

Analyzing the Consequences of the UAE Creating Artificial Islands in The Persian Gulf (Considering the Copenhagen School)

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Abstract

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates has begun creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf. These actions have sparked many concerns throughout the region, particularly from Iran. This study defines and analyzes the process of securitizing the creation of the UAE artificial islands in the Persian Gulf. Although, according to the Law of the Sea Convention, coastal states are entitled to create artificial islands, observing neighboring states' interests are a primary prerequisite for creating these lands. This study seeks to answer the following question: What are the consequences of the UAE creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf for Iran? The hypothesis of this paper proposes that creating these islands, regarding the expanding nature of the concept of security in the contemporary world, will have a fivefold consequence for Iran; creating artificial islands by the UAE will cause military, political, environmental, economic, and social insecurities for Iran in the Persian Gulf. The research follows a descriptive-analytical method and studies the question utilizing library sources. The Copenhagen School of Security Studies constitutes the theoretical framework of the paper.

Keywords: Copenhagen School, Iran, Persian Gulf artificial islands, securitization, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

1. Introduction

The status quo of the Persian Gulf is highly unorganized. Exploiting oil money and foreign investors' support, the Arab States in the region have created engineering masterpieces. Among them, the UAE, as the leading nation in this case, has been rapidly creating and developing artificial islands. The UAE, in the beginning of the third millennium, had announced that it would be creating 325 artificial islands in the Persian Gulf by the next ten years.

The Law of the Sea Convention describes artificial islands as structures that have been constructed by human rather than formed by natural processes. Such islands have been created by expanding existing islets, construction on existing reefs, or amalgamating several natural islets into a bigger island. According to the 1982 Convention, artificial islands cannot be accounted as national maritime borders, and, therefore, do not generate baselines, territorial seas, and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) for the beneficiary states (Aghaei Diba, 2009). Thus, creating artificial islands is not prohibited, but the environmental initiatives and the maritime neighbors' interests must be considered. The Law of The Sea Convention regards these islands as illegally created structures, should they lead to the destruction of the environment and other states' interests.

Although the UAE has announced that its objectives regarding the creation of the artificial islands are purely economic through attracting foreign investment and activating tourism, it is clear that they are trying to conceal the military, political, social, and environmental objectives of the islands behind economic reasons. As a result, the UAE, being a securitizing actor in the region, has been threatening Iran's security in the Persian Gulf. The following years will observe the changes caused by these activities. This paper seeks to answer the following question: What are the consequences of

the UAE creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf for Iran? The hypothesis of this paper proposes that creating these islands, considering the expanding nature of the concept of security in the contemporary world, will have a fivefold consequence for Iran; creating artificial islands by the UAE will cause military, political, environmental, economic, and social insecurities for Iran in the Persian Gulf.

We have utilized the Copenhagen School of Security Studies to study and analyze these consequences. Scholars of critical security studies, especially Barry Buzan, believe that the concept of security has undergone semantic changes since the end of the Cold War. They argue that the current affairs of the twentieth century cannot be discussed and analyzed by merely focusing on realist security anymore. Buzan (1991: 432) contends: “the ending of the Cold War has created a remarkable fluidity and openness in the whole pattern and quality of international relations. Although the events of 1989 were centered in Europe, they represent changes of such magnitude that it is appropriate to talk of the end of an era for the international system as a whole. Specifically, 1989 marked the end of the postwar period.” The structure of the current paper is such that at first we have presented the concept of security as considered by the Copenhagen School and then, we have discussed the consequences of the securitization process of the UAE creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf for Iran.

2. Literature review

There are a number of available papers on the UAE creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf, analyzing the issue in general or in detail. The newest papers, which have been utilized by the authors of this article, have considered the consequences on the Persian Gulf environment and the political-judicial outcomes of the islands. There are no Persian papers which have studied the consequences of the securitization of these islands,

and, this is a primary advantage of the current paper over previous studies. The most notable references are:

Pišgāhi Fard, Z. et al. (1391 [2012 A.D]). *Environmental and Legal Consequences of Creating Artificial Islands in the Persian Gulf*;

Rāsti, 'A. et al. (1391 [2012 A.D]). *On the UAE Creating and Expanding Territories in the Persian Gulf*;

Safavi, Y. and Qanbari, 'A. (1390 [2011 A.D]). *Consequences of the UAE Creating Artificial Islands in the Persian Gulf*;

Mir Heydar, D. et al. (1386 [2007 A.D]). *Processes of the Coastal States Creating Territories in the Persian Gulf*;

Aghaei Diba, B. (2009). *Legal Regime of the Artificial Island in the Persian Gulf*;

Salahuddin, B. (2006). *The Marine Environmental Impacts of Artificial Island Construction Dubai*.

2. Theoretical framework

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies is a term coined by Bill McSweeney to describe the works of Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, De Wild, and others. This school is the only approach purely based on security studies. The approach is among the first frameworks trying to establish an independent position for security studies, making it distinct from strategic studies. The Copenhagen School has categorized security studies under International Relations and has placed strategic studies under security studies ('Abd Alah Xāni, 1389 [2010 A.D]: 1190). This school studies security from different aspects, but has focused more on some particular issues, even creating some unique concepts. The concept of “expanded security against bounded security”, which is presented as an effort to expand security dimensions, and the discourse of “securitization” are some

statements which have been developed by the scholars of the Copenhagen School.

2.1. Expanded security

In their book, “Security: A New Framework for Analysis”, Buzan and Waever present the expanded “multisectoral” approach instead of the bounded “unisectoral” approach as the most explicit distinction between their framework and traditional ones. Those who possess a multidimensional view should adopt a wider perspective about the equilibrium and links between the different sectors, and a variety of threats, actors, and security issues which may emerge in a given historical period. Traditional frameworks however, pronounce the priority of the state’s military sectors and actors over others. They also stress the links and relations between other sectors only when they are directly connected to the concept of force. These two approaches are methodologically incompatible. Buzan and Waever base their definition of security on the social construction of threats and security issues, while the traditionalists believe these concepts have independent identities (Buzan, Waever & Wilde (1392 [2013 A.D]): 321). Therefore, the Copenhagen Schools tries to define the concept of security in a more expanded term rather than merely military aspects. This approach needs one to analyze security issues in a wider area of political, economic, social, and environmental affairs. The Copenhagen School argues that the excessive focus on military security has caused a negligence towards other issues (Jutila, 2006: 172).

The first critical study on Bounded Security was written by Richard Ullman in 1983. Ullman questioned the military focused security and argued that this overemphasis presents a false picture of reality and causes a decrease in security in the larger picture. Additionally, a military-based security will

translate into an increase in global insecurity ('Abd Alah Xāni, 1383 [2004 A.D]: 140). Buzan, however, proposed a more expanded and reasonable criticism of Bounded Security. He, in order to expand the concept of security beyond the military sector, added four other ones: political, economic, social, and environmental (Friis, 2000: 40). Buzan argues that military security is defined on two levels: the state's interpretation of other states' offensive capacities, as well as armed defense capacities. Political security is related to the organizational stability, the system, and the ideology of states, which as a whole provide legitimacy for governments. Economic security is connected to the access states have to the resources, finances, and essential markets necessary to maintain acceptable welfare and governmental power. Social security is translated into the capabilities of society to produce traditional patterns, language, culture, national identity, and desirable conditions for its evolution. Environmental security is the capacity of the state to preserve the local and planetary biosphere as a system which all other human activities are dependent on (Buzan, 1991: 433). Buzan contends that, "these sectors do not behave independently and each one of them is strongly connected to the others" (Stone, 2009: 4).

2.2. Securitization

Securitization is the process of categorizing issues under the security framework which have not been so before. This process is possible among all military and non-military domains and acts the same through all dimensions (Mohseni & Sālehi, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 616). Buzan and Waever believe that securitization is an extreme sort of politicization. Theoretically, all general issues could be identified in a spectrum which contains non-political issues (which do not concern the government and are not discussed among the public through any other ways), political issues (which are part of public policy-making and require

decision-making and resource allocation by the government, or, rarely, another form of public will), and security issues (which seem as existential threats requiring urgent decisions and acts outside the common boundaries of political trends). In fact, the position of an issue on this spectrum is not clear; an issue, based on the above criteria, can be placed on each sector of the spectrum (Buzan et al., 1392 [2013 A.D]: 51).

Securitization discourses are consisted of securitization actors and functional actors. Securitization actors are individuals or groups who securitize issues with a statement proposing the existential threats posed by a matter. Functional actors merely influence the decisions in the securitization process. In addition to that, the securitization actors are the only agents responsible for the securitization of an issue. The securitization actors are usually state leaders, governments, parties, and other agents like these. Functional actors are agents such as research institutions which act like think tanks for security issues. Buzan argues two other provisions for the process of securitization in addition to the two discussed actors. The first provision is the legitimacy of the existential threats to break the law and the normal political trend. In other words, the considered issues must be probable in the framework of threat. The second provision is that the Copenhagen School considers the audience as the final stage of securitization. Therefore, securitization is complete when it is accepted by the audience ('Abd Alah Xāni, 1383 [2004 A.D]: 150-151).

The advantage of the Copenhagen School's theory of security is the fact that it does not possess a unidimensional view of the matter. The School tries to liberate the concept of security from the boundaries of military issues. The Copenhagen definition of security covers individuals, states, and the international system. This leads to a better analysis of the security issues of different regions. The Persian Gulf, located in a critical geographical

location and being an active area of international interactions, is a particularly troubled region in terms of security issues. This issue requires a universal and, in the meantime, detailed perspective which is made possible through the use of the Copenhagen School's security theory, especially Buzan's findings.

3. The UAE artificial islands

Many countries, especially those which face shortage of land to build structures, show extreme interest in maritime projects. The first floating city was exhibited in Osaka, Japan, in 1975. Today, there are such islands in China, Austria, Canada, Denmark, etc. These structures are built in many countries to develop infrastructure and expand coastal cities (Mohamadi & Seyfi Nežād, 1393 [2014 A.D]: 35). Artificial islands have also been constructed in the Persian Gulf in an effort to access more land in order to achieve military, political, and social objectives. Therefore, the UAE, without respecting any treaties, is constructing and developing artificial islands in the most strategically significant waters of the world (Heydariān, 1391 [2013 A.D]). These constructions began in 2001 when Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum initiated the "Nakheel's Projects."

The Palm islands which are also called Dubai Nakheel, are among the largest manmade islands around the world. Each of these islands, Palm Jumeirah, Palm Jebel Ali, and Palm Deira, takes the form of a palm tree, topped by a crescent which acts as a breakwater. The fourth island, called the World, is an archipelago of artificial islands consisting of 300 separate islands in the shape of the world continents (www.ead.ae). The whole area of the islands are 5 to 20 hectares and 50 to 100 m of water separate them from each other (Butler, 2005). The UAE has passed laws regarding territory building at the sea which contain:

1. Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the Exclusive Economic Zone and its delimitation of 25 July 1980.
2. Federal Law No. 19 of 1993 in respect of the delimitation of the maritime zones of the United Arab Emirates, 17 October 1993.
3. Circular No. 34 of 1994 concerning the entry of vessels into the seaports of the United Arab Emirates and their departure therefrom, 24 May 1994.
4. Decision No. 5/2009 of the United Arab Emirates Ministerial Council with respect to the Application of Straight Baselines System to a Part of the Coast of the United Arab Emirates (Law of the Sea Bulletin No. 69).

The Federal Law No. 19 of 1993 is the most important law passed by the UAE regarding territory building in the Persian Gulf. This law is about the delimitation of the maritime zones of the UAE which contains four main chapters and at the end there is a chapter titled General Provisions. This law has 27 articles. The first four chapters discuss the internal waters, territorial sea, the Exclusive Economic Zone, and the continental shelf which are based on the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982 (Rāsti et al. 1391 [2012 A.D]: 42-43).

4. Legal state of the artificial islands

According to Article 11 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, off-shore installations and artificial islands shall not be considered as permanent harbor works (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 11). Because the artificial islands do not possess different maritime zones (territorial sea, Exclusive Economic Zone, etc.), drawing a baseline is not defined for them (Musi(ā) Zādeh, 1389 [2010 A.D]: 246). Additionally, according to Article 56 of the Convention of 1982, in the exclusive economic

zone, the coastal State has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil. Furthermore, the coastal State has jurisdiction as provided for in the relevant provisions of this Convention with regard to the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations and structures (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 56).

According to Article 60 of the Convention, in the exclusive economic zone, the coastal State shall have the exclusive right to construct and to authorize and regulate the construction, operation and use of artificial islands, installations, and structures for the purposes provided for in article 56 and other economic purposes (UNCLOS, 1982, Article 60). Also, according to Article 87 of the Convention, the high seas are open to all states, whether coastal or land-locked. Freedom of the high seas is exercised under the conditions laid down by this Convention and by other rules of international law. These freedoms shall be exercised by all states with due regard for the interests of other states in their exercise of the freedom of the high seas, and also with due regard for the rights under this Convention with respect to activities in the Area (Bigdeli, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 317).

Therefore, according to the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, coastal States have the right to construct artificial islands; but these activities are severely limited to preserving the maritime environment and the rights of the other coastal states (Mossavi & Aghaei, 2013: 312). So, regarding these legal articles, the UAE, before conducting any decisions regarding the construction of artificial islands, must coordinate with coastal States, especially Iran, which is the most populated state in the Persian Gulf and has the longest coast on the Persian Gulf (Safavi & Qanbari, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 12). On the other hand,

the limited width of the Persian Gulf does not allow the neighboring states to expand their territories predicted in the Conventions of 1982 and 1958. In some cases, the states are not able to possess all of their claimed territorial waters and if it would overlap with another state's territorial sea, the border is taken as the median point between the states' baselines. The Persian Gulf is a low depth sea and is located on a shared continental shelf. Therefore, each state must act on its own continental shelf. This has been made possible through treaties made between Iran, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, on the other hand. There have also been agreements signed between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Bahrain and Qatar, and Qatar and the UAE regarding the continental shelf. However, the issue of the maritime borders of Iran and Iraq, Iraq and Kuwait, Iran and Kuwait, and Iran and the UAE has yet to be resolved (Mir Heydar et al., 1386 [2007 A.D]: 7-8).

The UAE has undermined the Conventions of the Law of the Sea with irresponsible actions (Safavi & Qanbari, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 12). On the other hand, Iran has yet to ratify the Convention of the Law of the sea of 1982; Iran has only signed the document (Kirchner & Salinaite, 2013: 552). Neither Iran, nor the UAE have joined the Convention. As a result, the two states would not be able to advance their case regarding the artificial islands to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Additionally, Iran is not going to advance the case to the international institution because that will confirm that there are disputes between the two states.

5. Creating artificial islands and its multifold consequences for Iran's security

5.1. Military security

Traditionally, military threats have been the center of national

security concerns. Military actions are usually able to threaten all parts of the state, and they do. The economic bases of the government would be under pressure and there would be the possibility of damages and even severe effects on the ecosystem. On the other hand, military threats would disturb or destroy institutions and oppress, demolish, and obscure the state's structure. Military decisions not only fundamentally affect the security functions of the state, they also threaten the various social and individual interests which are more permanent than the state's superstructures; utilizing force would cause sudden undesirable changes. Military threats usually acquire the highest level of priority among the national security programs. Military threats entail the use of force and a particular form of threat (Buzan, 1389 [2010 A.D]). Considering this, building artificial islands on the borders in the Persian Gulf is a crucial guaranty in terms of security. While the smaller states of the Persian Gulf have not shown a considerable trust in creating cooperative security structures in the region, it seems that the UAE will make an effort to establish transregional cooperation with the United States and other Western allies (Mohamadi, 1391 [2012 A.D]).

5.1.1. Transregional supports

The Persian Gulf, as the heart of the world's energy reserves, has always attracted superpowers' attention (Simbar, 1384 [2005 A.D]: 29). Among them, the United States has tried to limit Iran's influence and role in the region, repeating and asserting its historical baseless claims in an effort to stimulate the world's public opinion and increase its own influence in the region (Motaqi, 1371 [1992 A.D]: 85). The United States has also tried to increase its influence in the Southern States of the Persian Gulf through improved relationships (Alsis et al., 2011: 4).

The United States has therefore supported the building of the

artificial islands. It seems that creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf is being supported by the United States in line with the International Zionism's interests and is aimed at increasing pressure on Iran in the case of the three Iranian islands and to decrease its role as the state with the longest maritime border (Safavi & Qanbari, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 16-17). The UAE, the US, and the UK have formed a consortium to support the creation of the artificial islands (Dadandish & Rahnavard, 2013: 116). The UAE has also cooperated extensively with the US to deter and defend itself against Iran and terrorism (Alsis et al., 2011: 26).

5.1.2. The Arab States arms race, especially the UAE

The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council are concerned about confronting nuclear threats in the future. They try to enrich uranium in their own countries. They view this as one of the ways to balance their power in face of the increasing power of Iran. They demonstrate this trend in various statements and actions. However, none of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council possess the human resources or the technological capacity to exploit nuclear energy. Russia, France, Japan, the US, and Canada have announced their willingness to cooperate in establishing nuclear power plants in the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Sālehi, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 162). The UAE, who had continuously tried to act as a neutral state in the politics of the Iranian nuclear program since 2002, has clearly changed its behavior recently and is supporting Western policies towards Iran. During the latest wave of sanctions against Iran, a group of experts traveled to the UAE to negotiate about the sanctions. This is happening while in the past few years incidents such as the military buildup of the UAE under the pretext of the Arab Spring and the increased influence of Iran, creating artificial islands (in an effort to change the territorial borders and proposing claims over islands based on these changes), trespassing into Iranian waters and building an oil platform in

those locations, and building a case against Iran in the Security Council of the United Nations about two maritime offices in Abu Musa have sparked concerns and even have made it probable for the National Security Commission of the Majlis, Iran's parliament, to terminate relations with the UAE (Yazdāni Zāzrāni, 1390 [2011 A.D]).

5.2. Political security

The state's ideas, especially those promoting national identity and organized ideology and the promoting institutions, are the natural targets of political threats. Because a state is essentially a political entity, political threats can be as frightening as military threats. This is particularly true when the government is weak, but even in the case of a powerful one, political threats can be a source of concern. A structural political threat happens when the organizational principles of two states are at odds in a way which none of them can ignore the other (Buzan, 1389 [2010 A.D]: 143-145). The UAE, therefore, will cause numerous political consequences in the region, especially for Iran, by creating artificial islands.

5.2.1. Geopolitics of the borders

The border of Iran and the UAE has particular characteristics compared to the other borders in the Persian Gulf: 1. The border is consisted of two parts in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman; 2. The UAE is not an integrated territory and based on the temporary constitution, any attempt to delimit the maritime borders and the continental shelf must be confirmed by all members (Mir Heydar & 'Asgari, 1383 [2004 A.D]: 172). As a result, the maritime borders between Iran and the UAE have not yet been defined. Although 39.2 miles of this border, between Iran and Dubai, was recognized in 1974, it was not passed by the legislative branch in Abu Dhabi (Mir Heydar et al. 1386

[2007 A.D]: 16). On the other hand, according to International Law, artificial islands do not entail territorial sea, or, because they are adjacent to the coasts, their conditions are different from those artificial islands in the middle of the sea (Niazi, 2013: 28). Therefore, the important point is the rights which may emerge from the development of these islands in case of establishment of baselines in the connections between different points of these islands, the sovereignty of territorial waters, and establishing exclusive economic zones in order to exclusively exploit the fishery in the future (Barzegar, 1389 [2011 A.D]). Thus the new artificial lands will have effects on recognizing new maritime borders and, as a result, territorial waters. When the maritime borders develop, territorial waters will follow as well (Anvari, 1385 [2007 A.D]).

Dubai's ruler made the decision of creating artificial islands in order to expand the coastal space of Dubai. Therefore, after successfully building the first "Palm Island", the crown prince asked for the building of "Palm Jebel Ali" and then "Palm Deira", each built more professionally and in a larger scale (Salahuddin, 2006: 7). The manager of Nakheel Project, Sultan bin Salim, has maintained that building the artificial islands has been extremely figurative as seen by many of Dubai citizens; but when the project is finished, we will have 1200 kilometers of maritime borders and facilities such as railways and residential areas (Safavi & Qanbari, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 6).

5.2.2. The significance of the three islands

The UAE has gradually occupied the continental shelf and the seabed of the Persian Gulf and has advanced more and more into the coast of Iran and through the three islands they are seeking territory expansion in the future (Niazi, 2013: 29). In fact, the UAE has utilized all its capacity to assert its desires. Therefore, it has been making claims on the three islands without any

logical reasons (Fathi, 1383 [2004 A.D]: 48).

There are about 130 small and large, residential and nonresidential islands in the Persian Gulf (Hāfez Niā & Razavi, 1384 [2005 A.D]: 11). The Greater Tunb, The Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa are three of the six Iranian islands which are known as the island arcs (Hekmat Niā, 1386 [2007 A.D]: 62). The Greater Tunb is approximately 11 km² and is bound to Qeshm in the North, to the Lesser Tunb in the West, to Abu Musa and Ras al-Khaimah in the South, and to Oman in the East. The Greater Tunb is 13.86 km away from the Lesser Tunb. The Lesser Tunb is 2 km² and is located to West of the Greater Tunb (Elāhi, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 43-45) and in 45 km out the coast of Bandar Lenge and 80 km from Ras al-Khaimah. The shape of this island somehow resembles a triangle and it is nonresidential (Jālinusi & Barāri Ārāyi, 1385 [2006 A.D]). Abu Musa is approximately 2 km². This island is located in the Strait of Hormuz and to the Southwest of Qeshm, in the lowest parts of Iranian waters, on the way of the vessels passing through the Persian Gulf. Abu Musa is located in an approximately equal distance from Bandar Lenge and Sharjah; nearly 80 km (Elāhi, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 45).

Abu Musa is famous for its rich red iron oxide resources. Additionally, the oil of Abu Musa in Mubarak field is bound in the Eastern side of the island and is the best oil of the Persian Gulf in terms of quality. Mubarak oil field is made up of three shafts. The grant to exploit oil from this field was given to the Buttes Gas & Oil Company prior to 1972. This grant was accepted by the Iranian government and the income achieved by oil operations in Abu Musa was divided between Iran and Sharjah; but the agreement of November 1972 between Iran and Sharjah and the delimitation of Iranian sovereignty over the strategic parts of the island and the law of the 12 mile limit was activated in the case of Abu Musa. These laws expanded the limits of the Abu Musa coastal waters to the borders of the overlap with the UAE and Umm al-Quwain waters; namely the

location in which the Occidental Petroleum Corporation had received discovery grants from the UAE. This issue has been a source of complicated problems (Hāfez Niā & Razavi, 1384 [2005 A.D]: 11-12).

There are 618 Sharjah citizens living in Southwestern Abu Musa who are natives of the island. In addition, there are non-native Iranians dispatched there as military and official agents. A police station commissioned to the UAE police is located in the island. A ship carries water and other necessary equipment for the population from the UAE to Abu Musa on a weekly basis. On the other hand, the Emiratis receive a considerable pension every month. It seems that the UAE hopes to eventually claim sovereignty over the island by increasing the island's population in favor of its own (Elāhi, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 45-46). Regarding this, the UAE is changing the balance of the population in favor of itself and against Iran.

The Greater Tunb is of great importance, as it is a large island. There is an old 1500-meter airfield in the island with a capacity of four helicopters, and there is a new 2500-meter one on which a C130 airplane can land. This makes the Greater Tunb a prominent island for military operations. Its strategic value, however, is not so high because it is far from the Strait of Hormuz (Hāfez Niā & Razavi, 1384 [2005 A.D]: 13-14). The strategic significance of this island could be realized when it is considered as one of the defensive Iranian islands in the island arc of the Strait of Hormuz. On the other hand, the Lesser Tunb is an uninhabited island located just a few kilometers to the Southwest of the Greater Tunb. This island is important because it is the only connection to the Greater Tunb in the defense line of Iran in the Persian Gulf (Mojtahed Zādeh, 1376 [1997 A.D]: 46).

These three islands are located in the deepest parts of the Persian Gulf and inside the important international maritime transport route. Most of the world's crude oil is passed through

these islands. Vessels pass from the upper side of the Tunbs when they arrive into the Persian Gulf and when they want to leave the Gulf, they pass between the Tunbs and Abu Musa. The depth of the Persian Gulf along the Iranian coast is 40 m to 73 m but it is 5 m to 10 m along the southern, southeastern, and central parts of the Gulf. This locates the deepest maritime pathways inside the Iranian sovereign waters (Nuri, 2010: 90).

Therefore, the UAE hopes to claim sovereignty of these islands by proposing these claims so that it can impose a gap in the Iranian defensive system in the Strait of Hormuz. The geostrategic importance of these islands for the UAE is so that it can threaten the security of the Strait and the security and interests of Iran in the region, considering its own political and military weakness and instability (Nuri, 2010: 91-92).

5.2.3. Efforts to make the argument over the three islands an international one

The efforts made by the UAE to propose the argument over the three islands in the Gulf Cooperation Council is the main reason behind the conflicts between Iran and the other states in the region; or at least the main reason preventing a better understanding between Iran and the UAE (Najafi Firuzjāyi, 1387 [2008 A.D]: 145). The UAE was even able to register a trilateral committee in its name from the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2000. Utilizing this, the UAE could use the Council as a leverage to impose pressure on Iran. The UAE has made the issue a prominent argument among the member states of the Damascus Declaration and the Arab Union. The UAE has also sought the intervention of The Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Security Council of the UN regarding the argument (Maleki, 1379 [2000 A.D]: 133).

These actions, along with the amplifying tensions between the region's states, have caused a halt in regional cooperation

and have increased the distrust between states, therefore, providing an excuse for the presence of transregional forces in the region and their intervention in the security of the Persian Gulf (Rāsti et al. 1391 [2012 A.D]: 620). Increasing its political influence and credibility in the region and the world, the UAE seeks to contain the geopolitical authority of Iran and, thus, improve its capacity and power to bargain with Iran (Mojtahed Zādeh et al. 1391 [2012 A.D]: 74).

5.2.4. The significance of the strait of Hormuz

Iran possesses the longest coast of the Strait of Hormuz. The importance of this strait in the economy, energy, maritime navigation, and mobilization of the military forces in the Persian Gulf has made it a significant point of force and pressure (Hekmat Niā, 1386 [2007 A.D]: 63). According to the latest assessments, the Persian Gulf states (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE) produce about 30% of the world's oil, while they possess 57% of the world's crude oil reserves (Cordesman, 2007: 2). Most of this oil is transferred to the industrial countries through the Strait of Hormuz (Torābi & Rezāyi, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 43).

The depth of the Strait of Hormuz does not create any limitations, as the depth of the water is more than 30 meters all over the Strait (Mir Heydar, 1367 [1988 A.D]: 158). Western states, however, have carried out some actions during the past few years to undermine the strategic prominence of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Constructing a pipeline to transfer regional oil, especially from Saudi Arabia and Iraq, has been the most important of those actions. However, the amount of the oil which is transferred from the Strait is so abundant that it cannot be transferred through the pipeline (Torābi & Rezāyi, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 43). The UAE's four artificial islands are located right next to the Strait of Hormuz. This demonstrates the

strategic significance of the Strait, especially in a region which is the oil exporting hub of the world (Anvari, 1385 [2007 A.D]).

5.3. Environmental security

Buzan believes there are three kinds of threats to environmental security: 1. Threats which are posed on human civilization by nature and are not caused by human activities (earthquakes, volcanoes); 2. Threats which are posed by human activities on natural systems and structures of the earth, while they truly seem existential threats to civilization (in a global scale, greenhouse gases, and in a local scale, extracting, wasting, or destroying of resources); and 3. Threats which are posed by human activities on natural systems and structures of the earth, while they do not truly seem existential threats to civilization (running out of mineral resources) (Buzan et al., 1392 [2013 A.D]: 134). The threats posed on the Persian Gulf are of the second and third types.

The Persian Gulf contains a closed maritime ecosystem and intervening in its natural system will make the regional environment extremely vulnerable (Barzegar, 1389 [2011 A.D]). Since Persian Gulf holds the maximum pollution rate, due to the human activities (Ghaffari et al, 2017: 267). The Persian Gulf is influenced greatly by climate changes. As it is surrounded by Northern and Southern heights, evaporation of its water is extremely high. It is one of the hottest regions in the world and, because it is near the Equator, temperatures over 49 degrees Celsius have been reported (Rabi'i, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 109). The Persian Gulf is known for its high saltiness. In average, the saltiness ratio of its water is 39-41.5 gr of salt to 1 kg of water. Additionally, the high saltiness of its water is recognized by its low depth. It is 35 m deep in the south and 81 m deep in the north (Salahuddin, 2006: 40).

The Persian Gulf is approximately 29500 square miles and

holds about 565 billion barrels of oil which constitute 63% of the total 896.5 billion barrels of the world's known reserves (Mojtahed Zādeh, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 3). Daily transportation of 17 million barrels of crude oil from the Strait of Hormuz and the probable leakage of oil from the tankers impose great damages on the region's environment. Around 25,000 tankers pass through the Strait of Hormuz every year and they carry nearly 40% of the world's oil exports (Rabi'i, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 113). Accordingly, the Persian Gulf is 47 times more vulnerable to pollution than other similar regions (Pišgāhi Fard et al., 1391 [2012 A.D]: 118-119). Although for the most part, this pollution is due to the extraction of oil and gas, however, the development process and in particular the construction of the artificial islands, play a substantial role as the roots of this pollution (Ghaffari et al., 2017: 267).

All these issues have made the Persian Gulf unique and fragile. Living organisms, which inhabit fragile maritime environments, are forced to survive in high temperatures, extreme saltiness, and strong winds and water flows. They also need to cope with human tension caused by oil discovery, maritime transportation, and coastal expansion (Salahuddin, 2006: 41). The UAE has considerably increased greenhouse gases with massive construction operations. Sea level has risen and it is anticipated that the artificial islands will go under water by the next 50 years (Pišgāhi Fard et al., 1391 [2012 A.D]: 129).

Sand is extracted from the Persian Gulf and then sprayed by special ships to create desired fields to construct artificial islands (Hāšemi, 1387 [2008 A.D]). Embanking for the artificial islands, therefore, directly destroys life and, in addition to that, causes the water to be sandy for a few miles. An increase of the sand in the sea will cause the dust to run through the water and expand to other regions as well. Maritime flows will move the pollution and the UAE's pollution will be transferred to Iran.

Increasing the construction of these islands will influence the Iranian coast and maritime flows will cause storms (Sediqi, 1391 [2013 A.D]).

The flow of the water in the Persian Gulf is weak and they move counter-clockwise. Therefore, it takes a relatively long time for the Persian Gulf waters to be changed through the Strait of Hormuz; approximately three to five years (Šahriāri, 1390 [2011 A.D]). The Persian Gulf is home to many different organisms. More than 500 kinds of fish, 15 kinds of shrimp, and 5 kinds of turtle live in the region. International organizations have warned against the destruction of the only cay in Dubai and killing its turtles during the first phase of the artificial islands' construction (Aghaei Diba, 2009). The UAE, therefore, through the construction of these islands, has jeopardized maritime life, has damaged barrier reefs, increased the pollution of the water, and has buried wildlife (Butler, 2005).

Constructing the artificial islands has limited the area for the expansion of the barrier reefs, as it will bring about the death of the corals. Reefs possess a high biological value and are considered as home of other aquatic organisms. Additionally, the analysis of the images and field studies obtained during a short period of five years from the residual carbonated sediments around the artificial islands show the expansion of these artificial islands. This will result in a decrease in the width of the Persian Gulf in these areas (Hāšemi, 1387 [2008 A.D]). For example, 1.65 billion cubic meters of sand and 87 million tons of reefs were removed and 1 billion tons of reefs were allocated to the region to complete the construction of the Nakheel. The consequences of these actions are: 1. Destruction and demolition of the only known cay in Dubai; and 2. Derailing the natural flow of the water. The UAE has also decided to move the wreckage of two warplanes, some jet airplanes, and seven boats into the sea to construct a maritime park in the

Persian Gulf. This is a clear violation of the International Law of the Sea (Jālinusi & Najaf Pur, 1386 [2007 A.D]).

5.4. Economic security

Economic threats are undoubtedly the most complicated threats to national security. The critical issue regarding economic security is that the normal status of the actors in a market economy will include a dangerous, aggressive, and vague competition (Buzan, 1389 [2010 A.D]). On the other hand, economic resources are one of the indices which are used to evaluate the strength of a given country. Its role, therefore, is critical in an expanded approach to security (Šeyhān, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 88-89).

The UAE, since its independence in 1971, has been relying on oil, like its neighbor countries. But, after a few years, they opted for development through tourism. Building artificial islands, artificial ski slopes, etc. have been the methods by which the UAE has developed its tourism industry, especially in Dubai. Dubai has been able to obtain 63% of its income from the artificial islands with the slogan of “a perfect place to get away from the world”. It seems that the main objective for the construction of these islands has been economic, to turn the UAE, especially Dubai, into the tourism center of the region (Jālinusi & Najaf Pur, 1386 [2007 A.D]: 4). The luxurious houses and the cozy location of the islands has allured many famous individuals from around the world. Dubai is one of the seven semi-sovereign emirates of the UAE and is accounted as the main commercial center of the Persian Gulf. The emirate has strengthened its tourism industry, preparing itself for the time that the state’s income from oil will have diminished (Fahim Dāneš, 1386 [2007 A.D]).

Building the artificial islands will attract investments from all over the world, especially Iran. Before the recent global

economic recession, more than 6500 Iranian companies had been working in Dubai with more than 400 billion dollars of capital (Safavi & Qanbari, 1390 [2011 A.D]). This leads to removing capital from Iranian markets to work on the UAE initiatives, which is an economic security threat for Iran. Additionally, the markets of these islands (places for selling luxurious and unnecessary Western products) have turned them into the origin of the illicit trading of these products into Iran (Rāsti et al., 1391 [2012 A.D]).

5.4.1. Energy security

The Persian Gulf region is home to some of the richest energy resources in the world. Many of these resources have been gradually discovered in the lower parts of the Persian Gulf and near the Strait of Hormuz (Niazi, 2013: 28). There are some shared oil and gas fields between Iran and the UAE in the Persian Gulf. The internal law of the UAE rules that each individual emirate is the main owner of the underground resources located in that emirate; therefore, the shared oil and gas fields are known as the shared fields between Iran and the Emirates. These fields are shared among Iran and the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Dubai; they are some of the most valuable reserves of the Persian Gulf. Mubarak oil field is one of the oldest in the Persian Gulf and is shared between Iran and Sharjah. Salman oil and gas field (previously known as Sasan) is shared between Iran and Abu Dhabi; 75% of the field is in Iranian waters and 25% is in Abu Dhabi waters and is called Abu Al Bukhoosh (Mir Heydar & 'Asgari, 1383 [2004 A.D]: 173).

Although the UAE has a 30-percent share in the field, considering the rate of extraction of oil and gas from Salman thus far and considering the fact that the resources are relocating towards the UAE, the current state of extraction would lead to a

less than 50-percent share for Iran (Mir 'Abāsi & Jahāni, 1390 [2011 A.D]: 112). Farzam and Nosrat are other shared fields between Iran and the UAE (Mir Heydar & 'Asgari, 1384 [2005 A.D]). Additionally, 30% of the world's known natural gas resources are located in the Persian Gulf. Iran has the largest share with 12.9% and other states have only a share of 3.5% of the world's gas resources (Naji & Jawan, 2011: 208). The country which will be able to control these resources in the future, would be able to play a crucial role in the world's economic and political status (Jālinusi & Najaf Pur, 1386 [2007 A.D]). Accordingly, the UAE's claim over the oil and gas fields of the region will increase as they build and expand the artificial islands, hoping to be closer to the fields. This will threaten the security of Iran in the region.

5.5. Social security

Social threat is not easily distinguished from political threat. In relations between states, a critical foreign threat on a social level is regarded as an attack on the national identity which is treated politically. On lower levels, even ideological and communication exchanges could be considered as posing cultural and social threats (Buzan, 1389 [2010 A.D]: 147). Additionally, Buzan argues that immigration is an existential threat, as it threatens the current common identity (Šeyhān, 1388 [2009 A.D]: 117-118). It should be noted that the social effects of the artificial islands have not received much attention.

The majority of the population of the countries located around the Persian Gulf are Muslims. In average, 95% of the population of the countries are Muslim, and this is the same among all the countries in the region. But many of these islands have been sold to rich European and American citizens (Ramezāni Buneš, 1391 [2012 A.D]). Chris O'Donnell, former CEO of the Nakheel Project, states that more than 4000 houses

and commercial apartments of the project have been bought by Emirati residents and other citizens of the region's countries. The British have bought 25% of the remaining buildings and the others have been bought by citizens of 75 countries from around the world (Vilā hā-ye gerān qeymat-e Jazāyer-e masnu'i-e naxl, (1386/07/09 [01/10/2007])). This trend will lead to a change in the cultural structure and the demographic composition of the region, regarding religion and ethnicity, in the next few years (Ramezāni Buneš, 1391 [2012 A.D]). Accordingly, the Western lifestyle of the population of these islands will affect the psychological, social, and cultural security of Muslim tourists, especially Iranians (Rāsti et al., 1391 [2012 A.D]).

This trend will lead to the formation of a rich and powerful European and American minority, mostly Christian, in the region. This Western non-Muslim minority will destroy the current coherent cultural-social structure. These minorities are all from powerful Western countries and could be considered as a good excuse for the permanent presence and influence of Western states in a geopolitically important region of the Persian Gulf. The importance of this region is not because of its rich energy resources, rather, because it is the center of the Islamic World. The presence and power of religious centers and nations like Iran, should they increase their geopolitical power, is a good force to change the regional and global geopolitical system in favor of Islam. Therefore, building and selling these islands to Western citizens may cause the creation of a new Israel in the heart of the Islamic World and provide a proper excuse for the presence and influence of regional and global powers in the Persian Gulf region for a long time (Ramezāni Buneš, 1391 [2012 A.D]).

6. Conclusion

This study analyzed and discussed the consequences of creating

artificial islands in the Persian Gulf utilizing the concept of security according to the Copenhagen School as a theory of critical security studies. The Copenhagen School argues that the concept of security in the post-Cold War era is expanded; it is not merely restricted to military issues and includes other fields such as economy, politics, society, and the environment. Accordingly, and to answer the question what are the consequences of the UAE creating artificial islands in the Persian Gulf for Iran, the study's hypothesis confirms that these islands, considering the expanded state of the concept of security in the modern world, will have a five-fold consequence for Iran. Creating artificial islands by the UAE in the Persian Gulf will lead to military, political, environmental, economic, and social insecurities for Iran in the Persian Gulf.

Although, according to the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, coastal states have sovereign rights to create artificial islands, respecting the neighbor states' interests is a fundamental prerequisite of this right. Should states disrespect these interests and destroy the ecosystem, they are stripped of their rights by the Law of the Sea. Therefore, the UAE, as the securitizing actor, is following its ambitions in creating artificial islands regardless of international agreements. This trend will lead to serious changes in regional security, especially for Iran. Considering what has been discussed, the following are suggested:

1. The Iranian government should hold summits to discuss and follow the issue of regional cooperation regarding the preservation of the Persian Gulf ecosystem.
2. The creator of the artificial islands (the UAE) should provide regional states with necessary information on the environmental effects of the artificial islands.
3. Should this trend continue, Iran could refer the case to

the United Nations and repeatedly send a gravamen to the International Court to put pressure on the UAE.

4. NGOs and interest groups could easily warn the world and environmental advocates about the issue using the media. This will put pressure on the UAE and, at least, other countries would not embark on the same sort of activities.

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