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The political changes that brought about the 1979 Iranian Revolution did not remain a domestic affair, rather the new leadership in Tehran is determined from the outset to export their revolution across the Arabian Peninsula as part of their strategy to gain regional hegemony. Today, Iran's ambitions and actions have increased in their scope and methods. It is motivated by religious zeal, geopolitical ambitions that are part of Iran's imperial mindset, and the anxieties of the country's leadership driven partly by their hostilities towards the United States and its regional alliances, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. This requires transitioning the BDF into a regional expeditionary force, and to do so, it must develop three existing deficiencies: professionalize the force, increase interoperability, and strengthen the military industry.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Bahrain Defense Force's Regional Expeditionary Challenge: A Transformation in Response to A Time of Uncertainty, Ambiguity, and Enmity That Arise from Iran's Strategic Ambitions

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Thesis: In order to defeat an evolving large force with irredentist and unconventional strategies, such as the Iranian armed forces, the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF), must be able to deploy sufficient forces across all domain and regional environments, and under all conditions. This requires transitioning the BDF into a regional expeditionary force, and to do so, it must develop three existing deficiencies: professionalize the force, increase interoperability, and strengthen the military industry.

Discussion: The political changes that brought about the 1979 Iranian Revolution did not remain a domestic affair, rather the new leadership in Tehran is determined from the outset to export their revolution across the Arabian Peninsula as part of their strategy to gain regional hegemony. Today, Iran's ambitions and actions have increased in their scope and methods. It is motivated by religious zeal, geopolitical ambitions that are part of Iran's imperial mindset, and the anxieties of the country's leadership driven partly by their hostilities towards the United States and its regional alliances, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. Although it is currently limited to using conventional means of warfighting, it seems to be preparing for a conventional conflict. Iran has deeply invested in conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and intends to use its string of proxies as mobilization forces to shape and control governments such as in the case of Iraq. This strategy has yielded positive results for Iran's hegemonic desires with relatively low cost and high yields in extending Tehran's influence far beyond Iran's borders. Iran's strategy of irregular warfare through the use of proxies, however, has a very high likelihood of escalating into a regional conventional conflict. Due to Bahrain's geostrategic location and previous claims by Iran that Bahrain is its fourteenth province, Bahrain should enhance its military interoperability with allies and partners, develop its doctrine and training into an expeditionary mindset so that it is capable of deploying forces regionally, and enhance its economic structure as a nation in order to be able to sustain conflict or prevent it. The United Arab Emirates is a good example of a force that has transitioned into one that is capable of implementing regional expeditionary objectives.

Conclusion: By transitioning into a regional expeditionary force, the BDF would aid in the deterrence of Iran and increase Bahrain's contribution to its coalition conscripts. Bahrain needs a grand strategy by coordinating with the GCC and mainly the United States and the United Kingdom, that addresses the threat from Iran and explains and coordinates the roles of each participating nation state.

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INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Bahrain's geostrategic location just east of Iran and south of Iraq and more importantly, within the main shipping channels in the Arabian Gulf, makes the security efforts of both the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Western powers vital.¹ It also has a geostrategic importance to Iran from a military point of view. If the Kingdom is controlled, when at war, Iran will gain offensive action, the element of surprise, and economy of effort towards Gulf nations.² After Bahrain's independence as a protectorate of Great Britain in 1971, the country had indicated an interest to host the United States who was seeking naval basing rights on the northern part of the island. As a result, both countries agreed on establishing the base later that year. Today, owing to this highly strategic naval base, the fifth fleet not only essentially maintains its presence in the area but also secures the Strait of Hormuz, which transports 20% of the world's oil.³

Historically, Iran has always claimed the Kingdom of Bahrain as its fourteenth province. Although in March 1970, following 26 months of secret Anglo-Iranian negotiations, Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran abandoned his country's age-old claim to Bahrain.⁴ However, following the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini declared himself Iran's supreme religious leader. Khomeini was motivated by religious zeal, geopolitical ambitions which are part of Iran's imperial mindset, and the anxieties of the country's leadership driven partly by their hostilities towards the United States and its regional alliances, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. This gave rise to his vision of expanding his ideology and becoming the regional hegemon.⁵ In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini passed away and was succeeded by Ali Khamenei, the current Ayatollah of Iran. Ultimately, Iran's actions within the region and beyond have made it a rogue state.⁶ Additionally, Khamenei has reiterated the claim that Bahrain is part

of Iran's territory and thus Bahrain has been a stepping stone in achieving Iran's ideological goal.⁷ In order to do so, Iran relies on two asymmetric strategies; violence through use of proxies, and control of the Strait of Hormuz to gain economic advantage and affect the world's oil market.⁸

Additionally, as it is currently limited in using its armed forces and tends to use irregular warfare methods, Iran is investing in developing a broader range of conventional capabilities than previous standards.⁹ The Iranians, moreover, are investing heavily in the cyber domain, and seeking hypersonic weaponry and autonomous systems to support their ambitions.¹⁰ Due to this emerging situation, the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) should evolve into a capable regional expeditionary force that is able to operate freely within its region, and organized to achieve strategic goals in regional conflicts.¹¹ Currently, the BDF's primary role is to defend the country inside its borders. However, as the Iranian backed proxy forces are increasing within the Arabian Peninsula, it is crucial that the BDF with its coalitions and allies defeat these threats before it reaches the Kingdom of Bahrain's borders.¹² Ultimately, in order to defeat an evolving large force with irredentist strategies and unconventional strategies, such as the Iranian armed forces, the BDF, must be able to employ sufficient forces across all domain and regional environments, and under all conditions.¹³ This requires transitioning the BDF into a regional expeditionary force, and to do so, it must develop three existing deficiencies: professionalize the force, increase interoperability, and strengthen the military industry. This essay examines and compares Bahrain and Iran from a strategic, and operational perspective.

DISCUSSION

Relative Power Analysis

From a strategic perspective, this study will compare both Iran and Bahrain using the instruments of national power: Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME) framework. The instruments of national power are tools that a country uses to guide its government into creating a strategy to achieve its national and international objectives.¹⁴ Additionally, it derives from strength and will. Strength comes from the transformation of means into capabilities, whereas will infuses the nation's objectives and thus accomplishes the objectives by employing the instruments of national power.¹⁵

Diplomacy at the international level is a form of soft power.¹⁶ It is about knowing and understanding foreign landscapes, history, languages, and people. This requires building and sustaining relationships of trust with other nations through embassies or consulates, while having the ability to negotiate better solutions. Additionally, foreign assistance in matters such as humanitarian aid, development, and security assistance are all part of diplomacy.¹⁷ Iran's political system has always been closed, secretive, informal, and clannish.¹⁸ After the Shah's government was overthrown, it was replaced by a regime that has moved the country away from diplomacy. Subsequently, there have not been any modern alliances with the world community, it has sought relationships that do not obligate it to traditional alliances such as non-state actors that follow its ideology. Iran has not shown effective negotiation skills within its region and the rest of the world. It has been difficult to approach, and always argue on an abstract of "justice" instead of defined legal obligations,¹⁹ claiming that great powers have long manipulated international law and that the system these powers create take advantage of weaker countries. Additionally, Iran seems to have conspiracy theories and believes that past events such as the

Iran–Iraq War and other events are the outcome of great power plots.²⁰ Iran’s reputation, according to the Reputation Institute makes it the world’s second most hated country as the most hated is Iraq.²¹ This started from the 1979 hostage crises in the U.S. Embassy in Iran and the fact that the U.S. classifies Iran as the foremost state sponsor of terrorism,²² although the Joint comprehensive Plan of Action created by the then U.S. President Barack Obama, was seen as a diplomatic achievement and an opportunity for Iran to have a better global image.²³ Unlike Iran, however, Bahrain has stronger diplomatic ties with the world community.²⁴ Its vision is to pioneer “a political and economic diplomacy with a distinctive Bahraini perspective.”²⁵ Bahrain’s leadership has focused on the international image of Bahrain when it comes to diplomacy; platforms such as the Manama Dialogue, Peace to Prosperity Conference, and the Diplomatic Engagement Program have brought together military and foreign policy experts and thus have strengthened its reputation. Bahrain has been active in many coalitions; currently it is a member of the GCC, and the Combined Maritime Taskforce, while also participating in coalitions within the Middle East. The Combined Maritime Taskforce is a coalition led by the U.S. including the United Kingdom and is tasked to protect shipping in the Arabian Gulf after Iranian aggressive and violent behavior in the area.²⁶

Information refers to the way a nation uses its platforms to collect information and therefore shape the global environment in support of its national interest.²⁷ As stated in the book *The Art of War*, by the ancient Chinese theorist Sun Tzu, “[When you] know the enemy and know yourself, in a hundred battles you will never [be at] peril. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal.”²⁸ It is also regarded as a means used by nations to understand the complex nature of international and domestic relations.²⁹ Ultimately, by being ahead in the information operations, the nation can integrate all

instruments of DIME to create and accomplish goals.³⁰ Iran, on the other hand, focuses on aggressive misinformation campaigns globally, aiming at audiences in the U.S., United Kingdom, Latin America, and the Middle East.³¹ Over 600 accounts have been identified on Facebook and other social media platforms associated with the operation.³² The main objective of these networks was to spread pro-Iranian messaging published in the respective country's preferred language on issues important to Iran, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, U.S. foreign policy, and the Decisive Storm Operation in Yemen.³³ For example, one article conveyed an anti-Israel message by purportedly showing how Europe is against Israel; the article's headline was "That is why the Europeans want to destroy Israel as a Jewish state."³⁴ Iran also uses its proxies within the Arabian peninsula to spread its ideology to delegitimize governments.³⁵ In addition, taking Bahrain as an example, Iran targets the national cohesion by triggering sectarian struggles in order to legitimize a direct intervention and occupation of Bahrain through deploying regular forces. However, Bahrain is globally viewed as a positive actor and controls the narrative inside the country and influences it positively outside the country. Domestically, the Bahraini government launched the *National Plan Bahrainouna* to promote the spirit of belonging to the nation and reinforce the values of nationalism. Its values and goals are based on targeting external misinformation, and is based on creating equality and justice, backed by the foundation of the reinforcement of loyalty.³⁶ Additionally, due to Bahrain's strong diplomatic ties, it has access to greater media platforms globally and as a result, it is able to delegitimize false information and spread more legitimate information across the world.³⁷

Military is the most important instrument of power to a nation-state.³⁸ As long as states continue to exist in a world of anarchy, military power will continue to play a vital role in

international politics.³⁹ Also referred to as “hard power” due to its kinetic nature, and to most likely cause collateral damage, it is viewed as a method of last resort.⁴⁰ Today, the United States military is a great example of military power; its multi domain forces are unmatched globally. This will deter adversaries and will encourage stability depending on the nation’s interests. The Iranian conventional military doctrine is primarily defensive in nature and based on deterring perceived adversaries. Iran is therefore unlikely to seek a direct, force-on-force confrontation,⁴¹ although it currently focuses on an offensive asymmetric way of war, known as Iran’s Gray Zone Strategy.⁴² Iran’s Gray Zone Strategy creates ambiguity by using covert and proxy activities around the region to deny their adversaries a legal justification for response and also creating uncertainty of how to respond.⁴³ It also has a hybrid deterrence/warfighting triad, that consists of a guerrilla navy force focused on disrupting shipping along the Arabian Gulf. It will most likely use indirect means such as rockets, mines, and Improvised explosive devices, and employ its proxies to do so. Incapably, Iran will try to threaten “all-out war” as a bluff, to deter any reactions from other nations as its current conventional doctrine is mainly defensive.⁴⁴ However, the inability to purchase modern weapons from the market makes it vulnerable to its adversaries. Bahrain on the other hand, is a smaller force although it has up-to-date weaponry when it comes to its air force and air defense systems. Its coalition and partnerships deter its adversaries and through regular joint training makes it a more capable force. Its doctrine is currently focused on defending the nation, although evolving into an expeditionary force will assure deterrence, the ability to deploy rapidly, and the capability of presenting its adversary multiple dilemmas.⁴⁵

Economic activity is the main revenue stream that leads to power including the ability to create wealth, influence, produce goods and services, and weaken or coerce possible adversaries.⁴⁶ It is the most critical vulnerability that must be maintained, as Mark Esper stated

“clearly, we need a strong economy to build a strong military.”⁴⁷ A strong economy provides the resources to allow national leaders the ways to attain desired ends. Iran, after the high pressure campaign and the U.S. sanctions, has been avoiding an economic collapse, although its unemployment rates are high, and inflation is increasing.⁴⁸ As an oil revenue dependent nation, due to mismanaging its priorities, Iran turns a blind eye to its people as they struggle to buy essential necessities, and would rather fund terrorism in support of its ideology.⁴⁹ Its industrial production such as cars, television sets, and washing machines have significantly decreased, although its mineral and petrochemical production have somehow increased despite U.S. sanctions.⁵⁰ Additionally, the rapidly increasing population has been making it harder for the nation to restore its economy, although the rise of the younger generation through determined effort and innovation can potentially enhance economic growth and development.⁵¹ Bahrain is also an oil dependent country, although unlike Iran, its economy has better access to the global market. Additionally, Bahrain’s financial institutions encourage economic growth, its human resources are highly educated, and its motivated labor force can increase the capabilities of the economy.⁵² Bahrain, after Dubai, is seen as a major financial Centre in the Middle East, allowing international financial institutions to operate with freedom.⁵³ However, Bahrain currently depends on imports to provide goods and services for its people. Today it is partnered with the International Trade Centre with an aim to support and grow local exports and increase government international exports of goods and services.⁵⁴

In summary of the DIME framework, Iran’s gridlock political system shows a tendency to lurch from conflict to conflict, thus drifting toward strategic incoherence. To understand Iran’s complex governing climate, one must have an understanding of its key leadership. Its current supreme leader Ali Khamenei has been overlooked as a weak and indecisive personality who

occupies a powerful post but lacks charisma.⁵⁵ On the diplomatic front, Iran has demonstrated bad communication, poor negotiation skills, and lack of presence globally.⁵⁶ This study has shown that Bahrain has been following a grand strategy that is based on the guidelines of the instruments of national power. Additionally, this study suggests that to Bahrain the economic instrument is the anchor of all four instruments of power. In fact, it is the power that will shape its foreign policy for decades. If the economic instrument is integrated wisely with diplomatic, information, and the military element, it will be a nation that is hard to beat. As the world today embraces globalization, economics will only gain greater influence.⁵⁷

Combat Power Analysis

The combat power study below discusses the Iranian armed forces and compares the BDF and Iran using the warfighting functions from an operational perspective.

The Iranian Constitution states:

In establishing and equipping the defense forces of the country, it shall be taken into consideration that faith and ideology are the basis and criterion. Therefore, the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Revolutionary Guards Corps will be formed in conformity, and will be responsible not only for protecting and safeguarding the frontiers but also for the ideological mission, that is, to wait for the coming of the twelfth Imam *Mahdi Almontathar* in a world of struggle and chaos.⁵⁸

The Iranian armed forces consist of two separate military powers, the “Artesh”, which is equivalent to a regular armed force, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) established in 1979. The Artesh which existed prior to the revolution, focuses on a defensive doctrine and the use of the armed force to counter any external threat to Iran. The IRGC’s main mission is to protect the regime and spread the revolution in the region through irregular forces.⁵⁹

In the aftermath of the 1979 revolution, there was great tension between the Artesh and the IRGC. The Artesh suffered purges of key individuals and was distrusted by the IRGC. This led to the IRGC expanding its military force into a conventional force and forcing the Artesh to demonstrate its loyalty to the regime. Today the regime applies order to both forces, although the rivalry remains due to uneven access to resources, varying levels of influence on the regime, and the inherent overlap in responsibilities and missions.⁶⁰

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)		Regular Forces (Artesh)	
IRGC Ground Force	150,000	Artesh Ground Force	350,000
IRGC Navy	20,000	Artesh Navy	18,000
IRGC Aerospace	15,000	Artesh Air Force	37,000
IRGC Qods	5,000	Artesh Air defense	15,000
Basij Reserves	450,000	Total:	420,000
Total Military (Active): 610,000			
Total Military (Incl. Reserves): 1,060,000			

Figure 1. Iran's Military Structure and Size Estimates⁶¹

In the Iran–Iraq War of 1980, Iran showed its inexperience in understanding the deadly facets of modern warfare, including ballistic missiles, and in its reaction to the chemical weapons that Iraq used extensively throughout the war.⁶² This war lasted 8 years, and more than 200,000 Iranians troops were killed.⁶³ Iran's leadership monitored the GCC, and mainly the United States' support for Iraq throughout the war that included several billion dollars' worth of economic aid, sale of dual-use technology, military intelligence, and special operations training.⁶⁴ As a result, Iran arrived at the conclusion that both the US and the GCC were

countering their ideology. Additionally, the West's embargo and military engagements with the GCC led the Iranian regime to be a self-independent state and emphasize asymmetric capabilities. Since the end of the Iraq–Iran War, Iran has restructured its military doctrine and approach to modern conflict. Subsequently, the IRGC expanded its outreach through proxies and militia forces within the Arabian Peninsula, mainly Hizballah in Lebanon and other smaller groups. Iran established the IRGC Qods Force to train, fund, equip, and prepare these forces for covert presence in the Arabian Peninsula through aggressive activities such as sabotage, espionage, and intelligence gathering. Ultimately, Iran seeks control over the Arabian Gulf border and appears to be highly dependent on unmanned air systems carrying IEDs.⁶⁵ Iran has also invested in developing the Artesh's conventional weapons capabilities—specifically ballistic missiles. To do so, Iran received great assistance from China and North Korea to establish its own manufacturing systems for a major weapons program.⁶⁶ After the start of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS), Iran became extremely involved in regional conflicts in the Arabian Peninsula, mainly in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, seeking to strengthen its position as the regional hegemon.⁶⁷

War Fighting Functions	Command	Intelligence	Maneuver	Firepower	Sustainment	Protection
BDF	++ Guided by the principles of war	++ Needs more advanced assets	++ Needs to apply the <i>Manoeuvrist approach</i>	+++ Effective combined arms, speed, and accuracy	++ Requires domestic logistics and medical manufacturing	++ Requires countering CBRN
Iran	+ Centralized Command	+++ Good cyber, depends on proxy forces	++ Slow moving force, limited mobility	++++ Largest missile force in the Middle East	++ Can manufacture, but requires a stable economy	+++ Good A2/AD strategy, and a diverse air defense system
GCC	+++ Requires more Interoperability	++++ Exceptional ISR, and regularly updated	+++ Understands importance of deception, command, and intelligence	++++ Advanced missiles, aircraft, and well integrated	++++ Many mobility corridors, and long-term logistics	++++ Excellent protection from ISR, attacks, and good risk assessments
+ Represents how strong the force is						

Figure 2. Comparing the BDF, Iran, and the GCC using the warfighting functions

The warfighting functions are six functions that represent the full breadth of a military force's activities when conducting operations. They are a device that helps organize a military's capabilities into intelligible groups and all functions need to be commanded and sustained when in conflict.

Command is conducted by five principles: a clear chain of command, unity and continuity of command, a command structure, and the employment of mission command.⁶⁸ It enables all other warfighting functions and requires interaction with other force elements. The BDF's command capability is limited in numbers in order to maintain tempo and momentum, known as the span of command.⁶⁹ Additionally, commanders and their headquarters are flexible, energetic, and agile and therefore can adapt to many roles and tasks. If, however, the BDF partners with a coalition force, such as the US and the GCC, the command structure will make it

more difficult to integrate forces unless it is regularly practiced through training or exercises. Additionally, this means that the BDF must enhance its interoperability with allies and partners to bring legitimacy and be prepared to adapt to the requirements within the coalition. Iran, on the other hand, has a Soviet command and control doctrine that operates on a centralized system of command, shows inflexibility in taking the initiative, and mostly focuses on the tactical level of the campaign rather than the operational level.⁷⁰ Moreover, integration between the Artesh and the IRGC is poor due to an inability to act together coherently and efficiently and achieve the tactical and strategic objectives effectively.⁷¹

Intelligence is the function that makes the most significant contribution in understanding the operational environment. Through this means, information is gathered and kept updated about the audience, actors, and adversaries and this requires many advanced assets to collect information, including electronic surveillance, human intelligence, manned and unmanned aircraft, and armored or light armored vehicles. Thus, the BDF must develop its asset capabilities and depend more on unmanned aircraft due to the current circumstances in the operational environment. In addition, dynamic and adversarial situations constantly evolve. Previous truths can rapidly become assumptions, and adversaries will actively seek to deceive. To stay ahead of the game, it is vital that the BDF develops its intelligence assets and operates professionally. Ultimately, during a coalition force campaign, the US is the most capable force for providing advanced surveillance and reconnaissance capability. However, Iran's intelligence services are capable of worldwide operations to counter any threat against its ideology and interests, as the IRGC is the most dependable intelligence gathering service, capable of all-source collection, analysis, and investigations.⁷² The IRGC, moreover, operates a counterintelligence system, securing their proxies, operations, facilities espionage, and revolutionary threats to the regime.⁷³

Maneuver is the employment of kinetic forces on the battlefield to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy to accomplish the mission. It involves movement in combination with fire over land or water or through air.⁷⁴ As Winston Churchill stated, “battles are won by slaughter and maneuver. The greater the general, the more he contributes in maneuver, the less he demands in slaughter.”⁷⁵ The concept of maneuver requires the BDF to practice combined arms exercises regularly and allows mission command to subordinates to take the initiative in battle. It requires practice in many forms: frontal, penetration, infiltration, and envelopments. Iran, on the other hand, improved its doctrine, training, and equipment after the Iran–Iraq War. However, it is a slow-moving force with limited armor maneuver capability and its artillery force is better for static defense. Ultimately, the Iranian armed force are mostly low paid, poorly trained conscripts, with aging and obsolete equipment.⁷⁶ Additionally, It has little experience in amphibious operations and does not practice amphibious assaults or raids on beaches. Nevertheless, it has good capability of maneuver over land by going through Iraq to access GCC countries. At sea, Iran will most likely fight asymmetrically, using hit and run attacks with sea and land-launched anti-ship cruise missiles, mines, mini-sub and suicide boats.

Firepower refers to the use of weapons to create a specific lethal or non-lethal effect on a target. Lethal firepower includes direct and indirect weapon systems of land, maritime, and air forces designed to destroy, neutralize, or suppress the enemy. Non-lethal firepower includes offensive cyber and electromagnetic activities that have physical effects. This may degrade or deny electronically controlled systems from communication, information systems, and other equipment and infrastructures.⁷⁷ In this scenario, it is crucial that the BDF integrates its firepower function with the intelligence function when employing firepower to have a precise effect on area targets. More importantly, the secondary effect will be breaking the enemy’s will,

cohesion, and morale. In addition, firepower is essential to enable maneuver forces to maneuver and be able to provide a safer area of operations. On the other hand, Iran depends on its ballistic missiles for firepower and lacks a modern air force asset.⁷⁸ Its missiles, the largest in the Middle East, are mostly produced domestically which will result in higher payload capacity encompassing ballistic to cruise missiles. Fortunately, Iran's missiles cannot currently hit accurate pinpoint targets.⁷⁹ However, while Iran cannot arm its missiles with nuclear weapons, Iran may have chemical or biological weapons.⁸⁰ Additionally, Iran uses its proxies, most commonly the Yemeni Houthis and Hizballah, as a firepower option and, through them, deploys unmanned air systems with IEDs and targets key infrastructures such as airports, oil refineries, and populated areas. To counter this strategy, the BDF must develop its countering capability of unmanned air systems with updated technology and systems. This will require regular research and development (R&D) which then can be introduced within the tactical formations of the units.

Sustainment allows military forces to operate providing them with freedom of action through logistics, equipment, medical, and other support required to conduct operations. The maneuver and firepower functions often generate high demand of consumables. Therefore, it is crucial that commanders balance the desired effects with the resources available.⁸¹ Thus, the BDF must be able to sustain its military force in a conflict within the Arabian Peninsula by increasing its logistics and medical capability domestically. This will require investment in the military industry to a sustainment level of requirements. In contrast, Iran is currently experiencing financial constraints and sanctions. This will decrease its capability to operate freely in the region. At the same time, they are trying to change their defensive doctrine to an offensive capability, such as combat air power, and to maintain a forward presence, although this

requires a legitimate military industry organization and a stable economy, which Iran is still far from.⁸²

Protection refers to those actions taken to protect the fighting power of a military force, including people, equipment, installations, and information activities and measures. It depends on a continually refreshed understanding of the risks facing the force and the mitigation and protection of the force's own center of gravity. Therefore, the BDF must enhance its counterintelligence and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) measures. Additionally, commanders within the BDF must also protect the moral component of the force. The force's own will and cohesion must remain robust, and information protection requires appropriate measures of operational and information security.⁸³ Iran, however, engages in a passive defense doctrine and focuses on denial and deception tactics. The defense mechanism includes camouflage and concealment, force dispersals, underground facilities, and high mobile units. It also includes cyber-defense to protect networks from cyber-attacks. Furthermore, it relies on its naval force and geostrategic position along the Arabian Gulf, a critical chokepoint for the world's oil supply.⁸⁴

Overall, without the GCC, the BDF compared to Iran will need to address these deficiencies of professionalism, interoperability, and the military industry to be able to conduct regional expeditionary operations using a bigger combined arms force and must conduct all warfighting functions simultaneously. This will create a successful fighting power of three components. The conceptual component is the force knowledge, understanding and applications of its doctrine. The moral component is the force's morale, leadership, and ethical conduct. The physical component consists of manpower,

equipment, sustainability, and resources. These are linked to the force's readiness. The more complete the elements are, the higher the level of readiness of the force.

BDF Existing Deficiencies:

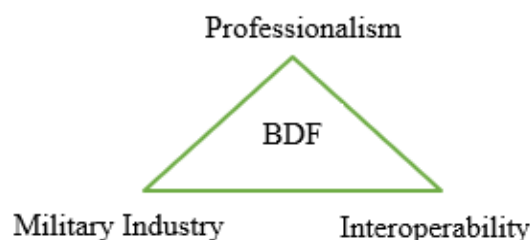


Figure 3. Bahrain Defense Force's three existing deficiencies

Conflict today requires a military force with an ethos of **professionalism** capable of defeating or deterring the enemy with advanced warfighting ways and means in offensive and defensive activities. It requires high contemporary skills because conflict today involves new technologies, emerging threats, many potential operating environments, and adversaries and enemies who seek to deceive and surprise their enemy. Additionally, highly effective leadership is required; morale, will, adaptation, cohesion, and the ability to cooperate with others are all essential.

The key enabler for military cooperation, whether it is with alliances, or partners, or within the nation's force itself, is **interoperability**, which is the ability to act together coherently, effectively, and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives.⁸⁵ It allows forces, units, and systems to operate together. It requires an understanding of one common doctrine and set of procedures, the capabilities of each force's key assets, and the ability to communicate with ease.⁸⁶

The **military industry** is a nation's military establishment as well as the industries involved in the production of armaments and other military materials.⁸⁷ It generates military power in ways that produce war-winning results. It involves creating and developing technologies such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, precision strike munitions, and all materials capable of operating within the five domains of land, sea, air, space, and cyber.⁸⁸ Its goal is a more lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovating force.

Professionalism

To increase its professionalism, the BDF must focus on developing the following aspects of: strategic leadership, tactical leadership, and warfighting fundamentals, and the best way of implementing this change is through professional military education (PME).

Strategic leadership is a level where institutions are led and shaped, the vision is set, and longer-term direction is determined. Strategic leaders work in uncertain environments, facing highly complex problems that extend beyond the military. The decisions made by strategic leaders will affect more people, commit more resources, instigate change, and have wide-ranging consequences.⁸⁹ Three aspects of strategy are particularly relevant to military forces. Firstly, a successful national strategy sets out a path using the diplomatic, economic, information, and military instruments of power to achieve government policy goals.⁹⁰ Strategy usually involves collaboration with other nations' governments and armed forces. National strategy consists of and should describe interdependent 'ends' (objectives of the strategy), 'ways' (methods), and 'means' (resources).⁹¹ Secondly, the military contribution to strategy is the application of military resources to achieve national strategic objectives. During planning for operations, military planners determine objectives, identify freedoms and constraints, set out options for the desired end-state, and describe the military approach and resources required. By implementing this concept of operational planning in the BDF, this would enable coherent military advice to be given to the Bahraini senior leaders to prompt a decision and initiate a campaign.⁹² Thirdly, a successful campaign requires a strategic narrative that resonates in the minds of the audience and that helps explain the campaign strategy and operational plan. This message must resonate with those involved in operations as well as the domestic and broader international audience. However, the narrative will be contested. Adversaries will create their

own narratives in support of their goals or possibly multiple narratives to deceive the audience so that the Bahraini strategic narrative fails to gain traction.⁹³ Highlighting the importance of the strategic level, David Fraser referred to Field Marshal Alan Brooke who regarded the art of strategy as “ determining the aim, which is, or should be, inherently political; to derive from that aim a series of military objectives to be achieved; to assess these objectives as to the military requirements they create, and the pre-conditions which the achievement of each is likely to necessitate.”⁹⁴

Tactical leadership is led by officers or noncommissioned officers at operational activities, battles, and engagements that are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical formations and units. The highest rank of this level of leadership is a battalion commander and below to the lance corporal according to the BDF’s structure. It is at the tactical level that troops are deployed directly into tactical activities, using the warfighting functions. The warfighting functions must be acknowledged and taught through the professional military education programs and couched in the context of the strategic and operational levels of warfare. As the Soviet military theorist and strategist Alexander Andreyevich Svechin wrote, “tactics makes the steps from which operational leaps are assembled; strategy points out the path.”⁹⁵ Ultimately, junior officers within the BDF must understand two activities, offensive and defensive, and their purposes. The purpose of offensive activities is to defeat the enemy either by breaking their will and cohesion or by physical destruction. During offensive activities, the attacker seeks to create the conditions for freedom of movement and maneuver, confuse the enemy’s understanding to defeat their forces selectively, or break their cohesion and will to fight.⁹⁶ The main characteristics of offensive activities are surprise and shock. The acme of surprise is when it combines high-tempo physical maneuver, superiority in virtual dimension,

and concentrated application of violence.⁹⁷ Both surprise and shock should be exploited rapidly and aggressively to achieve the purpose of offensive activities. Additionally, there are nine offensive activities that can lead to success: deliberate attack, hasty attack, counter-attack, raid, exploitation, pursuit, feint, demonstration, reconnaissance in force, ambush, and breakout of encircled forces.⁹⁸

Defensive activities do not mean that a force should hold their ground and engage with an attrition mentality similar to the Soviets' doctrine.⁹⁹ It is meant to defeat or deter a threat from the enemy, and specifically, to protect the force and provide the right conditions for offensive activities. One example of misunderstanding the purpose of defensive activities was during the Arab-Israeli 1967 War. There was one major aspect common to all three Arab forces: commanders failed to take the initiative and counterattack the Israeli Defense Force despite many opportunities throughout the battle. They adopted a Soviet mentality of attrition rather than an offensive mindset.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of defensive activities is to lure the attacker into situations where the defender can create and exploit surprise and ultimately target the attacker's command system to disrupt passage of information. Through this, defenders can fix the attacker for subsequent defeat through counter-attack.

Audiences. All the groups and individual people whose perception and interpretation of events and subsequent behavior contribute to the success or otherwise of military action.

Actors. A group or person that takes action or directly exerts influence.

Adversaries. A group or person that seeks to prevent us from achieving our objectives.

Enemy. A group or person that seeks to defeat us through armed lethal means.

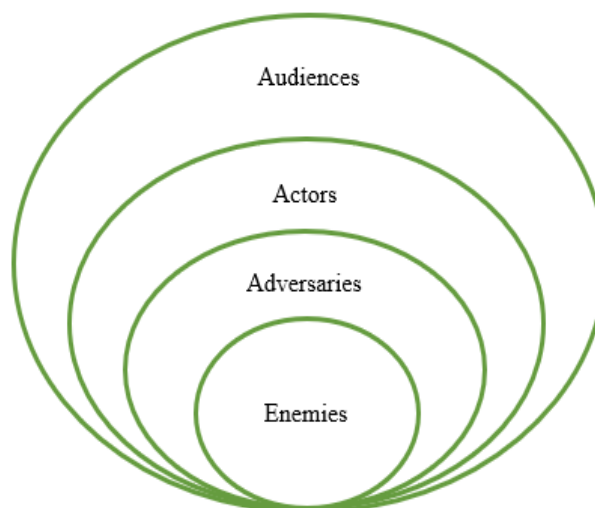


Figure 4. Integrated Action: Audiences, actors, adversaries and enemies¹⁰¹

Furthermore, to lead effectively, officers within the BDF must understand the **warfighting fundamentals:** integrated action, *maneuverist* approach, and the importance of mission command. Integrated action is not only required to be understood by officers, but by all military personnel. It describes how military forces orchestrate and execute operations in an interconnected world, where the consequences of military action are judged by an audience that extends immediate participants to distant observers. As shown in figure 4, the boundaries between these groups are not fixed. For example, adversaries may be persuaded to become neutral or even friendly actors. This means that a military force's actions may cause a neutral actor to become its enemy. It is crucial to identify how groups and certain backgrounds relate to each other, what motivates and influences them, and how a military force might seek to achieve advantageous behavioral outcomes and prevent those that are undesirable. This will require the BDF to invest highly in its information and physical aspects of the operating environments and to have a dynamic approach to understanding the audience because people are the heart of

conflict, and it is their decision and behaviors that determine how conflict is conducted and resolved.¹⁰²

The *maneuverist* approach is a fighting doctrine that leading militaries have followed from time immemorial; an example would be Khalid Bin Waleed, the Islamic general in the time of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him (PBUH). Khalid defeated the Persian and Roman Empires in Iraq and Syria by employing the *maneuverist* approach. This method requires a commander to take advantage of the enemy's lack of awareness and employ speed, mobility, and surprise in an offensive mentality rather than a defensive *attrition warfare* mindset to defeat rather than destroy the enemy.¹⁰³ Khalid Bin Waleed, can be used as an Islamic military icon to be included in the BDF's PME curriculum. Additionally, the *maneuverist* approach is an indirect approach that emphasizes effect on the enemy's will. It blends lethal and non-lethal actions to achieve objectives that shape the enemy's understanding, undermine their will, and break their cohesion. This approach aims to apply strength against vulnerabilities. Significant features of it are momentum, tempo, and agility,¹⁰⁴ which in combination lead to shock and surprise to the enemy. The *maneuverist* approach, ultimately, entails doing the unexpected, using initiative, and seeking originality to defeat the enemy.

Furthermore, the *maneuverist* approach is enabled by mission command. Mission command is a command philosophy that empowers subordinate commanders and promotes initiative as well as freedom and speed of action. Ultimately, it focuses on the achievement of the superior commander's intent in any type of mission. It also empowers leaders at every level from senior generals to a lance corporal and is intended to generate agility and tempo. Mission command will allow the BDF to overcome an enemy in the most chaotic and demanding circumstances and unlock everyone's potential to seize winning opportunities.¹⁰⁵ For

subordinates to execute mission command successfully, they must follow the following principles: unity of effort, freedom of action, trust, mutual understanding, and timely and effective decision making.

Professional military education represents the most important investment that the BDF can make in a time of an innovative young century. It will allow leaders to generate greater variety of skills in professionalism and many other aspects one may confront in peace or wartime.¹⁰⁶ It requires exceptional educational systems from war college institutions down to the senior noncommissioned officers' programs. It must include world class civilian faculty from the officer cadet's academy up to the highest ranks' military colleges. The curricula should firstly include Islamic military history and the military history of the world, policy and strategy involving international relations, conventional and unconventional warfare, and the study of languages and cultures, and most importantly, wargaming and planning exercises. It is also important that leaders think critically and express their knowledge both orally and in written format and understand and appreciate the roles of the international organizations, non-governmental agencies, and the private sector globally.¹⁰⁷

Implementing professionalism effectively will prepare the BDF to operate in a dangerous and uncertain world in which we live, which requires the BDF leadership to master innovative thinking, a regularly updated doctrine, and the ability to adapt efficiently. More importantly, the ability to deploy forces regionally.

Interoperability

The Kingdom of Bahrain's national policy envisages that most major overseas military operations involving the BDF will be part of a coalition that will probably be led by the United States or within the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force. Coalitions and alliances bring mass,

diplomatic power, economic support, and legitimacy to a nation state. The BDF must be ready to adapt to the requirements of any coalition, specifically, by increasing interoperability. According to one of the components of the Principle of War, cooperation means that “military operations are joint enterprises between formations, arms, services, government departments, agencies, allies and host nation partners, [and] so depend on cooperation for success. Cooperation is best engendered through shared training, developing interoperability, team spirit and cohesion.”¹⁰⁸ Interoperability has two approaches regarding the BDF. One is with coalition forces and the other is within its own military force.

Interoperability within a coalition will enhance the interoperability with respect to material, tactics, equipment, training, communication, and many other areas. NATO’s standardization policy is a good example, it makes a crucial contribution to the combined operational effectiveness of the military forces of the alliance and allows for better use of economic resources. The implementation of NATO Standardization Agreements supports nations within the coalition to better accomplish the common strategic, operational, and tactical tasks; therefore, understanding and executing command procedures, and employing techniques, material, and equipment more efficiently.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, the strategic perspective of coalition interoperability relies on centering the world views, strategies, doctrines, and force structure of the respective nations. Additionally, this level of interoperability requires adherence to international law, human rights, and open markets against common threats. This provides deterrence to conflict makers opposing the coalition and motivates the coalition to increase training and combined exercises,¹¹⁰ whereas the operational and tactical perspectives require interchangeability of force elements and units between forces of nations within the coalition.¹¹¹ These are categorized into three dimensions of interoperability:

technical, procedural, and human. Technical interoperability can be achieved through a variety of means including interoperable command centers with standardized communications and computerized data networks, intelligence, ISR systems, standardization of ammunition and other combat supplies. Procedural interoperability is based on a common doctrine, tactics, techniques, and similar terminology. Human interoperability includes a similar language and creates trust and a mutual understanding by strengthening relations between forces during training or on operations.¹¹² Human interoperability consists of five aspects: language, rapport, mutual respect, knowledge of other nations' doctrines, and patience. All of these aspects, if understood and implemented correctly, will maintain and promote cohesion of a multinational force, and build genuine and robust relationships between forces.¹¹³

Interoperability within the BDF is crucial among the three components of land, air, and maritime. Land forces are structured hierarchically into formations of units and sub-units and are categorized by functions and specialist capabilities. The BDF should organize this formation by regularly combining arms to form a cohesive and versatile whole. The principle of combined arms requires high levels of technical, procedural, and human interoperability among all forces.¹¹⁴ Additionally, regular exercises between combat, combat support, and combat service support force elements must be conducted regularly. The air component, moreover, is the most important physical environmental interface for a military force when at war. As Field Marshal Montgomery stated, "if we lose the war in the air, we lose the war and lose it quickly."¹¹⁵

Airpower has four fundamental roles: control of the air, intelligence and situational awareness, attack, and air mobility. Air and land integration is a form of interoperability and is probably the most common of all components throughout modern history.¹¹⁶ During the Second World War, the Burma campaign between the allies and the invading forces of Imperial Japan

highlights the vital importance of air and land integration to the eventual victory over the Japanese.¹¹⁷ This integration synergistically blends land and air power across all operational activities, from ISR to firepower, maneuver, and sustainment throughout the conflict. It requires strong relationships between air and land forces, and this process requires a lot of time and effort. It is crucial to integrate both forces more than the other services, particularly because in multinational operations the air component is more likely to be multinational.¹¹⁸

Bahrain is an island nation with regional responsibilities and interests. Hence the BDF relies on the maritime component for sustainment, projection, and support of land operations. Maritime power consists of three roles: warfighting using its naval assets, maritime security, and international engagement. Integrating with land forces is vital especially when conducting a ship to shore operation such as an amphibious assault, raid, withdrawal, or demonstration. The maritime security working group's vision as discussed with the Fifth Fleet Commander, James J. Malloy, is "[we] will establish a collaborative framework to share information, train, exercise, and conduct operations together."¹¹⁹ It requires that the BDF and the GCC nations involved in this strategy develop a regional capability to conduct sea control operations and crises response operations. The special forces component provides strategic insight and precision in all operating environments. They are designed, trained, and equipped to operate at the strategic and operational level to accomplish objectives and effects beyond the reach, capability, or expertise of conventional forces.¹²⁰ Routinely, special forces operate at the strategic level and this may not require interoperability with land forces. At the operational level, whether it is an integrated headquarters or in supporting or supported relationships, the special forces will integrate with maritime, air, land, and logistics. It is crucial that other components of other services understand the characteristics of the special forces such as; the principles of employment, roles, and

planning considerations. The contribution of special forces is qualitatively different than that of other military services just as the military instrument of power differs from the economic or diplomatic instruments.¹²¹

Consequently, with the growth of coalition warfare around the Middle East, interoperability in the BDF has proven to be crucial but difficult to achieve.¹²² Whether it is integrating between services or international allies and partners, it will always be a challenging obstacle. It will need more effort and resources from senior officers and must be planned from the strategic and operational perspective rather than just from the tactical level.

Military Industry

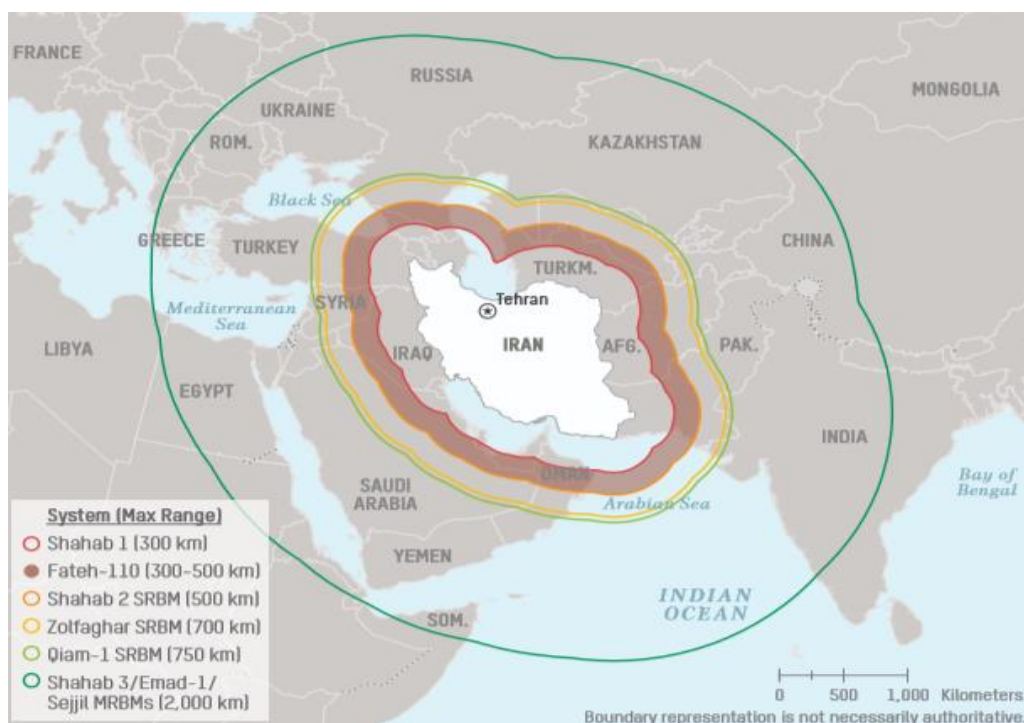


Figure 5. Iran's ballistic missile ranges¹²³

Iran is the immediate regional threat to the Kingdom of Bahrain. It is a self-sufficient manufacturer of most of its military assets and is seeking to strengthen its regional position by continuous research and development.¹²⁴ Obviously, Iran recognizes its inability to defeat a great

power such as the United States. Therefore, it will most likely focus on enhancing its three core capabilities towards regional conflict: the mass manufacturing and development of ballistic missiles with regional access as shown in Figure 5; littoral naval forces capable of disrupting navigation in the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, and supporting irregular forces through funding, training, and arming.¹²⁵ Iran's investment in local arms industries has reinforced its position to become a politically independent nation state and has reduced its military or strategic dependence on international powers.¹²⁶ Ultimately, as stated by Michael Handel "The power of a state is thus best measured not against all other countries, but in relation to its neighbors, and by the degree to which the strength at its disposal matches its national goals and ambitions."¹²⁷ Therefore, following the 'Balance of Threat' theory, a derivative of the traditional balance of power calculation, one can argue that states, in this case Iran poses a significant threat to Bahrain in terms of aggregate power, offensive capability, geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions.¹²⁸

Tier One: States which *innovate* at the technological frontier and, therefore, temporarily become the sole or dominant producers of a given arms technology.

Tier Two: States which produce at or near the technological frontier and are capable of adapting existing technology to market and security requirements.

Tier Three: States which copy and reproduce existing technologies but do not capture the underlying process of innovation or adaptation.

Tier Four: States which acquire and use existing technologies but are incapable of production.

Tier Five: States which either acquire technologies and cannot use them or do not obtain them.

Figure 6. The hierarchy of production¹²⁹

This analysis suggests in response to Iran's threats, the BDF should invest in domestic arms production appropriate to its national requirements. By using the hierarchical structure of five tiers as shown in Figure 6, the BDF should produce at a Tier Three level. This will assure

sustainability as a nation and a military force in conflict, increase national economic growth, and establish an R&D program.

Sustainability enables the BDF to operate with the freedom of action by providing basic items such as uniforms, small arms, ammunition, tents, and logistics. At a Tier Three production level, this can be easily accomplished domestically, allowing a much longer time period of sustainment during conflict rather than depending on importing assets that add more time and cost to the defense force. Additionally, the ability to be able to sustain while in conflict, will deter any aggressive intentions toward the nation. Ultimately, the BDF should seek sophisticated and complex weapons to match those of its main adversary, Iran, to reach regional military balance.¹³⁰ For example, “the essential objective of India’s weapons acquisition policy is to ensure that the armed forces are always equipped with weapons that are qualitatively equal to those available to its adversary.”¹³¹ The BDF’s main threat in a regional warfare scenario is Iran’s production of ballistic missiles. Therefore, the Kingdom of Bahrain purchased a surface to air missile system from the United States, which ensures that the country is well equipped to defend against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and manned and unmanned aircraft.¹³² Although technology acts as a force multiplier, additional assets must be produced domestically or introduced from abroad to increase the combat effectiveness of the defense force in a manner equivalent to or greater than its size.¹³³

Moreover, two effective investments from a military industry perspective are in an advanced cyber security system and in advanced ISR assets. Cyber security protects critical IT infrastructure within the military and other government organizations, such as oil and gas, electricity, transportation, and many more. It is crucial that cyber security measures deter the nation’s adversaries by enabling offensive techniques rather than just incident responses.¹³⁴ The

United Arab Emirates has invested heavily in advanced ISR assets, and has managed to develop into one of the most modern and capable militaries in the region.¹³⁵ Therefore, the BDF investing in unmanned aircraft will lower the risk to its forces and will increase intelligence gathering from all parts of the operational environment.

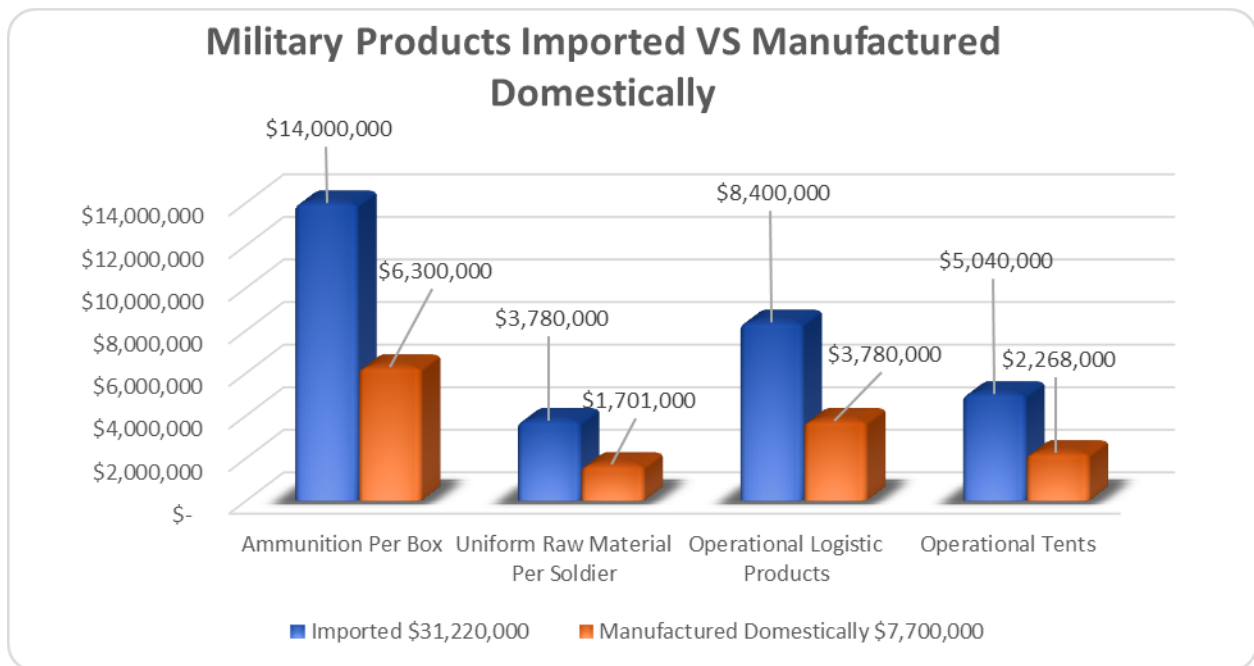


Figure 7. Difference between the annual cost of domestic manufacturing and imported products (This study is on an estimated 20,000 combatants within the BDF)

As shown in Figure 7, the BDF should follow the model of substituting imports of key military products such as uniforms, operational logistics products, ammunition, and operational tents. This allows up to 50% of high currency savings for the service and improves balance of payments in a time of expensive costs of high-tech products.¹³⁶ Additionally, the civilian industry must be linked to the defense industry to increase labor productivity, acquisition of skills and technology familiarization, leading to **national economic growth**.¹³⁷

One model that does not fit with the BDF's interests is described as export-oriented defense industries. This industry is involved in international arms exports and focuses on

sophisticated high technology products, leading to competition with leading international suppliers.¹³⁸ Ultimately, a military industry at a Tier Three level requires an advanced **R&D** program to coordinate high-technology products with existing military applications. The ordnance factories under the R&D program can be divided into groups and produce or develop the military's essential equipment. Such groups include the ammunition and explosive group, the weapons group, the armored vehicles group, the intelligence and command group, and the clothing group. Through these groups the program can manage, research, and develop each asset. This assures that the BDF will match or pass the technological quality available to adversaries and be able to respond rapidly to changes in the balance of power.¹³⁹

In summary, due to Iran's threats to Bahrain in the region, the BDF should produce at a Tier Three level, prioritizing production to sustain its forces should a conflict arise. Also, while developing the current R&D program, it should be able to design, develop, and enhance its products, services, and technologies to meet the regional challenges, thereby benefitting the BDF financially by saving costs on imports and at the same time developing its ability to export Bahraini industrial products and services.

Conclusion

Over time, the three existing deficiencies of professionalism, interoperability, and the military industry will have been addressed effectively. Following the example in the Planning Guidance issued by the US Marine Corps Commandant General David H. Berger, the BDF will be trained and equipped as a regional expeditionary force-in-readiness, capable of acting independently and able to adapt rapidly to new challenges while supporting government strategy to prevent conflict.¹⁴⁰ More importantly, the BDF as a regional expeditionary force would aid in the deterrence of Iran and increase Bahrain's contribution to its coalition conscripts. Additionally, by executing the information campaign *National Plan Bahrainouna*, Bahrain would create a strategic narrative countering Iran's offensive misinformation campaign. Above all, Bahrain is not alone in facing Iran's aggressive strategy resulting in regional conflict, animosities, and uncertainty. This challenge demonstrates why the GCC and partners need a grand strategy, as it is the art of looking beyond the battle and calculating ahead that brings the ultimate reward.¹⁴¹

Even though Iran is not a regional military power, it does have outstanding military assets and capabilities to wage asymmetric threats.¹⁴² Ultimately, what makes Iran a threat to Bahrain and the Arabian Peninsula is that politically the country is very volatile, and its decision-making process is controlled by the Supreme Leader and driven by ideology and religion.¹⁴³ As mentioned by Bahrain's Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, "Iran has been our neighbor for thousands of years. We know how to deal with them and they know how to deal with us. They don't represent a major threat to us, although they are a threat. In the end, we hope one day we can talk to each other in a more civilized way."¹⁴⁴

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