Book Review

Militarization of the Persian Gulf: An economic analysis

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The importance of the Persian Gulf region, specifically in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraqi war, has created a highly developed research program on Persian Gulf security, including societal, political, environmental and military sectors. The book by Askari *et al* tackles the issue of military expenditure in the Persian Gulf. A sizable literature is available on the matter, yet only a handful of informed studies have sought to explore the militarization of the Persian Gulf from an economic perspective. Therefore, this comprehensive analysis gives greater insight into the complex interplay between militarization and its economic effects in the region.

The analysis includes an in-depth study of both current regional military capabilities and socio-economic costs. In this regard, the research conducted by the authors stand out as one of the best studies analyzing the Persian Gulf's complex military situation and its consequences. The end result offers insightful suggestions on how reducing military expenditure leads to peace and stability in the region. The authors problematize the militarization and arms race in the Persian Gulf and also conclude that military expenditures contradict Islamic teachings.

Militarisation in the Persian Gulf is divided into seven chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. In the introduction, the authors familiarize the reader with the history of militarization in the Persian Gulf. Chapters 2 and 3 present a detailed account of military expenditures in the Persian Gulf and their economic impacts. They then outline the literature of relevant studies about military expenditure trends in the region. Additional depth is added to this analysis with the authors going through the detailed military expenditure in the Persian Gulf. In addition, the authors discuss how oil revenues have provided a ground for financing the weaponry. In Chapters 4 and 5, the authors seek to elucidate the magnitude of arm imports and imply that the arms race is intensifying in the region. They claim that between 1988 and 2005, the countries in the Persian Gulf region have spent more than US\$53 billion on arms imports.

Chapter 6 includes a discussion in which the authors analyze military developments in the region and offer a detailed description of the military industry in each of the Persian Gulf countries. Having established this background, the authors answer the big question of why military expenditures in the region are so high in Chapters 7 and 8. Also, we read that a peculiar combination of high oil revenues, corruption, regional instability, religion and intensive foreign interference in the affairs of this politically unstable region provides the framework for a militaristic focus. In Chapter 9 of the book, the authors put forward a number of suggestions for how to decrease military expenditures to benefit the region's

citizens and increase and bolster regional stability. The authors make strong and valid arguments but admit that there is little likelihood of military expenditure being reduced unilaterally, and that successful arms reduction in the region will require a sustained international effort. This reviewer agrees with the authors in many points; however, the authors do not draw conclusions on the question of how demilitarization in the post-Saddam era in the Persian Gulf region can be settled.

It is also worth noting, that the majority of data have been collected from governmental institutions, whereas data from independent non-governmental civil institutions were not consulted. To be fair, the authors acknowledge the limits of their data. Also, the book suffers from a lack of clear theoretical framework. Militarization as representing the military sector of security could be explained, for example, by referring to securitization processes.¹ Overall, the book merits reading by all who have an interest in military security problems and their impact on the economies of the Persian Gulf region.

Note

- 1 According to Buzan and Wæver (2003, p. 491), securitization represents a discursive process that an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a referent object and to enable a call for an urgent measure with the threat.

Reference

- Buzan, B. and Wæver, O. (2003) *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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