular aim to achieve?
4. What is the potential strategy for this alliance?
5. What are the opportunities that allow the new alliance to be a regional and international actor?
6. Are there challenges that could hinder the alliance from practicing its planned role?

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims at uncovering the underlying interests of KSA in calling for the establishment of this alliance in 2015. It also aims to analyze the most important security interests that the member states, especially KSA, are seeking to achieve through this alliance, as well as it attempts to analyze the nature of its role in order to clarify all the opportunities and obstacles facing its development on the regional and international arenas.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study lies in two aspects:

1. **Scientific**: It includes the description of the phenomenon of the "Islamic alliance" by studying some important and fundamental information related to the emergence of new Islamic military alliance analytically. This may provide a scientific benefit for many people who are interested in international relations in the Arab and Islamic countries.
2. **Practical:** It contains the analysis of the role of this new alliance led by KSA in the Middle East and North Africa, the two areas are full of regional actors such as KSA, Turkey, Iran, Israel, and some international actors of particular interests in the region such as the United States and Russia. The effects of this alliance, in the presence of these regional and international powers, may be reflected in the stability of the whole regional system in the region.

Hypothesis of the Study

This study is based on the assumption that there is a correlation between the growth of Saudi security needs and the maintenance of its security and national interests through the establishment of this alliance. This assumption will be tested based on analyzing some international facts and indicators.

Limitations of the Study

There are three limitations of this study:

3. **Thematic** that is limited to study through an independent variable, namely the growing regional threats to the Saudi state, and a subsequent variable which is the call for the alliance under Saudi leadership.
4. **Spatial** that includes the activities and interactions of this alliance in the regional and international arena, especially with regard to the regions of the member states which include South Asia, the Middle East and Africa.
5. **The timeframe** which include the period between 2015-2016 beginning with 2015 as a start point for the call for the formation of this alliance at the end of 2015, and extended until the end of 2016 (the time of preparing this study).

Methodology of the Study:

The study employs the analytical approach based on the theory of realism in the analysis of Saudi trends in the leadership of this Islamic alliance, considering that national strength and interest has been a cornerstone of Saudi foreign policy in recent years. In addition, the historical approach will be used to examine the developments that led to this alliance. The study also uses the analytical approach based on the analysis of many documents, data and practices related to the activity of this alliance in an attempt to explore the reality of the role of this alliance in the region**.**

Review of Related Literature

1. Akpomera, Eddy. (2016). Saudi Arabia -Led Islamic Military Alliance Against Terrorism and Nigeria's Policy Somersault.

This study deals with the idea of the Islamic military alliance against terrorism led by Sau KSA di Arabia, in particular

the position of the Nigerian state of this alliance, as Nigeria suffers from the practices of the terrorist organization Boko Haram, and its joining the alliance has become necessary to protect its national security.

2. Pulavarthi, V. & Dizon, I. (2016). Islamic Military Alliance.

The study presented the idea of the new Islamic alliance under the leadership of KSA; it showed the conditions and the main objective of its composition which are represented in fighting against international terrorism. The study also highlighted a number of obstacles facing this alliance, the most important of which was the lack of coordination with the international powers, and the restriction on the inclusion of Sunni Islamic countries only, which may affect its effectiveness in the future.

3. Gaub, F. (2016). Saudi Arabia and its 40 Allies: What the Islamic Alliance really means. Working Paper Security Policy (German).

This study showed that the idea of this alliance is not new and has been proposed by Saudi KSA Arabia previously. This study also showed the importance of this alliance, especially in the field of balancing the growing Iranian power in the region after the conclusion of the nuclear agreement with Western countries and the expansion of its influence in many Arab countries.

1.   4. Ali, A. (2015). New Saudi Alliance and the US Strategy. The study dealt with the idea of establishing the alliance in 2015 and linking it to the American strategy in Syria and Iraq. The study also found that the main objective of this alliance is to confirm the Saudi leadership in the region towards the growing Iranian policy in some Arab countries.

2.   5. Ajami, D. (2015). Islamic Alliance in the Era of Military Structures. The study showed that this alliance is the result of regional conditions prevailing in the Middle East region, where military militias, regular armies and regional alliances are deployed. KSA has taken the initiative in combating terrorism in order to calm Western criticism of Muslim and Gulf countries in particular as being a responsible source for spreading the Salafi jihadist ideology.

On contrast to the mentioned studies, which focused on only one aspect of this new alliance, this study examine the analysis of this alliance from a multi-faceted perspective and this is what distinguishes it. This study also linked the analytical framework of the theory of realism and the behavior of KSA, which stemmed from a security perspective and played a major role in forming this alliance. It also discussed the motives of the alliance members; presented some of the opportunities and obstacles that may determine the future of this alliance from the point of view of the researcher, which has not been tackled by the previous studies, and this gives it another advantage over others.

I. Regional and International Environments Role in Establishing the "Islamic Alliance"

Although the Crown Prince and Saudi Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman's call for an Islamic military alliance under the leadership of KSA executed on December 15, 2015, the history of Saudi foreign policy reveals a similar call dating back decade and under different regional and international environments. In 1965, King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz called for the establishment of an Islamic alliance, only Iran and Jordan agreed to join this alliance. This call was due to the prevailing of regional and international environment during the Cold War against the Communist camp. This is why most Arab and Islamic countries did not join it at that time, considering that this call was an attempt to revive the pro-Western Baghdad alliance against the revolutionary tide in the Arab world. However, the Arab and Islamic reaction toward this idea began to change after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The Arab defeat in this war and the subsequent burning of the Al Aqsa Mosque in 1969 had a clear impact on the call for the establishment of an Islamic bloc which is more acceptable to the Arab and Islamic countries. This bloc was called the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at the end of 1969, which, like other Arab and regional gatherings, does not activate its complementary and cooperative role in various fields (Charter of the OIC, 1970).

With regard to the timing of the announcement of this alliance at the end of 2015, it came at a time when Saudi security - both internally and externally - is facing a range of threats and challenges brought about by changes in the regional and international environment in the Middle East and North Africa region in a way not favored by the Saudi

decision-maker:

At the **local** level, KSA is suffering from the output of the Arab Spring that has permeated the region since the end of 2010 (Ayasrah, 2016). The internal situation of many Arab and Islamic countries for political reasons (i.e. absence of democracy, rule of law and freedoms), economic (i.e. increasing poverty and unemployment) and social (i.e. the absence of distributive justice of wealth between the ruling classes and peoples) had its repercussions on KSA in the light of some international criticism, especially Western, which is directed to the Saudi regime from time to time; coincides with some popular, religious and Saudi elite claims to implement internal political reforms and economy (Hause, 2016).

At the **regional** level, the challenges are more evident because regional threats are growing in a way that KSA has not faced for a long time. Although the region of Saudi neighborhood is always affected by tension and conflict due to the Iranian and Israeli presence in the region, the acceleration of the Arab Spring's outputs in many neighboring countries has forced KSA to reconsider its security and military capabilities differently (Alomoush, 2016). The strained relationship with the traditional Iranian opponent has entered advanced stages due to Iran's attempt to have nuclear capabilities that could upset the balance of regional power toward KSA; especially Riyadh still believes that the Iranian regime is a revolutionary regime seeking to achieve regional hegemony in the region under historical hostility with the Saudi regime (Mogdad, 2013). This Saudi concern of the Iranian regime deepens with the civil wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and it is approaching the allies of Riyadh, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Bahrain, with the support of Iran according to the Saudi view. In addition, the Iranian regime is trying to expand its influence in the region against Saudi KSA Arabia, as the two powers - Iranian or KSA - have a strong historical competition to play the role of the "core state" of the sub-regional system in the Gulf region (Abdul Hayy, 2010).

However, at the **international** level, it appears that the Saudi decision-maker realizes that the alliance with the United States has undergone some changes and is no longer being a real guarantor of Saudi national security. The absolute strategic protection that the United States has provided to KSA for nearly seven decades has been changing due to many factors such as the tension that affected the US-Saudi relations after September 11, 2001, American criticism of the human rights issue in KSA, the US-Iranian understandings on the Iranian nuclear file, the lifting of Western sanctions on Iran, and Washington's indifference to the fate of its former regional ally, (Mubarak's regime), who fell without any American help in favor of one of the opponents of KSA (the Muslim Brotherhood). All these factors have formed a Saudi concern about the seriousness of Washington in maintaining the strategic specific alliance relationship with Riyadh (Hause, 2016).

Above all, KSA has found itself in an unstable regional environment and this instability could be shifted to KSA. In the west, Iranian regional opponent strengthens its power with nuclear capabilities and political and military influence in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and the outputs of civil wars in the north (ISIS), are taking advantage of the opportunity to transfer it to KSA. The Houthis and some members of al-Qaeda and the ISIS turned the southern of KSA into a war zone, and in the east, Egypt is witnessing political instability between the Muslim Brotherhood and their opponents. This coincides with the growing state of internal instability in KSA, along with some doubts about the fate of the alliance relationship with the United States because of the pressures of "democratization" and human rights.

The announcement of KSA on December 15, 2015, to format an Islamic military alliance appears to have taken place under urgent regional and international conditions, especially after the growing threatening factors in the Middle East and North Africa, in particular after the continuing successes of some terrorist groups (al-Qaeda and the ISIS) in the region. Therefore, 34 Islamic countries instantly agree to this call and then additional countries joined and the number of members reached 41 countries, which could categorize in four groups (Joint Statement on Formation of Islamic Military Alliance, 2015):

1.   The Gulf States: It includes all the GCC countries namely KSA, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar[1], Bahrain and Oman.

2.   Arab non-Gulf States: It includes Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, Mauritania, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Comoros and the Palestinian Authority.

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[1] The alliance has announced the termination of Qatar's membership due to the diplomatic crisis between the Gulf states and Qatar since June 2017

3. Asian Islamic Countries: It includes Malaysia, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brunei and the Maldives.

4. African Islamic Countries: it includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, Togo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, and Benin.

It is noteworthy that some countries participating in the coalition fall under other military alliances, and this alliance is formed apart from the Arab Gulf Alliance, which leads the operations of "Decisive Storm" in Yemen. Also, granting this alliance the Islamic capacity makes it different from the international alliance formed by the United States to fight "ISIS" in Iraq and Syria since August 2014. More importantly, the absence of some influential Arab and Islamic countries that influence this alliance because of their importance and regional effectiveness such as Iran, and their geographical importance as an arena for the operations of terrorist organizations such as Iraq and Syria. This indicates that the alliance is not limited to combat terrorism only, but there are other motives and interests behind the establishment of this alliance.

II. Objectives and Motives of the Alliance Parties

Based on the realistic view that explains the external behavior of states, the specialized following concepts can be neglected such as the national state as a principal actor in the international relations, power, interest, rationality, international chaos, reducing the role of international organizations, self-reliance and the obsession of security and survival. These concepts formed the basics adopted by different realistic approaches to interpret the international phenomenon, which revolves around four main assumptions (Al Jandali, 2007):

− Nation States are the main actors in the international politics, not individuals or international organizations.

− The international political system is chaotic and lacks a universal central authority capable of imposing rules on States.

− The actors in the international political system are rational and seek to maximize their own interests.

− All countries seek power so that they can ensure their survival and preserve themselves

These assumptions did not depart from Hans Morgenthau's assumptions about the theory of realism; he assumed that states in their foreign policy are working to achieve the following objectives (Morgenthau, 1967):

− To maintain the power and the status quo, as any country strives to maintain its power.

− The struggle to increase power to achieve the objectives of the state.

− To strive to demonstrate the power and international status in its struggle and its competition with the rest of the nations of the international community.

Therefore, it is needless to say that the Saudi state, and the coalition countries, did not deviate from the realistic framework in its external behavior in forming this alliance, as all of them are national states that consider themselves the main actor in the current international system; it has not reached the level of organization and perfection yet because of the chaos of international politics and the absence of the central and effective role of international and regional organizations. Therefore, the behavior of the countries of the "Islamic Alliance", especially KSA, will seek to achieve its security and self-interests primarily as well as increase its power as the best options to ensure its survival.

Although the statement of the Islamic Military Alliance has set the goal of the coalition to combat extremist ideology and terrorism in the region (statement of the formation of the Islamic Military Coalition to combat terrorism, 2015), but the study believes that the Saudi call for the establishment of this alliance has borne other undeclared goals, which can be inferred from the regional and international environment changes surrounding KSA. Perhaps the most important goals are the following:

1. To improve KSA 's military position in the equation of regional balance against its traditional opponent, Iran. The imbalance of regional military power in recent years in favor of Iran, which has increased its military capabilities and potential for nuclear capability, and its growing influence in many countries of the region such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, could pose a threat to Saudi power that has become Iran's main opponent after the demise of the Iraqi regional balance power since 2003. Thus, KSA has economic and religious strength through this alliance; aims to increase its military power by gaining allies and to use the power of the coalition member states to create a strong counterbalance capable of deterring any potential Iranian threats (Gaub, 2016).

2.   To restore the Islamic prestige and status internally and regionally towards the practices of "ISIS": this goal is related to the previous goal on the grounds that increasing Iranian influence in the region, in addition to the successes achieved by "ISIS" in Iraq, Syria and Libya to undermine KSA 's status and prestige internally and regionally, especially Iran has been competing with KSA for decades to lead the Islamic world. Moreover, we should not forget that the discourse and media of "ISIS" tried to compete with KSA to enter the equation of competition for the leadership of the Islamic world as a "legitimate heir to the Islamic caliphate" and as a "true Islamic caliphate" and it does not care about the leadership of the Saudi state (Diabat, 2016). KSA, that leads an alliance includes most Muslim countries, seeks to maintain its leadership to the Islamic World, to block any Iranian or "ISIS" attempts to undermine Saudi prestige in the Islamic world in general and the region in particular (Akpomera, 2016).

3.   To control the regional stability through an active military role of the Muslim countries led by KSA: For several decades, KSA has enjoyed a regional and international status in the Middle East region. It has a share of regional influence in many regional issues (Al Lahidan, 2015). This influence has been exposed in recent years to a state of imbalance caused by the imbalance that has affected the whole region, which is represented by the outcome of the Arab Spring, the growing of Iranian influence, the proliferation of terrorist organizations in many countries of the region, and the emergence of new alliances of the major powers in the region such as (Russian- Iranian alliance, and American coalition against the "ISIS". Therefore, an Islamic alliance led by KSA may restore balance and stability in the region; to re-establish the strategic and international importance of KSA as an influential regional actor (Muhammad, 2015).

4.   To legitimize the Saudi military intervention against the Houthis in Yemen: KSA is trying, through the acquisition of many allies, to legitimate its military intervention against the Houthis who are supported by Iran. Therefore, the accession of many Muslim and Arab countries under the Saudi leadership is tacit acceptance on Riyadh's military policy in Yemen.

5.   To improve the image of KSA internationally as an antiterrorism state: This goal is shown by KSA 's attempts to reject any international or Western accusations of supporting the terrorist organizations, especially those accusations linked the events of September 2001 to the Saudi government due to the ideological relationship between the Terrorist organization and the Wahhabi ideology adopted by KSA. For this reason, the employment of a Saudi-led military alliance to fight against terrorism will contribute to refuting any international accusations against KSA related to its ideological custody and financial support for terrorism. It can also enhance the international image of the Islamic countries and KSA in particular in the equation of fighting global terrorism, as the Islamic countries themselves reject this phenomenon and lead a military campaign against it, considering that the war against terrorism is "the war of Muslims first," this may contribute to distinguishing between the moderate image of Islam represented by KSA and its allies on the one hand and radical Islam represented by extremist terrorist organizations (Ajami, 2015).

With regard to the objectives of the rest of the coalition countries, most of them meet the abovementioned Saudi objectives in terms of increasing power, preventing terrorist threats, balancing Iranian power (such as the Gulf States), improving the image of Islam (the case of Pakistan and Malaysia) and relying on a negotiating power in certain special issues (such as Turkey in its foreign policy towards European countries). However, some of these countries (Arab non-Gulf states and African countries) have sought their membership in this alliance to achieve financial and economic gains that could be provided by KSA in the event this alliance carries possible military missions. These countries suffer from suffocating internal economic crises because of the weakness of their national economies.

III. Alliance Strategy from Saudi Security Perspective

By reviewing the Saudi official statement to form this military alliance, the expected strategy of this alliance will be to combat terrorism of all kinds through developing the required programs and mechanisms (Statement of the formation of the Islamic Military Coalition to Combat Terrorism, 2015). To achieve this goal, KSA has taken a number of measures that contribute to the emergence of this alliance on the regional and international arenas. The first was the announcement of the establishment of a joint operations center, its headquarter in Riyadh, to coordinate and support the military operations against terrorism. KSA also announced for specific arrangements to coordinate with other states that have

been described as friendly, peace-loving and international actors (such as the United States, European states and the United Nations) to serve the international effort to combat terrorism and maintain international peace and security.

At the same time, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubair said on several occasions that the strategy of this new alliance is based on the followings (Ali, 2015):

1. To strengthen the security alliance among the member states, especially in the area of information exchange.

2. To cooperate with member states in training for counter-terrorism operations.

3. To cooperate with member states to facilitate the delivery of equipment for counter-terrorism operations.

4. To send joint military forces to assist states fighting terrorism.

On 27/2-10/3/2017, the coalition has started practical step to activate it internationally, it was represented in a military exercise for twenty of its members (KSA, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, Sudan, UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, Djibouti, Senegal, Chad, the Comoros and the Maldives). These military exercises aimed at training the forces on how to deal with irregular forces and terrorist groups. They also witnessed a qualitative military use of advanced weapons and equipment, including fighter aircrafts, as well as wide participation of artillery, tanks, infantry, air defense systems and naval forces. About 350,000 military personnel, 2,500 aircraft of different models, including 500 attack helicopters, and 20,000 tanks participated in these exercises (Al Jazeera, 2016).

After these exercises, the first meeting of the heads of staff of the coalition, which was held in Riyadh on 26-27 March 2016, revealed the proposed strategy for the work of the Alliance in the short run, which includes the following four dimensions (The final Statement of the Chiefs of Staff of the Islamic Military Alliance, 2016):

1. Military dimension**:** through the coordination of military efforts, exchange of information, planning and training of joint actions among the alliance countries, depending on the capabilities of members and their desire to participate in a manner that ensures respect for the member states and international covenants.

2. Intellectual dimension: this can be achieved by working on the accurate diagnosis of the phenomenon of terrorism and in order to confront the terrorist intellectual perspective and to work to refute its misleading ideological justifications and inculcate a counter-ideological system based on the values of moderation, tolerance, dialogue and acceptance of the other, especially young.

3. Media dimension: through the dissemination of an information policy to counter terrorist thought and misleading opinions, which can be used to spread social awareness through all means of education such as schools, mosques and civil society organizations.

4. Financial dimension: through tracking the sources of funding of terrorist organizations, and working to drain the sources of terrorism.

KSA affirmed its commitment to implement this strategy through a conference held on 14-16 January 2017, and with the participation of the United States this time (Saudi Press Agency, 2017).

IV. Opportunities and Potential Challenges for the future of the "Islamic Alliance":

The idea of an Islamic alliance under the Saudi leadership carries many opportunities and challenges that may determine the future of the alliance by continuing or ending and failing.

One of the first opportunities that can contribute to alliance's effectiveness and survival is the continuing of terrorist threat to most of the coalition countries. This means that the alliance's goal of fighting terrorism will remain. The map of the terrorist organizations spread in the countries of the coalition from South Asia to the Middle East and North Africa, and this enhances the opportunity of the coalition to keep in view that these countries face a common enemy and active in the international arena, it requires the integration of the military, economic and geographical capabilities of these countries within the scope of this alliance to overcome the terrorist threat or at least limit its activity in its national territory. It should be noted here that KSA 's continued sense of Iranian threats and its responsibility for supporting terrorism in the region is a motive for the continuation and survival of the alliance. Bearing in mind that the Iranian danger threatens the security and safety of the Gulf States and their allies, and this requires facing it through a capable balanced coalition.

Also, the alliance's military capabilities represent another opportunity for the alliance's success in terms of its magnitude, number and even quality. The alliance includes the majority of Muslim countries which are 41, including a nuclear state, Pakistan. It is noted from the following table that many of the coalition countries have advanced positions on the map of global military power, where Turkey occupies eighth place, followed by Egypt ranked 12th, Pakistan ranked 13th, and KSA ranked 24t (Global Firepower Index 2016.(

Table1 : Top 10 Military members of the Military Islamic Alliance according to the Global Firepower Index 2016.

State	Global ranking out of 126 States	Military Budget in Billion Dollar	Active Pers. per 1000	Reserve Pers. per 1000	Total Aircraft Strength	Tanks	Total Naval Assets	GFP Index[2]
Turkey	8	18.185	410.5	185.63	1007	3778	194	0.2623
Egypt	12	4.4	470	800	1133	4624	319	0.3056
Pakistan	13	7	620	515	923	2924	197	0.3246
KSA	24	56.725	235	25	722	1210	55	0.4335
Malaysia	34	4.7	110	296	227	74	61	0.6679
Morocco	56	3.4	200	150	282	1215	121	0.9011
UAE	58	14.375	65	0	515	545	75	0.9301
Yemen	61	1.44	67	71.2	170	1260	30	0.9678
Jordan	70	1.5	110.7	65	270	1250	37	1.2354
Kuwait	78	5.2	15.5	31	106	368	38	1.4601

Source: Global Firepower Index 2016

It should not forget that the alliance countries include countries with enormous economic capabilities that can be used to revitalize the alliance's effectiveness. The Gulf States in this alliance have a significant economic power, especially as they are influential countries in the map of the global economy regarding the oil and gas prices. In addition to the economic power of other participating countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia and others, it will constitute a huge economic bloc that could have an impact on international policy trends.

Furthermore, the ideological harmony among the members of the alliance can be a driving force for its activity: the Islamic military alliance is based on an Islamic bloc that includes only Islamic countries, especially those belonging to the Sunni faith. This can be seen positively in this area, given that religious and sectarian homogeneity provide a greater opportunity for cooperation among alliance members, as they defend the common principles they share tolerance and rejection of extremism and terrorism, and the dimensions of ideological differences among alliance members will be rather small.

Moreover, international support at the level of governments, international organizations or international public opinion will increase the effectiveness of this alliance: The Islamic Military Alliance, since its announcement at the end of 2015, enjoys wide international support by Islamic and non-Islamic countries with different political, economic and social directions, especially the major powers such as the United States, Russia and European countries. The alliance also enjoys the support of many international Islamic organizations (Organization of the Islamic Conference, Al-Azhar, and the Islamic World League) and non-Muslims (the United Nations, the European Union and NATO).

Finally, the geographical distribution of the members of the alliance can provide an opportunity to achieve its

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[2] Which provides an annual military assessment of countries based on the latest available data, which vary from country to country and based on a set of standards including the number of men serving in the army compared to the population of the intended country and the number of tanks and vehicles and the number of aircraft and airfields. The site also took military budgets into account in addition to the state's permissibility and its common borders with its neighbors. According to this classification, the value of 0.000 is the ideal value of the strength of the army, i.e. the closer the index of this value, the stronger.

objectives: the deployment of the member states in different regions in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa offers the Alliance the opportunity to take firm measures against the terrorist organizations that are most active in these regions. This will provide the alliance an opportunity to employ experiences and knowledge of the member states belonging to these regions in dealing with the geographical spread of these organizations.

Despite the existence of these opportunities in the establishment of an Islamic military alliance, there are also several obstacles that would hamper the Alliance's efforts to achieve its objectives:

The most prominent of these obstacles can be the absence of many active Islamic countries which are regionally and internationally influential, such as Iran, Iraq and Syria. Although the Iranian absence from this alliance is working to isolate it because of its interference in the affairs of some countries in the region, this absence may be a motive for Tehran to work to disrupt the directions of this, especially as Tehran views with suspicion the alliance led by its regional opponent, Sunni KSA. Moreover, the absence of Iraq and Syria from this alliance may limit the effectiveness of this alliance; the region of the two countries constitutes a suitable geographical location of the alliance's supposed activity against terrorism, as the main opponent of the alliance, the terrorist organizations (ISIS and Al Qaeda) is based in these two countries. This will make the possibility of military presence in Iraq or Syria without their consent so difficult.

The economic and military burdens of the alliance constitute another obstacle that must be sorted out. The alliance includes countries that are economically unequal, including oil-rich Gulf States and poor Arab and African countries suffering from the consequences of civil wars or high economic and debt problems. This makes the burden of the financial, economic and military costs of the alliance a dilemma for the member states. If the rich countries finance the activities of the alliance, this will strain their budgets, or if all members share these burdens, this will increase the economic problems of poor members and deepen the economic challenges of these countries; therefore, they may leave the alliance.

Another challenge for the Islamic Alliance is to define terrorism and identify the terrorist organizations to be confronted. The alliance is dealing with a hidden enemy and not a regular army, making it difficult to determine where it is or when it will be active. Therefore, it will not be easy to confront and destroy this danger. This may create a difference in the priorities of the member states in confronting the threats faced by them, in the light of the divergent interests that led them to join this alliance, especially if the active and rich countries in the alliance do not encounter the terrorist challenges in African countries, for example, which are not located in their geographical area. This will be reflected negatively on the effectiveness and performance of the Alliance in achieving its objectives (Ajami, 2015).

One of the challenges that the alliance may face is the institutionalization of the alliance and the creation of an institutional structure based on organizing all matters related to its military, economic and political activities. The Alliance, since its establishment at the end of 2015 till April, 2017, has lacked the existence of these institutions that manage it. Its actual existence did not exceed some statements that mentioned the necessity of its establishment, as well as of its strategy, without being documented by an international treaty defining the rights and obligations of the member states in addition to the absence of regulatory bodies (except for the disclosure of its headquarters in Riyadh). These bodies are responsible for defining many important issues in establishing international alliances such as the existence of an executive council, military leadership, funding sources or a clear decision-making mechanism. This may making the Alliance linked tothe mood of some decision makers in the member states.

Finally, the lack of coordination with international actors in the region, such as the United States and Russia, may limit the effectiveness of the Alliance (Pulavarthi & Dizon, 2016), as the focal area of terrorist organizations (the Middle East and North Africa) witnesses a remarkable activity for alliances led by Washington and Moscow as the United States led sixty-alliance on one hand and Russia is leading a quadripartite alliance alongside Syria, Iraq and Iran on the other hand (Omar, 2015). Thus, the lack of coordination with these two forces will limit the effectiveness of the alliance in achieving concrete results on the ground, and thus keep the alliance more formal rather than practical.

Results of the Study:

The study reached many of results, the most important of which were:

1. The study showed that there are many undeclared interests that KSA seeks to achieve through this alliance; they are different from the declared goal of this alliance, which is to fight terrorism. From the point of view of the Saudi security perspective, the study believes that KSA seeks through this coalition to balance the escalation of Iranian power in the region, restore its regional and international position in the region, and try to highlight its effective role in controlling regional stability, legitimize its military intervention in Yemen and improve its international image as an anti-terrorism state and it works to combat it.

2. The study defined the Saudi perspective of the strategy of this alliance, which is based on a military, financial, media and intellectual dimension; it is supposed to combat the phenomenon of terrorism.

3. The study concluded that this alliance carries several opportunities and challenges. In terms of opportunities, it was the continuation of terrorist threats as a justification for the existence of the alliance, the availability of enormous military and economic capabilities, a state of ideological harmony among its members, and the support of the international community. The most important obstacles were the absence of influential regional and international Islamic countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, the lack of sharing of economic and military burdens among member states, different priorities to confront terrorist threats among the member states, the absence of the institutional structure of the alliance, and the lack of coordination with the major powers in the region such as the United States and Russia. Thus, the future of this alliance depends on overcoming the difficulties it faces and developing the opportunities that maintain its cohesion.

Conclusion:

The study presented some important aspects related to the establishment of the " Islamic Military Alliance" IMA against terrorism in an analytical framework based on the theory of realism in the formation of military alliances. The study answered its questions and proved its hypothesis that there is a correlation between the growth of Saudi security needs and the maintenance of its security and national interests through the establishment of this alliance. The study investigated the local, regional and international threats that have become a concern for the security perspective of the Saudi state, which prompts it in 2015 to take the lead in calling for this alliance to achieve several objectives other than combating terrorism. The most important of these objectives is maintaining its national security against the growing Iranian power and influence in the region.

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"الحلف الإسلامي العسكري": بين مكافحة الإرهاب والحفاظ على الأمن السعودي

خير سالم ذيابات *

ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة قضية "الحلف العسكري الإسلامي"، الذي أعلنت عنه المملكة العربية السعودية في 15 ديسمبر 2015 ، لا سيما أن ظهور هذا الحلف الجديد قد تم ربطه بمكافحة الإرهاب تحت القيادة السعودية. وقد هدفت الدراسة إلى توضيح تأثير التغيرات الإقليمية والدولية التي أثرت على المنظور الأمني السعودي تجاه إقامة هذا الحلف الذي يضم 41 دولة عربية وإسلامية. كما هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف الدوافع والأهداف والاهتمامات التي تشجع أعضاء الحلف خاصة السعودية للانضمام إلى هذا النوع من الأحلاف. بعد ذلك حاولت الدراسة تحليل طبيعة الاستراتيجية الأمنية التي اعتمدها الحلف في تحقيق أهدافه. وقد استندت الدراسة إلى فرض مفاده وجود علاقة بين نمو الاحتياجات الأمنية السعودية والحفاظ على أمنها ومصالحها الوطنية من خلال إقامة هذا الحلف. ولدراسة هذه الفرضية، تطرح الدراسة سلسلة من الأسئلة وتجيب عنها. وتقوم الدراسة على توظيف كل من المنهج التاريخي والوصفي وكذلك المنهج التحليلي للوصول إلى النتائج بناء على بحث المشكلة التي تمثلها الأهداف الرئيسة وأسئلتها. وأخيرا، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن المملكة العربية السعودية تحاول تحقيق مجموعة من المصالح الوطنية من خلال هذا الحلف إلى جانب الهدف الرئيسي المعلن في مكافحة الإرهاب. وكان من أهم هذه المصالح موازنة صعود القوة الإيرانية واستعادة المكانة السعودية الإقليمية والدولية في المنطقة.

الكلمات الدالة: الحلف الإسلامي العسكري، السعودية، المنظور الأمني، الإرهاب الدولي.