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# **Evolution of Emirati Defence Attachés Roles**

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Master of Arts in International and Civil Security

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A thesis submitted to Khalifa University of Science and Technology in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in International and Civil Security in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.



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by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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**Master of Arts in International and Civil Security**

at

**Khalifa University**

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# Abstract

Mohamed Musabbah Alzahmi, “**Evolution of Emirati Defence Attachés Roles**”, M.A. Thesis, Master of Arts in International and Civil Security Thesis, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khalifa University of Science and Technology, United Arab Emirates, June 2025.

This thesis investigates the evolution of the roles undertaken by Emirati defence attachés, a topic that has received little scholarly attention despite the increasing strategic and diplomatic visibility of the United Arab Emirates on the global stage. Historically, defence attachés were tasked primarily with military liaison and intelligence gathering; however, this research explores how and why these roles have expanded over time. The central research questions guiding this research are: how have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time? and why have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time?

The research addresses a critical gap in the literature on military diplomacy, particularly in the context of the Gulf region. While defence attachés from Western nations have been studied in terms of their dual military and diplomatic roles, there has been no comparable analysis of Emirati defence attachés, whose evolving responsibilities reflect both internal national priorities and the external demands of host countries. This absence of research poses a challenge to policymakers seeking to optimise the utility of defence attachés within broader foreign policy and security frameworks.

Adopting a qualitative methodology, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with current and retired Emirati and Western defence attachés, supported by historical and contextual analysis. Findings confirm that Emirati defence attachés have transitioned from narrowly defined military roles to broader diplomatic functions, including promoting national defence industries (e.g. EDGE), participating in multilateral forums, and supporting civil-diplomatic initiatives. The study also finds that these changes are primarily driven by top-down strategic directives from the UAE leadership, with host country regimes playing a secondary, though still relevant, in shaping the role.

By contributing new empirical insights, this thesis advances understanding of the strategic function of Emirati defence attachés and offers a valuable case study in the evolution of military diplomacy in a non-Western context.

**Indexing Terms:** Emirati defence attachés, defence attaché, defence diplomacy, UAE

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Finally, I express my sincere gratitude to the Emirati defence attachés who participated in this research, as well as to my family and friends for their patience and encouragement. This work is dedicated to advancing the UAE's role in international cooperation and diplomacy.

# Declaration and Copyright

## Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Khalifa University of Science and Technology. The work is entirely my own except where indicated by special reference in the text. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of Khalifa University of Science and Technology. No part of the thesis has been presented to any other university for any degree.

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## Abbreviations

<b>CITI</b>	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
<b>COP 28</b>	28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties
<b>EDA</b>	Emirati Defence Attaché
<b>EXPO 2020</b>	World Expo hosted by Dubai, UAE from October 2021 to March 2022
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>IDEX</b>	International Defence Exhibition and Conference
<b>IRB</b>	Institutional Review Board
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>REDA</b>	Retired Emirati Defence Attaché
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Context of the Topic and Research Problem Description

The role of defence attachés in international relations, as representatives of a country's armed forces in foreign states, embodies a unique intersection of military and diplomatic functions. Emerging during the Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648), when military officers were dispatched abroad to monitor and liaise with allied powers, the role of defence attachés has evolved significantly over the centuries.<sup>1</sup> By the 19th century, most states around the world had institutionalized this position within their embassies, recognizing its strategic importance for military intelligence and international cooperation.

Defence attachés operate within a highly structured legal and diplomatic framework. As members of the diplomatic staff, their status is governed by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which grants them full diplomatic privileges and immunities.<sup>2</sup> This dual identity—as military officers and diplomatic agents—creates a nuanced dynamic that requires them to navigate military, political, and cultural contexts effectively.

In contemporary practice, defence attachés perform multiple critical roles: advocating their nation's security interests, fostering bilateral military cooperation, gathering and analysing intelligence, and promoting the defence industry of their home country. Moreover, they act as advisors to their ambassadors and engage in multilateral security dialogues.<sup>3</sup> However, the changing geopolitical landscape—marked by technological advances, regional conflicts, and the emergence of non-state threats—has expanded their responsibilities. This evolution underscores the need for a systematic understanding of their roles and challenges.

Despite their growing importance, the academic literature on defence attachés remains sparse. Studies often include their duties with broader military diplomacy or focus narrowly on intelligence-gathering. This gap is particularly evident in analyses of Emirati defence attachés. The UAE's strategic investments in military diplomacy align with its broader foreign policy goals, yet there is a lack of research on how these attachés navigate the complexities of representing a rapidly modernizing military in different parts of the world.

This research seeks to address these gaps by examining how and why the roles of Emirati defence attachés have changed over time. Historically, general defence attaché roles were

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<sup>1</sup> Kilibarda, Pavle. "The International Law Position of the Defence Attaché." *Available at SSRN* 3604969 (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Backgrounder*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Pajtinka, Erik. "Military diplomacy and its present functions." *Security Dimensions. International and National Studies* 20 (2016): 179-194.

limited to military observation and intelligence gathering.<sup>4</sup> However, contemporary defence attachés are integral to fostering defence partnerships, shaping security dialogues, and supporting national defence strategies.<sup>5</sup>

The central research problem is the lack of a comprehensive framework for analysing the dynamic roles of Emirati defence attachés. Without such a framework, policymakers may overlook critical insights into how these attachés contribute to national and international security. Moreover, understanding the evolution of their roles can inform strategies for optimizing their effectiveness in advancing the UAE's defence and diplomatic objectives.

By situating this analysis within the broader context of military diplomacy, this research not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also provides a basis for comparative studies with defence attachés from other nations. It highlights the interplay between historical precedents and contemporary demands, offering a nuanced perspective on the changing nature of Emirati defence attachés' roles over time.

## ***1.2 Problem Statement and its Significance***

There is a striking lack of scholarly literature on the roles and responsibilities of Emirati defence attachés, both in historical and modern contexts. While studies on defence attachés in Western and other regional powers highlight their contributions to military intelligence, diplomacy, and bilateral cooperation<sup>6</sup>, the specific functions of Emirati defence attachés remain largely undocumented. This absence of research creates significant gaps in understanding how their roles have evolved and the factors that played a role in their evolution.

Historically, defence attachés have been integral to fostering international military cooperation, gathering intelligence, and representing their countries at official events. However, contemporary roles have expanded to include non-combat initiatives, such as defence reform, counterterrorism efforts, and crisis response.<sup>7</sup> While it is reasonable to assume that Emirati defence attachés have similarly adapted their roles to align with global trends, there is no empirical evidence to substantiate or detail this transformation. This lack of documentation not

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<sup>4</sup> Wark, Wesley K. "Three military attachés at Berlin in the 1930s: Soldier-statesmen and the limits of ambiguity." *The International History Review* 9, no. 4 (1987): 586-611.

<sup>5</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Backgrounder*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

<sup>6</sup> D'Angelo, George Anthony. "The contemporary role of the military attaché: and problems relating to the attainment of a quality corps." Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Backgrounder*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

only obscures their historical contributions but also limits the ability of policymakers and scholars to assess their effectiveness in advancing the UAE's defence and diplomatic priorities.

As the UAE increases its global engagement—investing in strategic alliances, participating in multinational coalitions, and promoting regional stability—the responsibilities of its defence attachés have likely shifted to encompass broader diplomatic functions. These include facilitating international agreements, engaging in multilateral defence dialogues, and supporting the UAE's defence industry. Yet, the absence of research on these developments limits the ability of Emirati leaders to optimize the utility of defence attachés in achieving strategic objectives. Moreover, the lack of documentation can lead to misunderstandings or underestimation of their roles by international counterparts, potentially hindering collaboration and mutual trust.

The significance of addressing this research gap lies in its potential to enhance both practical and theoretical insights. On a practical level, a detailed analysis of the changing roles of Emirati defence attachés could inform policy adjustments, improve training programs, and strengthen the UAE's defence diplomacy. On a theoretical level, it contributes to the broader field of military diplomacy by offering a case study on the evolution of defence attaché roles in a rapidly modernizing country.

Without this research, the UAE risks underutilizing a critical tool in its foreign policy arsenal, especially as global challenges demand more nuanced and collaborative approaches to security and defence. By examining how and why the roles of Emirati defence attachés have changed over time, this research aims to fill a critical void, providing insights that are essential for both national strategy and international cooperation. This research is imperative for ensuring that Emirati defence attachés remain effective ambassadors of the UAE's security and diplomatic interests in an increasingly interconnected world.

### ***1.3 Research Objectives***

#### ***1.3.1 Statement of Research Aims***

The aim of this research is to adopt a qualitative approach to investigate the evolving roles of Emirati defence attachés by examining their functions and responsibilities through both historical and contemporary lenses. By conducting semi-structured interviews with current and retired Emirati defence attachés and foreign defence attachés stationed in the UAE, this research seeks to uncover the factors that have shaped these changes over time and provide a comprehensive understanding of their progression. This research aims to bridge the gap in the

existing literature through qualitative data collection and rigorous analysis of the roles of Emirati defence attachés over time.

Specifically, this research aims to:

- Explore the traditional roles and responsibilities of Emirati defence attachés, focusing on their initial establishment and early functions in military intelligence, representation, and security-related diplomacy.
- Analyse how the modern roles of Emirati defence attachés have expanded to include broader diplomatic functions, such as international cooperation and participation in civil-related agreements.
- Investigate the driving factors behind the evolution of these roles, including geopolitical shifts, the host country's governing regime, and the UAE's increasing prominence on the global stage.
- Offer a comparative analysis of Emirati defence attachés' roles relative to their counterparts in other nations, highlighting similarities, differences, and unique contributions to global military diplomacy.

### ***1.3.2 Research Question***

RQ1: How have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time?

RQ2: Why have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time?

### ***1.3.3 Research Hypothesis***

This research is guided by two primary hypotheses that aim to explore the evolving roles of Emirati defence attachés in the context of changing geopolitical and diplomatic landscapes:

- H1: Expansion of roles and responsibilities over time.

The roles of Emirati defence attachés have expanded significantly over time, transitioning from a narrow focus on military affairs—such as intelligence gathering, military representation, and security liaison—to encompassing broader diplomatic responsibilities. These expanded roles include fostering international cooperation, supporting economic and civil-related agreements, and contributing to multilateral dialogues on global security challenges.

H2: Influence of UAE interests and adaptation to host country regimes

The roles of Emirati defence attachés are shaped both by the strategic interests of the UAE and by the political, social, and institutional dynamics of host countries. While their core functions align with UAE foreign policy objectives—such as soft power projection, defence-industrial promotion, and broader diplomatic engagement—these

roles also evolve in response to the host country's regime, requiring attachés to adapt their actions to local diplomatic expectations, cultural norms, and security priorities.

These hypotheses will be tested through qualitative research, leveraging semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis to identify patterns and variations in the roles of Emirati defence attachés. By examining both historical and contemporary factors, the research seeks to determine the extent to which these hypotheses explain the observed changes in their responsibilities and contributions to the UAE's military diplomacy.

### 1.3.4 Concepts and Indicators

The following table illustrates the key concepts and their corresponding indicators that form the foundation of this research. Each concept is defined and linked with specific indicators to guide the investigation into the evolving roles of Emirati defence attachés.

Table 1. Concepts and indicators

Concepts	Definition and Indicators	
Emirati Defence Attaché	<b>Emirati defence attachés</b> are high-ranking military officers appointed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to represent the nation's defence and security interests within foreign diplomatic missions. They serve as key liaisons between the UAE's Ministry of Defence and the defence establishments of host countries, facilitating military cooperation, intelligence gathering and sharing, and defence diplomacy.	
Roles and responsibilities	The tasks and duties performed by Emirati defence attachés in their capacity as representatives of the UAE's Ministry of Defence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diplomatic engagement.</li> <li>• Defence partnerships.</li> <li>• Defence sales.</li> <li>• Intelligence gathering and reporting.</li> <li>• Representation at defence forums.</li> <li>• Military cooperation initiatives.</li> <li>• Inter-Agency coordination.</li> <li>• Support for host nation needs.</li> </ul>

## 1.4 Overview of Research Methodology and Methods

This research employs a combination of semi-structured interviews, qualitative analysis, and historical analysis. Each method is carefully selected to address the research question: how and why the roles of Emirati defence attachés have changed over time.

### 1.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method characterized by open-ended questions guided by a pre-determined framework while allowing flexibility to explore emerging themes. This method is ideal for gathering detailed insights into personal experiences and perspectives,

as it enables the researcher to probe beyond surface-level responses.<sup>8</sup> This type of interview is particularly effective for elite or expert populations, such as defence attachés, where the interviewer benefits from the interviewee's specialized knowledge.

These semi-structured interviews allow the research to explore both anticipated and emerging themes, providing depth and nuance in understanding how Emirati defence attaché roles have changed over time. Furthermore, they are crucial for capturing personal experiences, which are central to understanding the subjective dimensions of evolving responsibilities and expanded roles.

#### **1.4.2 Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative analysis is central to this research, offering a flexible and interpretive approach to examining the semi-structured interview data. Rather than relying on rigid coding schemes, qualitative analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and relationships through iterative engagement with the data. This approach allows the researcher to explore how the roles of Emirati defence attachés have evolved, based on how participants describe their experiences and perspectives.

Following transcription, the interviews were carefully reviewed to identify recurring themes, similarities, and contrasts across different narratives. These emergent themes provided the basis for understanding broader shifts in roles and responsibilities. As noted by Halperin and Heath, the process of qualitative data analysis typically begins with data reduction and then moves to identifying thematic patterns and drawing interpretive conclusions grounded in the text itself. The strength of qualitative analysis lies in its ability to capture complexity and nuance. Instead of seeking objectivity through quantification, the validity and reliability of findings rest on the plausibility of interpretations and the transparency of the analytical process. As Halperin and Heath state, qualitative research is considered reliable when the researcher clearly explains how they arrived at their interpretations in a way that is understandable and reasonable to others.<sup>9</sup>

#### **1.4.3 Historical Analysis**

Historical analysis focuses on studying archival sources, documents, and secondary materials to contextualize contemporary findings. This method is particularly valuable for examining sequences of events and tracing the development of political and social phenomena.<sup>10</sup> In this

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<sup>8</sup> Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. *Political Research Methods and Practical Skills*. 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020): 315.

<sup>9</sup> Halperin and Heath, 330-331.

<sup>10</sup> Halperin and Heath, 263.

research, historical analysis bridges the gap between past and present by highlighting the socio-political factors that influenced the evolution of Emirati defence attaché roles.

Historical analysis offers a macro-level perspective by situating contemporary changes within a broader historical framework. Moreover, it highlights the influence of external factors, such as geopolitical shifts and the host country regimes, on the roles of Emirati defence attachés. It also enhances the validity of findings by triangulating data from the interviews with historical records.

These methods complement each other, offering a robust framework for exploring both the historical and contemporary dimensions of the research question. The integration of qualitative insights with historical context ensures a comprehensive understanding of the evolving roles of Emirati defence attachés.

## **1.5 Limitations**

Limitations are inherent in all types of research, including those related to validity, reliability, and generalizability. Validity pertains to the accuracy of the results, reliability to the consistency of the findings, and generalizability to the extent to which the results can be applied to other contexts. It is important to acknowledge and consider these limitations when interpreting research findings.

### **1.5.1 Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which a measurement accurately represents the concept it intends to measure. In political research, validity can be established through various methods, such as face validity, content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity. These approaches examine whether an indicator is intuitively a good measure, covers the concept's full range, correlates with other related measures, and conforms to theoretical expectations, respectively.<sup>11</sup> Since this research will utilize semi-structured interviews which allow for in-depth exploration of complex topics, the subjective nature of responses may pose challenges to validity. Since the interviewees might interpret questions differently, their responses may reflect personal perceptions or biases rather than objective changes in their roles.

### **1.5.2 Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of a measurement. It examines whether the results of a measurement are consistent across repeated trials. In political research, different types of reliability include test-retest reliability, which measures consistency over time, and intercoder

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<sup>11</sup> Halperin and Heath, 189-190.

reliability, which assesses agreement between different coders. Reliable data is essential for establishing a foundation of consistent findings, even though it does not guarantee validity.<sup>12</sup> Some interviewees may not fully give out information due to the sensitive nature of their roles as defence attaché, security concerns, or reluctance to discuss certain experiences. This can result in inconsistent or incomplete data which will impact the reliability of the findings.

### **1.5.3 Generalizability**

Generalizability is the degree to which research findings can be applied beyond the specific cases studied to broader populations or contexts. In political research, achieving generalizability requires careful consideration of the sampling process and the representativeness of cases. This aspect is crucial for making broader inferences from a study's findings.<sup>13</sup> Since the research will focus specifically on Emirati defence attachés, the findings may not be easily generalized to defence attachés from other countries due to differences in political environments, defence structures, and diplomatic roles. The UAE's unique geopolitical position, its specific defence and diplomatic strategies, and its military culture make it difficult to apply the results to other countries.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

The structure of the thesis is:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Academic Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Research Methods

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion

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<sup>12</sup> Halperin and Heath, 191-192.

<sup>13</sup> Halperin and Heath, 192-193.

## **Chapter 2 Academic Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition of Defence Attachés**

Defence attachés are defined as representatives of their home country's armed forces, stationed at embassies to serve as liaisons for military and security matters, with roles shaped by diplomatic and legal frameworks.

DCAF describes a defence attaché as “a member of the armed forces who serves in an embassy as a representative of their country's defence establishment abroad,” emphasizing their role in bilateral military relations and their diplomatic status under the Vienna Convention of 1961. Defence attachés operate as advocates for their nation's military interests, maintain relationships with host country officials, and act as advisors to ambassadors.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Kilibarda highlights their dual identity as military officers and diplomatic representatives, enjoying the same privileges and immunities granted to embassy personnel. This dual role allows them to gather intelligence, promote military cooperation, and represent their country in formal and ceremonial settings.<sup>15</sup>

The definition of defence attachés illustrates the hybrid nature of their responsibilities, blending military and diplomatic functions. This dual identity enables them to act as critical conduits for communication and cooperation between the armed forces of their home and host countries. Their legal standing, as codified by the Vienna Convention, provides immunity and privileges, allowing them to perform sensitive tasks like intelligence gathering and defence negotiations without interference from the host country. This blend of military expertise and diplomatic immunity distinguishes defence attachés from other embassy personnel, highlighting their unique role in bridging military and civilian diplomatic objectives.

The core characteristics of defence attachés reflect their strategic importance in international relations. By combining military authority with diplomatic privileges, they serve as vital instruments for advancing defence diplomacy, fostering trust, and ensuring effective bilateral cooperation. Their distinct role makes them indispensable in modern diplomacy, where security and diplomacy are increasingly intertwined.

### **2.2 Historical Evolution of Defence Attachés**

The role of defence attachés has evolved significantly over time, transitioning from narrow intelligence-gathering functions to broader responsibilities encompassing diplomacy and

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<sup>14</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Background*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Kilibarda, Pavle. "The International Law Position of the Defence Attaché." *Available at SSRN 3604969* (2019).

security cooperation. This transformation reflects the changing geopolitical and security needs of states.

Initially, defence attachés were deployed primarily for intelligence purposes, focusing on gathering military information and monitoring developments in host countries. As noted by DCAF, the defence attaché position originated in the 17th century, with military officers acting as liaisons to allied powers during the Thirty Years' War. By the 19th century, attachés were formally integrated into diplomatic missions, reflecting the growing institutionalization of defence relations between nations. The post-Cold War period marked a critical shift, as the scope of defence attachés' roles expanded in response to a more complex and interconnected security environment.<sup>16</sup> Drab highlights how the concept of defence diplomacy emerged during this time, redefining the role of attachés to include activities like fostering trust, supporting defence reforms, and participating in peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>17</sup>

This evolution demonstrates the adaptability of the defence attaché system to meet the demands of contemporary international relations. The traditional focus on intelligence-gathering has not disappeared but has been complemented by more nuanced tasks, such as promoting bilateral military cooperation and serving as a conduit for defence diplomacy. These expanded responsibilities align with the broader understanding of international security, which now includes aspects of stability, development, and multilateral engagement. This shift reflects the growing recognition that defence and diplomacy are interdependent tools in maintaining international order.

The historical evolution of defence attachés underscores their enduring relevance in global diplomacy. While their origins lie in strategic intelligence collection, their current roles reflect a broader mandate, integrating military expertise with diplomatic experience to address the complexities of modern security challenges. This adaptability positions defence attachés as crucial players in fostering international cooperation and stability.

### ***2.3 The Dual Role: Military Officer and Diplomatic Representative***

Defence attachés embody a dual role as military officers and diplomatic representatives, balancing responsibilities between their defence ministries and the diplomatic corps to achieve strategic national objectives.

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<sup>16</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Background Paper*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Drab, Lech. "Defence diplomacy—an important tool for the implementation of foreign policy and security of the state." *Security and Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2018): 57-71.

Anwar emphasizes that defence attachés must possess competencies spanning military and diplomatic domains, acting as both defence advisors and representatives in strategic-level discussions. They are tasked with fostering communication, negotiating defence agreements, and building trust with host countries, requiring a unique combination of military expertise and diplomatic finesse.<sup>18</sup> Albasoos reinforces this dual role, stating that defence attachés are often the sole visible military presence of their home country in foreign missions. They perform critical duties such as promoting military cooperation, representing their country in ceremonial events, and advising ambassadors on military and security matters.<sup>19</sup>

This dual role creates a unique position where defence attachés must navigate the complexities of two distinct professional domains. As military officers, they uphold their country's defence strategies, ensuring alignment with broader military objectives. Simultaneously, as diplomatic representatives, they engage in the nuanced world of diplomacy, requiring cultural sensitivity, political expertise, and strong interpersonal skills. The combination of these roles allows them to act as vital bridges between their home and host countries, advancing bilateral relations while supporting military diplomacy initiatives. This duality also demands a high level of adaptability, as attachés must shift seamlessly between defence-related tasks and broader diplomatic engagements, such as attending international forums or mediating security discussions.

The dual role of defence attachés underscores their strategic importance in modern diplomacy. They enhance their nation's influence in foreign missions and foster stronger defence and security partnerships by integrating their military expertise with diplomatic responsibilities. This hybrid function not only strengthens bilateral ties but also contributes to global security initiatives, making defence attachés indispensable in the increasingly interconnected landscape of international relations.

#### **2.4 Challenges and Limitations of Defence Attachés**

Defence attachés face significant challenges and limitations stemming from the hybrid nature of their roles, balancing intelligence-gathering responsibilities with diplomatic expectations in complex international environments.

Wark highlights the inherent ambiguity in the role of defence attachés, particularly during critical periods such as the 1930s in Berlin. Attachés were expected to act as intelligence

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<sup>18</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

<sup>19</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

officers while maintaining their diplomatic persona, often leading to distrust and tension between military and civilian embassy staff. This duality created a challenging work environment where the boundaries between legitimate intelligence collection and covert espionage were frequently blurred.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, D'Angelo identifies the difficulty in selecting and preparing defence attachés, emphasizing that inadequate training and unclear role expectations often lead to inefficiencies. He also points out the pressure defence attachés face to deliver valuable intelligence while adhering to diplomatic protocols, further complicating their position.<sup>21</sup>

These challenges stem from the unique intersection of military and diplomatic spheres within which defence attachés operate. The expectation to gather actionable intelligence without crossing into espionage complicates their legitimacy in the host countries. Furthermore, the lack of clear policies or comprehensive training programs, as outlined by D'Angelo, can leave attachés underprepared for the multifaceted demands of their roles.<sup>22</sup> The tension between their responsibilities to their home country's Ministry of Defence and the expectations of the host country also creates additional stress. This dual accountability often results in conflicting priorities, making it difficult for attachés to fulfil both military and diplomatic objectives effectively.

The challenges faced by defence attachés highlight the need for clear policies, specialized training, and greater role definition to enhance their effectiveness. Addressing these limitations would not only improve their ability to perform under challenging conditions but also strengthen the credibility and strategic impact of their work in fostering international security and cooperation.

## **2.5 Comparative Analysis of Defence Attachés**

The roles and practices of defence attachés differ across nations, influenced by unique strategic priorities and operational frameworks, yet their core function as intermediaries between military and diplomatic domains remains constant.

Albasoos highlights that defence attachés from nations like the United States and Canada are often the only visible representatives of their armed forces in the host countries, making professionalism and effectiveness critical. These attachés are tasked with fostering military

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<sup>20</sup> Wark, Wesley K. "Three military attachés at Berlin in the 1930s: Soldier-statesmen and the limits of ambiguity." *The International History Review* 9, no. 4 (1987): 586-611.

<sup>21</sup> D'Angelo, George Anthony. "The contemporary role of the military attaché: and problems relating to the attainment of a quality corps." PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1972.

<sup>22</sup> D'Angelo, 67.

cooperation and gathering vital intelligence while upholding diplomatic protocols. The selection and training processes in these countries emphasize preparing attachés to adapt to complex international environments and perform a wide range of duties, from ceremonial representation to strategic advisory roles.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Anwar underscores the critical role of defence attachés in bridging military and diplomatic objectives, noting that their effectiveness often depends on competencies like negotiation skills, cultural adaptability, and strategic communication. Countries with robust competency models for defence attachés, such as Germany, ensure their attachés are well-equipped to navigate the dual demands of military and diplomatic tasks.<sup>24</sup>

The comparison between Western practices and broader global approaches reveals both similarities and distinctions in the expectations placed on defence attachés. Western nations often emphasize multilateral collaboration, aligning attachés' roles with broader security frameworks like NATO or regional defence partnerships. In contrast, other nations like Indonesia may prioritize bilateral military-diplomatic relations, tailoring the attaché's responsibilities to specific geopolitical contexts.<sup>25</sup> These differences reflect the varying strategic needs of nations, but they also underline the shared importance of adaptability and competence in ensuring defence attachés can effectively fulfil their roles.

Comparative analysis of defence attachés demonstrates the need for tailored approaches to their training and deployment. Nations can optimize the effectiveness of their defence diplomacy efforts by understanding the variations in defence attachés roles and responsibilities.

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<sup>23</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

<sup>24</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

<sup>25</sup> Anwar, 3.

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology and Research Methods**

### ***3.1 Research methodology and method***

This qualitative research employs semi-structured interviews, qualitative analysis, and historical analysis to explore how and why the roles of Emirati defence attachés have changed over time. Firstly, semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method designed to gather detailed insights through open-ended questions within a flexible framework. Particularly suited for elites and experts like defence attachés, these interviews capture both anticipated and emerging themes. This approach provides depth by exploring personal experiences, which are central to understanding the subjective dimensions of their evolving responsibilities.

Secondly, qualitative analysis was used to interpret the interview data, allowing for the identification of patterns and themes that reflect the changing roles of defence attachés. This approach enabled a structured examination of the narratives, highlighting recurring perspectives and contributing to a deeper understanding of how these roles have evolved over time.

Lastly, historical analysis examines archival sources and documents to provide a broader context for contemporary findings. This method situates current changes within a historical framework, revealing the socio-political and geopolitical factors that influenced the evolution of attaché roles. By bridging past and present, it enriches the research's validity through data triangulation.

Together, these methods create a robust framework that integrates qualitative insights with historical context, offering a comprehensive perspective on the evolving roles of Emirati defence attachés. This multi-dimensional approach ensures a nuanced understanding of their roles and responsibilities over time.

### ***3.2 Ethical Issues***

An application was sent to Khalifa University's Institutional Review Board on 26 December 2024 for IRB approval. Approval #H24-074 was received on 28 January 2025.

## **Chapter 4 Results**

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to gain insights and data needed to answer the research questions. To this end, six semi-structured interviews, in-person, from 9<sup>th</sup> of February to 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2025. This included four Emirati defence attachés (both retired and serving) and two Western defence attachés. The Western defence attachés were interviewed not only to provide comparative perspectives, but also to understand how they view Emirati defence attachés and their evolving roles. The Emirati defence attachés wished to remain anonymous. The results of this research are detailed below.

### ***4.1 Role Definition and Responsibilities***

The role of a defence attaché is fundamentally defined by its function as a conduit for military-to-military cooperation, yet this definition varies based on institutional culture and national context. Across all six interviews, defence attachés expressed that their primary responsibility is to act as a representative of their national military leadership within the diplomatic setting of a host country. This representative capacity aligns with the traditional understanding of military diplomacy, whereby attachés serve as a bridge between armed forces while operating under the broader umbrella of diplomatic missions. For instance, the Emirati Defence Attaché, EDA 3, explicitly described his role as a direct representative of the UAE's Military Chief of Staff, functioning not only as a conduit for military affairs but also as the security officer within the embassy. His responsibilities extended beyond typical military liaison duties, such as coordinating official visits for UAE military officers and engaging with relevant entities in the host country, to include maintaining strategic awareness of both UAE and host nation capabilities. This insight demonstrates how the attaché's role transcends administrative military coordination and becomes one of strategic significance, particularly within high-stakes geopolitical environments.

The duties undertaken by defence attachés extend beyond traditional liaison functions to include administrative, representational, and industrial promotion tasks, all of which vary according to national directives. The retired Emirati Defence Attaché 1, REDA 1, for example, defined the attaché's role as equivalent to that of a "high-level representative" responsible for military cooperation, emergency assistance, and facilitating joint training exercises. His responsibilities also included operational coordination during crises, such as organising Emirati military support in response to natural disasters in the host country. This included logistical planning, medical and firefighting assistance, and aligning with host country authorities during emergencies. This notion aligns with broader security cooperation mandates and reflects how

attachés serve as operational actors capable of coordinating responses to military or humanitarian crises. In contrast, the Dutch Defence Attaché, Peter de Groot, outlined a different view of the role by highlighting his administrative responsibilities, including visa processing and providing support for deployed soldiers stationed in the UAE. This administrative focus does not diminish the strategic value of the attaché's role, but it illustrates the multifaceted nature of the position, which oscillates between operational support and high-level representation. Furthermore, de Groot mentioned that his role included "opening doors" for Dutch defence companies, indicating a clear mandate to support defence industry diplomacy despite maintaining neutrality in commercial negotiations.

The differences in scope and emphasis across national contexts are also apparent in how defence attachés define their priorities, with some placing emphasis on crisis response or institutional resilience. The Swiss Defence Attaché, Cristian Stiener, articulated this particularly well, explaining that his responsibilities depend heavily on the host country's geopolitical significance. For instance, in countries like Russia with limited military cooperation, the role centres on observation and reporting, while in the UAE, it involves facilitating high-level engagements and promoting defence cooperation. Additionally, Stiener pointed out the need to build resilient networks for crisis scenarios, especially given Switzerland's neutral status and non-membership in NATO or the EU. His involvement in events like Expo 2020 and COP28 also revealed that attachés are increasingly integrated into broader embassy activities and contribute to national security policy beyond traditional military domains.

In summary, while the foundational responsibility of a defence attaché remains tied to military liaison work, the role is multifaceted, dynamic, and shaped by national priorities and host country conditions. The interview responses show that the attaché's role often includes administrative support, industry promotion, strategic analysis, and diplomatic representation. The modern defence attaché is not confined to battlefield concerns or static liaison roles; instead, they operate as versatile agents of military diplomacy, embedded within complex political, industrial, and diplomatic networks.

Drawing from these accounts, a contemporary definition of a defence attaché could be a uniformed military officer stationed within a diplomatic mission, tasked with representing their nation's armed forces or Ministry of Defence, promoting bilateral defence cooperation, intelligence gathering, advising on strategic matters, and fostering military and industrial relations in accordance with both national and host country priorities.

## **4.2 Role Evolution**

The role of defence attachés has undergone notable transformation over time, expanding from a strictly military affairs to encompass diplomatic, industrial, and political dimensions. This evolution was consistently echoed across all interviews, with each attaché reflecting on how their duties have shifted to meet emerging national interests and global challenges. Traditionally, defence attachés served primarily as military liaisons and intelligence gatherers, ensuring smooth coordination between the armed forces of the sending and host nations. However, contemporary attachés increasingly find themselves involved in areas far beyond classic military cooperation, including political analysis, civil engagements, and defence industry promotion. For example, EDA 3 highlighted how his duties evolved from a rigid military focus to a broader diplomatic engagement, often participating in embassy-wide events and playing a part in cultivating national representation alongside cultural and economic attachés. In addition to his representational role, he also served as the embassy's security officer, oversaw the coordination of official military visits, and regularly collaborated with diplomatic staff in planning and executing internal embassy activities, reflecting the growing administrative and integrative responsibilities of the modern defence attaché. This shift reflects a growing institutional expectation for attachés to function as holistic diplomatic actors.

This transformation is not uniform but is heavily influenced by national directives and the strategic context of the host country. The retired Emirati Defence Attaché 2, REDA 2, estimated that nearly 30% of his responsibilities during his tenure involved civil diplomacy, such as attending political dialogues and supporting the ambassador at diplomatic events. While this expansion was partly driven by the ambassador's leadership style, it also stemmed from the complex and highly centralised structure of the host country's military and political institutions, which required skilful diplomatic engagement. He recounted how these engagements often involved sensitive geopolitical discussions, such as those concerning Iran, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and GCC dynamics, conducted in coordination with the ambassador, reflecting a clear role in political-military intelligence sharing. Similarly, de Groot explained that his initial job description was purely military, but he gradually introduced political analysis into his portfolio, hiring an assistant with a background in Middle Eastern politics and conflict resolution. This decision was rooted in his personal vision but also reflected the Netherlands' growing emphasis on military-political synergy in its defence diplomacy.

The expansion of responsibilities also reflects changes in how defence diplomacy is conceptualised by states, especially smaller or non-aligned ones. Steiner described how his role expanded well beyond military-to-military cooperation to include crisis management and contributions to UN Security Council discussions. He noted that 20 years ago, defence attachés were often embedded within intelligence structures, but they have since moved into departments of international relations and strategic affairs, signifying a broader institutional mandate. Furthermore, Steiner stated that what was once considered intelligence-gathering is now understood as legitimate, strategic diplomacy which is also acknowledged by EDA 3, who reflected on how his role had adapted to fit within the ‘embassy family,’ collaborating seamlessly with other diplomatic departments.

Thus, the evolution of the defence attaché’s role signals a structural shift towards a multidimensional diplomatic function that transcends the traditional military scope. This transformation reflects not only changes in global security dynamics but also the ambitions of states like the UAE to project influence through soft power, defence industry integration, and multilateral cooperation.

*Table 2 Defence Attachés Traditional vs Contemporary Roles*

<b>Concepts</b>	<b>Traditional Role (Old)</b>	<b>Contemporary Role (New)</b>
<b>Primary Focus</b>	Military-to-military liaison	Military, political, economic, and cyber engagement
<b>Institutional Home</b>	Military intelligence or command units	Strategic or international relations departments
<b>Industry Involvement</b>	Minimal or non-existent	Actively promoting domestic defence industries (e.g., EDGE)
<b>Political Role</b>	Limited or indirect	Includes political analysis and reporting
<b>Diplomatic Engagement</b>	Ad hoc and reactive	Regular, proactive participation in embassy events and multilateral forums
<b>Training and Preparation</b>	General military background	Requires knowledge of host country politics, language, and culture
<b>Crisis Response</b>	Low involvement	Integral to embassy crisis planning and management
<b>Perception</b>	Legal spy or intelligence observer	Strategic military diplomat and advisor

### **4.3 Influencing Factors**

The changing role of defence attachés is closely shaped by a combination of national strategic interests, host country dynamics, and global geopolitical trends. This multifaceted influence has led to a diversification of responsibilities and a shift in the way attachés operate within the

diplomatic ecosystem. The most cited factor influencing role expansion was the strategic vision of the home country, particularly in relation to defence industry promotion and soft power projection. For instance, REDA 1 pointed to the UAE's increasing emphasis on promoting its military-industrial complex, especially EDGE Group, as a direct influence on the expansion of his role into areas of defence marketing and strategic outreach. This reflects how broader government directives can reshape the traditional boundaries of defence diplomacy.

Equally important are the host country dynamics, which often dictate the operational constraints or opportunities for defence attachés. REDA 2 highlights the dominance of complexity of the political-military system in his host country. He explained that its system is highly centralised and secretive, with rigid protocols and multiple bureaucratic layers. These features compelled him to adapt his approach, emphasising patience, cultural fluency, and indirect engagement. The host country's military structure, strategic posture, and openness to foreign military relationships fundamentally influenced how the attaché could function, particularly when contrasted with more transparent or cooperative environments. Similarly, EDA 3 described how his success in his host country was driven not just by official channels, but by the strength of personal relationships and his fluency in the local language which underscores how informal dynamics are often just as influential as formal policy.

Global and regional security trends continue to shape the operational landscape for defence attachés, but the extent to which individual attachés respond to these changes often depends on the degree of agency they are granted. Steiner highlighted how Switzerland's recent tenure on the UN Security Council prompted him to broaden his reporting to include political and economic security concerns, thereby expanding the traditional scope of military diplomacy. This broader definition of security aligns with contemporary approaches to international relations, where military diplomacy intersects with energy security and multilateral governance. Similarly, de Groot demonstrated a high degree of agency in adapting his role from purely military to what he described as "military-political," integrating political analysis and initiating naval diplomacy as a tool for bilateral engagement. However, this degree of personal initiative may not be universally accessible. On the other hand, Emirati defence attachés operate within stricter institutional frameworks and often rely on top-down directives to navigate complex diplomatic landscapes. As noted by EDA 3, relationships and initiative are crucial but must always be balanced against directives from senior leadership and the diplomatic mission. This discrepancy suggests that the agency available to defence attachés,

whether structurally enabled or personally initiated, functions as a key influencing factor in determining the evolution of their roles.

In summary, the evolving roles of defence attachés are not shaped in isolation but emerge at the intersection of top-down policy directives, host country structures, and wider international developments. Their ability to operate effectively now depends on their degree of agency, cultural literacy, strategic adaptability, and diplomatic foresight. These influences, although context-specific, suggest a trend towards a more flexible and outward-looking model of defence diplomacy.

*Table 3 Influencing Factors by the Defence Attachés*

<b>Attaché</b>	<b>Influencing Factors</b>
<b>REDA 1</b>	UAE’s push to promote its defence industry (EDGE); host country military-led governance
<b>REDA 2</b>	Host country’s secrecy, political system complexity, UAE strategic directives
<b>EDA 3</b>	Personal relationships, cultural alignment, host country’s informal networks
<b>de Groot</b>	Annual directives from Dutch MoD; agency of action; rising need for military-political synergy
<b>Steiner</b>	Switzerland’s neutral status; lack of NATO/EU ties; global cyber and political developments; UN responsibilities

#### **4.4 Role Comparison**

While the core mission of defence attachés across countries remains anchored in representing their military institutions abroad, notable distinctions exist between Emirati and Western defence attachés in both scope and style of engagement. These differences are shaped by organisational mandates, national culture, and the degree of autonomy each attaché holds. The Western attachés interviewed for this research perceived the Emirati approach to be more centralised and business-oriented, especially with the increasing responsibility placed on promoting the EDGE Group and other national defence industry products. For example, de Groot remarked that some Emirati attachés are primarily tasked with defence-industrial outreach, highlighting that such business promotion roles are generally avoided or outright prohibited in countries like Germany, where legal frameworks prohibit German defence attachés from engaging in commercial affairs. This observation underscores a structural divergence in how national priorities are reflected in attaché responsibilities.

Another key difference lies in the degree of proactive engagement and interpersonal networking expected of attachés. De Groot highlighted what he saw as his Emirati counterparts delayed diplomatic outreach, stating that it may take months to initiate a communication or a

courtesy visit, a move he considered essential for building trust. In contrast, he described his own approach as highly proactive, flying to neighbouring Gulf countries just to establish informal relationships over coffee. This suggests that while some Western attachés are empowered to take initiative and cultivate personal networks, their Emirati counterparts may operate within more rigid instructions or institutional constraints indicating lesser degree of agency. Nonetheless, this may also reflect individual personality or diplomatic training rather than structural norms alone.

At the operational level, many similarities persist, particularly in administrative duties and logistical support. Steiner pointed out that Emirati defence attachés, like their Western counterparts, are responsible for standard diplomatic functions such as securing visas, organising visits, and accompanying military delegations at exhibitions like IDEX. However, he also noted that Emirati attachés are more visibly involved in defence business development and product promotion which are functions the Swiss are legally restricted from pursuing. REDA 2, for instance, confirmed that part of his role included linking UAE companies with his host country’s military-industrial counterparts, reinforcing the UAE's deliberate strategy of leveraging defence attachés for national industrial goals.

Therefore, while Western and Emirati defence attachés share common ground in military liaison and embassy integration, their roles diverge significantly in commercial engagement, diplomatic style, and operational flexibility. These differences reflect broader variations in defence diplomacy philosophy and the strategic identity of the sending state.

*Table 4 Emirati vs Western Defence Attachés Roles*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Emirati Defence Attachés</b>	<b>Western Defence Attachés</b>
<b>Industrial Promotion</b>	Actively promote national defence industry (e.g. EDGE)	Ranges from passive to active promotion depending on their home country rules and law
<b>Diplomatic Initiative</b>	Often require ambassadorial instruction to engage diplomatically	Greater autonomy; expected to network and initiate diplomatic contact proactively
<b>Operational Flexibility</b>	Guided by central directives; limited personal discretion	High autonomy in executing annual frameworks
<b>Administrative Tasks</b>	Visa, protocol coordination, delegation management	Similar tasks including logistical and administrative support
<b>Cultural Diplomacy</b>	Participation influenced by national image and ambassador’s guidance	Often encouraged to integrate and participate in informal social diplomacy

<b>Legal Mandates</b>	Broader responsibility including defence marketing	Legal limits in some countries (e.g., Defence attachés cannot engage in business deals)
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#### **4.5 *Military vs Diplomatic Balance***

The contemporary defence attaché must continuously navigate the balance between traditional military functions and emerging diplomatic responsibilities, with this equilibrium often shaped by the expectations of the sending state, the preferences of the ambassador, and the strategic demands of the host country. While all attachés interviewed confirmed that military duties remain their core mandate, each expressed varying degrees of involvement in diplomatic affairs, often describing a fluid, adaptive balance rather than a rigid division. EDA 3 provided a clear example of this balance in practice, stating that although his official role was military in nature, he frequently accompanied the ambassador to cultural and political events and contributed to bilateral discussions when needed. His inclusion in the "embassy family" suggests that military attachés are now expected to operate within wider diplomatic settings, particularly where defence relations intersect with foreign policy goals.

The ambassador's leadership and the host country's diplomatic culture frequently influence how much an attaché engages in non-military tasks. REDA 2 estimated that civil diplomacy made up approximately 30% of his role during his tenure. This included participating in high-level dialogues such as political meetings, attending diplomatic receptions, and providing input on sensitive geopolitical topics like Iran or Russia-Ukraine. However, he also noted that these engagements were typically framed or endorsed by the ambassador, indicating a more hierarchical model in which military officers extend their function at the request of diplomatic leadership. This was similarly echoed by REDA 1, who highlighted that diplomatic involvement was situational and dependent on ambassadorial instruction. He added that while flexibility exists, it is often bounded by formal chains of command.

Western attachés, on the other hand, reported a more integrated or autonomous engagement in diplomatic affairs, often blending military representation with political advocacy. De Groot described military diplomacy as inseparable from political strategy, citing his personal initiative to hire a politically trained assistant and to expand his work into political reporting and defence exhibitions. His vision of military diplomacy included hosting naval ship visits that doubled as platforms for defence industry outreach and diplomatic engagement which is an approach he considered essential for building long-term strategic partnerships. Likewise, Steiner stated that his work extended into crisis management and political reporting for

Switzerland’s participation in the UN Security Council, illustrating a deeply institutionalised integration of military and diplomatic functions.

Thus, the balance between military and diplomatic duties is not only a matter of individual style but reflects broader institutional shifts in how states conceive military diplomacy. Today’s defence attachés must be hybrid actors, militarily credible and diplomatically fluent, capable of adapting their function based on geopolitical context, leadership expectations, and national objectives.

*Table 5 Defence Attachés Military vs Diplomatic Tasks*

<b>Attaché</b>	<b>Military Tasks</b>	<b>Diplomatic Tasks</b>
<b>EDA 3</b>	Represented Military Chief of Staff, handled security, participated in joint military events	Accompanied ambassador, engaged with other attachés, supported diplomatic ceremonies
<b>REDA 1</b>	Coordinated training and military cooperation	Participated in official visits at ambassador’s request, supported crisis management and emergencies
<b>REDA 2</b>	Maintained military ties	Joined political dialogues, civil events, provided policy input on regional affairs, engaged in defence industry coordination
<b>de Groot</b>	Liaison between Dutch and Emirati MoD, supported soldiers, facilitated naval visits	Conducted political analysis, coordinated defence exhibitions, promoted partnerships
<b>Steiner</b>	Facilitated MoD exchanges, monitored military developments	Crisis management, political reporting, supported Swiss UN Security Council agenda

## Chapter 5 Discussion

RQ1: How have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time?

The roles of Emirati defence attachés have evolved from narrowly defined military liaison and intelligence functions into multifaceted diplomatic roles that include defence industry promotion, civil-military engagement, and participation in multilateral forums. This transformation reflects a global trend in defence diplomacy as noted by Drab<sup>26</sup> and Hills<sup>27</sup>, and is corroborated by the data from the interviews where attachés described increased involvement in political reporting, cultural diplomacy, and strategic representation.

RQ2: Why have the roles of Emirati defence attachés changed over time?

The expansion in roles has been driven primarily by the UAE's strategic ambitions such as projecting soft power and advancing sovereign defence industries like EDGE, as well as by the need to adapt to the political and institutional contexts of host countries. As confirmed by REDA 1 and Steiner, the dual influence of top-down national directives and host-country dynamics underscores the hybrid pressures shaping attaché responsibilities, aligning with Albasoos's strategic-role frameworks<sup>28</sup>.

*Table 6 Hypothesis Alignment*

Hypothesis	Description	Alignment
<b>H1: Expansion of roles and responsibilities over time</b>	The roles of Emirati defence attachés have expanded significantly over time, moving beyond military intelligence and liaison to include broader diplomatic responsibilities such as fostering international cooperation, supporting civil and economic agreements, and participating in multilateral forums.	Supported
<b>H2: Influence of UAE Interests and Adaptation to Host Country Regimes</b>	The roles of Emirati defence attachés are shaped both by the strategic interests of the UAE and by the political, social, and institutional dynamics of host countries. While their core functions align with UAE foreign policy objectives—such as soft power projection, defence-industrial promotion, and broader diplomatic engagement—these roles also evolve in response to the host country's regime, requiring attachés to adapt their actions	Strongly supported (UAE interests), Partially supported (host country adaptation)

<sup>26</sup> Drab, Lech. "Defence diplomacy—an important tool for the implementation of foreign policy and security of the state." *Security and Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2018): 57-71.

<sup>27</sup> Hills, Alice. "Defence Diplomacy and Security Sector Reform." *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 1 (2000): 46-67.

<sup>28</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

	to local diplomatic expectations, cultural norms, and security priorities.	
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### 5.1 *Role Definition and Responsibilities*

The contemporary definition of a defence attaché encapsulates more than the traditional military liaison role; it reflects a dynamic and multifunctional actor operating at the intersection of diplomacy, national defence strategy, and international engagement. The literature consistently highlights this hybrid identity. Kilibarda defines defence attachés as dual-role actors, military officers with full diplomatic privileges, tasked with facilitating bilateral defence cooperation, gathering strategic intelligence, and advising ambassadors.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, DCAF outlines their functions as extending into defence policy support and defence-industrial promotion under the Vienna Convention’s framework.<sup>30</sup>

The findings from the interviews reinforce these definitions, particularly in the Emirati context, where the role is deeply integrated into the strategic and diplomatic functions of embassies. EDA 3 clearly articulated his position as the official representative of the UAE’s Military Chief of Staff, underlining a responsibility not only for military affairs but also for the broader security portfolio of the UAE abroad. He described himself as a vital conduit between the armed forces and the diplomatic mission, managing security awareness and contributing to embassy planning.

REDA 1 similarly highlighted the role to that of a “high-level commissioner” responsible for coordinating military assistance, emergency response, and bilateral cooperation, stressing its strategic and humanitarian dimensions. His account demonstrates how the defence attaché’s role expands to include military assistance during natural disasters or crises in the host country. These accounts illustrate that Emirati defence attachés are expected to perform a broad range of duties that blur traditional boundaries between military and diplomatic functions. This aligns with Anwar’s emphasis on competency modelling, which identifies adaptability, strategic awareness, and inter-agency coordination as essential for modern defence attachés.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the integration of administrative and ceremonial functions, such as visa

<sup>29</sup> Kilibarda, Pavle. "The International Law Position of the Defence Attaché." *Available at SSRN 3604969* (2019).

<sup>30</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). *Defence Attachés: DCAF Backgrounder*. Geneva: DCAF, July 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

facilitation, event coordination, and accompanying high-level delegations, shows the increasingly embedded nature of the defence attaché within the embassy’s operational framework.

In summary, the role of an Emirati defence attaché is now characterised by an expansive portfolio that merges military liaison, strategic representation, policy advocacy, and defence-industry diplomacy. This broad conceptualisation reflects both the evolving demands of international relations and the UAE’s proactive global posture.

*Table 7 Comparison of General Defence Attaché Roles vs Emirati Defence Attaché Roles*

<b>Role</b>	<b>General Defence Attaché Roles (Literature Review)</b>	<b>Emirati Defence Attaché Roles (Interview Findings)</b>
<b>Military Liaison</b>	Acts as a liaison between home and host military institutions; coordinates training and visits.	Performs military coordination and represents UAE’s Chief of Staff in official military matters.
<b>Diplomatic Engagement</b>	Engages in diplomatic representation and supports ambassadorial functions.	Participates in embassy-wide events, supports ambassador in political dialogues, and attends high-level receptions.
<b>Intelligence Gathering</b>	Collects strategic and military intelligence within legal diplomatic boundaries.	Gathers situational awareness on host country’s military capabilities; shares insights with UAE MoD.
<b>Industry Promotion</b>	Often excluded due to legal limitations, particularly in Western countries.	Mandated to promote UAE’s defence industry, particularly EDGE Group; serves as a key economic envoy.
<b>Crisis Management</b>	Mentioned rarely; secondary to primary liaison role.	Active role in embassy-level crisis response and emergency coordination, e.g. during natural disasters or Expo events.
<b>Inter-agency Coordination</b>	Limited mention; mostly interacts within defence structures.	Coordinates with other embassy sections and UAE ministries; operates as part of inter-agency diplomacy.
<b>Degree of Autonomy</b>	High in Western contexts; attachés exercise discretion.	Often constrained by top-down directives; initiatives require ambassadorial or MoD approval.

## 5.2 *Role Evolution*

The transformation of the defence attaché's role over time is one of the central themes in this research, confirming the hypothesis of the expansion of Emirati defence attaché's roles and responsibilities over time. As argued in the literature by Drab and Hills, the shift from intelligence-focused roles to broader diplomatic engagement was catalysed by the post-Cold War expansion of military diplomacy.<sup>32 33</sup> This study substantiates that such an evolution has also occurred within the Emirati context, particularly as the UAE expands its international influence through strategic alliances and defence-industrial diplomacy.

REDA 2 provided a compelling example of this evolution, explaining that his responsibilities gradually shifted from exclusive military affairs to approximately 30% diplomatic and civil engagement. His attendance at regional political dialogues and diplomatic receptions illustrates how the defence attaché's role has absorbed elements of public diplomacy. Steiner echoed this trajectory by noting that his reports have evolved from purely military updates to include political and economic analyses, particularly during Switzerland's term on the UN Security Council.

EDA 3 also described an increasing involvement in embassy functions unrelated to defence, such as cultural events and multilateral forums, reflecting a broader institutional expectation for attachés to support the UAE's diplomatic strategy beyond military matters. This supports Pajtinka's conceptualisation of attachés as "military diplomats," who must operate across domains, including strategic communication, multilateral engagement, and defence sales.<sup>34</sup>

De Groot, the Dutch attaché, offered an instructive Western perspective, noting that while his job began with a strict military mandate, he actively reshaped the position to include political reporting and defence-industry promotion. He even hired a political science expert to support this transformation, exemplifying how defence attachés can adapt their role to suit broader embassy goals.

Such examples illustrate that defence attachés are no longer confined to narrow operational boundaries but are expected to be multifunctional actors. This transition is underpinned by the need to respond to global security trends, regional crises, and bilateral expectations.

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<sup>32</sup> Drab, Lech. "Defence diplomacy—an important tool for the implementation of foreign policy and security of the state." *Security and Defence Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2018): 57-71.

<sup>33</sup> Hills, Alice. "Defence Diplomacy and Security Sector Reform." *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 1 (2000): 46-67.

<sup>34</sup> Pajtinka, Erik. "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions." *Security Dimensions. International and National Studies* 20 (2016): 179-194.

### 5.3 *Influencing Factors*

This section evaluates the extent to which the findings support the second hypothesis, which posits that the roles of Emirati defence attachés are shaped both by the UAE's strategic interests and by the political, institutional, and cultural dynamics of host countries. This hypothesis suggests that while attachés operate in alignment with national foreign policy objectives, such as soft power projection and defence-industrial promotion, they must also adapt their functions to the diplomatic expectations and governing structures of their host nations. The data from the interviews and the literature review provide substantial support for this dual-influence framework.

The evidence largely aligns with the UAE's strategic ambitions, particularly in developing its indigenous defence industry, were consistently cited as a driving force behind the evolving responsibilities of defence attachés. REDA 1 provided a clear example of this, stating that promoting UAE defence products, especially from EDGE Group, became an integral part of his role abroad. He explained that this shift was not incidental but rather rooted in top-level directives aimed at enhancing the UAE's soft power and economic diplomacy through defence industry promotion. Similarly, EDA 3 noted that his involvement in defence exhibitions and coordination with local military partners reflected the government's increasing emphasis on projecting the UAE's technological and strategic capabilities. These accounts confirm Anwar's argument that defence attaché roles are deeply connected to national strategic objectives, which determine the scope of their engagements abroad.<sup>35</sup>

This alignment is echoed in the literature, Albasoos highlights that modern attachés are increasingly tasked with extending their state's influence through the facilitation of commercial and strategic ties, often using defence platforms as gateways to broader political engagement.<sup>36</sup> Thus, both empirical and theoretical sources support the influence of the UAE's strategic objectives over the roles of Emirati defence attaché.

Host country dynamics do indeed influence how Emirati defence attachés interpret and execute their roles, but this influence is often mediated through institutional structures and personal agency. REDA 2, for example, recounted that his host country's centralised military-political system and its opaque communication protocols necessitated a more cautious, culturally sensitive approach. He described having to adapt to the intricacies of the governing party's

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<sup>35</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

<sup>36</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

influence over defence affairs, which limited direct access and demanded high levels of patience and indirect diplomacy. These adjustments partially support the idea that host country regimes exert a tangible influence on role performance.

Steiner noted that Switzerland's non-membership in NATO or the EU required him to build resilient networks independently in countries with limited military cooperation. His experience with crisis management and political reporting was heavily shaped by the host country's engagement posture and Switzerland's unique diplomatic model. This supports D'Angelo's argument that defence attachés must frequently recalibrate their functions in accordance with the political and institutional character of their host country.<sup>37</sup>

However, while host country dynamics matter, they do not appear to be the primary determinant of a role change, they condition how defence attachés execute responsibilities already shaped by national strategic directives. For instance, EDA 3 emphasised that although he built strong personal relationships and leveraged his cultural knowledge, his ability to act remained ultimately constrained by institutional guidance from the UAE's Ministry of Defence. This suggests that the influence of host countries, while significant, is more reactive and contextual, reinforcing the structural primacy of the home country.

In conclusion, the findings strongly support the hypothesis that the roles of Emirati defence attachés are shaped by a combination of the UAE's strategic interests and the contextual dynamics of host countries. National directives, particularly those related to soft power projection, defence-industrial promotion, and diplomatic alignment, emerge as the primary drivers of role evolution. At the same time, host country political systems, institutional norms, and cultural expectations influence how these roles are operationalised on the ground. The interplay between these top-down imperatives and situational adaptations underscores the complex environment in which Emirati defence attachés operate, requiring both strategic alignment and diplomatic flexibility.

#### **5.4 Role Comparison**

Comparative analysis between Emirati and Western defence attachés reveals both convergence in core responsibilities and divergence in operational style, agency of action, and diplomatic integration. While all defence attachés serve as military representatives embedded within diplomatic missions, their mandate scope, level of discretion, and institutional positioning vary significantly across national contexts. These findings validate prior literature, particularly

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<sup>37</sup> D'Angelo, George Anthony. "The contemporary role of the military attaché: and problems relating to the attainment of a quality corps." PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1972.

Anwar's competency modelling and Albasoos's emphasis on strategic identity shaping attaché engagement.<sup>3839</sup>

Emirati defence attachés, as reflected in the interviews, operate within a centralised command structure. REDA 2 stated that all his non-military activities, especially political engagement and civil diplomacy, were conducted under ambassadorial instruction. Similarly, EDA 3 reported that his inclusion in embassy events and inter-agency meetings depended on the leadership's approval, reflecting a system that prioritises top-down directive adherence. Even REDA 1 noted that while he actively promoted defence industry products, this was in line with structured national directives rather than individual initiative.

On the other hand, some Western defence attachés exhibited more degrees of agency. De Groot described a high degree of freedom in how he fulfilled his annual directive from the Dutch Ministry of Defence. He initiated coffee visits across Gulf countries to build rapport and saw himself as a "military-political" bridge, actively integrating defence and diplomatic functions. Steiner also described himself as a military advisor deeply involved in political reporting, crisis planning, and even support for Switzerland's UN Security Council agenda, highlighting the Swiss model's expectation for defence attachés to multitask across civil-military domains.

The literature provides a theoretical anchor for these differences. Kilibarda argues that defence attachés function within diplomatic structures that are either hierarchical or decentralised, depending on national bureaucratic traditions.<sup>40</sup> The UAE's model prioritises control and consistency, whereas European models tend to value adaptability and embedded strategic discretion.

Furthermore, differences extend to commercial engagement. While Emirati attachés are tasked with promoting EDGE Group and facilitating bilateral defence deals, de Groot clarified that Dutch law prohibits direct commercial involvement. He described his role as "door-opener" without commercial interest. Similarly, Steiner indicated that Swiss defence attachés may facilitate but not advocate for defence sales. These distinctions reveal how national legal frameworks and foreign policy doctrines shape defence attaché responsibilities.

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<sup>38</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

<sup>40</sup> Kilibarda, Pavle. "The International Law Position of the Defence Attaché." *Available at SSRN* 3604969 (2019).

Thus, while the core mission of representing national military interests abroad is shared, Emirati and Western defence attachés diverge significantly in their engagement style, institutional freedom, and integration of commercial and diplomatic functions.

### **5.5 Military vs Diplomatic Balance**

The evolving equilibrium between military and diplomatic duties lies at the heart of modern defence attaché roles. Hills supports this dual-function interpretation, arguing that military diplomacy today requires a blend of operational credibility and soft-power finesse.<sup>41</sup> The findings confirm that while military responsibilities remain foundational, diplomatic engagement is now integral to a defence attaché's daily role, particularly in complex political environments.

EDA 3 illustrated this balance by noting that, although his formal role was as a military officer, he often accompanied the ambassador on cultural missions and participated in broader political discussions, embodying the concept of "embassy family" integration. REDA 2 elaborated on this, explaining that he often supported the ambassador in high-level dialogues concerning regional issues emphasising that such engagements were always endorsed by senior leadership. REDA 1 stated that during emergencies, such as natural disasters in host countries, his duties shifted from military cooperation to humanitarian assistance, further demonstrating the fluidity of the defence attaché's scope.

On the Western side, de Groot's experience confirms a more integrated model. He did not draw clear boundaries between military and diplomatic activities, explaining that political reporting, naval diplomacy, and strategic outreach were all part of his routine. He proactively attended defence exhibitions and met with regional leaders to forge bilateral trust. Steiner also played a pivotal role in political crisis management during Expo 2020 and COP28, highlighting how Swiss defence attachés are expected to contribute to national-level strategy beyond traditional defence matters.

This convergence of roles confirms Anwar's assertion that defence attachés must possess cross-domain competencies to be effective in the field.<sup>42</sup> It also supports Albasoos's view that defence attachés are now central to executing foreign policy objectives, particularly in smaller or strategically ambitious states like the UAE and Switzerland.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Hills, Alice. "Defence Diplomacy and Security Sector Reform." *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 1 (2000): 46–67.

<sup>42</sup> Anwar, Syaiful. "Modelling the Competencies Required by Defence Attachés in Accomplishing Their Duties: Study on the Indonesian Defence Attachés." *Journal of Defense Management* 6 (2016).

<sup>43</sup> Albasoos, Hani. "The strategic importance of the military attaché in implementing foreign policy." *political issues* ed.77 (2024).

In practice, however, the balance is shaped by embassy leadership and national expectations. Emirati defence attachés often rely on ambassadorial approval to engage diplomatically, while some of their Western counterparts are more empowered to take initiative. Yet in both cases, defence attachés are increasingly seen not only as military envoys but as full-spectrum diplomats capable of contributing to foreign policy, industrial diplomacy, and multilateral security dialogues.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### ***6.1 Implications***

This thesis set out to explore how and why the roles of Emirati defence attachés have evolved over time. Drawing upon qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with both Emirati and foreign defence attachés and a review of the academic literature on military diplomacy, the study contributes several theoretical, empirical, and practical insights.

Theoretically, the findings support and refine the notion of the defence attaché as a hybrid actor, balancing the domains of military representation, diplomacy, and strategic outreach. This supports and extends the conceptual frameworks that describe defence attachés as evolving from narrowly defined military agents into integral players in foreign policy and international cooperation. In particular, the evidence from this thesis substantiates the idea that in emerging powers like the UAE, defence attachés are instruments of both soft power and defence-industrial policy, tasked with roles far beyond classical liaison duties.

Empirically, the study provides rare and valuable insight into a previously under-researched subject of the institutional role of Emirati defence attachés. Given the UAE's increasingly assertive global posture and investment in defence diplomacy, understanding the defence attaché's evolving functions is essential to interpreting the country's international strategy. This research fills a critical gap by documenting the expanded scope of Emirati defence attachés' work, from military cooperation and representation to political engagement and industrial promotion.

Methodologically, this thesis highlights the value of semi-structured elite interviews in capturing unique perspectives from actors whose work is typically underrepresented in official records. The integration of foreign perspectives also added a comparative dimension, enabling the identification of key differences in agency of action, role interpretation, and legal boundaries.

In practical terms, the findings carry implications for policymakers and institutions within the UAE. Specifically, there is a need to refine training and preparation programmes for defence attachés to reflect their expanded scope of responsibilities. The differences between Emirati and foreign defence attachés in terms of discretion and adaptability also suggest a potential benefit in revisiting the hierarchical structure of defence attaché mandates, particularly in contexts requiring agile diplomatic engagement.

## **6.2 Future Research Directions**

While this study has addressed the evolution of Emirati defence attachés with a degree of depth, it also opens several important avenues for further academic research. Future research could extend the findings presented here through different theoretical lenses, comparative case studies, or broader regional investigations.

One potential direction is to conduct a longitudinal study tracking changes in the Emirati defence attaché role over decades, using archival sources, memoirs, or institutional records where available. Such a study would complement this thesis's cross-sectional approach by examining how macro-level geopolitical developments like the Arab Spring, the Abraham Accords, or shifting alliances with global powers have shaped defence diplomacy over time.

Another important area for future research is a comparative study involving defence attachés from other GCC states, such as Saudi Arabia or Qatar. This would offer a regional perspective and allow scholars to determine whether the trends observed in the UAE are part of a broader Gulf military diplomacy pattern or whether they are uniquely Emirati. Such a study could also highlight institutional and cultural factors influencing defence attaché roles across different Arab states.

Finally, further study is needed into the training and selection processes for Emirati defence attachés. Examining how candidates are chosen, prepared, and supported throughout their postings could help optimise performance and better align institutional goals with field realities.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and reflective accounts from the interviews, several actionable recommendations can be made to improve the performance and preparedness of future Emirati defence attachés:

1. Future defence attachés should receive in-depth, country-specific training prior to deployment. REDA 2 recommended replicating the Egyptian model, where defence attachés undergo a full year of preparation, including scenario-based learning, cultural immersion, and political briefings. Such training would enhance effectiveness and reduce adaptation time abroad.
2. As EDA 3 and REDA 1 highlighted, relationship-building and interpersonal respect are crucial to the defence attaché success. Training programmes should include modules on cultural sensitivity, protocol, and interpersonal diplomacy to foster trust within both host nations and embassy teams.

3. Defence attachés should be trained in human resource management, especially in contexts involving local embassy staff. REDA 1 stressed that mistreatment of local employees can result in reputational damage or security risks, underscoring the strategic value of internal diplomacy.
4. Lessons learned from REDA 2 suggest that institutional knowledge is often lost during attaché rotations. Formalising a handover period, with clear transition plans and mentorship between outgoing and incoming officers, would significantly improve operational continuity.
5. Emirati Defence attachés often operate under strict hierarchies. However, as shown by the contrast with their foreign counterparts like de Groot and Steiner, allowing limited discretionary initiative could increase diplomatic agility. Mechanisms should be developed to empower defence attachés to respond flexibly while maintaining strategic alignment.

#### **6.4 Reflections and Challenges**

The process of researching and writing this thesis has been both intellectually rewarding and personally transformative. At the outset, one of the most significant challenges was the scarcity of academic literature on Emirati defence attachés required for the construction of a conceptual framework from a patchwork of studies on military diplomacy, diplomatic theory, and regional politics. This limitation, while daunting, ultimately became a strength which allowed the research to explore relatively uncharted territory.

Arranging interviews with current and former defence attachés presented a notable challenge due to the sensitivity of the topic and the difficulty of coordinating with individuals often located abroad or engaged in demanding roles. Their limited availability, both in terms of physical presence within the country and time constraints arising from their busy schedules, made scheduling particularly complex. Despite these obstacles, the interviews were ultimately made possible thanks to the goodwill and cooperation of the participants, whose openness and candid insights provided the empirical foundation of this research.

The iterative process of coding and analysing the data also presented methodological hurdles. It was necessary to strike a balance between respecting the individual contexts of each interviewee while identifying broader themes applicable to the research questions. This experience sharpened my skills in qualitative analysis and interpretation.

In conclusion, this research journey has underscored the value of persistence, adaptability, and intellectual curiosity. The study has not only contributed to a critical field of inquiry but has

also laid a foundation for my continued engagement with international security, diplomacy, and UAE policy development.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Non-Medical Human Subjects Ethics Approval



28/01/2025

Mohamed Musabbah Alzahmi, Master's Student, International and Civil Security,  
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Protocol Title: Evolution of Emirati Defense Attaches Roles

Protocol #: H24-074  
Funding Source: None  
REC Review Date: 28/01/2025  
Effective Date: 28/01/2025  
Submission Type: Initial Application  
REC Review Type: Exempt  
REC Review Category: (4) Survey/interview/observational research in which elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office serve as subjects, whether or not data collection is anonymous.

REC Review Action: Approve

Dear Mohamed,

On 28/01/2025 after review of your application the Research Ethics Committee of Khalifa University of Science and Technology has approved the above referenced submission. Please inform REC upon completion of your project. This approval includes the following:

Document Type	Document Title	Document Version #	Document Date
REC Application	H24-045_KU REC Application_v0	0	26/12/2024
Consent form	H24-045_Consent form_v1	1	26/12/2024
Interview Guide	H24-045_Interview Guide_v1	1	26/12/2024
Proposal	H24-074_Proposal_v0	0	26/12/2024

The following determinations were made:

- The risk determination is no greater than minimal risk.
- Consent will be obtained from each subject/representative by REC approved, indicated, qualified individuals prior to research. If capable, the subject will sign and personally date the written informed consent as indicated in approved REC application.
- If the research is intended to continue beyond REC approval expiry date (if specified by REC); PI is to submit continuing review request and documents two months prior to the REC approval expiration date.
- PI must submit all protocol amendments (including any change of procedures, study documents, recruitment materials, investigators, sample size, or study sites...etc.) to REC for approval prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.

Sincerely,

Signed by Lama Omar Jamhawi  
Signed at 2025-01-30 13:42:25 +04:00  
Reason: I approve this document. Lama

Lama Omar Jamhawi



Ms. Lama Jamhawi  
Manager, Research Compliance & Training  
Office of Research Services

Signed by Nada Naser  
Signed at 2025-02-13 23:01:00 +04:00  
Reason: I approve this document. Nada N

Nada Naser



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## *Appendix 2 Interview Guide*

### **Emirati Defence Attachés**

#### **1. Role Definition & Responsibilities**

1.1. How would you define the role of a defence attaché, and what were your primary responsibilities during your tenure?

#### **2. Role Evolution**

2.1. Did your responsibilities as a defence attaché evolve over time? If yes, what new functions or areas became part of your work?

#### **3. Influencing Factors**

3.1. What key factors most influenced changes in your role? These could be factors like the UAE's strategic interests, host country dynamics, or global trends.

#### **4. Role Comparison**

4.1. Based on your experience, how would you compare the role of Emirati defence attachés to your Western counterparts in terms of similarities and differences?

#### **5. Military vs. Diplomatic Balance**

5.1. Did you perceive a shift from traditional military-focused duties to broader diplomatic responsibilities, or vice versa?

#### **6. Closing and Reflections**

6.1. What key lessons from your experience would you share with future Emirati defence attachés to help them succeed?

6.2. Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to for additional perspectives on this topic?

### **Foreign Defence Attachés**

#### **1. Role Definition & Responsibilities**

1.1. How would you define the role of a defence attaché, and what were your primary responsibilities during your tenure?

#### **2. Role Evolution**

2.1. Did your responsibilities as a defence attaché evolve over time? If yes, what new functions or areas became part of your work?

#### **3. Influencing Factors**

3.1. Based on your experience, how would you compare the role of Emirati defence attachés to your own in terms of similarities and differences?

#### **4. Closing and Reflections**

4.1. Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to for additional perspectives on this topic?