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**QATAR: AN EMERGING PLAYER IN THE REGIONAL
ORDER OF THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE 2010**

PhD DISSERTATION

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THESIS APPROVAL

This work headed “Qatar: An Emerging Player in the Regional Order of the Middle East Since 2010” which has been prepared by Samet YÜCE, is approved as a Ph.D. thesis by our jury in majority vote.

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I hereby declare that in this thesis, scientific ethics are entirely followed. The utilization of the others' work in form of references has been undertaken only in compliance with scientific norms, as any quoted data is free from falsification. This thesis is my original work and no part of the thesis has been presented as another thesis at this university or another university.

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This research mainly examines the rise of Qatar in the regional order in the Middle East after the Arab Spring within the framework of neoclassical realist theory (NCR) and alliance theories. While the Arab Spring shattered long-standing regimes in the region, it revealed threats and opportunities for the regional countries. From this point of view, Qatar considered regional change as an opportunity and used both its own resources and alliance relations to respond to this systemic pressure. It strengthened its influence in transition countries, especially by benefiting from the political rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)/the Islamists in the region. At this point, NCR offers us a different perspective in examining Qatar's foreign policy behaviours. From this theoretical point of view, both systemic (independent variable) and domestic factors (intervening variables) are included in the analysis and help us to understand the foreign policy outputs / foreign policy behaviours (dependent variable) better.

The fact that Qatar increased its influence in the region with autonomous (independent) foreign policy preferences and supported the MB-attached governments worried its regional rivals. The KSA-led alliance/camp made political manoeuvres to halt the rise of Qatar and redesign its political preferences. In this context, they primarily supported the interferences/counterrevolutions that could restrict the MB in the region. Under these circumstances, an exceptional shift of political power took place in Qatar in 2013 and Emir Hamad, who had deep and historical ties with the MB, handed over his ruling power to his son Emir Tamim. In addition, the political behaviours of the KSA-led camp sought to weaken the Turkey and Qatar-led alliance/camp in transition countries.

Later, the KSA-led camp made two important diplomatic moves (the 2014 and 2017 Qatar crises) to put pressure on Qatar to restrict and, if possible, change its foreign policy. However, Qatar under the influence of its new leader tried to stand against these moves with the help of its strategic alliances and domestic factors. In other words, the Qatari leadership, who ensured regime security and domestic stability, mobilized the state power and succeeded in ending the crises. As a result, Qatar emerged as a significant player in the region after the Arab Spring, and despite many challenges, it successfully managed to preserve its position in the regional and international arena.

Keywords: Qatar, Arab Spring, Middle East, Regional Order, Gulf Countries.

Tezin Başlığı: “Arap Baharı Sonrası Ortadoğu’nun Bölgesel Düzeninde Yükselen Bir Oyuncu: Katar”

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Anabilim Dalı: Ortadoğu Çalışmaları

Bu araştırma temel olarak Katar’ın Arap Baharı sonrası Ortadoğu’nun bölgesel düzeninde yükselişini neoklasik realist teori ve ittifak teorileri çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Arap Baharı bölgedeki uzun süreli rejimleri sarsarken bölge ülkeleri için de tehdit ve fırsatlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu açıdan düşünüldüğünde Katar bölgesel değişimi bir fırsat olarak değerlendirmiş ve bu sistemik uyarıya cevap verebilmek için hem kendi imkanlarını hem de ittifak ilişkilerini kullanmıştır. Özellikle bölgede Müslüman Kardeşlerin politik olarak yükselişlerini de değerlendirerek, geçiş ülkelerinde nüfusunu kuvvetlendirmiştir. Bu noktada neoklasik realist teori Katar’ın dış politika davranışlarını incelememizde bize farklı bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Bu teorik bakış açısından hareketle hem sistemik (independent variable) hem de domestik faktörler (intervening domestic variables) analize dahil edilmiş ve ülkenin dış politika çıktıları/dış politika davranışlarını (dependent variable) daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olmuştur.

Katar’ın özellikle otonom (bağımsız) bir dış politika tercihi ile bölgede etkinliğini arttırması ve Müslüman Kardeşlerin yönetimlerini desteklemesi, bölgesel rakiplerini endişelendirmiştir. Suudi liderliğindeki ittifak, Katar’ın yükselişini durdurmak ve politik tercihlerini yeniden dizayn etmeye yönelik hamleler yapmıştır. Bu bağlamda öncelikle bölgede Müslüman Kardeşleri sınırlayacak müdahaleleri/karşı devrimleri desteklemiştir. Bu şartlar altında Katar’da 2013’de istisnai iktidar değişimi yaşanmış ve Müslüman Kardeşlerle derin ve tarihi bağları olan Emir Hamad iktidarını oğlu Emir Tamim’e devretmiştir. Ayrıca Suudi liderliğindeki ittifak politik davranışlarıyla geçiş ülkelerinde Türkiye ve Katar ittifakını göreceli olarak zayıflatmaya çalışmıştır.

Daha sonra Suudi liderliğindeki ittifak Katar’a iki önemli diplomatik hamle (2014 ve 2017 Katar krizleri) yapmış ve Katar’ı sınırlamaya ve politika değişimine zorlamıştır. Ancak Katar yeni liderinin de etkisiyle kendisine yönelik bu hamleleri stratejik ittifaklarını ve domestik unsurları yardımıyla engellemeye çalışmıştır. Bir başka ifadeyle, Katar liderliği ülkenin gücünü mobilize ederek rejim güvenliğini ve ülke içi istikrarı sağlamış ve krizleri sonlandırmayı başarmıştır. Sonuç olarak Katar Arap Baharından sonra bölgede önemli bir aktör olarak ortaya çıkmış ve birçok zorlayıcı etmene karşın bölgede ve uluslararası alanda konumunu koruyabilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katar, Arap Baharı, Ortadoğu, Bölgesel Düzen, Körfez Ülkeleri.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM	: Commander of Africa Command
ASEAN	: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUAB	: Al Udeid Air Base
CBRI	: China's Belt and Road Initiative
CBTF	: Children's Brain Tumour Foundation
CENTCOM	: US Central Command
CIA	: Central Intelligence Agency
CIC	: Coordination and Implementation Committee
CJTFOIR	: Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve
CMC	: Central Municipal Council
Daesh	: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
EU	: European Union
FPE	: Foreign Policy Executive
FSA	: The Free Syrian Army
GAF	: Qatari Amiri Airforce
GDP	: Gross Domestic Products
GFP	: Global Fire Power
GGC	: Gulf Cooperation Council
GNA	: Government of National Accord in Libya
Hamas	: Islamic Resistance Movement
HBJ	: Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr bin Muhammad Al Thani
HIA	: Hamad International Airport
HOR	: House of Representatives in Libya
HSC	: High Security Committee

IAEA	: International Atomic Energy Agency
IATA	: International Airport Transport Association
IFC	: International Federation of Journalists
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
IPI	: International Press Institute
IR	: International Relations
IRGC	: Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps
IRGC-QF	: Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force
ISIS	: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
Islah Party	: Yemeni Congregation for Reform
JCPO	: Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JS	: Jish Shaabi
KSA	: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LAS	: League of Arab States
LNA	: Libyan National Army
LNG	: Liquefied Natural Gas
LSH	: Libyan Shield Forces
MB	: Muslim Brotherhood
MBC	: Middle East Broadcasting Corporation
MbS	: KSA Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman
MbZ	: Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan
ME	: Middle East
MoU	: Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCR	: Neoclassical Realist Theory

NDC	: National Dialogue Conference
NDF	: National Defence Forces
NGC	: National General Congress
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organisations
NTC	: National Transitional Council in Libya
OIC	: Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OIR	: Operation Inherent Resolve
OPEC	: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSH	: The Operation Shield Euphrates
OUP	: Operation Unifier Protector
PKK	: Kurdistan Worker Party
PYD	: Kurdish Democratic Union Party
PM	: Prime Minister
PPP	: Purchasing Power Parity
QA	: Qatar
QA	: Qatar Airways
QALF	: Qatari Amiri Land Forces
QAN	: Qatari Amiri Navy
QD	: Qatari Diar
QF	: Qatar Foundation
QFFD	: Qatar Fund for Development
QFESCD	: Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development
QH	: Qatar Holding
QIA	: Qatar Investment Authority

QMA	: Qatar Museums Authority
QNB	: Qatar National Bank
QNDS	: Qatari National Development Strategies
QNHRC	: Qatar National Human Rights Committee
QNOC	: Qatar National Olympic Committee
QNV 2030	: Qatar National Vision 2030
QP	: Qatar Petroleum
QSI	: Qatar Sports Investments
QTA	: Qatar Tourism Authority
QU	: Qatar University
SAIM	: Saudi Arabian Information Ministry
SCAF	: The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SEC	: Supreme Education Council
SFI	: Sovereign Foreign Investment
SIPRI	: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SNC	: Syrian National Council
SWF	: Sovereign Wealth Fund
TNC	: The Transitional National Council
TR	: Turkey
UAE	: United Arab Emirates
UAVs	: Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UK	: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	: United Nations
UNSC	: United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	: United Nations Security Council Resolution

USA	: United States of America
WEF	: World Economic Forum
WTO	: World Trade Organisation
YPG	: People's Protection Units



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INTRODUCTION

The so-called Arab Spring jolted the Middle Eastern countries, either monarchies or republics, due to their authoritarian regimes and long-standing political leadership. The authoritarian governance, which held the authoritarian leadership, weakened state-society relationships, the lack of social cohesion and democratic domestic institutions, and restricted political participation, in the region largely impeded the political leaders to maintain their control over the local people, avoid the popular mobilization against the regime and safeguard their regime survival. A small spark even became enough for the local people to hit the streets. The death of the fruit vendor Mohammad Bouazizi, who burnt himself in public after the harassment of the municipal officers, triggered the popular uprisings in Tunisia in 2010. Shortly afterwards, the uprisings spread to the other regional countries and coerced the regimes in line with the different expectations. In a broader sense, the Arab Spring, which mainly emerged as a result of socio-political plus economic expectations of the Arab people, forced the hands of the persistent regimes and their tenacious political leaders to change the political landscape. From a realistic perspective, the systemic stimuli pushed the states in the Middle East for a political change. Finally, the authoritarian regimes changed in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and subsequently turned into a chaotic environment in Yemen and Syria.

On the other hand, the regional actors perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity and threat. They sought to respond to this regional challenge by relying on their own power (self-help) and/or their alliances. Qatar perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity rather than a threat. By exploiting the regional changes, Qatar sought to increase its sphere of influence primarily in the transition countries. It backed the popular uprisings/rebels economically, politically and militarily, more significantly, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its affiliates in the transition countries. The MB/the Islamists' gaining political weight in the region, precisely in the transition countries, created a suitable ground for the Qatari political leaders, who personally had good relations with the MB exiles harboured in Doha, to carry out their political ambitions. Yet, the Gulf Arab countries under the Saudi leadership did not enjoy Qatar's regional policy and support for the MB against the authoritarian regimes in the region due to the Saudi's different political objectives and approaches towards the regional dynamics during the Arab Spring. In line

with this rationale, Qatar was quite ambitious to take the leading role in the transition countries.

Qatar implemented a proactive foreign policy towards the regional developments during the Arab Spring. It actively backed the NATO-led military operations to drive the Gaddafi regime away in Libya even though they were both Arab countries and member states of the Arab League. With its support to the Western-backed operations in Libya, Qatar tried to increase its credibility in the international arena and niche its position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. Later in the post-Gaddafi period, it wrestled with the other regional actors to assume the lead in the country through the Islamist political parties/Muslim Brotherhood (MB)- attached governments.

Various regional alliances took positions against the political changes in the transition countries.¹ Within this context, the Turkey and Qatar-led camp (TR and QA-led camp) backed democratic protests and elected governments including the MB-attached governments,² whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)- led camp positioned alongside the authoritarian regimes. To put it clearly, the KSA- led camp was positioned against the MB and their governments as they perceived it as a serious threat to the regional stability and their regime survival.³ By and large, a power struggle among the rival camps accelerated in the rivalry Middle East with the outbreak of the Arab Spring.

During the Arab Spring movements, the power centre evidently shifted to the Gulf region and correspondingly affected the inner competition and composition of the GCC countries. The rich Gulf monarchies determinedly competed with each other to increase their influence in the unfolding regional order. Qatar attempted to pursue an independent foreign policy at the expense of serious confrontations with the KSA and its allies. Its traditionally constant perception of the KSA as a threat to its own regime security had a significant impact on the Qatari decision-makers in developing a different policy and using different political instruments. That is to say, regime security significantly drives

¹ Philipp O. Amour, "Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances in the Gulf Region and the Middle East", in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 408; Philipp O. Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, 44:3, 2017, 293-309, p. 293.

² Birol Başkan, **Turkey and Qatar in the Tangled Geopolitics of the Middle East**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 99-104.

³ Linda Berger, "The Gulf Cooperation Council between Unity and Discord towards the Arab Uprisings", **Security and Peace**, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2014, pp. 260-264, p. 262.

the alliance politics in the Middle Eastern regional system as well as inter-Arab relations.⁴ Then, Qatar's support for the MB or Islamic movements in the region, somehow, can be evaluated in this context.

Nevertheless, popular uprisings extended to the Gulf region as well. The uprisings in Bahrain started to worry the al-Khalifa regime and the other Gulf Arab states. Thus, the KSA- led coalition forces (the Gulf coalition forces) swiftly ended the uprisings against the al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain. Qatar supported the military intervention of the Gulf coalition forces in Bahrain as well. More notably, Doha-backed Al Jazeera acted following Qatar's foreign policies. Its broadcast towards the Bahraini uprisings was not as critical as the ones in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Also, the uprisings ascended in the Yemen case and triggered conflicts among the regional rivals. The KSA predominantly tried to save the Saleh regime against the Iran-aligned Houthi forces in the country. Despite their military interventions in Yemen, the KSA- led coalition forces could not succeed in suppressing the uprisings. The Iran-aligned Houthi forces consolidated their power in the key cities against the KSA-aligned regime forces in the country. Thus, severe competition started between the rival alliances. As a result, the foreign powers-backed fighting groups (proxies) drove the country into a chaotic environment.

The uprising continued to circulate in the region with a great impact on the regional order. In Syria, for example, it created security concerns for regional and international actors owing to the shattered power of the Bashar al-Assad regime. The fact that the al-Assad regime tried to stop the uprisings harshly not only fuelled the anti-regime protests but also caused instability in the country. Then, a power void appeared in Syria. Daesh, the terrorist organisation, benefited from the unstable environment in the country and strengthened its regional position. The strengthening position of Daesh and the unstable environment in Syria opened the door to foreign interventions.⁵ The regional countries such as Turkey, the KSA and Qatar tried to fight against Daesh in a coalition to prevent its regional expansion and to ensure regional stability. However, international powers including the USA behaved reluctantly on the Syrian issue. To put it simply, the military

⁴ Curtis R. Ryan, "Regime security and shifting alliances in the Middle East", in Marc Lynch and Stephanie Dahl (Eds.), **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 35, (12 February 2019).

⁵ Samet Yüce and Philipp O. Amour, "Russia is Back to the Balancing Game", **Gazi Akademik Bakış**, Cilt: 14, Sayı: 28, Yaz 2021, 43-66, p. 51-53.

intervention of the international forces to stop the terrorist activities in Syria did not occur until Daesh evolved to a global threat and expanded its territorial gains in the region. Then, US-led coalition forces started their military activities against it. Conversely, Russia increased its military muscle in the region to safeguard the survival of the Bashar al-Assad regime against anti-regime forces and the Daesh threat. Russia's increasing presence in the region unsurprisingly challenged the balance of power in the system. It tried to dominate the region through the Syrian issue. It allied with Iran to support the Syrian regime and relatively increased its sphere of influence in the region.⁶

In the context of the regional sphere of influence, Qatar gained a larger ground in the transition countries in the post-Arab Spring. Yet, the KSA- led camp felt uneasy about the rise of Qatar in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East and its support for the MB-attached governments. Thus, they defended the status quo politics in the region. They primarily supported the Sisi government, which overthrew the Morsi administration in a military coup, in Egypt and the Khalifa Haftar forces in the ongoing instability in Libya. In line with this perspective, the KSA- led camp attempted to counterbalance Qatar in the post-Arab Spring.

In addition to their efforts for the restriction of Qatar's regional influence/rise in the post-Arab Spring, the KSA- led camp imposed two significant blockades on Qatar respectively in 2014 and 2017. They withdrew their diplomats from Doha. Qatar's support for the MB and its affiliates, Al Jazeera publications and its interference in their neighbouring countries' internal affairs were mainly cited in the KSA-led camp's blockade decision. With these attempts, they intended to stop Qatar's political gains as well as its independent policy.

Also, the restrictive environment during the 2014 Qatar crisis was an important test for the young Emir, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who came to power in 2013 after the long-termed administration and maverick policy of Father Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The young Emir tried to repair the damaged relations with the neighbouring countries and took their political demands into account. Even, he forced some exiled members of the MB to leave Doha in order to prove its determination in good relations with the

⁶ Samet Yüce, "Rusya'nın Suriye'deki Varlığının Nedenleri", **Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, Sayı: 11, Ocak 2016, pp. 269-289, p. 281-285.

neighbouring countries. As a result, the diplomats of the blockading countries turned to Doha. Despite the efforts, the interrelations among the GCC countries didn't continue smoothly. After the shift in Saudi leadership, the relations between Qatar and the KSA, for example, became strained again. The new Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MbS)'s close relationship with Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan (MbZ), Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and his political stance became influential in the decision of the Qatar crisis in 2017. The KSA- led camp tried to blockade Qatar with their 13-point demands. They sought to put pressure on Doha to bring the Qatari leadership to their own line in politics.

The Qatari leadership managed to overcome the blockade with their capabilities and alliances. Turkey helped its ally Qatar to reduce the negative impacts of the blockade and safeguard the survival of the al-Thani regime. Thus, Qatar overcame the initial difficulties caused by the blockade to a large extent. More significantly, the recent Qatar crisis strengthened the alliance between Turkey and Qatar in the post-Arab Spring. As a result, Qatar successfully managed to avoid the negative impacts of the aforesaid crises in the country and counterrevolutions in the transition countries and tried to preserve its position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East.

Subject and Significance of the Dissertation

This PhD dissertation mainly focuses on Qatar's foreign policy behaviours after the Arab Spring through the neoclassical realist theory perspective. With the strategic decisions especially during Emir Hamad bin Khalifa's administration, Qatar sought to increase its sphere of influence in regional and international politics. Then, the Arab Spring opened a wider window for the Qatari leadership to leverage Qatar's position. They managed to pursue an effective foreign policy towards the regional challenge in the Middle East, where the Arab Spring created a ripple effect. In other words, they consolidated their strength through alliance building and pursued proactive and independent policy towards the regional challenges. Finally, Qatar emerged as an influential player in the regional and international arena after the Arab Spring.

Yet, its regional rivals attempted to counterbalance Qatar's rise in the region. They backed the counterrevolutions throughout the region and even directly challenged Qatar through the blockades respectively in the 2014 and 2017 crises. Despite the restrictive

environment, Qatar successfully struggled against these regional challenges through its own material and immaterial capabilities, as well as its alliance relations and concurrently, sought to preserve its position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East.

The research can be considered significant in many ways: Depending on the literature review below, there is a gap and weakness in the literature about Qatar's foreign policy behaviours since the Arab Spring from a theoretical perspective. In my research, I mainly examined Qatar's prominent rise in the regional order of the Middle East since the Arab Spring within the framework of Neoclassical Realist Theory (NCR). In this regard, I analysed Qatar's foreign policy behaviours towards the post-2010 regional challenges as well as the effects of domestic intervening variables in the foreign policymaking process. The NCR significantly provides a holistic and comprehensive approach to our understanding of the systemic and domestic variables' role in policymaking. In line with the theoretical assumptions, this research reveals how the systemic and domestic factors affected the policymaking and foreign policy behaviours of Qatar after the Arab Spring. Additionally, I examined Qatar's alliance relations with regional and international actors in the unfolding regional order of the ME. The literature indicates that previous academic studies on these academic arguments are very limited. Based on this observation, my research will make a considerable contribution to the existing literature. Also, the alliance relations between Turkey and Qatar from the Arab Spring to the end of the 2017 Qatar crisis will be clarified. In doing so, foresight about the future of Turkey and Qatar relations will be scientifically put forward.

Given these theoretical and research premises, this dissertation is unique and expected to contribute to the academic literature in IR.

Purpose of the Dissertation

This research mainly aims to examine Qatar's stance/rise in the regional order of the Middle East since 2010 within the framework of neoclassical realist theory (NCR). Qatar emerged as an influential player in the region through its capabilities and alliances after the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2010. More notably, it benefited from the Arab Spring and enhanced its influence/position in the transition countries.

Additionally, the dissertation not only seeks to investigate the regional dynamics and changes after the Arab Spring but also Qatar's foreign policy behaviours towards the regional challenges. Without ignoring the significance of the systemic factors, NCR contends that the domestic factors affect the states' policy preferences in their responses towards the systemic stimuli.⁷ Given this theoretical insight, the Arab Spring accelerated the regional rivalry and impelled the regional states and their leaders to re-evaluate their own capabilities as well as security alliances against opportunities and threats. Additionally, the leaders' perceptions of the systemic stimuli (threat and opportunity) and political calculations affect the states' policy preferences.⁸ In this regard, the TR and QA-led camp gave significant support to the MB and its affiliates/the Islamists in their gaining political power in the transition countries. On the other hand, the KSA-led camp perceived the MB and its affiliates as a direct threat to the regional stability and their regime survival. Likewise, they largely sought to counterbalance Qatar's rise throughout the region. They backed the counterrevolutions against the MB-attached governments, particularly in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. Also, the KSA-led camp directly coerced the Qatari leadership into staying in their political line through the two blockades respectively in 2014 and 2017. In return, the Qatari leadership successfully extracted and mobilized their domestic resources to respond to these regional challenges. From this standpoint, the research asserts that systemic factors as well as domestic factors affected Qatar's foreign policy behaviours towards the challenges during and after the Arab Spring.

In line with the discussion above, some research questions were determined. Thus, the dissertation was designed based on the main research questions in the following. "How has Qatar achieved its rise in the regional and international politics since the Arab Spring?" and/or "What determinants (systemic and domestic) have specifically affected Qatar's foreign policy since the Arab Spring?"

Then, the dissertation also depends on the following sub-research questions such as "How did the Arab Spring affect the regional order of the Middle East?", "How did Qatar

⁷ Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 59; Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis", in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (Eds.), **Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation**, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 136-137.

⁸ Rose, p. 146-152; Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 33-34.

position in the unfolding regional order?”, “How did the regional system and domestic factors shape Qatar's foreign policy behaviours during the Arab Spring?”, “How did Qatar's alliances with the regional and international actors affect its political behaviours towards the transition countries?”, “What is the role of domestic intervening variables in Qatar's foreign policy analysis?”, “What is Qatar's power projection and how does Qatar use its material and immaterial capabilities?”, “How was Qatar's stance against regional crises in 2014 and 2017?”.

Within the framework of these given research questions, I attempt to shed light on the significance of the domestic factors on the policymaking process as well as systemic factors to determine Qatar’s foreign policy behaviours against the regional challenges after the Arab Spring.

Above all, this dissertation urges that in addition to the systemic stimuli, domestic factors/domestic intervening variables substantially shaped Qatar’s foreign policy behaviours after the Arab Spring. In this concept, the dissertation is mainly based on the following hypotheses.

The First Hypothesis: Systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities) and domestic factors (leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions) determine Qatar's foreign policy choices towards the regional dynamics and transition countries after the Arab Spring.

The Second Hypothesis: The Arab Spring generates threats and opportunities for the regional states. Qatar perceives it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

The Third Hypothesis: Due to different threat perceptions, Qatar and other Gulf countries have different security concerns. In line with this, they co-operate against an imminent threat to the regime security and stability or they build different alliances.

The Fourth Hypothesis: The anarchic and self-help environment in the Middle East pushes the regional countries to provide their security by their own capabilities while increasing the rivalry among the regional countries. Qatar's foreign policy behaviours aim to ensure its security and strengthen its position in the regional order of the Middle East. From this perspective, security concerns and interests in the rivalry region affect Qatar’s policy behaviours.

The Fifth Hypothesis: States do not stand alone in the system. There are different alliance camps in the region. Qatar's alliances with Turkey and Muslim Brotherhood (MB) affect the other camps' behaviours.

Literature Review

Academic studies on Qatar and other Gulf countries have increased significantly in recent years. They have made key contributions to the literature as well as to our understanding of Qatar and the Gulf. Moving from this literature premise, I will review the literature in the following topic-based categories.

a) General studies on Gulf

With the increasing political and economic weight of the Gulf countries in regional and international politics, academic circles primarily took an interest in security, economic and political issues related to the Gulf countries. On the other hand, academia is very often inclined to deal with the Gulf countries as a whole (generalized) and/or predominantly the KSA.⁹ Firstly, generalization towards the Gulf countries probably

⁹ For further readings on the Gulf region, see Yoel Guzansky, "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers: Strategic Hedging in the Persian Gulf", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXII, No. 1, Spring 2015; Russell E. Lucas, "The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring", in Mehran Kamrava (Ed.), **Beyond the Arab Spring The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 313; Mehran Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015; Michael Herb, **All in the Family Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies**, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Silvia Colombo, "The GGC Countries and The Arab Spring: Between Outreach, Patronage and Repression", **IAI Working Papers** 1209, March 2012, ISBN 978-88-98042-46-3, p. 7, <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1209.pdf>, (15 November 2018); Sebastian Sons and Inken Wiese, **The Engagement of Arab Gulf States in Egypt and Tunisia since 2011: Rationale and Impact (DGAP-Analyse, 9)**, Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V. 2015, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-55770-2>, https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/55770/ssoar-2015-sons_et_al-The_Engagement_of_Arab_Gulf.pdf?sequence=1, (27 September 2018); Luigi Narbone and Martin Lestra (Eds.), **The Gulf Monarchies Beyond the Arab Spring: Changes and Challenges**, European University Institute, 2015, doi:10.2870/930212; Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (Eds.), **The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essay in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997; Anoushiravan Ehteshami, **Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2013; Mehran Kamrava, "The Arab Spring and Saudi led counterrevolution", (Foreign Policy Research Institute), **Orbis**, 56:1, Winter 2012, pp. 96-104; Andre Bank, Thomas Richter and Anna Sunik, "Durable, Yet Different: Monarchies in the Arab Spring", **Journal of Arabian Studies**, 4:2, 2014, 163-179, DOI: 10.1080/21534764.2014.971647; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and The Transition to The Post-Oil Era**, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015; Christopher M. Davidson (Ed.), **Power and Politics in the Persian Gulf Monarchies**, London: Hurst and Company, 2011; Mary Ann Tetreault, "The Winter of the Arab Spring in the Gulf Monarchies", **Globalizations**, Vol. 8, No. 5, 2011, pp. 629-637.

Also, in regards to the academic studies for Saudi Arabia, see Oz Hassan, "Undermining the transatlantic democracy agenda? The Arab Spring and Saudi Arabia's counteracting democracy strategy", **Democratization**, 22:3, 2015, 479-495, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2014.981161; Abdullah Ali Asiri, "The Decisive Kingdom from Soft to Hard Power", (Unpublished Master Thesis), **West Virginia: Marshall University**, May 2016; Eyad Saeed Alrefai, "Weak States and Systemic Pressure: The Saudi-Iranian Struggle for Power and Influence in the Middle Eastern Regional System", (Unpublished Master Thesis), **the US: Western Illinois University**, 2016; Khalid Saud Alhumaidi, "Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia: The Role of The Population Composition Represented by the Tribes", (Unpublished Master Thesis),

depends on a common thought that the Gulf countries have more or less similar characteristics. Secondly, preference for the KSA in academic writings probably depends on the fact that the KSA is a dominant power in the Gulf region and relatively determines the Gulf policy.

b) Qatar's modern history

Of the studies primarily on Qatar in the literature, there exist some key works, which give a broad description of Qatar's modern history as well as its political and economic developments and contemporary power configuration.¹⁰ Allen Fromherz and Habibur Rahman explore the emergence of the ruling Al-Thani family in Qatar's contemporary history.¹¹ Also, Mohamed A. J. Althani attempts to brighten one of the prominent important figures, Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Thani in Qatar's national building/history.¹²

c) The Regional Order of the Middle East and Qatar's foreign policy

Michael N. Barnett discusses the Arab states system from a different perspective. He explains the role and influence of Arab nationalism and sovereignty in the system. He also attempts to explain the interactions in the Arab system through an institutional analysis by considering the existing institutions and their roles.¹³ Beverly Milton-Edwards also discusses Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism as important factors in shaping regional politics. He also investigates the contemporary politics of the Middle East by focusing on the political system and social relations. More specifically, he mentions about political issues such as US foreign policy, democratization, political Islam, political economy, ethnicity which influence the Middle East regional politics.¹⁴ As another example for the regional order of the Middle East, Raymond Hinnebusch

The US: The University of South Dakota, May 2016; Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Volume 47, 2016, pp. 23-44; Umer Karim, "Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy and the Role of Decision-making Processes and Actors", **The International Spectator**, 52:2, 2017, 71-88; Neil Partrick (Ed.), **Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation**, London: I.B. Tauris, 2016.

¹⁰ See David Commins, **The Gulf States A Modern History**, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012; Jill Ann Crystal, and John Duke Anthony, "Qatar", <https://www.britannica.com/place/Qatar/Government-and-society>, (28 July 2019); Rosemarie Said Zahlan, **The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman**, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998; Rosemarie Said Zahlan, **The Creation of Qatar**, London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

¹¹ Allen J. Fromherz, **Qatar: A Modern History**, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012; Habibur Rahman, **The Emergency of Qatar: The Turbulent Years, 1627-1916**, London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

¹² Mohamed A. J. Althani, **Jassim the Leader Founder of Qatar**, London: Profile Books, 2012.

¹³ Mitchell N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, nationalism, and regional order in the Arab States System", **International Organisation**, 49, 3, Summer 1995, pp. 479-510.

¹⁴ Beverly Milton-Edwards, **Contemporary Politics in the Middle East**, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

mainly argues the regional dynamics which shape the regional order in the contemporary Middle East. In this sense, he prioritizes the key issues such as the emergence of the Middle East regional system, the determinants of the regional states' behaviours in the system and the influence of war over the regional order while providing an explanation for the interactions among the regional states.¹⁵

Avraham Sela draws a historical picture for regional Arab politics by examining inter-Arab politics and the Arab-Israel conflict. He discusses the political dynamics and their impacts on policy-making in Arab countries. Additionally, he highlights the Palestine question and evolution of the regional Arab system with the analysis of the historical events.¹⁶

The academic studies on the regional order of the Middle East in post-Arab Spring are highly limited.¹⁷ In this regard, Helle Malmvig analyses Middle East regional politics through norms and identity politics. He underlines the Sunni-Shia split in the regional politics in the pre/post-2011 regional order.¹⁸ Additionally, Philipp O. Amour investigates Israel's political position in the unfolding regional order.¹⁹ Then, Mehran Kamrava has adopted a new model/concept as "hierarchy in the Middle East regional system" to describe the regional order of the Middle East in the post-Arab Spring.²⁰ Against this background, my research provides a broad analysis of the regional order of the Middle East and the position of Qatar in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. It is expected to make a contribution to the existing literature.

The Qatari leadership have gradually strengthened Qatar's position in regional and international politics since the leadership of Emir Hamad.²¹ With the role of peace-

¹⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, **The International Politics of The Middle East**, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003.

¹⁶ Avraham Sela, **The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, The Middle East Politics and the Quest for Regional Order**, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

¹⁷ For the regional order in the Middle East, see Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; Sinan Ülgen and al., "Emerging Order in the Middle East", **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, Policy Outlook, 2012; Mehran Kamrava, "Hierarchy and instability in the Middle East Regional Order", **International Studies Journal (ISJ)**, 14(4), Spring 2018, pp.1-36; F. Gregory Gause, "Systemic Approaches to Middle East International Relations", **International Studies Review**, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 11-31.

¹⁸ Helle Malmvig, "Power, Identity and Securitization in Middle East: Regional Order after the Arab Uprisings", **Mediterranean Politics**, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2014, 145-148.

¹⁹ Philipp O. Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, 44:3, 2017, 293-309.

²⁰ Kamrava, "Hierarchy and instability in the Middle East Regional Order", p. 16-29.

²¹ J. E. Peterson, "Qatar and the World: Branding for a Micro-State", **Middle East Journal**, Vol. 60, No. 4, Autumn 2006, pp. 732-748, p. 745-748.

keeping and mediation in the regional conflicts (i.e., Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen), Qatar became a significant peace-making and mediator state in regional and international politics.²² Then, the Arab Spring started with turmoil in the region. It weakened some of the countries and led some others to a chaotic environment. By considering their political agenda, interest and security concerns, the regional states tried to determine their position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. The TR and QA-led camp supported the regional changes in the region. At this point, the TR-QA-led camp supported MB-attached governments. On the other hand, the KSA-led camp took a stand in favour of the status quo in the region as they perceived the MB as a threat to the regional stability and their regime survival.

On the other hand, Qatar rather determined a proactive and interventionist policy towards the regional crises and changes during the Arab Spring.²³ More notably, the Qatari leadership found an opportunity to take a further step to raise their position in regional and international politics and to implement an independent policy.²⁴ In line with this political determination, Qatar intervened in the inner-politics of the transition countries in the region. To be precise, it became the leading actor in transition countries through its own capabilities and alliances (primarily Turkey and MB).²⁵

All in all, some recent scholars have studied Qatar's foreign policy.²⁶ Yet, there is still room in the literature for the following studies on Qatar's foreign policy with a deeper analysis and causal arguments.

d) Comparative studies on Qatar

Qatar's consolidated position in regional and international politics increased regional competition. Other Gulf countries, especially the KSA and the UAE, positioned

²² Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 4, Autumn 2011, pp. 539-556, 539-540; Seda Elfatih Alsayed, "Qatar's foreign policy: Motivation of mediation in Sudan", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Qatar: Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 2017.

²³ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "From Mediation to Interventionism", *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 3, July/September 2013.

²⁴ Sara Pulliam, "Qatar's Foreign Policy: Building an International Image", p. 6-7, http://schools.aucegypt.edu/huss/pols/Khamasin/Documents/Qatar%27s%20Foreign%20Policy_%20Building%20an%20International%20Image%20-%20Sara%20Pulliam.pdf, (03 August 2018).

²⁵ David Roberts, "Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Fall 2014, p. 84-91; Matthew Hedges and Giorgio Cafiero, "The GCC and the Muslim Brotherhood: What Does the Future Hold?", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Spring 2017, p. 146-150; Başkan, p. 99-104.

²⁶ For the academic studies basically on Qatar's foreign policy, see Sir Graham Boyce, "Qatar's Foreign Policy", *Asian Affairs*, 44:3, 2013, 365-377, DOI: 10.1080/03068374.2013.826003; Lina Khatib, "Qatar's foreign policy: the limits of pragmatism", *International Affairs*, 89:2, 2013, 417-431; Kristian C. Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

themselves against Qatar to compete and balance their regional and international activities. Comparative studies which focus on Qatar and other Gulf countries with their challenges in regional and international politics are included in the literature.²⁷ Jill Crystal's academic work can be considered a good example of a comparative study on Qatar. It underlines the importance of the oil revenues in these given states' political developments in Kuwait and Qatar.²⁸ As another example, Alexey Khlebnikov discusses the ideological rivalry between Qatar and the KSA. He also clarifies their ideological perception towards the MB from the past to the turmoil in the Middle East during the Arab Spring. More significantly, he urges that Qatar perceived the MB as a political tool to compete with the KSA for the regional leadership.²⁹

e) Qatar and small states' policies

Scholars have recently focused on the policies of small states in the Gulf region. Qatar is included in such studies as well.³⁰ Mehran Kamrava claims that small countries strengthen their positions in the international system with foreign policy strategies and combined power capabilities such as wealth, marketing, national branding, military strength and active diplomacy, and contrary to the traditional concept, they are influential actors in the system.³¹ In line with this rationale, Jocelyn Sage mentions that due to the weakness of the hard power projection, the political elites of small states seek to maximize the efficient use of resource wealth and make a lot of activities to determine a particular position in

²⁷ For the comparative studies of Qatar, see Crystal A. Ennis, "Reading entrepreneurial power in small Gulf states: Qatar and the UAE", **International Journal**, Vol. 73(4), 2018, 573-595; Hiba Khodr, "A Preliminary Comparative Study of Policy Making in Two GCC Countries-Qatar and Kuwait: Processes, Politics, and Participants", **Politics and Policy**, Volume 42, No. 2, 2014, pp. 271-310, 2014, 10.1111/polp.12068.

²⁸ Jill Crystal, "Patterns of State-Building in the Arabian Gulf: Kuwait and Qatar", **PhD Dissertation**, Massachusetts, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1986; Also, Jill Crystal, **Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

²⁹ Alexey Khlebnikov, "The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry", **Strategic Assessment**, Vol. 17, No. 4, January 2015.

³⁰ For detailed readings on policies of small states and academic approaches to the small states in the region, see David B. Roberts, **Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State**, London: Hurst, 2017; Mehran Kamrava, **Qatar: Small State, Big Politics**, Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2013; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring", **Discussion Paper**, Durham: Durham University, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah Programme, 2012; Andrew F. Cooper and Bessma Momani, "Qatar and Expanded Contours of Small State Diplomacy", **The International Spectator**, 46:3, 2011, 113-128, DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2011.576181; İbrahim Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman)", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 2020; Babak Mohammadzadeh, "Status and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: Qatar's Emergence in Perspective", **The International Spectator**, 52:2, 2017, 19:36, DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2017.1298886; Burak Sarıtarla, "Arab Spring and Qatar: Big Role of A small State in Libya", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Ankara: Middle East Technical University, February 2014.

³¹ Mehran Kamrava, **Qatar: Small State, Big Politics**, Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2013, p. 47-48.

international politics.³² From this standpoint, Qatari leadership successfully uses intangible power/intangible tools to leverage Qatar's position in international politics.³³ Additionally, the researchers have studied the role and popularity of the key intangible power tools such as Al Jazeera and Qatar Airways in the region.³⁴

By contrast with this background, in the article which explores the motivations of Qatar and the UAE in their military intervention in Libya, İbrahim Kümek claims that even though it was exceptional for small states' foreign policy behaviours, Qatar and the UAE pursued an interventionist policy during the Arab Spring. These two small states, despite their hard power weakness, backed the rebels and NATO-led operation against the Gaddafi regime to increase their regional influence, to use the regional changes to their advantage and eliminate threat perception.³⁵

f) Security and alliance studies on Qatar

Security concern is one of the central issues in the Middle East. States seek to ensure their regime survival through their own capabilities or alliance relations.

Given this observation, academia studied these issues.³⁶ Some researchers chiefly focused on the security of Qatar through different theoretical approaches. Betül Doğan seeks to find out the relations between the transformation of Qatar's security and foreign policy implementation through the Copenhagen School.³⁷ On the other hand, David J. Cullen examines the security portfolio of Qatar and the UAE from the neoliberal perspective and

³² Jocelyn Sage Mitchell, "Beyond Allocation: The politics of Legitimacy in Qatar", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013.

³³ Paul Micheal Brannagan and Richard Giulianotti, "The soft power-soft disempowerment nexus: the case of Qatar", **International Affairs**, 94:5, 2018, 1139-1157, DOI: 10.1093/ia/iyy125.

³⁴ Mahmoud Raouf Al-Sadi, "Al-Jazeera Television: Intifada on the Air", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), the University of Memphis, 2011; Badreya Al-Jenaibi, "Democracy and the Press in the Middle East", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), the US: the University of North Dakota, 2008; Shawn Powers, "The Geopolitics of the News: The Case of the Al Jazeera Network", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), California: The University of Southern California, 2009; Meltem Ersoy, "Çatışma süreçlerinde medya-uluslararası ilişkiler etkileşimi: Irak Savaşı örneğinde El Cezire İngilizcenin incelenmesi", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2013; Catalina Gabriela Petcu, "The Assessment of the Role of Qatar Airways in the Economic Development of Qatar", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2017.

³⁵ İbrahim Kümek, "Küçük Devlet Müdahaleciliği: Katar ve BAE'nin Libya Müdahalesi", **Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi**, 4(2), p. 240-282, December 2020.

³⁶ See Murat Yeşiltaş and Tuncay Kardaş, "Mimicry and substitution in the logic of sovereignty: the case of PYD", **Int Polit**, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-021-00293-5>.

³⁷ Betül Doğan, "Securitization: Conceptualizing Qatari Foreign Policy", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2017; p. 3.

emphasizes that diversification of security tools combines their political-economic motivations as well as its survival and interdependence.³⁸

In the context of alliance studies, Mohammad Hussain examined the key issues such as alliance formation and political fragmentation in the Arab world.³⁹ Furkan Polat analysed the alliances in the Middle East after the Arab Spring from the theoretical perspective, mainly Walt's theory (balance of threat). He focused on the cases of Syria, Yemen and Libya.⁴⁰ However, there is a considerable gap and weakness in the literature, especially on Qatar's alliance relations. Against this backdrop, in my dissertation, Qatar's regional and global alliances are discussed by citing the alliance theories in the realist realm.⁴¹

Moreover, in recent years, especially since the Arab Spring, Turkey and Qatar have approached each other and built a strategic alliance against the regional challenge. Thus, the TR and QA led alliance emerged and assumed a good position in the transition countries. Based on this, the researchers examine the political, economic and military relations between Turkey and Qatar.⁴² Yet, the literature review delineates that the existing academic studies (especially accomplished in Turkey) in the literature mostly

³⁸ David J. Callen, "The Diversification of (In)Security in 21st Century UAE and Qatar: Cultivating Capital, Interdependence and Uncertainty", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Arizona: The University of Arizona, 2015, 43-67.

³⁹ Mohammed Hussain, "Alliance formation and political fragmentation in the Arab world", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Arizona: The University of Arizona, 1992.

⁴⁰ Furkan Polat, "Arap Baharı sonrası Ortadoğu'da kurulan ittifaklar: Suriye, Yemen, Libya Örneği (2011-2015)", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Sakarya: Sakarya University Middle East Institute, 2016.

⁴¹ For the theoretical approaches to the alliance relations, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics", **World Politics**, Vol. 36, No. 4, July 1984, pp.461-495; Glenn H. Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997; Stephen M. Walt, **The Origins of Alliances**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990; Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliance Endure or Collapse", **Survival**, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 156-179; Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", **International Security**, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1985, pp. 3-43; Curtis R. Ryan, "Alliances and the balance of power in the Middle East", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, John S. Duffield, Cynthia Michota and Sara Ann Miller, "Alliances", in Paul D. Williams (Ed.), **Security Studies: An Introduction**, New York: Routledge, 2008.

⁴² Serhat İnce, "Katar ve Türkiye'nin Ekonomik İlişkileri 1981-2010 Arası", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2015; Kadir Turgut, "Arab Baharı bağlamında Türkiye Katar ilişkileri", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Bahçeşehir University, 2015; Sümeyra Çayan, "Türkiye-Bahreyn, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Katar, Kuveyt Ticari İlişkileri", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2012; Abdullah Erboğa, "Ak Parti Döneminde Türkiye'nin Katar ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Politikaları", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Sakarya: Sakarya University Middle East Institute, 2020; Ahmad Jumah Al-Jasim, "Qatar-Turkey Relations from Political, Economical and Military Perspectives", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Qatar: Hamad Bin Khalifa University, January 2017; Ozgur Pala, "The Evolution of the Turkish-Qatari Relations from 2002 to 2013: Convergence of Policies, Identities and Interests", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2014; Fusun Çelebi, "Türkiye ile Körfez Ülkeleri (Suudi Arabistan, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri, Kuveyt, Katar) Arasındaki Karşılıklı Turizm Hareketlerinin İncelenmesi", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2006; Birol Başkan, **Turkey and Qatar in the Tangled Geopolitics of the Middle East**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

evaluate economic relations and/or the early phases in their relations between these two countries despite their developed and strategic relations in many fields.

g) Qatar's domestic policy

Qatar considerably increased its political activities within three decades. The Qatari leadership successfully exploited their rich energy resources and revenues in domestic policy and political legitimacy. In this regard, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa, who seized the political power in 1995, initiated modernization efforts/reforms in key areas such as education, health, economy and politics in the country.⁴³ On the other hand, some domestic issues put a constraint on the Qatari ruling elites to implement new policies and strategies. To put it concretely, Qatar required a foreign labour force in the economic fields. The increasing population of expatriates in the country caused an important issue in domestic politics. The Qatari indigenous people believed that this increase caused a cultural loss in the Qatari society.⁴⁴ In addition to domestic unrest, it caused international criticism due to the claim of mistreatment towards the expatriates.⁴⁵ The Qatari leadership strategically implemented a new reform on the labour force to ease domestic and international criticism.⁴⁶

Academic studies on the other thematic issues related to domestic politics such as population, urbanization, political legitimacy, diversity of economic resources and employment of young people take their place in the literature.⁴⁷ In addition to Qatar's

⁴³ Louay Bahry, "Qatar Democratic reforms and global status", in Abbas Kadhimi (Ed.), **Governance in the Middle East and North Africa**, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 270; Maryam Al-Subaiey, "Qatarization Policy-Implementation Challenges", **Qatar: Brookings Doha Center**, 2011, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/06_bdc_essay_winner.pdf, (01August 2018); Amirah Ismail, Michael Flamenbaum and Kimberly Doyle, "Maverick of the Gulf: Qatar's Strategic Moves to Enhance its Nation Brand", **The US: The Institute For Middle East Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University**, May 2011; Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, "Political Reform in the Gulf: The Case of Qatar", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 36, No. 4, October 2000, pp. 47-62.

⁴⁴ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, 2016, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 183; Abdulaziz Al Horr, Ghaila Al Thani, M. Evren Tok, Hany Besada, Ben O'Bright, and Jason McSparren, "Qatar's Global-Local Nexus: From Soft to Nested Power?", in M.E. Tok et al. (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State**, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 370.

⁴⁶ **Qatar Tribune**, "Rights of foreign workers in Qatar see progress: UN", 18 November 2018. www.qatar-tribune.com/PrintNews.aspx?id=146135, (18 November 2018).

⁴⁷ For the academic studies on these issues, see Aisha Ahmed Al-Asiri, "Sustainable Urbanism: Adaptive Re-Uses for Social-Cultural Sustainability in Doha", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 2017; Aisha Ghanim H S Alganim, "Qatar's Journey Toward A Knowledge-Based Economy", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2017; Anders Gulbrandsen, "Bridging the Gulf: Qatari Business Diplomacy and Conflict Mediation", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2010; Zahra Aziz Nejad, "Qatari Youth Unemployment: Evaluating Qatari Governmental Initiatives: Qatarization Policy Through Bedaya Center", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2016; Jocelyn Sage Mitchell, "Beyond Allocation: The Politics of Legitimacy in Qatar", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013.

transition through hydrocarbon revenues and politics, Mathew Gray evaluates this transition within a new concept of “late rentierism” in his academic work. He discusses the changes of a rentier state, Qatar, primarily during the ruling power of Hamad bin Khalifa from a conceptual approach.⁴⁸

In the domestic politics of Qatar, tribes and tribal loyalty play an important role. Also, tribal norms and values affect the political system in the country. Ali A. Hadi Alshawhi underscores the political influence of tribes in Qatar and examines a key issue in Qatar’s political life.⁴⁹ Moreover, Jawahar A. Almal analyses the Qatari women’s political participation in local politics.⁵⁰ It contributes to gender studies, which are apparently rare in the literature.

h) Qatar Crises

Although there are different academic studies on two important crises (2014-2017) imposed by Qatar’s regional rivals, there are many aspects of these regional crises that need to be examined. Based on this observation and literature review, there is a significant weakness in the literature, especially about the 2014 Qatar crisis.⁵¹ However, these two crises clearly demonstrate the regional rivalry among the Gulf countries or GCC countries. In these given crises, the relations among the Gulf countries are interrupted for a while and the Gulf countries tried to balance each other. In view of these aspects, it is worth studying the Qatar crises in 2014 and 2017.

In this research, crises are analysed in all their aspects regarding alliance relations, leaders’ perception and ability to extract and mobilize the state power, domestic

⁴⁸ Matthew Gray, **Qatar: Politics and the Challenges of Development**, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2013.

⁴⁹ Ali A. Hadi Alshawhi, “Political Influences of Tribes in the State of Qatar: Impact of Tribal Loyalty on Political Participation”, (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), Mississippi: Mississippi State University, 2002.

⁵⁰ Jawahar Abdulla Almal, “Local Politics: Examining the Political Participation of Qatari Women in the Central Municipal Council Elections”, (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2017.

⁵¹ For the Qatar crises, see Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019; Yusuf Devran and Ömer Faruk Özcan, “Katar Krizi ve El Cezire: Ortadoğu’da Özgür Yayıncılığın Geleceği”, **Gümüşhane University Communication Faculty e-Journal**, Volume: 6, Number: 1, March 2018, pp. 305-325; Tarek Cherkaoui, “Qatar’s public diplomacy, international broadcasting, and the Gulf Crisis”, **Rising Powers Quarterly**, Volume 3, Issue 3, 2018, pp. 127-149; Talha Köse and Ufuk Ulutaş, “Regional Implication of the Qatar Crisis: Increasing Vulnerabilities”, **SETA Perspective**, No: 31, June 2017; Rory Miller (Ed.), **The Gulf Crisis: The View from Qatar**, Doha: Hamad bin Khalifa University Press, 2018; Nadide Frisk Abdullah, “Qatar and the 2017 Gulf Cooperation Council Diplomatic Crisis”, **Academic Project Paper**, Department of International and Strategic Studies Faculty of Arts and Social Science University of Malaya, 31 May 2019; İbrahim Efe, “Katar Krizi ve Al Jazeera”, **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, Temmuz-Ağustos 2017; Mahjoob Zweiri, Md Mizanur Rahman and Arwa Kemal, **The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Approach**, Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2021; Noof ALDorasi, “Tribe and Tribal Ideology in Arabian Gulf States Foreign Policy Making: A Case Study of the Qatar Crisis”, **Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM)**, Analysis No: 233, July 2019.

institutions etc. In particular, I believe that examining these crises has important implications for the analysis and sustainability of regional relations and future constraints. From this point of view, it is expected to make a broader contribution to our understanding of Qatar as well as debates in the international relations of the Gulf region.

In conclusion, this literature review openly shares F. Gregory Gause III's academic review. Based on his profound literature review on the Gulf region and Gulf countries, he urges that despite the existing scientific studies, there is still a weakness and gap in the literature.⁵² Additionally, there are not many holistic and comprehensive studies on how the international/regional system affects Qatar's policies and/or how the systemic and domestic factors affect policy making and foreign policy behaviours in the country. In this respect, I strongly believe that examining how the international/ regional system and internal dynamics shape Qatar's foreign policy behaviours in the post-Arab Spring will make an important contribution to the literature. In the research, Qatar's foreign policy behaviours towards the post-2010 regional challenges as well as the effects of domestic intervening variables in the foreign policymaking process are discussed within the framework of Neoclassical Realist Theory (NCR).⁵³ Also, I will argue more broadly about the theoretical approach on NCR later in the methodology of the dissertation.

This literature review clearly exposes that such academic studies mentioned above are very limited. Above all, studies on the Gulf region and Qatar are a suitable testing ground for the IR theories.

Limitations of the Dissertation

Despite all these aspects mentioned above, this dissertation has limitations as well. I can review it in four categories such as (a) data-based limitation, (b) language-based limitation, (c) theory-based limitation, (d) time-based limitation.

In the category of (a) data-based limitation, the official data about the Qatari government and security institutions are restrictively released. It is impossible to reach the significant

⁵² F. Gregory Gause, "Domestic Politics and International Relations in the Gulf Area: A Review of the Literature", **Center for Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) Monograph Series**, No. 1, December 2016, p. 7.

⁵³ There are many academic studies on NCR but the following can be considered as basic NCR studies: Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", **World Politics**, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct. 1998), pp. 144-172; Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016; Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

official meeting minutes, unpublished documents on security and military issues, and official military data. Thus, the lack of data on governmental and security issues is the prime limitation of this dissertation.

Secondly, in the category of (b) language-based limitation, the author of this dissertation does not speak Arabic, which is the official language of Qatar and the Gulf region. Due to the language-based limitation, resources in English were used only in finding empirical data.

Thirdly, (c) theory-based limitation indicates that NCR does not solely occupy to explain Qatar's alliance relations with others as interrelations with the regional and international actors are so complex and various. Instead, the dissertation used other alliance theories from the realist realm. Also, the research is limited to theoretical assumptions and predictions. Thus, it should not be expected to explain all the aspects of the chosen case.

Finally, in the category of (d) time-based limitations, this dissertation mainly focuses on the events between late 2010 and early 2021. Put it simply it covers the outbreak of the Arab Spring (2010) and the end of the 2017 Qatar Crisis (2021). Thus, the dissertation doesn't provide a detailed analysis for the pre-Arab Spring.

Design and Methodology of the Dissertation

Various theories, concepts, logic and cases are distinctively used in social and political studies.⁵⁴ More specifically, theories have great importance in the field of International Relations (IR) to shed light on events and cases. Then, the researchers in IR evidently and preferably examine their chosen cases through the lens of theoretical assumptions to provide explanations and reveal outputs. In addition to them, the particular cases can help the evaluation and refinement of the theories in IR.⁵⁵

Relying on the assumptions of neoclassical realist theory (NCR) in this research, I applied a theory-oriented method to examine the case of Qatar. Rather, I attempted to discuss Qatar's rise mostly since the Arab Spring within the framework of NCR. Unlike other realist theories, NCR argues that domestic factors including individual-level factors

⁵⁴ Philippe Schmitter, "The Design of Social and Political Research", in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (Eds.), **Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective**, Fifth Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 293.

⁵⁵ Pascal Vennesson, "Case studies and process tracing: theories and practices", in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (Eds.), **Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective**, Fifth Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 227-228.

should be considered as well as the systemic factors in the analysis, in other words, in explaining foreign policy behaviours of the states⁵⁶ as the states pursue foreign policies through their domestic factors to respond to the systemic stimuli.⁵⁷ To put it clearly, the NCR methodologically combines systemic and domestic factors to make a congruous policy decision against the incentives.

Based on the theoretical debate above as well, neoclassical realists consider their theoretical approaches at three levels of analysis (system, state and unit).⁵⁸ From this standpoint, three levels of analysis are highly compatible with NCR, which mainly focuses on systemic and domestic factors in its analysis. More notably, the researchers who seek to examine an event or a case physically or socially in line with the three levels of analysis acquire to benefit from parts or components.⁵⁹ Such an analysis will allow the researchers to consider and analyse the chosen events or cases from different aspects as well.

To further the debate on the NCR assumptions, neoclassical realists defend that systemic stimuli should be filtered and translated into the behaviours of actual political decision-makers through the domestic factors/variables in the policymaking process. They, thus, emphasize that foreign policy choices are made by real political leaders and political elites, and how these leaders and elites perceive relative power is much more important than the relative numbers of physical resources and powers (imperfect transmission belt).⁶⁰ In this respect, they urge that the domestic intervening variables such as leader image, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions should be taken into consideration in decision making and foreign policy behaviours.⁶¹

According to the given theoretical approach, the system generates incentives for all states to provide their own security (self-help) and respond to the challenges.⁶² Hence, systemic

⁵⁶ Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis", in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (Eds.), **Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation**, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 136-137.

⁵⁷ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 59.

⁵⁸ Owen Temby, "What are levels of analysis and what do they contribute to international relations theory?", **Cambridge Review of International Affairs**, 28:4, 2015, 721-742, p. 271.

⁵⁹ J. David Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations", **World Politics**, 14:1, International System: Theoretical Essay, 77-92, 1961, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", **World Politics**, 5(1), October 1998, pp. 144-172, p. 146-168.

⁶¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 13; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, **Neoclassical Realism, The State, and Foreign Policy**, p. 4.

⁶² Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, p. 4.

stimuli (independent variable) are perceived and evaluated through domestic factors (domestic intervening variables) before implementing a foreign policy (dependent variable). To put it concretely, the Arab Spring movements generated threats and opportunities for the regional countries. Qatar evaluated the emerging threats and opportunities through its domestic factors and pursued policies in this direction. In essence, Qatar responded to the regional challenge during the Arab Spring after filtering through its domestic factors in the policy-making process. In line with this theoretical discussion, the systemic stimuli that emerged with the Arab Spring movement are considered as the independent variable. The domestic factors such as leader images, strategic cultures, state-society relations and domestic institutions in Qatar are intervening variables, and finally, Qatar's foreign policies are dependent variables.

To clarify the implications of Qatar's foreign policy behaviours through the theoretical assumptions (mentioned earlier), it is sufficient to reach existing scientific sources in literature to collect the data. Also, the data chosen from the sources should be of a quality that can meet the research goal.⁶³ There are many qualitative data materials such as academic journals, reports, periodicals, academic thesis, official sites, official documents, books to examine and obtain the data about the research. Besides the existence of the academic sources in the literature, the selection of these sources has key importance for obtaining empirical findings and achievement of the ongoing research. Depending on the nature of the research, various sources such as primary and secondary sources can be preferred. In today's world where there are many secondary sources, identification of these sources and possibilities of reaching them can be considered as a good start. Secondary data analysis can greatly assist academic studies as research databases and technological tools are equally advanced.⁶⁴

Also, the news is important for researchers to understand the atmosphere of the time. At this point, the newspapers help them to access information especially about the perspectives of the policymakers.⁶⁵ During the data collection, global media networks, predominantly Al Jazeera and a wide range of internet media significantly facilitated

⁶³ Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, p. 86.

⁶⁴ John W. Cresswell, *Araştırma Deseni: Nitel, Nicel ve Karma Yöntem Yaklaşımları*, Third Edition, Selçuk Beşir Demir (Ed.), Ankara: Eğiten Kitap, 2017, p. 33-36.

⁶⁵ George and Bennett, p. 108.

sources about the research by providing various information about Qatar and the Middle East. More strikingly, researchers should refer to the primary sources in addition to the secondary sources.⁶⁶ Thus, some primary sources such as official documents and archive documents are investigated in this research as well.

All in all, the data picked from various sources including publications in leading IR journals in the literature will be analysed within the theoretical framework of NCR. In this way, the research will provide more analytical explanations for the research questions/hypotheses in line with the theoretical assumptions. It will proceed and articulate the theoretical assumptions and expectations related to the collected empirical data in its analysis. By doing this, it is expected to build a background for the other researchers in their studies as well.

The research is divided into six chapters. The first chapter highlights the theoretical framework, namely Neoclassical Realist Theory (NCR) of International Relations (IR). NCR provides multi-analysis for the research. Depending on the theoretical capabilities/assumptions, which the NCR significantly provides multi-analysis, the research will be evaluated with the three levels of analysis (system, state and unit). NCR cooperates systemic level independent variables with the unit level variables consistently to analyse the decision-making process and foreign policy output. To put it clearly, we should consider systemic stimuli and domestic variables together in the decision-making process and/or see the policy response. The theoretical part also enlightens the concept of alliance building. In IR, states do not merely stand on their own against systemic pressure. They interact with other states to meet the expectations of the system or withstand systemic pressure. From this standpoint, states are obliged to cooperate to respond to systemic pressure.

The second chapter mainly attempts to analyse the characteristics of the regional order of the Middle East. The regional order explicates the relationship among the states and non-state actors which exist in the system in the context of their alignments and arrangements depending on the characteristics of the regional order.⁶⁷ In view of these given aspects, the chapter focuses on political culture, indicative ideas and regime types as well as the

⁶⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 133.

⁶⁷ Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 9-10.

regional rivalry. Overall, it gives a broad explanation about the regional order of the Middle East in the past and present together to see the political environment and novel changes after the Arab Spring.

The third chapter explores Qatar's relations with the regional and international actors. The geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic characteristics of the Middle East very often created a rivalry environment for the regional actors. Thus, they competed to preserve their survival and security in such an environment. In the context of survival and security, regional dynamics during the Arab Spring compelled the regional actors to reconsider their traditional alliances or to form new alliances. Various rival camps such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)- led conservative-moderate camp, the Iran-led conservative resistance/Western critical camp and the Turkey and Qatar-led elected-reformist camp appeared in the regional order. The given camps responded to the regional challenges in the post-Arab Spring following their own perceptions of the regional stimuli or rivalry in the system. The rapprochement of Qatar and Turkey put an important impact on the regional rivalry. Additionally, this chapter demonstrates Qatar's relations with the international powers. The weakness and fragile structure of the regional states in the Middle East make them dependent on external forces to provide their security and stability. In a similar vein, they are vulnerable to foreign interferences. Thus, they expect the external forces to ensure the survival of their regimes against the rival states while they focus on domestic issues. They generally rely on the US or Russia to provide their regime survival or security. Moreover, the research also underscores the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which influences the regional and international actors in terms of their security concerns in the Middle East.

The fourth chapter investigates the domestic-level intervening variables (leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions) in an optimal foreign policy response because the neoclassical realists urge that the domestic factors also matter in decision-making and policy implementation/mobilization of national resources to conduct political responses to the external stimuli. In this regard, the research handles Qatar's domestic factors (domestic-level intervening variables) in its policy implementation, especially after the Arab Spring.

The fifth chapter greatly examines Qatar's sources of power to analyse its capabilities after the Arab Spring. The regional countries tried to evaluate the opportunities and threats during the Arab Spring within the scope of their own perceptions of security and power capacity. Qatar, which perceived this regional challenge as an opportunity rather than a threat to its own interests, made active efforts/pursued a proactive policy to increase its influence and strengthen its position in the region. It established good relations with anti-regime actors/groups especially in the transition countries by using its material and non-material capabilities. In this regard, Qatar's state power played a significant role in Qatar's rise during the uprisings. More notably, the Qatari leadership managed to extract and mobilize their resources successfully during the Arab Spring. Likewise, they used their political, economic and strategic assets to leverage Qatar's regional and international position.⁶⁸

The sixth chapter deeply analyses the Qatar crises in 2014 and 2017. These blockades beset Qatar in the post-Arab Spring. The neighbouring countries withdrew their diplomats from Doha by targeting to constrain Qatar's autonomous foreign policy through diplomatic and economic pressure. In both blockading decisions, the claims of the blockading countries were similarly based on Qatar's Al Jazeera broadcast, intervening in their internal affairs and support for terrorism in the region. The Qatari Foreign Policy Executives (FPEs) responded quickly to the given regional challenges. They tried to ease the tension with the neighbouring states as well as preserving their interests. It proved that in the restrictive environment, the Qatari leadership could pursue optimal policies to avoid the challenges. In line with this understanding, the Qatari FPEs successfully exerted and mobilized their resources during the Qatari crises. They stood up against the regional challenges with Qatar's power capabilities and alliances. More significantly, social cohesion in the country worked very well. The Qatari society united and backed the Qatari leadership against the challenges.

⁶⁸ Samet Yüce, "Book Review: Qatar and Arab Spring", *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol: 3, No: 2, 2016, pp. 146-157, p. 146-149.

CHAPTER 1: THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: NEO-CLASSICAL REALIST THEORY (NCR) AND ALLIANCE

Stephen M. Walt indicates the function of the IR theories by stating that “we need theories to make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us daily.”⁶⁹ From his perspective, we require a theoretical lens to evaluate the information that we get from the real world. The abstract approaches of theories give robust associated clues and patterns to understand the real world and reuse the outcomes that we obtain. Notwithstanding our requirements, it is not so easy to construct a comprehensive theory for all cases. Randall L. Schweller asserts that such a theory that covers or unifies everything concerning international politics hasn’t been constructed yet.⁷⁰ In a similar way, John J. Mearsheimer argues that “no social science theory can account for every case; all theories face anomalies.”⁷¹ Depending on the discussion above, there is no unique theory to apply for all cases or events in IR. It possibly opens a window for scholars to construct novel theories for more powerful explanations and/or better assumptions. It seems to be an irresistible challenge for the existent theories as well. Yet, an array of theories assertively and boldly continues to explain and interpret the events and phenomena in the fields concerning international affairs despite their successors and critics’ challenges. In doing so, they prompt a beneficial competition in the clusters of theories. Walt, for instance, champions the competition among the theories favourably. He believes that such a competition positively uncovers weak and/or powerful points of the emerging theories with the encouragement for onward adjustments.⁷²

Given all these aspects, I will analyse Qatar’s foreign policy behaviours since the Arab Spring. I will employ the neoclassical realist theory (NCR) first in my research. The NCR mainly contends that the systemic pressure should be translated through the domestic

⁶⁹ Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories”, **Foreign Policy**, Special Edition: Frontiers of Knowledge, No. 110, Spring 1998, pp. 29-32+34-46, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Randall N. Schweller, “Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism”, in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Eds.), **Progress in International Relations Theory Appraising the Field**, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: MIT Press, 2003, p.311.

⁷¹ John J Mearsheimer, “Reckless States and Realism”, in Ken Booth (Ed.), **Realism and World Politics**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011, p. 129; Additionally, Legro and Moravcsik assert that “no single theory can or should claim to explain all of world politics or to be empirically preeminent under all circumstances.” In this regard, see Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist”, **International Security**, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1999, pp. 5-55, p. 49.

⁷² Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories”, p. 30.

factors to implement foreign policy behaviours.⁷³ However, the NCR does not singly analyse the alliance building in IR except for some valuable studies from different perspectives.⁷⁴ At this point, I will also employ the alliance theories from the realist realm because Qatar's alliance relations with the regional and international actors are so complex and various due to their security concerns and political agenda.

1.1. Neoclassical Realist Theory (NCR)

Realist school, although underpinned with various insights, commonly affirms that states are the core actors in international relations/international politics in which power and security are the paramount issues.⁷⁵ In line with this given rationale, relations between nation-states essentially determine international relations. Classical realism starts from human nature and behaviours, neorealism from the international system and NCR from domestic factors in order to understand and explain international relations. NCR, by looking inside of the state, defends that different and interacting intrastate (domestic) factors, predominantly statesmen, play an important role in international relations as well as foreign policy. Likewise, neoclassical realists argue that the balance of power among the states is intentionally established and shielded by states and statesmen and the decisions of statesmen are highly effective in changing the existing balance of power. To simplify it, the balance of power among the states is not a spontaneous and fixed situation. Proceeding on this line, NCR distinctively sees the state-structure/domestic factors as an important and indispensable determinant of international relations and foreign policy behaviours, albeit adopting the international system.⁷⁶ I will employ this theoretical base in my research, so it will be beneficial to clarify the insights of NCR as a theory of international relations.

⁷³ Rose, p. 146.

⁷⁴ Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing", **International Security**, 29:2, Fall 2004, pp. 159-201; Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in", **International Security**, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1994, pp. 72-107; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, **Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Power Politics and the Balance of Risk: Hypotheses on Great Power Intervention in the Periphery", **Political Psychology**, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2004.

⁷⁵ Robert Jervis, "Theories of International Relations", in F. Costigliola and M. Hogan (Eds.), **Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, DOI: 10.1017/CB09781107286207.002, p. 9-24; W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, "Political Realism in International Relations", 26 July 2010, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/>, (28 March 2021).

⁷⁶ Eyüp Ersoy, "Realism", in Ramazan Gözen (Ed.), **Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorileri**, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014, p. 160-166.

The increasing criticism on the lack of neorealism's explanatory capability about the end of the Cold War and discussion on the role of state behaviours in international politics led to the emergence of neoclassical realism (NCR).⁷⁷ It was first termed by Gideon Rose in his Review Article: *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*. He basically introduced the above-named theory by contending that systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level.⁷⁸ To this end, he sought to append domestic politics and ideational influences into the foreign policy analyses.⁷⁹ Thus, he tried to explain NCR systemically from a different point of view.⁸⁰ Eventually, he brought about a new theoretical approach in International Relations (IR). However, a theoretical debate is underway on whether NCR is a novel theory and/or a "degenerative" theory when compared with the other realist paradigms.⁸¹ The neoclassical realists clearly do not accept it.⁸²

Brian Rathbun and Randall L. Schweller particularly underscore that NCR is a blend of classical/traditional realism, neorealism, liberalism and constructivism.⁸³ In a broader perspective, NCR takes key insights from these mentioned theories. Furthermore, improving their core insights/variables, the neoclassical realists sought to explain foreign policy decision making and behaviours.⁸⁴ Finally, they contend that with the advancement of their research program, NCR is more efficient than the other realist theories and liberalism in explaining the phenomena and answering "the big questions" in international politics.⁸⁵

The NCR: A blend of the realist and non-realist theories

⁷⁷ Sami Kiraz, "Bir Dış Politika Analiz Yaklaşımı Olarak Neoklasik Realizmin İncelenmesi", **Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, 13(4), 2020, 665-686, p. 672.

⁷⁸ Rose, pp. 144-172.

⁷⁹ Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism", **Security Studies**, 17:2, 294-321, 2008, DOI: DOI: 10.1080/09636410802098917, p. 295.

⁸⁰ Kiraz, p. 673.

⁸¹ Rathbun, p. 294; J. Sterling-Folker, "Realist Theorizing as Tradition: Forward Is As Forward Does", in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Patrick James, and Ewan Harrison (Eds.), **Rethinking Realism in International Relations: Between Tradition and Innovation**, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 209; Joseph M. Parent and Joshua M. Baron, "Elder Abuse: How the Moderns Mistreat Classical Realism", **International Studies Review**, Volume 13, Issue 2, 1 June 2001, pp. 193-213; Birkan Ertoý, "Uluslararası İlişkilerde Realist Geleneğin Dönüşümü ve Neoklasik Realizm", **Anadolu Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Dergisi**, Cilt: 1, Sayı: 1, 2019, ss. 1-26; Nathan Alexander Sears, "The neoclassical realist research program: Between progressive promise and degenerative dangers", **International Politics Review (IPR)**, Volume 5, May 2017, p. 27.

⁸² Nuri Yeşilyurt, "Kitap İncelemesi: Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, Cilt: 14, Sayı: 55, 2017, 119-124, p. 120.

⁸³ Rathbun, p. 294-321; Schweller, "Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism", p. 318.

⁸⁴ Schweller, "Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism", p. 318.

⁸⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 187-188.

As noted earlier, the NCR consists of the components of four different theories (traditional realism, neorealism, liberalism and constructivism). I will lay out how these given theories relate to the NCR in the following pages.

One of the components of NCR is traditional realism. In other words, NCR takes assumptions of traditional realism. The leading traditional realists such as Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr and Thomas Hobbes link states directly to human nature.⁸⁶ They stress the major effect of human nature on the conduct of international affairs. They urge that states, like humans, have an innate desire to dominate their environment and fight each other accordingly. More notably, the traditional realists are pessimistic about interstate relations by citing human nature.⁸⁷ They believe that individuals are selfish or egoistic by their nature. That (human nature) doesn't change. It drives individuals as well. Thus, individuals go after their own interests, so do individual states. Also, individuals or states naturally have a high motivation to dominate their environment. They try to increase their power capacity to accomplish this goal. Additionally, states are obliged to have sufficient power to protect themselves from others.⁸⁸

To clarify the nexus between power and politics, Morgenthau asserts that international politics means a struggle for power and people including statesmen run after power.⁸⁹ It encourages people/states to fight with each other. In this sense, the traditional realists believe that target, acquisition and use of power are the main concerns of the political activity.⁹⁰ Essentially, international politics is a bid for power among the states which seek their national interests. It helps us to understand the nature of power by looking at the persistent competition for power among the states.⁹¹ At this point, it should be noted that NCR takes the state level of traditional realism into its theoretical analysis.

⁸⁶ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics", **International Organisation**, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring, 1992, pp. 391-425, p. 395; Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

⁸⁷ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

⁸⁸ Mustafa Aydın, "Uluslararası İlişkilerin "Gerçekçi" Teorisi: Kökeni, Kapsamı, Kritiği", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, Cilt 1, Sayı 1, Bahar 2004, 33-60, p. 38.

⁸⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, **Politics among Nations the Struggle for Power and Peace**, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Aydın, p. 39-46.

⁹¹ John J. Mearsheimer, **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 12-13.

Another component of NCR is neorealism. Unlike traditional realism, neorealism is not a theory of human nature but a theory of international politics.⁹² The neorealists clearly ignore the state of human nature. They principally focus on the effects of the international system. Kenneth Waltz, who is the pioneer of neorealism/structural realism, argues that each state seeks to survive in the international system. Despite several great powers in the system, there is no formal central authority to protect the states from the others. In other words, the international system is anarchic. It means there is no higher authority over the states. In this anarchic environment, each actor has to survive on his own (self-help).⁹³ Therefore, the states seek to gain more power than their rivals and care about the balance of power to maintain their survival.⁹⁴ Also, Waltz affirms that the anarchic and self-help environment lead the weaker states to balance against more powerful rivals rather than bandwagon with them.⁹⁵

The anarchic nature of the international system brought about different approaches into the realist school as defensive and offensive realism. The defensive realists claim that war is more likely when states can conquer each other easily in the anarchic international system. If a state's defence becomes easier than offence, cooperation will be possible.⁹⁶ Thus, the state will be prone to cooperation because it defends to maintain status-quo politics for its survival. Defensive realists believe that the international system provides strong incentives for the states' expansion only under certain conditions.⁹⁷ In this context, they primarily advocate maintaining the balance of power in the rivalry system rather than shifting it. The states desire to survive and great powers guarantee the other states' security in the system by forming balancing alliances and providing military support.⁹⁸ Additionally, defensive realists argue that an anarchic international system leads the states to conduct moderate policies to maintain their security.

On the other hand, for offensive realists, states seek more power and influence to assure their security. They also hold that the anarchic international environment encourages the

⁹² Chris Brown, "Structural Realism, Classical Realism and Human Nature", in Ken Booth (Ed.), **Realism and World Politics**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011, p. 150.

⁹³ Mearsheimer, "Reckless States and Realism", p. 125; Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

⁹⁴ Mearsheimer, "Reckless States and Realism", p. 125.

⁹⁵ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

⁹⁶ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

⁹⁷ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy", **International Security**, Vol. 25, No. 3, Winter 2000/01, pp. 128-161, p. 129.

⁹⁸ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

states' expansion. This leads the states to maximize their power/relative strength as they believe that only powerful states can guarantee their own survival.⁹⁹ In this context, they claim that all states seek to maximize their relative power because they cannot be confident when they face with a revisionist power.¹⁰⁰ Status quo powers are rarely seen in the international system as systemic incentives drive states to seize an opportunity to maximize their power and also their security at the expense of the rival states.¹⁰¹ Consequently, the environment which provokes the fear of the adversaries' unexpected behaviours causes the security dilemma and then results in an armament race among the states.

In line with this theoretical debate, NCR takes insights from the neorealist theory on the international structure and its consequences by highlighting neorealism's limitations on its analyses.¹⁰² It argues that there are four significant limitations to the neorealist model such as the ability of the leaders' perception of systemic stimuli, the lack of clarity in the international system, the rationality problem and the difficulty in mobilizing domestic resources.¹⁰³ With the given limitations, they attempt to display the lack of neorealist perspective in determining foreign policy behaviour and put forward their arguments accordingly.

Firstly, regarding the leaders' perception of systemic stimuli/constraints, the neoclassical realists underscore the leaders' role in the state's response to the systemic stimuli. They assume that the ability of the leaders' perception about the systemic stimuli determines how the states respond to the international stimuli. When a leader understands the systemic constraint/stimuli correctly, the state's response is shaped accordingly. In this regard, the decision makers' ideologies, personal characteristics and perspectives from which they read the real world are extremely important while creating foreign policy outcomes.¹⁰⁴

Secondly, clarity in the international system is very important for the states and their leaders to respond to the systemic stimuli. The neoclassical scholars indicate that three

⁹⁹ Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy", p. 128.

¹⁰⁰ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 21.

¹⁰² Schweller, "Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism", p. 317-318; Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities", *International Studies Review*, 17, 2015, 635-661, p. 636.

¹⁰³ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Kiraz, p. 677.

indicators need to be taken into consideration to determine the level of clarity in the international system. The first indicator is the level at which threats and opportunities are recognized. The second indicator is whether the system provides information on the timing of threats and opportunities. The last one is whether optimal policy options are present or not.

If there is high clarity in those three indicators mentioned above, determination of the system directly increases on foreign policy. However, this is a very rare phenomenon in international politics. Additionally, they assert that states behave differently in restrictive and permissive strategic environments.¹⁰⁵ In general, the international system has low clarity, and states have a permissive strategic environment. In this regard, state and unit variables have more opportunities to influence foreign policy/decision making.¹⁰⁶

The neoclassical realists assert that when the international system sends clear signals to states about threats and opportunities, systemic signals must stimulate national policy responses after passing through the often-imperfect transmission belts of leader perception and domestic politics. On the other hand, if the international system does not send a clear signal about threats and opportunities, states choose to act following their domestic characteristics such as world news of leaders, strategic cultures of the states, and domestic political constraints.¹⁰⁷ Political elites or leaders act in accordance with the previously mentioned message (threats and opportunities) sent by the international system.¹⁰⁸ Then, they extract and mobilize the domestic resources to respond to the international stimuli. In a broader explanation, political leaders cannot always respond rationally to the systemic stimuli even though the international system sends a clear signal or they perceive it correctly. This can hereby cause a security issue for states.¹⁰⁹

Thirdly, according to the neorealists when states encounter a similar external threat and opportunities, they act similarly despite having different regime types, ideologies and political institutions.¹¹⁰ Contrary to this, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro as a neoclassical realist

¹⁰⁵ Vikash Chandra, "Neoclassical realist theory of international politics", *Strategic Analysis*, 41:3, 2017, 297-299, p. 298.

¹⁰⁶ Yeşilyurt, 2017, p. 121.

¹⁰⁷ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 28-29.

¹⁰⁸ Ali Balcı, Tuncay Kardaş, İsmail Ediz and Yıldırım Turan, *İmparatorluğun Savaş Kararı Osmanlı Devleti Birinci Dünya Savaşına Neden Girdi*, Ankara: Kadim Yayınları, 2019, p. 8-11.

¹⁰⁹ Chandra, "Neoclassical realist theory of international politics", p. 297.

¹¹⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro and. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 19.

claims that states may respond to the same external threat differently. At the same time, states have different abilities to extract and mobilize domestic resources to defend themselves.¹¹¹ In other words, states are not functionally the same and they cannot act as unitary rational actors to respond to the international constraints.

Fourthly, NCR stresses that states cannot always extract and mobilise their domestic resources adequately to respond to the international pressures due to the domestic constraints because there is no “perfectly flexible state” (as neorealists assert) to identify systemic stimuli perfectly and react to them urgently by mobilizing resources. When confronted with a fragmented or weak society, a state cannot respond to the external threat properly or in a different scenario when there isn’t a strong opposition, a state can take a fast decision to respond to the systemic stimuli properly.¹¹²

However, the neoclassical realists believe that threats and opportunities that arise in the international system primarily let states construct their foreign security policies.¹¹³ For example, the Arab Spring generated both threats and opportunities for the regional states. Qatari political leaders perceived it as an opportunity, which was more different than the neighbouring Gulf countries and tried to benefit from it. The Gulf countries such as the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain perceived the Arab Spring as a threat to their regime survival and regional stability. Then, the Qatari leadership manoeuvred against the regional dynamics without sensing any threat from their own society. Since they did not face a serious domestic constraint in the decision-making process, they managed to extract and mobilize their resources from the society and constructed a proactive foreign policy towards the regional challenge during the Arab Spring.

The third component of NCR is its liberal-oriented assumptions. The liberal perspective, which primarily emphasized the topics including joint security, democratization, self-determination and individual’s rationality, emerged in modern international relations. In other words, the idealistic view dominated the discipline after the First World War. Despite its idealistic views it could not foresee or prevent the outbreak of the Second World War.¹¹⁴ Subsequently, realism as a critique and alternative for liberalism became

¹¹¹ Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State”, *Security Studies*, 15: 3, July-September 2006, 464-495, p. 464-465.

¹¹² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 24-27.

¹¹³ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 19.

¹¹⁴ Aydın, “Uluslararası İlişkilerin “Gerçekçi” Teorisi: Kökeni, Kapsamı, Kritiği”, p. 34.

a dominant and explanatory theory during the bipolar Cold War years. On the other hand, NCR focuses on domestic factors in the explanation of foreign policy choice and connotes the liberal assumptions for the effects of domestic institutions and state-society relations. At this point, it benefits from liberalism rather than traditional realism. However, the NCR doesn't give a clear definition of the assumptions which it took from non-realist traditions/liberalism.¹¹⁵

The failure of realism and liberalism in explaining the reason why the Cold War ended paved the way for constructivist theory (the fourth component of NCR). Unlike the mainstream theories- realism and liberalism- which mainly holds material factors such as relative power and trade, constructivism largely focuses on the impact of ideas in international politics.¹¹⁶ While sharing realists' key assumptions,¹¹⁷ the constructivists defend that collective norms, rules, culture, social identities and elite beliefs shape the state behaviours. They also regard the political discourse, which is considered to reflect and shape beliefs and interests. In other words, a discourse can shape political actors' behaviours and interests. Additionally, constructivists focus on identities. At this point, Alexandre Wendt argues that interests largely depend on identities.¹¹⁸

NCR mainly benefits from the constructivists with regard to the formation of national collective identity.¹¹⁹ Collective identity brings about the formation of groups. As a social creature, the human being is inclined to form groups. The creation of in-group/out-group distinction, which is entailed by collective identity formation, bears resemblance to external relations as well as internal politics and competitions. From this perspective, tribalism is an unchangeable feature of the human experience and these groups are highly effective to shape and tie their individual members utilizing "social practices, institutions and common identities."¹²⁰ Tribalism is still an integral part of the social fabric in today's

¹¹⁵ Sears, p. 27-28.

¹¹⁶ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 40; Additionally, for the competing paradigms among realism, liberalism and constructivism, see the illustration. Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", **Foreign Policy**, No. 110, Special Edition: Frontiers of Knowledge, Spring, 1998, pp. 29-46, p. 38.

¹¹⁷ Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics", **International Security**, Vol. 20, No.1, Summer 1995, pp. 71-81, p. 72.

¹¹⁸ Alexandre Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", **International Organization**, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, pp. 391-425, p. 398.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Neoclassical realism and identity: peril despite profit across the Taiwan Strait", in Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 103.

¹²⁰ Sterling-Folker, p. 110.

Middle East even though it has successfully managed to adapt itself to the changes in the modern political and economic system.¹²¹

Constructivists discuss systemic structure as other realists, albeit differently. According to their assumptions, anarchy cannot solely explain the reason for the conflict between the sovereign states because it is much more important how anarchy is perceived. Wendt explains it as “anarchy is what states make of it.”¹²² or Onuf emphasizes it as “the world is what we take.”¹²³ From this perspective, constructivists think that the actors behave under what they see or perceive. Hence, how the actors perceive the truth is significant for power politics.¹²⁴ To shed a light on the rationale in the constructivist approach towards the interstate relations in the system, nation-states behave more differently towards their enemies than their friends because their friends don’t threaten them.¹²⁵

Advancement of a novel research program: NCR

Ripsman, Lobell and Taliaferro, pioneers of the neoclassical realist theory (NCR), openly argue that NCR finds broader and more powerful answers for the issues and events in international politics than its competitors.¹²⁶ Systemic pressures are to be filtered through intervening variables to construct a foreign policy choice. In this context, it is significant to open the black box to understand the key domestic actors’ preferences and alignments better.¹²⁷ In this regard, Fareed Zakaria suggests that we should count the domestic culture and individual decision-makers to analyse the foreign policy.¹²⁸ Accordingly, we can understand how domestic actors play a role in the process of foreign policy construction (Figure 2).

Furthermore, they relatively framed the theoretical assumptions and figured the NCR models of foreign policy as Type I, Type II and Type III (Figure 1 and 2). Thus, they attempted to create a new theoretical model which includes the international system, domestic-level intervening variables, national foreign policies and strategies. Using key

¹²¹ David Commins, **The Gulf States A Modern History**, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012, p. 295.

¹²² Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories”, p. 40-41.

¹²³ Nicholas Onuf, **World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations**, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989, p. 37.

¹²⁴ Samet Yüce, “The Role of Tourism in Turkic World in Terms of International Relations (IR): A Social Constructivist Approach”, **Uluslararası Türk Dünyası Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi**, Cilt: 1, No: 1, Nisan 2016, p. 67.

¹²⁵ Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics, p.397.

¹²⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro, and. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 7.

¹²⁷ Rose, p. 148.

¹²⁸ Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay”, **International Security**, Volume: 17, No. 1, Summer 1992, p. 197.

assumptions, they primarily underscore the key role of the domestic-level intervening variables in determining national responses to the international systemic stimuli.¹²⁹

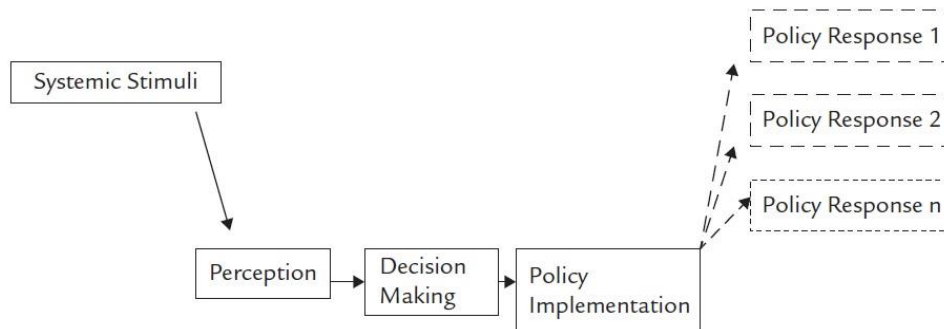


Figure 1. The Types I and II NCR Model of Foreign Policy.¹³⁰

In Type I, they urge that the NCR is a guide to explain anomalies or pathologies. Also, in Type II, they urge that it is a sufficient theory to elucidate a broader range of foreign policy preferences and grand strategic adjustments.¹³¹ Moreover, using these two types, they desire to display the distinction, anomalies and domestic variables.¹³² Based on this NCR model (Figure 1), the NCR scholars simply try to demonstrate the policy making process from the perception of the systemic stimuli until the policy responses. In this regard, the model indicates that states respond to the systemic stimuli through a domestic political mechanism. Systemic stimuli are first perceived. Then, the decision-making and policy implementation process shape the policy responses.

¹²⁹ Michael Baun and Dan Marek, “Making Europe Defend Again: The Relaunch of European Defense Cooperation from a Neoclassical Realist Perspective”, *Czech Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2019, p. 31-32.

¹³⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, 2016, p. 31.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 28-29.

¹³² Nicholas Ross Smith, “Can Neoclassical Realism Become a Genuine Theory of International Relations?”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 2018, 742-749, p. 746.

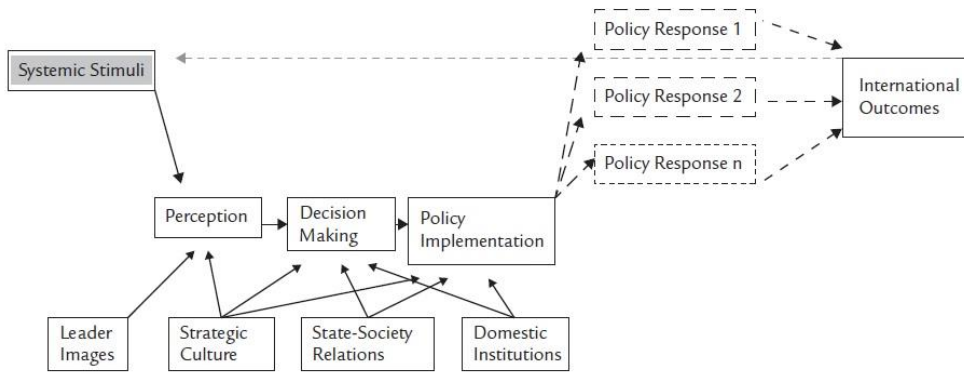


Figure 2. Type III Neoclassical Realist Model¹³³

In Type III (Figure 2), the NCR scholars endeavour to prove that their novel theory produces a larger explanation to the phenomena in international relations by adding domestic intervening variables. These variables impact decision making and policy implementation. In this way, the variables ultimately help shape the policy responses against the systemic stimuli. Depending on this new advanced model, the neoclassical realists openly assert that they have constructed a comprehensive theory to explain a broader range of phenomena from short-term behaviours of states to their long-term behaviours in their foreign and defence policies as well as systemic changes and international outcomes.¹³⁴

Additionally, they have brought the state back into the realist analysis.¹³⁵ NCR defends that domestic politics highly influence the states' behaviours in the system.¹³⁶ In line with this, it incorporates structural and domestic factors to pursue a foreign policy.¹³⁷ Briefly, NCR highlights that evaluating international conditions, domestic political possibilities and constraints together will explain the states' behaviours better.¹³⁸

On the other hand, the NCR scholars seek to find out a proper answer for the question of whether NCR is only applicable to the great powers or if it can be used to effectively

¹³³ Ripsman, Taliaferro and. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 34.

¹³⁴ Smith, p. 746-747; Ripsman, Taliaferro and. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 187-188.

¹³⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 31.

¹³⁶ James Adam Oswell, "Opening the Black Box: An Examination of Structural Realist and Neoclassical Realist Explanation of Foreign Policy", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta, Fall 2013, p. 26.

¹³⁷ Sears, p. 22.

¹³⁸ Ali Balcı, "Realism", in Şaban Kardaş and Ali Balcı (Eds.), **Uluslararası İlişkilere Giriş Tarih, Teori, Kavram ve Konular**, Dördüncü Baskı, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014, p. 141.

analyse middle and small powers as well. They reply that their theory deals not only with grand powers but also middle powers and small powers.¹³⁹ That is to say, this theory can be applied to the small states just like the small Gulf states including Qatar. In answering how a small state such as Qatar became an influential actor in the regional order of the Middle East since the Arab Spring (one of the core puzzles in my research), I will evaluate systemic stimuli and domestic factors together in my research. Therefore, I should also get into the black box and focus on the intervening variables (leader's image, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions) to evaluate Qatar's responses to the regional challenges since 2010. Consequently, NCR obviously presents a comprehensive theoretical framework to analyse the individual states' foreign policy behaviours.¹⁴⁰

Power also matters

In the anarchic and self-help international system, states need power primarily to ensure their security, to eliminate a threat, to survive, to seize an opportunity, protect their interests and in a broader sense to affect others' behaviours. Thus, they can use their military and economic power (tangible/immaterial capabilities) as well as their culture, values and policies (intangible/immaterial capabilities) in order to achieve the desired outcomes.¹⁴¹ Similarly, they exert their material and non-material capabilities to change and shape others' behaviours and ultimately reach their objectives.¹⁴² Further, if they have the sufficient capacity to combine material and immaterial power instruments, they choose "smart power" (combined capability) to promote their national interest or achieve their purpose.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and. Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 182-183.

¹⁴⁰ Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis", in Annette Freyberg-Inan, Ewan Harrison and Patrick James (Eds.), **Rethinking Realism in International Relations Between Tradition and Innovation**, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, p. 137.

¹⁴¹ Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power", **The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 616, Public Diplomacy in a Changing World, March 2008, pp. 94-109, p. 94; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 105, No. 2, Summer 1990, pp. 177-192, p. 177-183; Also, Felix Berenskoetter and Adam Quinn attempt to employ soft power in terms of the influence of ideas in their study. In this regard see Felix Berenskoetter and Adam Quinn, "Hegemony by invitation: neoclassical realism, soft power and US-European relations", in Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz (Eds.), **Neoclassical realism in European politics Bringing power back in**, Manchester and New York: Manchester University, 2012, pp. 214-233.

¹⁴² Pinar Bilgin and Berivan Eliş, "Hard Power, Soft Power: Toward a More Realistic Power Analysis", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 10, No.2, 2008, pp. 5-20, p. 11.

¹⁴³ Ernest J. Wilson III, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power", **The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science**, Vol. 616, **Public Diplomacy in a Changing World**, March 2008, pp. 110-124, p. 115.

In constructing a foreign policy, NCR does not reject that power capabilities are also important. Similar to the other realists, it defends that the state is the basic unit in the anarchic international system and power is the central instrument for world politics.¹⁴⁴ Even further, they defend that military power is the only way to survive. However, it is not decisive on its own. Instead, various supportive factors such as economic strength and human potential are required to maintain its military power.¹⁴⁵ In line with this understanding, states prefer to use their military power as the last option because military intervention today costs much more.¹⁴⁶ Instead, states may prefer non-material powers in international politics. Additionally, non-material factors, which assure a decisive advantage, can play an important role to change the outcomes.¹⁴⁷ In this context, national image, public support and leadership gain weight in world politics. Also, this kind of power helps small states to become more powerful in the international arena.¹⁴⁸

Also, NCR sees other power generating dynamics at the domestic level in the context of state power. It focuses on domestic factors such as ideology, state-society relations as power generating domestic resources.¹⁴⁹ More significantly, Taliaferro defines the power (as state power) as the ability of states to extract and mobilize domestic resources to respond to perceived threats and opportunities.¹⁵⁰ Against this theoretical background, NCR has a slightly different approach to the understanding of power because NCR adopts that domestic factors such as ideas, state-society relation, societal forces, elite power also play a significant role in the composition of state power. Ultimately, the neoclassical definition of power explains how power differs from troops and missiles. They believe that power is much more than material resources such as the number of troops and missiles.¹⁵¹ In another word, individual states own different amounts of state power.¹⁵² Thus, it highlights domestic factors to display the state power or/and the effect of extraction and mobilization of the resources from the domestic society. For example, if

¹⁴⁴ Sears, "The neoclassical realist research program: Between progressive promise and degenerative dangers", p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Balci, "Realism", p. 126.

¹⁴⁶ Colin Dueck, "Neoclassical realism and the national interest presidents, domestic politics and major military interventions", in Stephen E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Eds.), **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 146; Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Soft Power", **Foreign Policy**, No. 80, Twentieth Anniversary, Autumn 1990, pp. 153-171, p. 154-157.

¹⁴⁷ Mearsheimer, **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, p.58.

¹⁴⁸ Nye Jr., "Soft Power", p. 160.

¹⁴⁹ Oswell, 2013, p. 35.

¹⁵⁰ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 486.

¹⁵¹ Oswell, 2013, p. 29.

¹⁵² Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 485.

the state cannot effectively mobilize its people or utilize its resources, it will appear to be weaker. On the other hand, the states which manage to mobilize the societal forces efficiently appear to be stronger than perceived.¹⁵³

Even more importantly, NCR counts the leaders' perception to explain the state's behaviours.¹⁵⁴ In a broader sense, the Foreign Policy Executives (FPEs)¹⁵⁵ make foreign policy choices relying on their perceptions and calculations of relative power and other states' intentions.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, they should have sufficient wisdom to be aware of the limitations of the power instruments. In essence, the decision-makers should know when to use their power (either material or immaterial capabilities) to achieve their strategic goals.¹⁵⁷ In this regard, the politico-military institutions of states as an essential part of state power influence the ability of the FPEs to extract and mobilize the domestic resources/state power derived from domestic society.¹⁵⁸

Last but not least, NCR has an eclectic theoretical approach, which means a tendency to use multiple variables or theories-even competing ones or ideas from diverse sources to elucidate a phenomenon or event.¹⁵⁹ It examines international relations through "a plural perspective" by combining system, structure and domestic politics which derive from material and ideational factors.¹⁶⁰ This is more likely to increase its explanatory power rather than the alternative theories.¹⁶¹

1.2. Alliance in Theories

In International Relations (IR) states do not stand on their own. Instead, they interact with other states. In order to meet the expectations of the system or to withstand the systemic pressure, states cooperate with each other in terms of alliance-building such as

¹⁵³ Oswell, 2013, p. 29.

¹⁵⁴ Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities", p. 641.

¹⁵⁵ Neoclassical realists name the individuals such as President, Prime Minister, dictator, and key cabinet members, ministers and advisors who charged with the conduct of foreign and defense policies as the Foreign Policy Executives (FPEs). Thus, I will call them as FPEs. Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 61.

¹⁵⁶ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 485-486; Rose, p. 147.

¹⁵⁷ Ernest J. Wilson III, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power", p. 113-116.

¹⁵⁸ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 487.

¹⁵⁹ Chandra, "Neoclassical realist theory of international politics", p. 299; Sears, p. 21.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation", **Review of International Studies**, 36(1), 2010, 117-143, p. 119.

¹⁶¹ Smith, p. 747.

bandwagoning and so on. Against this background, it is essential to dig for alliance theories.

The neoclassical realists have added valuable studies to alliance-building with different perspectives. Randall L. Schweller stands against the key prediction of neorealism that states will balance against the threatening increases of power in the system by forming alliances or building arms or both. Depending on the historical records, he contends that instead, states choose bandwagoning, buck-passing, appeasement or any other way in their response to the threat. Also, he underscores that if the leaders can not recognize the external threats, they will not respond to them. Then, this will create consequences for the states.¹⁶² Schweller also developed “balance of interests” as an alternative theory of alliances at the systemic and unit level. In his study, he mainly urges that states are driven to bandwagon for profit rather than security.¹⁶³ On the other hand, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro discusses the puzzle in IR that the great powers often undertake risky military interventions in the periphery regions, even they continue their failing interventions despite their high costs at home and abroad.¹⁶⁴

However, Qatar’s alliance relations with the regional and international actors vary due to its security concerns and political agenda. At this point, the research also needs to investigate the other alliance theories and perspectives for a better analysis. The following pages will enlighten the concept of alliance building in the realm of realism.

Security is the main motivation for the states’ cooperation. Thus, in an alliance formation, two or more states have formal or informal commitments for their security cooperation.¹⁶⁵ In these relationships, states can act in terms of ensuring their security or the security of the allied state and thereby meet security demands. In a broader sense, states can establish alliances with other states mainly with the aim of ensuring security, counteracting a strong threat together and balancing regional or international powers. In line with this rationale, Stephen M. Walt claims that states join an alliance to avoid being dominated by stronger

¹⁶² Randall L. Schweller, “Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing”, **International Security**, 29:2, pp. 159-201, Fall 2004.

¹⁶³ Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in”, pp. 72-107.

¹⁶⁴ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, **Balancing Risks: Great Power Intervention in the Periphery**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “Power Politics and the Balance of Risk: Hypotheses on Great Power Intervention in the Periphery”, **Political Psychology**, Vol. 25, No. 2, 2004.

¹⁶⁵ Stephen M. Walt, **The Origins of Alliances**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 1; Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse”, **Survival**, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 156-179, p. 157.

powers or they join alliances to protect themselves from the threat of the robust resources of the other states or coalitions.¹⁶⁶ From this, we can conclude that in international alliances states unite under formal or informal forms against a common threat and commit to fighting against it.

In addition to the balance of power, states concern polarity. Similarly, alliances are concerned with the structure of the international system. The structure of the international system can affect alliances, especially when it comes to the balancing game.¹⁶⁷ During the Cold War era, the system was bipolar and there were two main blocks led by the superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union. This resulted in states being positioned in one of the competing blocks, either on the US's side or the Soviet Union's side.¹⁶⁸ Their power equilibrium was almost equal and they suspiciously checked each other. States felt more secure under the security umbrella of a superpower. In this context, Waltz urges that the bipolar system is more stable than the multipolar system.¹⁶⁹ Mearsheimer shares the same opinion by underlining that the multipolar international system is inclined to the war more than the bipolar international system because the system is dominated by more powerful states, which ultimately desire to be the hegemon of the system.¹⁷⁰ In the post-Cold War era, the US remained the sole hegemon state due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and came to a decisive position as the sole dominant actor of the international system. In other words, the world order was re-established under the US leadership. Overall, the US became the dominant power in the international system with no other state left to balance it.

After the great shift, the stability of the unipolar international system became a common debate between the balance of power theorists and power preponderance and hegemonic stability theorists.¹⁷¹ The neoclassical realists mediate by arguing that a domestically unconstrained unipolar system would be threatening, as the balance of power pundits predict, as well as imbue fear and balancing. Contrary to that, domestically constrained

¹⁶⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1985, pp. 3-43, p. 5; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain gangs and passed bucks: predicting alliance patterns in multipolarity", *International Organisation*, Volume: 44, No: 2, Spring 1990, p. 140.

¹⁶⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No.1, 2000, pp. 5-41, p. 18.

¹⁶⁹ Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories", p. 31; Christensen and Snyder, "Chain gangs and passed bucks: predicting alliance patterns in multipolarity", p. 142.

¹⁷⁰ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 4-5.

¹⁷¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 14.

hegemon would be much less threatening and might imbue alliance as power preponderance and hegemonic stability pundits predict.¹⁷²

Tracing the rationale between the alliance building and polarity, found in the old multipolar international system, states with different power capabilities form alliances. However, states are unsure about others in the system due to the existence of many states and their strategic interests.¹⁷³ This implies that the distinction between friend and enemy is unclear in the system but states focus on their interests. British former Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston openly explains this distinction with his historic words: “We (Britons) have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”¹⁷⁴ Likewise, Mearsheimer urges that contemporary alliances are not formed for long-term relationships due to the self-help world. Each state sees itself as alone and depends on its own power, seeking only to provide for its survival and interests. Thus, they build short time alliances with the understanding that “...alliances are only contemporary marriages of convenience. Today’s alliance partner might be tomorrow’s enemy, and today’s enemy might be tomorrow’s alliance partner.”¹⁷⁵ It seems that this perspective hasn’t changed much in terms of international relations so far, as states continue to focus selfishly on their interests and mainly rely on their own resources.

With regard to alliance-building in the multipolar system, which is dominated by at least three or more great powers, states have different options for alliance behaviour: they can choose a survival strategy such as external and internal balancing, bandwagoning, buck-passing, appeasement, hiding from threats, and preventive war.¹⁷⁶ The members of such an alliance with almost relative equality have much more security interdependence because their security becomes tied with the other members. This is a behaviour of a chain gang. Also, in this system, some states are willing to pass the buck as they want to avoid

¹⁷² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 14.

¹⁷³ Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, p.19; Glenn H. Snyder, “Review: Alliances, Balance, and Stability”, **International Organization**, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 121-142, p.124.

¹⁷⁴ Susan Ratcliffe (Ed.), **Oxford Essential Quotations**, Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2016, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/search?source=%2F10.1093%2Facref%2F9780191826719.001.0001%2Facref-9780191826719&q=lord+palmerston>, (10 March 2021).

¹⁷⁵ Mearsheimer, **The Tragedy of Great Power Politics**, p. 33.

¹⁷⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 18.

unnecessary costs or to strengthen their relative position by putting distance between themselves and the other powers.

In bipolarity, however, superpowers do not prefer chain gangs and buck-passing as they are not dependent on the small and reckless allies for their survival and more importantly their allies cannot stand up to the adversaries on their own.¹⁷⁷ Overall, the gang chain and buck-passing mostly fit to the multipolar environment rather than the bipolar one.

In the great powers-dominated international system, great powers drive the small and medium states to ally. In this regard, Walt claims that the weaker states seek to ally with the stronger ones as strength attracts states.¹⁷⁸ In case of a decline of strength or relative position, states are likely to lose their allies.¹⁷⁹ At this point, it turns out that power is an important component of alliance choice because we see that states seek to ally with the more powerful states in the hope that the powerful states will contribute more to them.¹⁸⁰

It is also important to highlight that common interests are the initial impetus for the states to form an alliance. With the formation of an alliance, more common strategic interests emerge and the parties identify themselves as friends and others as enemies.¹⁸¹ Because the states obviously chase their national interests, the primary purpose of an alliance-building between the states mostly aims to unite their capabilities to protect their mutual interests.¹⁸² States participate or do not participate in alliances after making a profit-loss calculation: when states consider that their profits are higher, they usually enter into an alliance relationship with other states.¹⁸³

Realists consider that bandwagoning strategy is the best alternative when balancing does not occur.¹⁸⁴ States may opt for "bandwagoning" policy in order to sustain their independence in the face of potential danger, in other words, due to defensive or offensive reasons.¹⁸⁵ It is a policy favoured by the states with limited capabilities for balancing

¹⁷⁷ Christensen and Snyder, p. 140.

¹⁷⁸ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 20.

¹⁷⁹ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", **International Security**, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1985, pp. 3-43, p. 7.

¹⁸⁰ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 14.

¹⁸¹ Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, p. 25.

¹⁸² Walt, "Why Alliance Endure or Collapse", p. 157.

¹⁸³ Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, p. 25.

¹⁸⁴ Erdem Özlük, "Dengeleme mi Peşine Takılmak mı?: Dış Politika Stratejilerini Yeniden Düşünmek", **Gazi Akademik Bakış**, Cilt: 10, Sayı: 20, 2017, p. 248.

¹⁸⁵ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 9.

which hope to give up their alliance later.¹⁸⁶ Against this, the international system forces small states to choose an alliance with a powerful state, small or weak states try to carry out such policies by positioning themselves behind powerful states. However, a state does not necessarily have to be small or relatively weak in order to form an alliance. Sometimes, a strong state may choose an alliance with weak states to establish a power balance, which generally happens when a strong state backs a weak one against its adversaries. Such an alliance commitment increases the stronger state's influence within the alliance as the weak state/coalition requires much more assistance than the stronger state in the system.¹⁸⁷

Walt argues that the states generally prefer to balance against the external threat rather than bandwagon it.¹⁸⁸ However, Schweller does not agree with the states' general preference of balancing rather than bandwagoning. He explicates that Walt uses these two terms- balancing and bandwagoning- as opposite ideas just like if you don't defeat them, ally with them.¹⁸⁹ In fact, they are not opposite but fundamentally different choices. States have various reasons to prefer balancing or bandwagoning behaviours, but the constant motivation for such behaviours depends on calculations of losses/costs and gains. In this regard, states desire either to avoid losses/costs by balancing or to make gains by bandwagoning.¹⁹⁰

Small states that establish international or regional alliances instead of bandwagoning a potent or hegemonic state have the potential to direct other alliance members in the line of their interests. On the other hand, when a small state bandwagons, powerful states will lead more causing small states to be more influenced. From this perspective, states desire to be able to act more independently and effectively with their alliances and to take a stronger and more effective position in regional and international politics with the help of their alliances. If the state bandwagons the hegemon state, it will have to be under the influence of the hegemon which will bring some restrictions to its actions/policies.

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2000, pp. 5-41, p. 38.

¹⁸⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliance*, p. 18-19.

¹⁸⁸ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ However, Schweller claims that "the question of whether balancing is more common than bandwagoning is a misleading one. They are not opposite behaviors. The motivation for bandwagoning is fundamentally different from that of balancing. Bandwagoning is commonly done in the expectation of making gains; balancing is done for security and it always entails cost." See Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", p. 81-106.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Although independent states do not desire to lose their freedom of action or to be stuck in the sphere of the hegemon's influence, relatively weaker states often use this strategy because they do not have the capacity for balancing and are more vulnerable to pressure.¹⁹¹

In fact, bandwagoning strategy is actually more related to the distribution of capabilities in the international or regional system rather than the state itself. Small and medium states have limited capacity to balance relatively powerful states or hegemons. With this strategy (bandwagoning), which is defined as taking the stronger side, states can choose to protect themselves.¹⁹² For example, in the regional system of the Middle East, the states are mostly weak and vulnerable. They often bandwagon the hegemon/superpowers, especially the US, to make profits/gains. In return, the US provides security for the regional states against external threats which increases their dependence on the US. To put it clearly, Middle Eastern states frequently tend to form alliances against the perceived threat from nearby regional states. While the superpowers seek to balance each other, the Middle Eastern states are mainly interested in threats from proximate power, thereby demonstrating that regional states perceive that their neighbours pose the most imminent threats to their security.¹⁹³

As mentioned earlier, Walt claims that states choose the alignment to balance a threat. This is shown in his "balance-of-threat theory", which argues that a state poses a threat to others due to its geographic proximity, aggregate power, offensive capability, perception of aggressive intentions. Thus, the states/state leaders which perceive the external threat prefer to align with another state or other states to maintain their survival. It is also significant for the states and state leaders to decide when and with whom to ally.¹⁹⁴ More notably, on survival strategies, NCR defends that the strategic environment (permissive and restrictive) affects the threatened states' responses to the challenges. The FPEs navigate the strategic environment and choose balancing or other suitable strategies

¹⁹¹ Özlük, "Dengeleme mi Peşine Takılmak mı?: Dış Politika Stratejilerini Yeniden Düşünmek", p. 250; Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 173.

¹⁹² Özlük, p. 246-248.

¹⁹³ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 148-164.

¹⁹⁴ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p.21-22.

under the permissive environment while they tend to balance or bandwagon under the restrictive environment.¹⁹⁵

Walt also mentions a hypothesis that the provision of economic or military assistance/aid will generate beneficial allies/alliances.¹⁹⁶ In fact, foreign aids are a significant tool for superpower diplomacy to affect the weak states in their alliance behaviour. For instance, the rich Gulf countries prefer to provide economic and military aids for the weak neighbouring countries. The donors in the region enjoy backing their clients, generally friendly regimes or expected to become, by generous aids. Against the common belief, Walt reveals in his study that foreign aids including military and economic aids create a relatively little impact on the alliance choices. Instead, he believes that foreign aids are more important for the established alliances because they can effectively strengthen the existing alliances as well as changing the positions of the alliance members. Thus, states can consolidate their unity and increase their strength against others through material assistance within the alliance. Providing foreign aid can also lead to an effective alliance relation if depends on a shared political interest.¹⁹⁷

One of the prime goals of the alliance behaviour is to balance regional and international forces. In another word, the balance of power among the states motivates states to make alliances. We should consider the reason why power must be balanced. According to Kenneth W. Waltz, whoever holds unbalanced power poses a potential danger to others, and strong states in international politics encourage or lead others to balance that power.¹⁹⁸ Unbalanced power threatens the survival of less powerful actors in the system.¹⁹⁹ Individual actors align themselves with others via this motive and strive to balance regional or international power. In this context, Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 opened up more space for Russia to counterbalance the USA in the region and safeguard its traditional ally-the Bashar al Assad regime. Russia's military intervention prevented the US from acting as the sole force in the region as it had

¹⁹⁵ Chandra, "Neoclassical realist theory of international politics", p. 298.

¹⁹⁶ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 27.

¹⁹⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliance*, p. 221-242.

¹⁹⁸ Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after Cold War, p. 28.

¹⁹⁹ John S. Duffield, Cynthia Michota and Sara Ann Miller, "Alliances", in Paul D. Williams (Ed.), *Security Studies: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 296.

before.²⁰⁰ Also, the balance of power theory contends that threatened states accumulate power and forge counterbalancing alliances to balance power.

Another question for the alliance relations is when the alliances end or sustain. An alliance may end as one or more members don't have any interests in it any longer or domestic politics and misperception of the political elites may end the alliance relations. The same factors may sustain the alliance. In a broader sense, the existing alliance will deteriorate or dissolve because of changing perception of threat, declining credibility, and domestic politics.²⁰¹ Additionally, the changes in the distribution of power in the system jeopardize the ongoing alliances.²⁰² On the contrary, the alliances will survive owing to hegemonic leadership, preserving credibility, domestic politics and elite manipulation, the impact of institutionalisation, ideological solidarity, shared identities and 'security communities'. Domestic preferences or external changes may lead the states to end the existing alliances and seek new commitments or arrangements between the states. Additionally, the leaders who seek to minimize the unpredictability can help the persistence of the existing alliance despite the internal or external shifts.²⁰³ Overall, structural pressure and domestic factors will affect alliance policy/building.

Upon giving the theoretical base of the study, the next chapter will start to analyse the systemic level during the Arab Spring and the regional order of the Middle East.

²⁰⁰ Samet Yüce, "Rusya'nın Suriye'deki Varlığının Nedenleri", **Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, Sayı: 11, Ocak 2016, pp. 269-289, p. 273-274.

²⁰¹ Walt, "Why Alliance Endure or Collapse", p. 156-164.

²⁰² Duffield, Michota and Miller, p. 296.

²⁰³ Walt, "Why Alliance Endure or Collapse", p. 164-170.

CHAPTER 2: THE ARAB SPRING AND REGIONAL ORDER OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Introduction

The NCR considers the effect of the systemic factors in their analysis by emphasizing that in an anarchic and self-help system states focus on the systemic stimuli and craft their foreign policies to respond to them appropriately and/or secure themselves. Also, the neoclassical realists employ domestic factors to shed light on their systemic analysis. Moreover, they defend different actors ranging from individual states to individual firms that interact in the system although they mainly depend on a conception of a state-centric system.²⁰⁴ To this end, this chapter aims to reveal the systemic effect of the Arab Spring on specifically the regional order of the Middle East as highlighted in NCR theory. In this way, we will understand better the opportunities and threats that emerged during the Arab Spring from the perspective of Qatar. In line with this, the Arab Spring will be explained and its effects will be uncovered firstly. Then, colonial background, regional order, security concerns and political system in the Middle East will be given.

First of all, it is sufficient to have a look at the pre-regional order to analyse the unfolding regional order of the Middle East during the Arab Spring and after. Thus, we should trace the roots of the traditional regional order of the Middle East with its colonial background as well. The colonial countries ruled the regional countries, in other words, the Middle East for a long time following their core objectives including exploitation of the rich energy sources in the region. Against this background, the Gulf states which gained their independence roughly in the second half of the 20th century appear to have permanent links with their old patrons and share vital and controversial issues which have remained in their interstate relations and domestic politics since colonial times.

During the Cold War era, there were two dominant powers, the US and the Soviet Union in the international system. They used to provide a security guarantee for the weak states. The Middle East also depended on the same pattern. Since there were fragile states in the region, the presence of outside powers was generally welcomed. To be precise, patron-client relations were in question in the region. The Middle Eastern states relied on either the US or the Soviet Union in their regional and international politics. Particularly the

²⁰⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 20-35.

Gulf states had strong ties with the US. They were under the security umbrella of the US. When the Cold War ended in 1990, the bipolar regional system shifted as well. The US consolidated its power in the region.²⁰⁵ It remained the sole dominant power in the Middle East with the commitment to ensuring survival and security in the region. In this regard, The US intervened in Iraq after the Saddam regime invaded Kuwait in 2003. It tried to bring stability to the region as well as refraining Iraq's territorial expansion.

Then, the Arab Spring uprisings started in Tunisia in 2010 and expeditiously extended to other countries throughout the region. The local people mainly expected political reforms, social justice and good governance from their regimes during the popular protests.²⁰⁶ At this point, the Arab Spring was a regional challenge that the strong wave of anti-government protests for more social equity and stronger economic development resulted in political changes in the regional states.²⁰⁷ NCR asserts that states build their foreign security policies by counting threats and opportunities in the system.²⁰⁸ The regional states responded to the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities) through their own capabilities and alliances to ensure their regime survival.²⁰⁹ However, the response of some to this systemic pressure was unavailing because the uprisings forced to shift the regional dynamics including regime changes in the region. More significantly, the regional order of the Middle East²¹⁰ faced particular challenges emanated from the Arab Spring due to the emergence of the TR and QA-led camp, augmentation of the sectarian

²⁰⁵ Anwar M. Gargash, "Prospects for Conflict and Cooperation: The Gulf Toward the Year 2000" in Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (Eds.), **The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essay in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 320.

²⁰⁶ Philipp O. Amour, "Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction", in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Middle East reloaded: revolutionary changes, power Dynamics, and regional rivalries since the Arab Spring**, London-Washington: Academica Press; 2018, p. 200; Margareta Drzeniek Hanouz and Miroslav Dusek, "A Time of Opportunities: The Competitiveness Performance of the Arab World", **Arab World Competitiveness Report 2011-2012**, Geneva: the World Economic Forum and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), p. 9.

²⁰⁷ Hanouz and Dusek, p.9.

²⁰⁸ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 19.

²⁰⁹ The regional system incorporates state and non-state actors which interact with each other in various forms. See the theoretical approach to the regional system in the Gulf region and the broader Middle East in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

²¹⁰ The regional order is defined as "a set of formal or informal arrangements that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within a regional system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals. These arrangements are generally based on values and translated into norms, institutions and international regimes." Eduard Soler i Lecha et al., "Re-Conceptualizing Orders in the Mena Region", **Methodology and Concept Papers**, MENARA, No. 1, November 2016, p. 111; "Rather, regional order signifies varied forms of interactions, negotiations, common assumptions or even shared norms and institutions among the actors of a given region", Raffaella A. Del Sarto, Helle Malmvig and Eduard Soler i Lecha, "Interregnum: The regional order in the Middle East and North Africa after 2011", **MENARA Final Reports**, No. 1, February 2019. https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_fr_1.pdf. (11 August 2021).

conflict, the increasing influence of non-state actors, the shift of powerhouses (rise of Russia's regional influence), the growing rivalry between the Iran- led camp and the KSA- led camp in the region. More accurately, the interactions of the regional and international powerhouses created polarization, rivalry, conflict and alienation in the region.²¹¹ Against this background, the Arab Spring mainly had three impacts:

Firstly, the popular uprisings triggered changes in the regional balance of power among the states in the Middle East. The uprisings managed to change the long-standing regimes and their leadership of the regional states such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen while leaving a chaotic environment and impotent leadership in Syria. However, the major regional powers such as the KSA, Iran, Turkey and Israel tried to strengthen their positions in the regional order via their own capabilities and alliances.²¹² Thus, the intolerable regional challenge and competition among the regional powers affected the current equilibrium in power in the region. Furthermore, the regional order of the Middle East became vulnerable to the external forces' interventions as well. Russia, which remained far from being a dominant power in the system for a long time, re-positioned itself again and was involved in the regional issues to balance the US. It backed the Bashar al-Assad regime after the popular uprising and escalation of the conflicts in the region after the Arab Spring.²¹³

Secondly, the Arab Spring generated both opportunities and threats for the regional states. The states respond to this regional challenge regarding their leaders' perception of systemic stimuli and political calculations.²¹⁴ Hence, the Gulf states were particularly responsive to the challenge. The KSA- led camp sought to preserve the status quo in the region as the leadership/FPEs perceived the uprisings as a threat to the regional stability or regime security.²¹⁵ Additionally, they calculated that the rise of the Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the domestic politics of the transition countries would be a benefit to the Iran- led camp. On the other hand, the TR and QA- led camp strengthened their position by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in regional politics.

²¹¹ Amour, **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, p. 9.

²¹² Mehran Kamrava, "Hierarchy and instability in the Middle East Regional Order", **International Studies Journal (ISJ)**, 14(4), Spring 2018, pp.1-36, p. 2-4.

²¹³ Samet Yüce and Philipp O. Amour, "Russia is Back to the Balancing Game", **Gazi Akademik Bakış**, Cilt: 14, Sayı: 28, Yaz 2021, 43-66, p. 51-53.

²¹⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 20-21.

²¹⁵ Berger, p. 262.

Thus, the change in the regional dynamics of the Middle East during the Arab Spring opened a new window for, the TR and QA- led camp/ the elected-reformist camp. Particularly Qatar highly benefited from the uprisings and increased its influence over the countries in transition such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

The KSA-led camp sought to balance Qatar as it relatively increased its sphere of influence in the region. Thus, they supported the counterrevolutions along the region. For instance, in Egypt, the democratically elected Morsi government was ended by a military coup of General Sisi in 2013. The KSA-led camp backed the new government economically and politically.²¹⁶ After that, the tension between Qatar and the KSA- led camp was escalated. They imposed a blockade on Qatar in 2014 by drawing their diplomats from Doha.

When the new Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Haman al Thani, came to office in 2013, he attempted to restore the ties with the neighbouring countries including Egypt. He even deported some MB members out of the country to relieve Riyadh on one of the controversial issues between the two states. The Qatari leadership acted in the political line with the KSA on some regional issues such as Syria and Yemen. Qatar, however, under the new leadership couldn't manage to establish a better and promising relationship with the KSA.

Thirdly, the uprisings inflamed mistrust and antagonism among the regional states in the present anarchic regional arena.²¹⁷ In fact, the traditional rivals Iran and the KSA sought to increase their sphere of influence along the region. The uprisings in the Gulf region were basically tied with the Iranian regional expansion. Thus, the Gulf states openly accused Iran of fuelling the tension in the region over the Shia population. Moreover, identity politics and sectarianism have risen in the region since the Arab Spring. Such politics has galvanized and popularized the radicalism and violence of the terrorist groups in the region.²¹⁸ Consequently, the Arab Spring was a great challenge that caused a

²¹⁶ Oz Hassan, "Undermining the transatlantic democracy agenda? The Arab Spring and Saudi Arabia's counteracting democracy strategy", *Democratization*, 22:3, 2015, 479-495, p. 486-487; Ali Bakir, "The Evolution of Turkey-Qatar Relations Amid a Growing Gulf Divide", in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), *Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 204.

²¹⁷ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 293.

²¹⁸ Mehran Kamrava, *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015, p. 143.

transformation of the long-termed regional order by generating bipolar rivalries, counterrevolutions and novel alliances in the region.²¹⁹

2.1. Colonial Background in the Middle East

The British Empire's formal ties with the Gulf sheikhdoms go back to the early decades of the 1800s as it had a significant dominion in India and key interests around the Gulf region.²²⁰ The NCR underscores the significance of geography for the units.²²¹ The geo-position of the Gulf region increased its value for the rival states. As an opportunity emerged in the system through the late 1800s, Britain focused on the Gulf with the political and security motivation to broaden its regional position and protect its interests. It gradually increased its influence over the Gulf Arab sheikhs, chiefly Bahraini sheikh, via mutual treaties. More prominently, in 1892, Britain signed a new treaty with Bahrain to further its influence over the emirate. By doing so, the British Empire committed to defence the Bahraini ruler against external threats while binding him to the Empire.²²² Likewise, Britain's sphere of influence increased in the region.²²³

The states' positions and relative material capabilities shape their foreign policy behaviours in the system.²²⁴ The Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, sought to preserve its influence in the region, albeit Britain's enticement. Yet, it entirely lost its long-standing administrative, military and political control over its territories in the Middle East in the post-First World War. Instead, France and the British Empire dominated the region. Relying on their colonial experience, they adopted their own political design to shape and rule their shares (fundamentally agreed by the 1915 Sykes-Picot Secret Agreement) in the region. Given the shift in the regional balance of power after the First World War, the British Empire gained complete control over the Arab rulers not only in the Gulf region but also Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine.

²¹⁹ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 293.

²²⁰ Valentina Mirabella, "When Maritime Protection Is Not Enough: Britain's Agreement to Protect Qatar's Borders at Sea and On Land", **Qatar Digital Library**, <https://www.qdl.qa/en/when-maritime-protection-not-enough-britain's-agreement-protect-qatar's-borders-sea-and-land>, (27 May 2021).

²²¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 40-42.

²²² J. C. Hurewitz, **Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Document Record: 1535-1914**, Vol. I, Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956, p. 194-209.

²²³ <https://live1b.nationalarchives.gov.uk/first-world-war/a-global-view/the-middle-east/trucial-states/>, (15 May 2021).

²²⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 56.

During Britain's dominance over the Gulf sheikhdoms, the role of ruling families was formalised and their internal legitimacy was strengthened by the British authority.²²⁵ This means that mainly Britain as an external power or an imperial power shaped the fundamental patterns of state formation in the Gulf countries and conducted their state-building.²²⁶ The political and economic structure, as well as the security system in the Gulf, were basically shaped under Britain's regional interests and objectives.²²⁷ Yet, the legacy on the regional distribution of power and regime structure left the regional environment prone to instability and conflict.²²⁸ To put it differently, Britain's clout created a systemic and state-level weakness in the regional order of the Middle East. Thus, we should regard the interactions of the regional state with their old patrons and the effects of the traditional institutions over the contemporary rentier Gulf monarchies to see the recent effects of their colonial past. Although the states in the Middle East gained their independence, we still encounter not only the significant traces of their colonial past in either domestic or regional issues but also their predominant ties with their former patrons.²²⁹ Finally, navigating historical ties will help us to find comprehensive answers for the reasons for the shifts in the regional order and to have a better analysis of the regional dynamics.

The colonial interference affected the regional dynamics. The anti-colonial struggle was enhanced through Arab nationalism/pan Arabism roughly from the 1950s to the end of the 1960s by weakening the British hegemony in the region.²³⁰ Even if an ideological reaction known as Arab nationalism toward the colonial patrons had developed all throughout and become successful to some extent during the Nasser period, it wasn't solely sufficient to unify all Arabs in the region due to the perceptions and

²²⁵ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 18-19; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 17-18.

²²⁶ Raymond Hinnebusch, **The International Politics of the Middle East**, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 73-89.

²²⁷ Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 18-19; Christopher M. Davidson, **After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, London: Hurst & Company, 2015, p. 17.

²²⁸ Francesco Belcastro, "Conflict in the Middle East", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 290-295.

²²⁹ Esra Çavuşoğlu, "Arap-İsrail Sorunu Ekseninde İngiltere'nin Post-Kolonyal Körfez Politikası (1971-1991)", **FSM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi**, No. 11, pp. 1-27, 2018, p. 6-11.

²³⁰ Lorenzo Kamel et al., "The Past: Terminology, Concepts and Historical Junctures", in Eduard Soler i Lecha et al. (Eds.), "Re-Conceptualizing Orders in the Mena Region", **Methodology and Concept Paper, MENARA**, No. 1. November 2016, p. 18; Commins, p. 161-166.

mis/calculations of the Arab leaders. Arab leaders saw themselves as Arab nationalists and championed Arab unity, albeit divergent political considerations and regional practices for interstate relations in the Arab world.²³¹ At this point, NCR urges that states evaluate the systemic stimuli by filtering through the perception of the decision-makers. They desire to design the external environment as well.²³² General Nasser interpreted the strategic environment and responded to the British threat.

To understand the regional dynamics and drastic changes in Arab power politics, it will be more descriptive to look into the Palestinian issue and rivalry between the Arab world and Israel. The Palestinian issue has remained permanent at both regional and international levels. In a broader sense, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been on the table since Israel proclaimed itself as an independent state in the Palestinian territories in 1948 with the great support of the British Empire and the US.²³³ Since then, Israel and its Arab rivals have had tense relations in the region.²³⁴ In this regard, we should count a historical depth in the Arab-Israeli conflict and hostility.

Israel and Arab rivals entered many wars and these wars consistently resulted in Israel's territorial expansion and increasing strength in the region. Conversely, Israel's efforts to settle and expand their sphere of influence on the Palestinian territories have not been accepted by the Arab states and always caused a conflicting and unstable environment in the region. Thus, the Palestinian issue can be considered as a prime issue that may potentially shape the regional dynamics.²³⁵ Even, political Islam and Arab nationalism use it as a common reference for their ideological resilience. Yet, the Arab states are unable to stand together against the challenges of Israel and its western allies as they cannot compensate for their own shortcomings. On the other hand, the US, the dominant actor and mutual ally of Arab states and Israel have always been inclined to oversee Israel's national interests in its political approach to the issue. As a result, Israel sustained its unique status and strategic position as a regional superpower and leading partner of the western powers in the regional order. Similarly, the regional dynamics overshadowed

²³¹ Michael N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System", **International Organisation**, Vol. 49, No.3, Summer, 1995, pp. 479-510, p. 480.

²³² Rose, p. 152.

²³³ Karim Makdisi et al., "Regional Order from the Outside In: External Intervention, Regional Actor, Conflicts and Agenda in the Mena Region", **Methodology and Concept Paper, MENARA**, No. 5, November 2017, p. 9.

²³⁴ Çavuşoğlu, "Arap-İsrail Sorunu Ekseninde İngiltere'nin Post-Kolonyal Körfez Politikası (1971-1991)", p. 18.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 8; Bayram Sinkaya, "Introduction to the Middle East Politics: Leading Factors, Actors and Dynamics", **ORSAM**, ORSAM Resource, No. 1, April 2016, p. 22.

the Palestinian issue in favour of Israel.²³⁶ Moreover, pan Arabism ideology which was a principal political agenda of the Arab states faded away after Israel's military gains at the 1967 war.²³⁷

If we turn back to the relations between the colonial administration and the Gulf region, particularly after the First World War, the British Empire's concern was intensified on the Gulf region to achieve its broad objectives including the air route and the oil.²³⁸ As the Gulf was in the geostrategic position of the London-Indian route, it gained more importance in terms of British interests. More importantly, Britain was interested in the oil fields in the region as they vitally needed the Gulf oil to use in the Royal Navy. Thus, the fact that the Gulf region increased its strategic importance in terms of British interests drove the British leadership to maintain their dominance on the Gulf for a long time.²³⁹ At this point, the NCR contends that the leaders' perception and political calculations about the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities) shape states' policy choices.²⁴⁰ Moreover, the British leadership committed to providing security for the Gulf states against external threats. Britain proved that it was the sole authority in the region with the formal protection commitment of Qatari soils against Saudi threats. In return, it gained concession and access to Qatari oil through a British oil company in 1935.²⁴¹ They initially discovered the oil in Dukhan in 1939.²⁴² In those days, Britain was the dominant foreign power as the US avoided direct military presence in the region.²⁴³ It adopted its traditional administration policy to rule the Arabian Gulf. It ruled the Gulf states, in fact all its colonial states, through its own administrators. They also chose the rulers from the

²³⁶ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 308.

²³⁷ Michael N. Barnett, "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System", **International Organisation**, Vol. 49, No.3, Summer, 1995, pp. 479-510, p. 501.

²³⁸ Commins, p.117-122.

²³⁹ Reyadh Alasfoor, **The Gulf Cooperation Council: Its Nature and Achievements**, Printed Doctoral Thesis, Department of Political Science, Lund: Lund University, 2007, p. 17.

²⁴⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 20-21.

²⁴¹ Valentina Mirabella, "When Maritime Protection Is Not Enough: Britain's Agreement to Protect Qatar's Borders at Sea and On Land", **Qatar Digital Library**, <https://www.qdl.qa/en/when-maritime-protection-not-enough-britain-s-agreement-protect-qatar-s-borders-sea-and-land>, (27 May 2021); Valentina Mirabella, 'The Qatar Oil Concession Ushers in a New Era for British Relations with Doha', **Qatar Digital Library**, <https://www.qdl.qa/en/qatar-oil-concession-ushers-new-era-british-relations-doha>, (27 May 2021).

²⁴² **Qatar Digital Library**, "File 10/3 XI Qatar Oil Concession' [214r] (442/594), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/418", https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100024164774.0x00002b, (28 May 2021), **Qatar Digital Library**, "File 10/3 XI Qatar Oil Concession' [243r] (500/594), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/418", https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100024164774.0x000065, (26 May 2021).

²⁴³ Çavuşoğlu, "Arap-İsrail Sorunu Ekseninde İngiltere'nin Post-Kolonyal Körfez Politikası (1971-1991), p. 10.

local families who were pliant and loyal to them.²⁴⁴ That is to say, they cooperated with any government in the regional territories that would protect the British interests and any local people that would undermine those interests.²⁴⁵

Since the colonial administrators mostly chose the state rulers from the tribal leaders in the territories of their colonies, the state was institutionally organized around the ruling tribes. This created centrality of the ruling families. To put it clearly, the state was organized around the individuals as Britain appointed the rulers and backed them in their succession battle.²⁴⁶ Additionally, the legitimacy of the states' rulers was initially ensured by the colonial patrons but their domestic (societal) legitimacy was consolidated through the state services or institutions.²⁴⁷ Yet, they were unable to act fully independently and establish the necessary state institutions to gain their people's loyalty or belongings. In other words, the colonial patrons did not allow the states which they dominated to be independent and to develop their national identity collectively. In terms of building national identities, the Gulf states didn't face any conflicts or national struggles to unify the people under a common purpose as the British authority imposed political and territorial divisions in the Gulf region. In its political design, Britain was aware of the hazard that the creation of national identity or a sense of belonging to a nation could break or weaken the dominance of the colonial state. Instead, the Gulf monarchies constituted tribal identity rather than national identity in line with the nation-state norms of the West. Tribal identities or ethnic identities couldn't be the leading identity in the states where national identity dominated.²⁴⁸ However, tribal identity and tribal loyalty relatively kept their importance in the Gulf monarchies. Even modernity couldn't eliminate tribalism or tribal loyalty²⁴⁹ in the monarchies, which obstructed the people's national belonging.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 11.

²⁴⁵ İsmail Şahin, Cemile Şahin and Samet Yüce, "Efforts of the British Empire to Build a State in Iraq After the First World War", **Gazi Akademik Bakış**, Volume. 8, No. 15, 2014, pp. 105-132, p. 128; Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 19.

²⁴⁶ Michael Herb, **All in the Family Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies**, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 29-30.

²⁴⁷ Mehran Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 156.

²⁴⁸ Maryam Al-Kuwari, "Tribe and Tribalism: The Trojan Horse of GCC States?", in Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf: The Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 39.

²⁴⁹ Maryam Al-Kuwari identifies the difference between tribe and tribalism as "Tribe and tribalism are two different notions. While the tribe as a concept refers to a group associated with social, cultural and other values, tribalism refers to the rise of politics of identities, which in the GCC context, takes on a tribal dimension, in addition to ethnic and sectarian dimensions. Tribalism is a form of mobilisation around a component or several components of identity, which could be kinship, ethnicity, religion, sect and others." Al-Kuwari, "Tribe and Tribalism: The Trojan Horse of GCC States?", p.39.

²⁵⁰ Serra Can, "The Iraqi Identity: Faisal's Unsolved Legacy", **Trames**, 22(72/67),4, 2018, 2018, 389-405, p. 399.

Although tribes' political role in the Gulf monarchies relatively diminished, they enabled themselves to be significant, dynamic and legitimate social actors.²⁵¹

In fact, nearly all of the modern states in the Middle East were created by colonial states with artificial borders which were away from economic, geographical and social realities, and without considering the requests of the indigenous people in that period.²⁵² In line with the explanation above, the legacy of territorial disputes was largely emanated from the colonial states and external interventions.²⁵³ The disagreement on territorial borders on the Arabian Peninsula has caused persistent hostility among the regional states even until now they are independent states with territorial integrity. Over time, the security concerns, perception of threat and economic interests have led to boundary problems between the neighbouring states in the region. The Gulf states, for instance, have border issues in their interstate relations such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar, Iraq and Kuwait, Oman and Yemen, Oman and the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman for a long time.²⁵⁴ It is claimed that "border disputes are an integral part of inter-Gulf politics."²⁵⁵ From this observation, we understand that border disputes affect the interstate relations among the Gulf countries as well as their relations with other regional countries. Notably, one of the key motivations behind Iraq's annexation of Kuwait was that Iraqi leadership saw the soil of Kuwait as their own territory. Similarly, Saddam Hussain's perception and miscalculation of the systemic signals paved a way for the battles and chaotic environment in the region. Moreover, the political decisions of the regional and external actors in the pre/post-Gulf War reshaped the regional balance of power and/or distribution of power in the system. On the other hand, border issues and geo-political considerations in the Middle East are still on the agenda.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Al-Kuwari, "Tribe and Tribalism: The Trojan Horse of GCC States?", p. 49.

²⁵² T.G. Fraser, Andrew Mango and Robert Mcnamara, **Modern Ortadoğu'nun Kuruluşu**, Fusun Doruker (Çev.), İstanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 2011, p. 238; Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman), p. 49.

²⁵³ Gwenn Okruhlik and Patrick J. Conge, "The politics of border disputes on the Arabian Peninsula", **International Journal**, Spring 1999, pp. 230-248, p. 233; Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 18-21; Jane Kinninmont; "Citizenship in the Gulf", in Ana Echagüe (Ed.), **The Gulf States and the Arab Uprisings**, Spain: FRIDE and the Gulf Research Center, 2013, p. 48.

²⁵⁴ Okruhlik and Conge, p. 230-231.

²⁵⁵ Gargash, p. 328.

²⁵⁶ Stefanos Yerasimos, **Milliyetler ve Sınırlar Balkanlar, Kafkasya ve Ortadoğu**, Şirin Tekeli (Çev.), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia also experienced border problems in the Gulf region. In fact, the Saudi leadership desired to absorb Qatar and extend its sphere of influence in the region. The British authority was quite aware of their intention and tried to prevent Qatar from the Saudis' attacks.²⁵⁷ The tension increased between the two neighbouring countries nonetheless. In the 1960s, the Saudi King openly claimed the Qatari territories as a part of Saudi Arabia's al Hasa. Later in 1992, Doha accused Riyadh of occupying its Khafus border post and killing two Qatari soldiers.²⁵⁸ Eventually, the parties have partly solved the border issue. Another territorial claim was between Qatar and Bahrain on the control of the Hawar Islands and the surrounding reefs, which had gas and oil reserves. Thus, the strategic value of the islands and reefs has intensified the territorial claims of Qatar and Bahrain. The Gulf states still have such tense relations on their boundary issues or territorial disputes. However, the GCC remains impotent to solve their members' territorial disputes, which cause tensions in the intrastate relations and make the Gulf states vulnerable to external forces. This key regional institution has been ineffective to mediate between the members to reach an agreement on their disputes.²⁵⁹ As a result, the brotherly relations in inter-Gulf politics has been sometimes poisoned by incomplete border arrangements.²⁶⁰

In particular, the basic needs of the citizens such as health, education, rights and freedoms and security could not be fully met by the governments and the state-society relationship could not be developed to the desired extent due to the constant weakness of the state and societal cleavages in the Gulf Arab states. The colonial states, which aimed to exploit the natural resources in the Gulf region, were concerned with their economic interest rather than their social, economic, and political development.²⁶¹ The fragmented or weak states vis-à-vis their societies do not respond to the external threats properly as NCR asserts.²⁶² For this reason, the Gulf monarchies including Qatar tried to make their moves based on the establishment of institutions that would regulate the state-society relationship as well as enhancing their influence after the declaration of their independence. Thus, the ruling

²⁵⁷ **Qatar Digital Library**, "File 10/3 IV Qatar Oil Concession' [40r] (102/534), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/413", https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100023509761.0x000067, (28 May 2021).

²⁵⁸ Bahry, p. 267.

²⁵⁹ Okruhlik and Conge, p. 247.

²⁶⁰ Gargash, p. 328.

²⁶¹ Çavuşoğlu, "Arap-İsrail Sorunu Ekseninde İngiltere'nin Post-Kolonyal Körfez Politikası (1971-1991), p. 18.

²⁶² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 27-28.

families of the Gulf monarchies endeavoured to establish a political mechanism and institutions in which they could maintain their political power or support their own existence with restricted public participation.²⁶³ Despite such efforts for state-building, they upheld their alliance with their external patrons rather than their own society.²⁶⁴

The British political and military involvement in the Gulf region officially perished in 1971.²⁶⁵ In that year, Qatar declared its independence and tried to form state institutions and political mechanisms.²⁶⁶ The provisional constitution was quickly issued after the declaration of its independence. The Qatari ruling family aimed to bend their patriarchal authority with the modern times' rational and legitimate authority in order to maintain the centrality of their ruling power.²⁶⁷ Emir started to rule the country under the provisional constitution, appointed his key executives to the political institutions such as the Council of Ministers (Majlis al-Wuzara) and Advisory Council (Majlis al-Shura) in the country.

Although Qatar became an independent state, it didn't cut its ties with the western powers due to its main concern with national security issues.²⁶⁸ However, the US replaced Britain and its dominance heavily increased in the Middle East after the Second World War.²⁶⁹ NCR defends that systemic outcomes can change the existing systemic structure by weakening the great powers in the system and creating new dominant powers.²⁷⁰ The US authority predominantly focused on their rivals the Soviet Union and China's influence in the region. They wanted to restrict their rivals' increasing influence in the region after Britain's weakening position in the regional system. Then, in the late 1960s, the US was interested in the Gulf region oil to back its military interventions in Southeast Asia rather than its daily domestic consumptions, whereas British domestic oil consumption and dependency on Gulf oil ultimately increased.²⁷¹ More specifically, the US regarded the Gulf region as their vital interest against the challenges during the Cold War and tried to

²⁶³ Ehteshami, **Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution**, p. 168-172.

²⁶⁴ Kamel et al., "The Past: Terminology, Concepts and Historical Junctures", November 2016, p. 19.

²⁶⁵ Alasfoor, "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Its Nature and Achievements", p. 18; W. Taylor Fain, **American Ascendancy and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 172-173.

²⁶⁶ Jill Ann Crystal and John Duke Anthony, "Qatar", <https://www.britannica.com/place/Qatar>, (29 August 2019).

²⁶⁷ Davidson, **After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 34.

²⁶⁸ Crystal and Anthony, "Qatar".

²⁶⁹ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 20.

²⁷⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 86.

²⁷¹ Fain, p. 147-148.

ensure Gulf security by all means.²⁷² Thus, it counted on its Gulf allies in order to preserve its interests in the post-British rule and increase its military presence.²⁷³

While Qatar was a country with a modest economy, largely trading in oil, seafood and pearls, it experienced rapid economic development with the discovery of oil and mostly export of natural gas in the country. Its liquid gas production (LPG) replaced Qatar among the countries with the most significant economic income in the world. The hydrocarbon revenues helped the small sheikhdom to change its political economy and shape state-society relations.²⁷⁴ Likewise, the redistributive mechanism of the hydrocarbon revenues builds and guarantees the perpetuation of the social contract, which binds the state and society.²⁷⁵ Qatar's economic growth was relatively shared with its citizens and the welfare level of its citizens has highly increased, accordingly. Even, the country's economic wealth has significantly served to create social cohesion. In this regard, Qatari FPEs tried to sustain the economic growth and increase their nationals' welfare by introducing a national strategy (National Vision Strategy 2030) that would diversify the country's economy as well as reducing Qatar's dependence on foreign sources.²⁷⁶

However, the foreigners including the US and the UK have maintained to preserve their national interests in the Gulf region due to its rich hydrocarbon deposits. After the Trump administration escalated the tension due to its withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal, Britain sent its warships to defend its maritime interests in the Gulf.²⁷⁷ They attempted to stabilize the maritime security in the Gulf to maintain the navigation of their commercial ships. On the other hand, London was willing to de-escalate the tension and safeguard the existing nuclear deal with Tehran.²⁷⁸ The restrictive environment generates imminent threats and opportunities for the individual states and the state leaders should read the

²⁷² Melvyn P. Leffler, "From the Truman Doctrine to the Carter Doctrine: Lessons and Dilemmas of the Cold War", **Diplomatic History**, Vol. 7, No. 4, Fall 1983, pp. 245-266, p. 245-246; Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 10.

²⁷³ F. Gregory Gause, III, **International Relations of the Persian Gulf**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 244.

²⁷⁴ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 35.

²⁷⁵ Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 21; Ulrichsen, "Domestic implications of the Arab uprisings in the Gulf", in Ana Echagüe (Ed.), **The Gulf States and the Arab Uprisings**, Spain: FRIDE and the Gulf Research Center, 2013, p. 40.

²⁷⁶ **Planning and Statistics Authority**, <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/pages/default.aspx>, (29 August 2019).

²⁷⁷ Greg Wilford, "Royal Navy sends third warship to the Gulf to protect British-flagged ships from Iranian attacks", **the Telegraph**, 24 August 2019.

²⁷⁸ Patrick Wintour and Bethan McKernan, "UK ships in Gulf on high alert after Royal Navy trains guns on Iranian vessels", **the Guardian**, 11 July 2019. <https://theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/11/uk-ships-in-gulf-on-high-alert-after-royal-navy-trains-guns-on-iranian-ships>, (23 October 2019).

strategic environment and react accordingly.²⁷⁹ The British ruling elites believed that they owned gains through the 2015 Nuclear Agreement.²⁸⁰ Also, they shared similar concerns with other signatories France and Germany, which the ongoing nuclear agreement (the JCPOA) was “the best route” to refrain Iran from having nuclear weapons.²⁸¹

2.2. End of the Cold War and the Regional Order of the Middle East

With the emergence of a unipolar international system through the end of the Cold War, the USA became a sole hegemon state with a political, economic and military role in the Middle East.²⁸² In other words, the balance of power system collapsed and the US remained the sole superpower in the unipolar international system.²⁸³ In this system, such a power does not probably face a restrictive strategic environment as the distribution of material capabilities was constructed to its advantage.²⁸⁴ In line with this theoretical insight, the US enjoyed the advantage of being a single power, which could increase its influence on the regional states. While Russia partially sustained its relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria on the historical and ideological basis (the Ba’ath-based relation) due to its minimized power and weakened influence, the USA strengthened long-term relations and became the only dominant power in the Middle East. NCR also asserts that relative power/capability and position in the system is significant in an individual state’s foreign policy. Despite the effect of the relative power on determining foreign policy parameters, the effect of the intervening unit-level variables should be considered in the policy-making process as well.²⁸⁵ In line with this theoretical assumption, the US leadership built up its strategic relationships with Turkey, Israel, Iran, the KSA and Egypt in the pre-Arab Spring (1990-2011) to increase its influence over the regional states.

Most significantly, the unipolar international/regional system gave a great advantage to the US to concentrate deeply on its core interest of the reliable energy flow to the US and

²⁷⁹ Chandra, p. 298.

²⁸⁰ **BBC News**, “Iran nuclear deal: UK won’t walk away, says Boris Johnson”, 9 May 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-44044946>, (17 June 2019).

²⁸¹ Ahmet Gurhan Kartal, “UK ‘committed’ to Iran nuclear deal”, **Anadolu Agency**, 07 June 2018. <https://aa.com.tr/en/energy/nuclear/uk-committed-to-iran-nuclear-deal/20382>, (23 October 2019).

²⁸² Kamel et al., “The Past: Terminology, Concepts and Historical Junctures, November 2016, p. 22.

²⁸³ Ross Harrison, “U.S. Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East: Pumping Air into a Punctured Tire”, **Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies**, Research Paper, (7 March 2019), p. 5.

²⁸⁴ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “Neoclassical realism and the study of regional order”, in T. V. Paul (Ed.), **International Relations Theory and Regional Transformation**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 85.

²⁸⁵ Rose, p. 146; Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, p. 25-26.

its western allies' economies.²⁸⁶ More notably, the Gulf region has been the key location (in terms of geo-politics, geo-strategic and geo-economics) where the US has the most dominant long-term strategic relationship. The US has been trying to safeguard the flow of Gulf oil and gas to the world markets through the Strait of Hormuz by its military capability since the mid-1970s.²⁸⁷ Also, the Gulf monarchies are relatively weak in military terms despite having rich oil and gas deposits which mean a significant amount of the global hydro-carbon production. At the same time, the Gulf monarchies strikingly lack a full integration and have the potentials to cause continuous turmoil despite their mutual defence and economic agreements.²⁸⁸ Based on this observation, the Gulf monarchies have a strong strategic dependence on the USA in terms of security.²⁸⁹

In the post-Cold War era, the US as an unchallenged and unbalanced hegemon intensified its military presence as well as destabilising the interstate relations in the region.²⁹⁰ In this context, in both 1991 and 2003, the US had effective military interventions on Iraqi territories. In the latter, the US invaded Iraq by aligning with the Gulf states. As a result, a large number of American troops stayed in the region until 2011.²⁹¹ In line with the given rationale, three conclusions can be drawn from the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 in terms of the regional order: Firstly, since the Arab states do not have the sufficient capacity to form a regional power balance and to ensure the security among the regional states, they need an external guarantor to secure the interrelations in the regional system. Secondly, a powerful Iraq was a direct threat to other regional powers or regional balance of power, and the US ended the danger. Iraq was apparently a powerful neighbour for the Gulf monarchies until the US invasion. The Iraqi occupation promoted Iran to get stronger or consolidate its position in the region because the U.S launched Shia-dominated governance in Iraq and weakened the Sunni domination in Iraqi politics. In the post-Iraqi war, Iraq's regime change affected the distribution of power among the states in the Gulf region. In this strategic environment, Iranian leadership perceived it as an opportunity to

²⁸⁶ Fred Halliday, **The Middle East in the International Relations: Power, Politics, and Ideology**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 134.

²⁸⁷ Fatma Ashi Kelkitli, "Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Volume 47, 2016, pp. 23-44, p. 24.

²⁸⁸ Gaub, **The Gulf Moment: Arab Relations Since 2011**, May 2015, p. 13.

²⁸⁹ Matteo Legrenzi and Marina Calculli, "Middle East Security: Continuity amid Change," in Louise Fawcett (Ed.), **International Relations of the Middle East**, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 210.

²⁹⁰ Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 28.

²⁹¹ **Al Jazeera**, "Troop numbers: Foreign soldiers in Iraq", **Al Jazeera**, 14 December 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/iraqschallenge/2011/06/201162864733970544.html>, (15 September 2019); Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 28-29.

expand its sphere of influence in the rivalry region. They crafted their foreign policy in line with the given strategic environment as highlighted by NCR. They developed economic and political relations with the new administration in Iraq. On the other hand, the regional competition was intensified between the two main rivals, Iran and the KSA, on the basis of ideology, regional leadership and security.²⁹² Thirdly, this war proved that the Arab regional order was not unified and that's why it was vulnerable. Hence, the fragmentation in the Arab regional order turned out to the US's advantage.²⁹³ The US consolidated its power politically and militarily after the Iraqi occupation.²⁹⁴ In addition to the power distribution in the system, material factors may also cause a conflictual environment to increase or decrease. To clarify it, material factors such as military and technological developments, geographical proximity, military balances, extraction of the resources in the conquered/occupied soils, which NCR defines as structural modifiers build a ground for strategic interactions (i.e., conflicts and cooperation) in the system.²⁹⁵ The US occupation opened a window for strategic interactions and its long time stays in the region as a hegemon.

Qatar also took a lesson from Iraq's attack on Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait could not stand against Iraq with its military capacity. It would likely happen to the other Gulf states as they were apparently small and weak. In the restrictive environment, the systemic imperative is much more forceful and clearer. It provides greater clarity and clearer guidance for the leaders against imminent threats while narrowing the optimal policy choices.²⁹⁶ The Gulf emirates perceived threats from their three major neighbours. Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. They posed different periodic threats to each emirate. Among the Gulf emirates, Kuwait was mostly exposed to the irredentist policies of Iraq and eventually occupied.²⁹⁷ Consequently, the Gulf states unavoidably needed a foreign power for their national security.²⁹⁸

²⁹² Kelkitli, "Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?", p. 27-33.

²⁹³ Legrenzi and Calculli, p. 210.

²⁹⁴ Kamel et al., p. 22.

²⁹⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell; p.40-42, Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited", p. 136-137.

²⁹⁶ Lobell, "Great powers in a restrictive international environment", p. 339.

²⁹⁷ Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman)", p. 50-57.

²⁹⁸ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 39-40.

Towards the end of the 2000s Russian interventions of Georgia and Crimea gave the impression that the international domination of the US would be restricted. The states' behaviours may vary in line with the strategic environment. Russia has begun to give a great power pose that it can provide a balance of power in the system, but not as much as during the Cold War. Particularly, Russia's active role to balance the U.S in the Middle East can be seen both in the Syrian and Iran case. Russia clearly backed the Bashar al-Assad regime against the anti-regime force and Daesh.²⁹⁹ Thus, it enabled to balance against the US in the region and ensured its regional interests. Russia successfully established its position as a dominant actor in Syria. Russian military mobilization was a clear message that the region cannot be abandoned to the US control and Russia should be considered as a powerful external actor in the regional system.³⁰⁰ In other words, Russia restricted the US freedom of action in the Middle East and the balance of power politics returned to the system again (the rivalry between Russia and the USA in the post Arab Spring will be given in detail in 2.7).

The realists predict that the states seek to increase their inner capabilities and establish external alliances to balance against the threatening state.³⁰¹ During the Putin administration, Russia consolidated its domestic power and sought to balance the US in the system. Russia and Iran came closer in the Middle East. Putin administration provided huge military aid to Iran. It helped Iran to develop its military capacity and defence industries. In the same vein, Moscow took a great stand against the Western embargo on Iran, which had faced an embargo from the western powers under the US leadership owing to its nuclear energy efforts. In a nutshell, Moscow aligned with Iran against the regional and global challenge.³⁰² However, Russian military and diplomatic support did not end Iran's discomfort with its Western and regional rivals. Iran still seems to have difficulties in restoring friendly relationships with the regional and international actors because of its domestic structure and international stand as an anti-western state.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ İskender Karakaya, "Küresel Terörizmle Mücadele: Yerel, Bölgesel ve Küresel Güçlerin IŞİD ile Mücadelesi", **Kırklareli Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi**, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 1, 2020, p. 102-103.

³⁰⁰ Samet Yüce, "Rusya'nın Suriye'deki Varlığının Nedenleri", p. 280-283.

³⁰¹ Kathleen J. Hancock and Steven E. Lobell, "Realism and the Changing International System: Will China and Russia Challenge the Status Quo?", **China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly**, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2010, pp. 143-165, p. 149.

³⁰² Hoshimjon Mahmudov and Muhammad Yaseen Naseem, "Russia-Iran Defense Cooperation: Past and Present", **The Journal of Iranian Studies**, Vol: 2, No: 1, 2018, pp. 91-119, p. 100-102.

³⁰³ Louise Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", in Louise Fawcett (Ed.), **International Relations of the Middle East**, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 187.

2.3. Security Concerns in the Middle East

The Middle East is the core security concern for the regional and international actors as it has been the key supplier of significant energy resources to the world market. It has the substantial capacity to meet the energy demands which the world population are highly in need of. In a world with scarce energy possibilities, the richness of energy resources and dependence on these resources push the actors to focus on the region and fight against each other to benefit from this exceptional wealth. The fascinating mixture of rich natural resources, wealthy traditions, cultures and peoples make the region not only attractive but also conflictual for the inhabitants and the outsiders. From this perspective, the Middle East is a place of rivalry and challenge for the world major powers because of its geopolitical, strategic and economic character.³⁰⁴

In the regional order of the Middle East, states are fragmented and weak due to regional and domestic issues, persistent rivalries, dominant identities and conscious influences of external forces. This makes them vulnerable and fragile against external threats. They seek to provide their security and ensure their regime survival through the external powers. Thus, the regional system of the Middle East was penetrated by external powers.³⁰⁵ The external powers attempt to solve the security concerns of the regional players in terms of their own political agendas. More precisely, they exploit the regional states' weakness in security to increase their sphere of influence in the region.

In the regional system, the US has been a dominant power in ensuring the security of the region since the Cold War.³⁰⁶ At this point, the other actors at the core and in the periphery are mostly subordinate to the wishes of the hegemon because they are not as powerful as the hegemon. Moreover, they need the hegemon to protect their national security. To define the alliance relations between the US and the Middle Eastern states, Gawdat Bahgat underscores that the US policy towards the region chiefly depends on "the oil for security bargain". Theoretically, the states that do not have sufficient resources to provide their own security build alliance with the powerful ones and tend towards auxiliary goals because powerful states with greater resources in the context of security provision

³⁰⁴ Yüce, "Rusya'nın Suriye'de Varlığının Nedenleri", p. 270.

³⁰⁵ Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 188.

³⁰⁶ Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, **Regions and Powers the Structure of International Security**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 201-202.

guarantee both their own security and the security of their allies.³⁰⁷ The U provides security for the oil producer countries against external threats and in return guarantees its oil demand at a good price from them.³⁰⁸ This observation makes clear that the economically rich but militarily weak states of the Middle East supply the oil to the hegemon, the US, in exchange for their protection against the threat.

To clarify the US key interests in the Middle East, Fred Halliday claims that “beyond Gulf oil (the US energy policy towards the Arabian Peninsula), the main political focus of US policy towards the region in the early 1990s was therefore on the Arab-Israel context.”³⁰⁹ In this regard, the US mainly focus on ensuring the free flow of the Gulf oil to the international market and Israel’s survival against the threats, which means terrorist attacks and Iran’s political expansion threatens the US’ main interests in the region. Hostile intentions, revisionist behaviours and expectations of the imminent attacks damage the key interests and threaten the regional stability.³¹⁰ Thus, drastic changes in the regional stability affect the US regional political focus and interests such as securing energy supplies in the Middle East and its allies’ security.³¹¹

In fact, forming an alliance with the regional and international actors plays an important role for the Middle Eastern states. They mainly ally with these actors to ensure domestic and regional stability. From this perspective, the small Gulf monarchies have particularly formed alliances with the KSA at the regional level and the US at the international level to ensure their security and stability.³¹² By doing so, the KSA and the US play a leading role in authoritarian resilience in the Gulf. These powerhouses commit their material capabilities for their allies’ protection, in other words, protection of the rentier Gulf states’ regime security and domestic stability. More strikingly, owing to the lack of confidence in the inter-Gulf politics, the small Gulf monarchies, particularly Qatar, do not trust the larger ones and fear their “self-centred” and “imperial” policies.³¹³ Thus, security threats and risks for the regional states always remain at the regional and domestic levels.

³⁰⁷ Kitchen, “Systemic pressure and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation”, p. 136.

³⁰⁸ Gawdad Bahgat, “The Emerging Energy Landscape: Economic and Strategic Implications”, In Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 68.

³⁰⁹ Halliday, **The Middle East in the International Relations: Power, Politics, and Ideology**, p. 134.

³¹⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 46-47.

³¹¹ Ross Harrison, “U.S. Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East: Pumping Air into a Punctured Tire”, **Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies**, Research Paper, 7 March 2019, p. 4.

³¹² Legrenzi and Calulli, p. 211.

³¹³ Gargash, p. 323.

The vast majority of the countries in the Middle East are also rentier states which have strong economies based on rich hydrocarbon resources. However, they are mainly dependent on the regional and external powers for their security issues. The economic and military interests of the states in the region are provided by a simple cycle. While the hydrocarbon-rich regional countries produce the oil or gas to the developed countries, in return, they receive military aid from them to balance their trade and security.³¹⁴ In other words, the developed countries use the hydrocarbon resources in the Middle East and in return, they ensure their clients' security concerns. This is a traditional political bargain between the external patrons and their clients. In this regard, Doha has had a defence agreement and cooperation with the US since 1992. It provided close military cooperation between two parties such as arms sales, opening military facilities, and presence of the U.S. troops in Qatar.³¹⁵ However, the strategic alliance between Qatar and the US helped Qatar's survival as a sovereign state in the system and increased its security dependence.³¹⁶

In fact, all forms of aid, somehow, strengthen the bargaining positions of the strong countries towards their clients. The major regional powers also seek to drive their clients towards their own interests through their huge economic, military and political powers. They spend a lot of money for their weak and poor neighbouring countries to wield their influence or gain their regional loyalties.³¹⁷ In this context, the rentier Gulf states grant a great amount of financial aid to the oil-poor countries in the region such as Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. Additionally, Gulf countries, which own strong economies based on oil and natural resources, use machinery of their financial aids to increase their activities in the region. They intend to maintain their presence and influence over the other regional states. For example, Qatar was the main economic donor to the MB-led government in Egypt until the Sisi government seized the power in 2013. Then, the KSA,

³¹⁴ Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 194.

³¹⁵ Kenneth Katzman, "Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", **Congressional Research Service**, 1 September 2017, p. 1; Christopher M. Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations", **Congressional Research Service**, 2010, p. 12.

³¹⁶ Maximilian Felsch, "Qatar's rising international influence: a case of soft power?" **Conjunctura Internacional, Belo Horizonte**, Volume: 13, No: 1, November 2016, pp. 22-35, p. 33.

³¹⁷ Mark Fuechec, "Challenges to Economic and Political Liberalizations under the Deauville Partnership with Arab States: Gulf Competition in Transition States", in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Middle East Reloaded Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics and Regional Rivalries Since the Arab Spring**, London and Washington: Academica Press, 2018, p. 339.

the UAE and Kuwait strengthened their ties with the Sisi government and gave a great economic support to Egypt.³¹⁸

The states which exist in the regional order have interactive relations with each other through security cooperation and engagement.³¹⁹ There are some regional organisations in the Middle East. Of these organisations, The GCC was mainly founded to protect the huge energy resources of its member states. The organization aimed to build an economic integration among the members of the organization. However, the Gulf states first had to secure their national interests as well as their great economic wealth in the anarchic regional environment. That is why security was the main motivation of the establishment of the GCC as well as its economic integration.³²⁰ The Gulf states primarily aligned with the international powers and GCC states to ensure their regime security as well as an external threat.³²¹

In the post-Arab Spring, the GCC took big steps both to be a wider integration offering membership to two non-oil monarchies-Jordan and Morocco and be a strong organisation that was able to intervene in the regional issues including Yemen, Libya, pro-Syrian-rebellion stance and Qatari crisis. However, it has still had an insufficient impact on regional issues. This means that the GCC is economically enormous with its oil producer members but politically insufficient or weak in dealing with the regional issues and internal issues.³²²

Additionally, almost every member of the GCC pursues foreign policy following their political agendas. Qatar, for example, exploited efficient diplomacy in putting pressure on the GCC as well as the Arab League (LAS) to pursue a policy towards the Syrian issue during the Arab Spring.³²³ Then, the GCC states under the leadership of the KSA imposed a blockade on Qatar and froze their relations in 2014 and 2017 despite some member states' reluctance, mainly Kuwait and Oman, to comply with the decision. They also had

³¹⁸ Robert Mason, "Egypt's Future: Status Quo, Incremental Growth or Regional Leadership?", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, Summer 2016, p. 78-79.

³¹⁹ Amour, *The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances*, p. 9.

³²⁰ Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 194.

³²¹ Ulrichsen, *The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf*, p. 11.

³²² Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Can the Gulf Cooperation Council Survive the Current Crisis?", *Washington DC, Arab Center*, 07 September 2017, http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/can-the-gulf-cooperation-council-survive-the-current-crisis/, (15 September 2019).

³²³ Paul Salem, "The Regional Order", in Sinan Ülgen et al. (Eds.), *Emerging Order in the Middle East*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp. 1-24, 2012, p. 13.

a different political perspective on the basis of MB's regional position in the post-Arab Spring.³²⁴ Given drawbacks prove that there has been a lack of full consensus between member states of the organisation and both functions and the long-termed viability of the GCC has turned to be questionable.³²⁵ Moreover, Kuwait and Saudi ties were also strained due to the control over the oilfields in the so-called Neutral Zone. They haven't agreed on a deal yet. Such disagreement among the members of the GCC led to weakening the organisation and uniform of the Arab front against their rivals.³²⁶ More significantly, the KSA-dominated GGC were aware of their restrictions in the interstate confrontations and proxy wars in the region. Thus, they sought to increase their military capabilities by allying with the US and even initiating positive relations with Israel.³²⁷

As for the League of Arab States (LAS), an important regional organisation to regulate economic, social and political relations among the members, it supported the intervention in Libya and Syria to change their regimes and topple their leaders.³²⁸ However, it can't be said that LAS took an independent and responsible decision to solve the regional issues apart from the foreign powers. However, a sign of growing dynamism appeared through its role in the Libyan military intervention.³²⁹ The states acted differently towards the regional dynamics as the NCR predicts. The KSA- led camp supported the old regimes and their leaders while the TR and QA- led elected camp backed the rebels in the countries in transition. From this perspective, it is really hard to say that the member states in the LAS are fully integrated with each other or "impartial actors" on regional issues.³³⁰

2.4. Political System and Legitimacy of the Governments in the Middle East

The Middle East is the sole region on Earth with its cultural richness, demographic profile, political system, and rich natural resources which constrain the regional dynamics directly or indirectly. Even, they catalyse political legitimacy. As a theoretical

³²⁴ Luciano Zaccara, "The Role of the Gulf Countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East Following the Arab Spring", *IEMed, Mediterranean Yearbook*, 2015, p. 71-73, https://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxiu-sadjunts/anyari/med.2015/IEMed%20Yearbook%202015_RoleGulfCountriesMediterranean_LucianoZaccara.pdf, (12 May 2021).

³²⁵ Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, p. 153.

³²⁶ Ulrichsen, "Can the Gulf Cooperation Council Survive the Current Crisis?", p. 4; Stephen Kalin, "Qatar rift overshadows Gulf Arab summit as emir stays away", *Reuters*, 9 December 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-idUSKBN1O803S>. (22 August 2020).

³²⁷ Harrison, p. 7.

³²⁸ Giacomo Luciani, "Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East," in Louise Fawcett (Ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 p. 122.

³²⁹ Salem, "The Regional Order", p. 14.

³³⁰ Ulrichsen, *The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf*, p. 4.

presumption, legitimacy is a key resilience for the governments in a political context.³³¹ The regional states exploit the religious identity (mainly as known political Islam) to legitimize their inner politics, bolster the regional politics or promote interstate relations with the others, especially under the forementioned regional organisations.³³² Against this background, religion and religious cult or religious divisions are used as a political or identity card at an inter-state level and unit levels. Islam is the most populous religion in the region.³³³ Therefore, some regional countries sought to establish their religious or political identities on this populous religion due to its widespread influence in the region. The Gulf monarchies and Iran are good examples, which they are mostly bound to Islamic rules in their political system and government legitimacy. In this regard, we should re-underscore the effective role of political Islam in these given countries and regional dynamics. To clarify the implications of political Islam over the regional dynamics and interrelations between Iran and the Gulf monarchies, political Islam was perceived as a direct threat to regime security, even regional security, by the KSA- led Gulf monarchies (with the undeniable exception of Oman) after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Then, the majority of political Islamist movements turned into political parties in the regional countries.³³⁴

Also, the ancient religious segregation affects the political system of the Middle Eastern states. Sunni and Shia split has been influential in regional segregation and non-homogeneously extended throughout the region. It became one of the key sources for the rivalry and tension between mostly Sunni Arab GGC countries and mostly Shia Iran,³³⁵ albeit Shia's non-monolithic presence in the Gulf Arabian communities.³³⁶ The increasing weight of identity politics and religious sectarianism created tension among societies in

³³¹ Mark Sedgwick, "Leadership and legitimacy in MENA", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 98-100.

³³² Bettina Koch and Yannis A. Stivachtis, "Introduction: Regional Security in the Middle East", in Bettina Koch and Yannis A. Stivachtis (Eds.), **Regional Security in the Middle East: Sectors, Variables and Issues**, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2019, p. 10.

³³³ A demographic study on the Middle East-North Africa by Pew Research Centre shows that the Muslim population in the Middle East and North Africa is 321.9 million in 2010 and roughly nine-in-ten people living in these regions are Muslim (91.2% in 2010). Also, a fifth of the Muslims in the world (19.9% in 2010) live in the Middle East-North Africa. Pew Research Centre, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population", 27 January 2011, <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-middle-east/>, (02 March 2018).

³³⁴ Sinkaya, p. 20.

³³⁵ Colombo, p. 11.

³³⁶ Frederic M. Wehrey, **Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Springs**, New York: Colombia University Press, 2014, p 29.

the region and even led to the empowerment of non-state actors beyond the borders.³³⁷ Particularly, the Syrian crisis widened the Saudi Arabia and Iran rivalry as well as the Sunni-Shia split.³³⁸ States and non-state actors chose such politics in order to consolidate their position. They used sectarianism in their rhetoric to preserve their own political agendas.³³⁹ Against this background, the ethnic and sectarian segregation deeply affected the inter-state relations among the regional countries, especially the KSA and Iran.³⁴⁰

Regarding the Gulf States (except for Bahrain), they are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims. Bahrain, the tiny sheikhdom of the Gulf, having the longstanding political conflict between its Sunni monarchy and Shia majority was considerably affected by the mass protests.³⁴¹ In low clarity and restrictive environment, leaders' perception and strategic culture (Iranian expansion through Shia ideology) have a greater impact on the policy decisions. Bahraini Sunni ruling elites felt pressure from their Shia population during the Arab Spring. With over 70 % Shia majority and "its sectarian composition", the regime was vulnerable to Iran's influence and regime stability.³⁴² On the other hand, economically, politically and socially marginalized Shia populations in Bahrain were often perceived as a threat to their social cohesion and domestic stability by their governments. In this regard, the Shia community posed a threat to the ruling regime.³⁴³ However, we should also keep in mind that the popular protests in Bahrain and others during the Arab Spring stood against the Sunni and Shia divide (religious segregation) and an Iranian-style polity.³⁴⁴

Although Wahhabism is a central religious ideology embedded in the Sunni monarchies including Qatar, the KSA considers itself as the main representative or leader of the Wahhabism/Salafist ideology. It politically exploits this religious privilege to increase its influence over the regional countries and even construct religious supremacy under

³³⁷ Helle et al., "The Contemporary Regional Order", in Eduard Soler i Lecha et al., "Re-Conceptualizing Orders in the Mena Region", **Methodology and Concept Paper, MENARA**, No. 1. November 2016, p. 45.

³³⁸ N. Janardhan, "Regionalisation and omni-balancing in the Gulf", in Ana Echagüe (Ed.), **The Gulf States and the Arab Uprisings**, Spain: FRIDE and the Gulf Research Center, 2013, p. 27-30.

³³⁹ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 147.

³⁴⁰ Francesco Belcastro, "Conflict in the Middle East", p. 290 in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020.

³⁴¹ Katerina Dalacoura, "The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications", **International Affairs**, 88:1, 2012, 63-79, p. 65.

³⁴² Guzansky, 2015, p. 116-117.

³⁴³ Colombo, p. 11.

³⁴⁴ Dalacoura, p. 75-79.

Wahhabism ideology. During Emir Hamad's ruling period, Qatar strategically used political Islam to pursue its independence from the KSA-based religious ideological domination. In line with their political vision and perception, the Qatari leadership believed that Islamism/political Islam played a significant role in Qatari politics as well as Arab politics. Depending on this belief, they employed the MB cadres in the country to foster moderation in KSA-dominated Wahhabism and create an Islamic identity for their nation. Since they tried to prevent the Qatari ulema from Saudi influence, they sent the Qatari religious scholars to al-Azhar University in Cairo for their education instead of the universities or institutions in Riyadh.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Qatari leadership effectively utilized the power of political Islam in determining their political moves rather than Saudi leadership. They did not see any domestic inherited institution and clerics to restrict their political decisions.³⁴⁶

Also, the ethnic composition helps us to understand the inner politics and regional interactions in the Middle East and the Gulf. Despite varied ethnic groups/ethnic mosaic in the region such as Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Persians, Jews, et al., the Arab population has been more than the others. In the tiny Gulf States, the population varies as well. Qatari society is highly dominated by foreigners when compared with its neighbours. % 13 of its population is Qatari Arabs and % 87 foreigners, mostly Southern Asian Muslims.³⁴⁷ The foreigners, who are expatriates from other countries, especially Asians work almost in all fields with no political rights. However, they basically help the Qatar leaders' political economy ambition, which means diversification of the Qatari economy from traditional dependence on hydrocarbon wealth.³⁴⁸

Evaluating the regional dynamics during the Arab Spring, the diminution of pan Arabism, which had a significant role in gaining political legitimacy in the Arab world, was believed to lead the evolution of the regional order of the Middle East.³⁴⁹ The political elites historically tried to unite the Arabs under the ideology of pan Arabism. They significantly advocated pan-Arabism against the colonial expansion and foundation of

³⁴⁵ Andrew Hammond, "Qatar's Leadership Transition: Like Father, Like Son", **ECRF/95**, February 2014, p. 4-5, www.ecfr.eu, https://ecfr.eu/publication/qatars_transition_like_father_like_son304/, (13 April 2021).

³⁴⁶ James M. Dorsey, "Wahhabism vs. Wahhabism: Qatar challenges Saudi Arabia", **RSIS Working Paper No. 262**, 06 September 2013, p. 2-4, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/rsis-pubs/WP262.pdf>, (14 April 2021).

³⁴⁷ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/katar-kunyesi.tr.mfa>, (19 September 2018).

³⁴⁸ Khodr, p. 281.

³⁴⁹ Legrenzi and Calculi, p. 210-211.

Israel in the region as mentioned before. Egypt was mainly well-known for its pioneering role in Arab nationalism/pan Arabism which had had a regional influence since the establishment of the modern state system in the Middle East.³⁵⁰ Also, Egypt was perceived as the Arab world's "traditional" leader.³⁵¹ During the Nasser period, Egypt sought to be the leader of the other Arab states as a regional hegemon despite being weak in material power.³⁵² Nevertheless, it was considered one of the major forces of the Middle East with its pre-eminence in the Arab community on the scale of its geostrategic position, political influence, and military size.³⁵³ Also, allying with some conservative states, only Saudi Arabia could come forward to balance Nasser-led pan-Arab nationalist actions in the 1960s.³⁵⁴

Furthermore, General Nasser prompted Arab nationalism/pro-Arabism ideology in the region. As noted above, it was an ideological counter stance against the external domination and interventions. It became a political tool for the Egyptian leadership to legitimate their domestic and foreign politics and achieve regional supremacy. Conversely, the Arab nationalist movement inspired by General Nasser appeared to have soured in the Arab states including Egypt and the wealthiest Gulf monarchies.³⁵⁵ Similarly, Egypt gradually lost its leading position in the Arab world.

In the context of the political system in the Middle East, characteristically there are republics and monarchies. In the Gulf region, states are ruled entirely by royal families. In other words, there is top-down governance in the Gulf's family ruled monarchies. The Emir has dominating/absolute power in all key decisions. The Gulf monarchies are, in general, authoritarian regimes. These states are overwhelmingly tribal societies.³⁵⁶ In fact, most of the Arab states in the region are tribal societies. In this concept, the political system of the GCC states is knitted by the tribal social system to consolidate the ruling elites' authority. Furthermore, tribes have a significant role in the people's identity. Even, "tribal identity" is often considered more important than the national identity. Individuals

³⁵⁰ Dalacoura, p. 63.

³⁵¹ Mohammed Ayoob, "The Arab Spring: Its Geostrategic Significance", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XIX, No. 3, Fall 2012, p. 89.

³⁵² Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 187.

³⁵³ Sons and Wiese, p. 23.

³⁵⁴ Thomas Richter, "Saudi Arabia: A Conservative P(l)ayer on the Retreat?", in Henner Fürtig (Ed.), **Regional Powers in the Middle East: New Constellations after the Arab Revolts**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 179.

³⁵⁵ Davidson, **After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 2-3.

³⁵⁶ Lina M. Kassem and Esraa Al-Muftah, "The Qatari Family at the Intersection of Policies", in M.E. Tok et al. (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State**, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-46639-6_13, p. 214.

in the traditional Arab states are bound to their tribes rather than the state's ruling government, which have an impact on the leaders' political decision.

The tribe is the prime unit of civil society in the Arab states, which has the capability to resist the state authority.³⁵⁷ Thus, the political elites in the Arab states should take into the tribes' considerations because "tribal loyalty" sometimes becomes a real challenge to the governments as well as state institutions. The political elites have to provide inner stability and ensure the loyalty of the tribes to the governments and governing rulers by making generous allowances for the tribes and granting some privileges and restricted power to the tribal elders.³⁵⁸ As for Qatar, it is a tribal state which is ruled by the al-Thani royal family. The al-Thani political elites have absolute control over the governance of the state. The Qatari ruling family and tribes are granted by some political and economic posts in the state institutions. To elucidate it, key ministers are chosen from the royal family or key tribes.³⁵⁹ They have a significant power to influence the political decisions in the country. The power can be concentrated in one or a few tribal groups as the alienated groups can threaten the internal balance of power.³⁶⁰ The ruling elites in general first and foremost focus on their regime survival.³⁶¹ By distribution of the power balance among the tribes, the Qatari political elites enable to rule the country more efficiently and maintain their ruling position free from the risks against the possible public opposition.

The centralized governance of the ruling family (the al-Thani) in Qatar also provides tribes' loyalty as well as their political legitimacy. Therefore, they never ignore the local tribes' influence over domestic politics.³⁶² Even it is sufficient for the Qatari rulers to balance the power within the royal family for stability, regime survival or holding power,³⁶³ which can be considered as "a ruling bargain" within the ruling family.³⁶⁴ At

³⁵⁷ Roy P. Mottahedeh and Mamoun Fandy, "The Islamic Movement: The Case for Democratic Inclusion", in Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (Eds.), **The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essay in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 310.

³⁵⁸ Kassem and Al-Muftah, p. 214.

³⁵⁹ Hassan Al-Sayed, "Qatar's Constitutional and Legal System", in M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, London: Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p. 88.

³⁶⁰ Khodr, p. 279.

³⁶¹ Steven E. Lobell, "Threat assessment, the state and foreign policy: a neoclassical realist model", in Stephen E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 50-51.

³⁶² Kassem and Al-Muftah, p. 215.

³⁶³ Michael Herb, **All in the Family Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies**, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 156.

³⁶⁴ Kassem and Al-Muftah, p. 214; Al-Sayed, p. 88.

this point, they grant the lower posts in the state apparatus to the other relatives to remain in power, ensure their survival, monopolize the key offices and even construct a steady hegemony over their own state and domestic institutions.³⁶⁵

In line with the understanding of the political legitimacy in the Gulf region, the rentier Gulf states generally spend much on welfare and guarantee security.³⁶⁶ The ruling families satisfy their citizens' basic material needs by distributing high revenues of the state bounteously as well as pacifying their political passions at home. In other words, the oil monarchies restrict their nationals' political participation due to disturbing the state's largesse. Thus, it helps the oil monarchies pursue their national goals without democratic accountability and reduce the risks of not facing any considerable public pressure.³⁶⁷ Also, the rentier economy of the Gulf monarchies enables them to increase their states' capabilities to overcome the challenges of the domestic political opposition.³⁶⁸

Socio-economic contract (also political bargain or ruling bargain) between the ruling elites and the citizens allows the governments to provide the legitimacy of the regimes and hold the political power in the country.³⁶⁹ Through the perspective of "mutual expectations" between state and society for political legitimacy,³⁷⁰ the Qatari ruling elites also used re-distribution of the rent resources to ensure their political legitimacy in domestic politics.³⁷¹ With the help of the political bargain through the distribution of the hydrocarbon revenues as well as the perception of the Qatari leaders about the threats in the system, Qatar avoided the popular protests during the Arab Spring. Conversely, many others in the region faced widespread protests. In general, the protests emerged during the Arab Spring imply that most of the regional states and their leadership had a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of their own people.³⁷²

³⁶⁵ Herb, **All in the Family Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies**, p. 8.

³⁶⁶ Betul Dogan Akkas and Gilla Camden, "Political Culture in Qatar: State-Society Relations and National Identity in Transformation", in Magdalena Karolak and Nermin Allam (Eds.), **Gulf Cooperation Council Culture and Identities in the New Millennium: Resilience, Transformation, (Re)Creation and Diffision**, Singapore: Palgrave macmillan, 2020, p. 68; Khodr, p. 277.

³⁶⁷ Ehteshami, **Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution**, p. 140-143.

³⁶⁸ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 154.

³⁶⁹ Rory Miller, **Desert Kingdoms to Global Powers: The Rise of the Arab Gulf**, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016, p. 13.

³⁷⁰ Akkas and Camden, p. 68.

³⁷¹ Crystal A. Ennis, "Reading entrepreneurial power in small Gulf states: Qatar and the UAE", **International Journal**, Vol. 73(4), 2018, 573-595, p. 574.

³⁷² Mark Sedgwick, "Leadership and legitimacy in MENA", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 104.

To further the effects of the natural resources on the Gulf states' interactions and political behaviours at home and abroad, oil had a significant niche in effecting the power balance in inter-state relations as well as global relations. When the oil incomes increased and filled in the coffers of the Gulf states, their leaders initiated some new reforms to strengthen and extend the activities of the private sector in the region.³⁷³ On the other hand, the developing private sector needed more expatriates due to the insufficient manpower in the Gulf's rentier states. Qatar and other Gulf states enjoyed the increasing numbers of expatriates to compensate the labour force in the private sector at the cost of "demographic imbalance".³⁷⁴ As mentioned earlier, the expatriates played a critical role in diversifying the Gulf states' economy from heavy dependence on hydrocarbon resources.³⁷⁵ Qatar gladly received their expatriates as their key labour force under the mechanism of the "Kafala (sponsorship) system."³⁷⁶

However, the migrant employees/expatriates and the Kafala system paved the way for domestic and international criticism. At a domestic level, the migrant employees were believed to cause "loss of identity" or/and "erosion of cultural values", which resulted in growing societal unease in the region.³⁷⁷ At an international level, the mistreatment of migrant employees caused international criticism.³⁷⁸ Fortunately, the Qatari leadership perceived the systemic incentive and designed a policy response against the imminent threat. They attempted to introduce a new reform in the labour system in the country.³⁷⁹ Depending on this observation, Qatar behaved strategically towards the foreign labour force. Qatar gave "carrots" by offering jobs with high salaries for both highly skilled and low-skilled from various countries to meet its demanded labour force from abroad.³⁸⁰ Additionally, many educated non-nationals found suitable posts for the government and even some had influential positions in the policy-making process in the country.³⁸¹ Similarly, the small sheikhdom hosted approximately 15000 US nationals, of whom

³⁷³ Luciani, p. 124.

³⁷⁴ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, 2016, p. 179-182.

³⁷⁵ Khodr, p. 281.

³⁷⁶ "A work-sponsorship system known as Kafala, currently requires all foreign workers to obtain their employer's consent to travel abroad or switch jobs, a measure that rights groups say leaves workers prone to exploitation and forced labour." **Aljazeera**, "Qatar introduces changes to labour law", 14 December 2016. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/qatar-introduces-labour-law-161213073333258.html>, (27 July 2018).

³⁷⁷ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 186.

³⁷⁸ Abdulaziz Al Horr et.al., p. 370; Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 183.

³⁷⁹ **Qatar Tribune**, "Rights of foreign workers in Qatar see progress: UN", 18 November 2018.

³⁸⁰ Felsch, p. 28.

³⁸¹ Khodr, p. 281.

nearly 5000 were employed in high-skilled jobs in 2019.³⁸² More importantly, despite the overnumbered expatriates, skilful or unskilful, employed in various labour positions in the Gulf states including Qatar, they could not enhance a considerable political sphere of influence over the given states.³⁸³

2.5. A System-Level Analysis: The Arab Spring Movement and its Impact on the Middle East

The Arab Spring movement, which started in Tunisia in late 2010, has spread all over the Middle East. It initially emerged as a response to the treatment of Mohammed Bouazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, and then spontaneously escalated the tension in the entire region. The popular protests in Tunisia were, in fact, the only impetus for the unified expression of the people's expectations from the old guards. The most basic expectations of the people who rushed to the streets en masse can be categorised as political reforms, social justice and good governance.³⁸⁴ More strikingly, economic grievance linked to economic inequality, uneven growth, corruption and unemployment was one of the prime motivations behind the popular protests. To put it clearly, economic grievance including unemployment especially among the young was expressed during the protests.³⁸⁵

The Arab states mostly had young people which reached almost 60% of their population.³⁸⁶ Naturally, people desired to live under better conditions in those countries in transition.³⁸⁷ However, the regional states couldn't employ them in proper jobs and unemployment increased. As a result of this, they attempted to take a stand against their own regime at the slightest opportunity during the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring movement made roughly three significant impacts on the Middle East. Firstly, it affected the regional balance of the Middle East. Secondly, it generated

³⁸² **Gulf Times**, "US lauds Qatar's help in defusing tension", 08 July 2019. <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/636111/US-lauds-Qatar-s-help-in-defusing-tension-in-the-r>. (20 September 2019).

³⁸³ Herb, **All in the Family Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies**, p. 63-64.

³⁸⁴ Amour, "Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction", p. 200; Hanouz and Dusek, p. 9.

³⁸⁵ Russell E. Lucas, "The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring", in Mehran Kamrava (Ed.), **Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 326-328; Magdi Amin, et al. **After the Spring: Economic Transitions in the Arab World**, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 31-56.

³⁸⁶ James L. Gelvin, **The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know**, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 19.

³⁸⁷ In her academic article, Yassamine Mather claims that Arab Spring is a partly consequence of economic misery, frustration with increasing unemployment and a growing gap between rich and poor in the revolutionary states such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, and their rulers' attitudes towards the recent U.S interventions and prominent Palestine issue. Yassamine Mather, "The Arab Spring and its Unexpected Consequences", **Critique**, 42:1, 2014, 73-86, DOI: 10.1080/03017605.2014.909977.

opportunities and threats for the regional states. Thirdly, the uprisings inflamed mistrust and antagonism among the regional states.

2.5.1. The Arab Spring and the Regional Balance of Power in the Middle East

The violent clashes during the Arab Spring led to the re-negotiation of the current regional order.³⁸⁸ It quickly spread throughout the region and jolted the ancien régimes and the old guards of the regional states such as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen. On the other hand, the greater regional states (Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran) sought to strengthen their positions in the Middle East regional order by using their capabilities and alliances. However, the other regional states, even smaller ones, such as Qatar and the UAE also went into a competition to shape the region's order although competition among the regional powers created instability and tension in the region.³⁸⁹

Against this background, the Arab Spring uprisings put systemic pressure onto the prevalent regional order (balance of power and distribution of power) of the Middle East. Some regional states such as Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen weakened their positions in the regional order due to domestic conflicts or/and international interventions. From another perspective, the traditional power centres such as Egypt, Iran and Syria relinquished their leading role in Arab politics to Saudi Arabia and Qatar after the uprisings.³⁹⁰

More notably, the Arab Spring created a power void in the system in political, security and economic context and primarily the Gulf monarchies were quite ambitious to benefit from the power void in the revolutionary countries with their allies.³⁹¹ Thus, they exploited the void through their state power to steer the Arab Spring despite different political agendas. They attempted to strengthen their positions, similarly maximize their political gains, in the unfolding regional system.³⁹² Particularly, they used their economic wealth and influence capabilities to achieve their regional objectives. Also, the unstable and insecure regional environment during the Arab Spring paved a way for the Arab

³⁸⁸ Bernd Kaussler, "Tracing Qatar's Foreign Policy Trajectory and its Impact on Regional Security", **Research Paper**, Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Sep 2015, https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/lists/ACRPS_PDF_DocumentLibrary/Kaussler_on_the_Development_of_Qatari_Foreign_Policy.pdf, p. 42, (08 August 2018).

³⁸⁹ Kamrava, "Hierarchy and instability in the Middle East Regional Order, p. 16-29.

³⁹⁰ Curtis R. Ryan, "Inter-Arab Relations and the Regional System", in Marc Lynch (Ed.), **The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East**, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 117-118.

³⁹¹ Sons and Wiese, p. 5.

³⁹² Zaccara, p. 70.

powers to re-emerge and increase their strength in the regional system/distribution of power among the regional states which had been greatly dominated by non-Arab regional states.³⁹³

In the context of creating a power void in the region, the US decision to withdraw its military muscle from the region in 2011 played an important role as well. Likewise, this strategic political decision heavily affected the regional system as well as the Arab Spring.³⁹⁴ The Obama government decided to withdraw American troops from Iraq in 2011 owing to the increasing cost of war.³⁹⁵ After the withdrawal of the American troops from the Middle East, the regional system broke down.³⁹⁶ Hence, the hegemon left a power vacuum in the region as the Arab Spring did.³⁹⁷

The hegemonic power relatively decreased its power in the region, consequently, the regional powers increased their strength. This regional environment let the regional states emerge as significant players in the regional order of the Middle East. NCR defends that leaders' calculations and perception of relative capabilities and domestic coercion shape the foreign policy behaviours.³⁹⁸ Qatar's political behaviours towards the Bashar al-Assad regime and anti-regime forces significantly affected the military balance in the country due to the lack of a clear and effective step from EU and US leaderships in resolving the violence in Syria.³⁹⁹

³⁹³ Curtis R. Ryan, "Inter-Arab Relations and the Regional System", p. 115.

³⁹⁴ Also, for Obama administration's strategy in the Middle East see Yalçın, Hasan Basri, "Obama stratejisi ve Ortadoğu", Akademik Ortadoğu, Cilt:9, Sayı:2, 2015.

³⁹⁵ The American troops had been in the Middle East since the Iraq War of 2003 and the number of troops increased in number with a high cost. For detailed info see Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11", Congressional Research Service, 8 December 2014, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>; Neta C. Crawford, "Cost of War, US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: \$4.79 Trillion and Counting Summary of Costs of the US Wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan and Homeland Security", **Watson Institute of Brown University**, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2016/Costs%20of%20War%20through%202016%20FINAL%20final%20v2.pdf>; **Reuters**, "Timeline: Invasion, surge, withdrawal; U.S. forces in Iraq", 15 December 2011; For the reason of the withdrawal of American troops also see Serhat Erkmen, "ABD'nin Irak'tan çekilme süreci: Irak'ta işgalin sonu mu, sonun başlangıcı mı?", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 2, Sayı: 21, Eylül 2010.

³⁹⁶ Fadime Özkan, "Dr. Hasan Basri Yalçın: ABD Suriye'de PKK devleti kuruyor", **Star**, 26 June 2016. <http://www.star.com.tr/roportaj/suriyede-amerikaya-bagliliktan-cikmaliyiz-diyen-dr-hasan-basri-yalcin-uyariyor-haber-1121293/>, (29 September 2017).

³⁹⁷ Hasan Basri Yalçın, "Ortadoğu'da Yeni Durum ve Türkiye'nin Dış Politika Stratejisi", in Burhanettin Duran, Kemal İnat and Ali Balcı (Eds.), **Türk Dış Politikası Yılığ 2013**, Ankara: Seta, 2014, p. 14. In his study, Hasan Basri Yalçın also claims that there can be correlation between the power vacuum created by withdrawal of American troops from the region in 2010 and the emergence of the Arab Spring.

³⁹⁸ Colin Dueck, "Neoclassical realism and the national interest: presidents, domestic politics and major military interventions", p. 143-148.

³⁹⁹ Kaussler, p. 30.

More importantly, the US as a security provider for the regional states behaved reluctantly to safeguard its clients against the regional challenge. In return, the regional states attempted to provide their own security by strengthening their positions in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. To put it clearly, after the Arab Spring uprisings and withdrawal of American troops, the regional states largely focused on the security issue. From the realist perspective, the states are forced to provide their security relying on their capabilities, because security is a prime issue in interstate relations. Similarly, the realists urge that “self-help” is considered as a primary motivation for the states to provide their own security.⁴⁰⁰ In the self-help system, the Middle Eastern states obviously sought to ensure their security by maximising their power, re-negotiating their alliances and forming new alliances as they didn’t feel secure in the region.

At this point it is beneficial to refer to our theoretical background: NCR highlights how individual states decipher and perceive the distribution of power in the system.⁴⁰¹ In line with this rationale, during the Arab Spring, the regional states responded to the systemic stimuli mainly by relying on their own power capabilities (self-help) or alliances. To put it concretely, Qatar managed to use two key factors to niche in the regional politics in the post-Arab Spring: Its alliances and its own power. It sought to ensure its regime survival against the regional challenge and strengthen its position in the unfolding regional order. At this point, the structure of the international/regional system and its internal dynamics paved the way for Qatar to provide their security and stability. In the anarchic and insecure regional system, it tried to survive.

NCR also stresses that FPEs have a key role to formulate a proper strategy to increase the security of the state and respond to the challenges. However, they must be aware of the state’s capacity and the environment to achieve it.⁴⁰² Through this theoretical perspective, the Qatari FPEs wisely re-negotiated or formed new alliances not only with the individual states but also with non-state groups in the region. It preserved its close relations with its long-time ally the US in the system as well.

⁴⁰⁰ Stephen M. Walt, “Realism and Security”, <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-286?print=pdf>, (15 September 2019); Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, “Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy”, p. 4.

⁴⁰¹ Oswell, p. 30.

⁴⁰² Oswell, p. 31-32.

The US has had its largest military base called the El Udeid air base in the Middle East, where American troops have been stationed for military operations for a long time.⁴⁰³ Such an operational US air base located in Qatar mirrors the significance of the alliance relationship between Doha and Washington. Also, with the significant deterrence and persuasion, the US presence in the Qatari soils apparently preserves Qatar from any military aggression of the major regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰⁴

Additionally, Qatar formed a strategic alliance with a stronger regional powerhouse Turkey. They co-operated in the regional issues and sought to preserve their mutual interests. Later, Turkey and Qatar signed an official military agreement in 2014 including the establishment of a military base in Qatar's soils⁴⁰⁵ and Turkey currently has its troops at its military base in Qatar. In this context, Qatar tried to provide its security and regime stability by forming an alliance relationship with Turkey at a regional level as well as preserving its relations with the US at a global level. Moreover, it aligned with the MB and its affiliates to extend its sphere of influence in the region.⁴⁰⁶

In the context of power projection to increase its position in regional politics, Qatar mobilized its rich natural sources very effectively during the Arab Spring. It properly used its vision and economic wealth during the uprisings. It backed the popular uprisings in the region by providing military, economic and diplomatic assistance to the rebels in the transition countries such as Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. By doing so, Qatar sought to increase its sphere of influence in the region. Thus, it overshadowed the traditional Arab powerhouses such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.⁴⁰⁷

The popular uprisings during the Arab Spring weakened Egypt's position in the unfolding regional order as well. The political uprisings had a strong effect on the political transformation in the country. The civil society and opposition groups of nearly 20000 participants unexpectedly came together to protest the ongoing government in Egypt.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/udeid.htm>, (06 November 2018).

⁴⁰⁴ Bank, Richter and Sunik, "Durable, Yet Different: Monarchies in the Arab Spring", p. 174; İbrahim Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman), (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), İstanbul: Marmara University, 2020, p. 140.

⁴⁰⁵ **Official Gazette**, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Katar Devleti Hükümeti arasında askeri eğitim, savunma sanayii ile Katar topraklarında Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin konuşlandırılması konusunda işbirliği anlaşmasının onaylanmasının uygun bulunduğu dair kanun", 19 March 2015. <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2015/03/20150328.pdf>, (10 July 2018).

⁴⁰⁶ Başkan, p. 99-104.

⁴⁰⁷ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, p. 67.

⁴⁰⁸ Dalacoura, p. 63-64.

Then in 2012, the MB/the Islamists came to power by a democratic election and ended the long-settled Mubarak administration. Instead, Islamist-dominated governments seized political power in some other Arab countries.

Bahgat Korany urges that the governmental changes in some Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco in favour of Islamist-dominated government were perceived as “an Islamist Spring”.⁴⁰⁹ Unlike semi-secular political elites in pre-2011, Arab Spring lifted the new political parties with the Islamic inheritance and tied with the MB to the leadership in some revolutionary states. New political parties such as al-Nahda in Tunisia, Freedom and Justice in Egypt, Justice and Development in Morocco, which changed the general character of the political elites and carved out a new political elite during the transition period, appeared in the transition countries.⁴¹⁰ Therefore, the KSA- led conservative- moderate camp was uneasy about the MB/Islamists’ rise in the region as they perceived them as a threat to their governance.⁴¹¹ They pursued the status quo foreign policy and supported the old regimes, whereas the TR and QA- led camp in the region emerged in the regional politics and backed the MB and its affiliates. In fact, the emergence of the TR and QA- led camp would further their relations with the others and change the balance of power, in a broader sense, the nature of the regional system in the long term. Additionally, the MB/Islamist-based governments would bolster the Iran-led conservative- ‘resistance’/western-critical camp including Hezbollah and Hamas in the region.⁴¹²

In 2013, the newly elected president Morsi was removed from his seat by a military coup. The domestic political tides in Egypt caused the country to weaken its position in the regional system. On the other hand, the KSA- led the conservative-moderate camp and Israel enjoyed the overthrow of the elected government in Egypt. It backed El-Sisi’s military coup government diplomatically and financially to resist domestic and

⁴⁰⁹ Bahgat Korany, “The Middle East since the Cold War: Initiating the Fifth Wave of Democratization?”, in Louise Fawcett (Ed.), **International Relations of the Middle East**, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 93.

⁴¹⁰ Amour, “Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction”, p. 2; Quinn Meacham, “Islamist Movement”, in Marc Lynch (Ed.), **The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East**, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 209-212.

⁴¹¹ Mason, p. 77.

⁴¹² Amour, “Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment”, p. 300.

international challenges.⁴¹³ In turn, Riyadh desired to be the leader of the Arab world with its economic richness and religious ideology.⁴¹⁴ In a similar vein, Riyadh's support to the El-Sisi government demonstrates its political preference towards the authoritarian regimes in the region as well as its fear for the Morsi government and other MB governments in the region, whereas Doha saw it as a counterweight against the KSA and the UAE alliance. In the restrictive strategic environment, the Saudi leadership also saw the Morsi government and others as a risk for its regional influence and its competition with the Iran- led camp in the unfolding regional order.⁴¹⁵

However, the Iran-led camp continued to strengthen its position in the region despite the opposition of the KSA- led camp and their western allies. The systemic stimuli affected the Iranian political choices. The perception and images of the Iranian leadership had an impact in shaping Iran's policy towards the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities). When Hassan Rouhani came to power, he pursued a new political approach towards Iran's global rivals with political calculations. He sought to reduce the long-term tension with the West at the cost of the displeasure of its neighbouring countries. Tehran successfully managed to disrupt international isolation by signing a nuclear deal with the US. Consequently, Rouhani sought to maintain Iran's strategic leverage in the region.⁴¹⁶

In the context of Iran's power consolidation in the region, the fight against the Daesh terrorist organization in Iraq and Syria and the struggle between the regime forces and opposition groups in Syria strengthened Iran's regional position. Tehran significantly managed to enhance its sphere of influence in the region. Even, it became one of the three guarantor states in the Syrian issue, which indicates that Iran has benefited from the regional changes and appeared to be one of the most dominant regional states in the post-Arab Spring despite the vigorous challenge from the foreign powers. However, both Iran and Saudi Arabia regarded the US presence in the region differently, in essence, due to different perceptions and political calculations of their leadership. While Iranian leadership perceived the US as a challenge of a foreign power, Saudi Arabia didn't agree

⁴¹³ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 309.

⁴¹⁴ Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 187.

⁴¹⁵ Christopher M. Davidson, "Arab Spring and the Gulf monarchies", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 87-96.

⁴¹⁶ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 143.

with its traditional rival and regarded the US's presence in the region as a relief from their fear of Iran.⁴¹⁷

On the other hand, the new regional dynamics showed that the Gulf states couldn't be united in all political decisions. For example, their political approach towards the Egyptian administration was one of the distinguishing points as the Gulf states had different foreign policies towards the regional dynamics. Qatar showed their support to the democratically elected Morsi government while Saudi Arabia/the UAE supported the Sisi government or counterrevolutions in the region. At the same time, it is also significant to see some considerable changes in their policy towards Israel. The strong pan-Arabism made the impression that the traditional opposition to Israel and the unification of Arab peoples got weaker and weaker. The convergence of Saudi Arabia and Israel continued.⁴¹⁸ Israel started to use the airspace of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged that their relations with the Arab world were better than before.⁴¹⁹ Iran rivalry was one of the main reasons why Israeli leadership and Saudi leadership came closer to each other. This implies that Saudi and Israeli ruling elites saw the Sisi government as convenient for their national interests. Against this background of the drastic regional ideological shifts in the post-Arab Spring, the traditional regional causes such as pan-Arabism, pan-Islamism, the Palestine cause and the Zionist threat were relatively weakened due to the novel and stronger causes such as the Iranian threat and MB threat in the region.⁴²⁰

2.5.2. The Arab Spring: Opportunities and Threats for the Regional States

The regional states sought to secure themselves against the threats and/or benefit from the opportunities in this period as assumed by NCR. More notably, it is known that both the regional and the foreign states did not expect such a popular uprising in the Middle East.⁴²¹ Thus, their reactions to the challenge substantially varied. The threats and

⁴¹⁷ Kelkitli, "Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?", p. 44.

⁴¹⁸ Ceyhun Çiçekçi, "İsrail-Suudi Arabistan Yakınlaşmasının Arkaplanı", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 8, Sayı: 73, Mart-Nisan 2016, s. 38-41.

⁴¹⁹ **Al Jazeera**, "First India-Israel flight over Saudi airspace angers El Al", 24 Mar 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/india-israel-flight-saudi-airspace-angers-el-al-180324131241116.html>. (27 March 2018).

⁴²⁰ Philipp O. Amour, "Did a Palestine Spring Take Place? The Lost Decade in Palestine," *Turkish Journal of History*, 67:1, June 2018, 151-176; Amour, "Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances in the Gulf Region and the Middle East", p. 427-429.

⁴²¹ Gamal M. Selim, "The United States and the Arab Spring: The Dynamics of Political Engineering", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Special Issue: Perspectives on the Arab Uprisings, Summer 2013, pp. 255-272, p. 258.

opportunities that the Arab Spring brought about were perceived differently by the FPEs of those states.

NCR significantly considers the states' responses towards the challenges in the IR. It contends that every state responds differently to a stimulus pushed by the international/regional system or every state has a different foreign behaviour against the systemic stimuli.⁴²² Given this theoretical assumption, the energy-rich Gulf monarchies, mainly the KSA, Qatar and the UAE, desired to influence the regional dynamics actively during the Arab Spring.⁴²³ They absolutely responded to the street insurrections in the region differently. Silvia Colombo evidently identifies the GCC countries' reaction to the uprisings as a "double standard".⁴²⁴ They perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity to enhance their influence throughout the region or/and a threat to their domestic stability.⁴²⁵

The Gulf Arab states traditionally haven't always been on the same page when evaluating the regional dynamics. Even though they were located in the same region and under the same security umbrella (the GCC and under the US protection), the FPE's perception and foreign policy approaches led these states to behave differently. However, Qatari and the UAE leaders saw it as such an opportunity that they could increase their recognition and strength in both the regional and international arena. The others, somehow, perceived the regional developments as a threat to their regime stability or regional stability. In this sense, it indicates that the GCC countries couldn't be seen as "a monolithic bloc" despite a large-scale similarity in their political mechanism and resource endowment to foster their international standing.⁴²⁶ As noted above, they were divided in their perception of the regional challenge/stimuli (threat and opportunities). Moreover, Riyadh used the GCC as a political tool to guarantee regime security and counter the revolutions in the region.⁴²⁷

Qatar pursued a proactive policy and supported the revolutionary movements in the Middle Eastern countries with diplomatic, economic and military aids. On the other hand, the KSA/the UAE, status quo monarchies, backed the old guards in the region and

⁴²² Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 464.

⁴²³ Florence Gaub, **The Gulf Moment: Arab Relations Since 2011**, The USA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, May 2015, p. 14-15.

⁴²⁴ Colombo, p. 12.

⁴²⁵ Fuechec, p. 334.

⁴²⁶ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p.37.

⁴²⁷ Curtis R. Ryan, "Alliances and the balance of power in the Middle East", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 350.

provided economic and political assistance to return to the pre-2011 order. Therefore, they acted differently towards the uprisings/the regional developments after the Arab Spring.⁴²⁸ In line with this understanding, they didn't totally behave differently in all cases. For instance; they substantially had a common strategic approach towards the uprisings in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen.

Qatar's proactive approach and support for the revolutionary movements have differentiated over time, and it sometimes acted in line with the KSA, by taking sides with the ruling governments against the popular movements in Bahrain and Yemen. The Gulf monarchies were very responsive to the uprisings in Bahrain and Yemen because they encountered a clear and imminent threat to their strategic position in the region. If the regimes were overthrown in these given Shia-populated countries, the regional balance mainly between the KSA and Iran would be affected.⁴²⁹ The GCC-led "The Peninsula Shield Force" promptly took military action for Bahrain to protect the Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah regime from the uprisings. In the Bahrain issue, Doha gave its support to safeguard Manama, an ally in the GCC, in the Gulf region as well.⁴³⁰

Riyadh gave a clear message to Tehran that Bahrain was in its "sphere of influence" by launching a military operation against the rebels and preventing the ruling family.⁴³¹ From the Bahrain case, it can be concluded that the Gulf monarchies responded strongly to the anti-government protests within the GCC countries/the Gulf region. The Gulf leaders probably perceived such anti-government protests as a direct threat to their legitimacy, survival of their regimes and the Gulf security.⁴³² Thus, they also stopped a possible "Gulf Spring" in the region.

Even, Doha and Riyadh had similar foreign policy behaviours in Syria. They gave support to the anti-regime forces to stop the Bashar al-Assad regime. In this respect, it can be analysed as follows: While Qatar defended the status quo on security and stability in the Gulf region/in the core, it favoured the political changes out of the Gulf region/in the

⁴²⁸ Berger, p. 260-261.

⁴²⁹ Ayoob, p. 87.

⁴³⁰ **Muscatdaily**, "Qatar has sent troops to Bahrain: Official", 19 March 2011. <https://muscatdaily.com/Archive/Stories-Files/Qatar-has-sent-troops-to-Bahrain-official>, (16 September 2019).

⁴³¹ Yoel Guzansky. "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers: Strategic Hedging in the Persian Gulf", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXII, No. 1, Spring 2015, p. 116.

⁴³² Kylie Moore-Gilbert, "A Band of (Muslim) Brothers? Exploring Bahrain's Role in the Qatar Crisis. **Middle East Institute**, 3 August 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/band-muslim-brothers-exploring-bahrains-role-qatar-crisis>, (16 September 2019); Davidson, **After The Sheikhs The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 2.

periphery. This can be attributed to Qatar's desire for security and stability in the Gulf and its fear that a possible power vacuum in the Gulf will inevitably affect its regime stability. It would be better to draw out the consequences of a foreign policy in line with its national and strategic interests, perception of threat and proactive foreign policy rather than treating it as ambivalent behaviour or inconsistency in Qatar's foreign policy.

2.5.3. The Arab Spring: Mistrust and Antagonism in the Middle East

The Arab Spring uprisings inflamed mistrust and antagonism among the regional states in the present anarchic regional arena. During the Arab Spring, the regional states were mainly divided into three groups/camps as conservative-resistance/western critical camp (led by Iran), the conservative- moderate camp (led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), and the elected camp (led by Turkey and Qatar).⁴³³ These rival camps which formed alliance blocks have competed against each other to hold a better position in the region, albeit with their different power capabilities.

Based on political competition in the Gulf region, Qatar's foreign policy during the Arab Spring caused a divergence with its neighbouring countries. The Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood (MB) became a major controversy between Qatar and Saudi Arabia/The UAE. Qatar backed the MB and its affiliates both domestically and regionally in the transition countries. In return, it wisely used the MB as a political tool to influence the regional states. Qatar is well-known to have hosted the exiles of the MB for a long time. It was the right time for the Qatari leadership to use their contacts with the MB members to enable their involvement in the political issues in the region.⁴³⁴ The MB didn't pose a threat to Qatar's regime survival and tried to maintain its alignment with the MB, even during the Arab Spring,⁴³⁵ but the other Gulf states perceived Qatar's alliance with the MB and its initiatives to increase its influence on the revolutionary states as both destabilization and a threat to their domestic and regional power.⁴³⁶ Although Qatar saw the MB as a strategic ally to pursue an independent policy and exploit its influence in the

⁴³³ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 293.

⁴³⁴ David Roberts, "Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Fall 2014, p. 89.

⁴³⁵ David B. Roberts, "Qatar, the Ikhwan, and the transitional relations in the Gulf", in **The Qatar Crisis, POMEPS Briefings**, No. 31, October 2017, p. 54-57, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

⁴³⁶ Fuechec, p. 335; Guido Steinberg, "The Gulf states and The Muslim Brotherhood", in **The Qatar Crisis, POMEPS Briefings No: 31**, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 66, (12 February 2019).

region, mainly Saudi Arabia/the UAE perceived the same group as a threat to its internal security (regime survival) and stability. To highlight the shifting relations and alliances among the regional states, regime survival significantly motivates the alliance politics in the Middle East regional system as well as in inter-Arab relations.⁴³⁷ Consequently, Qatar's support to Muslim Brotherhood and affiliates caused tension in its relations with the neighbouring Arab countries.⁴³⁸ Furthermore, Qatar had to compete with the KSA-led camp to maintain its position and independent policy in the GCC as well as in the unfolding regional order.

The relations between Iran and the Gulf states were another problematic issue in the region. The KSA-led GCC countries were restless for Iran's influence/the Iran-led in the region. They felt that Iran could be influential on Shia populated states and create a risk for the regime security and stability in the Gulf. Considering this and the regional developments, it can be analysed that Iran expanded its influence in the Gulf after the Arab Spring.⁴³⁹ In the initial year of the Arab Spring, the two Iranian warships heading to Syria were allowed to pass through the strategically important waterway Suez Canal by the Egyptian government.⁴⁴⁰ This manoeuvre demonstrates that the relations between Iran and Egypt evolved. In addition to this, the interim government sought to improve relations with Iran as well.⁴⁴¹ The MB leadership in Egypt evaluated the regional environment and desired to improve the political relations with the TR and QA-led camp and Iran. Their perceptions of the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities) and political calculations guided Egypt in shaping foreign policy towards the neighbouring countries. Additionally, the systemic constraints restricted leaders' political ambitions and choices.⁴⁴² As a consequence, the Morsi government's political choices affected relations negatively with the KSA leadership, because Iranian influence on the regional states was unacceptable for its rival Gulf states.⁴⁴³ In this context, the KSA-led camp was anxious about Iran's increasing influence in the region and directly accused Iran of backing the

⁴³⁷ Ryan, "Regime security and shifting alliances in the Middle East", p. 35-36.

⁴³⁸ Fuechec, p. 335.

⁴³⁹ Colombo, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁰ **Al Jazeera**, "Iranian navy ships exit Suez Canal", 22 February 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/201122244215758692.html>. (20 November 2018).

⁴⁴¹ Colombo, p. 11.

⁴⁴² Jacek Wieclawski, p. 201.

⁴⁴³ Guzansky, "The Foreign-Policy Tools of Small Powers: Strategic Hedging in the Persian Gulf", p. 116.

rebels in the region.⁴⁴⁴ It responded to the challenge of Iranian expansion throughout the region as well.⁴⁴⁵ Unlike the KSA- led camp, Qatar was pragmatic in its relations with Iran due to the security and stability in the Gulf region because it shared a rich gas deposit in the North Field with Iran.⁴⁴⁶ Eventually, different threat perceptions and calculations of the state leaders highly increased mistrust and antagonism among the regional states' interactions after the Arab Spring.

2.5.4. Democracy as a Driving Force during the Arab Spring

As noted above, in 2010, a local incident, which a street fruit seller Mohammad Bauzzizi burnt himself in Tunisia, unexpectedly mobilised the mass demonstrations in the country. The popular movement fuelled the growing dissatisfaction across the Middle East concerning socio-economic and volatile environments and the protestors who mainly demanded “political reforms, social justice and good governance” from the ancien regimes.⁴⁴⁷ A large range of actors from the different social layers (including young people) during the uprisings aligned with each other to stand against the existing regimes.⁴⁴⁸ Then, it turned to the Arab Spring movement resulting in the collapse of the long-settled political leadership and the regimes in the region.

With the emergence of the Arab Spring, the existing regional order also signalled for some drastic changes in the context of authoritarian regimes or political changes. To put it clearly, the Arab Spring generated an expectation for democratic changes in the Middle East and initiated a transition period by putting pressure on the authoritarian regimes to meet the demands of the Arab people due to the lack of strong domestic political institutions and civil society in the Middle Eastern countries in terms of democracy.⁴⁴⁹ Based on the domestic politics, political leadership profiles and regimes in the region, the regimes in the transitional countries are characteristically authoritarian and lacks popular

⁴⁴⁴ **BBC News**, “Iran and Saudi Arabia: Friends and foes in the region”, 10 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41945860>, (30.September 2018); Tali Rachel Grumet, “New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry”, (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Josef Korbel School of International Studies, 2015, p. 122. <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1028>, (25 August 2019).

⁴⁴⁵ Breanna C. Strand, “Explaining Sectarian Violence in The Middle East: A Comparative Study of Bahrain and Yemen”, (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, June 2016, p. 111.

⁴⁴⁶ Ulrichsen, **Arab Spring and Qatar**, p. 72.

⁴⁴⁷ Philipp O. Amour, “The Arab Spring Movement: The Failed Revolution. Preliminary Theoretical and Empirical Deliberation”, in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Middle East reloaded: revolutionary changes, power Dynamics, and regional rivalries since the Arab Spring**, London and Washington: Academica Press, 2018, p. 200.

⁴⁴⁸ Vincent Durac, “Social movements, protest movements and cross-ideological coalitions-the Arab uprisings re-appraised”, **Democratization**, 22:2, 2015, 239-256, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2015.1010809, p. 247-250.

⁴⁴⁹ Dalacoura, p. 72.

legitimacy. In a similar vein, there is not a suitable habitat in the authoritarian countries to foster liberal thoughts including democracy and democratic institutions as their long-standing political leadership are unwilling to share the ruling power with a large mass of people or their regimes rely on personalized legitimacy rather than electoral institutions.

During the Arab Spring uprisings, the Arab people had political demands such as a larger role in governance and more participation in civil society.⁴⁵⁰ They evidently challenged to express their frustration against their political leadership with mass demonstrations. Their demonstrations shook or demolished many authoritarian regimes in the region without distinguishing “republic or a monarchy.” They toppled the long-termed established leadership of the Middle East such as Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen. Then, they wanted to elect new political leadership in the revolutionary countries. Despite the political demands and mass demonstrations, most of the members of the Arab League did not have much change in their political leadership or in terms of democracy such as the constitution and political rights.⁴⁵¹ Tunisia can be considered as an exceptional Arab state which made great progress including democracy in the region although it is still fragile in both economic and social terms.⁴⁵²

Also, the mass demonstrations in the region put pressure on the rich Gulf monarchies to reconsider their administrations and domestic security. After filtering this pressure through the domestic factors, the Gulf leaders put forward new political and economic reforms to increase political liberties and the national economy and tried to prevent a potential Arab Spring at home. In essence, regime security is paramount for the leaders’ main political focus. They sought to maintain regime survival by these new reforms.⁴⁵³ In other words, the Gulf monarchies tried to cool the society by implementing new reforms on time. In this regard, state leaders of the Gulf monarchies perceived the imminent threat beforehand and responded to it with political calculations. As NCR highlighted, perceptions and calculations of the state leaders through their leader images

⁴⁵⁰ Fuechec, p. 323.

⁴⁵¹ Amour, “Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction”, p. 3; Marina Ottaway, “The Consequences of the Internal Power Shift”, in Sinan Ülgen et al., **Emerging Order in the Middle East**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Outlook, May 2012, p. 6-9.

⁴⁵² Sons and Wiese, p. 3; Dalacoura, p. 73; Durac, p. 251-253.

⁴⁵³ Dalacoura, p. 79.

and strategic culture towards the threats and opportunities in the system niched in the policy-making process to shape the foreign policy responses.⁴⁵⁴

Additionally, the GCC tried to secure their own stability and extend their influence by providing financial aid and inviting some regional countries for the GCC membership.⁴⁵⁵ In fact, compared with the other states under the popular uprisings, the rich Arab Gulf monarchies had some more time to bring about reactive reforms.⁴⁵⁶ They immediately provided financial support for their public sector and unemployment sector.⁴⁵⁷ They actuated the mechanism of the rentier bargain. The public in the GCC generally maintained to accept the political status quo in their countries. Unlike their citizens, the marginalized groups such as the Bidoon in Kuwait, the Shi'ites in Bahrain, and the employees in Oman participated in the popular protests against the regimes in the GCC.⁴⁵⁸ According to the NCR, the leaders understand the strategic environment to construct a political response to the proximate danger and preserve their strategic interests. They calculate the domestic constraints as well.⁴⁵⁹ In Jordan and Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, the masses were calmed down thanks to “the cooling reforms”, which the ruling elites accomplished as successful manoeuvres.⁴⁶⁰ Qatar was one of the rare countries that experienced the least pain during the Arab Spring.⁴⁶¹ The state which had an unfragmented and coherent society (social cohesion) can counteract the external threat properly.⁴⁶² Relying on the domestic stability/cohesion and power projection capabilities, the Qatari leadership respectively backed the democratic uprisings across the Middle East with the exception of Bahraini uprisings to shape the existing political landscape in the Arab countries.⁴⁶³

On the other hand, the international community perceived the Arab Spring uprisings and political changes positively. With the Deauville Partnership with Arab countries in

⁴⁵⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 60-66.

⁴⁵⁵ Colombo, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁶ Lucas, “The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring”, p. 325.

⁴⁵⁷ Amour, “Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction”, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁸ Lucas, “The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring”, p. 338.

⁴⁵⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 47-60.

⁴⁶⁰ Dalacoura, p. 66.

⁴⁶¹ Martin Beck and Simone Hüser, “Political Change in the Middle East: An Attempt to Analyse the “Arab Spring”, **GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies**, No. 203, 2012, s. 13.

⁴⁶² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 27-28.

⁴⁶³ Mohammed Nuruzzaman, Qatar and the Arab Spring: down the foreign policy slope, **Contemporary Arab Affairs**, 8:2, 2015, 226-238; DOI: 10.1080/17550912.2015.1024034, p. 228.

transition in May 2011, the G8 leadership/the globally powerful states initiated international support through the regional states and financial institutions for the transition states in the Middle East on democratic and economic reforms. They mainly purposed to supply technical, political and financial support for the transition states in the region to build transparent and liable governments and sustainable economic growth.⁴⁶⁴ Conversely, the new governments couldn't manage to bring stability and build democratic institutions in the revolutionary countries with the exception of Tunisia, where a national consensus occurred in the key state institutions including its military to consolidate the democracy in the country.⁴⁶⁵ Although democratic initiatives were not successful in transition countries, regional people put pressure on regimes in line with their expectations. The new uprisings in 2018 imply that people in these countries still expect and struggle for democratic changes.

2.6. Counterrevolutions: Efforts to Achieve Equilibrium in the Regional Order of the Middle East

The popular protests during the Arab Spring achieved great success to change the authoritarian regimes and their long-termed leaders in the Middle East. Then, Islamic political actors/Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its affiliates dominated the governments effectively in several transition countries in the region. The Saudi leadership perceived them as a threat to their interests and regime security.⁴⁶⁶ The state leaders pursue a foreign policy to fit the systemic stimuli. However, the clarity of the international system and domestic factors including leaders' perceptions and calculations of the strategic environment affect the policy-making and policy responses to eliminate threats or maintain security interests.⁴⁶⁷ They sought to lead a region-wide counterrevolution to protect its strategic interests.⁴⁶⁸ Also, the political elites of the UAE perceived the Islamist organisations regionally and domestically as a threat to their state control and banned

⁴⁶⁴ Fuechec, p. 322; Sons and Wiese, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁵ Larbi Sadiki, "Tunisia's "civic parallelism" Lessons for Arab democratization", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 199-200; Stephen J. King, "Authoritarian adaptability and the Arab Spring", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 81-83.

⁴⁶⁶ İsmail Numan Telci and Mehmet Rakipoğlu, "Suudi Arabistan'ın Müslüman Kardeşler Politikası: 1932-2016", **Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi**, Cilt: 13, Sayı: 1, Nisan 2018, p. 157.

⁴⁶⁷ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 33-34.

⁴⁶⁸ Mehran Kamrava, "The Arab Spring and Saudi led counterrevolution", **Elsevier Limited on behalf of Foreign Policy Research Institute**, Winter 2012, p. 103.

them in the country. They favoured the old authoritarian order in the post-Arab Spring and backed the counterrevolutionaries in Egypt, Libya and Yemen.⁴⁶⁹ From this perspective, the KSA- led camp, status quo monarchies, tried to stop the regional changes and the MB-dominated governments in the region in order to maintain their regime survivals and national interests.

Qatar became an influential actor over the newly elected governments linked to the Muslim Brotherhood in the region. It increased its influence by using political, military and financial aids. On the other hand, the Saudi leadership perceived Qatar's efforts to wield its influence on the revolutionary states as a big challenge to the long-seated position of the KSA in the regional order of the Middle East.⁴⁷⁰ Additionally, since the Arab Spring weakened Egypt's position in the unfolding regional order, the Saudi FPEs calculated that they seized an opportunity to become the leader of the Arab world. At this point, NCR underscores that states' position and relative power determines their foreign policies in the system.⁴⁷¹ After the overthrown of Mubarak, the Saudi administration gave a financial aid of \$4 billion to the Egyptian government to expand its regional influence and buy influence in the country.⁴⁷² They tried to achieve equilibrium in the region by winning Egyptian ruling elites over. In other words, the Saudi leadership sought to balance the TR and QA- led camp throughout the region. Hence, three Arab countries- Egypt, Libya and Yemen- witnessed "conservative counterrevolutions" led by the old guards with the alignment of the regional powers.⁴⁷³

The Egyptian army, which had a great weight in the economic, political and social fields, closely followed the revolution process and became an influential force in the shift of political power by taking the support of regional and international power.⁴⁷⁴ The Egyptian army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi backed by the KSA and the UAE ousted the first democratically elected president Morsi in a military coup in July 2013.⁴⁷⁵ At this point,

⁴⁶⁹ Andreas Krieg, "The Weaponization of Narratives Amid the Gulf Crisis", in Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf: The Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillian, 2019, p. 101.

⁴⁷⁰ Mark Fuechec, p. 335.

⁴⁷¹ Rose, p. 146.

⁴⁷² Mehran Kamrava, "The Arab Spring and Saudi led counterrevolution", **Elsevier Limited on behalf of Foreign Policy Research Institute**, Winter 2012, p. 103.

⁴⁷³ Amour, "Revolutionary Changes, Power Dynamics, and Regional Rivalries since the Arab Spring: An Introduction", p. 3; Hassan, p. 487; Bakir, p. 203-204.

⁴⁷⁴ Veysel Kurt, "Beşinci Yılında Arap Baharı: Devrim, Karşı Devrim ve Bölgesel Kriz", **SETA**, 7 December 2014, <https://www.setav.org/besinci-yilinda-arap-bahari-devrim-karsi-devrim-ve-bolgesel-kriz/>, (25 August 2019).

⁴⁷⁵ Bakir, p. 204.

the military coup in Egypt can be considered as a turning point in the transition period as well as a tough reaction from the regional and global powers, which perceived the revolutionary changes (despite its democratic potential for the novel regimes) as a threat either to their regime or their strategic interests. They didn't openly stand against the military coup government in Egypt despite its undemocratic practices. Even, they gave material support for the new government.⁴⁷⁶ For instance, after the military coup, France and some other leading Western countries joined the KSA and the UAE to support al-Sisi's military government in Egypt. France sold two Mistral helicopter ships to Egypt, worth almost a billion dollars. Despite the regional and international support to the Sisi government, Qatar and Turkey remained as the sole actors which openly continued to support the democratically elected government of President Mohammed Morsi in Egypt.⁴⁷⁷

The US leadership's strategic perceptions and calculations towards the Arab Spring basically based on the hesitant political attitude and deeper co-operation with their local non-state allies created a geopolitical environment in which both regional powers and sub-state actors became more effective in regional politics. In this environment where was not crystal clear about the dangers, the sectarian polarization of the proxy wars between the KSA and Iran affected the regional policies and strategic calculations as well. Moreover, the possibility of balancing the polarization by the Turkey and Qatar- led camp was abolished by the al- Sisi military coup in Egypt.⁴⁷⁸ The interactions and miscalculations of the leadership towards the constraints arising from the regional environment resulted in "deep division" in Libya, "bitter violence" in Syria and "increasing sectarian violence" in Iraq. On the other hand, the Obama administration and their European allies intervened urgently in the Libyan regime with their military capabilities but slowly in the Syrian regime. Their policy behaviours as well as external interventions created political consequences in the region. In Libya, two seated governments emerged and sought to increase their political power by using material capabilities and alliance building. The Khalifa Haftar group cooperated with the KSA-

⁴⁷⁶ Ayfer Erdoğan, "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt: The Role of External Actors", **Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol: 7, No: 1, 2020, pp. 169-201, p. 188-192.

⁴⁷⁷ Aktürk, "Arap Baharında devrim/karşı-devrim ve Katar kuşatması". <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/arap-baharinda-devrim-karsi-devrim-ve-katar-kusatmasi/841243>, (25 August 2019).

⁴⁷⁸ Burhanettin Duran, "Bölgede yeni bir değerlendirme zamanı", **Sabah**, 27 February 2019. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/duran/2015/02/27/bolgede-yeni-bir-degerlendirme-zamani>, (25 August 2019).

led camp and sought to seize the ruling power against the UN-backed Tobruk government in the country. In Yemen, the KSA-led coalition force not only intervened to stop Iran-aligned Houthi forces but also backed the Hadi administration in the country. On the other hand, the Houthis increased their influence by capturing some major cities in the country. At last, Yemen turned into a chaotic environment with a fragmented domestic structure by the military interference of foreign powers. Consequently, political uncertainty and regional insecurity were heightened in the Gulf region.⁴⁷⁹

The main supporters of the counterrevolutions were the KSA- led camp and Israel.⁴⁸⁰ The Israeli leadership, who primarily focused on the Palestinian issue, evaluated the regional changes in the direction of Israel's own strategic interests.⁴⁸¹ The uprisings in Egypt and Syria made Israel uneasy from time to time. In particular, the rise of the TR and QA- led camp in Egypt and the increasing influence of the Iran-led camp in Syria were perceived as a threat to its security by Israel. Thus, the KSA- led camps' counteraction to the MB/Hamas throughout the region substantially relieved Israel.⁴⁸² Moreover, the KSA- led camp and Israel, which saw Iran and Muslim Brotherhood as a "twin" danger to their security and interests, became implicit strategic partners.⁴⁸³

Although the KSA- led camp removed the MB from the political power by supporting the counterrevolutions, the radical actors such as Daesh and Al-Qaeda threateningly came to the fore. Since the Saudi leadership heavily relied on state-controlled Salafist ideology, which legitimated their regime and governance, the radical Salafist understanding and violence of these given non-state actors were a serious threat to the Saud dynasty.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, the KSA targeted to defeat the radical terrorist organisations by allying with the regional powers such as Turkey and Qatar and foreign powers such as the US and France.

Despite the cooperation of the regional and international powers in the context of security considerations, ideological divisions and rivalries between interstates' relations or Sunni factions relatively increased in the region. Toby Matthiesen claims that these rivalries and

⁴⁷⁹ Ulrichsen (Ed.), *The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf*, p. 3-15.

⁴⁸⁰ Duran, "Bölgede yeni bir değerlendirme zamanı".

⁴⁸¹ Philipp O. Amour, " Hamas-PLO/Fatah Reconciliation and Rapprochement within the Unfolding Regional Order in the Middle East since 2010: Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist Perspectives", *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 6(5), 2018, 621-631, p. 627.

⁴⁸² *Middle East Monitor*, "Israel satisfied with Egypt relations post-Coup", 18 April 2014. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20140418-israel-satisfied-with-egypt-relations-post-coup/>. (20 September 2018).

⁴⁸³ Duran, "Bölgede yeni bir değerlendirme zamanı".

⁴⁸⁴ Duran, "Bölgede yeni bir değerlendirme zamanı".

divisions within the Sunni realm were more significant than the Sunni-Shia split. Against this backdrop, the KSA- led camp sought to refrain the MB from extending its power and forming “an alternative Sunni Islamic political order” in the Middle East as well as Egypt from becoming an independent and a mighty rival state in the region.⁴⁸⁵ Then, they backed the counterrevolution movements mostly towards the MB and its affiliates in the region through their material and non-material assets as they perceived them as a threat to the regional stability and their regime security. In the line of these given rationales above, they tried to hold Cairo in their coalition to counteract the Iranian threat.⁴⁸⁶

2.7. Power Rivalry of External Actors in the Middle East in the Post-Arab Spring

In the post-Arab Spring, regional power rivalry and increasing regional polarization revived the global actors’ alignments as well as hostilities in the Middle East. Thus, The Syrian civil war became a milestone for the global rivals (Russia and the USA) to encounter each other and their regional proxies.⁴⁸⁷ The power vacuum in the post-Arab Spring in the region, and the US’ slow and unwillingness to intervene in the uprisings actively created an opportunity for Russia. Depending on the systemic perception and strategic culture, Russia, which did not seek the US to remain the sole dominant actor in the Middle East, carried out a military mobilization over the formal invitation of the Bashar al-Assad regime.⁴⁸⁸ It deployed its military power to safeguard the Bashar al-Assad regime and balance the US in the Middle East. In this concept, Russia initially strengthened its military base in Latakia of Syria. Then, it supported the Bashar al-Assad forces against the anti-regime forces in the country.⁴⁸⁹ Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned all other external forces staying without Bashar al-Assad’s invitation to leave the Syrian territories.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, the Russian diplomat tried to legitimate the regime’s survival as well as Russia’s position in the region. Russia struggled for keeping the Bashar al-Assad regime in power but the US threw its support for opposition groups in the

⁴⁸⁵ Toby Matthiesen, “Renting the Gasbah: Gulf States’ Foreign Policy Towards North Africa Since the Arab Uprisings”, in Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (Ed.), **The Changing Security Dynamics of The Persian Gulf**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 56.

⁴⁸⁶ Erdoğan, p. 195.

⁴⁸⁷ Amour, “Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances in the Gulf Region and the Middle East”, p. 420.

⁴⁸⁸ Corky Siemaszko, “Syrian government invites Russia to protect Assad regime from ISIS”, **New York Daily News**, 02 November 2015. <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/russia-launches-attacks-syria-day-article-1.2382933>, (08 August 2019).

⁴⁸⁹ Samet Yüce, “Rusya’nın Suriye’deki Varlığının Nedenleri”, p. 282-285.

⁴⁹⁰ **Tass Russian News Agency**, “All foreign forces staying in Syria without invitation must leave, says Lavrov”, 22 August 2018. <https://tass.com/politics/1018246>, (08 September 2018).

country. In other words, Russia supported the status quo (continuation of the Assad regime), while the USA took a revisionist attitude (change of al-Assad regime).⁴⁹¹

However, with geostrategic importance in the region, Syria became an arena for a regime-dissident conflict leading to a civil war in the country.⁴⁹² In other words, in Syria, the regime and its political decision for conflict resolution, which chose the way of suppressing its own people violently by using militarist ways, resulted in a civil war.⁴⁹³ The harsh intervention of the regime further widened the rift between the opposition groups and the regime forces, and the country was dragged into a chaotic environment. Both the regional and international forces intervened to end the conflicts between the regime forces and the opposition groups in Syria. The US, France, Britain, Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia backed the Syrian rebels while the rival powers Russia, China, Iran and Hezbollah supported Bashar al-Assad to ensure the regime survival.⁴⁹⁴

Regional powers took their strategic positions alongside the international powers in the direction of their own strategic interests. Iran- led camp and Russia backed their long-time ally al-Assad regime against the regional challenges. Iran continuously supplied military, economic and diplomatic assistance to the Syrian regime. The Iranian government deployed its Quds Force under the command of Qasem Soleimani to reorganize and train the National Defence Forces (NDF) in Syria built up by both regime and foreign militias to fight for the survival of the Syrian regime. Even, Tehran encouraged the Iraqi government under Iran's political influence to trade with Damascus.⁴⁹⁵

On the other hand, the KSA- led conservative-moderate camp backed anti-regime forces such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria. Additionally, the US, France and Turkey

⁴⁹¹ Samuel Mercier, "The Legality of Russian Airstrikes in Syria and 'Intervention by Invitation', **E-International Relations Students**, 29 March 2016, <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/04/29/the-legality-of-russian-airstrikes-in-syria-and-intervention-by-invitation/>, (08 September 2019).

⁴⁹² Legrenzi and Calculli, p. 212.

⁴⁹³ On 15 March 2011, the arrest of the students with their written message of "the people want the fall of the regime" on the walls of the city of Deraa flamed the anti-government demonstrations in Syria. The al-Assad forces trying to stop them by disproportionate force caused the death of many Syrians. Due to the al- Assad's drifting the country into a chaotic environment, many Syrians had to leave their country or fight against the regime forces. "Kıvılcımı duvar yazısı tetiklemişti", 15 March 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/kivilcimi-duvar-yazisi-tetiklemisti-26010729>, (21 September 2018); Richard Spencer, "Syria uprising: We will continue until the fall of the regime", **the Telegraph**, 23 April 2011.

⁴⁹⁴ Nazir Hussain, "The Syrian Crisis and Regional Order in the Middle East", **Pakistan Horizon**, Vol. 66, No. 4, October 2013, pp. 39-51, p. 41.

⁴⁹⁵ Kelkitli, "Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?", p. 37.

allied with Qatar and Saudi Arabia to support the rebels in Syria. In 2011, The Syrian National Council was formed in Istanbul and aligned with the Free Syrian Army.⁴⁹⁶ Later, the Friends of Syria, an alliance group of western and Arab states to back the Syrian opposition groups, officially met in Doha and took a decision to increase their military aids to the Syrian opposition. The leaders evaluate their surroundings through their personal lens.⁴⁹⁷ In the Doha meeting, Qatari leadership defended the use of force against the Bashar al-Assad regime. Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ) claimed that:

“all the Arab and international efforts to end the Syrian tragedy have failed, rendering the international community a helpless observer that cannot deal with the situation...The use of force may be necessary to reach rightness, the provision and use of arms might be the only way to achieve peace, especially in the Syrian case...Moral support alone shall not be enough for the Syrian people.”⁴⁹⁸

Also, the states, which participated in the Doha meeting, demanded Iran-backed Hezbollah militias leave Syria and ease the sectarian tension.⁴⁹⁹ Riyadh took a strategic step and used its tribal links in Syria, which was established through intermarriages, religious networks and business relations. With their interferences, the external actors sought to run the course in Syria for their principal strategic benefits. Thus, the KSA- led camp and Iran- led camp competed for each other at the Syrian war theatre. By doing so, the regional rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran turned into a proxy war in Syria.⁵⁰⁰

Two key foreign actors- The US and Russia- took the lead in the Syrian issue. The regional actors cooperated with these two dominant actors. In other words, they were involved in this power game by holding one side of the rope. Great powers force the less powerful powers to form an alliance. Similarly, the regional states' vulnerability on the security issues allowed the foreign powers to intervene in their internal issues during the Arab Spring. The regional actors traditionally had dependent relations with the

⁴⁹⁶ Hussain, “The Syrian Crisis and Regional Order in the Middle East”, p. 41-42.

⁴⁹⁷ Mariana Carpes, “From breadcrumbs to threads of wool: Building a neoclassical realist approach for the study of regional powers nuclear choices”, (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), the University of Hamburg and GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2014, p. 38.

⁴⁹⁸ Scott Stearns, “Syria's ‘Friends’ Pledge More Support for Rebels”, **VOA News**, 22 June 2013, <https://www.voanews.com/world-news/middle-east-dont-use/syrias-friends-pledge-more-support-rebels>, (08 August 2019).

⁴⁹⁹ “Friends of Syria Core Group-Final Communiqué”, 22 June 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/friends-of-syria-core-group-final-communication>, (08 August 2019).

⁵⁰⁰ Kelkitli, “Saudi-Iranian Entanglements in the Persian Gulf: Is Rapprochement Possible?”, p. 38.

international powers as they were relatively weak and insecure in the system. Thus, they relied on their alliance relations with the foreign powers to provide their security. They hope to gain more from the powerful foreign powers through their alliance building.⁵⁰¹ In other words, they expected their allies to help avoid the threats and/or respond to the regional challenges. However, their alliance relationship paved the way for the foreign powers to remain permanently in the region. Along with the Arab Spring, there appeared an unfolding regional order (the novel distribution of power among the states) in the region. In this unfolding regional order, I observe that the regional forces, as well as global forces as strategic allies, sought to maximize their influence and power capabilities.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring started in Tunisia in 2010 and rapidly extended to the other regional states. As NCR significantly highlighted, systemic stimuli created a strategic environment for the states and their leaders' political responses.⁵⁰² Thus, the Arab Spring became a great regional challenge for the states (and their leaders) in the Middle East with three significant impacts on the region:

Firstly, the popular uprisings triggered changes in the regional balance of power among the states in the Middle East. The popular uprisings enabled the Arab people to change their regimes and long-seated leadership of the regional states such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen while creating a chaotic environment and impotent leadership in Syria. In other words, the regional challenge forced to change the current distribution of power among the regional states and resulted in demolished and/or weakened regional states in the volatile region. Qatar emerged as an influential player in the regional order of the Middle East. It increased its sphere of influence in the region as well as consolidating its power by forming new alliances and re-negotiating its traditional alliances.

Secondly, the Arab Spring generated threats and/or opportunities for the regional states. The states responded to this regional challenge differently in terms of their own interests and security concerns. The KSA- led camp perceived the regional challenge as a threat to regime security and regional stability. Depending on the threat perception and strategic

⁵⁰¹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 14.

⁵⁰² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 52-56.

calculation towards the systemic stimuli, their FPEs sought to preserve the status quo in the region. In line with this, the rise of Islamists/the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates was perceived as a challenge to the legitimacy of the status quo monarchies. The strengthening position of the Islamists/the MB and its affiliates in the region was also influential in the KSA- led camps' political attitudes towards the regional challenge. They shared the fear that the Islamists would threaten their regime survival and act in favour of the Iran-led camp. Additionally, the Egyptian leadership during the democratically elected Morsi government took some steps in the name of normalizing the relations with Iran caused to deepening of the hostility and threat perception of Saudi Arabia towards the new administration/the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁰³ The KSA- led camp backed the al-Sisi military coup in Egypt, namely, the status quo in the region.

On the other hand, the TR and QA- led camp backed the popular uprisings and rebels throughout the region. Particularly, the Qatari FPEs perceived the regional dynamics as an opportunity to exploit their influence in the region. The intervening variables such as leaders' perception and images influenced Qatar's policy choices towards the systemic constraints. They pursued an independent policy towards the regional pressure and actively intervened in the regional issues. Qatar joined the NATO-led military operation to end the Gaddafi regime in Libya. They provided economic, military and diplomatic aids to the anti-regime forces. At the same time, Qatar backed the Islamists groups such as Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the region.⁵⁰⁴ The Islamist movement exploited its influence in a number of Arab states through its social presence and organisational capacity.⁵⁰⁵ To put it clearly, the Islamist parties gained weight in the region during the Arab Spring. As a result, Qatar benefited from the uprisings/regional dynamics and expanded its influence in the transition states.⁵⁰⁶

Thirdly, the popular uprisings inflamed mistrust and antagonism in the interstate relations in the present anarchic regional system.⁵⁰⁷ The traditional regional rivals Iran and Saudi

⁵⁰³ Telci and Rakipoğlu, p. 159.

⁵⁰⁴ Berger, p. 262.

⁵⁰⁵ Nathan J. Brown, "Changes in the Domestic Order", in Sinan Ülgen et al., **Emerging Order in the Middle East**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012, pp. 1-24, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁶ Marina Ottoway, "The Consequences of the Internal Power Shift", in Sinan Ülgen, Nathan J. Brown, Marina Ottoway, and Paul Salem, **Emerging Order in the Middle East**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp. 1-24, 2012, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁷ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 293; Ulrichsen, **Qatar and Arab Spring**, p. 105-107; Ulrichsen (Ed.), **The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf**, p. 40-41.

Arabia sought to increase their sphere of influence throughout the region. Both parties confronted each other during the uprisings in Bahrain and Yemen. The Gulf forces managed to repel the rebels in Bahrain but they failed to stop the clashes in Yemen. The Iran-aligned Houthi forces still fight against the internationally recognized Hadi government. More significantly, while identity politics and sectarianism has risen in the region since the Arab Spring, the radicalism and violence of the varied terrorist groups have been gradually galvanized and popularized in the region.⁵⁰⁸

However, the impetus towards the reforms or changing the status quo within the region which was triggered by the revolutionary movements has gradually loosened. The new and stronger actors such as Turkey and Qatar already appeared in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. The long-standing rivalry and fragmentation have increasingly been embedded in the region. Israel is still a common adversary for Iran and all the Arab states, even some of them have implicit relations, and Iran is also a historic rival for the KSA and the other Gulf countries. Syria and Iraq had civil and proxy wars, which made them vulnerable to interventions and influence from other regional and external actors. Hence, they failed to respond to domestic and regional challenges.⁵⁰⁹ Both Syria and Iraq mostly remained under the influence of Tehran. More notably, Tehran bolstered the Bashar al-Assad regime militarily and financially against the anti-regime forces and external forces.⁵¹⁰ Thus, it protected its traditional ally and consolidated its strength in the regional order. Egypt, the traditional leader of the Arab world, which was deteriorated by its power in the system couldn't achieve its historical standing again.⁵¹¹ As Riyadh provided domestic stability and subsequently required economic support, Egypt focused on its domestic issues rather than the regional ones.⁵¹² Additionally, the two dominant international powers, Russia and the US have strengthened their positions in the region. They even penetrated the borders to protect their clients' regional interests.

In the post-Arab Spring period, counterrevolutions and proxy wars at various fronts between the KSA-led camp and the Iran-led camp put their weight on the Middle East policy. This meant that the rivalry, mistrust and hostility were escalated throughout the

⁵⁰⁸ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 143.

⁵⁰⁹ Makdisi et al., p. 5.

⁵¹⁰ Daniel Byman, "Regime Change in the Middle East: Problems and Prospects", **Political Science Quarterly**, Vol. 127, No. 1, 2012, p. 40.

⁵¹¹ Makdisi et al., p. 5.

⁵¹² Ayoob, p. 89.

region. Additionally, the KSA-led camp challenged the TR and QA-led camp, which backed the democratic protest in the transition countries. Thus, the Arab Spring movement failed to meet the Arab citizens' demand for democracy.

The interstate relations became very fragile in the post-Arab Spring. When considering the geopolitical features and strategic environment of the Middle East, it is actually very difficult to estimate the future of interstate relations based on present trends through the shifting dynamics of regional politics of the Middle East after the outbreak of the Arab Spring. However, the states in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East have still been fragile, fragmented, weak and vulnerable.

After understanding the Arab Spring and its effects on the regional order of the Middle East, it is time to analyse Qatar's regional and international policies at this stage. Therefore, the next chapter will present Qatar's regional and international alliances in the post-Arab Spring.

CHAPTER 3: QATAR'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING

Introduction

This chapter mainly aims to explore Qatar's stance against the regional turmoil after the Arab Spring. In this regard, it discusses its response to the Arab Spring and its alliance building with regional and international actors through the perspectives of NCR and other alliance theories in the realist realm.

The regional states sought to stand against the regional challenge that emerged during the Arab Spring through their capabilities or alliance building because it forced them to reconsider their security and strategic interests. States create their foreign security policies primarily by considering threats and opportunities that emerged from the system, which carve their policy preferences.⁵¹³ Also, they respond to the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities) after filtering them through the domestic intervening variables.⁵¹⁴ However, states need the power to respond to systemic stimuli appropriately. NCR agrees that power is significant in external politics, whereas it underscores the leaders' perception of the international system and ability to extract and mobilize their power from domestic sources.⁵¹⁵ Given this theoretical background, the regional states preferred alliances to accumulate power to respond to the systemic stimuli.⁵¹⁶ Also, they consolidated their strength and ensured their regime security. In this regard, the KSA- led camp, Iran- led camp and the Turkey and Qatar- led camp emerged in the region during the Arab Spring following their own perceptions (as either a threat and/or an opportunity) of the systemic stimuli.

On the other hand, the Arab Spring forced the long-termed regimes and their leaders for significant changes, which resulted in either devastated regimes or weakened regimes in the regional order of the Middle East. Thus, the regional changes affected the balance of power among the states in the region while raising the regional position of the Gulf

⁵¹³ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 20-22.

⁵¹⁴ Rose, p. 144-172.

⁵¹⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 43-45.

⁵¹⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics", *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4, July 1984, pp.461-495, p. 461

monarchies, predominantly Qatar. The power centre relatively shifted to the Gulf region where the wealthy Gulf monarchies were ambitious to influence the regional politics.⁵¹⁷ They were actively involved in the Arab Spring uprisings to enhance their sphere of influence and/or safeguard their regime security.

Just after Tunisia and Egypt, the popular uprisings threatened the survival of the Gaddafi regime in Libya. The regime resisted the strong public protests, which Doha bolstered economically, politically and militarily. After the regime's violations towards the anti-regime groups/protests, the Libyan uprisings were internationalized. To clarify it, the US imposed sanctions on the Gaddafi regime to end the violations in the country. Then its western allies, primarily the UK and France, insisted on a military campaign on Gaddafi's authoritarian regime. By doing so, the western powers manifestly saw the Gaddafi regime as a threat. However, the US didn't take the lead for the proposed military intervention towards the Libyan regime.

The NATO-led coalition forces including some ambitious members of the Arab League launched a military operation to topple Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. At this point, the regional states allied with the international powers to end the imminent threat arising from the neighbouring state.⁵¹⁸ Doha gave a great contribution with its military and financial capabilities to the success of the internationally campaigned operation. The belief that backing the most powerful side ultimately would be beneficial proved very well in Qatar's decision to ally with the NATO-led operation.

Qatar didn't face a serious domestic constraint during the Arab Spring. Relying on the social coherence and ruling elites' cohesion in the country, the Qatari leadership thereupon focused on regional issues. They perceived the regional dynamics as an opportunity to increase their influence throughout the region. They benefited from transition activities during the Arab Spring.⁵¹⁹ Qatar is actively involved in the popular uprisings in the region. Material capabilities including the economic capabilities were the key source of power for Qatari FPEs, but how they use them was more significant.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Introduction, Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 5-18; Sebastien Boussois, "Iran and Qatar: A Forced Rapprochement", in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 230.

⁵¹⁸ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 171.

⁵¹⁹ Makdissi et al., p. 5.

⁵²⁰ Ennis, p. 574- 578.

They exerted and mobilized the nation's power to exploit their influence throughout the region.

As noted earlier, Doha backed the democratic movement along the region by providing military, diplomatic and economic assistance to the rebels. Most notably, Qatar gave great support to the anti-regime groups including Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates and the mass public protests via the Doha-based Al Jazeera network to drive the authoritarian regimes and its long-seated leaders. Above all, Qatar pursued a very active and interventionist policy towards systemic pressure.⁵²¹ Its cooperation with the NATO-led military force to overthrow the authoritarian Gaddafi regime in Libya implies that Qatar pursued a novel policy by shifting from mediation and peace-building to a proactive and interventionist state. In view of these given aspects above, I analyse that highly concentrated Qatari FPEs wisely and quickly manoeuvred to play a predominant role in the regional issues. They enabled to steer Qatar for a better position mainly in the transition states than its rivals in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Additionally, Qatar was actively involved in military operations in the Gulf region. In Bahrain and Yemen, it backed the KSA- led Gulf coalition forces to end the anti-regime protests. In Bahrain, the military attempt of the coalition forces resulted in the survival of the al-Khalifa regime. However, Yemen turned into a different case for the coalition forces. Initially, Saudi Arabia endorsed the status quo and stove for Saleh's government to remain in power. The US as the global patron in the region acted in line with Saudi Arabia to protect its ally in Yemen. However, the developments overturned the course in the country more differently than the US and the neighbouring Gulf states' perceptions and calculations. Iran-aligned Houthis sided with the popular protests. President Saleh reacted to the public protest violently and the GCC endorsed a conflict resolution to the ruling government. To solve the political issue in the country in Yemen, a provisional government was formed under President Hadi with the alignment of the US and the KSA. However, President Hadi couldn't manage to rule the country due to the fact that Iran-aligned Houthis gained considerable power in the country. Finally, President Hadi called on the regional and international powers for military interference in Yemen.

⁵²¹ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, p. 121.

As for the Syrian issue, the regime's brutal reaction towards the anti-regime protestors escalated the tension in the country. Also, the power void in Syria and Iraq helped emerge different militia groups in the region and even violently expand their territorial gains. The country was drifted into a chaotic environment. At this point, state-sponsored sectarianism and ideology policies have paved the way for the militancy of these groups to enable their radicalism and violence at home and abroad.⁵²² The environment in Syria and Iraq created vulnerability for the foreign actors' involvement. The regional and international actors intervened in Syria to ensure regional stability. Thus, they primarily sought to end the regime's violence to the Syrian people and eliminate the terrorist groups such as Al Qaida, Daesh and PYD/YPG (Kurdish Democratic Union Party/People's Protection Units) in the context of their interests and perceived threat.

Qatar sided with Saudi Arabia and Turkey to ease the tension in the region. Initially, they tried to negotiate with the Bashar al-Assad regime on the increasing violence in the country. The regime, somehow, avoided the negotiations and also maintained to suppress the anti-regime groups. At that time, the US leadership avoided intervening in the Syrian issue until 2014 when the Daesh terrorist group strengthened its position in Iraq and Syria and expanded its power with territorial gains.⁵²³ Then, the US launched airstrikes to bring stability to the region.

On the other hand, Iran, the traditional rival of the Gulf monarchies, helped the Bashar al-Assad regime with its militia groups including Hezbollah, which created a threatening environment for the regional countries. Turkey, Qatar and the KSA in a coalition attempted to balance Iran on Syrian soil as well as throwing out the terrorist groups, which pose a direct threat to their national interests. At the same time, Russia started to fight against the anti-regime forces after its ally Bashar al-Assad regime's call on support. In this regard, the USA, its European allies and regional allies (Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia) were involved in the Syrian conflicts by supporting the opposition groups while Russia, Iran and Hezbollah stood for the al-Assad regime to safeguard its survival. It proves that regional powers choose a global ally that willingly supports their political purposes and interests rather than concerning the shifts in the distribution of global

⁵²² Kamrava, *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf*, p. 143.

⁵²³ Karakaya, p. 100-101.

power.⁵²⁴ Then the regional developments drove Russia, Turkey and Iran, the key states for conflict resolutions in Syria, to sit on the same table officially under the Astana peace talks to end the Syrian crisis.

Surprisingly, the US tried to solve the long-standing nuclear issue with the Iranian regime on which the US authority and its European allies had imposed harsh sanctions. The Obama administration stepped back and initiated the diplomatic negotiations to make an official deal on the problematic nuclear issue in Iran. The two parties agreed on a nuclear deal despite the opposition of its Gulf allies and Israel. The 2015 Nuclear Deal opened a new window for Iran to avoid the squeezing sanctions. After the release from international pressure, Iran gradually increased its influence in the region by strengthening its relations with Russia and Syria. From this standpoint, the nuclear deal and its expanded alliance commitments with Russia and Syria helped Iran's leverage in the regional order. Especially the KSA- led GCC states and Israel perceived Iran's strengthening regional position as a threat to their survival. However, with the new political seat in the US, the leader's images affected the foreign policy choice towards Iran. In line with this, the Trump government did not recognise the ongoing Iranian nuclear deal and announced that the US withdrew from it. In the context of the discussions above, such developments in the region theoretically prove that "it makes little sense to ally with a state that is known to be hostile, regardless of its other traits."⁵²⁵

The US's decision on the deal relieved the KSA- led camp and Israel. Qatar followed the middle road or remained neutral in the nuclear issue due to the share of the gas field with Iran in the Gulf region. Most significantly, the regional dynamics caused the Gulf region (the Persian Gulf/the Arabian Gulf) to become "one of the most volatile and tension-filled regions in the world."⁵²⁶ It turned to be one of the most highly militarized and insecure spots in terms of regional and international politics. The tension between the US and its Gulf allies was re-escalated in the Gulf region when several oil tankers and Saudi oil fields were anonymously attacked. The US and Saudi Arabia accused Iran of these anonymous attacks in the Gulf where energy security was the prime issue for the regional and international players.

⁵²⁴ Walt, **The Origins of Alliances**, p. 162-164.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p. 171.

⁵²⁶ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 1.

In the post-Arab Spring, Qatari leadership, with a great effort, tried to balance the Saudi threat and pursue an independent policy both in the GCC/Gulf and in the Middle East. However, Qatar's rise during the Arab Spring created discomfort for the KSA- led camp. Unlike Qatar, they backed the status quo in the region due to the fear that the mass protests would damage their regime security and regional stability. Thus, they perceived the rise of the Islamists/ MB in the region as a direct threat. In this sense, the rising political power of the Islamists/MB and its affiliates in the revolutionary countries caused a split between two parties, namely, Qatar and the KSA. For instance, Qatar backed the democratically elected new government of Mohammad Morsi in Egypt while the KSA- led camp was throwing their backing behind the status quo or the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).⁵²⁷ Thus, their leadership⁵²⁸ followed different regional politics and formed alliances with the different local actors in the revolutionary countries.

3.1. The Arab Spring and Qatar

The lack of ideal clarity in the system affects the strategic political decisions/preferences of states but domestic variables such as leader images and strategic culture plays a significant role in evaluating it and creating political responses towards threats and opportunities.⁵²⁹ The regional developments during the Arab Spring period posed as an opportunity to the Qatari leaders. The tight circle of the Qatari leadership responded to this international/regional stimulus. They tried to benefit from the regional developments and increase their influence in the anarchic regional environment. In this context, after its proactive foreign policy towards the regional challenges, Qatar became a proactive and interventionist state by changing its regional role as a mediator state, which had gained a reputation as a non-stop mediator in the Middle East until the Arab Spring.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 126-202.

⁵²⁸ Neil Quilliam urges that after the new top decision makers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia came to power, their foreign policy considerably shifted towards the regional and international issues. Also, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MbS) was highly influenced by the ideas of the UAE leader Mohammad bin Zayed (MbZ), therefore, the decisions on the Qatar Crisis should be evaluated in this regard. For details see Neil Quilliam, "The Saudi Dimension: Understanding the Kingdom's Position in the Gulf Crisis", in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

⁵²⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 45-52.

⁵³⁰ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, p.1-121; Nuruzzaman, p. 227-232. Qatar became a mediator state for the regional issues from 2007 to 2011. In this context, it mediated in Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen. For detailed info, see Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", **Middle East Journal**, Vol. 65, No. 4, Autumn 2011, pp. 539-556.

The neoclassical realists claim that the state's material capabilities such as economic capacity and military capability affect its foreign policy behaviours.⁵³¹ Although Qatar is a small state with a relatively limited military capability, it owns a huge economic capacity. Also, state leaders' ability to extract and mobilize resources plays an important role in designing strategic policies. The Qatari FPEs sought to increase the state's influence in the region by extracting and mobilizing the national power/resources. They implemented a proactive policy to increase their sphere of influence in the region. Additionally, Emir's personal diplomacy and Doha-based Al Jazeera played a key role in responding to the regional challenge during the Arab Spring.⁵³²

At the beginning of the Arab Spring, Qatar's approach to the regional challenge was much different from the other Gulf states. In this regard, the FPEs pursued a well-established strategy that considerably differentiates Qatar from its neighbouring Gulf states.⁵³³ They preferred to support the popular uprisings with the material and non-material capabilities against the long-seated regimes in the region.⁵³⁴ Also, they tried to act in a similar manner with the Western allies towards the popular uprisings in the authoritarian regimes.⁵³⁵ The Qatari leadership actively backed the use of power to change the Gaddafi regime in Libya and the Bashar al Assad regime in Syria despite the annoyance of the regional powerhouses Iran and the KSA.⁵³⁶ Similarly, the West sought to change Gaddafi's authoritarian regime in Libya and Doha acted in alliance with the Western countries under the NATO military initiatives against the Gaddafi regime accordingly. In this respect, it enthusiastically joined the NATO-led air operations to oust Gaddafi of Libya.⁵³⁷

Qatar's role in the military action in Libya showed that "a drastic shift" occurred in Qatar's foreign policy when compared with its policy in the pre-Arab Spring period.⁵³⁸ Taking a further step, Doha was also interested in rebels who took a stand against Libya's Gaddafi regime. It provided weapons, money and military training for the Libyan rebels.⁵³⁹ Qatar's strategic manoeuvres towards the Libyan issue resulted in some gains

⁵³¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 44.

⁵³² Lucas, "The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring", p. 316.

⁵³³ Sons and Wiese, p. 17.

⁵³⁴ Beck and Hüser, s. 13.

⁵³⁵ Nuruzzaman, p. 227.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 228

⁵³⁷ Bank, Richter and Sunik, "Durable, Yet Different: Monarchies in the Arab Spring", p. 174.

⁵³⁸ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring.", **Discussion Paper. Durham University**, Durham: HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah Programme, 2012, p. 12.

⁵³⁹ Beck and Hüser, p. 13.

in terms of Qatar. Firstly, it gained an image with its independent foreign policy without bandwagoning Saudi Arabia towards the regional challenges. Secondly, it showed that despite the limited military capabilities, Qatar could militarily intervene in regional and international issues as needed. Thirdly, it defined itself as the supporter of the people's right to self-determination despite its own poor report on democracy.⁵⁴⁰

Apart from Qatari FPEs' successful efforts, the state-sponsored Al Jazeera network particularly played an important role during the upheavals in the context of Qatar's regional political position. Al Jazeera concentrated on the Arab Spring uprisings throughout the region and gave live broadcasts from the hot spots.⁵⁴¹ Al-Jazeera's broadcast about the protestors in Cairo's Tahrir Square attracted the attention worldwide to the region. Although the Egyptian media outlets censored the true face of the popular protests, Al Jazeera transparently broadcast the protests worldwide. Moreover, it enabled to make interactions with the other communication forms which were successfully applied during the uprisings.⁵⁴² Then, it helped for the promotion of democracy and regime changes as well as the mobilisation of the Arab people against the authoritarian regimes.⁵⁴³

Al Jazeera also proved that it had the ability to affect and shape the public opinion towards Qatar because it successfully managed to present Qatar as a state which supported freedom and democracy throughout the region.⁵⁴⁴ However, it settled on the focus of the discussions and disputes during the Arab Spring. Simply put, it was thought to be a significant political tool of Qatar and correspondingly turned into one of the disputes between the rivalries.⁵⁴⁵ On the other hand, Al Jazeera news channel managed to stand as an independent and reliable actor which struggled for the protection of the rights of the common Arab people and strengthened Qatar's prestige and credibility in the

⁵⁴⁰ Sons and Wiese, p. 17.

⁵⁴¹ Marc Lynch, "Media, Old and New", in Marc Lynch (Ed.), **The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East**, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 99-103.

⁵⁴² Mather, p. 73-86; Also see Derek Gregory, "Tahrir: Politics, Publics and Performances of Space", **Middle East Critique**, 22:3, 2013, 235-246, DOI: 10.1080/19436149.2013.814944, and Helga Tawil-Souri, "It's Still About the Power of Place," **Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication** 5, No. 1, 01 January 2012.

⁵⁴³ Nuruzzaman, p. 228.

⁵⁴⁴ Al Horr et al., p. 358.

⁵⁴⁵ Ulrichsen, 'Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring.', p. 14.

international community via its influence in Arab politics.⁵⁴⁶ As a result, Doha became “the interlocutor” between the Arab streets and the West through Al Jazeera.⁵⁴⁷

The uprisings extended to the Gulf region where the oil-rich monarchies were located. In this respect, the challenge of the anti-regime protests appeared in Bahrain, which harboured a large Shia-majority.⁵⁴⁸ However, the protests were engulfed by the KSA- led coalition forces/the Peninsula Shield Force to safeguard the al Khalifa regime and prevent themselves from Iranian influence in the region.⁵⁴⁹ A small number of Qatari troops, security personnel and observers were sent to the KSA’s Eastern Province as support to the GCC response towards the challenge.⁵⁵⁰ Qatar also backed the coalition forces through primarily Al Jazeera to refrain from the mass protests and to ensure the Bahraini regime survival.⁵⁵¹

The GCC countries claimed that the anti-government protests in Bahrain were fuelled by Iran.⁵⁵² They believed that Iran was extending its sphere of influence in the region through the Shia population in the region. Since the Saudi FPEs perceived the Bahraini uprisings as a threat to its survival, they feared that the uprisings could extend to the Shia population in the country. Thus, the Saudi FPEs saw that the Bahraini regime survival/the survival of the al-Khalifa regime was a red line for them in their political calculations.⁵⁵³

The Sunni and Shia dispute have fuelled the rivalry between parties, the Sunni Gulf monarchies and Shia-dominated Iran. Unlike the neighbouring Gulf monarchies, Qatari leadership approached its neighbour Iran positively and their relations evolved on the basis of their common interest and good neighbourliness. With his perception and interpretation of the regional/international arena and worldview, Qatari Emir Tamim urged that the ongoing Sunni-Shia dispute in the region was mainly a political issue that depended on the regional Arab-Iranian differences and was triggered by political and

⁵⁴⁶ Al Horr et al., “Qatar’s Global-Local Nexus: From Soft to Nested Power?” p. 358.

⁵⁴⁷ Sons and Wiese, p. 17.

⁵⁴⁸ Bahrain has Shia Muslims at rate of %70 of its population. <https://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-sunni-and-shia/>, (15 August 2019).

⁵⁴⁹ Simon Mabon, “The Battle for Bahrain: Iranian-Saudi Rivalry”, **Middle East Policy Council**, Volume XIX, No. 2, <https://www.mepc.org/battle-bahrain-iranian-saudi-rivalry>, (15 August 2019).

⁵⁵⁰ Bruce R. Nardulli, “The Arab States’ Experiences”, in Karl P. Mueller (Ed.), **Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War**, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2015, p. 344.

⁵⁵¹ Mabon, “The Battle for Bahrain: Iranian-Saudi Rivalry”; Ezzeddine Abdelmoula, “Al-Jazeera’s Democratizing Role and the Rise of Arab Public Sphere”, (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), The University of Exeter, 2012, p. 268.

⁵⁵² David Roberts, “Blame Iran: a dangerous response to the Bahraini uprising”, **the Guardian**, 20 August 2011.

⁵⁵³ Mabon.

social forces. He also underscored that both parties could solve the issue and Qatar was ready for a solution for the differences between Arabs and Iran.⁵⁵⁴

On the other hand, Qatar didn't have serious pressure from the Shia population in the country when compared with its neighbouring states such as Bahrain and Yemen. In the analysis of the stable environment in the country, it seems that it managed to bargain with the Shia population in the Qatari society as the Shias were relatively well-integrated into Qatar's socio-political fabric and enjoyed its economic wealth together with the rest of the population.⁵⁵⁵ From this perspective, it can be concluded that state-society relations were highly well-established in Qatar. More notably, the state is much stronger than civil society over the control of the political mechanism.

Although there were no considerable uprisings in the Qatari society during the Arab Spring, the Qatari FPEs stepped further at the domestic level not to take any risk against the likely public affairs and consolidated their position. Theoretically, states foster domestic society to achieve their regional/international activities, in other words, further goals.⁵⁵⁶ The leadership announced some political reforms and a generous pay rise to relax and foster state coherence in the country. They gave a pay rise to the public servicemen in 2011 including a 60 % increase in the salaries and social allowances of state civil employees, and 120% increase for officer ranks and 50% for military personnel of other ranks,⁵⁵⁷ and they formally declared that the parliamentary elections would be held in 2013.⁵⁵⁸

Additionally, the Qatari leadership significantly attained to evaluate the possibilities of his country very well and pursue strategies appropriately during the Arab Spring. They strategically announced the Qatari National Development Strategies (the QNDS) and the macro-economic policy planning strategy (2011) during the uprisings in the region.⁵⁵⁹ These decisions probably help the Qatari leadership pose that they consider social expectations properly. More notably, they gave more salaries but "restricted

⁵⁵⁴ Habib Toumi, "Sunni-Shiite divide 'driven by politics'-Qatar", *Gulf News*, 29 September 2015.

⁵⁵⁵ Colombo, p. 11.

⁵⁵⁶ Fred Halliday, "State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda", *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 1987, 16: 2, DOI: 10.1177/03058298870160022701, p. 223.

⁵⁵⁷ Habib Toumi, "Public sector in Qatar to get 60 per cent pay rise", *Gulf News*, 7 September 2011, <https://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/public-sector-in-qatar-to-get-60-per-cent-pay-rise-1.862595>, (14 October 2018).

⁵⁵⁸ *Aljazeera*, "Qatar to hold legislative elections in 2013", 2 November 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/201111204320763263.html>, (14 October 2018).

⁵⁵⁹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 87.

participation” in governance. Consequently, they hired more nationals to prevent their standing against the ruling regime and to consolidate their authority on the public servicemen.⁵⁶⁰ In view of these aspects, the Qatari leadership achieved to implement a ruling bargain to avoid a possible uprising in the society during the Arab Spring as well as fostering the domestic society to mobilize and extract the state power for the regional and international activities.

The Qatari leadership benefited from their personal ties with the exiled members of the MB to develop relations with the revolutionary countries because some leading members of the MB/Islamists such as Yousuf al-Qaradawi and Ali al-Sallabi were hosted in Doha after having been exiled from their own countries. They worked for the state institutions and co-operated with the statesmen. When the Muslim Brotherhood gained considerable weight in the political life just after the uprisings, Qatar gained momentum in its relations with these revolutionary countries through the prominent MB leaders. It openly supported and allied with the MB governments/Islamists parties in the revolutionary countries economically, politically and financially.⁵⁶¹ Also, Qatar positioned itself as an interlocutor between the international powers and Islamist forces in the revolutionary countries.⁵⁶² More strikingly, Qatar sought to use MB as a political tool to engage in power rivalry with Saudi Arabia for regional leadership.⁵⁶³

The TR and QA- led camp backed the democratically elected Morsi government when they came to power in Egypt in 2012. However, the KSA- led camp supported old regimes and their leaders. In other words, Saudi Arabia defended the status quo in the region. Saudi leadership saw the Muslim Brotherhood/the Morsi government as a threat and rival to the Saudi regime.⁵⁶⁴ Similarly, Saudi Arabia’s Gulf allies acted in the line with the Saudi leadership and enjoyed the Sisi military government in Egypt when it seized power in 2013. Also, they actively supported General Sisi instead of the democratically elected Morsi government through financial and diplomatic assets and bought influence in Egypt.⁵⁶⁵ More notably, General Sisi’s military coup to topple the democratically elected

⁵⁶⁰ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 173.

⁵⁶¹ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 183.

⁵⁶² Nuruzzaman, p. 231-232.

⁵⁶³ Alexey Khlebnikov, “The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry”, **Strategic Assessment**, Volume 17, No. 4, January 2015, p. 22.

⁵⁶⁴ Nuruzzaman, p. 234-235.

⁵⁶⁵ Hassan, p. 487.

Morsi government in 2013 can be read as the start-up of counterrevolutions fostered by the KSA- led camp along the region.

However, before the KSA-led counterrevolutions in the transition countries, Emir Hamad decided to transfer his ruling authority to his son, Emir Tamim, which meant that the traditional way of reign change (either die in rule or coup in the palace) was ignored in Qatar. A leader's vision and perception are very important to understand the future challenges and determine a convenient strategy against them.⁵⁶⁶ Emir Hamad read the Arab Spring and regional environment very well and pursued a new strategy in order to safeguard the survival of the al-Thani regime as well as ensuring domestic stability. In other words, with the farsighted political vision, he saw the regional changes and interactions beforehand. He decided on a political power shift in the country by replacing his son Emir Tamim.

In my analysis of the abrupt political power shift in Qatar, Emir Tamim's leader images affected Emir Hamad's decision. Emir Tamim had some different features when compared with Emir Hamad. Firstly, Emir Hamad left his political position to Emir Tamim because he was deeply engaged with the MB and its affiliates and young Emir was less eager on the MB relations than him.⁵⁶⁷ By this power shift, he did not personally face any challenge from the KSA and the UAE in the context of the MB and particularly did not let the MB down. However, Emir Tamim decided to deport some key MB members after the 2014 Qatar crisis as a restoration of the spat.⁵⁶⁸ In the same position, it could be very difficult for Emir Hamad to take a decision against the MB, especially, after the long-seated relations with them.

Secondly, Emir Hamad increased Qatar's position in the transition countries vis-à-vis its rivals by pursuing an autonomous policy. Thus, Qatar's political behaviours disturbed the KSA and the UAE. They wanted to stop its rise and unorthodox regional policy. Unlike his father, Emir Tamim had no political baggage against the regional states. He was ready to establish good relations with the other countries, primarily the Gulf countries as their relations were highly tensed and considerably deteriorated. He even sent a message to the

⁵⁶⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 61-66.

⁵⁶⁷ Ian Black, "Qatar's emir Sheikh Hamad to hand power to son, crown prince Tamim", **the Guardian**, 24 June 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/24/qatar-emir-steps-down-son-tamim>, (17 September 2021).

⁵⁶⁸ **CNN Turk**, "Katar krizi nedir? Nasıl ortaya çıktı?", 22 Haziran 2017. <https://www.cnnturk.com/dunya/katar-krizi-nedir-nasil-ortaya-cikti>, (09 February 2019).

Sisi government (just after the toppled Morsi government) in order to further their relations. By doing so, Emir Tamim focused on foreign policy to restore the damaged relations with the regional countries and showed to distance the controversial policies.⁵⁶⁹

Despite the shift of the leadership in Qatar and the new Emir's political desire to restore the damaged relations with the neighbouring countries, the KSA-led neighbouring countries imposed a blockade against Qatar in 2014. They withdrew their ambassadors from Doha by accusing it of involvement in the blockading states' domestic affairs.⁵⁷⁰ The crisis was solved within eight months through the new Emir's efforts to establish good diplomatic relations again. However, the relations among the Gulf states seemed to be fragile because, in the self-help anarchic regional system of the Middle East, states were weak and vulnerable. In the post-Arab Spring, the KSA-led camp relatively gained weight in the region. Qatar, which preferred to take place in the elected camp with Turkey, sought to maintain its independent policy vis-à-vis Saudi threat and survive in the anarchic regional order.

When the most dominant actors in the old regional order were fragmented and weakened, the new regional players and alliances could find a suitable ground to appear in the unfolding regional order.⁵⁷¹ The Arab Spring affected most of the regional states negatively by pushing for the regimes and their long-seated leaders to change. Instead, the regional camps were newly formed or re-consolidated. Against this background, Turkey and Qatar made alignment against the regional dynamics because their regional politics was largely overlapping.⁵⁷² They backed the democratic popular protests in the region, strengthened their relations with the MB in Libya and Egypt, gave political support to Hamas in Gaza and desired to change the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria.

Moreover, Turkey and Qatar came closer and formed a strategic alliance to consolidate their power against threats and opportunities in the strategic environment. Their leaders' visits considerably helped strengthen their relations as well. Employing these diplomatic

⁵⁶⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Foreign policy implications of the new emir's succession in Qatar", Policy Brief, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), August 2013, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/170552/Foreign%20Policy%20Implications%20of%20the%20New%20Emir%20in%20Qatar.pdf>, (17 September 2021); Ulrichsen, Qatar and Arab Spring, 175-184.

⁵⁷⁰ BBC, "Körfez'de diplomatik kriz: Katar hedefte", 05 March 2014.

⁵⁷¹ Fawcett, "Alliances and Regionalism in the Middle East", p. 202.

⁵⁷² Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Ortadoğu'da Ortak Stratejik Vizyon Işığında Türkiye-Katar İlişkileri", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 6, Sayı: 64, s. 76-77, 2014, s. 76.

visits, the relations between Turkey and Qatar evolved towards high strategic partnership relations. In 2015, they agreed on the establishment of a Turkish military base in Qatar. More notably, this military agreement let Turkey have a military base for the first time outside its territory.⁵⁷³ Thus, their relations moved from the economic dimension to the military and security one. In other words, the relationship between the two countries turned into a high strategic partnership and a new regional alliance.⁵⁷⁴ I will explain the Turkey-Qatar alliance further under a subtitle in this chapter as it deserves special importance.

In line with the assumption that states mostly fear proximate threats,⁵⁷⁵ Qatar, which was surrounded by stronger neighbours Iran and Saudi Arabia, always needed to navigate its neighbouring states and balance the two different regional rival camps through either its national power or its alliance. Nevertheless, Qatar's neighbouring countries re-challenged it in 2014 and 2017. To put it clearly, the KSA, Egypt and other Gulf states imposed a blockade on Qatar with some accusations. (Qatar Crises will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6). In return, Qatar sought to respond to the challenges through its alliance building with Turkey and its own material capabilities. Depending on NCR's power assumptions, we should keep in mind that Qatar's relative power cannot solely explain its foreign policy behaviours during the crises. NCR persistently assumes that political leaders' perceptions and beliefs related to the international system and domestic political calculations should also be taken into account as they have to focus on their responses to the challenges within a short time.⁵⁷⁶

3.2. Qatar's Alliances with the Regional Actors in the post-Arab Spring

States focus on maintaining their security and strategic interests in the system. They undeniably require sufficient power to face the dangers and challenges. They usually prefer alliance formation with others as a prominent method to accumulate power.⁵⁷⁷ The Arab Spring was an imminent regional challenge for the regional states, which forced the regional states, either monarchies or republics, to reconsider their own security and interests. In this context, Middle Eastern states formed new alliances and/or maintained

⁵⁷³ **Sabah**, "Türkiye Katar'da üs kuracak", 09 June 2015.

⁵⁷⁴ Ebrar Şahika Küçükaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", **Discussion Paper**, Istanbul: TRT World Research Center, February 2019, researchcentre.trtworld.com, p. 10-13.

⁵⁷⁵ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 162.

⁵⁷⁶ Devlen and Özdamar, p. 137-139.

⁵⁷⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics", **World Politics**, Vol. 36, No. 4, July 1984, pp.461-495, p. 461.

the traditional alliances to strengthen their position, ensure their regime security and pursue their interests during the Arab Spring. Basically, three different regional alliance camps emerged in the region under the major regional powerhouses: the KSA- led conservative moderate camp, the Iran-led conservative-resistance camp and the Turkey and Qatar led elected-reformist camp.⁵⁷⁸ Conversely, Israel as a significant regional powerhouse didn't fixate itself within a certain regional alliance camp toward the regional shift during the uprisings, but it aligned with the regional actors, apparently the KSA- led camp in the context of its security understanding.

The distribution of power among the states in the Middle East has an important role in the emergence of various regional alliance preferences for the regional states against the challenges/threats that emerged after the Arab Spring. Similarly, the distribution of power in the Middle East allows the regional states to take part in different alliance groups to ensure their security and interests as the Middle East has a multipolar regional system consisting of three and /or more actors which are almost equal to each other in terms of power capacity. In sharp contrast to the higher capabilities of the regional powers, weaker states that obviously need support against the stronger threatening neighbours also exist in the regional system. The theory predicts that if the capabilities of the states in a multipolar system are distributed evenly, it doesn't generate any alignments. Against it, a multipolar system may generate some alignment expectations if moderate differences occur in the capabilities of the states in the system.⁵⁷⁹ From a different standpoint, a multipolar environment, somehow, damages full confidence about the potential partners as it creates uncertain perceptions for the states about who is "friend or foe" in the system due to a large number of actors and their strategic interests.⁵⁸⁰ To put it simply, states won't be sure of others, even their friends under any circumstances. Eventually, relying on the possibility of different variations in finding allies in the multipolar regional system, I defend that such an environment makes it easier for small states such as Qatar to engage with various actors and groups as well as major states in the system. However, they will

⁵⁷⁸ Amour, " Hamas-PLO/Fatah Reconciliation and Rapprochement within the Unfolding Regional Order in the Middle East since 2010: Neorealist and Neoclassical Realist Perspectives".

⁵⁷⁹ Glenn H. Snyder, "Review: Alliances, Balance, and Stability", **International Organization**, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 121-142, p.124.

⁵⁸⁰ Glenn H. Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997, p.19; Snyder, "Review: Alliances, Balance, and Stability", p.124.

be suspicious of others, even their allies. This may cause a great risk for the alliance relations among the states in the region as well.

Perception has key importance for alliance formation. The rival states may perceive an alliance formation of a state as “an act of hostility”. Thus, their perceptions may lead to new alliances or disintegrate the existing alliances in the system. The multipolar regional system provides multiple choices and flexibility for the actors in their alliance formation with others. However, it shortens the lifespan of alliances as well as reducing their interdependence or commitments in their alliance. The variability which is offered by the system leads to a change in formal obligation and creates an absence of formality in view of the fact that this causes the ambiguity of the strict boundaries of alliance forms.⁵⁸¹

A small state can find an opportunity to determine its position in the multipolar system. However, we should keep in mind that the allies fear being abandoned by their own allies in the system because alliances in a multipolar system are not completely solid even if the states mutually agreed on security deals.⁵⁸² Only their interests are decisive for the states in their alliance formation. In this context, the states with their shared interests support each other while opposing the others with which they have a conflict of interest.⁵⁸³ The Gulf monarchies within the GCC traditionally have hostilities with Iran based on conflicts of various regional interests. Thus, the KSA- led GCC countries displayed a strong reaction without hesitation to the uprisings in Bahrain and Yemen when domestic political instability was likely to create a favourable area for Iran.⁵⁸⁴ On the other hand, regional states perceive the proximate powers as an imminent and direct threat because proximate powers may have more often experience conflicts of interest.⁵⁸⁵ The KSA- led Gulf coalition forces immediately intervened to end the popular uprisings and protect the ruling governments in these countries. Additionally, Saudi Arabia accused Iran of fuelling a “Shia uprising” in the Gulf countries. However, Oman and Kuwait were not willing to give full support to the Saudi rhetoric on Iran’s ideological expansion for its domestic concerns.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸¹ Snyder, **Alliance Politics**, p. 146; Polat, “Arap Baharı sonrası Ortadoğu’da kurulan ittifaklar: Suriye, Yemen, Libya Örneği (2011-2015)”, p. 21.

⁵⁸² Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics”, **World Politics**, Vol. 36, No. 4, July 1984, pp.461-495, p. 466.

⁵⁸³ Snyder, “Review: Alliances, Balance, and Stability”, p.124.

⁵⁸⁴ Abdullah Erboğa, “Bölgesel Dönüşüm Süreci ve Körfez Güvenliği”, **Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Cilt: 3, Sayı: 1, 2016, ss. 9-38, p. 13.

⁵⁸⁵ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 162.

⁵⁸⁶ Berger, p. 262.

The regional states responded differently to the systemic stimuli which the Arab Spring generated, as NCR highlights states response differently towards the same systemic stimuli (assumption of rationality).⁵⁸⁷ In this sense, Qatar, which didn't face considerable unrest towards the regime security was separated from the other Gulf countries in response to the Arab Spring movements.⁵⁸⁸ In the restrictive strategic environment during the Arab Spring the Qatari leadership perceived it mostly as an opportunity to increase its influence in the region.⁵⁸⁹ With the advantage of having a small range of political leadership, it managed to extract and mobilize its national resources to achieve its strategic goals. In this context, Doha gave significant support to the political forces linked with MB in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere in the region. Thus, Qatar tried to maintain an independent policy within the GCC. More significantly, its strategic culture, which was shaped by the ambition of pursuing independent policy and ensuring its security against the threat of the powerful neighbours (mainly the KSA), affected its foreign policy behaviours/choices during the uprisings. From this standpoint, Qatar has afforded to pursue an independent policy at the expense of the KSA- led camp's long-seated displeasure towards the regional dynamics since Emir Hamad seized the power in the country. Emir played a key role in positioning Qatar on the world political map in line with his personal preferences and vision. After his coming to power, the country's regional and international profile gradually increased.⁵⁹⁰

3.2.1. Alliance in Egypt: Turkey and Qatar- led Camp and Muslim Brotherhood

During the Arab Spring, the regional states didn't respond to the regional dynamics in the same way. Qatar openly backed the rebels who struggled against the old regimes and their authoritarian rulers. In other words, it supported pro-democracy protests throughout the region by supplying military, political and financial aids to the rebels.⁵⁹¹ The Qatari FPEs mobilized their capabilities for the rebels' success. Particularly Doha-based Al Jazeera played an active role in the development of the protests in the Middle East. by shaping

⁵⁸⁷ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 464.

⁵⁸⁸ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Perceptions and Divisions in Security and Defense Structures in Arab Gulf States", in Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

⁵⁸⁹ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 180.

⁵⁹⁰ Kümek, "Küçük Devlet Müdahaleciliği: Katar ve BAE'nin Libya Müdahalesi, p. 248.

⁵⁹¹ Gülşah Neslihan Akkaya ve Mahmud Elrantisi, "Arap Baharı Sonrası Katar Dış Politikası ve Körfez Siyaseti", Analiz, **SETA**, Kasım 2015, Sayı: 138, p. 16; Ulrichsen, 'Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring.', p. 13; Dmitry Zhdannikov, Regan E. Doherty and Mohammed Abbas, "Special reports: Qatar's big Libya Adventure", **Reuters**, 09 June 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-qatar/special-report-qatars-big-libya-adventure-idUSTRE75826M20110609>, (11 September 2018).

the narratives of the regional protests during the uprisings in Egypt.⁵⁹² At this point, Qatari leadership enjoyed voicing public expectations via Al Jazeera, which had a great influence on the Arab masses. As a result, Qatar benefited from Al Jazeera's regional activities in the context of strategic interests and objectives towards the transition countries.⁵⁹³

Qatar also considered the popular uprisings to be a democratic movement and supported it in terms of self-determination rights, which were officially embedded in the Qatari constitution.⁵⁹⁴ It threw their support for the success of democracy and the aspirations of the people in the region. By doing so, it placed itself beside the protestors to manifest as "advocates of humanity."⁵⁹⁵

In stark contrast to the earlier statements, Doha backed the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates primarily in the wake of the uprisings owing to its pragmatic expectations that the Islamists would govern the transition countries as "future rulers".⁵⁹⁶ In fact, Doha's support and relations with the MB go back as it hosted the exiles of the MB's key leadership. Qatar built a close tie with them and accordingly allowed the exiled members of the MB to work in key areas of bureaucracy and education in Qatar. In the wake of the Arab Spring, Qatar benefited from the MB members to bridge Qatar and the states in transition. More specifically, Qatari leaders exploited the MB members who returned to their homeland for their political links and influence. Both the Doha-based exiles and Muslim Brotherhood's institutional influence leveraged Qatar's influence in the states in transition.⁵⁹⁷ In this sense, Qatar benefited from the close relations, or I can theoretically define as its alliance relations with the MB to strengthen its position in the region as well as pursuing an independent policy.

⁵⁹² Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Qatar and the Arab Spring, Policy Drivers and Regional Implications", **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, September 2014, p. 3, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/qatar_arab_spring.pdf, (06 January 2018).

⁵⁹³ Faisal Mukhyat Abu Sulaib, "Understanding Qatar's Foreign Policy, 1995-2017", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, Winter 2017, p. 30.

⁵⁹⁴ "Qatar's Constitution", <https://www.gco.gov.qa/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/GCO-Constitution-English.pdf>, (29 December 2018).

⁵⁹⁵ Pinar Akpınar, "Mediation as a Foreign Policy Tool in the Arab Spring: Turkey, Qatar and Iran", **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, 17:3, 252-268, p. 260.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 259.

⁵⁹⁷ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, 2014, p. 102-103; Ulrichsen, "Qatar and the Arab Spring, Policy Drivers and Regional Implications", p. 9.

In the context of alliance formation, Qatar took place in the elected camp on the side of Turkey. They both supported the democratically elected government of Mohammad Morsi in Egypt and the MB and its affiliates across the region.⁵⁹⁸ However, Saudi Arabia actively defended the regional status quo⁵⁹⁹ as it perceived the changing regional dynamics as a threat to both the regional stability and their regime security. The MB was an important factor in Riyadh's attitude towards the regional shift.⁶⁰⁰ Specifically, unlike the TR and QA- led camp, the KSA- led camp supported the status quo in Egypt and was in favour of the continuation of the Mubarak regime. They didn't desire to let the MB harm their influence. Apparently, the ruling power shift in Egypt was a great challenge towards the influence of Saudi Arabia. To put it clearly, Saudi Arabia lost a key regional ally when the Morsi administration seized the power in Egypt.⁶⁰¹ Thus, Qatar's great support for the Islamists/ the MB (later the new elected Morsi government) against the old regime caused to deterioration of its relations with the neighbours as well as the KSA's prominent status in the regional order.⁶⁰² In fact, Qatar attempted to pursue an independent foreign policy to preserve its national interests, shape the long-term regional politics, play a greater role and hold a better position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. By doing so, Qatar's leadership made a great challenge towards Saudi's long-standing sway in the Middle East.⁶⁰³

Qatar distanced itself from the KSA- led camp by allying with Turkey and the MB. The KSA- led camp attempted to balance the influence of the TR and QA- led camp throughout the region. Theoretically, the states mobilize their power through alliances or arms to balance others who excessively increase their power.⁶⁰⁴ In this regard, the KSA and the UAE built a counter alliance/camp in the transition countries. Then they initiated counter-revolutions throughout the region either to balance its traditional rival Iran's expansion as well as the rising regional actors, primarily the TR and QA- led camp. In this context, the KSA promptly suppressed the anti-regime protests in Bahrain, tried to refrain the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen and backed the military coup in Egypt.⁶⁰⁵

⁵⁹⁸ Başkan, p. 99-104.

⁵⁹⁹ Ennis, p. 580.

⁶⁰⁰ Telci and Rakipoğlu, p. 157.

⁶⁰¹ Abu Sulaib, p. 32-39.

⁶⁰² Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 126-202.

⁶⁰³ Akpınar, p. 259.

⁶⁰⁴ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 17.

⁶⁰⁵ Makdissi et al., p. 5-6.

Additionally, by providing financial and diplomatic support to the Sisi government, the KSA- led camp tried to weaken the elected-reformist camp in the country. In fact, rich states choose to back the friendly regimes or presumably to become friendly through foreign aids. Foreign aids turn into a much more effective tool in terms of the alliance building when they share the same political interests.⁶⁰⁶ Both regional camps gave generous aids to the governments they backed in Egypt. The elected-reformist camp granted nearly \$7.5 billion and the KSA- led camp granted \$12 billion as cash and investment in Egypt.⁶⁰⁷ After the Sisi government seized power in Egypt, the KSA- led camp relatively consolidated its power against the TR and QA-led camp. Moreover, they struggled for the bid for much more influence in Egypt, Libya and other transition countries after the counterrevolutions began in the region.

3.2.2. Turkey and Qatar- led Camp vs the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)- led Camp in Libya

Doha sought to play the role of mediator between the regimes and the Western powers in Libya and Syria in the early phase of the Arab Spring movement. However, their authoritarian leaders' behaviours fuelled the violence in the public. Then, Doha openly took a stand against the authoritarian regimes and supported the opposition movements in these transition states.⁶⁰⁸ It wisely used the Arab League (AL) to impose a no-fly zone over Libya and leverage its international prestige.⁶⁰⁹ Despite its relatively limited military capacity, it joined the NATO-led military operation to topple Colonel Muammar Gaddafi from his office.⁶¹⁰ In other words, it backed the military operation using its military muscle with the other regional and international partners.⁶¹¹ It sent its Mirage fighter jets and supported the rebels with defensive weapons such as Milan anti-tank missiles. It trained the Libyan fighters in Libya and Doha as well. More significantly, Qatar successfully bridged the NATO forces and the Libyan rebels before and during the military operation. In this regard, Major-General Hamad bin Ali al-Atiya, the chief-of-

⁶⁰⁶ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 221.

⁶⁰⁷ David Held and Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Arab Spring and the changing balance of global power", **OpenDemocracy**, 26 February 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/north-africa-west-asia/david-held-kristian-coates-ulrichsen/arab-spring-and-changing-balance-of-global-power>, (18 August 2017).

⁶⁰⁸ Bilgin Ayata, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing Arab World: Rise and Fall of a Regional Actor?", **Journal of European Integration**, 37:1, 95-112, p. 99.

⁶⁰⁹ Lucie Kröning, "The Arab League and the Arab Spring: Strategic reconfiguration in response to new security challenges", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, May 2013, p. 54.

⁶¹⁰ Beck and Hüser, p. 13.

⁶¹¹ **NATO**, "Nato and Libya (Archived)", 09 November 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_71652.htm, (14 December 2018).

staff of Qatar, voiced that Qatar handled training and communications for the Libyan rebels and supervised the plans accordingly. The Libyan rebels were prepared and trained militarily due to the fact that they had lack of military experience for they weren't soldiers but civilians.⁶¹²

The key motivations behind the Libyan military operation in terms of Qatar can be explained as its ambition of economic, military and political influence in the region: Firstly, Qatar intervened in Libya to augment its regional influence. It desired to strengthen its position and increase its political, economic and military impact in the region by breaking the Saudis' dominance over the Middle East. In this regard, Qatari leadership acted under Qatar's strategic culture, which they primarily struggle to preserve their autonomy in the pursuit of foreign policy. Thus, they attempted to pursue an independent foreign policy after the Arab Spring.

Secondly, Qatar backed the Western-led military operation to gain more credibility from the West. In this regard, credibility is considered one of the key sources of intangible power. Governments more frequently contest with each other either to increase their credibility or weaken their rivals' credibility.⁶¹³ Qatar could hold such an opportunity through the military operation to Libya to demonstrate that it was a desired ally for the western states and the international community.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, it strategically backed the rebels for democracy, human rights and self-determination, which were very significant in terms of Western norms.⁶¹⁵ Simply put, Qatar advocates democracy, human rights and self-determination by relying on its own constitution:

“Article 7: The foreign policy of the state is based on the principle of strengthening international peace and security using an encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes, and shall support the right of peoples to self-determination, and shall not interfere in the domestic affairs of states, and shall cooperate with peace-loving nations.”⁶¹⁶

The further developments showed that Qatar played a leading role in the NATO-led military operation and gained considerable credibility by its alliance building with the

⁶¹² Ian Black, “Qatar admits sending hundreds of troops to support Libya rebels”, *the Guardian*, 26 October 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/26/qatar-troops-libya-rebels-support>, (14 December 2018).

⁶¹³ Joseph S. Nye Jr, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 616, **Public Diplomacy in a Changing World**, March 2008, pp. 94-109, p. 100.

⁶¹⁴ Pulliam, p. 8.

⁶¹⁵ Sons and Wiese, p. 4.

⁶¹⁶ “Qatar’s Constitution”, <https://www.gco.gov.qa/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/GCO-Constitution-English.pdf>, (29 November 2018).

Western countries and Libya. Firstly, U.S. President Obama boosted the Qatari leadership for their support to preserve the Libyan people's rights and freedom.⁶¹⁷ Secondly, the Qatari flag with its national colours- maroon and white- was waved in the Libyan sky side by side with Libya's own flag. Additionally, Qatari leadership prominently attracted and allied with the local forces during the uprisings by using its state power.

Thirdly, Qatar tried to find out a solution for the Arab issues in the region. At this point, it defended solving the Arab countries' problems through the neighbouring Arab countries.⁶¹⁸ From a different perspective, Qatar's leaders offered to solve the problems within the Arab world by themselves. In the context of the NATO-led military operation, HBJ contended that they had to intervene in Libya because the situation in the country was awfully intolerable.⁶¹⁹ On the other hand, Qatar legitimated the western-back military operation to an Arab state in the eye of the Arabs in the region because the Arab countries struggled for their independence against the colonial states/western attacks in their past. Thus, the western-backed intervention would be perceived as a similar attack on their independence. By doing so, Qatar removed the possible suspicion of the Arab people on the Western-backed military operation to Libya, which would mean such a Western interference into an Arab state's affairs (a colonial expansion).⁶²⁰

Doha-based Al Jazeera satellite TV as a key intangible source of power in the country helped the rebels to voice themselves regionally and internationally. The TV channel presented programmes about the Libyan uprisings. The programme titled "Libya: A state of terror" was broadcast on certain days to support and attract the people. The live programmes tried to show the bad sides of the Gaddafi regime and the uprisings against it.⁶²¹ Qatari leadership allowed the regime opponents to set up a Libya TV to broadcast from Doha. The TV programmes tried to convince the Arab people about the necessity of a military operation to topple the Gaddafi regime.⁶²² The picture was very clear: Libyan

⁶¹⁷ Patricia Zengerle and Jeff Mason, "Obama praises Qatar leader for Libya coalition help", **Reuters**, 15 April 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-qatar/obama-praises-qatar-leader-for-libya-coalition-help-idUSTRE73D8LX20110414>, (11 September 2018).

⁶¹⁸ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Rationale and Implications of Qatar's Intervention in Libya", in Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen (Eds.), **Political Rationale and International Consequences of the War in Libya**, The UK: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 119; Ulrichsen, "Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the Wake of the Arab Spring.", p. 13.

⁶¹⁹ **Reuters**, "Qatar to take part in military action over", 20 March 2011.

⁶²⁰ Ulrichsen, "The Rationale and Implications of Qatar's Intervention in Libya", p.124.

⁶²¹ **Al Jazeera**, "Libya: A state of terror", 03 March 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2011/03/2011338154221771.html>, (29 December 2018).

⁶²² Akkaya and Elrantisi. "Arap Baharı Sonrası Katar Dış Politikası ve Körfez Siyaseti".

people were protesting and chanting slogans for their democratic rights. Hence, Al Jazeera helped the Qatari leadership with the extraction and mobilization of the resources from the domestic society. As a result, they overthrew Colonel Muhammad Gaddafi, the long-termed leader of Libya with the Western allies.

Turkey initially behaved differently from Qatar in the Libyan issue. The Turkish leadership tried to make a mediation to refrain the conflicts between the regime and the opposition, even between the regime and the external powers. In this regard, Ankara mediated in releasing the Western journalists detained by the regime forces when the US and the UK withdrew their diplomats from Libya. Additionally, it sought to mediate between the regime government and the Transitional National Council (TNC) for conflict resolution in the country. Turkey, a major regional state and a member state of NATO, initially opposed the NATO military intervention in Libya despite the discontent of the NATO allies. However, after the Gaddafi regime's acceleration of tension and brutal violence in the country, Ankara changed its political approach towards the Gaddafi regime by warning about the regime's violent behaviours towards the Libyan people.⁶²³

As mentioned before, Qatar backed the international military intervention and gave significant financial, political and military support to the anti-regime forces, especially the MB to topple the Gaddafi regime as well as creating a sphere of influence in the country.⁶²⁴ Its political calculations worked very well and became a leading actor in Libya.

After the collapse of Gaddafi's 42-year regime by an international military operation, the reconstruction of the country began. However, the country faced great challenges to reconstruct the state including domestic security institutions. Arming too many people during the uprisings and the emergence of various militia groups made it much more difficult to unite the people under the vital domestic institutions. Thus, the militia groups had to be appeased to lay down their arms.⁶²⁵ On the other hand, the global and regional

⁶²³ Akpınar, p. 255.

⁶²⁴ Jason Pack and Barak Barfi, "In War's Wake: The Struggle for Post-Qadhafi Libya", **The Washington Institute for Near East Policy**, February 2012, p. 17-18; Beck and Hüser, p. 13; Ulrichsen, "Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring", p. 13.

⁶²⁵ Christopher S. Chivvis et al., "Libya's Post-Qaddafi Transition: The Nation-Building Challenge", **RAND Corporation**, www.rand.org, (12 February 2019), p. 6-7.

powers endeavoured to restore the country by establishing the domestic institutions and backing up the local groups through their capabilities.⁶²⁶

The National Transitional Council (NTC), which undertook the task of coordinating rebels during the popular uprisings, officially engaged in the reconstruction of the fragmented country in the post-Gaddafi period. In this context, while establishing security units in the country, they attempted to assure the integration of the armed militias under one roof. A High-Security Committee (HSC) was established under the General Staff and Ministry of Defense to assume the role of law enforcement officers within the Libyan Shield Forces (LSH) and the Ministry of Interior, provide national security and end the chaotic environment in the country accordingly. However, it was difficult to create a stable environment in Libya because various ideological and political groups were armed and empowered in the country. On the other hand, the NTC, which was established during the transition period, governed the country until the July 2012 election.⁶²⁷ The July 2012 election ultimately resulted in the establishment of the National General Congress (NGC), but it couldn't bring stability to the country. In fact, a bid for power over "the secular-religious competition" after the election fuelled instability and facilitated the formation and development of the armed groups in the country. In addition to political instability in the country, the direct involvement of external actors in the Libyan issue increased the ongoing division among the local actors. Thus, the external actors provided a significant support to the Libyan local power seats.

After May 2014, the foreign actors became more prominent in leading the domestic policy. TR and QA- led camp and the KSA-led camp separately supported rival groups in Libya. During the civil war in the post-Gaddafi period, the coalition of the KSA, UAE and Egypt supported "Honorary Operation/Operation Dignity" under the command of General Khalifa Haftar, whereas Turkey and Qatar supported "Libya Down" headed by the militias of Tripoli and Misrata.⁶²⁸ The regional states feel threats from their neighbours rather than the global powers in the system. Such threats induce these states to prefer balancing behaviour.⁶²⁹ After the polarization mainly in the political and military

⁶²⁶ Yüce and Amour, p. 55-60.

⁶²⁷ Furkan Polat, "Çok Kutuplu İç Savaş Sarmalında Libya; Aktörler ve İttifaklar", **ORMER Perspektif Serileri**, No: 13, Mayıs 2015, p. 4; Pack and Barfi, p. 2-4.

⁶²⁸ Polat, "Çok Kutuplu İç Savaş Sarmalında Libya; Aktörler ve İttifaklar", p. 4.

⁶²⁹ Walt, the Origins of Alliance, p. 158-162.

fields in 2014, the Turkey and Qatar alliance jointly attempted to balance Egypt, the UAE and their cooperation with the Khalifa Haftar forces. Ankara and Doha recognized the Tripoli government as Libya's legitimate representative and backed it against the Khalifa Haftar forces but the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HOR)/ the Khalifa Haftar group directly accused the TR and QA- led camp of their support to the Islamists/the MB in western Libya. On the other hand, the international community sought to find a solution between these competing ruling groups-the Tripoli government and the Khalifa Haftar forces- in the country. Thus, they supported implementing the U.N. Action Plan to ensure stability in the country as well as avoiding the possible risks for international security.⁶³⁰ The conflictual environment and inner-state rivalry didn't end in the country, albeit the international solution plan and all foreign efforts.

Instead, Libya had a fragmented structure with two parliaments, two armies and two governments due to the competing militia groups' different ideological and political goals and the lack of integration among them. In other words, the country was split into two spheres of influence: eastern and western Libya. With the support of the key tribes in eastern Libya, the Khalifa Haftar forces competed against the "Libyan Dawn" coalition of militias from Misrata and Tripoli in western Libya.⁶³¹ Consequently, the TR and QA- led camp backed Libya's Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and the KSA- led camp supported the Tobruk government led by Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) forces. Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani underscored the reason why they backed the government in western Libya: "Qatar stands with the Government National Accord in Libya, for it is a government recognized by the UN. We wish for peace and stability in Libya."⁶³²

In 2019, Khalifa Haftar- led LNA forces made a military campaign called "Flood of Dignity" with thousands of men and heavy artillery to capture Tripoli. However, they couldn't siege Tripoli, the capital of the GNA in the west of Libya, to topple Turkey and Qatar-backed GNA. Khalifa Haftar forces were basically backed by regional and international powers such as the UAE, Egypt, the KSA, France and Russia. They were

⁶³⁰ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy", **Congressional Research Service**, May 2, 2018, www.crs.gov, p. 6-23.

⁶³¹ Polat, "Çok Kutuplu İç Savaş Sarmalında Libya; Aktörler ve İttifaklar", p. 4.

⁶³² Ali Murat Alhas, Sena Guler and Sibel Morrow, "Turkish FM stresses dialogue to resolve Libyan conflict", **Anadolu Agency**, 09 March 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkish-fm-stresses-dialogue-to-resolve-libyan-conflict/1447209>, (19 June 2019).

pretty confident that there wouldn't be a significant resistance from Tripoli as relying on the local people's support.⁶³³ In return, the Turkey and Qatar alliance suggested a dialogue for crisis resolution rather than military aggression.⁶³⁴

3.2.3. Protecting the al-Khalifa Regime of Bahrain Under the GCC-backed Peninsula Shield Force

The Arab Spring soon spread to the Gulf region, posing a threat to the al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain. The NCR contends that leaders' perceptions of systemic stimuli and domestic factors affect policy behaviours.⁶³⁵ The regime perceived Iran's ideological threat behind the popular uprisings.⁶³⁶ The thought/perception that the large Shiite population in the country could revolt against the government disturbed the regime.⁶³⁷ Then, Bahraini leadership sought to end the uprisings before creating any domestic instability by relying on its allies, the KSA and the UAE in the region.

The KSA and the UAE also perceived the 2011 popular uprisings in Bahrain as a direct threat to the regime survival and regional stability.⁶³⁸ Similarly, they saw the Bahraini uprisings as Iran's expansionist policy.⁶³⁹ Theoretically, states ally with others to balance against an ascendant threat.⁶⁴⁰ Through this perspective, the Saudi leadership tried to reunite the other Gulf allies, namely, the GCC to counter the threat of Iran as well as the Arab Spring effect. Likewise, the KSA often used the GCC as a political tool to counter the given threat and increase its regional position in the region.⁶⁴¹ As a result, the KSA and the UAE mobilized their military muscle to foster the Sunni government (the al-Khalifa regime) in Bahrain.⁶⁴² Qatar also supported the regime survival in Bahrain and stood by the KSA and the UAE's side by sending a small group of troops to the alliance force.⁶⁴³ From this standpoint, they stopped the protesters via the GCC's "Peninsula Shield Force". In essence, Qatar responded to the Bahraini uprisings with the Saudi

⁶³³ **World Economic Forum**, "Conflict in Libya threatens to turn into a devastating regional proxy war. Here's how it can be stopped", 19 March 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/conflict-in-libya-threatens-to-turn-into-a-devastating-regional-proxy-war-heres-how-it-can-be-stopped/>, (19 June 2019).

⁶³⁴ Murat et al., "Turkish FM stresses dialogue to resolve Libyan conflict".

⁶³⁵ Rose, p. 146-152; Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 33-34.

⁶³⁶ Wehrey, p. 112.

⁶³⁷ Moore-Gilbert, p. 5.1

⁶³⁸ Eman Ragab, "Beyond Money and Diplomacy: Regional Policies of Saudi Arabia and UAE after the Arab Spring", **The International Spectator**, 52:2, 2017, 37-53, p. 45.

⁶³⁹ Wehrey, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁰ Walt, **The Origins of Alliance**, p. 17.

⁶⁴¹ Ryan, "Alliances and the balance of power in the Middle East", p. 350.

⁶⁴² Ragab, p. 40.

⁶⁴³ Moore-Gilbert, p. 4.

soldiers and the Emirati police force to protect the al-Khalifa regime against the pro-democracy protests.⁶⁴⁴ The Bahraini uprisings demonstrated that the GCC countries concerted to remove the popular uprisings from Bahrain as well as the Gulf Arab region regardless of their own political agenda.⁶⁴⁵

Strong domestic institutions and social cohesion in the country helped the Qatari leadership to have freer manoeuvres domestically and to pursue its proactive role, even an interventionist role in its foreign policy behaviours during the uprisings.⁶⁴⁶ Unlike Bahrain, they did not face any serious pressure from their own society. Also, they do not have a constraint of religious segregation as seen in Bahrain, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the Shia minority, which was relatively well-integrated with Qatar's socio-political fabric, enjoyed economic wealth together with the rest of the population in the country.⁶⁴⁷ The Qatari leadership also played an important role in domestic stability in the country. They successfully managed to solve the possible problems between the society and the ruling power. They positively approached to the conflictual regional issue based on the Shia-Sunni split. Emir Tamim saw the given Sunni-Shia issue/religious segregation in the Gulf region as a political matter, mainly depending on the regional Arab-Iran differences. He believed that the regional actors could solve this prevailing issue under the mediation power of Qatar.⁶⁴⁸

Surprisingly, Qatar-backed Al Jazeera did not broadcast in favour of the rebels.⁶⁴⁹ Its broadcast towards the Bahraini uprisings was much less challenging than it used to pose in the other transition countries. With its broadcasts for the uprisings, Al Jazeera followed Qatar's foreign policy choice. Thus, it was criticized seriously.⁶⁵⁰ From this case, I can conclude that state leaders can act differently towards international/regional challenges by relying on their perception of threats and opportunities and other domestic level variables help the leaders to extract and mobilize the state power against the systemic stimuli (threats and opportunities).

⁶⁴⁴ Colombo, p. 5.

⁶⁴⁵ Benedetta Berti and Yoel Guzansky, "Gulf Monarchies in a Changing Middle East: Is Spring Far Behind?", *Orbis*, 59(1), 2015, 35-48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2014.11.004>, p. 46.

⁶⁴⁶ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, p.121.

⁶⁴⁷ Colombo, p. 11.

⁶⁴⁸ Toumi, "Sunni-Shiite divide 'driven by politics'-Qatar".

⁶⁴⁹ Abdelmoula, p. 268.

⁶⁵⁰ Davidson, *After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 227.

3.2.4. Turkey, Qatar and the KSA-led Regional Alliance in Syria

Qatari political leadership played an important role in Qatar's political decisions towards the changing regional dynamics during the Arab Spring. They responded to the Arab Spring fast and effectively. The leadership or the Emir's strong autonomous power over the society and the decision making helped Qatar's fast response to the international/regional incentives. Also, the leadership enjoyed the absence of opposition groups in the country. During the Arab Spring, there was almost no pressure over the political leadership or the regime security from the society in the country. It shows that the national image was very high in the country and Qatari people trusted their leadership. Additionally, the leadership in the country convinced their people of their ability and policies. More significantly, Qatar took sufficient official measurements to foster the regime security and legitimacy of the ruling family for a long time.⁶⁵¹ From this standpoint, the Qatari leadership benefited from social cohesion during the Arab Spring because they had to extract and mobilize resources from their domestic society while responding to the external environment.⁶⁵² They enabled to bargain with the public and tailored their foreign policy from a range of policy options in order to fit the systemic pressure during the Arab Spring to large extent.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, Qatar and its neighbouring states such as the KSA, Bahrain and Kuwait openly backed the Bashar al-Assad regime against the popular uprisings.⁶⁵³ At the same time, relying on their close relationship Qatari and Turkish leadership advised the al Assad regime to execute new reforms to ease the uprisings. the al-Assad regime.⁶⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Bashar al-Assad did not appraise their diplomatic efforts. In other words, the regime forces didn't stop repression for the Syrians during the uprisings and ignored diplomatic initiatives and criticism of the regional and international powers.⁶⁵⁵ Furthermore, it increasingly violated international law and killed many civilians in the country. Qatar inevitably ended up its relationship with Syria despite avoiding a military confrontation single-handedly.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵¹ Mustafa Yetim, "State-led Change in Qatar in the Wake of Arab Spring: Monarchical Country, Democratic Stance?", **Contemporary Review of the Middle East**, 1 (4), pp. 391-410, 2014, p. 395.

⁶⁵² Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state and the foreign policy", p. 7.

⁶⁵³ Yehuda U. Blanga, "Saudi Arabia's Motives in the Syrian Civil War", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, Winter 2017, p. 50.

⁶⁵⁴ Pala, p. 75.

⁶⁵⁵ Blanga, p. 50-52.

⁶⁵⁶ Nuruzzaman, p. 229-231.

The failure of the Syrian regime forces to stop the popular uprisings and its disproportionate use of force on its own people led to the deepening of the crisis and turning into an international/regional issue. Two regional and competing states, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, tried to resolve the Syrian issue under the Arab League. In terms of foreign policy approach, they acted together on the resolution of the chaotic situation in Syria.⁶⁵⁷ More strikingly, Qatar benefited from its rotational presidency of the League (2011-2012). During its presidency in the League, it successfully mobilized Arab support for the uprisings as the Qatari leadership desired to solve the Syrian issue in the Arab League with the support of the other Arab members. In this regard, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr bin Muhammad Al Thani (HBJ), the Prime Minister of Qatar, said that they wanted to have a majority of the members approve the crucial decisions on the al-Assad regime.⁶⁵⁸

Initially, Saudi Arabia and Qatar attempted to solve the crisis diplomatically. They sent diplomatic warnings to the Bashar al-Assad administration to stop harsh violations for the Syrian people. However, they could not get a sufficient answer from the Syrian regime and imposed compelling measures such as the suspension of Syria from the Arab League and the withdrawal of their diplomats from Damascus.⁶⁵⁹ In another word, the Arab League suspended Syria from Arab League and imposed sanctions for its failure not to stop violence on pro-democratic protests in the country.

To highlight Qatar's political position and role in the regional system, Qatari political elites embraced to be a mediator on the regional issues in the pre-Arab Spring period. They had a great reputation as a mediator state on peace solving in Lebanon, Darfur, and Yemen. Contrariwise, in the wake of the uprisings, they decided to change their policy behaviour from being a mediator to an interventionist/activist player.⁶⁶⁰

As I have mentioned above, the Qatari leadership openly backed the Syrian rebels against the regime. Also, Arab people mostly had sympathy for the Syrian rebels who protested the authoritarian Assad regime. Nearly 90% of Arab people supported Al Jazeera's efforts for the rebels in Syria although external/international intervention in Syria caused a deep

⁶⁵⁷ Abu Sulaib, p. 31.

⁶⁵⁸ David Batty and Jack Shenker, "Syria suspended from Arab League", **the Guardian**, 12 November 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/12/syria-suspended-arab-league>, (05 January 2018).

⁶⁵⁹ Felsch, p. 32.

⁶⁶⁰ Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", pp. 539-556.

division among the Arab nations. Concurrently, Al Jazeera shared the Qatari leadership's opinion on the Syria issue and external intervention.⁶⁶¹ In this context, media has a significant role/tool in pursuing a foreign policy. It mediates between the FPEs and the public. It gives the necessary information to the public on behalf of governments as well. Therefore, it has a considerable power to ease the tension or/and end the conflicts by supplying new perspectives to the public.⁶⁶² As a result, it affords substantial assistance to the FPEs to pursue their policies and to protect their national interests.

Additionally, the state-sponsored Al Jazeera media outlet achieved a leading role regionally and internationally. It provided credibility and suitable ground for the regional actors, primarily Qatar and anti-regime forces to attract the attention of others and to achieve national interests. More notably, it brought a different perspective on regional issues and helped to change the understanding and perception of the Western world towards the Arab world accordingly.⁶⁶³ Since Al Jazeera Arabic channel was launched in 1996, it has led the Arab people to understand the regional issues through an Arab station while strengthening its position against the global media such as the BBC and the CNN with reaching “more than 310 million households in more than 100 countries and more than 3000 highly experienced staff from over 70 nationalities.”⁶⁶⁴ In regards to media influence and widespread presence, its logo was frequently seen on images fed to popular television networks across the world.⁶⁶⁵ It advocated the pro-Arab and pro-Muslim perspectives, which made its news service popular among the Arabs.⁶⁶⁶ From this point of view, it challenged the regional tradition of non-criticism on authoritarian regimes of the Middle East. Moreover, it became a common voice of the protestors who demonstrated social, economic and political expectations from their authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Its broadcast and coverage became an effective tool to back the street

⁶⁶¹ Shibley Telhami, “Al Jazeera: The Most-Feared News Network”, **Brookings**, 15 June 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/al-jazeera-the-most-feared-news-network/>, (31 November 2013).

⁶⁶² Shqipe Palloshi, “The Influence of the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect on American Foreign Policy”, **Maltepe University Communication Faculty Journal**, 2(2), Fall 2015, p. 46.

⁶⁶³ Osman Antwi-Boateng, “The Rise of Qatar as a Soft Power and the Challenge”, **European Scientific Journal**, December 2013, p.6.

⁶⁶⁴ **Official website of Al Jazeera**: <https://www.aljazeera.com/aboutus/>, (31 December 2018); Torin Douglas, “Al Jazeera sees its model copied”, **BBC News**, 29 November 2011. <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-15953265>, (31 December 2018).

⁶⁶⁵ Christina Slade, “Al Jazeera: How TV channel helped shape the Middle East”, **CNN**, 27 June 2014.

⁶⁶⁶ “Al Jazeera to Take on CNN, BBC in English”, **YaleGlobal Online**, 3 November 2002, <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/al-jazeera-take-cnn-bbc-english>, (31 December 2018).

uprisings. Consequently, it also made a valuable effort to bring democracy to the region by supporting the protests against the old regimes in the region.⁶⁶⁷

In the context of the conflict resolution on the Syrian issue, HBJ called the Syrian opposition to have a meeting for a unified vision at the headquarter of Arab League.⁶⁶⁸ In doing so, Qatar persistently tried to find out solutions for the regional issues within an Arab framework.⁶⁶⁹ It supported the rebels' democratic rights and a shift in the old/authoritarian regimes. More specifically, Qatari leadership played a leading actor in the revolutionary movements in Syria as the Arab Spring opened a window for Qatar to strengthen its influence in the region. They were involved in the Syrian issue in 2012 in the absence of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was reluctant to deal with the Syrian issue in the beginning. However, states' relative capabilities and position in the system influence their political choices against the regional dynamics. It changed its policy and positioned itself as a leading Arab actor. Saudi Arabia's involvement in the issue made Qatar discomfort as they were pushed back. In this context, HBJ said that Saudi Arabia wanted them in the back seat. However, Qatar didn't take a risk against its powerful neighbour Saudi Arabia and had to stop competition with it.⁶⁷⁰ Instead, it allied with Saudi Arabia and Turkey against the al-Assad regime.

Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia acted in the same common stance towards the Syrian issue. Despite having different approaches towards the issue, they formed an informal regional alliance over joint military policies and became the decisive actors in the Syrian crisis.⁶⁷¹ More notably, the alliance formation of these countries was believed to reveal the impression of the emergence of a "Sunni bloc" in the region.⁶⁷² Iran, which has had historical ties with Syria since the 1980s, clearly set a position with its allies in favour of the Syrian regime. Thus, Iran tried to preserve the status quo in Syria, which they regarded

⁶⁶⁷ Palloshi, p. 45-46.

⁶⁶⁸ David Batty and Jack Shenker, "Syria suspended from Arab League", **the Guardian**, 12 November 2011.

⁶⁶⁹ Neil MacFarquhar, "Arab League Votes to Suspend Syria Over Crackdown", **the New York Times**, 12 November 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/world/middleeast/arab-league-votes-to-suspend-syria-over-its-crackdown-on-protesters.html>, (06 January 2018).

⁶⁷⁰ Roula Khalaf, "Lunch with the FT: Sheikh Hamad Bin-Jaber al-Thani", **Financial Times**, 15 April 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/98477922-0227-11e6-99cb-83242733f755>, (06 January 2018).

⁶⁷¹ Furkan Polat, "Ortadoğu'daki Yapısal Değişimin Devletlerin İttifak Politikalarına Etkisi: Suriye Örneği", **Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Cilt: 4, Sayı: 1, 2017, ss. 74-102, p. 85.

⁶⁷² Ömer Taspinar, "Turkey's strategic vision and Syria", **The Washington Quarterly** 35, No. 3, 2012, 127-140.

as a key ally in its sphere of influence.⁶⁷³ We should keep in mind that Iran had a considerable capacity to influence the Shia population throughout the region. Given this backdrop, Iran threw its support to the Syrian regime to build a passage from Iran to Lebanon, which meant strengthening its position and power in the region. It sent its Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)/Quds Force (QF/IRGC's expeditionary unit)⁶⁷⁴ to Syria in order to help the Syrian regime against the anti-regime forces.⁶⁷⁵ IRGC commander General Mohammad Ali Jafari explained that Iranian backed elite Quds Forces settled in Syria to help and train the al-Assad regime. In this context, 50,000 volunteer militia in Jish Shaabi (JS) or the People's Army (JA) was trained by the Iranian forces.⁶⁷⁶ At the same time, General Jafari warned the regional and international forces about a possible military attack on the Bashar al-Assad regime by proclaiming that Iran would back the al-Assad regime militarily.⁶⁷⁷ After denying their involvement in the Syrian crisis, Iranian officials consequently accepted that they gave military support to the Syrian regime.

The Iranian leadership also advocated that they were on Syria's soil to stop the massacre of people by accusing "foreign interferences" and "terrorists" of killing many Syrians in the country.⁶⁷⁸ On the other hand, the Gulf monarchies sought to balance the rival forces of the Iran-led camp in Syria. They increased the arms supplies for their allies/ the western community-backed rebels in the country.⁶⁷⁹

Iran, on the other hand, had robust ties with Lebanon Hezbollah, the Shia militia group, which fought for the Syrian regime throughout the Arab uprisings.⁶⁸⁰ Hence, Iran-sponsored Hezbollah mainly tried to defend Damascus and the locations near Lebanon

⁶⁷³ Karim Sadjadpour, "Iran's Unwavering Support to Assad's Syria", **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, 27 September 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/08/27/iran-s-unwavering-support-to-assad-s-syria-pub-52779>, (18 June 2019).

⁶⁷⁴ Hanin Ghaddar (Ed.), "Iran's Foreign Legion: The Impact of Shia Militias on U.S Foreign Policy", **the Washington Institute for Near East Policy**, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote46-Ghaddar-2.pdf>, p. 2, (19 June 2019).

⁶⁷⁵ Ian Black, "Iran confirms it has forces in Syria and will take military action if pushed", **the Guardian**, 16 September 2012.

⁶⁷⁶ Farnaz Fassihi and Jay Solomon, "Top Iranian Official Acknowledges Syria Role", **the Wall Street Journal**, 16 September 2012. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443720204578000482831419570>, (19 June 2019).

⁶⁷⁷ Ian Black, "Iran confirms it has forces in Syria and will take military action if pushed". <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/16/iran-middleeast>. (18 July 2019).

⁶⁷⁸ Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Syrian army being aided by Iranian forces", **the Guardian**, 28 May 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/28/syria-army-iran-forces>, (18 June 2019).

⁶⁷⁹ Frank Gardner, "Gulf Arabs 'stepping up' arms supplies to Syrian rebels", **BBC News**, 08 October.2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34479929> (18 June 2018).

⁶⁸⁰ Akpinar, p. 261.

and Iraq to secure the 'land bridge' for better communication. More notably, it gained more confidence and experience in Syria and advanced military capabilities to stand against the domestic and regional challenges as a key player in Iran's Middle East army.⁶⁸¹

In 2012, Iran sought a political solution to safeguard its regional ally, the Bashar al-Assad regime because increasing criticism at home and abroad pressed them to initiate a dialogue between the Syrian regime and the opposition groups. Against domestic and external constraints, the Iranian diplomats intensely met the opposition leaders including Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Turkey. Iranian political leaders tried to find out a diplomatic solutions with the relevant actors in the region. They also wanted to ease the tension and safeguard the al Assad regime diplomatically in the regional and international arena. They urged that President Assad was going to implement the necessary reforms in the country but he failed to make necessary reforms which the opposition mainly demanded.⁶⁸² In this context, Iran couldn't find a reasonable solution to the Syrian crisis and end the bloodshed in Syria after its initiatives.

The Iranian leadership, in fact, endorsed the Syrian regime to secure its own regime survival. They had a fear that the popular uprisings would spill over into Iranian domestic life. In this regard, Iranian leaders perceived the anti-regime forces as a threat to its regime survival, whereas they supported the regimes in the neighbouring countries. Additionally, Tehran supported the Shia groups in Iraq, Bahrain and Yemen as an ambition to implement its expansionist policy during the uprisings. The 2015 nuclear deal eased the tension between the US and Iran by opening a new era for regional and international relations.⁶⁸³ Then Tehran seized an opportunity to focus on the regional issues more.

Turkey, Qatar and the KSA mainly came together to balance the proximate threat of the Syria and Iran alliance. They supported the opposition groups politically and militarily against Iran- backed Syrian regime.⁶⁸⁴ In this context, the Gulf allies stood behind different anti-regime forces in Syria. Qatar backed Syrian MB forces (moderate Sunni

⁶⁸¹ Micheal Eisenstadt, "Shia Militias as a Military", in Hanin Ghaddar (Ed.), "Iran's Foreign Legion: The Impact of Shia Militias on U.S Foreign Policy", **the Washington Institute For Near East Policy**, 2018, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote46-Ghaddar-2.pdf>, p. 3-4, (19 June 2019).

⁶⁸² Mohammad Ataie, "Iran is trying to broker a political solution in Syria", **the Guardian**, 26 June 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jun/26/iran-political-solution-in-syria>. (18 June 2019).

⁶⁸³ Akpinar, p. 262.

⁶⁸⁴ Gardner, "Gulf Arabs 'stepping up' arms supplies to Syrian rebels".

forces) while Saudi Arabia favoured the Salafist forces.⁶⁸⁵ To highlight Saudi alliances with the proxy forces in Syria, Saudi Arabia supported anti-regime forces ranging from the moderate/secular forces (the Free Syrian Army) to Salafi jihadist forces (Ahrar al-Sham) to foster its own regional interests.⁶⁸⁶ Despite the different preferences in their local alliances, Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani (HBJ) made a call to mobilise the states to handle the Syrian issue by proclaiming that they should do whatever necessary to help the opposition groups, even including supplying arms for their self-defence against the Bashar al Assad regime.⁶⁸⁷ In this regard, the Gulf Arab states and Turkey openly believed that President Assad should not remain in the ruling power.

The regional actors were deeply involved in the Syrian crisis. The alliance of Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia gave support to their anti-regime allies by acting collectively to organise and legitimize them as well as isolating the Syrian regime.⁶⁸⁸ The opposition groups met in Turkey in 2011 and The Syrian National Council (SNC) was formed with the alignment of the General Idris-led Free Syrian Army. Then, Qatar hosted the Syrian opposition in Doha in 2012. More notably, “Friends of Syria” came together in a meeting in Doha in June 2013 for the resolution of the issue on increasing the weapon supplies to the Syrian opposition. On the other hand, Iran- sponsored Hezbollah fighters joined the Syrian regime forces against the anti-government forces. Thus, the Syrian crisis turned into a regional competition among the regional actors and international actors.⁶⁸⁹

Both Russia and Iran- led camp attempted to balance the counter-alliance of Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia by mobilizing their military, economic, political resources in the early stages of the crisis, but these efforts did not yield a concrete outcome. In the last months of 2014, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia- actively backed Syrian opposition groups took Idlib and moved towards Latakia despite Russia and Iran’s support to the Syrian regime forces. The opposition groups’ success against the Syrian regime forces relatively changed the future of the Syrian regime.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁵ Nuruzzaman, p. 239.

⁶⁸⁶ Blanga, “Saudi Arabia’s Motives in the Syrian Civil War”, p. 59.

⁶⁸⁷ Jonathan Schanzer, “Saudi Arabia Is Arming the Syrian Opposition”, **Foreign Policy**, 27 February 2012.

⁶⁸⁸ Polat, “Arap Baharı sonrası Ortadoğu’da kurulan ittifaklar: Suriye, Yemen, Libya Örneği (2011-2015)”, p. 65.

⁶⁸⁹ Hussain, p. 42.

⁶⁹⁰ Polat, p. 87.

Although Qatar and Saudi Arabia both supported the opposition groups in Syria, Saudi Arabia did not want to leave the area solely and exclusively for Qatar. In fact, these Gulf Arab states had a different sphere of influence in Syria. Qatar was trying to influence the northern part of Syria with Turkey while Saudi Arabia was trying to hold the sphere of influence near the Jordan border in the south of Syria. Eventually, both Doha and Riyadh targeted to topple the Bashar al-Assad regime. In spite of the shared threat against Iran and the al-Assad regime, Saudi Arabia and Western powers suspiciously perceived Qatar's military, financial and diplomatic support for the Syrian MB forces and the other Islamist groups in Syria. In view of these aspects, different political approaches particularly caused a disagreement between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in Syria although they both targeted to topple the al-Assad regime.⁶⁹¹

On the other hand, The US and the European Union countries were very reluctant to provide weapons to the opposition groups in Syria because they feared that the weapons would be taken by anti-Western groups linked with the Al Qaeda group. Also, they considered al Qaeda and other radical Islamists as a threat to their security. In this period, the USA acted in accordance with the Obama Doctrine toward the new regional dynamics in the Middle East including the Syrian issue. According to the given doctrine, the US government would not directly interfere in the events in other geographies unless there was a direct threat to its own security. Thus, the US determined to restore its negative reputation eroded in Iraq and Afghanistan wars by avoiding interfering in the international security crisis, which didn't directly threaten US security.⁶⁹² More significantly, after experiencing long and costly military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration desired to refrain from the possible costs in the Middle East and to share the costs of any military operations by mobilizing the material capabilities of their partners and regional allies. The rationale for the US policy was straightforward. The US leadership wanted to find a solution to escape from the further costs of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and implemented a novel Middle East policy to share the costs of the military operations with the regional allies and partners.

The Obama doctrine became effective in the war against the Daesh terrorist group in the Middle East. They provided indirect support to the groups including the Shi'a elements

⁶⁹¹ Mariam Karouny, "Saudi edges Qatar to control Syrian rebel support", **Reuters**, 31 May 2013.

⁶⁹² Michael Clarke and Anthony Ricketts, "Did Obama have a grand strategy?", **Journal of Strategic Studies**, 40:1-2, 2017, 295-324, DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2017.1284660, p. 308-309.

and the countries fighting against Daesh in the region. In 2014, the US provided indirect air support for Iranian backed Shi'a militias and advisors in Iraq who were fighting against the Daesh terrorist group.⁶⁹³ In other words, both the US and Iran were surprisingly fighting against a terrorist group in the Middle East on the same side.

On the other hand, the KSA- led camp actively tried to balance the rise of Qatar in the region twice. They did not hesitate to impose an embargo on Qatar in 2014 although the new Emir of Qatar made an attempt to restore relations with the neighbouring countries. This proves that there was a continuous competition between Qatar and the KSA- led camp. They calculated to balance the regional influence of Qatar by the embargo decision. In fact, the Saudi leadership desired to return to the balance of power in pre-Arab Spring.⁶⁹⁴ Additionally, Doha and Riyadh pursued different policies towards the Bashar al-Assad regime. Since 2017, with the increasing influence of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in the Saudi administration, Riyadh has changed its attitude towards the al-Assad regime in Syria and has made attempts to foster al-Assad's regime survival and gain political legitimacy.⁶⁹⁵

Moreover, in 2017, the KSA- led camp decided to impose sanctions on Doha. It was tougher than the 2014 Qatar Crisis. The neighbouring Arab states jointly imposed sanctions on Qatar from air, land, and sea aimed to drive it into their own interests. They basically blamed Qatar for sponsoring terrorism and Iran. Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdurrahman's official visit to Tehran shortly before President Trump's visit to the KSA was claimed to be effective in the KSA- led camp's embargo initiative. The KSA- led camp saw Iran as a hostile state and it was very difficult for them to tolerate improving relations between Qatar and Iran. Additionally, the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia increased after the execution of Saudi cleric Seyh Nimr in 2016. However, Iran tried to benefit from the crisis in the GCC. Iran's first practical reaction to the Qatar crisis was to break the blockade. Especially it allowed Qatar to use Iranian airspace to

⁶⁹³ Andreas Krieg, "Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East", *International Affairs*, 92:1, 2016, 97-113, p. 97.

⁶⁹⁴ Abu Sulaib, p. 32.

⁶⁹⁵ Bora Bayraktar, "Bölgesel Liderlik Arayışı ve Suudi Arabistan: Farklılaşan Tehditler ve Yeni Dış Politika", *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, 12-1, 2020, 16-47, p. 32.

reach the outside world. Thus, Iran assumed a key role to reduce the impacts of the blockade on Qatar by using its geographical position.⁶⁹⁶

3.2.5. Gulf Alliance in Yemen: The GCC-backed Operation Decisive Storm

The Arab Spring quickly spread to the Gulf region. Relatively weak Gulf states such as Bahrain and Yemen are faced with a great international/regional constraint. The GCC countries including Qatar championed the survival of the al-Khalifa regime against the domestic uprisings. However, the popular uprisings in Yemen turned into more persistent activities.

“Historical accumulation” helped the expansion of the popular uprisings in Yemen. The wrong practices of President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s long-termed authoritarian government, unfair income distribution, poverty, unsolved conflicts, the erosion of the country’s international reputation as well as Saleh’s obvious intention to prepare his own son for the future presidency destroyed the hopes and expectations of the Yemeni people for a better future.⁶⁹⁷ Then, popular street protests against the Saleh regime began in January 2011. The state leaders’ political mis/perception and decisions towards the challenge of anti-regime groups affected the domestic strategic environment. In line with this, the regime forces harshly tried to stop the crowds in the streets. However, the armed intervention of the regime forces against the democratic protests increased the protestors. Although the protests initially centred in Sanaa where many protesters camped in front of the Sanaa University and chanted for President Saleh’s resignation, they spread to the major cities including Taiz, Sa’da, and Aden. In other words, youth-led protests turned into crowded popular protests against the Saleh regime.⁶⁹⁸

The Saleh regime failed to end the popular protest in Yemen. The failure of the ruling administration to intervene in the popular protests in the country led some terrorists’ organizations to gain ground for their activities.⁶⁹⁹ In 2011, when the popular uprisings and clashes took place, Al Qaeda became very active in key parts of the country and became one of the elements of the conflict. Apart from al-Qaeda, Houthis and local tribes,

⁶⁹⁶ Hakkı Uygur, “İran’ın Katar Krizine Bakışı”, *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, Temmuz-Ağustos 2017, p. 26-27.

⁶⁹⁷ Veysel Kurt, “Devrim” den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen”, *SETA Analiz*, Sayı: 144, Aralık 2015, p. 8.

⁶⁹⁸ Marcel Serr, “Understanding the War in Yemen”, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/23739770.2017.1419405, p. 2.

⁶⁹⁹ Faisal Edroos, “Yemen: Who was Abdullah Saleh?”, *Al Jazeera*, 05 December 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/yemen/2011/02/201122812118938648.html>, (20 June 2019).

who competed to take the control of the government, were involved in the conflict as well.⁷⁰⁰

However, President Saleh defended his regime by claiming that there was a conspiracy against the unity and territorial integrity of Yemen. Later he offered either to revise the constitution or pass on his power to a civil government. Despite his efforts to remain in the office at the cost of stepping down against the opposition, he had to resign after an agreement brokered by the GCC. Instead, the new government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi took the office in Yemen.⁷⁰¹

On the other hand, the GCC countries activated a key mechanism in the transition process in the country. They espoused the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) with the participation of the international observers within the framework of the resolution of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). They established the NDC to manage the political transition in the post-Salih period principally by providing a suitable ground for political formations and the political representation of the domestic groups in the country. Despite the efforts of internationally-backed President Hadi to end the disintegration and division in the country, a stable government could not be established in the country. Furthermore, the political environment dragged the country into a new turmoil. It can be concluded that the main factor for the new turmoil was the fact that the political parties didn't stretch their historical positions both during the initiation of the popular protests and during the process of the NDC's mission. In this regard, Abdulmelik al Husi stated that he had withdrawn from the NDC while it was still in negotiations. On the other hand, Muhammad al-Bahti did not recognize the NDC's decisions by arguing that the country's federative structure would not be the basis for a fair allocation of the resources and that it would be large economic differences between federal regions.⁷⁰²

The Iran-aligned Houthis largely benefited from the political turmoil in the country and attempted to strengthen their position in the country. They increased their sphere of influence in the country in a short time. They besieged the presidential palace in Sanaa

⁷⁰⁰ Ensar Mutlu, "Askeri Müdahaleyle Yemen Devletini Yeniden Tesis Çabaları ve Menfi Gelişmeler", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 7, Sayı: 71, Kasım Aralık 2015, p. 47-49.

⁷⁰¹ Edroos, "Yemen: Who was Abdullah Saleh?"

⁷⁰² Veysel Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", **SETA Analiz**, Sayı: 144, Aralık 2015, p. 12.

and forced President Hadi and Prime Minister Khalid Baha to resign.⁷⁰³ Therefore, President Hadi had to call the regional and international powers for a military operation in Yemen due to the Houthis' capture of Sanaa and Aden international airport, and increasing its power in the country.⁷⁰⁴

As a response to President Hadi's call for an urgent intervention, the KSA- led coalition force began a military operation in Yemen.⁷⁰⁵ In addition to the direct support to the military operation by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain, some other states such as Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan and Sudan agreed to join the land operation. In doing so, Saudi Arabia primarily sought to balance Iran in the Gulf and secure the regime survival against the possible uprisings.⁷⁰⁶ Likewise, the KSA- led coalition under "Operation Decisive Storm" mainly desired to re-establish the Hadi administration by eliminating the Iran-aligned Houthis' political power in Yemen through their military capabilities. The wealthy GGC countries, particularly the KSA and the UAE, shouldered the main burden of the military intervention towards the threat in the country. However, Oman did not participate in the coalition forces because it preferred to remain neutral between the traditional rivals, Iran and the Arab countries.⁷⁰⁷ Conversely, Doha deployed nearly 1000 armed personnel to protect the Saudi border from the possible attacks of the Iran-aligned Houthis.⁷⁰⁸

Saudi leadership took the lead in the Yemen crisis. Thus, through the Yemen case, they tried to show that the KSA was the possible leader of the Arab countries and the only powerhouse that could balance Iran's hostility in the rivalry Middle East.⁷⁰⁹ Similarly, Yemen holds geostrategic importance for the regional rivals, primarily between the KSA and Iran to bid for regional dominance and display their military capabilities through the

⁷⁰³ The resignation of Hadi administration created a political power vacuum in the country. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies strategically cut the economic aid to Yemen. As a consequence of their response, the economic difficulties increased in the country and drove the Yemeni people to protest the Houthis in the squares. Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", p.15.

⁷⁰⁴ **Al Jazeera**, "Hadi'den askeri müdahale çağırısı", 25 March 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/hadiden-askeri-mudahale-cagrisi>. (20 June 2019).

⁷⁰⁵ **Türkiye Gazetesi**, "Yemen'de Şii Husileri kararlı fırtına vurdu!", 27 March 2015. <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/dunya/250541.aspx>, (20 June 2019).

⁷⁰⁶ Bayraktar, p.35.

⁷⁰⁷ Emile Hokayem and David B. Roberts, "The War in Yemen", **Survival**, 58:6, 2016, 157-186, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2016.1257202, p. 170; Mutlu, "Askeri Müdahaleyle Yemen Devletini Yeniden Tesis Çabaları ve Menfi Gelişmeler", p. 47-49.

⁷⁰⁸ Katzman, p. 9.

⁷⁰⁹ Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", p. 15.

proxies in Yemen.⁷¹⁰ More significantly, the Sisi government conveyed a clear message to the Gulf Arab countries, especially to the new Saudi leadership that they backed the GCC countries against the regional threat and Egypt unquestionably became an effective actor in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East again. Thus, Egypt sent 4 warships to the Gulf of Aden to prove its military support for the coalition forces.⁷¹¹

To shield the coalition forces against the Iran-aligned Houthi militias, Saudi Arabia and the UAE assisted the military operation much more than other allies. Although the coalition forces weakened the Houthis by air operations, they lost considerable numbers of soldiers in the land operations. Also, the military operation resulted in civilian casualties in the country.⁷¹² In the end, the military operation couldn't change the inner political structure in the country because they couldn't end the Houthis' activities in the country.⁷¹³

In a broader perspective, by launching 'Operation Decisive Storm' to Yemen, the KSA-led Gulf coalition forces including Qatar tried to stop Iran to exploit its influence in the country. The operation also depended on the perception that Iran and its aligned Houthis was a serious threat to the security of the Gulf Arab countries. They felt that Iran would expand its regional influence with cooperation with the Houthi regime after its significant position in Syria.⁷¹⁴ From this standpoint, the regional states' external policies were driven by geographic proximity and perceived intention about the threat.

On the other hand, the Qatar Crisis in 2014 slowed down the Saudi-led military operation in Yemen as Saudi Arabia and the UAE didn't feel comfortable fighting alongside the Muslim Brotherhood-associated Islah Party forces against the Houthis. However, the coalition forces heavily depended on the Islah fighters on the land and it was the most powerful opposition group in the country, which played a dominant role in the mass protests against Saleh with Doha's political, financial and media support.⁷¹⁵ As mentioned before, Qatar supported the Muslim Brotherhood movement along the Middle

⁷¹⁰ Serr, p. 5-6.

⁷¹¹ Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", p. 20.

⁷¹² Mutlu, "Askeri Müdahaleyle Yemen Devletini Yeniden Tesis Çabaları ve Menfi Gelişmeler", p. 47-49.

⁷¹³ Anthony H. Cordesman, "Yemen and Warfare in Failed States", **CSI Center for Strategic and International Studies**, 22 April 2015, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/yemen-and-warfare-failed-states>, (20 June 2019).

⁷¹⁴ Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", p. 15.

⁷¹⁵ Manual Almeida, "What Qatar's role in Yemen tells about the Gulf crisis", **Arab News**, 16 June 2017 <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1116206>, (22 June 2019).

East during the Arab Spring while Saudi Arabia and the UAE leadership perceived it as a threat to their dynastic rule and sought to obstruct the Muslim Brotherhood from holding power in the region in the post-Arab Spring period.⁷¹⁶

Also, the 2017 Qatar Crisis affected Qatar-Yemen relations. The KSA-backed Yemeni government announced that they cut ties with Doha after asserting its support for the Houthi forces. Fahd Al-Sharafi, Yemeni information minister Councillor and head of the Yemeni Association, accused Qatar and Doha based Al Jazeera of supporting the Iran-aligned Houthi forces in the following citation.

“Qatar’s position was shameful in supporting the Houthis politically, militarily, and through its media influence and that the Al Jazeera channel became “meaner” in handling the Yemeni file than the Houthi channel “al-Maseera”.⁷¹⁷

Also, he praised the KSA- led Gulf coalition forces and their “Decisive Storm Operation” with the exception of Qatar. Instead, he criticized Qatar harshly.⁷¹⁸ Additionally, the Islah party members broke up in this discussion. Some members backed Yemeni President Hadi and some others still had alliance relations with Qatar.⁷¹⁹ Regardless of the detriment of the KSA-backed Yemeni government’s political approach, Qatar tried to increase its influence in Yemen and acted in line with the US while the Trump administration attempted to find out a political solution and stop the sufferings of the people in Yemen.⁷²⁰

3.3. Turkey and Qatar Alliance: An Unfolding Regional Camp

Turkey and Qatar pursued almost similar policies towards the regional dynamics after the Arab Spring.⁷²¹ They tried to benefit from the opportunities during the popular protests in the Middle East. They emerged as the elected-reformist camp and threw their support behind the protests and the rebels in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria in terms of

⁷¹⁶ Aziz El Yaakoubi, “Qatar crisis strains Saudi-led Arab alliance in Yemen war”, **Reuters**, 20 July 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-qatar-yemen/qatar-crisis-strains-saudi-led-arab-alliance-in-yemen-war-idUSKBN1A51XM>, (22 June 2019).

⁷¹⁷ Mariam al-Jaber, “Yemeni info official: Qatar provided Houthis with all kind of support”, **Al Arabiya English**, 23 June 2018. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2018/06/23/Yemeni-info-official-Qatar-provided-Houthis-with-all-kind-of-support.html>. (22 June 2019).

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ **Middle East Eye**, “Qatar and the Gulf crisis: How it’s dividing Yemen”, 08 June 2017. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/qatar-and-gulf-crisis-how-its-dividing-yemen>, (22 June 2019)..

⁷²⁰ Samuel Ramani, “How Qatar is working to boost its influence in Yemen”, **Al-Monitor**, 19 October 2018.

⁷²¹ Turgut, p. 31-33; Bülent Aras and Pinar Akpınar, “Turkish Foreign Policy and the Qatar Crisis”, **Istanbul Policy Center (IPC)**, Istanbul, August 2017, <https://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/Content/Images/Document/turkish-foreign-policy-and-the-qatar-crisis-17ea79/turkish-foreign-policy-and-the-qatar-crisis-17ea79.pdf>, (13 October 2019). p. 3.

democracy because the Arab Spring movements re-intensified the hopes for democracy in the region.⁷²² Turkey was actively involved in the Arab uprisings and saw itself as “a promoter of democracy and popular will.”⁷²³ On the other hand, Doha based Al Jazeera media outlet played an influential role in the announcement of the popular protests in the regional and international arena during the Arab Spring. Consequently, Turkey and Qatar welcomed the democratic wave of the protests and backed the Islamists, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates across the region.⁷²⁴

The rise of the MB/Islamists in politics after the uprisings opened a window for Turkey and Qatar as they had close historical ties with them. They furthered their relations and provided political and financial assistance to the new government of Morsi in Egypt.⁷²⁵ Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan officially paid a visit to Cairo. He celebrated the democratically elected President Morsi and gave a speech at Cairo University. He underscored the cooperation with Cairo on regional stability and recent Israel assaults towards the Palestinians in Gaza.⁷²⁶ Emir Hamad also visited Egypt and showed their eagerness for his cooperation with the new government.⁷²⁷

After the popular protests spread to Libya, Ankara openly opposed the NATO-led military action against the Gaddafi regime and desired to find a political solution, instead.⁷²⁸ Turkish leadership was reluctant to give support to a military action mainly for two reasons: First, Turkey had a large investment in Libya. Secondly, the ruling elites had good personal ties with the Libyan regime and did not want to attack a Muslim state. Thus, it passively and reluctantly backed the NATO-led intervention in Libya.⁷²⁹ On the other hand, Qatar actively supported the NATO-led coalition forces in Libya. In the post-Gaddafi period, Turkey and Qatar threw their support to the MB. However, Qatar

⁷²² Cihat Battalolu, “Arap Baharı’nın 8. Yılında Değişen Demokrasi Algısı ve Toplumsal Talepler”, **Ortadoğu Araştırma Merkezi (ORSAM)**, 10 November 2018, <https://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/arak-baharinin-8-yilinda-degis-en-demokrasi-algisi-ve-toplumsal-talepler/>. (14 May 2019).

⁷²³ Ayata, p. 99.

⁷²⁴ Abu Sulaib, p. 30.

⁷²⁵ Başkan, p. 99; Özgür Pala and Bülent Aras, “Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in the Turkish and Qatari Foreign Policy on the Arab Spring”, **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, 17:3, July 2015, 286-302, p. 295-296.

⁷²⁶ **Ahram Online**, “Egypt, Turkey can bring Mideast stability without foreign brokers: Erdoğan”, 17 November 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/58423/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt,-Turkey-can-bring-Mideast-stability-without-.aspx>, (03 May 2020); **Daily Sabah**, “Erdoğan vows support for Palestinians”, 18 November 2012. <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2012/11/18/erdogan-vows-support-for-palestinians-from-egypt>, (03 March 2020).

⁷²⁷ Başkan, p. 99.

⁷²⁸ Ayata, p. 100.

⁷²⁹ Ziya Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East”, **Mediterranean Politics**, 19:2, 2014, 203-219, p. 208.

relatively took the lead in Libya.⁷³⁰ Above all, the TR and QA-led camp challenged the regional balance of powers (the Iran-led camp and the KSA- led camp).⁷³¹

In Syria, Turkish and Qatari leadership relied on their personal ties with Bashar al-Assad and recommended him to implement democratic reforms urgently to de-escalate the uprisings in the country. The two countries tried to use all possible channels to negotiate with the Bashar al-Assad regime. Turkey tried to mediate between al Assad regime and the opposition. However, the regime ignored Turkey's repeated calls as well as the democratic demands of the Syrian opposition. Also, the Arab League made a critical decision to suspend the Syrian membership and imposed a sanction on Syria. Ankara was substantially relieved after the League's decision towards the Bashar al-Assad regime.⁷³²

Saudi Arabia joined Turkey and Qatar in the Syrian issue as it calculated to stop the Iranian expansion/activism in the region.⁷³³ Iran, Iraq and Lebanese Hezbollah substantially backed the Bashar al-Assad regime as well as the popular protests in Bahrain.⁷³⁴ Thus, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey acted in an alliance against the al-Assad regime and balance the Iranian influence in the region.⁷³⁵ They demanded to overthrow Bashar al-Assad and actively advocated the Syrian opposition.⁷³⁶ Even, they tried to put pressure on Washington for a military intervention against the Bashar al-Assad regime.⁷³⁷ However, the Obama administration was very reluctant to involve another costly intervention in the Middle East after the military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.⁷³⁸ The US's reluctance or/and decline gave the regional actors unprecedented freedom of action and autonomy in their bid for regional influence.

The KSA- led camp, the status quo monarchies, primarily focused on the regime survival and perceived the Arab Spring uprisings as a threat to their survival. They opposed the MB governments in the region and backed General Sisi's military coup in Egypt to

⁷³⁰ Başkan, p. 89.

⁷³¹ Nuri Yeşilyurt and Mustafa Yetim, "Emergence of the Turkish/Qatari Alliance in the Middle East: Making of the Moderate Resistance Bloc", in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 133-134.

⁷³² Mütçe Küçükkeleş, "Arab Leagues's Syrian Policy", **SETA Policy Brief**, No. 56, April 2012, p. 8.

⁷³³ Başkan, p. 89-93; Christopher Phillips, "Eyes Bigger than Stomachs: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Spring 2017, p. 37.

⁷³⁴ Mustafa Yetim, "Katar 2012", in Kemal İnat and Muhittin Ataman (Eds.), **Ortadoğu Yıllığı**, İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2012, p. 383.

⁷³⁵ Yetim, "Katar 2012", p. 283.

⁷³⁶ Pala and Aras, p. 293.

⁷³⁷ Phillips, p. 36.

⁷³⁸ Ziya Öniş, p. 211.

overthrow the democratically elected MB government.⁷³⁹ Moreover, the KSA-led camp put strict pressure on Qatari leadership and withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in November 2014. The new emir, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, couldn't strongly advocate the MB/the Morsi government against the illegitimacy of the military takeover in Egypt so as not to be isolated by its neighbouring countries.⁷⁴⁰ On the other hand, Qatar's position within the GCC appeared to be precarious after the military coup in Egypt.⁷⁴¹ Also, Turkey was isolated by the Western countries and more significantly, its relations with Egypt was deteriorated due to its opposition to the military coup-led government.⁷⁴² The Turkish leadership openly condemned the military coup and their decisions against the rulers of the democratically elected government.⁷⁴³ As a result, the relations between the Saudi-backed Sisi government and TR and QA- led camp were strained.⁷⁴⁴ Additionally, Turkey and Qatar lost their ally in the region after the KSA- led camp's counter-revolution achievement in Egypt. On the other hand, TR and QA-led camp's isolated position in the region highly motivated them to enhance their relations with each other.⁷⁴⁵ With this motivation, they sought to balance their rivals in the volatile regional environment.⁷⁴⁶

Qatari leadership always tried to balance the threat of Saudi hegemony as well as ensuring the regime survival. Al Thani ruling elites have traditionally perceived Saudi Arabia as a threat to their regime survival. The two neighbouring countries had strained and complicated relations throughout the reign of the al-Thani family. Allen J. Fromherz urges that the KSA, which had political, economic and religious supremacy, wanted to gulp its neighbour Qatar.⁷⁴⁷ Al Saud family tried to maintain their influence on Qatar through the Bedouins, notable Qatari businessmen and rival members of the ruling Al-Thani family.⁷⁴⁸ In line with this, the Qatari leadership perceived the Saudi threat mainly on border claims, counter-coup attempts and ideological expansion. To put it clearly, the

⁷³⁹ Telci and Rakipoğlu, "Suudi Arabistan'ın Müslüman Kardeşler Politikası: 1932-2016", p. 158.

⁷⁴⁰ Pala and Aras, p. 297-298.

⁷⁴¹ Küçüktaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", p. 9.

⁷⁴² Ayata, p. 97.

⁷⁴³ Jonathon Burch, "Turkey's Erdogan slams world's 'double standards' on Egypt", **Reuters**, 19 July 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-protests-turkey/turkeys-erdogan-slams-worlds-double-standards-on-egypt-idUSBRE96I0NJ20130719>. (03 May 2020).

⁷⁴⁴ Hassan, p. 486.

⁷⁴⁵ Ahmad Jumah Al-Jassim, "Qatar-Turkey Relations from Political, Economical and Military Perspectives", Doha: Hamad Bin Khalifa University, **Master Thesis**, January 2017, p. 28.

⁷⁴⁶ Küçüktaşçı, p. 9.

⁷⁴⁷ Allen J. Fromherz, **Qatar: A Modern History**, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011, p. 91.

⁷⁴⁸ Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations", p. 19.

border skirmishes and the counter-coups prominently caused a strained relation between the two ruling families.⁷⁴⁹ The border claims between the two countries remained as a source of their strained relation until 1999 when a demarcation agreement was mutually signed between the two parties.⁷⁵⁰ More notably, Qatari leadership perceived the Saudi threat after the failed coup attempts in 1970, 1996 and 2005.⁷⁵¹ They claimed that Saudi Arabia supported the coup attempts.⁷⁵²

Moreover, Saudis' ideological expansion through Wahhabism has always stood for a threat to Qatar. Although both of them follow the Wahhabi version of Sunni Islam, they have nuances in the practices of their understanding. Qatari leadership internalizes a much more moderate way of Islam than Saudi Wahhabism.⁷⁵³ They tried to create a politically weak religious version rather than Saudi Wahhabism. Through this perspective, they strategically used the exiled Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood members in Doha to design Qatari Wahhabism and avoid the constraints of the religious institutions on decision-making.⁷⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Qatar doesn't have a powerful religious establishment that can either enforce ultra-conservative social norms or construct absolute gender segregation in Qatari society.⁷⁵⁵ Freedom of religion is provided for the non-Muslims living in the country as well. From this perspective, Qatari leadership demonstrated the young people in the Arab world how they could change society positively without disposing of the belief system in the country.⁷⁵⁶ On the other hand, they tried to safeguard their autonomy without allowing Saudi Arabia's domination through ideological expansion. The Qatari leadership, who was aware of the great influence of the Saudi ideology on public life, intended to use MB pragmatically to avoid or/and abate the Saudi influence in the religious and social domain in Qatar.⁷⁵⁷ In this context, the great mosque

⁷⁴⁹ David B. Roberts, "Understanding Qatar's Foreign Policy Objectives", *Mediterranean Politics*, 17:2, 2012, 233-239, p. 235; David B. Roberts, *Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State*, London: Hurst & Company, 2017, p. 99.

⁷⁵⁰ Fromherz, p. 92.

⁷⁵¹ Blanchard, p. 19; Sarıtarla, p. 34; Davidson, *After The Sheikhs The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 183.

⁷⁵² Fromherz, p. 94; Blanchard, p. 19; Sarıtarla, p. 34.

⁷⁵³ Esra Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", *Turkish Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol: 7, No: 1, 2020, pp. 81-109, p. 92.

⁷⁵⁴ Hanlie Booysen, "Qatar's Calculated Gamble on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood", in Philipp O. Amour (Ed.), *The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances*, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 200-201.

⁷⁵⁵ James M. Dorsey, "Qatari Wahhabism vs. Saudi Wahhabism and the perils of top-down change", *Huffpost*, (12 April 2017). https://www.huffpost.com/entry/qatari-wahhabism-vs-saudi-wahhabism-and-the-perils_b_5a257240e4b05072e8b56b29, (22 April 2020).

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ Küçükaşçı, p. 9.

in Doha was named Muhammed bin Abdulwahhab Mosque” not only to reaffirm its adherence⁷⁵⁸ but also to demonstrate that they have absolute control over the religious domain in the country.

Emir Hamad sought to enhance the cooperation with the regional states (including Israel and Iran), the international states (such as the US, the UK and France), even with the Islamist groups (MB and its affiliates) to counter the Saudi threat and pursue an autonomous policy.⁷⁵⁹ Additionally, Al Jazeera was used as a political tool to guarantee its survival against the Saudi belligerence.⁷⁶⁰ NCR underlines the perception of the political leaders about the international/regional system and domestic political calculations.⁷⁶¹ After a short time in his taking office, Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani tried to focus on domestic issues and restore the tense relations with its neighbouring countries due to the 2014 Qatar Crisis. Mehran Kamrava claims that Emir Tamim tried to pursue a foreign policy in line with “traditional GCC practices”, which meant that he allowed the KSA both to assume the role of big brother and to take the lead in the regional issues.⁷⁶²

Neoclassical realists urge that the FPEs worldview is very significant in pursuing a foreign policy. Along with the shift in power in Saudi Arabia, its regional policy also changed. Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) gained power as a crown prince in the country. Riyadh fostered the status quo in the region and attempted to increase its influence in the region. MbS pursued an aggressive policy to rescue the President Hadi government against the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen. The KSA- led coalition forces launched a military operation/Operation Decisive Storm in the country.⁷⁶³ MbS’s repeated visits to Emir Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (MbZ) of Abu Dhabi underscores “a special bond” between them.⁷⁶⁴ Neil Quilliam urges that MbZ was influential in shaping MbS’s worldview. Their personal relationship paved the way to create an alliance to safeguard their mutual interests, ideologies and values in politics. Abu Dhabi under the

⁷⁵⁸ Dorsey, “Qatari Wahhabism vs. Saudi Wahhabism and the perils of top-down change”.

⁷⁵⁹ Andrew Hammond, “Qatar’s Leadership Transition: Like Father, Like Son”, *ECRF/95*, February 2014, p. 2-10, www.ecfr.eu, https://ecfr.eu/publication/qatars_transition_like_father_like_son304/, (13 April 2021).

⁷⁶⁰ Roberts, *Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City- State*, p. 170.

⁷⁶¹ Devlen and Özdamar, p. 138.

⁷⁶² Kamrava, *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf*, p. 107.

⁷⁶³ Joshua Teitelbaum, “Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman”, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Saudi-Arabia/Reign-of-King-Abd-Allah-2005-15>, (06 May 2020).

⁷⁶⁴ Anjana Sankar, “Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman arrives in UAE”, *Khaleej Times*, 28 November 2019.

rule of MbZ became a role model for the Saudi Crown Prince to implement new reforms in Saudi Arabia's conservative society.⁷⁶⁵

Given these regional dynamics, Qatar started to get closer to Turkey, which means their relations continued with increasing cooperation. States build alliances to stand against the threats.⁷⁶⁶ The two countries, which had almost a similar position against al-Sisi's military government/Saudi and Emirati backed counterrevolution in Egypt and the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, desired to lead political and military steps in the regional sense. In a similar vein, the vision and goals of Turkish and Qatari leadership on the regional dynamics fostered Turkish-Qatari rapprochement.⁷⁶⁷ In line with the discussion above, their ruling elites' mutual visits also proved it. President Erdogan's visit to Doha in December 2015 surfaced very fruitful outputs in terms of formalizing their increasing cooperation in recent years. Within the scope of this visit, the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Meetings in education, environment, maritime, energy, science and technology fields were held, and an agreement was signed between Ankara and Doha.⁷⁶⁸ The decisions taken at meetings including the abolition of visas between the two countries can be regarded as a further step for Turkey and Qatar rapprochement.

Additionally, the agreement on natural gas cooperation between Qatar Petroleum and BOTAŞ was significant to balance Turkey's energy reliance on Russia and Iran. Qatari LNG could diversify Turkish energy imports and help Turkey to safeguard its energy demand against the energy supply cut-offs mainly from Russia and Iran.⁷⁶⁹ On the other hand, Turkey would mainly supply food and agricultural machinery for Qatar.⁷⁷⁰ It seemed to be very significant for Qatar's domestic needs because Fahad bin Mohammad al-Thani as a chairman of the Qatar National Food Security Programme voiced that they were almost 95% dependent on food imports from other countries and the unstable

⁷⁶⁵ Quilliam, p. 124.

⁷⁶⁶ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 4.

⁷⁶⁷ Pala, "The Evolution of the Turkish-Qatar Relations from 2020 to 2013. Convergence of Policies, Identities and Interests", p. 82; **Time**, "Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber al-Thani: The World's 100 Most Influential People: 2012", 18 April 2012. http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2111975_2111976_2112001,00.html. (01 June 2021).

⁷⁶⁸ **TCCB**, "Türkiye ile Katar Arasında 15 Anlaşma İmzalandı", 02 December 2015, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/36169/turkiye-ile-katar-arasinda-15-anlasma-imzalandi.html>, (06 February 2016).

⁷⁶⁹ Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", **Turkish Studies**, 10:1, 2009, 75-93, p. 86-89; Al-Jassim, p. 40.

⁷⁷⁰ Al-Jassim, p. 50-51.

environment after the Arab Spring caused supply disruptions in the country.⁷⁷¹ From his explanation, we understand that Qatar was affected by the Arab Spring in the context of food shortage to some extent. Thus, Qatar and Turkish cooperation were expected to help diversify the sources of Qatar's food supply and strengthen its food security.

Peace and security issues became the main concerns for the military cooperation between Turkey and Qatar.⁷⁷² They decided to establish a formal alliance. In this context, they agreed to build a Turkish military base in Doha. Despite the various analyses on the reason why Turkey built a military base in Qatar, it was strongly believed that Ankara aimed to consolidate its position in the Gulf region and involve in the security issues in such strategic geography.⁷⁷³ Simply put, the alliance between Turkey and Qatar has geostrategic importance, which will likely let Turkey consolidate its position in the region by enabling it to navigate and communicate in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea. Additionally, a Turkish permanent military base in Doha was expected to safeguard Qatar from external threats.⁷⁷⁴ Ankara clearly provided a security guarantee for Doha by the establishment of a Turkish military base in the country.⁷⁷⁵ In addition to the military base and military training, Turkey and Qatar promoted their strategic cooperation in the defence industry, which targeted to improve economic and long-standing alliance relations.⁷⁷⁶

The cooperation between Turkey and Qatar mainly advanced to balance the KSA- led camp and the Iran- led camp in the region. Since Qatar was geographically surrounded by regional powers such as Iran and the KSA, it had to balance them.⁷⁷⁷ Thus, Doha sought to maintain a balanced and pragmatic relationship with Tehran to avoid any conflicts over the hydrocarbon resources in the North Field.⁷⁷⁸ Also, it attempted to balance Saudi Arabia and counter the other challenges. Given this background, Turkey likely foster Qatar's autonomy vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia and Iran. Although Qatar is one of

⁷⁷¹ Fahad Bin and Mohammed Al-Attiya, "Qatar's Journey to Self-Sufficiency", **Journal of International Affairs**, Vol. 67, No. 2, Global Food Security, Spring/Summer 2014, pp. 153-157, p.154; Adriana Seagle, "Environmental (In) Security in the Middle East", in Bettina Koch and Yannis A. Stivachtis (Eds.), **Regional Security in the Middle East: Sectors, Variables and Issues**, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2019, p. 89.

⁷⁷² Al-Jassim, p. 58.

⁷⁷³ Aras and Akpınar, "Turkish Foreign Policy and the Qatar Crisis", p. 4-5.

⁷⁷⁴ Al-Jassim, p. 57.

⁷⁷⁵ Aras and Akpınar, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁶ Bilal Kayaoğlu, "Ortadoğu Politikası Doğrultusunda Türkiye ve Katar İlişkileri: Ekonomik ve Ticari Temaslar, **Uluslararası Yönetim Akademisi Dergisi**, Cilt: 3, Sayı: 2, 2020, 464-475, p. 473.

⁷⁷⁷ Faisal Mukhyat Abu Sulaib, p. 35.

⁷⁷⁸ Sarıtarla, p. 30.

the richest countries in the world with its hydrocarbon wealth, its military capacity is relatively weak when compared with its neighbours. Additionally, it cannot solely rely on the US military capacity for its security issues. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 created distrust within the GCC countries.⁷⁷⁹ Egypt was another novel example to worry the Gulf leaders. The Obama administration didn't back the US loyal ally President Mubarak against the increasing popular pressures for the political change in the country.⁷⁸⁰ Thus, it strategically required to cooperate with Turkey, which was one of the most influential countries in the region, in order to balance its rivals and respond to the imminent and proximate threats in the region. During the Qatar crisis, Turkey played a significant role for Qatar in terms of its regime survival and security concerns. Turkey responded very quickly to the crisis. The legislation to send Turkish troops to Qatar was approved by the Turkish parliament to preserve the peace in the region.⁷⁸¹ Turkish President Erdogan paid an official visit to the Turkish military base in Doha. He underlined the importance and commitment of the alliance relationship in the following citation.

“To be with our brothers and friends in difficult times is one of the greatest heritages that our ancestors have left us...Moreover, throughout history we do not hesitate to give this support whatever the cost. We have once again demonstrated our commitment in this regard by increasing our troops, which has existed in Qatar since 2015, to threefold after the last crisis.”⁷⁸²

Also, President Erdoğan underlined that Turkey had strong political, economic and strategic relations with Qatar. He also added that they caught momentum with Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and strengthened it with Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.⁷⁸³ To this end, Qatar and Turkey gradually enhanced their military cooperation. Qatar purchased defence equipment from Turkey. Totally, a defence agreement of 4 billion \$ was signed between Turkish and Qatar companies in 2017.⁷⁸⁴ In this context, besides the political dimension of Turkey-Qatar relations, the economic dimension gives a broader perspective about the relations of the two countries. International trade can often be

⁷⁷⁹ Martin, p. 81.

⁷⁸⁰ F. Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council”, *Turkish Studies*, 12:4, 2011, 689-698, p. 695-696.

⁷⁸¹ Küçüktaşçı, p. 11.

⁷⁸² **Anadolu Agency**, “President Erdoğan visits Turkey military base in Qatar”, 16 November 2017. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/president-erdogan-visits-turkey-military-base-in-qatar/966671>. (29 April 2020).

⁷⁸³ Okan Müderrisoğlu, “Başkan Erdoğan’dan Katar dönüşünde uçakta önemli açıklamalar”, **Sabah Gazetesi**, 26 Kasım 2019. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2019/11/26/baskan-erdogandan-katar-donusunde-ucakta-onemli-aciklamalar>. (03 February 2020).

⁷⁸⁴ Gökhan Erel, “Türkiye-Katar Ortaklığının Ticari Boyutu”, **Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi (ORSAM)**, 31 January 2019, <https://orsam.org.tr/tr/turkiye-katar-ortakliginin-ticari-boyutu/>, (02 May 2020).

influenced by changes in conflicts and cooperation between countries, and/or trade links may change as a result of foreign policy cohesion and conflict.⁷⁸⁵ Especially, trade and direct investments consolidated the bilateral relations between Turkey and Qatar.⁷⁸⁶

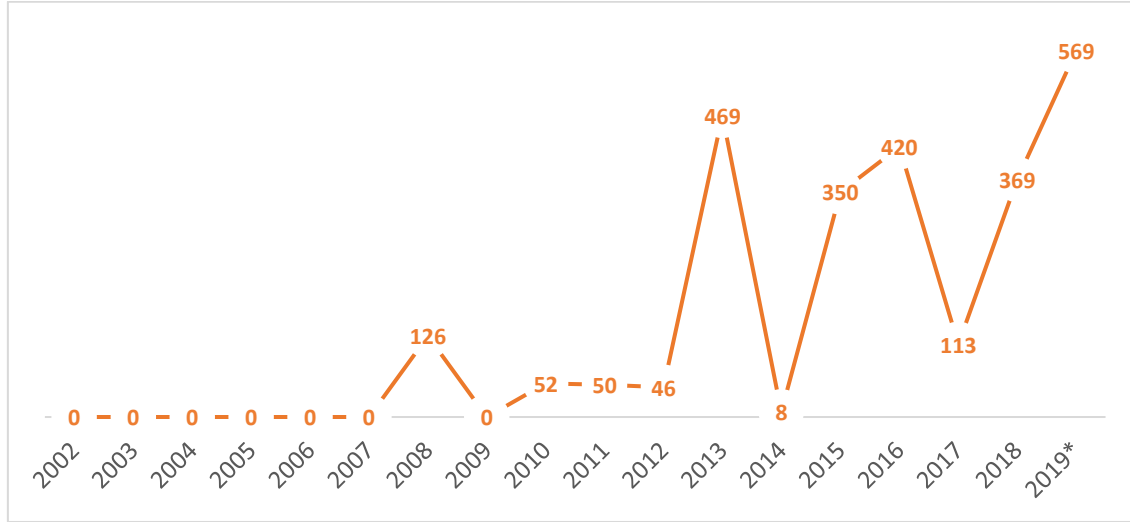


Figure 3. Qatar's Direct Investment in Turkey (x Million USD)

Source: It is compiled by the Balance of Payments Statistics Report of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey in November 2019 (www.tcmb.gov.tr).

*Data for 2019 includes January-November.

Referring to the direct investment between Turkey and Qatar, it is seen that there is an increase in favour of Turkey. In Turkey, Qatar initially had a direct investment of 126 million US \$ in 2008.⁷⁸⁷ Then, it couldn't achieve stability or an increase in its direct investments between 2008 and 2012. In fact, they were lower than in 2008. Despite the zigzags in the given figures, it rose to 569 million USD in the last 11 months of 2019 (Figure 3). Totally, it reached 2.4 million USD in 2019. The figures also show that Qatar's direct investment in Turkey relatively increased after the Arab Spring. Especially, it made direct investments including strategic fields in Turkey with very high numbers, more significantly since 2015. We can evaluate this data as an output of Qatar's strategic rapprochement with Turkey. In this context, Turkey and Qatar made an agreement to open a military base in Doha. Then, the two countries primarily enhanced their cooperation and

⁷⁸⁵ Brian M. Pollins, "Conflict, Cooperation, and Commerce: The Effect of International Political Interactions on Bilateral Trade Flows", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1989, pp. 737-761, p. 737-739.

⁷⁸⁶ Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Ortadoğu'da Ortak Stratejik Vizyon Işığında Türkiye-Katar İlişkileri", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 6, Sayı: 64, Eylül-Ekim 2014, p. 77.

⁷⁸⁷ TCMB, "Ödemeler Dengesi", <https://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/609ef884-3b3c-4bc3-84fe-9254244c3490/odemelerdengesi.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-609ef884-3b3c-4bc3-84fe-9254244c3490-m-tYNK>. (26 January 2020).

investment in the fields of finance, media, food and retail.⁷⁸⁸ In return, 500 Turkish firms assumed many projects in various fields in Qatar.⁷⁸⁹ Thus, Turkey had a direct investment of US\$4 million in the pre-Arab Spring but increased to US\$29 million between 2010 and 2019.⁷⁹⁰ The most important reason why Turkish investors, who do not have a very strong capital pool, keep their investments in Qatar low is undoubtedly the fact that their capital / financial assets dominate the domestic market and their investment areas are quite narrow compared to others.⁷⁹¹

Table 1: Foreign Trade between Turkey and Qatar (x Thousand USD)

Years	Export	Import	Total
2010	162 549	177 046	339 595
2011	188 138	481 018	669 155
2012	257 329	466 499	723 828
2013	244 077	373 923	618 000
2014	344 713	394 552	739 265
2015	423 088	360 978	784 066
2016	439 142	271 083	710 225
2017	648 915	264 126	913 041
2018	1 096 417	335 320	1 431 737
2019*	1 066 488	243 799	1 310 287

Source: It is compiled from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) database.

Export data: http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=624.

Import data: http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=625.

*Data includes the month from January to November of 2019.

When considering the trade volume between Turkey and Qatar, Qatar's trade with Turkey (import-export) in 2010 on the basis of the start of the Arab Spring was at the sum of US \$339.5 million, but it increased to US\$1.3 billion in the first eleven months of 2019. It represents a 286% increase in their trades in recent years. The figures in the export and imports indicate that there has been an export-based trade and a gradual rise in the export to Qatar in recent years (Table 1).

⁷⁸⁸ Talip Yılmaz ve Aram Ekin Duran, "Türkiye'deki Katar yatırımları artıyor", **Ekonomist online**, 19 September 2019. <https://www.ekonomist.com.tr/dosya/turkiyedeki-katar-yatirimlari-artiyor.html>. (03 February 2020).

⁷⁸⁹ Müderrisoğlu, "Başkan Erdoğan'dan Katar dönüşünde uçakta önemli açıklamalar".

⁷⁹⁰ TCMB, "Ödemeler Dengesi" <https://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/609ef884-3b3c-4bc3-84fe-9254244c3490/odemelerdengesi.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-609ef884-3b3c-4bc3-84fe-9254244c3490-m-1YNK>. (26 January 2020).

⁷⁹¹ Erboğa, "Ak Parti Döneminde Türkiye'nin Katar ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Politikaları", p. 84.

When the foreign trade figures are in general examined in the pre-Arab Spring and post-Arab Spring, Qatar does not have a significant weight in Turkey's exports when compared with Qatar's other foreign trade partners. However, it reached a considerable volume somewhat in 2006. The most important reason for reaching an export volume of over 1 billion dollars and a trading volume close to 1.5 billion dollars between Turkey and Qatar in 2018 (and also 2019) was undoubtedly the effect of the economic and political blockade on Qatar. This year, Turkey's exports to Qatar were 69%. During the 2017 Qatar crisis, Turkey offered political and economic support to Qatar to stand against the tough blockade. It influentially transferred the goods in order to meet all the economic needs of the Qatari people, especially food.⁷⁹²

All in all, Turkish and Qatar leadership mutually created an alliance to protect their regional interests and positions vis-a-vis the rival states in the region.

3.4. Qatar's Alliances with the International Actors in the post-Arab Spring

The regimes/governments in the Middle East were mostly weak and vulnerable because the authoritarian leadership gradually dismantled or exploited the domestic institutions for their regime resilience. Likewise, the authoritarian leadership in the region reconstruct institutions to preserve their regime survival or balance the internal politics. Yet, their attitudes toward the state institutions created a security deficit and weakness in the context of internal politics as well as external politics. Moreover, the Arab Spring made the weakness and vulnerability of the regimes more visible. The regional (systemic) challenge during the Arab Spring forced them for a great shift or invertedly to find any other ways for their survival. The regional governments sought to align with the international powers within their political calculations to protect their regime survival and stability against the internal and external threats as well as increasing their position and safeguarding their own interests in the unfolding regional order in the post-Arab Spring. Viewed with the analysis above, Qatar attempted to build alliances with the international powers, particularly the USA, to accomplish its regional and international objectives. I will collocate Qatar's alliances with the international actors in the post-Arab Spring period by highlighting the general outlook (historical legacy) of alliance behaviours with

⁷⁹² Erboğa, "Ak Parti Döneminde Türkiye'nin Katar ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Politikaları", p. 68-71.

the international actors in the Gulf and further analysing Qatar's alliances on the basis of transition states such as Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen.

3.4.1. Historical Legacy for Alliance Behaviours with the International Actors in the Gulf Region

The vulnerability and weakness of the Gulf Arab states pushed them to form an alliance with the stronger international powers to ensure their external security just after their independence. Thus, they mostly relied on the international powers to protect themselves against external threats. The USSR and the USA were the main security provider in the region in the bipolar Cold War era. However, the US prominently increased its influence in the Gulf states in the post-Cold War international political system. Because the USSR lost its power and the US became an unrivalled actor in the unipolar international system. Despite its weaker position in the system, Moscow attempted to have closer ties with the Gulf states, especially on trade.⁷⁹³ On the other hand, the Gulf states strengthened their relations with the US in order to guarantee their external security as well as extending their commercial relations with other actors such as Russia, China and India.⁷⁹⁴

In the context of external security, the Gulf countries principally took a sensible lesson from Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in 1991. Simply put, they didn't want to encounter such a threat as their neighbours faced as in the example that a stronger neighbour, Iraq attacked its neighbour Kuwait. The other regional states including Saudi Arabia and Egypt couldn't stop the revisionist state in the regional system. In other words, the GCC countries and other non-member Arab countries couldn't restrain Iraq from annexing their close ally.

At last, the US attempted to solve the regional issue as it saw Iraq's annexation as a direct threat to the US economic and political interests. Iraq reached to hold almost two-thirds of the world's oil reserves after its annexation to Kuwait. Also, it politically posed a potential threat to Israel.⁷⁹⁵ Thus, the US militarily intervened in Iraq and then Saddam Hussein had to withdraw Iraqi troops from Kuwait. In other words, the US provided a military deterrence to the Iraqi leadership to protect its Gulf allies and Israel against the

⁷⁹³ Katerina Ostarsson and Seteve A. Yetive, "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 67, No. 3, Summer 2013, pp. 381-403, p. 383-386.

⁷⁹⁴ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and Transition to the Post-Oil Era*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 70-76.

⁷⁹⁵ Alptekin Molla, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Körfez Krizleri ve Türkiye-ABD-NATO İlişkileri", p. 34, <https://dergipark.org.tr/download/article-file/203488>, (24 May 2019).

Iraqi threat.⁷⁹⁶ In return, the US exploited the rich natural resources of the Gulf states and had economic gains in return for its engagement and protection. While the US provided a security commitment for the regional states, it openly obtained economic benefits including a great number of arms sales. In this context, the Gulf states including Qatar has firmly remained under the US security umbrella since Iraq's annexation in 1991.⁷⁹⁷

However, after the 9/11 attacks in America, the relations between the USA and Saudi Arabia were highly soured.⁷⁹⁸ Depending on threat perceptions and strategic calculations, Qatari leadership benefited from the rift between the hegemon and the strongest powerhouse in the Gulf. In this regard, Qatar opened its territories for the US military base. Then the US troops were stationed in Al Udeid Air Base, which would allow a wider range of military operations and equipment relocations. Thus, Al Udeid Air Base could provide more operational flexibility to the US Central Command (CENTCOM) than Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁹⁹ More significantly, the US military base helped Qatar gain an advanced position in its relations with the United States. To put it clearly, the construction of the US military base in Doha fortified the alliance between Qatar and the USA. The military figures apparently prove it as well. Qatar now hosts the largest US military base in the Middle East with more than 11.000 US troops.⁸⁰⁰ Small states, which have an important source of raw materials such as oil and natural gas or hold a strategic position, ensure their security thanks to the great powerhouses. In return, these powerhouses provide the necessary assurance of territorial integrity and sovereignty to the small state in exchange for services (e.g., military facilities). Here the great powers have more bargaining power in alliance building as small states are vulnerable militarily. So, they mostly focus on regime survival.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁶ Miroslav Zafirov, "The Qatar Crisis-Why the Blockade Failed", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 11:2, 2017, 191-201, p. 193.

⁷⁹⁷ Ulrichsen, *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and Transition to the Post-Oil Era*, p. 80; F. Gregory Gause, III, *International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 128.

⁷⁹⁸ F. Gregory Gause, III, *International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, p. 144-145.

⁷⁹⁹ *Global Security*, "Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar", <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/udeid.htm>, (25 May 2019).

⁸⁰⁰ *U.S. Department of Defence*, "U.S. and Qatar Sign MOU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base", <https://dod.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/1731648/us-and-qatar-sign-mou-reaffirming-qatars-commitment-to-supporting-us-military-a/>, (25 May 2019).

⁸⁰¹ Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman)", p. 33.

It can be concluded that Qatar and the US desired to deepen their mutual security and military partnership through the military airbase in Qatar. The US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Qatar Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to expand US military activities at the Al Udeid Air Base (AUAB) in Qatar. This agreement was expected to promote regional stability and strengthen the defence alliance between the two countries. Additionally, the memorandum broadened and improved the US presence at AUAB.⁸⁰² More notably, Pompeo underscored that Al Udeid was important to US security and their shared efforts for the promotion of regional and domestic stability.⁸⁰³ From this high-level statement, I understand that Qatar successfully positioned itself as an important regional ally for the USA with the depiction of a state image as a trusted ally.

On the other hand, Qatar's alliance with the USA also helped it to enable to extend its intangible influence in the region and to ensure its security against regional threats⁸⁰⁴ because the strong states possess a lot to offer for their allies in the system.⁸⁰⁵ To make it clearer, the Qatari leadership didn't face an external constraint, especially from the USA, on their foreign policy choices during the Arab Spring. They had a freer hand in pursuing their foreign policy against the regional threats. In other words, they established a suitable strategic ground to formulate a more independent policy, which led them to succeed in balancing the threat of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf region. From this standpoint, the US protection and relations mostly helped the Qatari leadership to avoid the regional threats including Saudi Arabia's hegemony and pursue an independent foreign policy in the region.

3.4.2. Reluctant International Powers and Egyptian Crisis

Qatar seized an opportunity during the Arab Spring to increase its influence in the region and pursue an independent policy in response to the unfolding regional challenge. The Qatari political elites reacted very quickly to the given challenge and mostly supported

⁸⁰² Kenneth Katzman, "Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", **CRS Report**, 2020, p. 13.

⁸⁰³ **U.S. Department of Defence**, "U.S. and Qatar Sign MOU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base"; **Airforce Technology**, "US signs MoU with Qatar to expand support at Al Udeid Air Base", 17 January 2019, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/us-qatar-support-udeid-air-base/>, (25 May 2019).

⁸⁰⁴ Antwi-Boateng, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁵ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 14.

the rebels throughout the region. However, the international powers couldn't evaluate the regional stimuli exactly. Even, they hesitated to determine exactly how to respond to the shifts in the Middle East.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the US leadership couldn't determine their exact position against the regional dynamics or respond to the regional dynamics with a clear strategy.⁸⁰⁶ In other words, the Obama administration couldn't sufficiently take the signals from the regional states into account.⁸⁰⁷ Initially, they perceived the popular uprisings against the pro-American Arab regimes as a threat to the US regional interests. Thus, they backed Ben Ali, Mubarak and Saleh regimes during the uprisings. Conversely, the pro-American Arab regimes respectively started to fall down and the US leadership changed their sidings/attitudes towards the revolutionary forces.⁸⁰⁸ In this regard, the US leadership misperceived the systemic stimuli, which was in line with the NCR insights. Then, the Obama government, which recognized the popular uprisings as a democratic development or "story of self-determination", put a stand against the Hosni Mubarak regime in Egypt, which had allied for many years.⁸⁰⁹ The fortiori expectation of democracy in the Middle East led the Obama administration to act in this direction.

When the popular uprisings respectively spread to the other regional countries, the Obama administration reacted to the changes rhetorically and merely condemned the humanitarian crisis in the region. Despite the chaotic environment in the regional states and the deterioration of regional stability, public pressure in America was not sufficient to mobilize the ruling government to deploy US ground troops to the region.⁸¹⁰ NCR defends that domestic factors including opposition parties and organizations play a key role in decision making. Thus, they didn't dare to give open support to the opposition groups lest they should face public opposition at home.⁸¹¹ On the other hand, the US government endorsed the political transition in the regional states with financial aids during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁶ Daniela Huber, "A Pragmatic Actor- The US Response to the Arab Uprisings", *Journal of European Integration*, 37:1, 2015, 57-75, p. 57.

⁸⁰⁷ Selim, p. 259.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

⁸⁰⁹ Huber, p. 60-63.

⁸¹⁰ Andreas Krieg, "Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East", *International Affairs*, 92:1, 2016, 97-113, p.108.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., p.109.

⁸¹² Huber, p. 63.

The USA opened a new page in their foreign policy towards Egypt and Egyptian political life. After the democratic presidential election in 2012, the Morsi government endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood came to power. Thus, the Islamists/ the Muslim Brotherhood took an opportunity to rule the country against firmly established military authority.⁸¹³ The US leadership perceived the Muslim Brotherhood as the strongest political figure in Egypt and engaged it for a while. Meanwhile, the US Congress sent a clear message to the newly elected Morsi administration that Israeli security was the US primary issue in the region. However, the terrorist attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo in the same year became a discouragement for the US authority to support the Morsi administration.⁸¹⁴ Additionally, the Morsi government's political approach towards the US' rivalries Russia and Iran could be considered as another factor for cooling the relations between the USA and the Morsi government. Theoretically, FPEs determine foreign policy choices mainly relying on their perceptions, calculations of relative power and other states' intentions.⁸¹⁵ From this viewpoint, Qatar and the USA didn't support the same actor in Egypt after the political developments. More notably, Russia didn't balance the USA in the region despite the US's reluctant attitudes towards the regional dynamics.

3.4.3. Libyan Crisis and an International Alliance

As mentioned before, the Gaddafi regime increased its violation of the anti-regime forces and it resulted in a conflictual environment in Libya. However, the USA was hesitant to intervene in Libya to end the conflicts as it didn't have considerable security and energy interest in the country. Further, the US administration withdrew most of its military muscle from the Middle East to reduce the high military costs. I should underscore that the US's withdrawal created a power void in the region. In the context of military intervention, western allies tried to push the USA for a military operation against Gaddafi's authoritarian regime. Instead, the US authority initiated to impose sanctions on the Gaddafi regime as a possible military intervention could be quite costly.⁸¹⁶

Later the US and its western allies changed their policy towards Libya. They decided to launch a military operation against the Gaddafi regime under the NATO initiative.

⁸¹³ Ernesto Londono and Karin Brulliard, "Islamist wins Egyptian presidency", **the Washington Post**, 24 June 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/morsi-named-new-egyptian-president/2012/06/24/gJQAMZaazV_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2cc471fef6b6, (25 June 2019).

⁸¹⁴ Huber, p. 64.

⁸¹⁵ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 485-486.

⁸¹⁶ Huber, p. 65.

Surprisingly, the US directly relied on the military capacity of the Arab states against the regional challenge and shared the burden of the military action with them. It only gave air support to the NATO-led operation in Libya with the Arab League members and the GGC countries. The Arab states including Qatar, Jordan, Morocco and the UAE stood for the NATO-led military operation called Operation Unifier Protector (OUP), helped legitimize the Western interference in an Arab state and polished NATO's image crisis in the Middle East.⁸¹⁷ At the same time, Qatar backed the NATO-led military operation in different ways. To put it concretely, it supported the NATO forces with its aircrafts, Mirage war jets and provided training and military equipment for the anti-regime forces in Libya. In a broader sense, Qatar gave military, economic and diplomatic assistance to the anti-regime forces and shared financial, human and political costs of the military engagement to Libya with its ally the USA.⁸¹⁸ As a result, Qatar as a leading actor helped its western allies and opposition groups in Libya to eliminate the Gaddafi regime.

In the post-Gaddafi period, Libya became much more vulnerable and fragile. Two seats of power (Tobruk-based government (LNA) and Tripoli-based government (GNA)) emerged in the country. The regional and international actors backed one of these power centres to ensure their own strategic interests. Russia backed General Khalifa Haftar, the commander of the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army (LNA) dominating eastern Libya.⁸¹⁹ Although it denied backing the Khalifa Haftar group,⁸²⁰ General Haftar met the Russian top officials in his visit to Moscow in November 2016 by mentioning that their relations were crucial and wanted help from Russia.⁸²¹ In this context, Russia supported the Khalifa Haftar forces via the Russian Wagner Group, a private military company. They supplied high-tech military equipment such as artilleries, tanks, drones and ammunition to the LNA forces to surpass the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli.⁸²² Thus, Russia attempted to increase its influence in the

⁸¹⁷ Sally Khalifa Isaac, "NATO's Intervention in Libya: Assessment and Implications", 2012, https://www.iemed.org/observatori-en/arees-danalisi/arxiu-adjunts/anuari/med.2012/Khalifa_en.pdf, p. 121, (25 June 2016); Nardulli, p. 345.

⁸¹⁸ Andreas Krieg, "Externalizing the burden of war: the Obama Doctrine and US foreign policy in the Middle East", *International Affairs*, 92:1, 2016, 97-113, p.107-109; Nardulli, p. 344-345.

⁸¹⁹ **TRT World**, "Russia's growing intervention in Libyan civil war", 07 March 2019.

⁸²⁰ George Martin, "Is Putin making another power grab in the Middle East? Moscow denies backing renegade Libyan general who is marching on Tripoli-amid suspicions of a Russian hand in looming civil war", **Daily Mail**, 05 April 2019. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6890201/Is-Putin-making-power-grab-Middle-East-Moscow-denies-backing-renegade-Libyan-general.html>, (22 June 2019).

⁸²¹ **The Guardian**, "Libyan General Khalifa Haftar meets Russian minister to seek help", 29 October 2016.

⁸²² Alec Luhn and Dominic Nicholls, "Russian mercenaries back Libyan rebel leader as Moscow seeks influence in Africa", **the Telegraph**, 03 March 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/03/03/russian-mercenaries-back->

Middle East by supplying logistic and military aids to the Khalifa Haftar forces. However, Russia's military and political engagement in the Libyan civil war made the US military officials uneasy.⁸²³ In this context, it is believed that Russia is interested in gaining control over Libya's oil reserves, mostly in the oil fields located in eastern Libya and re-establishing the trade relations as well as restarting arms sales, which considerably waned in the post-Gaddafi period.⁸²⁴ More significantly, Russia attempted to increase its power and balance the USA in the Middle East after gaining secure ground in Syria.⁸²⁵

In the context of balancing the Khalifa Haftar forces, Qatari leadership made a general call to block the foreign arms supplies to the Haftar forces, which were fighting for the takeover of Libya. They underscored that the existing U.N decision for an arms embargo on Libya could end the foreign arms supplies to the Haftar forces if the UN put it in force strictly. However, the regional and international powers split up to back the domestic powers in the country with their material and immaterial capabilities. In this context, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Russia and France supported the Khalifa Haftar group while mainly Turkey, Qatar, the USA and the EU supported the UN-recognized Tripoli-based government/al Sarraj government, which had Islamist-leaning factions in the west of Libya.⁸²⁶

In the alliance group for the Haftar forces, France and Italy confronted each other about "French reluctance" on existing EU resolution compelling the Haftar forces to stop his advance in the country.⁸²⁷ These two western actors had an important sphere of influence in the country. Italy was the key foreign actor in the Libyan oil sector and suffered from the migration of refugees and economic migrants after the NATO-led military campaign in 2011. On the other hand, France chiefly drove the NATO-led operation to topple Gaddafi and damaged Italian economic and security interests accordingly. Also, Paris gradually positioned itself in the Libyan civil war in the post-Gaddafi period by

libyan-rebel-leader-moscow-seeks-influence/. (22 June 2019); **TRT World**, "Russia's growing intervention in Libyan civil war", 07 March 2019.

⁸²³ **TRT World**, "Russia's growing intervention in Libyan civil war", 07 March 2019.

⁸²⁴ Stasa Salacanian, "Championing rogue warlord Haftar, Russia reveals true agenda in Libya", **the New Arab**, 22 January 2019. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2019/1/22/russias-agenda-in-libya>, (22 June 2019).

⁸²⁵ Yüce and Amour, p. 61.

⁸²⁶ Patrick Wintour, "Libya: International community warns Haftar against Tripoli attack", **the Guardian**, 14 June 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/06/libya-international-community-warns-haftar-against-tripoli-attack>, (23 June 2019).

⁸²⁷ Ulf Laessing and Ahmed Elumami, "Libya conflict stirs divisions in Gulf and Europe", **Reuters**, 16 March 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-security/libya-conflict-stirs-divisions-in-gulf-and-europe-idUSL5N21Y2FW>, (22 June 2019).

supporting the Khalifa Haftar group. It is believed that Paris's main motivation in Libya was either commercial considerations or blocking the flow of arms and funds to the jihadist groups threatening the fragile governments in Chad, Niger and Mali under the French sphere of influence. On the other hand, the French officials defended that Paris endorsed Khalifa Haftar to build strategic alliances across the Middle East rather than economic interest. More notably, France openly aligned with the KSA, The UAE, and Egypt against the alliance of Turkey, Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood/the Turkey and Qatar-led elected-reformist camp.⁸²⁸ Given this background, France highly increased its political weight in the post-Gaddafi period when compared with its regional and international allies.

3.4.4. Syrian Crisis: Russia-led Coalition vs the US-led Coalition

The USA was the dominant power in the system but it surprisingly hesitated to intervene in the Syrian issue in the early phase of the popular uprisings despite Syria's crucial geostrategic and geopolitical position. Neoclassical realists prioritise that the leaders' images, perceptions and calculations of systemic stimuli affect the states' external policy. The Obama administration miscalculated the Syrian uprisings and evaluated them within the bounds of the Arab Spring.⁸²⁹ From this perspective, it reveals that the US leadership didn't have a clear strategic vision on the Syrian issue at the beginning of the uprisings.⁸³⁰

Nevertheless, the al-Assad regime increased its violence toward civilians with massive use of highly dangerous weapons in the country in 2013. Then, the US government did not accept the increasing violence of the al-Assad regime against the Syrian people. Although the US didn't approve of Bashar al-Assad's inhuman treatment as a solution to suppress the rebels, its military interference was excessively delayed. In other words, the Syrian civil war and al-Assad regime turned into a serious threat to regional stability but the Obama administration stayed away from military involvement in Syria.⁸³¹ Besides these given drawbacks, the increasing uprisings caused a chaotic environment and a power void in the region. As a result, power void in the region led to the emergence of

⁸²⁸ Paul Taylor, "France's double game in Libya", *Politico*, 17 April 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/frances-double-game-in-libya-nato-un-khalifa-haftar/>, (23 June 2019).

⁸²⁹ Itamar Rabinovich, "The United States and Israel vs. the Syria of Bashar al-Assad: Challenges, Dilemmas, and Options", Policy Analysis, *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 23, No. 4, October 2020, p. 85.

⁸³⁰ Huber, p. 66.

⁸³¹ Rabinovich, p. 85.

terrorist groups such as Daesh and Al Qaeda. In this regional environment, Daesh gained ground within a short time and strengthened its position in Syria.

In the context of US interference in the regional conflicts, the US leadership apparently had a contradictory vision. NCR affirms that the systemic incentives push the states to respond to threats and opportunities, however, through the often-imperfect transmission belt of leader perception and domestic politics.⁸³² To put it concretely, the Obama administration intervened in Libya but it remained silent or avoided any action in Syria. In fact, the conflicts in the given countries didn't pose a direct threat to their own security or concern vital US national interests.⁸³³ Geography as a systemic modifier highly affected the US decision on military intervention.

Furthermore, the US put forward a new strategy that was rather different from the usual grand strategy after the hard experience of the Gulf crisis and the 2008 economic crisis. The US leadership strategically calculated that it would be less likely to engage in conflicts that did not directly threaten vital American national interest or its engagements would be at a lower level. This strategy would cost less military and material loss for the US. Therefore, the US would avoid the economic cost of the interventions as well as the military losses by retrenchment strategy. With this new strategy/retrenchment strategy, the US leadership showed a more different behaviour than the longstanding policies of the US.⁸³⁴ Henceforth, the US favoured avoiding deep engagement as it did in the post-Cold War period. Following this strategy, the US authority acted towards the terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria.

Under the strategy of avoiding deep engagement, the USA desired to return to the Middle East with a small number of military troops in order to stop the terrorist organization and the Syrian regime's authoritarian and harsh attitude towards its own people. However, it faced Russian and Chinese opposition at the 2013 G20 summit in Russia, while it was calculating a possible military operation by claiming that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons on innocent people. France, Turkey and the Arab League members bluntly supported the Obama administration's war plan against the Syrian regime forces.

⁸³² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 28.

⁸³³ Clarke and Ricketts, p. 315.

⁸³⁴ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment", **International Security**, Vol. 37, No. 3, WINTER 2012/13, pp. 7-51, p. 9-11.

However, the British government did not give its support to its ally's plan due to the negative votes in the British House of Commons in the beginning.⁸³⁵ Domestic constraints affected the British leaders in shaping their external policy towards the threat in Syria.

After a consensus, the international and regional partners, which increased in numbers later, initiated a military operation called the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTFOIR) to defeat the Daesh terrorist group and ensure regional stability in the Middle East.⁸³⁶ The USA allied with the opposition groups/anti-Assad regime and provided military and financial assistance to them against the al-Assad regime and the Daesh terrorist group. It also intensively launched airstrikes against the terrorist organisations, mainly in Iraqi soils.⁸³⁷ More notably, it was the first time that the US forces had launched a military operation since the withdrawal of the American troops from the Middle East in 2011.

Also, the US military force joined the coalition forces' military operations in Syria as the Daesh terrorist group enhanced its power on Syrian soil. The coalition forces highly expanded after 2014 with the participation of other regional and international countries and considerably increased their airstrikes.⁸³⁸ The coalition forces totally conducted 13,331 airstrikes in Iraq and 11,235 airstrikes in Syria under Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) up to August 9, 2017.⁸³⁹ However, the US airstrikes couldn't stop the terrorist organizations from advancing on the Iraqi and Syrian territories. At the same time, the Assad regime managed to survive in a jammed area.

The USA meanwhile acted in line with the Gulf countries and Turkey. Yet, Turkey faced significant challenges during the Syrian conflict. Political, security, humanitarian and economic issues, which were considered as consequences of the Syrian civil war, put serious pressure on Turkey. In this regard, it welcomed more than three million Syrian refugees. It also fought against the terrorist groups on its long Syrian border, because they obviously threatened its national security and national interest.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁵ Hussain, p. 43.

⁸³⁶ **U.S. Department of Defense Official Website**, "Operation Inherent Resolve", <https://dod.defense.gov/OIR/>, (25 June 2019).

⁸³⁷ **BBC News**, "Iraq: US air strike on Islamic State militants in Iraq", 08 August 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28709530>, (25 June 2019).

⁸³⁸ Karakaya, p. 100-101.

⁸³⁹ **U.S. Department of Defense Official Website**, "Operation Inherent Resolve".

⁸⁴⁰ Makdisi et al., p. 11.

On the other hand, the international community sought to end the Syrian crisis in the context of international diplomacy. Given this background, on June 30, 2012, they held a meeting in Geneva to talk about the Syrian crisis. The talks started at a time when the mass protests increased against the Syrian regime. The UN permanent members and the regional states including Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, and Turkey, the UE Foreign Affairs and Security High Representative Catherine Ashton and the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon attended the Geneva talks. Then the final declaration of the negotiations among the participants agreed on the establishment of a transitional government in order to create an unbiased environment for future arrangements. They underlined that the Syrian people would decide the future of the country. Also, they agreed that a fully authorized transition administration, which was composed of the names chosen with the mutual consent of the Syrian regime and the opposition, should prepare the constitution and help the country to go to the polls. The principles of the declaration were subsequently registered in December 2015 by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254. Iran was not invited to the meeting in Geneva as the US leadership did not want it to participate in the negotiations. However, Kofi Annan, the former joint special delegate of the UN and Arab League, would inform the Iranian administration about the outcome of the Geneva meeting because Iran had a great influence on the al Assad regime.⁸⁴¹

While the Geneva I resolutions were expected to be implemented to end the Syrian crisis, the Assad regime consolidated its strength against the Syrian opposition by the support of the Iranian military muscle and Hezbollah militants. Thus, from the second half of 2012 to the end of 2013, the Syrian regime could relatively stand against the opposition forces. Consequently, the Syrian regime shelved its political transition plan.⁸⁴² In other words, the Syrian regime turned its back to the Geneva I resolutions.

Despite the wide participation of the international community in the Geneva II talks in January 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon was forced to withdraw his invitation to Iran after the Syrian opposition (the Syrian National Coalition) refused Iran's participation.⁸⁴³ This was a huge loss of prestige for Iran. Although Iran was an influential

⁸⁴¹ **Al Jazeera Türk** "İlk Cenevre'den bugüne", 24 January 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/dosya/ilk-cenevreden-bugune>, (18 July 2019).

⁸⁴² Selen Temizer, "Suriye krizinde Cenevre maratonları sonuçsuz kaldı", **Anadolu Agency**, 21 February 2017. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/suriye-krizinde-cenevre-maratonlari-sonucsuz-kaldi/754818>, (18 June 2019).

⁸⁴³ İpek Yezdani, "10 soruda Cenevre II Konferansı", **Hürriyet**, 23 January 2014. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/10-soruda-cenevre-ii-konferansi-25629289>, (18 June 2019).

player in Syria, the international community successfully left it out of the negotiations in Geneva.

On the other hand, Russia increased its assistance for the survival of the al-Assad regime. By leaning on the Russian shoulders, the al Assad regime intensively attacked the anti-regime forces and then changed the balance of power in its favour. However, the regime forces couldn't take full control of the country. After the summer of 2015, the opponents consolidated their power and put pressure on the al-Assad regime and Iranian backed groups. Then Bashar al-Assad called on its traditional ally Russia for its military assistance.⁸⁴⁴

Russia deployed its troops to the country to protect the Bashar al Assad regime as well as its key political and military interests in Syria. In this sense, it had military defence deals with the Syrian regime and had a naval base in the Tartus port of Syria. In addition, Russia seized an opportunity to balance the USA for the first time after the end of the Cold War and to open up a space for itself as the USA remained the sole dominant actor in the Middle East in the post-Cold War period. Russia attempted to change the US's unrivalled position in the system through military operations against the anti-regime forces. To put it clearly, Russia exploited the power vacuum and challenged the US position in the unipolar post-Cold War international system.⁸⁴⁵ Further to this attempt, Russia, China, Iran and the Syrian regime took place on the same alliance camp to balance the alliance camp of the US, the European powers and the Gulf monarchies in the region. In fact, small states have limited interests in international politics and they do not play an effective role in the global balance of power. Instead, they mostly concentrate on regional issues related to their national/strategic interests. They mainly attach importance to their relations with their immediate surroundings and neighbours. Thus, they avoid disputes and conflicts with border states as much as possible.⁸⁴⁶

The Russia led camp fought against the Syrian opposition groups as well as the Daesh terrorist group. At the same time, the US-led western coalition forces conducted a number of airstrikes on Daesh after 2014 and initially supported "moderate" rebel groups against

⁸⁴⁴ Temizer, "Suriye krizinde Cenevre maratonları sonuçsuz kaldı".

⁸⁴⁵ Yüce and Amour, p. 53-54.

⁸⁴⁶ Kumek, p. 29-30.

the Syrian regime.⁸⁴⁷ However, Russia's intervention with its military forces increased Russia's domination in the region and helped the survival of the Syrian regime. In this regard, Russia backed the survival of the Syrian regime in favour of its own interests by taking international and regional risks.⁸⁴⁸

Against the Russian direct interference, The US preferred to avoid deep engagement in the region and favoured a proxy war. There appeared to be two main blocks of alliances involving regional and international actors in the Middle East. As seen from the Syrian case, Russia, Iran, and China struggled for the survival of the Assad regime. Against the Assad regime, the US, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia (plus EU countries) built an alliance.⁸⁴⁹ When we look at the formation of the second regional alliance, it cannot be said that the members are in complete alliance with each other.

Firstly, Turkey and US relations became more complicated in the Syrian case. The USA explicitly supported the terrorist group PYD/YPG, which is the Syrian offshoot of the terrorist group PKK (Kurdistan Worker Party).⁸⁵⁰ Turkish top executives warned the US authority about the PYD/YPG, which was officially identified as a terrorist group by Turkey. Also, Ankara urged that the US material and non-material support to the PYD/YPG terrorist group threatened Turkey's national security. In this regard, President Erdoğan of Turkey stated that they would never tolerate such a formation that would threaten their national survival.⁸⁵¹ Although Turkey precisely emphasized that the PYD/YPG were terrorist organisations and a direct threat to its national survival, neither the USA nor the EU supported Turkey about sweeping such organisations and their activities near the Turkish border. Instead, John Kirby, the spokesperson for the US State Department, clearly declared that they did not see PYD/YPG as a terrorist group, backed up these groups with the military arms and maintained their alliance relations with them in the region.⁸⁵² In line with the given background, the US alliance choice (its proxies in

⁸⁴⁷ **BBC News**, "Why is there a war in Syria", 25 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229>, (18 June 2019).

⁸⁴⁸ Halit Gülşen, "Rusya'nın Suriye Müdahalesi: Kazanımlar, Kayıplar ve Riskler", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 79, Mart-Nisan 2017, p. 30-31.

⁸⁴⁹ Yüce and Amour, p. 51-54; Amour, "Introduction: The Regional Order in the Gulf and in the Middle East", p. 1-25.

⁸⁵⁰ Küçükaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", p. 10.

⁸⁵¹ **BBC News Türkçe**, "Erdoğan: ABD sınırlarımızda terör ordusu kuruyor", 15 January 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-42692309>, (07 January 2019).

⁸⁵² **NTV**, "ABD: PYD'yi terör örgütü olarak görmüyoruz", 09 February 2016, https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/abd-pydy-teror-orgutu-olarak-gormuyoruz,jkPYg6G4OEuqkJO_NEVB-Q, (07 January 2019).

Syria) in the region despite Turkey's insistent opposition increased the tension in Turkey-the USA relations.⁸⁵³

Secondly, Qatar and the USA relations tensed as the U.S government of Donald Trump accused Qatar of backing the terrorist groups, relations with Iran, and having an extremist ideology.⁸⁵⁴ Thus, President Trump formally backed the KSA- led camp in their blockade decision/the Qatari crisis in 2017. Instead, with the shift in the regional political dynamics in the Middle East, Turkey and Qatar got closer. Their relations/alliance building on military and economy have intensified since the recent Qatari crisis.⁸⁵⁵

Besides Qatar had economic ties with Russia despite the deterioration based on the attack on the Russian ambassador Titorenko by the security guards at the Hamad International Airport.⁸⁵⁶ Also, Qatar and Russia competed in the energy field as they were the leading gas suppliers in the world energy sector. In the context of Russia-Qatar energy competition, Qatar increased its export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the European nations and its challenge encouraged the Europeans to reduce their dependence on Russian gas supplies. Consequently, Qatar and Russia initiated to restore their deteriorated interrelations due to the Russian ambassador incident and their rival approaches to the tensions during the Arab Spring. Emir Tamim paid diplomatic visits to Moscow to improve the interrelations, albeit its close relations with the US. Also, Doha invested in the Rosneft energy through Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). As a result of the increasing relations, the Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom opened a representative office in Doha. The Qatari leadership enjoyed the new developments in their relations with Russia. They intended to further their relations in economic fields such as investments in Moscow airport with Qatar Airways and the energy field with the Russian Gazprom.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵³ Rabinovich, p. 86.

⁸⁵⁴ David Smith, Sabrina Siddiqui and Peter Beaumont, "Gulf crisis: Trump escalates row by accusing Qatar of sponsoring terror", **the Guardian**, 09 June 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/09/trump-qatar-sponsor-terrorism-middle-east>, (07 January 2018).

⁸⁵⁵ Küçükaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", p. 10-11.

⁸⁵⁶ Katerina Oskarsson and Steve A. Yetiv, "Russia and the Persian Gulf: Trade, Energy, and Interdependence", **Middle East Journal**, Vol. 67, No. 3, Summer 2013, p. 390.

⁸⁵⁷ Kenneth Katzman, "Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", **CRS Report**, 2020, p. 15; **Qatar Gulf News**, "QATAR: Gazprom, Qatar seek joint investments after opening Doha Office", 11 February 2013. <https://www.qatar-gulfnews.com/qatar-gazprom-qatar-seek-joint-investments-after-opening-doha-office/>, (24 June 2019).

On the other hand, the US insisted on organizing Geneva III talks as civilian massacres increased and Russia changed the course of the war in Syria. Iran was invited to the meetings of Geneva for the first time in February 2016. It shows the increase of Iranian political weight in the Syrian issue. The opponents decided to withdraw from the talks to protest the violence of Iran and the Russia-backed regime in Aleppo. The US continued its cooperation with the PYD in Syria when Russia gradually reduced its military interventions in 2016. With the support of the US, the PYD made major land gains against Daesh.⁸⁵⁸

Against the US-PYD alliance, Turkey-Russia relations developed as a balancing factor. Russia, Iran and Turkey stepped forward in the Syrian crisis, which initiated a diplomatic process in Astana to find a solution to end the chaotic environment in Syria. At this stage, Russia became a more dominant global actor in the Syrian issue than the global rival US. In fact, the withdrawal of the US troops from Syria weakened the US position in the Syrian issue.

In January 2016, a key decision was taken to implement the ceasefire in the Syrian war theatre in Astana meeting with the tripartite mechanism including Ankara, Moscow and Tehran.⁸⁵⁹ Turkey strengthened its position in the Syrian issue via the Astana process. Additionally, the military operation (Operation Shield Euphrates (OSH)) helped Turkey's presence in Astana. By doing so, Turkey sent a clear message that it was an effective player in the regional issues. In this regard, Turkey took significant steps for its national security and Syrians' liberation, which meant that it created a secure area for the Syrians by throwing the terrorist organisations such as PYD / YPG and Daesh elements from the north of Syria.⁸⁶⁰

3.4.5. Gulf Monarchies and the US Alliance in Yemen

The US remained in the same line with Saudi Arabia in the Yemen crisis during the Arab Spring uprisings. In this regard, in the wake of the uprisings, the US leadership worked consistently with Riyadh and tried to refrain from the mass protests against President Saleh, who had close ties with the USA. After the regime's violence to the protestors, the GGC countries including Qatar increased their political involvement in the Yemen crisis

⁸⁵⁸ Temizer, "Suriye krizinde Cenevre maratonları sonuçsuz kaldı".

⁸⁵⁹ Temizer, "Suriye krizinde Cenevre maratonları sonuçsuz kaldı".

⁸⁶⁰ Cengiz Tomar, "Suriye Krizinde Son Viraj", **Anadolu Agency**, 23 January 2017.

and Saleh's power was handed over to Abdurabbu Mansour al-Hadi to form a unity government.⁸⁶¹ Then the Obama administration closely backed Yemen with huge financial aid for humanitarian, economic, political and governmental reform, and security concerns.⁸⁶²

In the Yemeni crisis, The USA strengthened its alliance relations with the Gulf countries. It backed the Saudi leadership for their political and military maneuverers towards the imminent and proximate threat by supplying particularly logistical assistance and intelligence to the KSA and the UAE- led coalition forces in the Yemen war.⁸⁶³ We can conclude that Yemen was very important for the USA mainly in two aspects: Firstly, the struggle against the Al Qaeda terrorist group which was gaining much more power in this country and spreading this struggle to the region as a model. Secondly, Yemen had a potential impact on US-Saudi relations.⁸⁶⁴ From this standpoint, the US opposed Al Qaeda's activities and expansion in Yemen with its material capabilities and alliance through Gulf forces as it perceived it as a threat to its own security and regional security as well. Thus, it conducted several attacks against al-Qaeda terrorist groups with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).⁸⁶⁵

More notably, the USA didn't want a political power gap in Yemen for its own strategic interests and/or the benefit of Al Qaeda. Although the Houthi forces had sufficient potential to fight against Al Qaeda and eliminate them, the US seemingly did not prefer the Houthis because of the US's close relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. In this sense, the USA felt obliged to prevent its key Gulf allies, primarily the KSA from the chaotic war in Yemen. A long-lasting war in the Gulf could destabilize the KSA and other Gulf states. Thus, the US sought to safeguard the KSA and its Gulf allies against the anti-regime groups in Yemen.⁸⁶⁶ Similarly, Qatar backed the USA and its Gulf allies in Yemen against the Iran-aligned Houthis.

⁸⁶¹ Gamal M. Selim, "The United States and the Arab Spring: The Dynamics of Political Engineering", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Special Issue: Perspectives on the Arab Uprisings, pp. 255-272, Summer 2013, p. 266.

⁸⁶² Reliefweb, "US. Government Assistance to Yemen: Fact Sheet", 22 May 2012, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/us-government-assistance-yemen-fact-sheet>, (25 June 2019).

⁸⁶³ Hokayem and Roberts, p. 179.

⁸⁶⁴ Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen".

⁸⁶⁵ See Ensar Mutlu, "Yemen'deki İnsansız Hava Aracı Saldırılarının Bilançosu", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 7, Sayı: 67, Mart-Nisan 2015.

⁸⁶⁶ Kurt, "Devrim" den Askeri Müdahaleye Yemen", p. 19-20.

The Middle Eastern states often build alliances to balance regional threats as they perceive that the imminent threats mostly come from their neighbours, not from the global powers.⁸⁶⁷ From this theoretical perspective, the KSA- led camp positioned against Iran and its aligned Houthis through their military capabilities in Yemen. Also, it cooled its relations with Qatar during the Qatar crises in 2014 and 2017. Based on its close relations with the KSA and the UAE, the Yemen government openly threw their weight behind the KSA- led camp and put a distance between Qatar and itself. However, Qatar strategically tried to maintain its alliance relations with the USA to counter regional threats and preserve its strategic interests in the region.

3.4.6. Qatar's Alliance with China

Depending on their strategic culture, Qatari leadership concluded that they had to diversify their political, economic and security relations with the regional and global partners to respond to the perceived challenges.⁸⁶⁸ They began to invest in the emerging markets in the Asian states, which led China to become one of Qatar's trade partners in Asia.

In fact, China particularly built good economic relations with the regional countries through its low profile and abstention policy on conflictual issues.⁸⁶⁹ In the context of economic relations, China managed to develop further relations with the GCC states.⁸⁷⁰ Especially, Saudi Arabia has been China's greatest economic partner in the Gulf despite the US unique position on Saudi Arabia's security. Unlike the US political attitude, China's policy of staying away from interfering in Saudi Arabia's domestic affairs positively affected China-Saudi Arabia relations.⁸⁷¹ Furthermore, the fall of the Libyan regime and the Syrian crisis in the post-Arab Spring drove Chinese leadership to interfere much more in the regional dynamics in the Middle East.⁸⁷² In this sense, after the diplomatic crisis of Qatar in 2014 with the neighbouring Arab states, Doha substantially increased its bilateral economic cooperation with China. Considering that Qatar and

⁸⁶⁷ Walt, **Origin of Alliance**, p. 164.

⁸⁶⁸ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Can the Gulf Cooperation Council Survive the Current Crisis?", **Arab Center Washington DC**, 7 September 2017, p. 3.

⁸⁶⁹ Tugrul Keskin and Christian N. Braun, "When a Sleeping Giant Wakes- A Neoclassical Realist Analysis of China's Expanding Ties in the Middle East", **Sociology of Islam** 4, 2016, 1-26, doi 10.1163/22131418-00402009, p. 10-22.

⁸⁷⁰ Joseph Y. S. Cheng, "China's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council States: Multilevel Diplomacy in the Divided Arab World", **China Review**, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2016, pp. 35-64, p. 43.

⁸⁷¹ Keskin and Braun, p. 13-15.

⁸⁷² Cheng, p. 36.

China cooperation mainly depended on the energy sector, Qatar had a strategic significance to China's energy security.⁸⁷³

Qatar has had economic and diplomatic ties with China since 1988. Although they had cooperation agreements in many fields such as economy, trade, finance, culture and sports, Emir Tamim's visit to China in 2014 was important to consolidate their relations. They signed a strategic partnership agreement during the visit. The two leaders agreed on augmenting current high-level consultation by backing the two nations' positions on sovereignty and territorial integrity issues as well as economic and trade integration in the fields of energy, infrastructure, advanced technology, finance and industry.⁸⁷⁴

Qatar has sold a great amount of LNG and reached seven destinations in China via Qatar Airways since 1999.⁸⁷⁵ It became the second-largest supplier of natural gas for China by providing more than 20 % of China's total demand.⁸⁷⁶ Its energy trade with China helped diversify energy sources and enjoy clean and renewable energy.⁸⁷⁷ Moreover, the state-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP) established joint ventures with some Chinese oil and gas companies such as exploration, production and refining projects.⁸⁷⁸

On Qatar-China trade cooperation, Qatar's ambassador Sultan bin Salmeen Al Mansouri underlined that Qatar was China's fourth-largest trading partner and the trade between Doha and Beijing exceeded to the US\$11 billion in 2017 simply with the US\$7.7 billion worth of Chinese exports and the US\$2 billion in Qatari exports.⁸⁷⁹ He also explained that they had nearly 180 large and medium-sized Chinese companies, which could operate and invest in Qatar in various fields ranging from infrastructure, communication, technology, education, and finance. On the other hand, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) had investments of nearly US\$15 billion in China. More notably, the two concept

⁸⁷³ Anas Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane", **Channel News Asia**, 03 June 2018. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/qatar-gulf-states-growing-ties-china-10450188>. (12 January 2019).

⁸⁷⁴ Brahim Saidy, "Qatar and Rising China: An Evolving Partnership", **China Report** 53: 4, 2017, pp. 447-466, p. 454.

⁸⁷⁵ Haifa Said and Du Chao, "Qatar and China: Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership", **China Today**, 11 August 2018, http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctenglish/2018/ii/201808/t20180811_800138032.html, (12 January 2019); Saidy, p. 447.

⁸⁷⁶ Said and Chao, "Qatar and China: Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership"; Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane".

⁸⁷⁷ Said and Chao, "Qatar and China: Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership".

⁸⁷⁸ Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane".

⁸⁷⁹ Mordechai Chaziza, "China-Qatar Strategic Partnership and the Realization of One Belt, One Road Initiative", **China Report**, 56:1, 2020, 78-102, p. 82; Said and Chao, "Qatar and China: Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership".

projects, the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (CBRI), were accommodated to unify a development strategy to the mutual interests of these participant states.⁸⁸⁰ China's CBRI consisted of energy, transportation networks, fast trade methods, social and cultural interaction. As a result, the project CBRI was expected to lead China to come forward regionally and globally.⁸⁸¹

After the Qatar crisis in 2017, Beijing boomed its exports of goods and services to Qatar, even by surpassing Qatar's key global ally the US. Its trade also went up due to the construction of the Lusail Stadium built for the 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament, Hamad Port in Doha and other significant infrastructure works in the country.⁸⁸² Given this background, China became the new trade route for the development of the Qatari economy after the challenge of its Arab neighbours in 2017.⁸⁸³

Additionally, Qatar and China appeared to foster security cooperation considerably during the Qatar crisis in 2017. They signed a counterterrorism deal to increase their coordination against terrorism in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific regions. More notably, Qatar's security cooperation was consolidated with China by secretly purchasing the SY-400 short-range ballistic missiles in 2017 although there was no official announcement about the sale of the Chinese missiles.⁸⁸⁴ Additionally, China was not a key military supplier to Qatar due to the easy availability of US weapons. Moreover, Qatar was selective in arms purchases. It acquired to use more modern and advanced technology for its military force in order to increase the capabilities of the limited armed force of nearly 12000 military personnel and ensure its land, air, and maritime security. Thus, Qatar always wanted to purchase advanced weapons from western arms suppliers such as the US, France and the UK rather than the relatively inferior quality of China's weaponry. Consequently, military cooperation between Qatar and China was in progress by the military contacts but it was not at the significant level when compared with the

⁸⁸⁰ Said and Chao, "Qatar and China: Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership".

⁸⁸¹ Selim Han Yenciun, "Çin'in Silah Ticaretinde Ortadoğu ve Denge Politikası", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 84, Ekim-Kasım 2018, p. 72.

⁸⁸² Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane".

⁸⁸³ Debasish Roy Chowdhury, "China A Pillar of Strength in Qatar's Fightback Against Arab Blockade", <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2149915/china-pillar-strength-qatars-fightback-against-arab-blockade>, (12 January 2019).

⁸⁸⁴ Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane"; Chowdhury, "China A Pillar of Strength In Qatar's Fightback Against Arab Blockade".

rival Western states. However, Qatar was willing to diversify the weaponry suppliers and reduce its dependency on Western states.⁸⁸⁵

China has evolved into an emerging alternative global state for arms supplies especially since it integrated the new generation war systems into the exports, produced comprehensive solutions, and stayed away from conflicts in the region. In this regard, Doha considered China as a safe trading partner and a supplier of its defence industry.⁸⁸⁶ Consequently, Qatari leadership desired to balance the threat of the KSA- led camp in the region. Thus, they sought to foster the relations with the globally economic giant China to diversify its allies out of the highly fractured Gulf Cooperation Council.⁸⁸⁷ Qatari political leaders' strategy for diversification of its allies and increasing its economic benefits in implementing joint strategies and plans with the global and regional actors help to create equilibrium between Qatar and its neighbours as well as to maintain and enhance its international presence in the system.⁸⁸⁸ However, Qatar primarily chose to continue an alliance with the US although China managed to enlarge its relations with it in the post-Arab Spring. Moreover, the Gulf states including Qatar perceived that China neither have the capability nor intention to challenge the US hegemony in the region. More significantly, the Arab public recently had several dissatisfactions with China's foreign policy towards the regional dynamics despite the Arab governments' assuming a more important role to China.⁸⁸⁹

China had tight relations with the KSA and the UAE as well as Qatar.⁸⁹⁰ In this sense, China preferred a balanced approach for its Gulf partners and preserved its neutral position towards the ongoing Qatar crisis. Also, it backed the cohesion among the GCC countries and regional stability in the Gulf region as perceived for China's best interest.⁸⁹¹ However, China may mediate between Qatar and the aggressive Arab countries to safeguard the energy supplies. Also, it should fulfil its commitments to its strategic

⁸⁸⁵ Saïdy, p. 458-462.

⁸⁸⁶ Yenciun, p. 73

⁸⁸⁷ Igtait, "Commentary: Isolated Qatar pivots towards China, as its ties with Gulf states wane".

⁸⁸⁸ Zafirov, p. 192-193.

⁸⁸⁹ Cheng, p. 49-56.

⁸⁹⁰ Mahmoud Ghafouri, "China's Policy in the Persian Gulf", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XVI, No. 2, Summer 2009, p. 87.

⁸⁹¹ Samuel Ramani, "China's Growing Security Relationship With Qatar", **the Diplomat**, 16 October 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/chinas-growing-security-relationship-with-qatar/>, (12 January 2019).

partners to provide market stability and sustain the current influx of money from its trade.⁸⁹²

3.5. The 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal and Its Impact

The Iranian nuclear issue has long been one of the major problems between the West and Iran. With the discovery of Iran's two secret nuclear facilities in 2002, it was brought to the world public opinion and since then, allegations that Iran had developed nuclear weapons had been brought up to the world's political agenda.⁸⁹³ The West was uneasy about Iran's nuclear activities. The international community perceived Iran's nuclear ambitions as a threat to regional security because it could shift the balance in the Middle East after it had a nuclear weapon. Consequently, Iran's nuclear program increased Western countries' pressure on Iran.⁸⁹⁴

The political leaders in Turkey, citing Turkey's own economic and political interests, did not support the US policy of isolating Iran for a long time and took a risk for a confrontation with Washington on this issue. By contributing to the peaceful solution of the Iranian nuclear problem, Turkish political leaders aimed to prevent conflicts that would lead to destabilization of the Middle East region and to prevent major tensions with the US. At this point, it is seen that Turkey was not compatible with the US policy. It pursued an independent policy towards the Iranian issue. Turkish delegation made great efforts to prevent the Iranian nuclear issue, which would turn to possible armed intervention in the Middle East. Turkey, which received Brazil's support on peacefully resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, conducted a very fine policy in achieving a solution that would satisfy the West. Furthermore, Turkey followed a determined attitude towards the issue despite the criticism of international and national circles that it had shifted its axis or it changed its foreign policy. American administration not only increased its pressures on Tehran but also have increased its demand from Turkey to step back on Iran as well.⁸⁹⁵

⁸⁹² Zafirov, p. 196.

⁸⁹³ Mustafa Şeyhmus Küpeli, "Dış Politika Aracı Olarak Yaptırımlar: İran'a Uygulanan Yaptırımların Etkileri", **Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Cilt: 3, Sayı: 1, 2016, 97-135, p. 106.

⁸⁹⁴ Ali Vaez, "Iran's Nuclear Program and the Sanctions Siege", **Arms Control Today**, Vol. 43, No. 4, May 2013, pp. 8-14, p. 8-10; Ray Takeyh and Suzanne Maloney, "The self-limiting success of Iran sanctions", **International Affairs** (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 87, No. 6, November 2011, pp. 1297-1312, p. 1298.

⁸⁹⁵ Kemal İnat, "Türkiye'nin İran Politikası 2010", in Kemal İnat and Muhittin Ataman (Eds.), **Ortadoğu Yılığ**, İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, p. 13-18.

Turkey took new steps to solve the Iranian nuclear issue. It tried to solve this regional issue by diplomatic attempts as they were neighbouring two major states in the Middle East.⁸⁹⁶ In terms of Turkey's approach to the Iranian nuclear issue, Iran's nuclear weapons development was an important factor that would disrupt the balance of power between the two countries. Additionally, the failure to reach an agreement between Iran and the West and the possibility that the process would end up in war caused a regional unease that could lead to instability in the region. On the other hand, keeping Iran's nuclear development under international inspection and preventing the capacity of Iran's weapons development programs were more beneficial for Turkey in the context of the balance of power.⁸⁹⁷

Turkey and Brazil began negotiations with Iran. Realizing that their initiative was the only serious alternative to free Iran from new and very serious UN sanctions, the Tehran administration chose to respond to the calls of these two countries despite all their distrust towards Western countries' attitudes. Tehran declaration was signed in 2010 with the efforts of Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Brazilian President Lula da Silva. Also, by brokering the Iranian nuclear deal, these leaders managed to persuade Iranian leadership to sign the nuclear swap deal. However, the US saw it as a tool that was questioning their power policy against Iran. The US and other Western states, which were uncomfortable with this agreement, focused on a new sanction from the UN Security Council without giving it any chance.⁸⁹⁸ The Security Council decided to impose sanctions on Iran despite Turkey and Brazil's vote against Iran sanctions.⁸⁹⁹

The Iranian nuclear deal came to the fore at a time when a new president, Hassan Rouhani, was elected in Iran. Unlike Ahmadinejad, Hassan Rouhani, a more moderate and reformist leader, advocated a foreign policy that considered the realities of the international system rather than the policies of the previous periods that conflicted with the West.⁹⁰⁰ With a pragmatic attitude in foreign policy, Rouhani aimed to eliminate

⁸⁹⁶ Mustafa Yetim and Rıdvan Kalaycı, "Türkiye İran İlişkileri: "Sıfır Sorun Mu", Nükleer Sorun Mu?", **Akademik Orta Doğu**, Cilt 5, Sayı 2, 2011, p. 105.

⁸⁹⁷ Segah Tekin, "Tahran Deklarasyonu ve Sonrası: Türkiye-Brezilya Küresel Ortaklığının Yükselişi ve Gerileyişi", **Akademik Bakış**, Cilt 11, Sayı 23, Kış 2018, p. 59.

⁸⁹⁸ İnat, p. 23-30.

⁸⁹⁹ **The Telegram**, "UN hits Iran with new sanctions", 09 June 2010.

⁹⁰⁰ Bülent Aras and Ebru Turhan, "İran Nükleer Anlaşması, Ortadoğu da Güç Dengesi ve Türkiye", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 6, Sayı: 62, Mayıs-Haziran 2014, p. 18.

sanctions and ensure economic recovery in the country.⁹⁰¹ He posed to reduce the reactions of the international community in response to the ongoing uranium enrichment activities during the Ahmadinejad administration. With the Ahmadinejad administration, uranium enrichment was resumed in Iran.⁹⁰² On the contrary, the international community took a stand against Iran's possibility of obtaining nuclear weapons, and Western-Iranian relations deteriorated as well. The no-compromise attitude of the Bush administration against Iran and the continued decision of the Ahmadinejad era on nuclear activities led to the crisis in relations between the two countries. In the post-2005 period, which was the first period of Ahmadinejad's presidency, Iran's efforts in the field of nuclear energy were accelerated and therefore, it was the time in which international sanctions against Iran were most intensified. Iran's nuclear program was first met by the reaction of EU member states. However, negotiations between England, France and Germany and Iran failed. The US administration brought Iran's nuclear program to the agenda of the UNSC by highlighting the possibility of Iran's developing nuclear weapons capacity.⁹⁰³

Although Iran allowed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to watchdog the process, the crisis between Iran and the West could not be solved due to mutual distrust. The common feature of IAEA's reports on Iran was that the agency couldn't agree or couldn't reach a clear conclusion that nuclear work was peaceful. Although there was no clear evidence that Iran was making nuclear weapons in these reports, many countries took scepticism about Iran's nuclear program due to the fact that Iran's past activities were carried out confidentially and without the IAEA's knowledge. Accordingly, the support given to the sanctions increased in the international arena and Iran was tried to bring a line in which the nuclear issue could be negotiated in exchange for the removal of the sanctions. Maintaining the nuclear program for Iran became increasingly costly due to sanctions. Ongoing economic and political problems also paved the way for the election of a president in Iran such as Rouhani, who aimed to remove the economic sanctions and was willing to use the option of negotiations on the nuclear issue with the Western

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁹⁰² Mustafa Kibaroglu, "İran'ın Nükleer Programı ve Türkiye", **Bilge Strateji**, Cilt 5, Sayı 9, Güz 2013, ss. 1-8, p. 4.

⁹⁰³ Tekin, p. 57.

powers.⁹⁰⁴ Additionally, the Iranian government enabled to development of mutual relations with Russia and China.⁹⁰⁵

Iran primarily signed an interim agreement on November 24, 2013, as a result of the Geneva negotiations with the P5 + 1 countries. The parties reached an agreement on 20 January 2014 for the lifting of the sanctions. This provisional agreement can be described as the closest step in the West's negotiations with Iran since 2000.⁹⁰⁶ This step of Iran was considered a diplomatic success. At the same time, Iran tried to increase its nuclear capacity as a means of avoiding international sanctions and economic collapse. Today nuclear weapons are tools for psychological and ideological oppression that strengthen the parties in political negotiations rather than providing them with functional-military superiority. Iran's main problem in international politics was its ambition to become a legitimate and effective player. Thus, Iran strategically used the nuclear card to make extensive gains to realize its strategic goals. When this political storm between Iran and the US erupted, Iran was expanding its influence over anti-Americanism and sectarianism in the Middle East.⁹⁰⁷

Iran, which had the world's second-richest natural gas and third oil reserves on its territories, experienced economic difficulties due to the international embargo imposed in 2012. In connection with the economic difficulties, there was a considerable unemployment, high inflation and economic contraction in the country. Moreover, it welcomed a sharp decline in oil exports due to the international embargo, which affected its highly natural resources (energy)- based economy. In fact, the sanctions imposed by the international community were a “collective punishment” aimed specifically at the Iranian central bank and the energy sector. Accordingly, Iran was forbidden to sell its oil and gas in international markets and to use the international banking system.⁹⁰⁸ In other words, Iranian oil and gas could not reach the world markets and the international banking system was barred to be used by Iran. The US administration underlined the importance of the economic sanction on Iran as demonstrated in the following citation.

⁹⁰⁴ K peli, p. 124.

⁹⁰⁵ Takeyh and Maloney, p. 1310-1311.

⁹⁰⁶ K peli, p. 125.

⁹⁰⁷ Talha K se, ** ran N kleer Pro ramı ve Orta Do u Siyaseti: G   Dengeleri ve Diplomasinin  mkanları**,  stanbul: SETA Yayınları III, Birinci Baskı, A ustos 2008, p. 14.

⁹⁰⁸ Gregory Shank, “Anatomy of a Done Deal: The Fight over the Iran Nuclear Accord”, **Social Justice**, Vol. 42, No. 1 (139), 2015, pp. 1-18, p. 2.

“Because of our efforts, Iran is under greater pressure than ever before...Few thought that sanctions could have an immediate bite on the Iranian regime. They have, slowing the Iranian nuclear program and virtually grinding the Iranian economy to a halt in 2011. Many questioned whether we could hold our coalition together as we moved against Iran’s Central Bank and oil exports. But our friends in Europe and Asia and elsewhere are joining us. And in 2012, the Iranian government faces the prospect of even more crippling sanctions.”⁹⁰⁹

We also understand that the Obama administration was pleased with the consequences of the economic embargoes. The economic difficulties were expected to shape Iran’s political behaviours at home and abroad. Furthermore, they would maintain the embargo, an even stricter one, with others if Iran did not give up its nuclear program.

As noted earlier, the Rouhani government, after his perception of systemic stimuli and calculation for strategic interests, wanted to remove the economic sanctions and create a stable environment in the country. A stable economic recovery in the country would possibly strengthen the position of Rouhani in the country. Firstly, the over-conservative group still influential in the country does not want the rapprochement between Iran and the West. A good economic recovery could give Rouhani superiority over this group as he could gain public support in the country. Secondly, Iran had weakened its position as a regional actor through the embargo of the international community. International rapprochement with Western powers and internal economic empowerment could help Rouhani to increase Iranian global stance and regional power with the help of conventional means.⁹¹⁰ In other words, Iran, which had a strong economic structure and good relations with the West, could be more effective in the Middle East.

The state leaders may intend to make peace agreements or negotiations with their foes by considering their strategic interests, which elicits some unexpected political consequences. The Obama administration's desire for a nuclear agreement with Iran led to different reactions in the US⁹¹¹ and the regional countries. After the withdrawal of American troops from the Middle East, a power vacuum already developed in the region. In addition, the Arab Spring forced the power equilibrium in the region to change and the regional countries openly felt a surge of anxiety. Considering Iran as a threat/enemy,

⁹⁰⁹ “Fact Sheet: Sanctions Related to Iran”, **the White House**, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/31/fact-sheet-sanctions-related-iran>, (10 November 2019).

⁹¹⁰ Aras and Turhan, p. 19-20.

⁹¹¹ For detailed info see Gregory Shank, “Anatomy of a Done Deal: The Fight over the Iran Nuclear Accord”, **Social Justice**, Vol. 42, No. 1 (139), 2015, pp. 1-18.

Israel and the Gulf countries normally unaccepted the possible power change in the region. The leadership of these countries reacted against this development in the nuclear issue, which would be in favour of Iran and would help Iran strengthen itself in the regional order. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the Iranian nuclear deal a “stunning historic mistake” by claiming that Israel would try to block its nuclear ambitions.⁹¹² Although member states of the GCC had different approaches toward the nuclear deal among themselves, they were disturbed by the status quo change in the region. While Qatar, Oman and Kuwait expected a more open dialogue with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain perceived the Western-Iran rapprochement as a threat.⁹¹³ Saudi Arabia and Bahrain probably calculated that Iran could increase its influence in the region. The intensive presence of Shiite populations in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain made the leadership in these countries anxious about Iran’s intervening in these countries through Shiites. In other words, Iran could increase its influence on Shiites in the Gulf region, which both Riyadh and Manama experienced public protests during the Arab Spring era and managed to stop them by using immediate force on the rebels.

Turkey hadn’t adopted the decision taken by the international community to impose sanctions since the very beginning. It clearly supported the nuclear deal and tried to develop a mutually close relationship with the Gulf states. In doing so, Turkish leadership considered and calculated the potential of the Iranian-Western rapprochement and the possible effects of the solution towards the current security problems in the region.⁹¹⁴

There were various debates on the effects of the nuclear deal on Iran and the region. Some argued that the nuclear agreement would not change the power balance in favour of Iran or the agreement would eliminate the nuclear tension in the region or Iran's rapprochement with the West would positively influence the region and regional interactions.⁹¹⁵ On the other hand, some others also argued that the leadership in Tehran, who escaped from economic embargoes and solitary confinement, not only would have a

⁹¹² **Reuters**, “Israel’s Netanyahu calls Iran nuclear deal ‘historic’ mistake”, 14 July 2015. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran-israel-netanyahu/israels-netanyahu-calls-iran-nuclear-deal-historic-mistake-idUKKCN0PO0N720150714>. (16 June 2019).

⁹¹³ Aras and Turhan, p. 20.

⁹¹⁴ Aras and Turhan, p. 21.

⁹¹⁵ Aras and Turhan, p. 21.

stronger position to modernize their countries and develop their economies, but also they could better support allies and Shiite militias in the region.⁹¹⁶

According to the Provisional Nuclear Agreement (PNA) between the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and Germany and Iran, Tehran agreed to cooperate with the international community on its nuclear capacities, while the international community agreed to remove economic and military embargoes on Iran gradually. The Iranian nuclear agreement should be seen as a part of Obama strategy/doctrine, which aimed to reduce the burden on their shoulders by avoiding interferences and establishing good relations with traditional opponents and rivals. The Obama administration made a strategic warning to the Gulf countries and the traditional partners/allies in the region, especially Israel, in order to find solutions for the existing problems in the Middle East by forcing an important player/Iran to soften its position in the Middle East with the Nuclear agreement. However, Tehran had an important influence in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. Iran, which had a considerable influence over the Shiites in some countries in the region, could not be ignored. Thus, they felt that there was no satisfactory solution to the major problems in the Middle East without establishing a good relationship with the Iran regime. More specifically, the US leadership calculated that they had to cooperate with the regional power for a permanent solution in the field in solving the ongoing issues in Syria as well as removing the Daesh threat from the region.⁹¹⁷

The framework agreement signed by the related parties on 2 April 2015 was highly welcomed with enthusiasm in Iran despite some weak domestic opposition. Reformers in Iran expected that this process would give them strength in many ways, which meant that any success achieved internationally would create a wide space of political manoeuvres for the Rouhani administration in domestic politics against the conservatives.⁹¹⁸ After some postponements, finally, at a joint press release in Vienna on 14 July 2015, the Joint

⁹¹⁶ Tarık Oğuzlu, “İran Nükleer Anlaşması’nın Yeni Orta Doğu’ya Etkileri”, **Bilgesam Analiz/Orta Doğu**, No: 1243, Ağustos 2015, p. 1.

⁹¹⁷ Oğuzlu, p. 1-2.

⁹¹⁸ Cüneyt Doğrusözlü, “Nükleer Anlaşmasının İran İç Siyasetine Yansıması”, **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 7, Sayı: 68, Mayıs-Haziran 2015, p. 34.

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPO) was revealed by a consensus on the Iranian nuclear issue.⁹¹⁹

On the other hand, nuclear capacity building paved the way for Iran to strengthen itself against the West and get closer to the alignment of Russia and China. During this period, the Iranian administration developed its relations with Russia and China. Iran's nuclear energy policy included the US and Western powers on one side, while China and Russia, Iran's close allies, were on the other. While Western society opposed Iran's desire for nuclear energy, Russia and China supported Iran under their interests. Russia almost always continued to support Iran in the field of nuclear energy despite the long-standing pressures from the US and Israel.⁹²⁰ In doing so, it tried to increase its influence in the region vis-à-vis the US. However, the US protected its ally Israel against the nuclear threat while Israel wanted to maintain its position as the only country with nuclear weapons in the Middle East in terms of its security.⁹²¹

The main motives in Russia's relations with Iran were trade and military relations. In particular, Iran had various key agreements with Russia on air defence systems, long-range missiles, armoured military vehicles and submarine sales and their close cooperation still continued accordingly. Although Russia did not in principle oppose Iran's uranium enrichment; it argued that such a move was not in Iran's best interest, and therefore it needed to work on alternative solutions. At the same time, Russia proposed a formula on which nuclear fuel could be supplied by Russia. Thus, Russia approached the nuclear issue in its own interest or benefit whereas it wanted to take an active part in Iran's nuclear activities and to have a say in every stage of Iran's nuclear program. I contributed to the continuation of nuclear activities by reaching an agreement of \$ 800 million for the completion of Iran's Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant.⁹²²

China has significant energy-based economic relations with Iran. In 2004, it signed a \$ 70 billion oil and natural gas agreement, which was described as the “treaty of the century”, and strengthened the trade relationship with Iran. It is understandable that China, which needs stable energy sources for its increasing energy needs, will not be

⁹¹⁹ Küpeli, p. 125.

⁹²⁰ Zafer Akbaş and Adem Baş, “İran’ın Nükleer Enerji Politikası ve Yansımaları”, *History Studies*, 5:2, A Tribute to Prof. Dr. Halil İNALCIK, P. 21-44, March, 2013, p. 36-37.

⁹²¹ Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Orta Doğu Siyaseti: Güç Dengeleri ve Diplomasinin İmkanları*, p. 51.

⁹²² Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Orta Doğu Siyaseti: Güç Dengeleri ve Diplomasinin İmkanları*, p. 48-49.

pleased with the instability in Iran. In addition to trade relations, China has good relations with Iran in terms of military technology and arms sales.⁹²³

The fact that Iran couldn't produce nuclear weapons in the short and medium-term due to the nuclear agreement/international constraints could be seen as a relaxing result for the Gulf countries. A nuclear-armed Iran could affect changing the balance of power in the region in its favour as these neighbouring countries could have the disadvantage of nuclear weapons against Iran.⁹²⁴ The US and EU troika countries perceived Iran's increasing relative power, primarily in energy and nuclear fields and position in the system as a threat to their strategic interests. To clarify it, they wanted to block Iran's political, military and energy hegemony initiatives in the Middle East because access to nuclear weapons was seen as the most important instrument for Iran to achieve this hegemony. Iran's nuclear weapons production would provide it with both military and political superiority as well as moral and psychological superiority in the region.⁹²⁵ On the other hand, other regional actors focused on Iranian political influence in the region and recalculated their political positions and strategies towards the regional environment in the post-nuclear deal because they felt uncomfortable with Iran's influence.⁹²⁶

While the Gulf states shared the concern that Iran would expand its regional influence by primarily economic its economic gains and they would face a strengthened Iran in the system, Qatar, Oman and Dubai Emirates were careful to show a more moderate and closer attitude towards Iran with the political calculation that the nuclear agreement would help to reduce regional tension. Oman did not see the Tehran administration's policies as a threat to its internal stability and wanted to have good relations with its neighbour, which shares the Strait of Hormuz. Even within the United Arab Emirates, it is not surprising that Dubai and the Abu Dhabi Emirates had different attitudes towards Iran.⁹²⁷ Qatar also departed from the KSA- led camp on the nuclear issue because both Qatar and Iran shared the same gas field in the Gulf. They strategically tried to be in good relations

⁹²³ Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Orta Doğu Siyaseti: Güç Dengeleri ve Diplomasinin İmkanları*, p. 50.

⁹²⁴ Hasan B. Yalçın, "İran Nükleer Müzakereleri Kim, Neyi, Neden ve Nasıl Aldı?", *Analiz, İstanbul: SETA*, 2015, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20150630141034_iran-nukleer-muzakereleri-pdf.pdf, p. 20, (28 May 2019).

⁹²⁵ Köse, *İran Nükleer Programı ve Orta Doğu Siyaseti: Güç Dengeleri ve Diplomasinin İmkanları*, p. 47.

⁹²⁶ Talha Köse, "İran Nükleer Mutabakatının Muhtemel Bölgesel Sonuçları", *SETA Perspektif*, Sayı: 110, Temmuz 2015, p. 2.

⁹²⁷ Abdullah Erboğa, "Bölgesel Dönüşüm Süreci ve Körfez Güvenliği", *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Cilt: 3, Sayı: 1, 2016, 9-38, p. 19.

in the gas field which was called South Pars by Tehran and North Field by Doha so that they both could produce at a maximum level.⁹²⁸

Iran's intensive efforts to create spheres of influence on Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain have yielded short-term results in terms of foreign policy. However, it should be kept in mind that a Gulf coalition force that could be regarded as a niche in the history of the Middle East in terms of its security scope was formed against Iran's threat. In the face of the Iranian-aligned Houthis coup in Yemen in 2014, Gulf countries used their military muscle. It would be appropriate to see it as a response to the ongoing geopolitical power struggle with Iran after the nuclear deal. Yemen was an area for the Gulf countries to respond to the perceived Iranian threat by creating an important step to seize psychological superiority over other areas of conflict in the region. The Riyadh administration tried to compensate for its failure to produce an answer to Iran in the security dilemma by allocating extraordinary figures to conventional armament and defence expenditures and thus they showed its deterrence. In the context of security concerns, the Gulf countries increased their defence spending. More notably, even though they wanted to diversify their arms suppliers, which can be read as a reaction to the US policy on the nuclear deal, they paid attention not to break the strategic relations with the USA.⁹²⁹

NCR considers the leaders' perceptions and calculations to explain the states' foreign policy choices.⁹³⁰ US President Trump perceived Iranian nuclear activities as a threat to the US strategic interests. In this direction, he announced withdrawal from the Obama administration's Iranian nuclear agreement officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPO) in 2018.⁹³¹ Trump evaluated the agreement as "the worst ever" agreement negotiated by the US authority and repeatedly called it "insane and ridiculous". He decided to change the US policy toward the agreement by replacing tougher economic sanctions on the Iranian regime. Also, he believed that Iran exploited the nuclear

⁹²⁸ **Iran Times**, "Qatar offers to help Iran get out its gas", 03 January 2014, <http://iran-times.com/qatar-offers-to-help-iran-get-out-its-gas/>, (16 January 2019).; Boussois, p. 223-225.

⁹²⁹ Erboğa, "Bölgesel Dönüşüm Süreci ve Körfez Güvenliği", p. 25-33.

⁹³⁰ Michiel Foulon, "Neoclassical Realism: Challengers and Bridging Identities", p. 641

⁹³¹ **BBC News**, "ABD Başkanı Trump İran nükleer anlaşmasından çekildiklerini açıkladı", 08 May 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-44033357>, (07 June 2019).

agreement to maintain its nuclear activities. He expressed his dissatisfaction about it in the following citation.

“The so-called Iran deal was supposed to protect the United States and our allies from the lunacy of an Iranian nuclear bomb, a weapon that will only endanger the survival of the Iranian regime...In fact, the deal allowed Iran to continue enriching uranium and over time reach the brink of a nuclear blackout... today we have definitive proof that this Iranian promise was a lie.”⁹³²

The United Kingdom, France and Germany, which had signed the agreement respectively, couldn't succeed in discouraging the Trump administration, who often threatened to cancel the agreement, though they did hard work. The Trump administration initiated a challenge to isolate Tehran economically and push European countries to avoid any trading contacts with Iran.⁹³³ French President Emmanuel Macron regretted the US decision and underlined that the mission of France and its European allies was to save the Iranian nuclear deal.⁹³⁴ In line with this, the European leaders agreed to maintain their commitments to the Iran nuclear agreement.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a written statement that he was deeply concerned that the US would withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and would begin to re-impose sanctions. Guterres, who called the parties to fulfil their commitments and also called all member states to support the nuclear deal. Guterres stressed that the agreement with Iran was a great success in nuclear disarmament and diplomacy and contributes to international peace and security.⁹³⁵ US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a written statement by underlying that they would be working with their allies to find a real, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Iranian threat. By doing so, they tried to put pressure on Iran to end its nuclear efforts. Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon described Trump's decision as a historic action for the stability of the Middle East. Ambassador Danon said that a united movement against the Iranian regime that promoted terrorism and instigated instability would put an end to the Iranian

⁹³² Jon Rogers and Aletha Adu, “The Trump Hand Why did Donald Trump pull out of Iran nuclear deal and what sanctions are the US reinstating?”, **the Sun**, 16 May 2019. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6231230/why-donald-trump-out-iran-nuclear-deal/>. (07 June 2019).

⁹³³ Julian Borger and Patrick Wintour, “Donald Trump tells Iran ‘call me’ over lifting sanctions”, **the Guardian**, 09 March 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/09/eu-rejects-iran-two-month-ultimatum-on-nuclear-deal>, (08 June 2019).

⁹³⁴ **BBC News**, “ABD Başkanı Trump İran nükleer anlaşmasından çekildiklerini açıkladı”, 08 March 2018.

⁹³⁵ **CNN Türk**, “Trump anlaşmayı iptal etti, birçok ülke tepki gösterdi”, 09 May 2018. <https://www.cnntrk.com/turkiye/trump-anlasmayi-iptal-etti-bircok-ulke-tepki-gosterdi?page=1>. (07 June 2019).

aggression that threatens our region and the entire international community.⁹³⁶ From this perspective, the Israeli leadership was satisfied with the recent American decision.⁹³⁷

Turkey evaluated the US decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran as “an unfortunate step”. In a similar way, Russia described the US decision to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as “deep disappointment”. Russian Foreign Ministry recalled that the Iranian nuclear deal was multilateral and ratified by United Nations Security Council Resolution No.2231 by stressing that it was open to active political dialogue and bilateral cooperation with other participating countries in the agreement and Iran.⁹³⁸

In addition, there was a political challenge between the US and Iran on the US decision to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear deal. The US declared Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) a terrorist organization. John Bolton and Mike Pompeo were effective in the designation of the Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist group. On the other hand, Iran declared the American troops in the Middle East as terrorists and the US government as a sponsor state of terrorism.⁹³⁹ Additionally, Iranian President Rouhani warned the Trump administration that they would regret it if they withdrew the agreement.⁹⁴⁰

The leaders consider the domestic constraints on their political behaviours. Thus, Trump won the hearts of his own electorate at the same time as he stepped down from the Iranian nuclear deal.⁹⁴¹ It was claimed that Trump's messages to the public before her election were consistent with her post-election practices and that such a step had been taken in view of these promises. It was also believed that Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Iranian Nuclear Accord was to set up a new agreement or lay the groundwork for countries with the potential to produce medium-range nuclear missiles.⁹⁴² The US also sent the Aircraft Carrier to the Gulf region and gave the message that they were ready for war. The pressure of US policy on Iran left Iranian leadership in a difficult position

⁹³⁶ **BBC News**, “ABD Başkanı Trump İran nükleer anlaşmasından çekildiklerini açıkladı”.

⁹³⁷ Alexander Fulbright, “In recording, Netanyahu boasts Israel convinced Trump to quit Iran nuclear deal”, **the Times of Israel**, 17 July 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-recording-netanyahu-boasts-israel-convinced-trump-to-quit-iran-nuclear-deal/>, (16 June 2019).

⁹³⁸ **CNN Türk**, “Trump anlaşmayı iptal etti, birçok ülke tepki gösterdi”, 09 May 2018.

⁹³⁹ Edward Wong, “Citing Iranian Threat, U.S. Sends Carrier Group and Bombers to Persian Gulf”, **the New York Times**, 05 May 2019.

⁹⁴⁰ **BBC News**, “ABD Başkanı Trump İran nükleer anlaşmasından çekildiklerini açıkladı”, 08 March 2018.

⁹⁴¹ Hasan Basri Yalçın, “Nükleer Anlaşma iptal”, **Takvim**, 13 May 2018. <https://www.takvim.com.tr/yazarlar/hasan-basri-yalcin/2018/05/13/nukleer-anlasma-iptal>, (07 June 2019).

⁹⁴² Gülsüm İncekaya, “Trump’ın hedefi, yeni bir nükleer anlaşma yapmak”, **Anadolu Agency**, 08 February 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/trumpin-hedefi-yeni-bir-nukleer-anlasma-yapmak/1387024>. (07 June 2019).

economically and politically towards the public.⁹⁴³ Conversely, it pleased the US allies in the Gulf. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) supported US President Trump's decision to leave Iran's nuclear deal and to reinforce economic sanctions against Iran suspended in 2015. The KSA and its regional allies probably benefit from this regional environment and try to weaken their traditional rival Iran in the system.

The tension between the US and Iran was re-escalated by the deployment of a US aircraft carrier to the region and US executives' statements for possible re-sanctions on Iran.⁹⁴⁴ John R. Bolton as the US national security adviser underscored that the deployment of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and air force bombers to the Gulf meant an open message to the Iranian regime that any attack on US interests or those of their allies would be met with merciless force.⁹⁴⁵ It proves that the Trump administration took a hard-line policy against the Iranian regime, which was more different than the Obama administration. While the US was giving the image of a possible war preparation on the Gulf and efforts were made to make progress towards the joint action of Gulf countries against Iran, the statements from the US administration tried to change the course. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that they would engage with the Iranian regime without any pre-conditions about the Iranian nuclear programme by adding that they wanted to see Iran behaving like "a normal nation".⁹⁴⁶ In his statement, Pompeo gave the image that the relations between the two countries could be overcome by using diplomatic channels. In another word, the US policy of "maximum pressure on Iran", which was expected to force Iranians to rise against the Islamic Republic and push it to "act pragmatically", was put aside for a while, and Iran was driven to come to the negotiating table with the US after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's statement that Iran would not negotiate with the US despite Rouhani's positive approach to the talks if the

⁹⁴³ Mustafa Caner, "İran'ın nükleer anlaşmaya vedası ve muhtemel sonuçları", **Sabah**, 11 May 2019. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/mustafa-caner/2019/05/11/iranin-nukleer-anlasmaya-vedasi-ve-muhtemel-sonuclari>. (28 May 2019).

⁹⁴⁴ David E. Sanger et al., "New Tensions With Iran Threaten Nuclear Deal and, White House Says, U.S. Troops", **the New York Times**, 06 March 2019; **BBC News**, "Iran nuclear deal: Trump raises pressure with sanctions on metals", 08 March 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48204646>. (17 June 2019).

⁹⁴⁵ Wong, "Citing Iranian Threat, U.S. Sends Carrier Group and Bombers to Persian Gulf".

⁹⁴⁶ David Brunnstrom and John Revill, "US prepared to talk to Iran without 'pre-conditions', Iran sees "word-play", **Reuters**, 02 March 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-switzerland/us-prepared-to-engage-with-iran-without-pre-conditions-pompeo-idUSKCN1T30DT>, (08 June 2019).

US sanctions were lifted.⁹⁴⁷ Despite the strategic manoeuvres by the US and Iran, the attacks on oil assets in the Gulf region re-fuelled the ongoing tension and both were constrained to re-negotiate the regional issues.

Riyadh's decision-makers perceived the devastating attacks on their oil assets as a threat to their national security and economic interests and called regional powers for emergency summits. Saudi leadership hosted three summits which had a key goal of "confront and isolate Iran" in the country. At the summit of the GGC, the Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Riyadh simply tried to put diplomatic pressure on Tehran. The member states took a final decision to condemn Iranian interference in Arab affairs. The KSA-led conservative moderate camp emerged more powerful as there was no other power centre. Therefore, some Arab circles thought that Saudi Arabia posed a central power in the Arab and Islamic world. Although Saudi Arabia faced many international and regional challenges such as Jamal Khashoggi murder, it tried to strengthen its position and influence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Arab League (AL) and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) by focusing on the Iranian threat. In other words, Saudi leadership tried to unite the Arabs against the Iranian threat.⁹⁴⁸

Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was surprisingly invited to attend the emergency Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in Mecca on May 30, 2019, although the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates' blockade on Qatar was still in progress.⁹⁴⁹ Qatar's foreign minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani put his country's reservations on the final statements by claiming that the Saudis had imposed pre-prepared final statements on the attendees to the summits.⁹⁵⁰ While the states at the two summits which were the Gulf and Arab summits primarily focused on the Iranian threat, the leaders at the Islamic Summit of the

⁹⁴⁷ Hassan Ahmadian, "Why Trump's strategy against Iran is likely to fail", **Aljazeera**, 05 March 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/trump-strategy-iran-fail-190603150853723.html>. (08 June 2019).

⁹⁴⁸ Marwan Bishara, "Saudi Arabia and Iran after the summits of discontent", **Aljazeera**, 04 June 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/saudi-arabia-iran-summits-discontent-190604101807753.html>, (08 June 2019).

⁹⁴⁹ **Al Jazeera**, "Saudi king invites Qatar's emir to GCC summit in Mecca", 27 May 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/saudi-king-invites-qatar-emir-gcc-summit-mecca-190526203906436.html>, (09 June 2019).

⁹⁵⁰ Bishara, "Saudi Arabia and Iran after the summits of discontent".

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) focused on the Palestinian cause, terrorism combat under the theme “Makkah: Hand in Hand toward the Future”.⁹⁵¹

King Salman Ibn Abdul Aziz stated that Palestine was their main cause and they would continue the political struggle until the Palestinians regained their rights from Israel. In fact, Makkah summits aimed to send a message of Arab unity and solidarity against the actors who threatened regional security and stability. In other words, the Arab world tried to ensure a unified Arab stance against the developments in the region.⁹⁵² They condemned the attacks by the Iran-aligned Houthi militias in Yemen. The final communique of the GCC Summit underlined that Tehran should respect the international laws and stop supporting, arming and funding the Houthis in Yemen and fuelling sectarian disputes. The GCC Summit condemned the attacks on four oil tankers in UAE’S regional waters and drone attacks on Saudi oil pumping stations as well. The GCC leaders agreed to continue the security agreements and alliance building with the USA for the regional stability and security.”⁹⁵³

Saudi King Salman claimed that Iran’s development of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities had been threatening regional and international security.⁹⁵⁴ Through this perspective, they tried to link the attack on Saudi oil facilities and the Houthis as Iranian proxy militia force. They claimed that Iran-backed militia forces in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon threatened the stability and security of the region. King Salman showed his determination to stand against Iran’s threat by sharing the responsibility with the western partners. Then, Saudi Arabia held the Mecca summits while there was rising tension between Iran and the US.⁹⁵⁵ Also, they acted in the line with their ally US. The National Security Adviser John Bolton had warned the Iranian regime during a meeting with UAE leaders in Abu Dhabi in May 2019. Both Riyadh and Washington wanted Iran to act like a responsible member of the international community or it would face the consequences

⁹⁵¹ Ramadan Al Sherbini, “Makkah Islamic summit tackles key issues”, **Gulf News**, 01 June 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/makkah-islamic-summit-tackles-key-issues-1.1559360179888>. (09 June 2019).

⁹⁵² **Gulf News**, “Makkah summit: A message of unity to achieve security, peace”, 31 March 2019.

⁹⁵³ **Gulf News**, “GCC Summit in Makkah condemns ‘acts of sabotage’ on ships near UAE”, 31 March 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/gcc-summit-in-makkah-condemns-acts-of-sabotage-on-ships-near-uae-1.1559269163860>. (09 June 2019).

⁹⁵⁴ **Al Arabiya**, “Saudi King Salman at GCC Summit: Iran actions threaten regional, global security”, 31 May 2019. <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2019/05/31/GCC-Summit-kicks-off-in-Mecca.html>, (09 June 2019).

⁹⁵⁵ Ramadan Al Sherbini, “Saudi king urges world to rein in Iran”, **Gulf News**, 31 May 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/saudi-king-urges-world-to-rein-in-iran-1.1559250045875>, (09 June 2019).

of the international community's strong response.⁹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Tehran refused the accusations of Riyadh.

On the other hand, Qatari leadership was eager to develop mutual relations with Iran in all fields and the Emir favoured the negotiations with Iran to ease the tension in the Gulf region. Also, President Rouhani emphasized that they were willing to strengthen relations with Qatar.⁹⁵⁷ In this respect, we can analyse that Qatari leadership tried to balance the KSA as they were aware of their geo-position and proximate threat to its interests (security consideration).

On May 12, 2019, US officials blamed the Tehran administration for the four oil tankers in the UAE's territorial waters without providing full evidence to support their claims in connection with the attacks. The US also perceived the attack as part of a larger "campaign" endorsed by Iranian leaders against the US and its allies.⁹⁵⁸ On 6 June 2019, a new attack on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman mobilized the US Navy. The Norwegian-owned Front Altair and the Japanese-owned Kokuka Courageous, which were carrying oil to Singapore and Thailand, were damaged and their crews had to be evacuated.⁹⁵⁹ The US authority blamed Iran for the attack on two tankers in the Gulf of Oman.⁹⁶⁰ They issued footage of an Iranian gunboat claiming that it had collected unexploded limpet mines from an attacked tanker ship in the Gulf of Oman. More specifically, Trump blamed Iran by claiming that Iran was written all over the limpet mine. Also, Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan underscored that Iran posed a threat to international peace and freedom of navigation in international seas.⁹⁶¹ On the other hand, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Jawad Zarif accused the US of "sabotage diplomacy" and described it as part of "efforts to conceal economic terror".⁹⁶²

⁹⁵⁶ **Gulf News**, "Makkah summits send a strong message to Iran", 31 May 2019.

⁹⁵⁷ **Al Jazeera**, "Iran: Rouhani welcomes developing relations with Qatar", 06 June 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/iran-rouhani-welcomes-developing-relations-qatar-190605154738749.html>. (08 June 2019).

⁹⁵⁸ **BBC News Türkçe**, "ABD Ulusal Güvenlik Danışmanı Bolton: BAE açıklarında tankerlerin çarptığı mayınlar çok büyük olasılıkla İran'ın", 29 May 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-48445371>, (15 June 2019).

⁹⁵⁹ **BBC News Türkçe**, "Trump: ABD'nin videosu Umman Körfezi'ndeki tanker saldırılarını İran'ın düzenlediğini gösteriyor", 14 June 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-48621604>, (15 June 2019).

⁹⁶⁰ Hakan Çopur, "Trump'a göre tanker saldırılarından İran sorumlu", **Anadolu Ajansı**, 14 June 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/trumpa-gore-tanker-saldirilarindan-iran-sorumlu/1504715>. (15 June 2019).

⁹⁶¹ Lucas Tomlinson and Adam Shaw, "Trump blames Tehran for Gulf tanker attacks after Navy releases video showing Iranian boat removing unexploded mine", **Fox News**, 14 June 2019.

⁹⁶² Çopur, "Trump'a göre tanker saldırılarından İran sorumlu", **Anadolu Ajansı**, 14 June 2019; **BBC News Türkçe**, "Trump: ABD'nin videosu Umman Körfezi'ndeki tanker saldırılarını İran'ın düzenlediğini gösteriyor", 14 June 2019; **Al Jazeera**, "Iran FM Zarif: US sanctions are 'economic terrorism'", 04 March 2019.

China's President Xi Jinping and Iran's President Hassan Rouhani met at a summit in Kyrgyzstan and Beijing reconfirmed that they were willing to strengthen their mutual ties with Iran⁹⁶³ by following the policy of "no matter how the situation changes,"⁹⁶⁴ while Rouhani was accusing the Trump administration of carrying out an aggressive foreign policy against the Iranian regime.⁹⁶⁵ China took a tough stance against the Trump Administration in the context of the tense relation between Iran and the US because it was endeavoured to be squeezed on trade by the US's imposing additional tariffs on \$325 billion of Chinese exports to the US.⁹⁶⁶ On the other hand, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made an effort to ease the increasing tension between Iran and the US including the Gulf states. He paid a diplomatic visit to Iran to find a solution for the issue between Iran and the US.⁹⁶⁷

Qatar tried to ease the increasing tension between the US and Iran. It was clearly understood from Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani's statement below:

"Right now, I believe it's like a stalemate. What we are concerned about is any miscalculation by any of the parties, either direct or indirect parties...Any dispute should end with a settlement: settlement means compromises by both parties and we hope this happens sooner rather than later because the longer it takes, the more tension it creates in the region and will lead to more and more problems and conflicts."⁹⁶⁸

Furthermore, Qatar tried to mediate between the two states. The Qatari political leadership respected the US policy but they stressed that they had their own assessment.⁹⁶⁹ Additionally, they openly declared that they had reservations about the statements on Iran at the summits initiated by Saudi Arabia.⁹⁷⁰ This response shows that Qatar tried to pursue an independent policy and safeguard its regional interests.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2019/05/iran-fm-zarif-sanctions-economic-terrorism-190503102310913.html> , (17 July 2019).

⁹⁶³ Edmund DeMarche, "China vows to develop ties with Iran after attack on tankers", **Fox News**, 14 June 2019.

⁹⁶⁴ **Reuters**, "Xi says China will promote steady ties with Iran", 14 June 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-attacks/xi-says-china-will-promote-steady-ties-with-iran-idUSKCN1TF0IH?il=0>, (15 June 2019).

⁹⁶⁵ Mikelionis, "Trump not 'worthy' of response, Iran's supreme leader says as Japan's Abe tries to ease tension".

⁹⁶⁶ DeMarche.

⁹⁶⁷ Mikelionis.

⁹⁶⁸ Andrew England, "Qatar warns US-Iran stalemate could trigger conflict", **Financial Times**, 9 June 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/c8b300fa-8ae5-11e9-a1c1-51bf8f989972> , (17 June 2019).

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁰ **Reuters**, "Qatar says it has reservations about the Arab statements on Iran", 02 June 2019.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring generated threats and/or opportunities for the regional states including Qatar. Although this regional challenge devastated some long-standing regimes such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and weakened some others such as Syria and Morocco, the regional states reconsidered their own security and interests primarily to survive in an anarchic and self-help system. The Qatari leadership, who enjoyed stability at home and tried to benefit from the regional changes in the region managed to form the new alliances as well as maintaining the traditional ones. In fact, there are three main allied camps in the region with different political agendas. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)-led camp favoured the status quo in the states in transition and attempted to ensure the survival of their regime and maintain the stability in the Gulf against the regional challenges. Iran- led camp tried to expand its regional influence to the regional states where the Shia population was dense. TR and QA- led camp endorsed the public uprisings and Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the region with its own national resources including Doha based Al Jazeera. The Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates initially appeared to gain considerable ruling power in the region and helped Qatar's leading role in the transition countries.

In Libya, Qatar supported the anti-government forces with political, military, financial capabilities as well as joining the NATO-led military operation with its military capabilities.⁹⁷¹ However, a stable administration couldn't be established in the country after the NATO-led operation. The militia groups fought against each other to gain more ruling power in ruling the country. At last, two separate governments emerged in Libyan domestic politics and struggled for ruling power in the country. TR and QA- led camp backed the UN-recognised Tripoli government in western Libya while the KSA- led camp, predominantly the UAE and Egypt, backed General Haftar's Tobruk government in eastern Libya.

In Bahrain and Yemen, Qatar allied with the KSA and the other GGC members. The KSA- led Gulf coalition forces interfered to end the popular protests in Bahrain and protected the al-Khalifa regime. In Yemen, Qatar changed its political attitude towards the Saleh regime and joined the KSA to ease the tension in the country. The GGC

⁹⁷¹ Nardulli, p. 344-345.

launched a new plan and a Provisional Government under the rule of President Hadi. The US also gave support to the Hadi government. When President Hadi lost ground against the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in the country, the KSA- led Gulf coalition forces and the US militarily intervened in Yemen. Yet, the external forces neither solved the political problems nor stopped the clashes in the country.

In Syria, Qatar allied with Turkey and Saudi Arabia to remove the Bashar al-Assad regime. Initially, they tried to negotiate with the regime about the increasing tension and violence in the country. However, President Assad disregarded their warnings and maintained the violence in Syria. In other words, his misperception of the systemic stimuli and miscalculation of the regional and domestic environment caused a chaotic environment and a power void. At this point, TR and QA- led camp backed the Syrian opposition groups to liberate the country and ensure security in the region.

In 2014, Russia became another dominant actor in Syria and balanced the US and its allies. It allied with Iran and the Syrian regime to fight against Daesh, the terrorist group and the anti-regime forces. Conversely, the US favoured the Syrian opposition groups as well as the terrorist groups PYD/YPG. The US gave air support to its regional allies by launching many airstrikes but didn't deploy significant land troops to the war field. In fact, the US withdrew its troops from the Middle East in 2011 due to the high military cost and loss of prestige. After the Arab Spring, the Trump administration almost followed the Obama Doctrine on the Middle East policy except from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. President Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal signed by the Obama government. After the dissolution of the deal, a new tension was initiated between the US and Iran. The US decision turned to a regional and international debate. Qatar strategically remained neutral in the Iranian nuclear issue as it shared the rich gas field with Iran. Given this background, the regional and international actors are highly sensitive to the imminent and proximate threats as well as the regional dynamics.

In this chapter, I analysed Qatar's political stance and alliances with regional and international actors against regional changes after the Arab Spring. The next chapter will deal with the domestic factors that affect Qatar's foreign policy behaviours.

CHAPTER 4: EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC-LEVEL INTERVENING VARIABLES ON QATAR'S DECISION MAKING AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

NCR combines the systemic and domestic determinants of foreign policy to demonstrate their roles in conducting political responses.⁹⁷² More specifically, the neoclassical realists underline the significance of the domestic-level intervening variables in determining a foreign policy as demonstrated in the following citation.

“While policy makers construct policy to fit systemic stimuli, policy selection is often influenced by domestic-level intervening variables, including: leader images that interfere with accurate perception; strategic culture, which shapes all aspects of state responses; state-society relations, which affect the state's ability to enact and implement decisions; and domestic political institutions, which can either enable or constrain state leaders when they face societal opposition to policy selection or implementation.”⁹⁷³

Systemic pressures should be filtered through domestic intervening variables (mainly policy-makers/state leaders) to construct an optimal foreign policy.⁹⁷⁴ In this regard, their perception and worldview heavily influence their policy preferences. They read the systemic pressure, make necessary preparations and respond to the threats and opportunities properly by extracting and mobilizing the state power. In Qatar, the political power is centralized by a handful of political elites, which have a greater autonomy of policy preferences than the other states in the system. They used the domestic institutions and resources successfully against the regional challenges after the Arab Spring.

During the restrictive environment during the Arab Spring uprisings, the state leaders held a significant position, the supremacy indeed, over the institutions in the region.⁹⁷⁵ From a different perspective, the state leaders' monopoly on domestic institutions is typically seen in the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East.⁹⁷⁶ More notably, the leaders in Qatar, similar to all Gulf monarchies, sought to design and control the domestic institutions by allying with the tribal families and social forces in the country to project their ruling

⁹⁷² Jacek Wieclawski, “Neoclassical Realism and the Crisis of the Realist Paradigm in Contemporary International Relations”, *Mysl Ekonomiczna I Polityczna*, No. 2(57), 2017, pp. 192-219, p. 200.

⁹⁷³ Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 34.

⁹⁷⁴ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay”, p. 198.

⁹⁷⁵ Kamrava, *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf*, p. 3.

⁹⁷⁶ Mehran Kamrava, “Preserving Non-Democracies: Leaders and Institutions in the Middle East”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 46:2, 2010, 251-270.

power, consolidate their legitimacy of the regime and provide the citizens' loyalty.⁹⁷⁷ Based on this discussion, the impact of domestic factors on the FPEs' behaviours, decision-making and policy implementation in Qatar needs to be assessed in the policymaking process.

The state's strategic culture as another determinant shapes the decision-making process of the state against the challenges. Policymakers are greatly influenced by the strategic culture/collective acceptance in the country for their policy choices.⁹⁷⁸ In other words, it forces them to shape their foreign policy behaviours. The strategic culture in Qatar heavily affected the Qatari leadership in their political responses towards the challenges and opportunities during the Arab Spring and Qatar crises.

The state-society relationship, another key domestic level variable, affects the ability of the individual state to make decisions and implement policy. It is expected that the state serves its citizens and meet their needs and expectations. Conversely, the civil societies in the Middle Eastern states face different political and economic constraints which minimize their influence on domestic politics.⁹⁷⁹ Moreover, the state leaders exploit the state capabilities on the society and increase their strengths while weakening the impact of the civil society and eliminating societal rights including political participation and organisations. Thus, they damage the socio-political cohesion for their desire to maintain their monopoly on governance.⁹⁸⁰

On the other hand, Qatar provided constitutional rights, services, and security to its nationals via domestic institutions. Additionally, it shared the rich hydrocarbon revenues with the nationals to increase their wealth and welfare. The functions of domestic institutions in Qatar are very substantial in the distribution of wealth and welfare. The political and economic supports to the citizens/nationals subsequently create social coherence in the society. In the states where there is social coherence, the citizens trust and support the state and the government. More importantly, a social coherence-

⁹⁷⁷ Adham Saouli, "States and state-building in the Middle East", in Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine K. Gani (Eds.), **The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System**, London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2020, p. 46-47.

⁹⁷⁸ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 67.

⁹⁷⁹ Eberhard Kienle, "Civil Society in the Middle East", in Michael Edwards (Ed.), **The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society**, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 155-156.

⁹⁸⁰ Yannis A. Stivachtis, "Political (In) Security in the Middle East", in Bettina Koch and Yannis A. Stivachtis (Eds.), **Regional Security in the Middle East: Sectors, Variables and Issues**, Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2019, p. 25-26.

dominated environment in a country helps the government to conduct their policies. To put it concretely, the Qatari leadership benefited from the social coherence in the country during the Arab Spring. Relying on their domestic environment, they easily extracted and mobilized the state power to counter the regional challenge. At last, they augmented their influence in the transition countries.

Consequently, this chapter examines domestic-level intervening variables under the subtitles as leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions. Given the domestic level intervening variables I mainly aim to discuss the effects of the domestic-level variables on the decision-making as well as the key domestic actors in the political mechanism in Qatar from the NCR perspective.

4.1. Leader Images

The neoclassical realists underline the importance of the state leaders/the FPEs and leader images in the foreign policy choices. As top political figures and representatives of the state authority, they retain critical positions in the state administration. Thus, they bear the responsibility to safeguard national security and national interests.⁹⁸¹ Likewise, the leaders have the responsibility for reading systemic pressure, making provisions and finally responding to threats and opportunities through the components of their images.⁹⁸² In line with this understanding, based on their own images, the leaders decipher the interactions in the system, immediately translate them as a threat or an opportunity and finally carve out the foreign policy behaviours to protect the interests of their state.⁹⁸³

Against this theoretical background, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, with his visionary approach and political ambitions such as regional leadership, international recognition and independent foreign policy, tried to raise Qatar's position in regional and international politics. He appointed his ruling team, technocrats and advisors, from the young people who had social and political ideas from the west. With their support to the governance, he desired to create an international image based on a liberal and progressive

⁹⁸¹ Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, p. 56.

⁹⁸² Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 62.

⁹⁸³ Gustav Meibauer, "Interests, ideas, and the study of state behaviour in neoclassical realism", **Review of International Studies**, 46:1, 20-36, 2020, p. 27.

state in the region.⁹⁸⁴ In line with this perspective, he initiated many reforms and programmes in the country.⁹⁸⁵

Emir Hamad perceived the Arab Spring uprisings as an opportunity to enlarge Qatar's influence and enhance its image in the region.⁹⁸⁶ He steered Qatari foreign policy in this direction. Under the leadership of Emir Hamad, Qatar preferred the Islamists, especially the MB, to build an alliance during the Arab Spring. Based on this, Qatar backed the MB and its affiliates to strengthen their position and gain weight in the regional politics in the transition countries.⁹⁸⁷ In return, the Qatari leadership desired to realize their regional ambitions such as regional leadership and autonomous position in the regional and international politics and leverage Qatar's position in the system.⁹⁸⁸ In line with this understanding, the Qatari leadership personally threw their support behind the MB in the context of its own regional interests and pragmatic approach.

When we have a deeper look at the MB resilience in Qatar and the Middle East, we can understand the historical ties between Qatar and the MB as well. The political and religious structure in the Arab world played an important role to accommodate the MB/the Islamists in the region. They largely leaned the individuals who seized the opportunity to take their positions in the politics of the Gulf monarchies, primarily the KSA, the UAE and Qatar.⁹⁸⁹ These neighbouring countries, which had tribal societies, welcomed the exiled MB members without seeing any risk for their political system (at least at the beginning) in the 1960s. Due to the fact that the tribes were the only existing units to resist the governments in these countries in the perception of the state leaders, they usually focused on these units for their regime security at home. However, the Arab countries

⁹⁸⁴ Pulliam, p. 3-4.

⁹⁸⁵ Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, "Political Reform in the Gulf: The Case of Qatar", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 36, No. 4, October 2000, pp. 47-62, p. 53; Jocelyn Sage Mitchell and Leslie A. Pal, "Policy-Making in Qatar: The Macro-Policy Framework," in M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p. 65-86.

⁹⁸⁶ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 181.

⁹⁸⁷ However, David Roberts claims that Qatar's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood is only pragmatic and non-ideological by underlining that Qatar has an official ideology based on the Salafi/Wahhabism, a version of Islam. David B. Roberts, **Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State**, London: Hurst & Company, 2017, p. 138-139.

⁹⁸⁸ Lina Khatib, "Qatar's foreign policy: the limits of pragmatism", **International Affairs**, 89:2, 417-432, 2013, p. 420-425.

⁹⁸⁹ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 171.

such as Egypt and Algeria, seemingly non-tribal societies opposed the accommodating Islamists.⁹⁹⁰

Unlike its rivals, Qatar opened its borders to the exiled members of the MB and didn't perceive them as a direct threat to the inner stability and security. Even the Qatari leaders allowed them to work in some critical fields such as education, culture and religion.⁹⁹¹ Moreover, during their stay in Qatar, the Qatari leadership had an opportunity to enhance their personal ties with them. Then, the centralized power of authority under the Emir of Qatar and his trusted circle greatly benefited from the opportunities during the Arab Spring more than the rival states.⁹⁹²

The FPEs should see the challenge almost from the same perspective and have a consensus on their foreign policy motives and political calculations.⁹⁹³ In this regard, the top leadership, mainly Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and his Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim (HBJ) assumed a significant role in the decision making of Qatar (up to 2013). However, during the process and mechanism of the highly centralized political decision making, the state leader, namely the Emir of Qatar occupies a significant position. Thus, leader images directly affect policy-making and foreign policy behaviours. To put it clearly, Emir Hamad tried to achieve his strategic goals and/or political ambitions by employing his leader images such as skill, personality, experience, personal temperament, health, mental state, and understanding capacity of the outside world in the pre-Arab Spring and after. Against this background, in the top-down governance mechanism of Qatar, the top leadership took decisions to pursue autonomous foreign policy, cultivate an internationally recognized image and maintain regional autonomy and international protection.⁹⁹⁴

In the pre-Arab Spring, the Qatari leadership sought to mediate in the regional conflicts from Darfur to Yemen in the last decade. Particularly, their skills and personalities enhanced Qatar's reputation as a mediator and regional peace broker state in the system.

⁹⁹⁰ Roy P. Mottahedeh and Mamoun Fandy, "The Islamic Movement: The Case for Democratic Inclusion", in Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (Eds.), **The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essay in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion**, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997, p. 310.

⁹⁹¹ Alexey Khlebnikov, "The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry", **Strategic Assessment**, Volume 17, No. 4, January 2015, p. 21-22.

⁹⁹² Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 183-185.

⁹⁹³ Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, p. 32.

⁹⁹⁴ Ulrichsen, **Arab Spring and Qatar**, p. 67-94.

Qatar's chief negotiators such as Emir Hamad, Prime Minister HBJ, Deputy Minister al-Mahmud bear the characteristics of successful mediators including their personal commitments, empathy, self-confidence, patience, self-sufficiency, flexibility and talents in negotiations. Also, elite cohesion and consensus in the decision-making team helped Doha manage conflict-resolution diplomacy successfully in the region. Based on the contents of their leader images, the Qatari leadership's proactive efforts in conflict resolution finally proved that Qatar was a capable and reliable peace broker in regional and international issues. As a result of the leaders' diplomatic efforts, it increased its position and image in regional and international politics.⁹⁹⁵

During the Arab Spring, the Qatari leadership was actively involved in the uprisings as they saw the uprisings as democratic rights of the people. Additionally, Doha backed the protestors in the region diplomatically, militarily and financially. Doha-based Al Jazeera's broadcasts helped the public protests to be heard regionally and globally. In this regard, Qatar tried to champion democracy in the transition countries. The leadership extracted and mobilized the state power from domestic resources to give support to the anti-regime groups including MB and its affiliates, who were determined to oust the old regimes and their long-standing leaders. This demonstrated that the ideational factors hold significance in the leadership's mobilisation and extraction of societal resources and/or state capabilities as well.⁹⁹⁶ Conversely, the KSA-led camp perceived its regional rival Qatar's support for the democratic changes in the region as a direct challenge to their regime survival.⁹⁹⁷

To emphasize the significance of the leader's prior experiences and perceptions on foreign policy behaviours in the context of Qatar and the KSA-led camp (chiefly the KSA and the UAE relations), Emir Hamad perceived the Saudi leadership as a threat for his government and he tried to ensure regime survival by pursuing independent policies at any cost. He assumed the Qatari throne by a bloodless palace coup in 1995 and won over the younger royals of the al-Thani family and the US. He convinced the US authority in the way that he desired to shape Qatar through liberal politics.⁹⁹⁸ However, he faced a

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 82-90; Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", p. 539-556.

⁹⁹⁶ Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, **Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy**, p. 38; Taliaferro "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 491-494.

⁹⁹⁷ Ismail Numan Telci, "Qatar-Gulf Rift: Can Riyadh be Triumphant?", **Al Jazeera**, 09 July 2017.

⁹⁹⁸ Commings, p. 283.

failed coup attempt called “Operation Abu Ali” on February 14, 1996, in aiming to replace his father Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani once again. Given this background, the KSA and the UAE didn’t receive the 1995 political shift in Qatar well due to Emir Hamad’s courageous policy when compared with his father Sheikh Khalifa.⁹⁹⁹ Hence, Emir Hamad claimed the Saudi and UAE’s support behind the failed coup attempt.¹⁰⁰⁰ Even more importantly, Emir Hamad forgave the Saudis to give a positive response to the wish from King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud as well as the domestic security and stability.¹⁰⁰¹

However, the legacy of the failed August coup re-surfaced during the 2017 Qatar crisis through Al Jazeera broadcast.¹⁰⁰² This demonstrates that their prior experiences and perceptions of the Qatari leadership about the KSA and the UAE’s stance towards the 1995 power shift strategically caused a long-standing strain among them and put a constraint on their interrelations.¹⁰⁰³ More notably, the Qatari leaders’ prior experience and perception of the KSA and the UAE make them sceptical about their intentions.

However, the Qatari leaders maintained to pursue an independent policy in regional and international politics. Also, NCR urges that the challenges in the system are basically filtered through the leaders’ cognition. It is very critical how the leader perceives the challenges. Then, the leaders will react to these challenges differently depending on how they understand them personally.¹⁰⁰⁴ Likewise, state leaders act differently but in line with what they believe is an appropriate response to the perceived incentives.¹⁰⁰⁵ Against this theoretical premise, we can observe the different political approaches to the challenges in the post-Arab Spring. With the power shift in the office in Qatar, Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, unlike Father Emir, avoided confronting the rival states in the post-Arab Spring. He tried to restore the deteriorated relations with its neighbouring states including Egypt for domestic and regional stability.¹⁰⁰⁶ In this regard, the FPEs

⁹⁹⁹ Yeşilyurt and Yetim, p. 139.

¹⁰⁰⁰ **Al Jazeera**, “Qatar 1996 coup plot: New details reveal Saudi-UAE backing”, 17 December 2018. www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/qatar-1996-coup-plot-details-reveal-saudi-uae-backing-181217083526698.html. (18 September 2019).

¹⁰⁰¹ Habib Toumi, “Qatar Emir pardons Saudis involved in 1996 coup”, **Gulf News**, 25 May 2010, www.gulfnews.com/world/gulf/qatar-emir-pardons-saudis-involved-in-1996-coup-1.632376, (18 September 2019).

¹⁰⁰² **Al Jazeera**, “Qatar 1996 coup plot: New details reveal Saudi-UAE backing”, 17 December 2018; Ali H. M. Abo Razeg, “Saudi-led block behind failed coup in Qatar: Al Jazeera”, **Anadolu Agency**, 05 March 2018, www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/saudi-led-bloc-behind-failed-coup-in-qatar-al-jazeera/1080034, (18 September 2019).

¹⁰⁰³ Yeşilyurt and Yetim, p. 139-140.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Meibauer, p. 32.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ulrichsen, Qatar and Arab Spring, p. 180-184.

make a calculation of costs and benefits for the policy options and outcomes.¹⁰⁰⁷ Later, he followed the KSA-led camp towards the Yemen crisis (discussed in Chapter 3).

Also, when the KSA- led camp imposed a blockade on Qatar in 2014 and forced Qatar to cut off its ties with the MB and its affiliates, Emir Tamim stepped back and expelled some MB members, who had been close allies of Qatar since the Emir Hamad period.¹⁰⁰⁸ More significantly, Emir Tamim approached religious segregation (Sunni-Shia) moderately vis-à-vis the rival states. He saw the Sunni-Shia dispute as a political issue that was mainly dependent on the regional Arab-Iranian differences and was eventually triggered by the political and social forces. To compensate for the issue, he offered Qatar's mediation role for the solution of the dispute.¹⁰⁰⁹ Emir Tamim's moderate approach to Iran rivalry or Sunni-Shia dispute gives a clear picture of his leader images. He seeks to consolidate its regional role through the rivalry between Iran and Gulf monarchies. From this perspective, it is concluded that the two prominent leaders of Qatar (Emir Hamad and Emir Tamim) responded to the regional challenges differently to ensure their national security and interest.

Leaders' experience and age are highly significant to stand for the challenges or master complex policies.¹⁰¹⁰ In this regard, Emir Tamim gained his political experience after he became the heir apparent to the Qatar throne in 2003. He learned how the government worked and the leadership solved the issues. Thus, he gained a great knowledge of state affairs. Additionally, he joined the important meetings and took responsibility as a statesman. He held the position of the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, president of the Qatar National Olympic Committee (QNOC), chairman of the committee organising the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and chairman of the Supreme Education Council and the Qatar Investment Authority.¹⁰¹¹ When he assumed his ruling power in Qatar in 2013, he was young but experienced enough to rule the country because of his prior positions in the decision-making of the state. Father Emir also threw his weight behind

¹⁰⁰⁷ Meibauer, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ian Black, "Qatar-Gulf deal forces expulsion of Muslim Brotherhood leaders", **the Guardian**, 16 September 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/16/qatar-orders-expulsion-exiled-egyptian-muslim-brotherhood-leaders>, (09 July 2019).

¹⁰⁰⁹ Habib Toumi, "Sunni-Shiite divide 'driven by politics'-Qatar", **Gulf News**, 29 September 2015.

¹⁰¹⁰ Philip B.K. Potter, "Does Experience Matter? American Presidential Experience, Age, and International Conflict", **The Journal of Conflict Resolution**, Vol. 51, No. 3, June 2007, pp. 351-378.

¹⁰¹¹ **Government Communications Office**, "His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani", <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/about-qatar/his-highness-the-amir/>, (10 July 2019); **Al Jazeera**, "Who is Qatar's emir?", 05 July 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/2017/06/qatar-emir-170605110119577.html>, (10 July 2019).

Emir Tamim's novel position in the following citation. "I am fully certain that he is up to the responsibility, deserving the confidence, capable of shouldering the responsibility and fulfilling the mission."¹⁰¹² His words implied that Emir Tamim was prepared for the leadership in the country by his father as mentioned earlier in the analysis of the unexpected political shift in 2013. Against the Qatari crises in 2014 and 2017, he pursued an influential strategy to avoid the damages of the blockade and end the crisis (discussed in detail in Chapter 6). The Qatari leadership remained undisturbed and acted on a consensus at home and abroad.

On the other hand, the leaders make some changes in state building depending on their personal cognitive filters/personal images. Mehran Kamrava claims that there are two distinctive tendencies in the royal family. Firstly, Emir Hamad and some other royal family members such as his wife Sheikha Moza, their two daughters Sheikha Al Mayassa and Sheikha Hind were leading between traditional Qatar and Western culture. Secondly, Emir Tamim and his brothers Jassim and Abdullah remained more traditional on social and cultural issues than the other family members. Additionally, he points out that the conservative social trend was on the rise in Qatari social life. Emir Hamad had some moves such as restrictions on alcohol consumption in the country.¹⁰¹³ Moreover, Emir Tamim considered the public demands and reactions in public. He promoted Arabic instead of English at Qatar University, which officially led the Qataris to use Arabic in their university education and signed legislation for compulsory military service.¹⁰¹⁴ The Qatari nationals between the edges of 18- 35 years old were obliged to join the military training for three months.¹⁰¹⁵ Later, Emir Tamim made a new decision to allow the voluntary recruitment of female nationals.¹⁰¹⁶ Yet, the strategic decisions on military service should be evaluated in the context of the 2014 and 2017 Qatar crises. From this perspective, the Qatari leadership responded to the deepening crisis through strategic decisions.

¹⁰¹² **Al Jazeera**, "Who is Qatar's emir?", 05 July 2017.

¹⁰¹³ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 182.

¹⁰¹⁴ Roberts, **Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State**, p. 161.

¹⁰¹⁵ Nada Badawi, "Qatari men report for first day of mandatory national service", **Doha News**, 01 April 2014, <https://dohanews.co/first-day-mandatory-national-service-kicks-2000-recruits/>. (27 September 2019).

¹⁰¹⁶ **Daily Sabah**, "Qatar allows women to join army, extends compulsory military service to one year", 05 April 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2018/04/05/qatar-allows-women-to-join-army-extends-compulsory-military-service-to-one-year>, (27 September 2019).; **France 24**, "Qatar introduces national service for women", 05 April 2018, <https://www.france24.com/en/20180405-qatar-introduces-national-service-women>, (27 September 2019).

Emir Tamim sought to strengthen Qatar's position in the region in the post-Arab Spring by its capabilities and alliance building, primarily with Turkey vis-à-vis its rivals. The elite consensus and cohesion in the government helped the Qatari leadership to balance against the threat as NCR highlighted.¹⁰¹⁷ The Qatari ruling elites united under Emir Tamim's ruling power and they all reacted towards the challenges in a harmony. Despite the harsh crises, the Qatari leadership successfully managed to safeguard the regime survival and domestic stability in the country.

This debate basically proves that under Emir Hamad and Emir Tamim leadership, Qatar was very influential in implementing optimal foreign policy behaviour and long-term goals in the restricted strategic environment. Also, their images were significant determinants in formulating such policies and goals in regional and international politics.

4.2. Strategic Culture

The neoclassical realists claim that the strategic culture of an individual state is an effective factor over the decision-makers.¹⁰¹⁸ The key actors are influenced by the constitutive effect of the cultural preferences that stands in their mindsets while making choices for the solution of the domestic and international issues.¹⁰¹⁹ From this standpoint, the strategic culture is a significant force to shape the leaders' foreign policy choices.

Additionally, the recent academic studies on cultural and ideational subjects show that there are several factors interrelated with the states' strategic culture. In this respect, geography, culture and traditions, historical strategic practices, political culture, national character, political psychology, ideology, and even international/regional system can be considered to be significant factors for strategic culture.¹⁰²⁰ Depending on this theoretical background, I will analyse Qatar's strategic culture and its effects on the Qatari leadership's foreign policy choices mainly in the following category.

a) Regional Environment

Qatar is located in the middle of the major powers such as the KSA and Iran in the region where it shares the rich hydrocarbon fields with the traditionally hostile state-Iran while

¹⁰¹⁷ Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing", p. 169-173.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 67.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ramazan Erdağ and Tuncay Kardaş, "Türk Dış Politikası ve Stratejik Kültür", **Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı**, 2012, p. 68.

¹⁰²⁰ Alastair Iain Johnson, "Thinking about Strategic Culture", **International Security**, Volume 19, Number 4, Spring 1995, pp. 32-64, p. 34.

having strategic relations with the KSA. The Qatari leadership seeks to balance these powerful neighbours to ensure its regime survival and domestic stability in the rivalry region. In this context, “common borders” with neighbouring countries actively encourage a balancing strategy in their interstate relations.¹⁰²¹

On the other hand, Qatar felt vulnerable in an insecure regional environment. The major countries use their ideologies to create their own spheres of influence in the region. Iran uses its Shia population for its expansion in the Gulf region and the Middle East. The KSA produces policies in line with its ideological acceptance-mainly Wahhabism- to increase its political control on Qatar and others. Also, it manoeuvres against Iran’s expansionist ideology, generally with the other Gulf allies. Consequently, sectarianism has been a dominant and expanding factor for the aforementioned actors in the Middle East.¹⁰²² Thus, the security concerns appear to have an important impact on the Qatari political elites’ strategic calculations towards the international and regional powers in the system. In other words, their security concerns push the political elites to develop various survival strategies in the rivalry Middle East. They sought to augment their power projection and their position in regional and international politics.

Doha predominantly focused on regional and international affairs by pursuing proactive and autonomous/independent policies after Emir Hamad bin Thani seized the power in 1995.¹⁰²³ The Qatari leadership under Emir Hamad determined their interests and higher goals (e.g., extending its sphere of influence, assuming a regional leadership and increasing its credibility/image in regional and international politics). in regional and international politics. For this purpose, Emir Hamad strategically implemented liberal reforms including women’s political participation to provide domestic stability and increase Qatar’s international recognition in the world. Additionally, he sought to increase Qatar’s regional and international recognition through state branding and diplomatic efforts. In this regard, Qatari leaders re-established the domestic institutions and created worldwide brand names such as Qatar Airways (QA) and Al Jazeera. The state-sponsored funds strategically invested in many well-known companies in Europe and America. Also, Qatar committed to hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2022 after

¹⁰²¹ Hancock and Lobell, p. 149.

¹⁰²² Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, Oxford University Press, p. 172-173.

¹⁰²³ Çavuşoğlu, “From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership”, p. 85-86.

winning the bid. The fact that the political and diplomatic culture of the country was effective in the interpretation of security, peace and stability concepts in the country inevitably affected the foreign and security policy.¹⁰²⁴ Qatar assumed responsibility as a mediator or a peace broker in the regional issues. The Emir and the HBJ personally engaged with the mediation efforts in the regional and international conflicts to leverage Qatar's position in the system. The Qatari political elites successfully achieved to mediate in Lebanon, Yemen and Sudan. To put it clearly, Emir Hamad desired to transform Qatar and lift it to the international league. Finally, the Qatari leadership managed to transform Qatar and pursued a balancing strategy against the powerful neighbours in the region to achieve its strategic interests and higher goals mentioned above.¹⁰²⁵

On the other hand, states' beliefs or presuppositions about foreign policy and war/peace are shaped by strategic choices that have settled over time and are consistently high on the political agenda.¹⁰²⁶ Against this theoretical background, Qatar's fear and political agenda for its powerful neighbouring states (primarily the KSA) shaped its strategic choices. Also, they often made the Qatari leadership sceptical about their neighbours. As a result, Qatar made great efforts to improve its military power in line with Emir Tamim's desire.¹⁰²⁷ It purchased a great number of military arms, vehicles and equipment. Qatar attempted to strengthen its military power in the Gulf where the security dilemma was escalated. Also, due to its limited military personnel, it aimed to develop its air force. In addition to these, Hamad bin Ahmed al-Nuaimi, head of colleges and institutes for the Qatari Armed Forces, announced some initiatives for their military development. They planned to build a "city" for military education which would have training and sports facilities as well as military educational establishment and institutes. Al-Nuaimi defined the project as "a major leap" for their military. More notably, Doha was willing to establish both a higher military academy for military science and a war college in the country.¹⁰²⁸

b) Geo-position

¹⁰²⁴ Tayyar Arı, **Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Dış Politika**, 8th Edition, Bursa: Marmara Kitap Merkezi, 2009, p. 221.

¹⁰²⁵ Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", p. 85-86.

¹⁰²⁶ Tuncay Kardaş, "Güvenlik", in Şaban Kardaş and Ali Balcı (Eds.), **Uluslararası İlişkiler Giriş: Tarih, Teori, Kavram ve Konular**, 4. Baskı, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014, p. 343-344.

¹⁰²⁷ Roberts, "Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State", p. 161.

¹⁰²⁸ Ahmed Youssef, "Qatar to establish 'city' devoted to military education", **Anadolu Agency**, 21 March 2019.

The states' geo-position as well as their resources lead them to adopt certain strategic policies at home and abroad.¹⁰²⁹ Qatar and the KSA historically have had close interactions and challenges as they have shared the same geography since the nomadic times.¹⁰³⁰ However, due to increasing economic and political interests, territorial awareness and regional rivalry, they have had severe disputes on border issues for a long time.¹⁰³¹ The Qatari government faced challenges in territorial disputes with its neighbouring countries such as Bahrain and the KSA.¹⁰³² Doha always responded to the challenges of its neighbouring states on this issue through its own capabilities and alliance building to protect its national interests. It tried to position itself in the regional order as well as asserting its autonomy against the KSA's hegemony in the Gulf economic and military organization called the GCC despite its restricted institutional capacity to find a solution for its internal issues.¹⁰³³

Also, Qatar's geo-position offered high revenues which were gained from its rich natural resources. The Qatari leaders granted their citizens high revenues. Hence, the Qatari public enjoyed having higher incomes and no taxation. In return, the leaders consolidated their authority or legitimacy by using the high revenues gained from the rich natural resources.¹⁰³⁴ That is to say, economic growth was significant for Qatar's political life. Moreover, the Qatari leadership sought to develop its economic and political relations with the other states through the state-owned grand foundations, which made huge investments in the global markets. As noted earlier, the decision-makers in a state are driven to consider the strategic culture in the decision-making process, whereas they aim to sustain their economic growth, solidify their state authority and achieve their interests and higher goals as mentioned earlier in regional and international politics.

c) Historical experiences and strategic practices

¹⁰²⁹ J. S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism", in Johnson J. L., Kartchner K. M., Larsen J.A. (Eds.), **Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Initiatives in Strategic Studies: Issues and Policies**, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009, p. 40.

¹⁰³⁰ Mohamed A. J. Althani, **Jassim the Leader Founder of Qatar**, London: Profile Books, 2012, 179-185; Commins, p. 105-106.

¹⁰³¹ Okruhlik and Conge, p. 230.

¹⁰³² Richard N. Schofield, "Border Disputes in the Gulf: Past, Present, and Future", in Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter (Eds.), **The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essay in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion**, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 132-137; Gargash, p. 327; Okruhlik and Conge, p. 230-231.

¹⁰³³ Okruhlik and Conge, p. 232.

¹⁰³⁴ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 157.

The historical experiences help states to form their strategic culture. Qatar faced harsh blockades from its neighbouring countries in its history. For instance, in the 2014 Qatar crisis, the neighbouring states withdrew their diplomats from Doha with restrictive demands. Yet, Qatar determined a strategy and maintained its independent policy despite the challenge. Depending on the prior experience, Qatar quickly responded to the recent challenge in 2017. The Qatari political elites depended on their strategic culture, which means that the strategic culture is an outcome of the long-termed connection/dialogue between people and history.¹⁰³⁵ Also, historical experiences help leaders broaden their worldview and understand the new challenges in times of peace and conflict. Against this background, the Qatari political elites tried to balance the KSA-led camp by mainly using their huge economic wealth, diplomatic ways and alliance relations to overcome the crisis. More notably, the political leaders should formulate an external policy to conform to the systemic stimuli.¹⁰³⁶ They immediately adopted this restrictive environment by enhancing their trade and strategic ties with Turkey and Iran. Most significantly, their quick response to the challenge prevented Qatar's economy from a decline despite the ongoing blockades.¹⁰³⁷ This proves that Qatar's historical strategic practices helped the Qatari leadership to shape their political choices and resulted in political gains.

The Qatari leadership perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity to achieve its interests and higher goals (e.g., extending its sphere of influence, assuming a regional leadership and increasing its credibility/image in regional and international politics). In connection with the discussion above, the Qatari leadership pursued a proactive and interventionist policy against the regional challenge.¹⁰³⁸ By doing so, the political elites of the state played a significant role in strategic cultural continuity and change.¹⁰³⁹ They backed the popular uprisings/pro-democracy uprisings against the long-standing regimes in the transition countries. Thus, they tried to play a leading role in the regional crisis and increased its influence in the transition countries by using their capabilities and alliance

¹⁰³⁵ Colin S. Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime-time for Strategic Culture", **Comparative Strategic Cultures Curriculum Project**, Final Report, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 31 January 2006, p. 17-19.

¹⁰³⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 34.

¹⁰³⁷ **Oxford Business Group**, "Qatar's economy thrives despite blockade", <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/right-be-optimistic-economic-strength-and-potential-have-been-reaffirmed-short-lived-impact-blockade>, (01 July 2020).

¹⁰³⁸ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, 2014, p.121.

¹⁰³⁹ Jack L. Synder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operation", **Report (R- 2154-AF)** Santa Monica: RAND, September 1977; Lantis, p. 45.

building. Also, it increased its international image after joining in the NATO-led military operation against the Gaddafi regime. Similarly, in the post-Arab Spring, the Qatari leadership sought to pursue independent foreign policy and balance the KSA-led camp with the help of its alliance building with the US at a global level and Turkey at a regional level.

I will add another analysis to the discussion on the role of the strategic culture during the policymaking process above by sharing the core assumption that the collective assumptions and expectations restrict/force the state leaders to commit strategic adjustments and determine foreign policy choices.¹⁰⁴⁰ In line with this, the state leaders do not seek to draw public reactions about their policies by opposing ideational and cultural perceptions in the society. In the survey of the 2017-18 Arab Opinion Index, the results indicate that most Arab citizens perceive Israel, the US and Iran as the largest threats to their national security.¹⁰⁴¹ To make it clear, Qatar and its neighbouring Gulf countries perceive Iran as an expansionist and instability-dominating force in its policies towards the Gulf. Furthermore, they receive widespread support from their citizens against Iran.¹⁰⁴² The Palestinian issue affects Qatar and others in the Gulf in their perception of Israel.

In this regard, the political leaders feel restricted in their policy choices towards these given states to some extent. Qatar's relations maintain at a low level due to the collective assumptions in the Arab community. On the other hand, the Qatari leadership make personal attempts to enhance their relations with the US in line with the theoretical insight that a weaker state calculates to ally with the stronger one by relying on a range of their offers in the system.¹⁰⁴³ The regional dynamics of the Middle East pressure them to safeguard their security via the regional patron US. In the final analysis, the changing regional dynamics can re-design Qatar's policy choices towards the US, Iran and Israel.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Erdağ and Kardaş, p. 67-68; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, p. 69.

¹⁰⁴¹ Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "The 2017-2018 Arab Opinion Index: Main Results in Brief", 09 May 2018, <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/News/Pages/ACRPS-Releases-Arab-Index-2017-2018.aspx>, (10 July 2019).

¹⁰⁴² Ibid.

¹⁰⁴³ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 14.

4.3. State-Society Relations

The Neoclassical realists recognize that state-society relations are important for domestic and international politics due to their direct impact on the policy formulation and implementation mechanism.¹⁰⁴⁴ In line with this, the Qatari governments give considerable support to provide social welfare, political legitimacy, loyalty, social contract and eventually domestic stability in the country. By doing so, they put a weight on social cohesion and political bargain in the society. More importantly, well-constructed relations help the state leaders to mobilize their resources effectively from society.¹⁰⁴⁵ Based on this, I will analyse the state-society relations in Qatar through the following concepts.

a) Social Cohesion

An individual state requires three pillars of values to build social cohesion. The first is social inclusion which refers to the equilibrium of all citizens' participation in economic, social and political life in a state. The second is social capital which means the people's trust in the state institutions and their feeling of belonging to the society. The last one is social mobility which refers to equal opportunities for all the citizens in the society to prosper.¹⁰⁴⁶ If a state successfully cultivates the values mentioned above, it will foster state cohesion. Then, it can yield efficient results in solving many domestic and international issues.

Against this background, especially since Emir Hamad's assuming the ruling power in the country, Qatar has enormously stepped forward in economic, social and political fields to affirm its "autonomy and distinctiveness" from its neighbouring Gulf states.¹⁰⁴⁷ Through his vision and perception of the international arena, he tried to accomplish infrastructural development, state branding and institutional building as well as removing his rivals in domestic politics.¹⁰⁴⁸ In other words, he implemented a miscellaneous plan for a great transformation in the country. More specifically, the Qatari leadership announced two significant reforms to advance the country. The QNDS and the QNV were

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 60-71.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Oswell, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴⁶ UN. "Perspectives on social cohesion-the glue that holds society together", 30 January 2012, New York, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/policy/perspectives-on-social-cohesion.html>, (24 July 2019).

¹⁰⁴⁷ Rathmell and Schulze, p. 53.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, p. 180.

the great challenges to transform the economy and society by 2030. The QNDS 2011-2016 focused on various projects on sustainable economic prosperity, human development, social development, environmental development and developing modern public-sector institutions. The projects were mainly on health, education, and social protection, which provided wealthier and better living conditions to the Qatari citizens. The leaders led to the development of the country through developing, designing and implementing public policies. They determined to satisfy the population and generate sufficient wealth to sustain the polity in the country.¹⁰⁴⁹ Also, a high increase in the gas exports after the 2000s generated a fresh flood of revenues to augment the state activities in many fields.¹⁰⁵⁰

The Qatari leadership strategically developed novel ideas and human resources which the country needed. At last, they strategically determined to transform their economy into a knowledge-based economy depending on the assumption that the natural resources will eventually run out and it is a great risk to rely on oil and gas income solely.¹⁰⁵¹ They even decided to build a knowledge-based society by exploiting a knowledge-based economy.¹⁰⁵² As a result, all throughout these development strategies, they aimed to foster more cohesive societies where people could trust each other and the state institutions.

If the citizens are convinced that their children have equal opportunities to build their human capital regardless of socio-economic status, social cohesion can be fostered in the country.¹⁰⁵³ In line with this perspective, the Qatari leadership took education as a prior issue and launched a new project in 2001. The K-12 Education Reform (2011-2014) was a project to prepare students to compete in the international arena or global market through education at distinguished universities, which was a state-sponsored project for raising the next generations of Qatar.¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁴⁹ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 180; Mitchell and Pal, p. 65-86; M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Mitchell and Pal, p. 65-86.

¹⁰⁵¹ Tok, Alkhater, and Leslie (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵² Ahmed Baghdady, "Transforming Qatar's PSE: Achievements and Concessions", in M.E. Tok et al. (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State**, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-46639-6_13, p. 137.

¹⁰⁵³ OECD, "Perspectives on Global Development 2012- Social Cohesion in a Shifting World", **Executive summary**, 2011, p. 23.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, "Qatar's Borrowed K-12 Education Reform in Context," in M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p. 97-101.

The ruling government sought to supply the best environment for its citizens' education by investing in one of the highest spendings in the world. They invited the most prestigious universities such as Georgetown University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Weill Cornell Medical College and Texas A&M University to the Education City in Doha.¹⁰⁵⁵ While the Qatari FPEs offered education to the Qatari youth in many fields without fees, they also strategically opened adult classes throughout the country to increase the number of literates.¹⁰⁵⁶ By doing so, they sought to strengthen the state-society relations through domestic institutions because states interact with their societies through several established institutions.¹⁰⁵⁷ They also regarded to meet the social demands in the country to avoid social instability due to the inefficient policy interventions. The Arab Spring uprisings became a good example of such inefficient policies that the ancient regimes disregarded people's desires.¹⁰⁵⁸

Qatar provided good job opportunities and welfare for its nationals. Unemployment was very low and GDP was very high in the country. More notably, almost all nationals who finished a university were provided jobs in public service with high salaries. In line with this, we should bear in mind that the Qatari FPEs heavily focused on modernisation under the leadership of Emir Hamad. They increased their investments at the domestic and global level not only to diversify their economy and increase its global recognition but also to provide sufficient job opportunities for their indigenous population.¹⁰⁵⁹

From the discussion above, with their worldview and perception, the Qatari leadership attempted to strengthen the state-society relations in the country. For this purpose, they established important domestic institutions. Finally, they created a social coherence in the society and united the Qatari people under their leadership.

b) Political Bargain

Qatar's rentier economy played an important role in the political legitimacy of the society.¹⁰⁶⁰ Its high hydrocarbon wealth helped the Qatari governments to provide a full range of benefits to their small population of nationals such as free education, healthcare,

¹⁰⁵⁵ <https://www.qf.org.qa/about>, (30 December 2018).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Jill Ann Crystal, and John Duke Anthony, "Qatar", <https://www.britannica.com/place/Qatar/Government-and-society>, (28 July 2019).

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 60.

¹⁰⁵⁸ OECD, "Perspectives on Global Development 2012- Social Cohesion in a Shifting World", p. 19.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Davidson, **After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 44-54.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, p. 159.

comfortable employment. In return, the governments expected their citizens' support and loyalty, which was a political bargain. In line with this, the Qatari rulers benefited from this political bargain of the rentier state. Even, such a political bargain based on rentier economy/revenues could be observed more evidently than any other state in the Gulf.¹⁰⁶¹ The Qatari rulers, mainly relying on its hydrocarbon revenues, successfully provided the Qatari citizens' welfare and maintained their political legitimacy.¹⁰⁶²

In the rentier states, the hydrocarbon revenues flow directly to the regimes' vaults. Thus, the governmental decisions to distribute the revenues from the state's resources result in important political and economic implications in the country.¹⁰⁶³ In this context, the al-Thani governments distributed material largesse to their citizens in return for their loyalty and restricted participation in politics.¹⁰⁶⁴ It was, somehow, a hydrocarbon revenues based-political bargain between the Qatari government/rulers and its public.

With the backing of the high hydrocarbon revenues, the Emir tried to win the loyalty of the citizens as well as strengthening his ruling power or political legitimacy in the society. He consolidated his strength and political legitimacy in making coalitions with the domestic actors, primarily major tribes, and making modernisation efforts.¹⁰⁶⁵ Also, the al-Thani family's patronage extended to other fields and became the main actors in financial investments.

Seth Kaplan theoretically claims that when one group takes over the state control, its members occupy the key posts and also ruling elites control wealth-generating assets and the rights of the electorate in the country. Conversely, rival groups which are out of ruling power probably accept the state as illegitimate and act against it.¹⁰⁶⁶ With this perspective, the wrestle for gaining ruling power may spoil the social contract and political legitimacy in the political life of a country. Unlike the leadership of the other Arab monarchies, Emir Hamad consciously and strategically expanded the public's participation in domestic

¹⁰⁶¹ Rathmell and Schulze, p. 52.

¹⁰⁶² Abdullah Baabood, "Qatar's Resilience Strategy and Implications for State-Society Relations", **IAI Working Papers**, 17/36, December 2017, <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1736.pdf>. (11 October 2019), p. 5.

¹⁰⁶³ Alexandre Marc et al., "Societal Dynamics and Fragility", **Washington, D.C.: The World Bank**, 2013, <https://issuu.com/world.bank.publications/docs/9780821396568/1?e=1107022/2829928>, p. 30, (25 July 2019).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Rathmell and Schulze, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Seth Kaplan, "Identity in Fragile States: Social cohesion and state building", *Development*, 52(4), 2009, pp. 466-472, p. 469.

politics.¹⁰⁶⁷ He allowed the first municipal election in the country in March 1999. The Qatari leadership considered the municipal elections as the first step to reach a “major leap toward democratisation”.¹⁰⁶⁸ Both Qatari female and male candidates could join the elections.¹⁰⁶⁹ It was an attempt to provide a basis for democratic institutions and political rights. Then, they held open and free elections for the elected body of the 29-member Central Municipal Council (CMC) in 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011. Similarly, the economic, political and social reforms realized in these years were seen as the basic elements of Qatar’s transformation and Emir’s commitment to the liberal path. The democratic reforms promoted Qatar to become a social welfare state and put its difference from the countries in its geography into account.¹⁰⁷⁰

The local tribes in Qatar hold vital importance in social, political and economic life.¹⁰⁷¹ The political elites had to balance these tribes and strengthen their loyalties through their policies and strategies. In this regard, the social and cultural norms of the Qatari society pushed the political elites to develop more efficient policies in the country.¹⁰⁷² Nevertheless, they underpinned some certain tribes and groups in defiance of others’ criticism about social justice.¹⁰⁷³ The political elites in the country strategically made some allowances or grant privileges to guarantee tribal loyalty to the state and state authority. They usually realized such a policy via the tribal elders, who were mostly respected by their tribes by giving them some limited power in winning their loyalty.¹⁰⁷⁴

On the other hand, the Qatari emir seeks to balance the local tribes as they probably did not want to share the political positions in the important corners of the state.¹⁰⁷⁵ Firstly he guarantees his position by appointing the royal family members to critical positions. Then, the key ministries are distributed to the members of the royal tribe or key tribes.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Rathmell and Schulze, p. 47.

¹⁰⁶⁸ **BBC News**, “World: Middle East Qatar holds landmark polls”, 08 March 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/292521.stm, (30 July 2019).; Rathmell and Schulze, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Crystal and Anthony, “Qatar”, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Qatar/Government-and-society>, (28 July 2019); Commins, p. 283.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Akman, Çiğdem and Gülseren Ergün, “Bağımsızlık Sonrası Katar’da Yaşanan Dönüşüm: Yönetmel Yapı Üzerinden Bir İnceleme”, *Üçüncü Sektör Sosyal Ekonomi Dergisi*, 54(3), 2019, 1078-1094, p. 1088.

¹⁰⁷¹ Rory Miller, *Desert Kingdoms to Global Powers: The Rise of the Arab Gulf*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2016, p. 6; Baabood, “Qatar’s Resilience Strategy and Implications for State-Society Relations”, p. 18.

¹⁰⁷² Bisher M. Osama Al-Homsi, “Qatarization Success Factors: A Framework For Organizations and Policymakers”, (Unpublished Master Thesis), Doha: Qatar University, June 2016, p.14.

¹⁰⁷³ Marc et al., p. 30.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Kassem and Al-Muftah, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Al Horr et al., p. 372.

This, however, gives the ministers more personal power.¹⁰⁷⁶ In choosing the ministers, the Emir tries to provide a balance of power among the tribal families.¹⁰⁷⁷

The state provides public goods and services as well as security, legitimacy, wealth and social welfare to its citizens.¹⁰⁷⁸ Thus, the state expects its citizens to remain loyal to the state and obey the rules in the country in return for its commitment to its citizens. To put it clearly, the state-citizen relationship depends on mutual responsibility, which relies on certain norms. These norms lead the relations and treatments between the citizens.¹⁰⁷⁹ Qatar provided free health care and medical services to all residents in the country.¹⁰⁸⁰ Despite the ongoing blockade in 2017, the leadership opened Sidra Medicine, which was a medical research hospital for women and children.¹⁰⁸¹ Qatar granted land for agriculture and commerce to its citizens or free accommodation as well. The citizens could receive an interest-free loan of nearly \$250,000 to develop their land. Also, The Barwa Housing Project accommodated many Qatari families without charging any fee. The state-sponsored Qatar Charity (QC) helped the poor Qatari families as well as Qatari orphans.¹⁰⁸² The Qatari rulers tried to balance the domestic constraints beforehand. Through these organizations and granting strategies, they sought to provide welfare for their citizens and improve their living standards. These efforts significantly helped them preserve their political legitimacy as well as the Qatari citizens' loyalty and social contract as well. More notably, the state-owned foundations in Qatar played an important role in the distribution of the state's wealth effectively and helped the protection of the country from the regional turmoil during the Arab Spring.¹⁰⁸³ In other words, they created social cohesion in the society by increasing the public's support for the legitimacy of the institutions.¹⁰⁸⁴

¹⁰⁷⁶ Mitchell and Pal, p. 88.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Al Horr et.al., p. 375.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Mehran Kamrava, **Fragile Politics: Weak States in the Greater Middle East**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Marc et al., p. 25.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Crystal, and Anthony, "Qatar"; Davidson, **After The Sheikhs The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸¹ H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, "They tried to make Qatar an island. We built bridges through education", **the Peninsula**, 08 June 2019. <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/opinion/08/06/2019/They-tried-to-make-Qatar-an-island.-We-built-bridges-through-education>, (19 June 2019).

¹⁰⁸² Davidson, **After The Sheikhs The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies**, p. 51-57.

¹⁰⁸³ Antwi-Boateng, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing", p. 175.

The Qatari leadership fostered social cohesion, political legitimacy and social contract through the new reforms, economic wealth and effective domestic institutions. As a result of this, they received support from the cohesive society and successfully managed to respond to the regional challenges during the Arab Spring and after. In this connection, social cohesion helps the leaders for their political behaviours against external threats.

4.4. Formal Domestic Institutions

Domestic institutions have an impact on both decision-making and policy implementation as NCR urged. When leaders are to conduct policy and/or face a social opposition, domestic institutions either support or constrain them.¹⁰⁸⁵ Against this background, the Qatari leaders sought to establish a strong domestic political institution to consolidate their ruling power in the country. Additionally, they focused on the economy-based institutions to augment their position at home and abroad. With a growing portfolio in the world, these economy-based institutions/foundations backed the Qatari leaders to create domestic welfare and leverage the country in regional and international politics. In line with this discussion, I will categorise the formal domestic institutions in Qatar as direct political institutions and indirect political institutions (mainly the economy-based foundations) in the following pages.

a) Direct Political Institutions

Some scholars believe that regime type is significant in political decisions including war and peace. Democracies, for instance, seldom fight each other or are peaceful towards each other.¹⁰⁸⁶ The state leaders in democratic countries have no incentives to fight against other democracies owing to the fact that the public does not give sufficient credit to their leaders over their war decisions towards other democracies.¹⁰⁸⁷ In this regard, the domestic institutions often put constraints over the decisions of the policymakers. Essentially, the political power in democratic countries is checked and balanced through domestic institutions. The leaders in these countries have to share their ruling power with the domestic institutions. Thus, they need to get the support of the domestic political

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 33-34.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Bruce Russett and William Antholis, "Do Democracies Fight Each Other? Evidence from the Peloponnesian War", **Journal of Peace Research**, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Nov., 1992), PP. 415-434, p. 416.; Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, "Why Don't Democracies Fight Each Other?", **The Journal of Conflict Resolution**, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 484-503, p. 484.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Mintz and Geva, p. 498-499.

institutions as well as the public in their strategic and political decisions. At this point, the domestic institutions play a key role in checking and balancing the leaders' political preferences.¹⁰⁸⁸

However, Qatar's institutional structure has a very restricted power on the Qatari leaders than the democracies. The Qatari leadership has a greater impact on the policymaking process.¹⁰⁸⁹ To put it clearly, in Qatar, where political power is mostly centralized by the rulers from the al-Thani family, there is no opposition party that would constrain the government. In other words, the domestic institutions in Qatar cannot solely mandate the 'leaders' autonomy in conducting their policies or strategic decisions. Unlike western democracies, there are no independent domestic political institutions or political opposition that can affect the leader's autonomous power in Qatar. Conversely, the al-Thani rulers (Emir indeed) have a monopoly on the political institutions to prolong their ruling power and legitimacy.¹⁰⁹⁰

The Qatari emir officially assumes his ruling power from the al-Thani royal family and the permanent constitution in the country, which was ratified by Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in 2004. Qatar's constitution guarantees personal freedom and the principle of equality in public rights and duties. It also supports the principle of the separation of powers on which the governmental system is based. Thus, the Shura Council/The Advisory Council established in 1972 with 20 appointed members has presented the Legislative Authority in the country since then. It depends on the consultation system and derives its main principles from Islam and Shari'a law.¹⁰⁹¹ The Emir of the State and the Council of Ministers are clearly defined as the executive authority of Qatar. More notably, there is no political party or a parliament although Qatar is a constitutional state and its political system is obviously defined as democratic in the constitution.¹⁰⁹² This is because the ruling elites intentionally crafted the political system or state institutions to enhance their political efficacy and stay in power in the long term.¹⁰⁹³ Thus, the political parties and opposition groups were not allowed to erect in the country. In two-party or multi-

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 76.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", p. 84.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Shura Majlis*, <https://www.shura.qa/Pages/About%20Council/History>, (27 September 2019).

¹⁰⁹² *The Foreign Ministry of Qatar*, <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (20 September 2018).

¹⁰⁹³ Kamrava, "Preserving Non-Democracies: Leaders and State Institutions in the Middle East", p. 251-270.

party systems, for instance, the opposition may constrain the leader's (or the government's) decisions. Thus, the leader may need to cooperate with the opposition, especially in making a highly strategic foreign policy decision. Otherwise, the influence of the opposition diminishes the public's confidence and support against the leader/government.

On the other hand, civil society has another influential power on the policymakers. They influence them to shape political decisions. Thus, civil society is usually considered as the "third sector" after the government and business.¹⁰⁹⁴ It proved its capability of influencing the governments during the Arab Spring. It positively led to social changes and social movements against the authoritarian regimes.¹⁰⁹⁵ However, civil society had a highly limited role in the policymaking process in Qatar. Also, the private sector wasn't developed sufficiently in the country as the emir and his family had autonomy in the business sector and the state-funded companies overwhelmingly assumed the responsibility for leading the economic activities. In this regard, the Qatari leaders avoided taking any risks for their mandate on the labour force in the country. Thus, the trade unions weren't allowed due to the intentional official restrictions.¹⁰⁹⁶

Qatar is a hereditary emirate ruled by the Al-Thani family. Emir is the absolute ruler in the country. He forms the government, appoints the prime minister, usually chosen from the Royal family, and takes the key decisions.¹⁰⁹⁷ However, the appointed prime minister and the other ministers are liable to the Emir and assist him in governance. They execute the government's policy and perform their duties.

The Council of Ministers works on the regulations and solutions on the issues such as maintaining public order, ensuring internal security, protecting the interest of the state abroad and approving economic projects.¹⁰⁹⁸ In fact, it acts as an institution that simply ratifies emir's decisions and directives rather than shapes a policy.¹⁰⁹⁹

¹⁰⁹⁴ Adam Jezard, "Who and what is 'civil society'?", **World Economic Forum**, 23 April 2018.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Rachel Cooper, "What is Civil Society, its role and value in 2018", **Helpdesk Report**, 15 October 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6c2e74e5274a72bc45240e/488_What_is_Civil_Society.pdf, p. 2, (19 November 2019).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Mitchell and Pal, p. 88.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Al-Sayed, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹⁸ <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (20 September 2018).

¹⁰⁹⁹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 88.

The Emir enjoys its ruling power to approve or reject their proposals¹¹⁰⁰ as the political decisions are taken from top-down in the political mechanism.¹¹⁰¹ Obviously, in the top-down governance of Qatar, the decision-making power is centralized under the emir and the other ruling elites. To elucidate the share in the ruling power of the country, the top ruling elites generally share the ruling power with the other individuals who have various ties with them. These individuals, who are in the rulers' circle of trusted advisors, detect the state's needs, then develop ideas or solutions for these issues and present them to the rulers. Their positions in the administration give them privileged access to the ruling family.¹¹⁰² In this regard, a small circle of ruling elites which consist of the emir and advisors, ministers, senior officials and foreign experts drive the policy-making process in Qatar.¹¹⁰³

There are some democratic institutions such as a Shura Council (Majlis) with a totally of 45 members, 30 of who are elected on a general ballot and 15 of whom are appointed by the Emir.¹¹⁰⁴ Its members have renewed since its foundation in 1972. Four women members were appointed to the parliament for the first time in 2017. The appointment of the women members to Qatar's decision-making was perceived as a vital step for democracy and development. With the new political changes, the Qatari FPEs aimed to achieve democracy with the new institutions such as parliament (the Shura Council), constitution, elections, free media as well as gaining support from the outside world.¹¹⁰⁵

The Shura Council, the Council of Ministers and the Emiri Divan symbolize the ruling power of the al-Thani ruling family. By the agency of these key domestic institutions, the emirs/the rulers govern the country. In other words, the Emir benefits from their functions in governance and policy-making. In this context, the Council of Ministers is an important political institution that advises the emir and supervises the execution of the new laws in the country. It is responsible for drafting the state budget and controlling the civil service

¹¹⁰⁰ Al-Sayed, p. 39-40.

¹¹⁰¹ Ulrichsen, *Arab Spring and Qatar*, p. 85.

¹¹⁰² Khodr, p. 287.

¹¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 285-286; Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 52.

¹¹⁰⁴ <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (20 September 2018).

¹¹⁰⁵ Nouf Saud Al-Maatouk and Mohamed Kama, "Determinants of the Regional Role of Qatar", *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2017, p. 193.

as well. The Council propose the draft legislation and the Shura Council discusses it. At last, the emir sees the legislation and approves or rejects it.¹¹⁰⁶

The Central Municipal Council (CMC) formed in the 1950s is another formal institution with 29 elected members. It has the responsibility to advise the state authorities on local affairs. However, it doesn't have any legislative or executive power.¹¹⁰⁷ The members of the CMC are chosen by free elections through the direct representation of both men and women.¹¹⁰⁸ The first CMC election was held in 1999. Then, five women of the total 130 candidates competed for the seats in the QMC in 2015. Although only one woman was elected in the 2015-QMC election, it gave hope for a better representation for the Qatari women in the country.¹¹⁰⁹

Qatar's policy-making system depends on the constitutional and legal architecture. The ruling elites such as the emir, the ruling family and the key ministers drive the policy-making process in the country. The Shura Council propose any amendment which enters into force after the approval of the Qatari Emir. Emir always has the right to reject the proposals of the Shura Council, which means the final decision. More significantly, the constitution plays an important role in ruling the country. It strengthens the emir's ruling power in the country as well as putting a limit to the authorities of the Qatari Shura Council on legislation. Hassan Al-Sayed urges that Qatar's current constitution appears not to be designed to regulate the decisions and positions of the Qatari emir, but rather to accompany or legitimize his regime. Thus, the constitution remains ineffective in limiting the emir's power.¹¹¹⁰

The current constitution lets the Qatari emir have a controlling power in all key decisions although the decision-making process includes the royal family/the al-Thani family, key members of other tribes and the machinery of the modern state bureaucratic institutions.¹¹¹¹ The emir can use the Emiri decrees to take total control of policymaking and pass urgent legislation.¹¹¹² Against this background, there is no domestic institution

¹¹⁰⁶ Khodr, p. 281-287; <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (20 September 2018).

¹¹⁰⁷ Justin Gengler and Majed Al Ansari, "Qatar's first elections since 2017 reveal unexpected impact of GCC crisis", *Al Monitor*, 25 April 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/04/qatar-first-elections-reveal-unexpected-impact-gcc-crisis.html>, (22 September 2019).

¹¹⁰⁸ <https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (20 September 2018).

¹¹⁰⁹ Anwar al-Khateeb, "Five women to contest Qatar municipal elections", *Al Araby*, 16 April 2015.

¹¹¹⁰ Al-Sayed, p.37-59.

¹¹¹¹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 87.

¹¹¹² Khodr, p. 286-287.

or organization to counterbalance the emir's absolute power or political decisions in Qatar. In other words, there are no powerful and independent societal actors to balance the Qatari emir's exceeding ruling power in the country. More significantly, the Shura Council has the right to propose an amendment to its legislation but it should be kept in mind that fifteen members (totally forty-five members) chosen by the Qatari emir can affect the equilibrium of legislative power in the Council. By doing so, he avoids the imminent threat and constraints from the domestic institutions to some extent. Another example of the Qatari emir's ruling power projection is the Council of Ministers (CM). The ministers are proposed by the Prime Minister but ultimately approved by the Qatari emir. More notably, they are usually chosen from the royal family.

Overall, the leaders' ability to use the state power is primarily based on the political system, executive-legislative-judiciary relations, party system, electoral system and quality of government. These factors not only show the functions of the state but also determine the leaders' sphere of influence in the country.¹¹¹³ The Qatari leaders consolidated their political position in the country by exploiting the domestic political institutions. They weakened the opposition factors that could put a constraint on the foreign policy preference. Then, relying on the existing political institutions and the state power, they pursued foreign policy behaviours against the regional challenges such as the Arab Spring, the 2014 Qatar crisis and the 2017 Qatar crisis.

b) Indirect Political Institutions

Qatar has various organizations in the economic fields, which do not have purely political goals but give substantial support to the foreign policy ambitions and the political legitimacy of the Qatari leaders. Several of them operate in the financial fields in which Qatar is active and effective in their overseas operations. By doing so, the state-controlled firms and organizations drive Qatar's rise in regional and international politics. In line with this, they back the Qatari leadership in their shaping foreign policy behaviours although they are not political institutions.

States can mandate economic activities and resources and even reassign them through state-controlled firms and organizations.¹¹¹⁴ In this view, Qatar has great control over

¹¹¹³ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 76.

¹¹¹⁴ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 487.

economic activities and rich hydrocarbon resources in the country. Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) as one of the effective state-owned foundations and ranked as the 14th of the global investors has a giant capital to invest in the various countries in the world.¹¹¹⁵ It runs the sovereign wealth fund (SWF) to diversify Qatar's economy because it heavily relies on its hydrocarbon sales. The QIA has many leading working partners such as Qatar Holding (QH), a key investment arm of QIA, Delta Two LTD, the secondary important company, Qatari Diar (QD), a real estate and development company, Hassad Food (HF), a farm and agricultural investment company, Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), a company for sports and leisure industries investments.¹¹¹⁶

Furthermore, the QIA globally invests in different fields such as football clubs, residential properties, oil companies, carmakers, fashion designers, banking. In other words, Qatar has large investments in various fields, which proves its high impact in the world. It is clear that Qatar invests across the globe to increase the nation's wealth.¹¹¹⁷ Taliaferro affirms that powerful states can presumably adapt their ambitious foreign policies as they can reach the economic and other potential resources more than their rivals.¹¹¹⁸ However, these global investments provide a suitable basis for Qatar to implement its foreign policy.¹¹¹⁹

To shed light on the implications of its global investments and foreign policy, Qatar's investment strategy seems rational and well calculated, because it generally invests in the worldwide known and publicly trusted brands in the US and Europe. They do not take much risk in their investments due to the institutional protection in their host countries. More significantly, with the help of purchasing the well-known brands, Qatar not only extends its own branding campaign but also approaches the US, the UK and the other prominent actors in international politics. In this context, it develops its trade relations with China and some other Asian states such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Japan as well. Eventually, Qatar ensures economic, geographic and resource security with the gains of

¹¹¹⁵ Neşe Karanfil, "Katar'ın dünyada 335 milyar dolarlık yatırımı var", *Hürriyet*, 05 June 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/katarin-dunyada-335-milyar-dolarlik-yatirimi-var-40480893>, (05 February 2019); **Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute**, "Qatar Investment Authority", <https://www.swfinstitute.org/profile/598cdaa60124e9fd2d05bc5a>, (27 June 2019).

¹¹¹⁶ Al Horr et al., p. 352.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 352.

¹¹¹⁸ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 488.

¹¹¹⁹ Akkaya and Elrantisi, p. 13.

much more freedom and ability to preserve its international and regional interests, foreign policy goals and objectives.¹¹²⁰

Additionally, the state-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP) owns the majority shares of many companies in aluminium, steel, real estate, fertilizer, transportation, electricity, insurance and water. Yet, leaving the economic gains aside the QP attempted to implement key social projects for a contribution to social development in the country. These projects mainly aimed to develop infrastructure in Qatar such as Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QFESCD), the Space City project, the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), and the Supreme Education Council (SEC).¹¹²¹ In this context, the QP has an important societal role in the ruling elites' political agenda. It helped the Qatari ruling elites to foster welfare and domestic stability, in a broader sense, state contract and social cohesion in the country as well as achievement of the foreign policy goals.

All in all, Emir Hamad built direct and indirect political institutions in the country. Then, they cemented his and Emir Tamim's ruling power at home and backed them against the external challenges. To put it concretely, they didn't have any considerable challenges from the society and societal actors during the Arab Spring when compared with many other Middle Eastern states in which the institutional and governmental political instruments were considerably demolished. The Qatari leaders' understanding of systemic stimuli and relative power protected them from proximate dangers and backed up them in their formulation of external policy. They successfully managed to assume the leading roles in the transitional countries during the political turmoil in the region.

Conclusion

The four clusters of the intervening unit-level variables (leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutions) significantly influence the implementation and formulation of the state's foreign policy and policy preferences. They have close interactions with each other in the political mechanism and foreign policy behaviours. In this regard, they either shape or constrain the political actors in their political decisions and strategic goals.¹¹²²

¹¹²⁰ Al Horr et al., p. 353-354.

¹¹²¹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 82.

¹¹²² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 59-61.

Given the intervening unit-level variables, the Qatari leaders' images played an important role in shaping political decisions and determining strategic goals. Particularly, Emir Hamad desired to transform Qatar in order to increase its position in regional and international politics. For this reason, he implemented liberal reforms and built domestic institutions in the country. Also, navigating the balance in administration and distribution of the state's wealth, Emir Hamad and Emir Tamim granted some members of the royal family and the key tribes in the key posts in the government and state-owned foundations. In return, they primarily expected loyalty from these people and strengthened their ruling position in the country.¹¹²³

To maintain their ruling power, Emir Hamad and Emir Tamim relied on rich hydrocarbon resources, which generated large revenues in the country. They distributed the hydrocarbon revenues to the Qatari citizenry to some extent through the domestic institutions in the country. Simply put, the Qatari rulers offered higher welfare to the Qatari citizens, in return, they remained loyal to the law and order in the country. Indeed, they provided their political legitimacy in society. Then, they fostered social cohesion and political legitimacy in the society. In line with this understanding, by the agency of the political bargain based on the hydrocarbon revenues, the Qatari rulers provided domestic stability and avoided the inner challenges against their political decisions.

Emir Hamad implemented significant political reforms to elevate the citizens' political rights in the country and increase its international recognition. The municipal elections were periodically held and the Qatari women gained voting power and even candidate rights for the municipal elections. The political reforms won recognition from the West as well. Nevertheless, political representation and participation are still limited in the country when compared with the western norms. No opposition group or party was allowed in the country although its political system was officially defined as democratic in its permanent constitution. This may damage Qatar's credibility and calibre in achieving its strategic goals and ambitions such as assuming regional leadership and international protection and pursuing an autonomous foreign policy.

On the other hand, there are some significant state-owned institutions/ indirect political institutions such as the QIA and the QF to back the politics, economy and education in

¹¹²³ Kassem and Al-Muftah, "The Qatari Family at the Intersection of Policies", p. 214; Al-Sayed, p. 88.

the country. The administrators of these economy-based institutions are particularly chosen from the royal family or loyal people to the al-Thani ruling family. It is similarly applied for the direct political institutions such as the Shura Majlis and the Council of Ministers. The fifteen members of the total 35 members in the Shura Majlis are also chosen by the Emir himself. Also, all ministers are appointed by the Emir and the key ministers are chosen from the loyal people and the al-Thani royal family. In this regard, the Emir not only strengthens his ruling power but also ensures regime security by appointing the members of the key institutions in the country. In return, he doesn't face any challenge or opposition against his governance. Given this background, the Qatari emir is the most powerful actor in the top-down ruling system of the country. He holds absolute power in the political mechanism and appoints the top executives to the key positions. accordingly. Thus, the political power in Qatar is monopolized by a handful of political actors including the emir, ministers and advisors.

During the Arab Spring, Qatar didn't have a serious challenge against its formal domestic institutions and political legitimacy despite the centralization of political power and low political participation in the country, because the Qatari leadership cemented welfare, social contract and political legitimacy through the high hydrocarbon revenues and direct/indirect political institutions. Then, they achieved to establish social coherence in the country. Namely, the public support the legitimacy of the state institutions.¹¹²⁴ This domestic environment helped the Qatari leadership in their political preferences and power extraction. Finally, the leadership successfully managed to extract and mobilize their national resources (the state power) from the domestic society against the external challenges, mainly the Arab Spring and the Qatari crises in 2014 and 2017.

Some important events such as a war, a natural disaster, a political uprising, even a football match unite the divided nations. Qatar crises opened a window of opportunity to mobilize/pull its population together and created a sense of community. Qatari people sided with their government and resisted the challenge of the neighbouring countries. The crises showed that Qatari society was not fragile and vulnerable during the external challenges. This can be evaluated that there was a significant society coherence in the country.

¹¹²⁴ Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing", p. 175.

During the Arab Spring and after, they increased their political power in the transition countries. Even, they preserved their position in the regional and international system despite the challenges from the neighbouring countries during the Qatari crises (I will discuss it further in Chapter 6). This verifies the theoretical assumption/prediction that the domestic institutions help the states' capability to extract and mobilize the national resources from its society but their leaders' images and capability to increase and preserve the political power also matters.¹¹²⁵

The chapter discussed the domestic level intervening variables to figure out their prominent effect on Qatar's decision-making process and political implementation, namely, Qatar's foreign policy behaviours after the Arab Spring. The next chapter will explore the sources of power that Qatar will use to pursue its foreign policy and achieve its strategic goals.

¹¹²⁵ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 489.

CHAPTER 5: QATAR'S SOURCES OF POWER

Introduction

During the Arab Spring, the leaders tried to perceive the opportunities and threats within the scope of their own perception of security and capabilities as highlighted by NCR. The Qatari leaders, who perceived this regional challenge as an opportunity rather than a threat, pursued a proactive foreign policy to increase their influence and strength in the region.

Qatar backed the popular protests in the transition countries. Thus, it established strategic relations with anti-regime actors/groups especially in the transition countries by using its diplomatic, military and economic power. In doing so, it tried to consolidate its regional strength through these actors. The collapse of the old regimes and the Islamists/ the Muslim Brotherhood's gaining political weight in the region consolidated Qatar's position in the transition countries.¹¹²⁶ In Egypt, it supported the Morsi government in the post-Mubarak period. In Libya, it joined the Western-backed military operation to overthrow the Gaddafi regime. Moreover, by giving political, military and financial support to the transition government, it tried to play a key role in designing Libya in the post-Gaddafi period. Against this background, Qatar exerted and mobilized its state power to increase its influence in the transition countries. Finally, it emerged as an influential actor in the regional order in the Middle East after the Arab Spring.

In this chapter, I will discuss the natural, tangible and intangible source of power (material and immaterial capabilities) to understand the scope of power in the context of Qatar's power projection capabilities. In this regard, I will first analyse the material capabilities/factors such as population, economy and military as they directly affect the state policy.¹¹²⁷ Conversely, NCR defends that power weights more than only material resources.¹¹²⁸ Likewise, Taliaferro defines state power as the ability of a state/state leader to extract and mobilize its domestic resources.¹¹²⁹ The Qatari leadership benefited from the political, economic and strategic assets in order to leverage their regional and

¹¹²⁶ Başkan, p. 112.

¹¹²⁷ Nicholas J. Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy, I", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Feb., 1938), pp. 28-50, p. 28; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, p. 39-45.

¹¹²⁸ Oswell, p. 101.

¹¹²⁹ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 467.

international position.¹¹³⁰ Based on this background, I will secondly analyse the immaterial capabilities through Al Jazeera network, Sovereign Wealth Fund / Qatar Investment Authority, Foreign Aids and Qatar's branding efforts.

5.1. Qatar's Natural and Tangible Sources of Power/Qatar's Material Capabilities

This section explores Qatar's material capabilities (natural and intangible sources of power) from the empirical data in the literature to understand Qatar's power projection in the context of the Arab Spring. In this sense, Qatar's population, economic, and military significance and their effects on external politics and political decisions will be discussed below.

5.1.1. Qatar's Population

The population is a significant feature for the states' power projection as some populous countries rely on their greater amount of population. At least, large populations can be translated into large armies and a strong labour force when needed.¹¹³¹

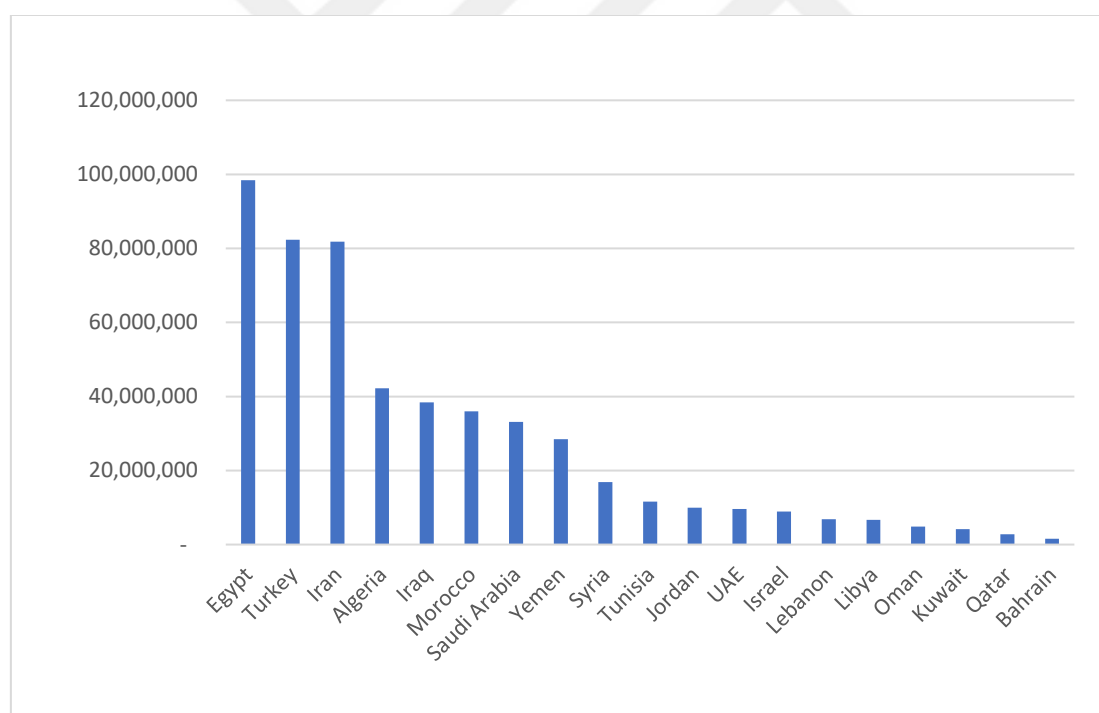


Figure 4. The Population of Middle Eastern Countries (2018)

Source: www.data.worldbank.org.

¹¹³⁰ Yüce, "Book Review: Qatar and Arab Spring", p. 147.

¹¹³¹ Philipp O. Amour, "Introduction: The Regional Order in the Gulf and the Middle East", in Phillip O. Amour (Ed.), **The Regional Order in the Gulf Region and the Middle East: Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances**, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 12.

In the context of population, Qatar has relatively a smaller population in the Gulf region with the exception of Bahrain. (Figure 4: Population of Middle Eastern Countries 2018). Likewise, the figures indicate that Qatar with its population of 2,740,479 (May 2019) can be considered as one of the countries with the lowest population density in the Middle East.¹¹³² The fact that Qatar is at the bottom of the population ranking in the Gulf and the Middle East implies that it cannot exploit its population as a power factor or gain an advantage over the others. To put it clearly, Qatar can't translate its small population into a large army. At the same time, we should keep in mind that in addition to its power projection and relative advantages in power capabilities, having a high population will bring various problems to the countries, especially at domestic policies. Yet, the consequences of the high population go beyond the scope of my research.

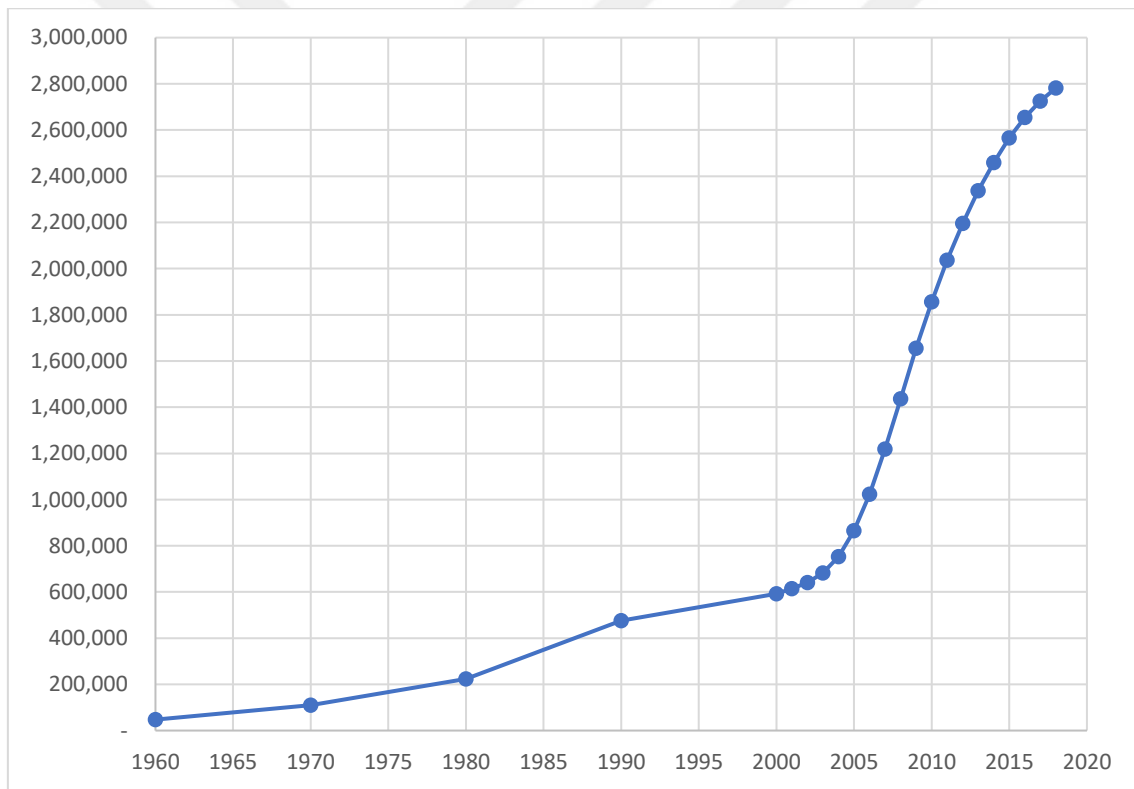


Figure 5. The Population of Qatar (1960-2018)

Source: www.data.worldbank.org

When we examined the population of Qatar in the previous years, we observe that its population steadily grew between 1960 and 2000. However, it has sharply increased since the 2000s (Figure 5). This increase can be related to its economic growth because Qatari

¹¹³² Planning and Statistics Authority, www.mdps.gov.qa, (02 July 2019).

FPEs have co-operated with the western countries on energy sources and made considerable investments in liquefied natural gas (LNG) since the 1990s.¹¹³³ With the growing economic sectors, Doha required to accommodate more human sources due to the fact that the Qatari nationals were not sufficient both in quality and quantity for the high demand of the economic sectors. Thus, a great number of foreign expats came to Qatar to meet the demands of the labour force in the country.

Inevitably, the Qatari population grew with the high numbers of foreign expats. Approximately 88.4% of Qatar's total population was non-Qataris while 11.6% was Qatari nationals,¹¹³⁴ which means that the rate of Qatari nationals in the population considerably decreased with the high rise of foreign expats from various nationalities. They were Arabs (13%), Indians (24%), Filipinos (11%), Nepalis (16%), Sri Lankans (5%), Bangladeshis (5%). Notably, the majority of the Arab people residing in the country were from Egypt, Jordan and Syria.¹¹³⁵ The composition of the nationalities in Qatar implies that the other nationals with high numbers rely on job opportunities in Qatar. The fact that people from other countries come to Qatar for the labour force relatively increases Qatar's influence and reputation in the regional and international arena.

On the other hand, the flow of the mostly unskilled foreign expats into Qatar can cause negative effects. It turns into a challenge against the demographic and economic balances as well as a social contract in the country. Most significantly, the FPEs has to counterbalance the given imbalances regarding inner cohesion as the challenge of the demographic and economic imbalances put a constraint on the FPEs for the reformulation of the social contracts to safeguard their legitimacy and inner stability.¹¹³⁶

Additionally, the population growth constraints the states and their rulers to provide sufficient job opportunities for the new generations/young people. They can probably counteract a serious challenge for the inner cohesion. In line with this understanding,

¹¹³³ QNB, "Qatar Economic Insight", September 2018, <https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1355602931841&ssbinary=true>, (01 July 2019).

¹¹³⁴ The figure was estimated in accordance with the data in 2015. Therefore, the figures can change. Jill Ann Crystal, and John Duke Anthony, "Qatar", <https://www.britannica.com/place/Qatar/Government-and-society>, (28 July 2019); The World Factbook, www.cia.gov, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>, (02 July 2019).

¹¹³⁵ Qatar Online, "Qatar Population and Expat Nationalities", 18 March 2019, <https://www.onlineqatar.com/visiting/tourist-information/qatar-population-and-expat-nationalities>, (03 July 2019).

¹¹³⁶ Ulrichsen, *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and Transition to the Post-Oil Era*, p. 85-94.

Qatar has a young-middle population when considered by age, which is 13.91% less than 15 yrs., 12.15% between 15 to 24 years, 72.69% between 25 to 64 years and 1.25% above 65 years.¹¹³⁷ This implies that Qatari leadership should implement projects and job opportunities for the Qatari youth. In this regard, Qatar's leaders' images worked very well. Through their perception, political calculation and worldview of the strategic environment, they tried to respond to the threat beforehand by pursuing long-run policies. Qatar FPEs strategically prepared a road map to build the future of the Qatari generations through the development programmes. They replaced their nationals in the public sector, even in state bureaucracies with high salaries.¹¹³⁸

The unemployed youth ages between 15-24 of total population is 0.5% (male: 0.2% and female: 2%) (2017) in Qatar.¹¹³⁹ From these figures, it is understood that young unemployment is very low in the country. Most significantly, the low figures on the unemployment among the Qatari youth clearly demonstrates that the Qatari leadership successfully managed to implement suitable policies and projects and exploited the national resources to provide job opportunities for the Qatari youth, either male or female. It must be noted that especially unemployment among the young Arabs was one of the driving factors behind the popular protests during the Arab Spring. However, the distribution of the rich hydrocarbon revenues to the lesser population of the country and the high welfare of the citizens relatively provided stability and inner cohesion to Qatar rather than its neighbouring countries.¹¹⁴⁰ If a state is weak in the face of its society or doesn't create social cohesion in the society, it/state leader feels the domestic constraints and doesn't extract and mobilize the resources from the domestic society to make an appropriate response to external threats.¹¹⁴¹ Also, the unemployment rates signify that the Qatari leadership had strategic calculations on domestic issues beforehand.

Another significant strategic calculation of the Qatari leadership was related to the modernization activities in the country. Emir Hamad and Emir Tamim, the top decision-makers, personally supported and implemented a rapid transformation throughout the

¹¹³⁷ Planning and Statistics Authority, www.mdps.gov.qa, (02 July 2019); **The World Factbook**, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>, (02 July 2019).

¹¹³⁸ Kamrava, **Inside the Arab State**, 2018, p. 161-164.

¹¹³⁹ **The World Factbook**, www.cia.gov, (02 July 2019).

¹¹⁴⁰ Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf**, p. 177-178.

¹¹⁴¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 27; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, p. 56.

country.¹¹⁴² They launched enormous modernization projects in line with the economic growth without any denials of Islamic and Arabian traditions. That is to say, without abandoning or denying the old traditions in the country, they tried to adopt the Qatari people to urban/city life. In their strategic calculation, they saw the high density of the population in the city life and needed to consider this reality. The population in the urban areas highly increased to 99.1% of the total population of Qatar (2018). Almost one-quarter of the total population of Qatar was housed in the capital city Doha,¹¹⁴³ which became the most populated city in the country. Apart from the most populated Doha, there were some other populated towns in the country such as Al Wakra, Umm Said, Al Khor, Madinat Al-Shamal, Al Zubara and Dukhan which housed most of the Qatari people.¹¹⁴⁴ We can conclude that people in Qatar are mostly integrated with urban life and rapid modernisation through modernization projects. This also shows that there is social life in Qatar towns despite the small living space in the peninsula.¹¹⁴⁵ This environment can strengthen the social life in the country while increasing the expectations of the Qataris in the context of state-society relations. As a result, this can drive the decision-makers positively to improve political participation and human rights in the country.

One more indicator about the strategic calculation of the Qatari leadership was about the education in the country. The Qatari leadership always saw education as a prime issue in the country and implemented considerable projects in this field, including the invitation of the prestigious Western universities to Qatar (mentioned earlier). As a result of their strategies and policies, the literacy rate is very high in Qatar. It is 97.3% of the total population. More significantly, any person at the age of 15 and over 15 can read and write in the country.¹¹⁴⁶ This seems to be a promising figure in terms of Qatari society. Qatar has a literate society, which can generate better consequences in terms of politics, governance and society in the country. Also, we can establish a connection between the literacy rate and the success of the Qatari leadership. They not only provided education

¹¹⁴² Brannagan and Giulianotti, p. 1142-1143.

¹¹⁴³ Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", p. 91.

¹¹⁴⁴ **Qatar Living.com.**, "Major Cities and Towns", <https://www.qatarliving.com/sightseeing-tourist-attractions/wiki/major-cities-towns>, (03 July 2019).

¹¹⁴⁵ For the discussion on urbanism and consequences in Qatar, see Aisha Ahmed Al-Asiri, "Sustainable Urbanism: Adaptive Re-Uses for Social-Cultural Sustainability in Doha", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Hamad Bin Khalifa University, 2017.

¹¹⁴⁶ **The World Factbook**, www.cia.gov, (02 July 2019).

for their citizens through domestic policies and projects but also strengthened the society in the country.

An in-depth analysis of Qatar's population reveals that there are positive and negative aspects of having a small population in the country. I will put them into two main categories below.

In the negative category, the limited human resources primarily for the economic fields created a dependence on the foreign expats and growing population after the flow of the foreign expats (but still small population/ a small size in population ranking) put a constraint on the Qatari leadership in domestic and international politics. They had to solve the foreign expats' integration and working conditions as well as the consequences of demographic and economic imbalances. Additionally, the leadership had to provide job opportunities to the Qatari young nationals, especially in better posts, including state's bureaucracies, than the foreign expats had. Furthermore, a small population refers that manpower is also proportionally low in terms of population and military power relationship. To put it clearly, Qatar lacks a large army because of its small population. The small number of soldiers due to the small population raised concerns about national security and created dependence on others to provide its security. The Qatari leadership sought to solve this security issue mainly through alliance building (discussed in Chapter 3) and arms spending (discussed in 5.1.3. Qatar's Military).

In the positive category, the Qatari leadership can rule the country without any deterrence due to the small population as they can distribute the rich hydrocarbon revenues to this small population of the country. This generates high welfare for the Qatari nationals. Subsequently, the welfare in the country relatively provides stability and inner cohesion as well as regime survival and political legitimacy. Consequently, this can create an environment in which the FPEs can pursue or reformulate domestic and foreign policies without any restriction from society.

5.1.2. Qatar's Economy

Qatar's discovery of the North Field in the Gulf region in 1971 historically became the first step in changing Qatar's future economic outlook. However, they had to wait for nearly two decades to use its products for both domestic and international demands. The Qatari leadership pursued the QNV 2030 to navigate the comprehensive management of

the state's economy, attract more investments and encourage growth.¹¹⁴⁷ Then, Qatar achieved to increase its economic growth. In fact, the investments in liquefied natural gas (LPG) played an important role in the increase of its economic growth, because Qatar became a leading LNG exporter in the world. The income from the natural gas export championed Qatar by ranking as the richest country in the world with its GDP per capita.¹¹⁴⁸

The economic profile of Qatar discussed broadly below shares the huge development in its economy as well. In this context, the Qatari leadership pursued an effective economic policy and focused on the development of the private sector and foreign investments in different fields as well as the energy sector.¹¹⁴⁹ They used the foreign investments as a key channel of surplus oil and gas revenues into high-income assets through state-owned authorities and companies as they generated opportunities for Qatar to expand its power projections in the other countries. The Qatari leadership enjoyed either earning high income from their investments as well as increasing their power capabilities over the borders.¹¹⁵⁰ Qatar strengthened its relations with the other countries through investments. It had several funds to use as an instrumental vehicle both to realize Qatar's political ambitions in the other states and avoid relying on hydrocarbon revenues only. In this regard, the Qatari leadership substantially sought to enhance its influence through the establishment of its giant foreign investments.¹¹⁵¹

The most significant Qatari state-owned fund is Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) founded in 2005.¹¹⁵² It has a big capital/current asset which is nearly \$335 billion to invest in the various countries in the world, which means that the QIA is the 14th investor globally.¹¹⁵³ It runs the sovereign wealth fund (SWF) and seeks to diversify its economy into a "knowledge economy". Also, it incorporates the state-owned investment companies

¹¹⁴⁷ www.mdps.gov; Davidson, *After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 114; *The Heritage Foundation*, "2019 Index of Economic Freedom", p. 348, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/qatar>, (01 July 2019).

¹¹⁴⁸ QNB, "Qatar Economic Insight", September 2018.

¹¹⁴⁹ T.C. Doha Büyükelçiliği Ticaret Müşavirliği, "Yurtdışı Yatırımlar Ülke Profili Katar", May 2018, p. 4, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/5b887e6813b87615b0eea9ca/cefcd2c0048dd9ca43ca0a40a11c0553.pdf>, (01 July 2019); QNB, "Qatar Economic Insight", September 2018.

¹¹⁵⁰ Davidson, *After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 42-45.

¹¹⁵¹ Zuhair al-Mokh, *A Study on the Foreign Policy of Qatar*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/BooksAndJournals/Pages/A-Study-on-Foreign-Policy-of-Qatar.aspx>, (09 September 2019).

¹¹⁵² Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 119.

¹¹⁵³ Neşe Karanfil, "Katar'ın dünyada 335 milyar dolarlık yatırımı var"; *Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute*, "Qatar Investment Authority", <https://www.swfinstitute.org/profile/598cdaa60124e9fd2d05bc5a>, (27 June 2019).

such as Qatar Holding (QH), the leading company for Qatar's strategic and direct investment, Delta Two LTD, the second important company, Qatari Diar (QD), a real estate and development company, Hassad Food (HF), state-owned food and agricultural investment company, Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), an international investment company for sports and leisure industries.¹¹⁵⁴

Hassad Food, for example, Qatar's key investing company in the food and agri-business sectors, aims to have a global portfolio of globally trusted product brands. It made a number of deals with international partners by developing and creating new branches in other countries. Hassad Australia was founded in 2009 to buy farmlands in the country for wheat and livestock production.¹¹⁵⁵ It purchased 14 farms in four states with over 280,000 hectares and has grown food and animals in its properties since then.¹¹⁵⁶ Additionally, Qatar's Hassad Food has owned a leading poultry company called A'Saffa Foods in Oman with 22,000 tons yearly since 2015.¹¹⁵⁷

Qatar invested in many other fields such as football clubs, residential properties, oil companies, carmakers, fashion designers, banking. In other words, Qatar invested across the globe to increase the nation's wealth.¹¹⁵⁸ Additionally, it seized an opportunity to develop its trade, tourism and investment relations with the other states, and subsequently enhanced its credibility worldwide, and carved out a sense of national pride among its citizens.¹¹⁵⁹

Qatar's investment strategy seems rational and well calculated because it invested in the worldwide known and publicly trusted brands through the state-controlled Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). It bought various well-known brands in the world such as Qatar National Bank, Volkswagen, Rosneft Petrol, Barclays, Royal Dutch Shell, Agricultural Bank of China, Sainsbury, Credit Suisse, Total, Glencore, Canary Wharf, Heathrow, Tiffany&Co., Harrold's.¹¹⁶⁰ Qatar's western investments appeared not to be

¹¹⁵⁴ Al Horr et al., p. 352.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 147.

¹¹⁵⁶ Cameron England, "Qatari Government buys up 14,000 hectares of prime South Australian farmland", **The Advertiser**, 17 June 2014, <https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/qatari-government-buys-up-14000-hectares-of-prime-south-australian-farmland/news-story/cad9ecad58522701d0aa3cec9774f4f5>, (04 November 2019).

¹¹⁵⁷ Hassad Food's Official Website, <https://www.hassad.com/English/Pages/ASaffa.aspx>, (28 June 2019).

¹¹⁵⁸ Al Horr et al., p. 352.

¹¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 352-361.

¹¹⁶⁰ Neşe Karanfil, "Katar'ın dünyada 335 milyar dolarlık yatırımı var"; **Qatar Investment Authority Official Website**, <https://www.qia.qa/Investments/InvestmentsApproach.aspx>, (29 June 2019).

risky due to the institutional protection in these countries.¹¹⁶¹ Qatar tried to strengthen its position in Sudan as well. The QIA also invested in the pan-African telecom company Airtel Africa, which operates in 14 countries in Africa and provides 2G, 3G and 4G technologies as well as data services and mobile commerce in the country.¹¹⁶² By purchasing these given global brands, Qatar enlarged the Asian actors as well as its trade relations with the western actors. Consequently, Qatar's huge investments not only increased its economic wealth but also gained much freedom and ability to secure its regional and international interests and foreign policy goals.

In the context of foreign investment, Qatar has considerable investments in the UK. Especially, former Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jaber al-Thani (HBJ) headed the QIA by dealing with some investments personally in the country. Qatari Sovereign Wealth Funds purchased many assets in England such as Harrods, the Shard, Chelsea Barracks, Canary Wharf, London Stock Exchange, the Berkeley, the Connaught and Claridge's. In his interview with Roula Khalaf, HBJ said that people didn't believe Doha would invest up to 20 billion pounds in England, however, Qatar's investment in the country was nearly 30 billion pounds. He also urged that Qatar had helped England's economy at a bad time. Moreover, Qatar had some political calculations in their investments mainly to increase its position abroad.¹¹⁶³ From a different perspective, the given state-sponsored worldwide economic investments clearly demonstrate that Qatar built a good basis to implement its political ambitions in international politics¹¹⁶⁴ and tried to maintain and foster its power projection beyond the borders through a long-standing investment vision.¹¹⁶⁵

After the 2017 Qatar crisis, Qatar strategically tried to intensify its trade relations including trade and military with its long-standing ally the US. Qatari Trade Minister Ali al-Kuwairi said that bilateral trade volume with the US doubled within 10 years and reached \$6 billion just only for a short period from January to October in 2018. It sought

¹¹⁶¹ Al Horr et al., p. 353; Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 40-42.

¹¹⁶² Navadha Pandey, "Qatar Investment Authority to invest \$200 million in Airtel Africa", *Live Mint*, 30 January 2019, <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/qatar-investment-authority-to-invest-200-million-in-airtel-africa-1548847764554.html>, (29 June 2019); The Hindu Business Line, "Qatar Investment Authority infuses \$200 m in Airtel Africa", 30 January 2019, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/qatar-investment-authority-infuses-200-m-in-airtel-africa/article26130439.ece>, (29 June 2019).

¹¹⁶³ Roula Khalaf, "Lunch with the FT: Sheikh Hamad Bin-Jaber al-Thani", *Financial Times*, 15 April 2016.

¹¹⁶⁴ Akkaya and Elrantisi, p. 13.

¹¹⁶⁵ Zafirov, p. 191.

to invest in fundamental sectors such as real estate, bourse and technology in the US. The QIA invested \$1.6 billion in the US networking software company Gigamon. Although its economic investment is valued at nearly \$30 billion in the US market, with the recent commitments, the QIA authority targeted to reach nearly \$61 billion valued investment in the US. In increasing its shares of the assets in the US, Qatar sought to balance their portfolio in the European market and transferred its allocations toward the US market.¹¹⁶⁶ Finally, these strategic investments can be analysed as an international barter that guaranties Qatar's position in regional and international politics.

On the other hand, Qatar drafted a foreign investment law in 2018 with the target to let foreign investors own 100% of the capital of the invested companies in the economic sector. Also, it introduced new reforms for the permanent residents to develop a knowledge-based economy by retaining mostly skilled foreign workers in the country.¹¹⁶⁷ With these novel attempts on economy and economy-related sectors, it tried to sustain its economic growth and ensure its security against threats.

Table 2: Qatar's GDP and GDP Growth (2010-2019)

Years	GDP (US\$)	GDP Growth (%)
2010	125.122	19.5
2011	167.775	13.3
2012	186.834	4.7
2013	198.728	5.5
2014	206.225	5.3
2015	161.74	4.7
2016	151.732	3
2017	161.099	-1.4
2018	183.335	1.2
2019	175.838	0.7

Source: data.worldbank.org

¹¹⁶⁶ "Qatar sovereign wealth fund to boost US portfolio to \$61b", **The StraitsTimes**, 15 June 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/business/invest/qatar-sovereign-wealth-fund-to-boost-us-portfolio-to-61b>. (27 June 2019).

¹¹⁶⁷ World Bank, "Qatar: Macro Poverty Outlook (April 2019)", p. 172, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/669561556573880727/pdf/Macro-Poverty-Outlook-for-Qatar.pdf>, (01 July 2019).

Depending on Table 2, Qatar's GDP (Gross Domestic Products) has steadily increased over the years. However, it has rocketed since 2000. Despite the economic crisis in the world in 2008, Qatar's economy seemed not to be influenced as much as the other countries in the world. During the Arab Spring and Qatar Crisis of 2014 when its neighbouring states cut off their diplomatic and economic ties, its GDP kept rising and peaked in 2014 at the amount of US\$206 billion.¹¹⁶⁸ In the following years when Qatar faced new challenges from the neighbouring countries, it also kept stability in the context of GDP values. Simultaneously, Qatar's GDP and annual GDP Growth (except from the GDP Growth in 2017) show that Qatar was not affected by the 2014 Qatar crisis and the 2017 Qatar crisis on an economic ground (Table 2).

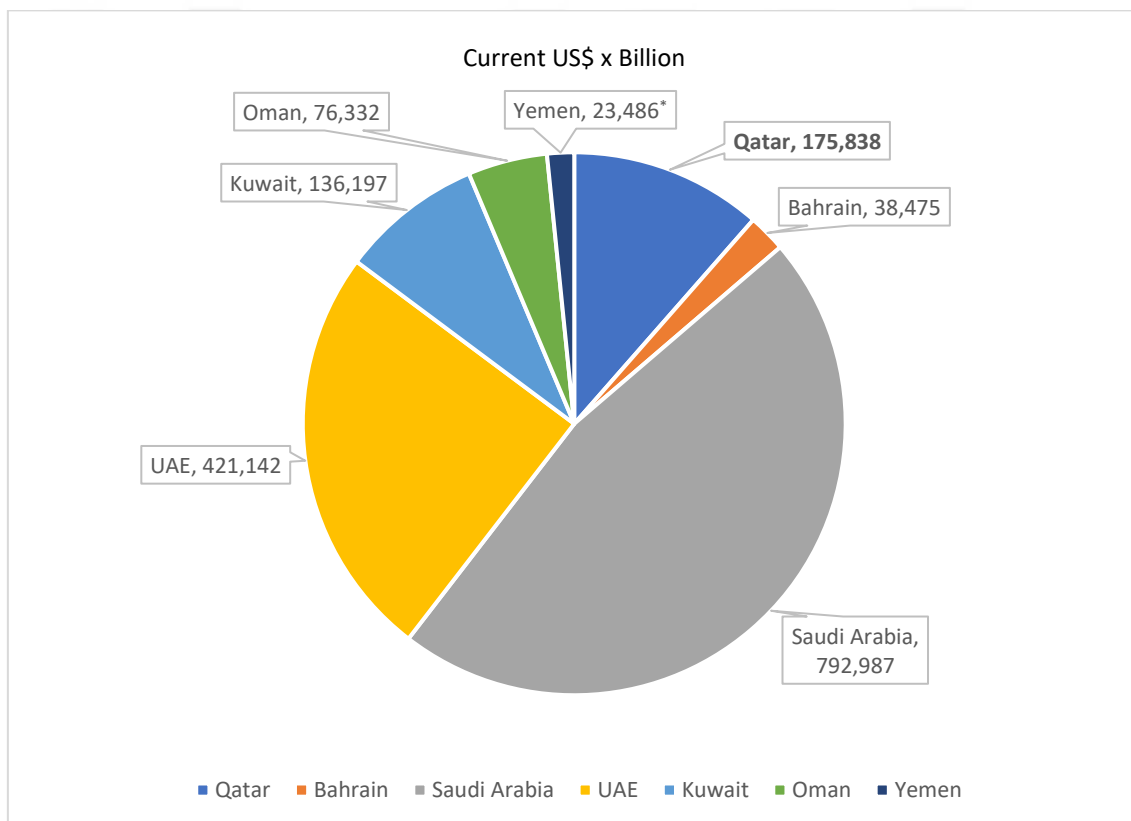


Figure 6. GDP (Gross Domestic Products) of The GCC Countries (2019)

Source: www.data.worldbank.org,

* Yemen (2018)

In 2019, Qatar's GDP was worth US\$175 billion. This figure shows that Qatar was the third biggest economy after its rivals the UAE and the KSA among the GCC in that year

¹¹⁶⁸ World Bank, "Qatar: Macro Poverty Outlook (April 2019)", p. 172.

(Figure 6. GDP (Gross Domestic Products as Current US \$)).¹¹⁶⁹ Also, the GDP value of Qatar represents a strong economic profile in the Gulf region and the Middle East. This value also means that Qatar can make more investments in the other markets. Finally, the values based on the economic activities and other indicators gave a fruitful output in terms of Qatar's economic weight. Even, the restrictive environments during the 2014 and 2017 Qatar crises could not obstruct its economic development and activities to some extent.

Qatar's most significant source of economic wealth is manifestly LNG.¹¹⁷⁰ It has the third-largest natural gas reserve in the world.¹¹⁷¹ To figure the natural resources, Qatar holds about 13% (appr. 900 trillion cubic feet) of the world's proven natural gas reserves with 25.7 trillion cubic meters and proved crude oil reserves of approximately 25.24 billion bbl. (1 January 2018).¹¹⁷² Its gas production has been considerably increasing 15% per year and its export covers nearly 30% of the world's LNG market.¹¹⁷³ From this perspective, Qatar is very dominant in the energy market. Additionally, Qatar's leading state-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP) has been seeking to develop "liquefaction capacity" by nearly 40%. This strategy operated through QP is believed to boost the country's revenues as well as consolidating its energy power in the global LNG market after 2024.¹¹⁷⁴ In doing so, Qatar will increase the energy competition vis-à-vis its rivals in the world. Depending on data and observations, Qatar's geo-position is vital for regional and international actors in terms of energy security and competition.

Even with a greater significance, Qatar has almost all of its gas reserves in the North Field, an offshore largest natural gas deposit in the world.¹¹⁷⁵ It means that Qatar shares its gas reserves with Iran and generates some political consequences. Owing to sharing the same natural gas reserves, Qatar pursues a calibrated political approach to its gas partner Iran. To put it differently, Qatar strategically pursues a balanced policy in its

¹¹⁶⁹ www.data.worldbank.org/qatar?view=chart, (10 September 2021).

¹¹⁷⁰ **The World Facts**, www.cia.gov.

¹¹⁷¹ "Yurtdışı Yatırımlar Ülke Profili Katar", T.C. Doha Büyükelçiliği Ticaret Müşavirliği, Mayıs 2018, p. 4, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/5b887e6813b87615b0eea9ca/cefcdd2c0048dd9ca43ca0a40a11c0553.pdf>. (01 July 2019).

¹¹⁷² **Al Jazeera**, "Ülke profili: Qatar", 13 December 2019. <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/ulke-profil/ulke-profil-katar>, (04 July 2019); <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>, (04 July 2019); **Fanack.com**, "Geography of Qatar", <https://fanack.com/qatar/geography/>, (04 July 2019).

¹¹⁷³ Jude Clemente, "Qatar As Major Competition For U.S. Liquefied Natural Gas", **Forbes**, 07 October 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/judeclemente/2018/11/07/qatar-as-major-competition-for-u-s-liquefied-natural-gas/#59621bb678ae>, (04 July 2019).

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁷⁵ **QNB**, "Qatar Economic Insight", September 2018, p. 2, <https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobkey=id&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1355602931841&ssbinary=true>, (01 July 2019).

relations with Iran to secure the gas flow from the reservoir. As noted earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, there is a traditional rivalry between Iran and the GCC states in the region. While maintaining good relations with Iran, it does not openly challenge the GCC policies towards Iran except for its strategic approach to Iran during the 2017 Qatar crisis (also mentioned in Chapter 6). The above discussion makes clear that the gas deposit in the North Field affects Qatar's political relations with Iran as well as its economic richness.

In addition to the given observations, figures and goods related to Qatar's import and export can give us some important clues about Qatar's economic situation and economic structure. Its exports in 2017 were around US\$67.5 billion, mostly based on liquefied natural gas (LNG), petroleum products and fertilizers while the import value of its foreign trade was US\$30.77 billion, mainly machinery, transport equipment, food, and chemicals.¹¹⁷⁶ These figures indicate that Qatar has significant income from the LNG export and a definite lean to an LNG-based economy. From a different perspective, its economy is dependent on natural gas reserves and LNG exports to compensate for the demands in the country. More notably, based on the import items in the given data the research shares that Qatar needs to diversify its economic resources to sustain its economic wealth and political stability. To support the analysis, Qatar heavily relies on its hydrocarbon reserves in its economy whereas its production in other economic fields is relatively limited. The Qatari leadership should trace the global changes and secure their economic assets through comprehensive plans and strategies.¹¹⁷⁷ As noted earlier, the QIA still seeks to diversify its economic resources and increase its economic wealth by investing in various fields in the world.

¹¹⁷⁶ Juha Kahkonen, "Qatar: Selected Issues", **International Monetary Fund**, 29 April 2019, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/06/02/Qatar-Selected-Issues-46957>. (20 July 2020), p. 7; The World Fact, www.cia.gov, (02 July 2019).

¹¹⁷⁷ For details, see Aisha Ghanim H. S. Alghanim, "Qatar's Journey Toward A Knowledge-Based Economy", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Doha: Qatar University, 2017; David J. Callen, "The Diversification of (In)Security in 21st Century UAE and Qatar: Cultivating Capital, Interdependence and Uncertainty", (**Unpublished PhD Dissertation**), **Arizona: The University of Arizona**, 2015; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and The Transition to The Post-Oil Era**, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

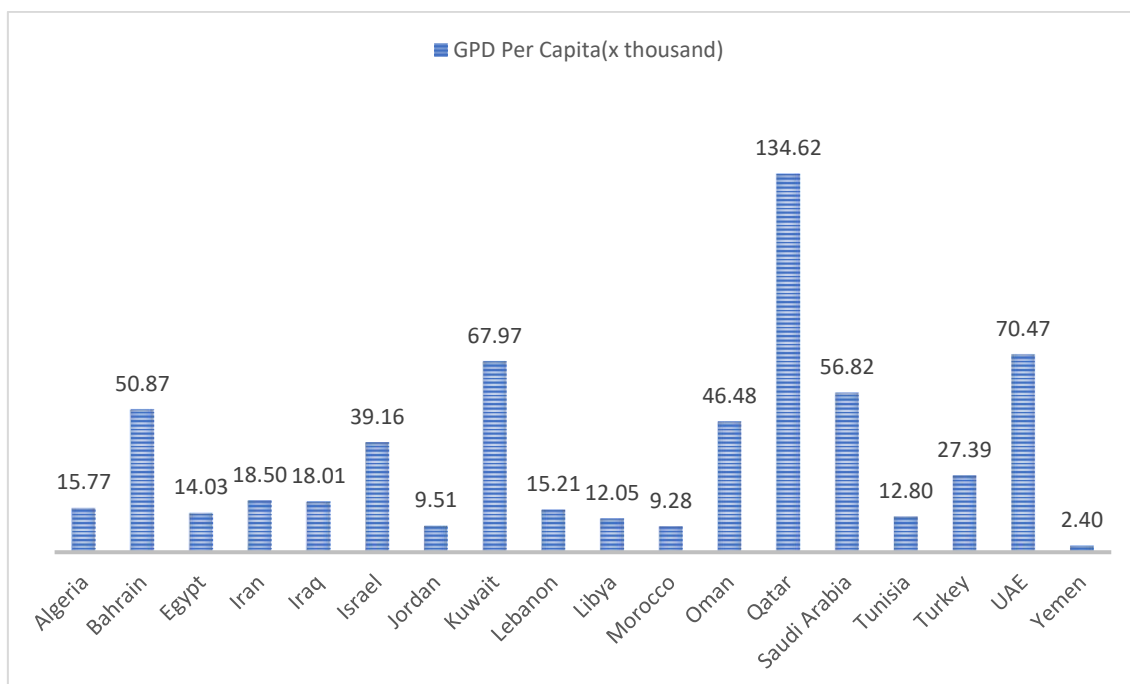


Figure 7. The Gulf and Middle Eastern Countries' Economic Outlook as GDP Per Capita Current Prices 2019 (Purchasing Power Parity (PPP); International Dollars Per Capita)

Source: IMF DataMapper (www.imf.org).

In 2019, Qatar's economic outlook created a promising impression in terms of the future of the country. Its GDP Per Capita based on PPP reached the highest level (134.000 international dollars) in 2019 when compared with its rivals (Figure 7: The Gulf and Middle Eastern Countries' Economic Outlook). It roughly represents Qatar's huge economic growth. It has a much higher GDP per capita based on PPP than any individual countries in the Gulf region and the Middle East when compared to their GDP per capita on PPP. From the figures, it can be concluded that Qatar had a positive economic development and the welfare level in the Qatari society is higher than in other countries.

Additionally, Qatar became one of the richest countries in the world with a GDP per capita income (US\$62.088) in 2019.¹¹⁷⁸ The reliable economic situation of the Qatari people prevents the emergence of any challenge against the government due to economic reasons, Therefore, Qatar does not turn to an economy-oriented foreign policy due to the high level of domestic social welfare and its own economic potential. To put it clearly, Qatar does not have economic targets in its foreign policy priority and an economy-

¹¹⁷⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=QA&view=chart>, (10 September 2021).

oriented agenda. Relying on the prosperity and wealth of the rich natural resources in the country it has not needed to diversify its economy and search for new markets until recent years. However, the economy is very important for Qatar to increase its influence in regional and international politics. It sometimes uses it as a political tool for achieving its political ambitions.¹¹⁷⁹

On the other hand, if a state owns a strong economy and developed industry, it can expand its domestic activities and secure its regional position vis-à-vis its regional rivals in the system.¹¹⁸⁰ In other words, the Qatari leadership translated the economic wealth and economy-based power source into capabilities to sustain their political legitimacy and withstand the regional challenges. To put it concretely, Qatar successfully responded to the challenge of the KSA-led camp during the 2017 Qatar crisis by relying on its own capabilities including its economic strength. As a result, Qatar maintained its domestic stability despite the high pressure of the neighbouring Gulf states (mentioned in more detail in Chapter 6).

Additionally, the higher-income countries have the ability to use their revenues to purchase military vehicles and equipment and build infrastructure.¹¹⁸¹ In line with this observation, Qatar had a large military expenditure to secure its regime survival and enhance its sphere of influence in the region. It purchased a great number of weapons from various countries for national security and other objectives. Qatar's military expenditure will be discussed further in 5.3. Qatar's Military. In addition to the observation above, the Qatari leaders had the ambition to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup in the country. The preparatory activities for the organization provided large infrastructure investments such as roads, a new port, a rail network, stadiums and other sports facilities. Qatar mostly benefited from the hydrocarbon revenues to take on these given infrastructure investments in the country.¹¹⁸²

In the last analysis, Qatar's economic activities generated a significant power projection capability in the regional and international arena.

¹¹⁷⁹ Erboğa, "Ak Parti Döneminde Türkiye'nin Katar ve Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Politikaları", p. 26-27.

¹¹⁸⁰ Amour, "Introduction: The Regional Order in the Gulf and the Middle East", p. 12.

¹¹⁸¹ Amour, **Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances in the Gulf Region and the Middle East**, p. 416.

¹¹⁸² QNB, "Qatar Economic Insight", September 2018, p. 3.

5.1.3. Qatar's Military

The Arab Spring fuelled the regional rivalry and security concept in the Middle East. The regional countries sought to provide their own security, safeguard their regime survival, balance rivals and bid for power through their own power capabilities and alliances in the insecure and anarchic environment. Also, they relatively increased their arms expeditions/race vis-à-vis their rivals.

With the survival challenge, Qatar was armed to withstand systemic push across the regional system. It purchased significant amounts of arms from the arms suppliers to strengthen its military capacity. It was ranked by 14th largest arms importer with the rate of 225 of 40 nations in the world.¹¹⁸³ It increased its arms imports and signed significant deals with the arms suppliers in the same period accordingly.¹¹⁸⁴ Qatari military expenditure increased up to 225% in volume according to the figures of its contracts signed in 2001-2010, which was estimated to be US\$1.5 billion, and the contracts of approximately US\$50 billion in 2014-18.¹¹⁸⁵

More significantly, the international actors exploited the regional rivalry and regional constraints to export their arms and increase their regional influence. The US, Russia, France, Germany and China predominantly supplied the major arms by the rate of 87% between two periods, 2009-13 and 2014-18 and increased the flow of arms to the Middle East.¹¹⁸⁶ Based on the given figures, the arms purchase preponderantly hardened the rivalry and anarchic nature of the region.

The regional rivals aimed to play a major role in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. They used their arms capacity or their military power as a tool to niche their position in the system. The TR and QA-led camp and the KSA-led camp deployed their military muscles to support the regimes or the anti-regime groups in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. In other words, they demonstrated their power projection in the neighbouring

¹¹⁸³ Pieter D. Wezeman et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018", **Sipri Fact Sheet**, March 2019, www.sipri.org, (03 July 2019).

¹¹⁸⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Asia and the Middle East lead rising trend in arms imports, US exports grow significantly, says SIPRI", 12 March 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/news/press-release/2018/asia-and-middle-east-lead-rising-trend-arms-imports-us-exports-grow-significantly-says-sipri>, (04 July 2019).

¹¹⁸⁵ Pieter D. Wezeman and Alexandra Kuimova, "Military Spending and Arms Imports by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE", **SIPRI Fact Sheet**, May 2019, www.sipri.org, (03 July 2019).

¹¹⁸⁶ Wezeman et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018".

countries to assist their allies and increase their position.¹¹⁸⁷ Moreover, economic strength helps to maintain a state's military power.¹¹⁸⁸ Qatar, similar to its rivals in the Gulf, benefited from the revenues to finance various armed groups, acquire expensive and sophisticated weapon systems and use them as an element of power.¹¹⁸⁹

In this context, Qatar seems to have diversified its arms suppliers. It purchased the large arm supplies from its Western partners as well as China while its main arms supplier the US maintained its privileged position. Germany became the second arms supplier to Qatar from 2014 to 2018. It purchased 9 Patriot PAC-3 air and missile defence systems from the US, 62 Leopard-2 tanks from Germany, short-range ballistic missiles from China from 2014 to 2018. Also, it had contracts with the UK for 24 Typhoon combat aircraft, France for 36 Rafale combat aircraft and 490 armoured vehicles, and Italy for 4 frigates. In near future, Qatar is expected to own nearly 100 advanced combat aircraft equipped with missiles. Additionally, it bought nearly 600 armoured vehicles from its key ally Turkey.¹¹⁹⁰ With this huge military spending, Qatar tried to strengthen its military capabilities and power projection operations in the neighbouring and distant countries in an unprecedented way.

On the other hand, I established a rationale for Qatar's military spending strategy. Qatar chose the arms suppliers from the countries that it desired to build mutual economic and commercial ties. Likewise, the excessive armament policy of Qatar was an effort to provide security support and develop a close relationship with the western powers, in particular, the US and European states.¹¹⁹¹ In line with this policy, Qatar made large financial investments in the US, Germany, the UK, France, Turkey and Italy. Also, it concluded arms contracts with these arm suppliers to ensure its military capacity. These western countries became the major arms suppliers to Qatar as well. More specifically, Qatar invested in Germany for about 25 billion Euros through the QIA.¹¹⁹² In return,

¹¹⁸⁷ Amour, "Regional Rivalries and Security Alliances in the Gulf Region and the Middle East", p. 422-423.

¹¹⁸⁸ Balci, "Realism", p. 126.

¹¹⁸⁹ İbrahim Kümek, "Küçük Devlet Müdahaleciliği: Katar ve BAE'nin Libya Müdahalesi", *Uluslararası Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4(2), 240-282, December 2020, p. 252.

¹¹⁹⁰ Wezeman and Kuimova, "Military Spending and Arms Imports by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE"; *VOA*, "Qatar to Expand Air Base Hosting Major US Military Facility", 27 August 2019. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/qatar-expand-air-base-hosting-major-us-military-facility>, (08 July 2019).

¹¹⁹¹ Kümek, p. 110.

¹¹⁹² **Government Communications Office**, "His Highness the Amir announces 10 billion Euros investment in Germany at Qatar-Germany Business and Investment Forum", 07 September 2018, <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/top-news/his-highness-the-amir-announces-e10-billion-investment-in-germany-at-qatar-germany-business-and-investment-forum/>, (08 June 2019).

Germany became Qatar's second arms supplier.¹¹⁹³ In line with this rationale, the Qatari leadership determined a foreign policy strategy to develop their relations with the western partners.

Table 3: Middle Eastern Powers Ranked by Military Strength (2021)

1	Turkey	6	UAE	11	Jordan
2	Egypt	7	Iraq	12	Yemen
3	Iran	8	Syria	13	Qatar
4	Saudi Arabia	9	Kuwait	14	Bahrain
5	Israel	10	Oman	15	Lebanon

Source: www.globalfirepower.com

In the category of Middle Eastern Powers Ranked by Military Strength in 2021, Qatar was ranked as the 13th of the fifteen nations in the region (Table 3: Middle Eastern Powers-2021).¹¹⁹⁴ In similar research of the Business Insider, it was reported that Qatar was the 11th of the 15 nations in the Middle East in 2014.¹¹⁹⁵ When the figures of the 2014 military strength by Business Insider and the 2021 military strength by Global Firepower were taken into account for the following analysis, Qatar's military strength relatively decreased in military ranking. The latest figures revealed that Qatar occupied the lowest rank with the exception of Bahrain and Lebanon. However, the data on the Middle Eastern Powers Ranked by Military Strength in 2021¹¹⁹⁶ (and also, 2019¹¹⁹⁷) caused a question on how Qatar with a stable domestic environment and harmony in its domestic institutions and government, could pose lower military strength than even Yemen, which had an ongoing chaotic environment and fragmented structure in government. Also, the SIPRI analysis supports this given question in the research. It clearly urges that Qatar didn't provide any military data linked with its military capacity/capabilities for about 5 years.¹¹⁹⁸ In line with this view, it not only reflects the lack of transparency in the military issues in Qatar but also poses a challenge for the

¹¹⁹³ Wezeman et al., "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018".

¹¹⁹⁴ **Global Fire Power**, <http://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-middle-east.asp>, (03 July 2019).

¹¹⁹⁵ **Business Insider**, "The Most Powerful Militaries In the Middle East (RANKED)", <https://www.businessinsider.com/most-powerful-militaries-in-the-middle-east-2014-8#kurdish-peshmerga-24>, (04 July 2019).

¹¹⁹⁶ <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-middle-east.php>, (10 September 2021).

¹¹⁹⁷ <http://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-middle-east.asp>, (03 July 2019).

¹¹⁹⁸ Wezeman and Kuimova, "Military Spending and Arms Imports by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE".

researchers to analyse Qatar's military strength. Thus, some values in the recent surveys should be considered to be estimated.

Table 4: Qatar's Military Strength (2019 and 2021)

	2019	2021
Manpower		
Available Manpower	612,164	611,044
Fit-for-service	474,427	470,503
Reaching Military Age Annually	11,861	11,763
Total Military Personnel (est.)	12,000	17,000
Active Personnel	12,000	12,000
Reserve Personnel	-	-
Airpower		
Total Aircraft Strength	100	148
Fighters	9	32
Attack	15	6
Transports	12	12
Trainers	31	35
Total Helicopter Strength	42	63
Attack Helicopters	-	20
Land Power		
Combat Tanks	95	86
Armoured Fighting Vehicles	465	750
Self-Propelled Artillery	46	46
Towed Artillery	12	12
Rocket Projectors	17	75
Naval Power		
Total Naval Assets	80	86
Aircraft Carriers	-	-
Frigates	-	-
Destroyers	-	-
Corvettes	-	-
Submarines	-	-
Petrol Vessels	68	68
Mine Warfare	-	-
Natural Resources (Petroleum)		
Oil Production (Barrels per day)	1,500,000	1,465,000
Oil Consumption (Barrels per day)	220,000	190,000
Proven Resources (Barrels per day)	25,240,000,000	25,240,000,000
Logistical Resources		
Label Force	1,953,000	1,953,000

Merchant Marine Strength	143	136
Major Parts, Hubs and Terminals	3	3
Roadway Coverage (km)	7,790	7,790
Railway Coverage (km)	-	-
Serviceable Airports	6	6
Financial Resources		
Defense Budget (\$US)	1,930,000,000	6,000,000,000
External Debt (\$US)	167,800,000,000	167,800,000,000
Reserves of Foreign Exchange and Gold (\$US)	15,010,000,000	15,010,000,000
Purchasing Power Parity (\$US)	345,000,000,000	345,000,000,000
Geography		
Square Land Area (km ²)	11,586	11,586
Coastline (km)	563	563
Shared borders (km)	87	87
Waterways (km)	-	-

Source: www.globalfirepower.com

*Some values are estimated.

Realists contend that military capabilities including military equipment, military capabilities and military budget represent its power projection. Also, the military power of an individual state can be measured with these given military capabilities.¹¹⁹⁹ In the light of this theoretical debate, we can roughly measure Qatar's military power and analyse its power projection by examining its military equipment, military troops, military budget, military expenditure, etc.

As seen from the figures of Qatar's Military Strength in 2019 and 2021 (Table 4) in the Gulf region. Military capabilities are very significant for the states to respond to the perceived threats when required. It indicates that Qatar needed more assistance and development in this field. More significantly, it sought to improve its air defence capabilities, which are crucial for the deployment of its troops in a crisis environment.¹²⁰⁰ Thus, it strategically planned to strengthen its air force due to the small size of military personnel in the country. It purchased expensive and sophisticated weapons from the western countries with increasing momentum (mentioned earlier). The figures of Qatar's Military Strength in 2019-2021 indicate that it tripled the defence budget although the

¹¹⁹⁹ Hancock and Lobell, p. 145.

¹²⁰⁰ Kumek, p. 103-104.

figures in natural resources almost remain stable. Supplementarily, it used its rich hydrocarbon income (defence budget) to increase its military power and modernize its military assets with the most advanced weapons systems to stand for the challenges in the region.¹²⁰¹

Also, the Qatari leadership pursued a new policy about national security after the Qatar Crisis in 2017. They re-calculated their domestic military capabilities.¹²⁰² They wanted to prepare their citizens for the state defence. By doing so, they can strategically tolerate the lack of manpower in times of conflict. In their political decision, the air force increased its strategic importance to reduce the disadvantages of the small military personnel. In this context, the Qatari Air Academy where the Qatari pilots graduated had a central role in their decision.¹²⁰³

Given the discussion above, Qatar had a huge expenditure to create its military capability and increase its power projection capabilities in the region. Despite its efforts and military spending, it has a small armed force, which does not mean that its military capability is weak. To put it concretely, in the post-Cold War, states generally desired to have a smaller size of armed forces but well-trained and equipped with a high-tech military for contemporary armed conflicts.¹²⁰⁴

5.2. Qatar's Intangible Source of Power/Qatar's Immaterial Capabilities

This section mainly aims to investigate the immaterial capabilities of Qatar. NCR considers other generating domestic resources in state power and believes that power is much more than material resources such as troops, missiles, air jets, which can be called immaterial capabilities.¹²⁰⁵ Qatar has done key activities in various fields, which promote intangible (immaterial) power projection. Primarily Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, after he seized the power in 1995, focused on the leading projects, investments and reforms to increase Qatar's credibility and visibility in the regional and international arena. In this line, Emir supported the establishment of the Al Jazeera media outlet by

¹²⁰¹ Eric Knecht, "As rift lingers with neighbors, Qatar ramps up air and seapower", **Reuters**, 29 November 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-defence-idUSKCN1NY1ZO>, (08 July 2019).

¹²⁰² **Reuters**, "Qatar to expand air hosting major U.S. military facility", 27 August 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-airbase/qatar-to-expand-air-base-hosting-major-u-s-military-facility-idUSKCN1LC1TJ>, (29 September 2019).

¹²⁰³ **The Peninsula**, "Qatar to strengthen military ties with US", 30 Jan 2018.

¹²⁰⁴ Sam Perlo-Freeman, "Monitoring military Expenditure", 11 Jan. 2017, www.sipri.org.

¹²⁰⁵ Oswell, p. 29-35; Taliaferro, p. 435.

prioritizing the freedom of the press. With its challenging broadcast to the traditional approach of the regional media, Al Jazeera played an important role in regional and international affairs and managed to attract the attention of both the Arab world and the West. To put it clearly, Al-Jazeera represented Qatar's intangible power/immaterial capabilities at home and in distant countries. Concurrently, it made strategic investments and foreign aids in many parts of the world to shield its autonomous foreign policy and leverage its political position in regional and international politics. The state-owned institutions and branding activities generated their immaterial capabilities accordingly.

To sum up, Qatar increased its immaterial power projection through state-owned assets and successfully exploited these immaterial power capabilities during the Arab Spring.

5.2.1. Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera Arabic was founded in Doha in 1996. In its foundation, it received the assistance of professionals from the Western media, especially BBC Arabic. In this context, BBC Arabic's position in the Middle East played a significant role in its foundation. Later it was excluded from the Saudis' satellite due to the BBC's interview with the Saudi dissident Mohammad al-Massari, who lived in London.¹²⁰⁶ Moving from this, the BBC staff, who lost their jobs due to the collapse of the BBC Arabic satellite channel, were employed at the new satellite channel.¹²⁰⁷

Al Jazeera was supported financially by the Qatari royal family although it technically seemed to be a private channel.¹²⁰⁸ Emir Hamad backed the satellite channel by US\$140 million.¹²⁰⁹ More significantly, the channel filled the void in the region as it was uncontrolled and uncensored with its own style, perspective, and diversity of telling stories.¹²¹⁰ On the other hand, the traditional channels usually worked under the control of their host states. They usually represented ideological, state-centric and authoritarian

¹²⁰⁶ Zafirov, p. 194; Dilip Hiro, "Saudi Arabia's New Succession Plan Shakes Up the Middle East", **Yale Global Online**, 29 June 2017, <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/saudi-arabias-new-succession-plan-shakes-middle-east>, (17 February 2019).

¹²⁰⁷ Nabil Sultan, "Al Jazeera: Reflections on the Arab Spring", **Journal of Arabian Studies**, 3:2, 249-264, DOI: 10.1080/21534764.2013.863821, 2013, p. 249.

¹²⁰⁸ Andrew F. Cooper and Bessma Momani, "Qatar and Expanded Contours of Small State Diplomacy", **The International Spectator**, 46:3, 2011, 113-128, DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2011.576181, p. 122.

¹²⁰⁹ Sultan, p. 250.

¹²¹⁰ Amir G Takawi Ghali, "Al Jazeera Networks the Voice of the Arab World", (**Unpublished Master Thesis**), Kutztown, Pennsylvania: Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, 2012, p. 17.

characteristics. Conversely, Al Jazeera brought a novel look and perspective to the region with its communicative, interactive and pluralist approach.¹²¹¹

With its broadcasting policy, Al Jazeera developed a different approach from the traditional Arab media, which were broadcasting in line with the policies of the states or governments they were affiliated with. Thus, it was unthinkable for the traditional media organisations to pursue a more different policy in broadcasting than their state policies. Otherwise, they could face bans on their broadcasting. Even they could face imprisonment if they dared to broadcast challenging news or analyses against the governments or heads of the states. As a result, the channels avoided criticising them and tried to be in line with them.¹²¹² Conversely, Al Jazeera aimed to follow an independent broadcasting policy when compared with those media organisations. Even, its broadcast and policy disturbed governments and leaders in the region as it was not in harmony with the policies or practices of the regional countries. Eventually, Al Jazeera posed a serious threat to the status of Arab governments and their leaders. This caused dissatisfaction or criticism against Al Jazeera as well.¹²¹³

Apart from the local and regional media, the western ones were actively broadcasting in the Middle East. However, the Arab people felt suspicious about these western media outlets. Simply put, the Arab people did not trust the western news channels due to their colonial experience. In this regard, Al Jazeera filled in the gap as a trusted media in the region. It was an Arabic channel with Arab journalists who were voicing their opinions freely. They also challenged to criticize any states and governments, unlike traditional Arab media. Hence, it gained a great number of viewers in the region¹²¹⁴ by constituting an assertive and independent channel in the region.

Also, Al Jazeera media network reached a significant technical capacity and prestige with its experienced staff and broadcast assets. It managed to broadcast to nearly 310 million households in more than 100 countries as well. In a sense, it underpinned “the Voice of the People” on a broader scale.¹²¹⁵

¹²¹¹ Abdelmoula, p. 68.

¹²¹² Anthony A. Maalouf, “The Influence of Al-Jazeera in the Arab World and the Response of Arab Governments”, (Unpublished Master Thesis), Villanova University, 2008, p. 2; Sultan, p. 251.

¹²¹³ Sultan, p. 4-5; Cooper and Momani, p. 122.

¹²¹⁴ Maalouf, p. 3.

¹²¹⁵ www.aljazeera.com, (25 January 2019).

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq increased Al Jazeera's broader popularity and influence because its coverage and stories linked with these wars were very successful and extended its influence beyond the Arabian borders. Then it became one of the key media players in the international arena. On the other hand, it posed a challenge to the state-controlled media in the region and the western countries. The politicians criticized the channel and even the US army wanted to stop its broadcast in Kabul (2001) and Baghdad (2003).¹²¹⁶

Despite negative criticism and efforts to end its broadcast, the Al Jazeera media network gradually gained leverage in the region. In this regard, its Arabic channel was recognized as the most influential Arab TV channel in the region with its various thematic programmes such as talk shows, sports, education programmes and finance programmes. With the help of these programmes, it targeted to share the Arab world's political, economic and social interests.¹²¹⁷ Also, Al Jazeera was used to counterweight Riyadh's pan-Arab media network the Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).¹²¹⁸ In other words, Saudi Arabia's media power in the region was balanced by Qatar's Al Jazeera. Qatar sought to balance Riyadh's influence through media activities in the region as these activities provide a sphere of influence for the states.

After Al Jazeera started to broadcast the news in English in 2006, it reached the regional and international viewers. More strikingly, Al Jazeera English became effective during the Arab Spring by helping the protestors to be heard beyond the Middle East. It managed to attract the west's interest in the protests in the region. Similarly, Al Jazeera helped to create an international public opinion against the authoritarian governments in the Middle East. From this standpoint, it affected the Arab world as well as the western world through its unprecedented stories taken from the hotspots of the uprisings during the Arab Spring. Al Jazeera's critical news towards the popular uprisings in the Arab societies created the "Al-Jazeera effect", similar to the "CNN effect" in the West.¹²¹⁹ Given this background, Al Jazeera created awareness regionally and globally.

Also, Al Jazeera increased Qatar's immaterial capabilities projection in the neighbouring and distant areas. Immaterial/intangible capability creates an agenda and attracts others

¹²¹⁶ Abdelmoula, p.63-64; Sultan, p. 252.

¹²¹⁷ Ghali, p. 6-17.

¹²¹⁸ Cooper and Momani, p. 122.

¹²¹⁹ Cooper and Momani, p. 122.

through the resources such as culture, political values and foreign policies.¹²²⁰ Consistently with the theoretical assumption, Al Jazeera assumed its host country's immaterial capabilities regionally and globally. During the Arab Spring uprisings, this media outlet with a leading role regionally and globally became a common voice of the rebels in the Middle East. In line with this perspective, Al Jazeera managed to unite the anti-government protestors in different countries through its live coverages.¹²²¹ Simply put, its broadcast and coverage became an effective tool to back up the street uprisings. It took a key role in the popular protests against the Arab rulers/regimes in the region by reporting with the activists/anti-regime protestors at the scene.¹²²²

Nevertheless, their staff confronted the difficulties in the Middle Eastern states in transition. In Tunisia, the protests were circulated by social media users but Al Jazeera helped the popular protests to reach the wider public. In fact, it was not allowed to report until the fall of the Ben Ali regime because its journalists could not enter Tunisia. Instead, it used "citizen-generated images" in its coverage.¹²²³ This means that its broadcast came from Doha through the sources obtained by social media. The local people used their cell phones, personal cameras and so on. Thus, Al Jazeera reached the source of information through its connections with the activists and "citizen journalists."¹²²⁴

After the popular uprisings jeopardized Egypt's position, the channel increased its activities in the country. It established Al Jazeera Mubashir and positioned many reporters in the country. It provided a non-stop coverage of events during the popular uprisings. They aired the protestors and their demonstrations in Tahrir Square by presenting as a legitimate body who struggles for human rights and democracy in a peaceful way against the authoritarian Mubarak regime in Egypt.¹²²⁵ With more journalists, staff and reporters in the hotspots of Egyptian protests, Al Jazeera became the largest international channel to broadcast the uprisings in Egypt.¹²²⁶ The Egyptian authorities tried to stop its activities

¹²²⁰ Joseph Nye, **Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics**, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, p. 11.

¹²²¹ Abdelmoula, p. 250.

¹²²² **Al Jazeera**, "Emergency rule imposed in Tunisia", 14 June 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/201111410345507518.html>, (30 December 2018).

¹²²³ Merlyna Lim, "Framing Bouazizi: 'White lies', hybrid network, and collective/connective action in the 2010-11 Tunisian uprising", **Journalism**, 14(7), 2013, 921-941, p. 924.

¹²²⁴ Abdelmoula, p. 252.

¹²²⁵ Khalil Rinnawi, "Cyber uprising: Al-Jazeera TV channel and the Egyptian uprising", **Language and Intercultural Communication**, 12:2, 2012, 118-132, DOI:10.1080/14708477.2012.671607, p. 124.

¹²²⁶ Abdelmoula, p. 255.

and attempted to shut down the channel in Cairo but it didn't give up its activities.¹²²⁷ In other words, Al Jazeera kept continuing its live broadcast and reporting the violence of the regime forces in Egypt although the government tried to block its broadcasts.¹²²⁸ Furthermore, it maintained to de-legitimize the old regime in the eyes of the Arab audiences.¹²²⁹ Its coverage was usually fed by Twitter and other online sources. Surprisingly, new media such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube re-used Al Jazeera's live stories.¹²³⁰ As a result, Al Jazeera supplied the news to the Egyptian people and social media by what it gathered from its sources and backed them for their democratic rights against the old regime. It turned out to be the only credible source of news from the region for the millions in the Arab world.¹²³¹

Al Jazeera reflected Qatar's foreign policy behaviours and objectives in its broadcast towards the transition countries. It is clearly seen in Libya intervention by NATO. In similar to Qatar's foreign policy, Al Jazeera Arabic and Al Jazeera English presented a pro-interventionist policy toward the Libyan regime. In this line, the NATO military intervention was presented as a legitimate and humanitarian action to liberate the Libyan people from a violent leader, Muhammad Gaddafi.¹²³² Al Jazeera also shared the Qatari leadership's opinion on the Syrian issue and external intervention.¹²³³ The Arab people mostly supported its efforts for the rebels in Syria although external/international intervention in Syria caused a deep division among the Arabs.

Theoretically, the media has a significant role/tool in pursuing a foreign policy. It mediates between the executives and the public. It gives the necessary information to the public on behalf of governments as well. Therefore, it has the power to ease the tension and conflicts by supplying new perspectives to the public.¹²³⁴ It affords assistance to the executives to pursue their policies and protect the national interest. In light of this

¹²²⁷ Abdelmoula, p. 275; Sultan, p. 253.

¹²²⁸ Robert F. Worth, "Al Jazeera Covers Protests Despite Hurdles", **the New York Times**, 28 January 2011; Andrew Hammond, "Analysis-Egypt's Al Jazeera bans channel's key role", **Reuters**, 30 January 2011. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-egypt-aljazeera/analysis-egypts-al-jazeera-bans-channels-key-role-idUKTRE70T2X220110130>, (30 December 2018).

¹²²⁹ Rinnawi, p. 128.

¹²³⁰ Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Mark Lynch, John Sides and Deen Freelon, "New Media and Conflict After the Arab Spring", Report, **United States Institute of Peace**, 2012, p. 19-21, www.usip.org.

¹²³¹ Sultan, p. 254.

¹²³² Sumaya Al Nahed, "Covering Libya: A Framing Analysis of Al Jazeera and BBC Coverage of the 2011 Libyan Uprising and NATO Intervention", **Middle East Critique**, 24:3, 2015, 251-267, 10.1080/19436149.2015.1050784, p. 254-264.

¹²³³ Shibley Telhami, "Al Jazeera: The Most-Fearred News Network", **Brookings**, 15 June 2013.

¹²³⁴ Palloshi, p. 46.

discussion, media creates a significant power capability in the context of domestic and foreign policy behaviours. Furthermore, media broadcasts may affect the leaders' ability to extract and mobilize the state power from the domestic resources.

In Bahrain, Doha restrained Al Jazeera's coverage because it backed the KSA- led camp against anti-government protests in Bahrain.¹²³⁵ The Saudi leadership perceived Bahraini protests as a threat to the regime security and gulf security. Since Bahrain was under the security umbrella of the GCC, Saudi Arabia immediately intervened to stop the popular protests against the al-Khalifa regime via the Peninsula Shield Force. In this regard, Bahrain was considered as "an integral part of Saudi national security concerns."¹²³⁶ Leaders' perceptions of systemic stimuli put an impact on their political response. During the protests of Bahrain, Qatar also perceived it as a threat and backed Saudi Arabia and Bahrain against internal security issues. Al Jazeera seemed to be "the mouthpiece" of the al Thani regime and broadcast in line with Doha's foreign policy towards Bahraini protests during the Arab Spring.¹²³⁷ Under the influence of Doha-inclined policy, Al Jazeera repeatedly claimed that the popular uprisings in Bahrain were an inner political struggle rather than a revolution attempt to the al-Khalifa regime.¹²³⁸

However, the Al Jazeera media outlet became one of the main disputes between Qatar and its neighbouring states during the Gulf states' blockade in 2017. The KSA-led camp perceived it as a threat to their regime survival and regional stability. They tried to put a constraint on Doha to close the Al Jazeera network.¹²³⁹ It will be discussed further in Chapter 6: Qatar Crises.

In the light of the discussion above, Al Jazeera played an important role in the transition countries during the Arab Spring. Concurrently, it fostered Qatar's immaterial capabilities projection above the borders.

5.2.2. Revenues as a Political Tool to Expand the Sphere of Influence: Foreign Aids

Foreign aids can be considered as an intangible power/immaterial capabilities projection because the states generously grant the poorer states in order to change their perception

¹²³⁵ Cooper and Momani, p. 122.

¹²³⁶ Ragab, p. 40.

¹²³⁷ Felsch, p. 30.

¹²³⁸ Abdelmoula, p. 268.

¹²³⁹ **HaberTürk**, "Körfez ülkelerinden Katar'a 13 maddelik talep listesi ve 10 gün süre!", 23 June 2017. <https://www.haberturk.com/dunya/haber/1540368-korfez-ulkelerinden-katar-a-13-maddelik-talep-listesi-ve-10-gun-sure>, (03 February 2019).

or influence them. Depending on this observation, Qatar grants foreign aids to the states or some organisations to influence them in the way that it wants as well. Its hydrocarbon revenues have key importance in formulating its aid policy towards the others. To simplify it, the Qatari leadership relies on Qatar's hydrocarbon wealth to give financial support to its neighbouring countries or distant countries.¹²⁴⁰ In line with this, rich hydrocarbon resources fill the state coffer and create a strong economy. A strong economy means a source of attraction.¹²⁴¹ Against this background, the Qatari leadership uses their financial aids as an immaterial capabilities projection to influence others and increase its regional and international prestige.

Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, chairperson of Silatech's Board of Trustees made agreements to finance Somalian youth and secure more than 75, 000 jobs in Somalia. The agreements aimed to create jobs and solve energy and housing problems in the country.¹²⁴² Thus, Qatar empowers Somalian youth and women economically. Also, financial aid was expected to promote social and economic stability in the country. Consequently, Qatar created an impact on the Somalian youth and women positively with this activity. Sheikha Moza also implemented her own campaign of "Education for All" to bring 10 million children around the world into school.¹²⁴³ Through this campaign, Qatar extended its immaterial capabilities to more distant places.

Also, foreign aids and projects attract the people and change their perceptions towards their donors. Put it concretely, Qatar donated considerable money to reduce the tension in Palestine in 2018. Then, it won the Palestinian youths over due to its financial aid/donations. On the visit of Qatari diplomat Mohammed Al-Emadi, some Palestinian youths shouted, "Long live Qatar!"¹²⁴⁴ Additionally, Qatari aid consolidated the relations and perceptions between the two nations.

¹²⁴⁰ Nouf Saud Al-Maatouk and Mohamed Kama, "Determinants of the Regional Role of Qatar", **Journal of Politics and Law**, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2017, p. 194.

¹²⁴¹ Joseph Nye, **Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics**, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, p. 8.

¹²⁴² HH Sheikha Moza witnesses signing of key agreements with Silatech in New York", <https://www.mozabintnasser.qa/en/news/hh-sheikha-moza-witnesses-signing-key-agreements-silatech-new-york>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁴³ Andrew Anthony, "Sheikha Mozah: the (un)acceptable face of Qatar's global expansion", **the Guardian**, 14 December 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2014/dec/14/sheikha-mozah-acceptable-face-qatar-global-expansion>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁴⁴ Nidal al-Mughrabi, "Qatar pays Gaza salaries to ease tensions; Israel says money's not for Hamas", **Reuters**, 9 October 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-gaza/qatar-pays-gaza-salaries-to-ease-tensions-israel-says-moneys-not-for-hamas-idUSKCN1NE1ET>, (29 December 2018).

In fact, the close relations between Qatar and Hamas have been known for a long. Qatar gave diplomatic and financial support to Hamas and Palestinians vis-à-vis Israel's pressures. In 2006, Doha donated 50 billion dollars to Gaza just after the parliamentary election. In 2011, it welcomed Khalid Meshaal, the former leader of Hamas Political Bureau when he had to leave Syria owing to the unfolding political environment in Syria. Also, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani paid a visit to Gaza Strip in 2012. He was the only head of a state or Arab leader visiting the Gaza Strip after Hamas forces seized control of Gaza. As the top Arab financial donor to Palestinians in Gaza, Qatar donated over 775 million dollars in reconstruction and funding for civilians in Gaza since 2012,¹²⁴⁵ which was presented as Qatar's demonstration of goodwill.¹²⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Qatar increased its immaterial power projection in Palestine. It demonstrated that Qatar backed the Palestinians and Arabs in times of peace and conflict.

Doha helped Palestine regardless of the political divide, Fatah and Hamas, in the country. In May 2019 Doha announced that they would send \$480 million to Palestinians both in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip for health, education and humanitarian relief after the ceasefire truce with Israel. Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas political chief, and President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine thanked Emir Hamad for Qatar's generous foreign aid.¹²⁴⁷ From this foreign policy behaviour, we can analyse that Qatar sees the Palestinian people rather than a political separation. It wants to help them against the challenges and show that it stands by them as a powerful actor in the Arab world and the Middle East. It also makes its political approach accordingly.

In addition to the financial aids above, Qatar implemented the humanitarian and development projects in Palestine as it aimed to increase its influence on the Arab public.¹²⁴⁸ It opened a hospital in Gaza to help the Palestinians and sent doctors to operate and train the medical staff. Khalifa bin Jassim Al Kuwari, the head of the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), stated that support for Palestinians had been Qatar's top priority.¹²⁴⁹ It was a meaningful message to the Arab world by reminding that the

¹²⁴⁵ **The Guardian**, "Qatar to send \$480m to help Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza", 07 May 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/07/qatar-send-480m-help-palestinians-west-bank-gaza-israel-ceasefire>, (30 June 2019).

¹²⁴⁶ Zafirov, p. 198.

¹²⁴⁷ **Al Jazeera**, "Qatar to send \$480m to West Bank, Gaza after truce with Israel", 07 May 2019; **The Guardian**, "Qatar to send \$480m to help Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza", 07 May 2019.

¹²⁴⁸ Kumeck, p. 88-91.

¹²⁴⁹ **The Peninsula**, "Qatar-funded 100-bed rehabilitation and prostheses hospital opens in Gaza", 23 April 2019.

Palestinian issue always became a priority in the political agenda of the Arab world. From Qatar's support on opening a rehabilitation and prosthetics hospital in Gaza, it can be concluded that Doha tried to show its support to Palestinians and administration in Gaza as well as leveraging its position in the Arab world.

Foreign aid policy also enables Qatar to create a positive and strong image in global politics.¹²⁵⁰ The UN championed Qatar's financial aid in Palestine. Nickolay Mladenov, the coordinator of the UN for the Middle East peace process, urged that the aid would provide stability and compensate for the electricity crisis in Palestine. Since the people in Gaza had been in lack of electricity for long and the electricity crisis had been growing in the enclave, the granted money would be transferred to both the poor families and the electricity company for the fuel in Gaza.¹²⁵¹ Thus, Qatar attempted to solve the crisis as well as providing a stable environment in Gaza. Additionally, Doha was well positioned in the Palestinian issue through granting generous financial aids.

After the Arab Spring, Qatar openly backed the Islamists such as Muslim Brotherhood in the transition countries economically. In the post-Ben Ali regime in Tunisia, it provided a US\$1 billion loan with an interest rate of 2.5% to the Tunisian government of Moncef Marzouki to restore the country with the generous job offer for the 20,000 Tunisian university graduates. Then, the Hizb al-Nahda, a moderate Islamist party and coalition partner in the government, was pleased with the Qatari financial aid.¹²⁵² In line with this view, Qatar consolidated its power with the Tunisian government in the post-Ben Ali regime.¹²⁵³

In Egypt, the Qatari leadership clearly determined their political stance against the old regime. They backed the MB-attached government accordingly. The new government required financial support to ensure domestic stability in the country. With the financial support/aid, states can consolidate their existing alliance building when they share the similar interests.¹²⁵⁴ In this regard, they gave financial support of \$2.5 billion to the Morsi

¹²⁵⁰ Kumek, "Küçük Devlet Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Basra Körfezi Emirliklerinin Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Davranışları (Kuveyt, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE, Umman)", p. 139.

¹²⁵¹ Mohammed Asad, "108,000 Gaza families to benefit from Qatar funds transfer", **Middle East Monitor**, 13 May 2019. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190513-108000-gaza-families-to-benefit-from-qatar-funds-transfer/>, (30 June 2019).

¹²⁵² **The Economist**, "Qatar provides financial support to Tunisia", 1 June 2012.

¹²⁵³ Antwi-Boateng, p. 10.

¹²⁵⁴ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 30.

government and later took a decision to increase their support with an additional \$2.5 billion.¹²⁵⁵ In fact, Qatar's financial support was mainly used to influence Egyptian public opinion.¹²⁵⁶ The Qatari leadership showed that they supported the Egyptians and their novel leadership against the old regime and its rivals' political influence. Eventually, Qatar fostered its position in Cairo during the Morsi government through its political and generous financial support.

5.2.3. Seeking to Change the Regional and International Perception: Qatar's "State Branding" Efforts

Qatar's state branding efforts can be considered as building a sustainable ground for its intangible power. Branding has been used not only in consumerism but also in other fields such as education, health and politics.¹²⁵⁷ Emir Hamad prominently made an effort on "state branding" after he came to office in 1995. His efforts/state branding helped to increase Qatar's recognition and prestige around the world.¹²⁵⁸ Sultan Barakat simply labels Qatar's state branding as education, culture, sport, international travel and tourism, and the Arab media outlet/Al Jazeera.¹²⁵⁹ The Qatari leadership implemented and invested in these key fields, which prospect both their own citizens and the international community and managed to use their resources effectively to create an unequalled national brand in the region. In fact, they expected to achieve their own foreign policy objectives regionally and globally.¹²⁶⁰ Thus they established some key state-owned institutions such as Qatar Foundation (QF), Qatar Petroleum (QP), Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) in the country and created worldwide known trademarks such as Al Jazeera and Qatar Airways.

Qatar initiated its plans to increase its branding by implementing the National Vision 2030 (QNV) whose main goal was to develop Qatar's economic, social, human, and environmental fields. This plan promoted a knowledge-based economy. Thus, the government invested in human capital through education, innovation and information

¹²⁵⁵ **The New York Times**, "Qatar Doubles Aid to Egypt", 8 January 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/world/middleeast/qatar-doubles-aid-to-egypt.html>, (06 November 2019).

¹²⁵⁶ Antwi-Boateng, p. 10.

¹²⁵⁷ J. E. Peterson, "Qatar and the World: Branding for a Micro -State", **Middle East Journal**, Volume 60, No. 4, Autumn 2006, p. 745.

¹²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 748.

¹²⁵⁹ Sultan Barakat, "The Qatari Spring: Qatar's Emerging Role in Peacemaking", **Research Paper, Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States**, No. 24, 2012, p.7, www.lse.ac.uk/LSEKIP/, (29 December 2018).

¹²⁶⁰ Al Horr et al., "Qatar's Global-Local Nexus: From Soft to Nested Power?", p. 357.

technologies both to meet the national demands in the country and transfer knowledge for the next generations.¹²⁶¹ In doing so, they aimed to fill in the positions of skilled labours and leadership in the private and public sectors. On the other hand, the leadership expected a high rise in these fields to meet the expectations of Qatari people in the modern world. As one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, Qatar prospected to diversify its rent-based economy to a knowledge-based and service economy.¹²⁶² The Qatari political elites were aware that the natural resources which they owned would eventually run out, and relying on oil and gas income heavily poses a high risk for their future prosperity. They decided to transform into a knowledge-based society by fostering a knowledge-based economy.¹²⁶³ In fact, it was a real challenge for modernisation as well as preserving its own traditions at the same time.¹²⁶⁴

In line with the rationale above, the Qatari political leadership attempted to underscore the national strategy, which mainly aimed to cultivate the national labour force and recess the Qatari nationals in critical positions under the policy of Qatar National Vision 2030.¹²⁶⁵ In other words, they implemented the Qatari National Vision (the QNV) and the Qatari National Development Strategies (the QNDS) to transform both their economy and society for their future prosperity by 2030.¹²⁶⁶ In this regard, they wanted to fill key leadership positions both in the private and public sectors with the Qatari nationals. Qatar Foundation (QF) mostly helped such a government-driven strategic initiative.¹²⁶⁷ As a result of this strategic approach, the Qatari leadership successfully managed to sustain Qatar's economy by supplying qualified Qataris through implementing a labour force nationalization strategy and preserving its national identity and culture.¹²⁶⁸

The Qatari leadership utilized the revenues of high gas exports in the 2000s to pursue new strategies and reforms on key fields in the country. With this perspective, they

¹²⁶¹ Al-Subaiey, "Qatarization Policy-Implementation Challenges", **Brookings Doha Center**, p. 3.

¹²⁶² **BTI 2018 Qatar Country Report**, https://www.btiproject.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Qatar.pdf, (29 December 2018); Tok, Alkhater, and Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, p.3.

¹²⁶³ Baghdady, p. 137.

¹²⁶⁴ **The official website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, <https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/political-system/general-information>, (29 December 2018).

¹²⁶⁵ Al-Subaiey, p.2.

¹²⁶⁶ Mitchell and Pal, p. 86.

¹²⁶⁷ **Official Website of Qatar Foundation**, <https://www.qf.org.qa/content/about/jobs/qatarization>, (06 January 2019).

¹²⁶⁸ Al-Homsi, p. 53.

strategically invested in welfare and cohesion through various domestic projects mainly on health, education, and social protection.¹²⁶⁹

Likewise, the Qatari leadership sought to strengthen their position beyond the national borders. In line with their policy, they took professional assistance from international institutions such as RAND Corporation and the Brookings.¹²⁷⁰ These professional institutions primarily helped to design Qatar’s appearance. They initiated new strategies and development plans to transform Qatar onto the global stage.¹²⁷¹ As a result, Doha became one of the most important economic and financial hubs in the world.¹²⁷²

Furthermore, the Qatari leadership desired to be an important cultural and intellectual hub in the world. With their visionary approach to domestic and external politics, they invited the worldwide famous western universities such as Weill Cornell Medical College, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Northwestern University, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, HEC Paris, and University College London to the peninsula.¹²⁷³ In doing so, Qatari leadership took education as a prior issue and then implemented the K-12 Education Reform (2011-2014) to educate the students on the world scale. In a sense, it appeared to be the project of raising the next Qatari generations. RAND helped for the state reform of the public education system. It found the experts from other countries to work with the political actors and local education leaders.¹²⁷⁴ In line with their education policy, they founded two important domestic institutions, The Qatar Foundation (QF) and Qatar University (QU) under the Supreme Education Council of Qatar (QSEC), for the development of education in the country.¹²⁷⁵ The al-Thani family-funded QF with a special mandate not only led the national education, science, research areas and community developments but also contributed to human development regionally and internationally.¹²⁷⁶ The QF as a non-

¹²⁶⁹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 78-79.
¹²⁷⁰

BTI	2018	Qatar	Country	Report,
https://www.btiproject.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Qatar.pdf , (29 December 2018).				

¹²⁷¹ Mitchell and Pal, p. 79-80.
¹²⁷²

BTI	2014	Qatar	Country	Report,
https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2014/pdf/BTI_2014_Qatar.pdf , (29 December 2018).				

¹²⁷³ Barakat, p.7; <https://www.qf.org.qa/about/about>, (30 December 2018).
¹²⁷⁴ Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, “Qatar’s Borrowed K-12 Education Reform in Context,” in M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R.M. Alkhater, and Leslie A. Pal (Eds.), **Policy-Making in a Transformative State: The Case of Qatar**, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p. 97-101.
¹²⁷⁵ Mitchell and Pal, p. 81.
¹²⁷⁶ <https://www.qf.org.qa/about/about>, (30 December 2018).

profit organization invested millions of dollars in various education projects across the Middle East to enhance the reputation and legitimacy of Qatar on the globe. In this sense, Qatar increased its intangible power in the international arena through the ruling family-run foundations.¹²⁷⁷

Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Misnad, Emir Hamad's second wife, played a key role in implementing Qatar's education policy. She was the founder and the chairperson of the Qatar Foundation (QF). Under the responsibility of Sheikha Moza, QF dealt with national education and built "Education City", where many prestigious universities currently exist.¹²⁷⁸ Education City helped Qatar's long-termed strategy to transform its traditional economy into a knowledge-based economy mentioned earlier.¹²⁷⁹ Both Education City and The Qatar Foundation, which were founded in the direction of the planned strategy of the Qatari FPEs, can be considered to be efficacious apparatus for Qatar's increasing immaterial capabilities. Under this strategic behaviour, they highly influenced the foreign students to extend Qatari culture, political values and reputation internationally. If the states legitimate their power vis-à-vis others, they do not confront much resistance or challenge to their international desires and objectives.¹²⁸⁰

At last, their strategy turned into a success as an increasing number of foreign students began their university education in Qatar.¹²⁸¹ Current Vice-Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani stated that they had an increasing number of students from the other countries even though they faced a challenge from the neighbouring countries after 2017. Also, she reinforced that their investment in education sent a clear message to the region and the world of how knowledge and innovation had no boundaries and constraints.¹²⁸²

Immaterial capability also creates an agenda and attracts others through the resources such as culture, political values and foreign policies.¹²⁸³ From this standpoint, one of the most determining factors to foster the foreign students' education in the country was

¹²⁷⁷ Felsch, p. 27.

¹²⁷⁸ Khodr, p. 287; Ulrichsen, **The Gulf States in International Political Economy**, p. 77.

¹²⁷⁹ Justin Gengler, "The Political Costs of Qatar's Western Orientation", **Middle East Policy**, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2012, p. 71.

¹²⁸⁰ Nye, 2004, p. 10.

¹²⁸¹ Felsch, p. 27.

¹²⁸² H E Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, "They tried to make Qatar an island. We built bridges through education", **the Peninsula**, 08 June 2019.

¹²⁸³ Nye, 2004, p. 11.

leaning on that those foreign students studying in Qatar and experiencing its culture and values would help Qatar's foreign policy to be tolerated more in their countries in the future. More notably, Qatar's immaterial capability moves to achieve its foreign policy goals through higher education somehow appeared to have similarities with the US long-termed foreign policy goal towards the foreign students.¹²⁸⁴

The Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) was another branding activity in the country because museums provide a significant connection between the imagined past and present. The public sees the revival of heroic figures of the state including the ruling family through the exhibition of the Museums. This state-led "visionary determination" enlightens the public about the distinction between the past and today and guide them for a better future as well.¹²⁸⁵ From this perspective, the QMA was established to develop Qatar's prosperity both in the Arab world and the western community.¹²⁸⁶ It was a great challenge in the tribal Arab community. The societal life in the Gulf was far more different from the western life. However, the Qatari leadership sought a rapid change in the country to keep up with the west. The modern high buildings, art exhibition centres and museums have been standing as symbols of modernization in the country. Qatar posed that it was a modern country in the Middle East. However, the leadership also tried to protect their cultural heritage and maintain the link between traditions and modernity.¹²⁸⁷ In this context, the old buildings were restored. Heritage-based festivals, competitions and events were organised. Heritage-focused museums were created and funded by the ruling family.¹²⁸⁸

The state-owned airline Qatar Airways (QA) is one of the substantial immaterial capability projections of the country, which attracts a great number of business and transit passengers from the international and regional flights.¹²⁸⁹ In this sense, its goal is more different than its rival regional and global leading aviation companies.¹²⁹⁰ It has gradually

¹²⁸⁴ Antwi-Boateng, p. 4-5.

¹²⁸⁵ Kamrava, *Inside the Arab State*, p. 158.

¹²⁸⁶ Barakat, p.7.

¹²⁸⁷ In this regard see *Qatar Museums*, <https://www.qm.org.qa/en>, (29 December 2018).

¹²⁸⁸ Davidson, *After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 71.

¹²⁸⁹ Cherkaoui, p. 131.

¹²⁹⁰ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The States in International Political Economy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 156-159.

developed since it was launched as a national airline of Qatar in 1994.¹²⁹¹ Today it is known worldwide as it flies to more than 160 destinations.¹²⁹²

The QA has been awarded many times since 1997. The administration claims that these rewards show the travelling people's confidence in the QA, because the QA with nearly 46, 000 professional staff and world-class airport Hamad International Airport (HIA) serve these people to earn their confidence.¹²⁹³ From this perspective, the Qatari leadership focused on the development of the QA to increase their immaterial capability/intangible power in the international arena and successfully managed to influence many people around the world that Qatar was a confident country.

QA Group CEO and IATA Chairman Akbar Al-Baker, who was appointed by the Hamad government in 1997,¹²⁹⁴ claimed that their innovative approach to both product and service ensured their customers' loyalty, which in turn drove their rapid growth. The airline executives made strategic choices to expand their sphere of influence in the world. They became a business partner with the oneworld alliance and expanded their network in the world.¹²⁹⁵ In addition to other investments in the airline sector, the QA purchased the minority shares (%49) of Air Italy but it was not considered as a highly profitable investment because of the losses and problems in the Italian airline.¹²⁹⁶ Depending on this, we can analyse that Qatar targeted to extend its sphere of influence rather than economic gains. In other words, Qatar augmented its intangible power on the scale of the world.

Qatar Airways also worked on social responsibility projects by backing up a large number of domestic and international projects of non-profit organisations in the fields of education, health, and sports organisations. In this sense, it threw its support for "Educate A Child", The Children's Brain Tumor Foundation (CBTF) and Save the Dream

¹²⁹¹ **Qatar Airways**, <https://www.qatarairways.com/content/dam/documents/press-kit/The%20Story%20of%20Qatar%20Airways%20-%20English.pdf>, (04 November 2019).

¹²⁹² **The official website of Qatar Airways**, <https://www.qatarairways.com/en/discover.html>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁹³ **The official website of Qatar Airways**, <https://www.qatarairways.com/en/discover.html>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁹⁴ **Qatar Airways**, <https://www.qatarairways.com/content/dam/documents/press-kit/The%20Story%20of%20Qatar%20Airways%20-%20English.pdf>, (04 November 2019).

¹²⁹⁵ **IATA**, "No time to stand still: His Excellency Akbar Al-Baker, Qatar Airways", <https://airlines.iata.org/ceo-interviews/no-time-to-stand-still-his-excellency-akbar-al-baker-qatar-airways>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁹⁶ Dominic Dudley, "Why Qatar Unable to Prevent Air Italy Heading into Liquidation", **Forbes**, 12 February 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2020/02/12/qatar-unable-to-prevent-air-italy-collapse/?sh=44294b86786d>, (11 April 2021).

(International Centre for Sports Security).¹²⁹⁷ In doing so, the QA played a leading role in Qatar's intangible power (immaterial capabilities) projection in international politics.

With the branding activities, the Qatari leadership targeted to change the regional and international perception of Qatar. Then, they not only invested in culture, tourism, travel and education but also in sports. Sports activities had an attraction on the people and steer for Qatar's immaterial capabilities to influence the global audience.¹²⁹⁸ Thus, they tried to transform Qatar into a sports hub in the region. In this connection, it hosted many sports events in the country. Qatar's Masters' golf tournament has been held by Doha Golf Club since 1998. The world's best golfers come to Doha to compete in the tournament.¹²⁹⁹ Then, Qatar has been a part of the Formula One motor race tournament since 2014. Qatari round has been raced in the International Losail Circuit.¹³⁰⁰ Additionally, the 24th Men's Handball World Championship was organized in Doha in 2015. Apart from domestic and international benefits from the aforementioned sports organisations, Asian Games in 2006 played a more significant role in Qatar's bidding for the following big sports organisations. Thus, Qatar proved that it could host big sports events after the successful organisation of the 2006 Asian Games in Doha.¹³⁰¹

In 2010 Qatar succeeded in the bid for the World Cup 2022 despite the allegations of bid corruption.¹³⁰² It became the first Arab state to host such a big organisation in the region.¹³⁰³ Thus, the mega projects for the World Cup in 2012 were planned. The National Development Strategy (2017-2022) was determined to complete these projects on time.¹³⁰⁴ In this context, in the process of the organisation, the Qatari leadership had to mobilize the country's societal, financial and political institutions.¹³⁰⁵ Thus, it demonstrated the capability of the leadership to drive the domestic institutions to organize

¹²⁹⁷ The official website of Qatar Airways, <https://www.qatarairways.com/en/about-qatar-airways/social-projects.html>, (30 December 2018).

¹²⁹⁸ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, 54-59.

¹²⁹⁹ See in this regard, Qatar-masters.com, <http://www.qatar-masters.com/tournament>, (11 October 2019); ATP Tour, <https://www.atptour.com/en/tournaments/doha/451/overview>, (11 October 2019).

¹³⁰⁰ Circuit Losail com, <https://www.circuitlosail.com/>, (11 October 2019).

¹³⁰¹ Cherkaoui, p. 132.

¹³⁰² TRT World, "UK press report alleges Qatar used 'black ops' to win 2022 World Cup bid", 30 July 2018.

¹³⁰³ Al Horr et al., p. 360.

¹³⁰⁴ BTI 2018 Qatar Country Report, https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2018/pdf/BTI_2018_Qatar.pdf, (29 December 2018).

¹³⁰⁵ Mahfoud Amara, "2006 Qatar Asian Games: A 'Modernization' Project from Above", *Sport in Society*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2005, pp. 493-514, p. 494.

such megaprojects. They committed to investing a huge amount of money in sufficient infrastructure for this international sports event.¹³⁰⁶

Additionally, the Qatari leaders exploited these sports activities to pin their country on the world map.¹³⁰⁷ While this tournament changed the state's image positively, they enjoyed attracting the world's attention to the country. In the context of the World Cup 2022, it is expected to create pride for Qatari citizens as seen when South Africa hosted World Cup 2010 as the football fans from all over the world are likely to focus on the tournament.¹³⁰⁸ On the other hand, Qatar tries to promote its influence in the world. Many people from other countries can visit the country and experience the hospitality and culture of Qatar. Accordingly, it can create awareness for these people. Furthermore, the bid of the World Cup 2022 opened a wider window for Qatar to feel like "a respected and legitimate member of the international community" and a successful player in pursuing their national ambition linked with sports activities.¹³⁰⁹ Against this background, the Qatari leadership used branding activities as a political tool and immaterial capabilities projection against the rival geopolitics and traditional power considerations in the region.¹³¹⁰ It legitimated and augmented its power vis-à-vis its rivals and strengthened its position in regional and international politics.

Conclusion

There are various states in the Middle East in terms of size of the population, military capacity, geography and economy. Most of these states are generally weak and fragmented. Thus, they have to rely on the support of the external actors, primarily the US, to meet their expectations in the context of security. Additionally, forming an alliance with a stronger actor provides many advantages for the weak ones.¹³¹¹

the Arab Spring uprisings pushed the regional states for using their national powers (material and immaterial capabilities) and alliance building to safeguard their security and bid for power vis-a-vis their rivals. In this regard, they chose to ally with other actors and/or purchase large quantities of weapons to consolidate their power. Especially, Qatar

¹³⁰⁶ Davidson, *After the Sheikhs the Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies*, p. 93.

¹³⁰⁷ Amara, "2006 Qatar Asian Games: A 'Modernization' Project from Above", p. 509.

¹³⁰⁸ Antwi-Boateng, p. 9.

¹³⁰⁹ Felsch, p. 28.

¹³¹⁰ Peterson, p. 746.

¹³¹¹ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," p. 14.

and the other Gulf Arab countries perceived Iran's expansion efforts in the region as a serious threat to their security and interests. They align themselves with the regional and international countries to respond to the proximate threats. For this reason, they allied with the US to ensure their position in the rivalry Middle East.

Qatar has a small size of population and land when compared with other countries in the region. It also appears to have a lower military capacity than its rivals. However, it is aware of its strength and acts strategically to enhance it. In consideration of its small army, it sought to equip its small number of troops with advanced technology weapons and vehicles as NCR highlights that power is central instrument for the politics and power capabilities are significant to construct a foreign policy.¹³¹² Thus, it could compensate for the relative weakness in the number of troops. Additionally, it strategically wanted to establish a strong air force with large exports of weapons and air jets to compensate for the lack of land troops in the country. More importantly, some other examples suggest that the number of troops or the possession of small pieces of land may not be a disadvantage. Qatar, on the other hand, has a wealth of natural resources. It can use its rich natural resources to increase its national power. Basically, it can convert its huge economic power into military power by purchasing more weapons with advanced technologies. In line with this rationale, Qatar tried to compensate for its relative weakness in the number of troops and lack of population through its economic wealth.

Above all, Qatar owns a considerable military power even if it is relatively limited because it has gradually increased it with the great number of arms purchases including high-tech military vehicles. During the Arab Spring uprisings, it specifically proved that it could use its military power, when necessary. The Qatari jets joined the US-backed military operations against the Gaddafi regime and the Bashar-al Assad regime.

Qatar possesses very significant institutions to enhance its political position regionally and globally. In this context, it uses its intangible (immaterial) power resources to increase its influence in regional and international politics. These state-owned institutions act strategically in their activities. The QIA diversifies its economic earnings by acquiring important brands of the world and improves its relations via its investments. Moreover, by using its wealth in the form of foreign aids, it changes the perception of the people of

¹³¹² Sears, "The neoclassical realist research program: Between progressive promise and degenerative danger", p. 23.

the countries it grants. Simply put, Qatar uses its economic assets to expand its power projection in regional and international politics.

Additionally, the Qatari leadership voluntarily fostered state branding activities in some crucial areas such as health, education, tourism and sports to promote their leadership in the Arab world and pick up international support.¹³¹³ In this regard, the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which will be held for the first time in an Arab country, demonstrates Qatar's success in intangible (immaterial) power configuration as well as state branding. Likewise, Qatar Airways as a worldwide name openly exhibits Qatar's immaterial capability projection around the world by gaining international confidence and creating international recognition and credibility.

Al Jazeera's prominent influence during the Arab Spring brought Qatar to the forefront in regional and international politics. It achieved to back the popular uprisings against the long-termed authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. More notably, Al Jazeera was claimed to be the 'mouthpiece' of its host country Qatar's foreign policy as it didn't act similarly towards the popular uprisings. For example, Al Jazeera's broadcast for the Bahrain uprisings was not so critical when compared with the uprisings in Egypt and Libya, because its broadcasts towards the transition countries were quite in line with Qatar's foreign policy behaviours. Qatar backed the KSA- led Gulf coalition forces to ensure the survival of the al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain. Yet, Qatar's rise in regional and international politics during the Arab Spring caused discomfort for its rivals. Then, Al Jazeera became the source of the tense relations between Qatar and other Gulf monarchies. The KSA- led camp reacted against Doha-based Al Jazeera and wanted to shut it down through the diplomatic blockades in 2014 and 2017.

Depending on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Qatar has gradually increased its material and immaterial capabilities projection in the neighbouring and distant countries. It can use them more efficiently in regional and international politics. However, its immaterial/intangible capabilities can relatively create much more impact and weight due to its prestigious state-owned institutions' activities all around the world. The next chapter will examine the 2014 Qatar crisis and the 2017 Qatar crisis, which affected Qatar's domestic and foreign policy behaviours.

¹³¹³ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and Arab Spring*, 2014, p. 38.

CHAPTER 6: THE QATAR CRISES

Introduction

Two significant blockades beset Qatar in the post-Arab Spring. Its neighbouring countries decided to cut their diplomatic ties in 2014 and 2017. They withdrew their diplomats from Doha by targeting to put pressure diplomatically and economically. In both blockading decisions, it is seen that the claims of the blockading countries were based on similar reasons such as Al Jazeera's broadcast, intervening in their internal affairs and support for terrorism in the region.

The Qatari leadership responded quickly to the regional challenges. They tried to ease the tension with the neighbouring states as well as preserving their own interests, which shows that in the restrictive environment, the Qatari leadership could pursue strategic foreign policies to avoid the challenges. Related to this, NCR counts the leaders' perceptions of the systemic stimuli as well as their perceptions of the strategic environment into the policy analysis.¹³¹⁴ In the 2014 Qatari crisis, they agreed to send some exiled members of the Muslim Brotherhood out of the country and tried to improve its relations with the new government in Egypt and the KSA- led blockading states which had unrest for the Muslim Brotherhood and its political gains in the transition countries after the Arab Spring. In the 2017 Qatari crisis, the Qatari leadership quickly denied the claims of the blockading states and resisted the economic sanction. More significantly, Qatar benefited from its alliance relations with Turkey in the wake of the crisis. It consolidated its power and position against the blockading states. To put it concretely, Turkey sent military force to secure the regime survival of the Al-Thani family. Additionally, it urgently provided food aid as Qatar's all borders were banned by the blockading countries. At the same time, the Qatari crisis opened a new window for the reproachment of Qatar and Iran.

States possess different amounts of state power/power resources to respond to the perceived threat. However, domestic factors affect the extraction and mobilization of the

¹³¹⁴ Foulon, p. 641; Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 485-486; Rose, p. 147

resources from the domestic society.¹³¹⁵ Qatari FPEs successfully exerted and mobilized their state power during the Qatari crises. They stood up against the regional challenges mainly with their economic and diplomatic capabilities. They tried to defend their legitimacy on the regional and international ground. In line with this, Qatari people supported their leadership during the crises. Social cohesion worked very well and society united against the challenges. If a state cannot mobilize the societal forces efficiently, it may pose a weak state to its rivals.¹³¹⁶ Although some tribes had strong family relations with the Saudis, they didn't put pressure on the Qatari government due to the effects of the domestic factors such as leaders' images, state-society relations and effective domestic institutions. More notably, during the recent Qatar crisis, Emir Tamim gained more domestic support. Even, he became a symbol for the public.

This chapter mainly aims to discuss the Qatar crises of 2014 and 2017 respectively. In this context, the reasons and results of the crises will be analysed through the NCR perspective.

6.1. The 2014 Qatar Crisis

Qatar's foreign policy was much more different than its neighbouring countries (the GCC countries) during the Arab Spring, which depended on interpreting the arisen systemic stimuli/regional challenges and more importantly, their political approaches towards them. In this regard, Qatar's approach to the regional dynamics during the Arab Spring caused controversies with its neighbouring states. In contrast to its neighbouring Gulf states, it actively backed revolutionary movements and the regime changes in the region. For instance, it realized a positive media presentation through the state-owned media outlet Al Jazeera about the Islamist actors including the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt, Hamas in Gaza, the Nahda party in Tunisia, and militias in Libya and Syria.¹³¹⁷ The massive protests enforced some regional states to change their regimes and political leaders as well as causing civil wars in some others. This politically restricted environment paved the way for the MB's influence in the regional politics. The MB and its affiliates attempted to take over the political power in the states in transition. The Qatari leadership backed the MB and its affiliates in the region without perceiving them

¹³¹⁵ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 486.

¹³¹⁶ Oswell, p. 29.

¹³¹⁷ Abdurrahman Arslan, "Basra'da Katar Açmazı", *Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Diplomasi Dergisi/Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy*, Cilt/Volume: 1, Sayı/Issue: 1, Ekim/October 2015, ss/pp. 75-91, p. 78.

as a direct threat to their regime survival.¹³¹⁸ In fact, Qatar backed MB's political activities in terms of democracy and leverage its influence in the region at the cost of confronting its neighbouring countries. In this regard, it backed the new democratically elected government of Morsi in Egypt while the KSA and other Gulf states perceived the MB and/or the MB-attached governments as a serious threat to their security and regional stability. Depending on their threat perceptions and political calculations, the KSA- led camp backed the counterrevolutions in the region.¹³¹⁹ To make it clear, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who was backed by the KSA and the UAE economically and diplomatically, was replaced with the elected government of Morsi in 2013 by a military coup d'état.¹³²⁰ The new Egyptian government after the coup d'état declared the MB as a terrorist organisation and immediately banned its activities in the country. The MB's political activities were banned in the KSA and the UAE as well. However, Qatar continued to prepare a political platform for the MB in the post-Morsi period.¹³²¹

Emir Tamim as a new Emir of Qatar assumed the throne in 2013. Yet, the Kingdom's leadership saw weaknesses in the new crown for mainly three reasons. Firstly, they thought that the new emir was easier to influence than Emir Hamad. Secondly, the Islamic movement/Muslim Brotherhood governments couldn't achieve to maintain the ruling power in the region. Thirdly, the KSA and Qatar backed different opposition groups in Syria and more importantly, the KSA saw itself as "the official Gulf supporter of the Syrian opposition."¹³²² From this perspective, the rift between Qatar and the KSA widened with the emergence of the Arab Spring but Emir Hamad desired to restore the damaged relations with its neighbour.

In addition to the discussion above, the Qatari ruling elites had much more constraints in their relations with the regional states. After the military coup in 2013, the new Sisi government kept the distance between Qatar and Egypt. They accused the Doha-based TV channel Al Jazeera of its broadcasting towards their regime. Journalists from the Al

¹³¹⁸ Berger, p. 262.

¹³¹⁹ David D. Kirkpatrick, "Qatar's Support of Islamists Alienates Allies Near and Far", **New York Times**, 7 September 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/qatars-support-of-extremists-alienates-allies-near-and-far.html>, (28 January 2019); Oz Hassan, "Undermining the transatlantic democracy agenda? The Arab Spring and Saudi Arabia's counteracting democracy strategy", **Democratization**, 22:3, 479-495, p. 487.

¹³²⁰ Karen E. Young, "How Egypt wound up in the center of a Gulf Cooperation Council dispute on Qatar", **POMEPS Briefings** No: 31, The Gulf Crisis, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 18, (12 February 2019).

¹³²¹ Arslan, "Basra'da Katar Açmazı", p. 78.

¹³²² Berger, p. 263.

Jazeera news channel were arrested and imprisoned in Egypt.¹³²³ Also, in Libya, Qatar lost the political ground significantly when compared to the pre-2013 period. That is to say, Qatar joined the NATO-led military operation in Libya to topple Qaddafi from the ruling power. In the post-Qaddafi period the country was divided mainly into two ruling groups. Yet, Qatar and other neighbouring Gulf states supported the rival groups in Libya. For instance, the UAE supported the former fighters for Qaddafi and members of his ruling elite (the Khalifa Haftar group in Tripoli) whereas Qatar supported a coalition group, which included Islamist groups such as Rafallah al-Sehati in Benghazi.¹³²⁴ To put it simply, Qatar backed the Islamists/MB in Libya.

Given the background above, the long-standing pursuit of Qatari foreign policy and the continuation of its independent policies during the Arab Spring period largely disturbed the KSA- led camp. Understanding the changing regional dynamics quickly the Qatari leadership tried to take the lead throughout the region and pursued proactive policy towards the regional countries during the Arab Spring. Economic, political and military interventions to the transition countries significantly increased Qatar's influence in the region. To put it simply, the neighbouring Gulf countries perceived Qatar's rise as a great challenge to their position in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. Also, the Kingdom's leadership perceived the political transition as a threat to its regime survival and regional stability, because the MB and its affiliates strengthened their positions in the regional politics.¹³²⁵ In this regard, Saudi Arabia as a dominant regional actor backed the status quo in the region.

Additionally, Doha-based Al Jazeera became one of the key active players in regional issues. Its challenging political broadcast towards the Arab Spring movement echoed in the Arab and international community. Both the leadership of the regimes in transitional states and the most stable Gulf states were annoyed by the broadcast of the Al Jazeera media outlet. In this regard, Al Jazeera was used by Qatar to exploit its influence regionally and internationally. During the Arab Spring, it channelled striking news throughout the region to the Arab people and international community. Contrary to the traditional media approach, it bravely criticized the authoritarian regimes in the Middle

¹³²³ CNN Turk, "Katar krizi nedir? Nasıl ortaya çıktı?", 22 June 2017.

¹³²⁴ Kirkpatrick, "Qatar's Support of Islamists Alienates Allies Near and Far".

¹³²⁵ Ennis, p. 580-581.

East. Conversely, the tone of the discourse used for the Qatari news was almost never critical and in this respect, it followed a line in the sense that it protected its host country.¹³²⁶ Moreover, Al Jazeera's broadcasting from 2014 to 2017 posed that it was "the mouthpiece" of Qatar and critical for the KSA's red lines.¹³²⁷

In the light of the explanation above, the fellow states of the GCC apparently had a rift owing to their different policies/approaches towards the regional dynamics. In this sense, Andreas Krieg claims that the Gulf states had opposite belief systems on how to arrange the regional socio-politics in the post-Arab Spring.¹³²⁸ Moving from this observation, the Gulf monarchies (the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain/the KSA- led camp) attempted to show their response to Qatar's regional policy. The Qatar Crisis of 2014 indicated "the visible manifestation of tensions" in the Gulf politics during the Arab Spring and the KSA- led camp's response to Doha's Arab Spring policies.¹³²⁹ They accused Qatar of interfering with their affairs and violating pledges and commitments stated in the Riyadh Agreements. Qatar and Gulf states had signed secret agreements in 2013 and 2014 to prevent any support for the opposition and hostile groups in these Gulf nations as well as Yemen and Egypt. They were kept secret because the heads of the states privately agreed on the abovementioned agreements. The 2013 handwritten agreement was offered to the signatories- the King of the KSA, the Emir of Qatar and the Emir of Kuwait, to refrain from interference in internal affairs and avoid financial and political assistance to terrorist groups.¹³³⁰ This implies that these countries which put a signature on the agreement of November 23, 2013, would avoid interfering in the international affairs of the Gulf nations as well as giving financial or political support to any anti-government activists.¹³³¹

The second secret agreement of November 16, 2014, was signed by the KSA, the UAE, Kuwait and three other leaders in the Gulf (The King of Bahrain, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Prime Minister of the UAE) by underlining that the signatories should

¹³²⁶ Yusuf Devran and Ömer Faruk Özcan, "Katar Krizi ve El Cezire: Ortadoğu'da Özgür Yayıncılığın Geleceği", **Gümüşhane University Communication Faculty e-Journal**, Vol. 6, Number: 1, March 2018, pp. 305-325, p. 315.

¹³²⁷ Cherkaoui, p. 136.

¹³²⁸ Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 2.

¹³²⁹ Ulrichsen, **Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and Transition to the Post-Oil Era**, p. 189.

¹³³⁰ Jim Sciutto and Jeremy Herb, "Exclusive: The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis", **CNN**, 11 July 2017. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/10/politics/secret-documents-qatar-crisis-gulf-saudi/index.html>. (13 February 2019).

¹³³¹ The original documents of the agreements in 2013 and 2014, and a third supplemental agreement in 2014, which were signed by the executives of the Gulf countries, were translated and published by the CNN. **CNN**, "The handwritten 2013 Agreement", <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf>, (14 February 2019).

back the stability in Egypt and Al Jazeera should not allow the challenging groups against al Sisi government.¹³³² In this regard, Al Jazeera television broadcast in many countries including Arab countries became subject to the reaction of these given regimes because of criticism in its publications.¹³³³ Conversely, the US administration in Washington saw Al Jazeera publications as an important source of information and one of the most powerful actors in the media of the Middle East. To make Al-Jazeera's position in the Arab world more prominent, Al-Jazeera media outlet gained a robust reputation in the Arab world long before it became so popular in the western world thanks to the programs that bravely broadcast political, social and economic issues in the Arab world.¹³³⁴

To clarify the leadership's role in the Gulf spat within the theoretical perspective, systemic pressures filter through domestic political calculations and political leader's belief systems and perceptions. The leader reads the political environment and finds out the best way to respond to the crisis. In other words, depending on systemic and domestic considerations, he pursues the best foreign policy behaviour to deal with his adversaries.¹³³⁵ In line with this theoretical premise, after the 2014 Riyadh agreement, Qatar under the rule of Emir Tamim also expelled some MB members from the country and silenced some others, which would partly be satisfied by the neighbouring countries.¹³³⁶

Additionally, Al-Jazeera Mubashir Mısır whose coverage aggravated the Sisi government was closed down. They had accused it of broadcasting in favour of the Morsi supporters. It is understood that Qatari political executives calmly didn't want to damage their ties anymore with Egypt and/or wanted to restore the damaged relations with the new government. Simply put, they sought to open a new page for their mutual interests. Therefore, Qatar sent a special envoy to Cairo. Al-Sisi welcomed the Qatari envoy and they had diplomatic talks to repair the recently damaged relations.¹³³⁷ Yet, they failed to proceed their mutual ties because of different political calculations.

¹³³² Sciutto and Herb, "Exclusive: The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis".

¹³³³ Arslan, p. 79.

¹³³⁴ Devran and Özcan, p. 315-316.

¹³³⁵ Devlen and Özdamar, "Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crisis", p. 146.

¹³³⁶ **CNN Turk**, Katar krizi nedir? Nasıl ortaya çıktı?", 22 June 2017.

¹³³⁷ **BBC News**, "Al-Jazeera suspends Egyptian channel Mubasher Mısır", 23 December 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30585551>, (16. February 2019).

The blockading states openly claimed that Qatar didn't comply with the agreement signed in Riyadh in 2014. In fact, issues putting a strain on the interrelations of the Gulf states such as Qatar's policy towards Iran and Israel and Al Jazeera's broadcast were often seen in the Gulf Arab politics¹³³⁸ but the Qatar crisis in 2014 was the biggest one in the GCC in the recent years.¹³³⁹ More notably, Al Jazeera played a significant role in the tense relations in the Gulf region because it was well-positioned as a local platform for the opposition figures in the region and voiced the human rights abuses and corruptions of the Arab regimes. To throw light on it, Al Jazeera Arabic's provocative editorial policy towards the regional changes and the authoritarian regimes as well as its increasing regional influence in the Arab world damaged the interstate relations in the Gulf region.¹³⁴⁰

After eight months, the GCC members held a summit in Riyadh to find out a solution to the GCC dispute. The KSA-led camp decided to return their ambassadors to Qatar. On their decision, they emphasized the unity and solidarity of the GCC countries and the future of their peoples.¹³⁴¹ In the end, the Gulf Arab states attempted to solve the 2014 Qatar crisis. However, controversial issues among the neighbouring states in the Gulf region appeared to remain.¹³⁴² In this sense, Qatar maintained its support against the anti-status quo movements, Muslim Brotherhood and Al Jazeera network. Qatar has seemingly been identified with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist political movements.¹³⁴³

6.2. The 2017 Qatar Crisis

Qatar pursued an independent policy within the GCC during Emir Hamad bin Khalifa government (1996-2013). He tried to increase its influence in the states in transition. In line with Emir Hamad's unorthodox political behaviours, Doha followed the policies prioritizing its interests and autonomous/independent stance in the regional issues. This implies that it mostly pursued different foreign policies from its neighbours towards the

¹³³⁸ Peterson, p. 742.

¹³³⁹ **BBC News**, "Körfez'de diplomatic kriz: Katar hedefte", 5 Mart 2014. https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/03/140305_katar_korfez, (09 February 2019).

¹³⁴⁰ Cherkaoui, p. 136.

¹³⁴¹ **Sabah**, "Körfez'de "Katar krizi" çözüldü", 18 November 2014.

¹³⁴² David Roberts, "Qatar row: What's caused the fall-out between Gulf neighbours?", **BBC**, 5 June 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40159080>, (16 February 2019).

¹³⁴³ Talha Köse and Ufuk Ulutaş, "Regional Implication of the Qatar Crisis: Increasing Vulnerabilities", SETA Perspective, No: 31, June 2017, p. 1.

regional dynamics. Likewise, Qatar had a different security perception from the other GCC countries.¹³⁴⁴ More notably, Emir Tamim's government, which came to the ruling power in 2013, politically tried to maintain his father's high-profile independent stance within the GCC.¹³⁴⁵ They actively backed the MB-led parties and governments (without sensing any threat to their interests and regime stability) in the transition countries during the Arab Spring to increase its influence in the region. Contrariwise, the KSA and the UAE supported the status quo, in other words, the authoritarian regimes or anti-MB stance in the region.¹³⁴⁶

In the post-2013, the KSA- led camp posed to foster its influence in the region while trying to weaken Qatar's position in the system. In this sense, the great challenge of the KSA- led camp coincided with the power handover of the young Qatari Emir. Simply put, Riyadh led camp has already begun to change the political gains of Father Emir in the region. Given the background, the democratically elected Morsi government in Egypt, which Qatar supported politically and financially, were removed from the ruling power. The Ennahda government in Tunisia withdrew from the ruling power voluntarily. Then, Nidaa Tounes chiefly supported by the KSA and the UAE assumed the ruling power instead of the Ennahda government.¹³⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Qatar acted in line with Saudi Arabia in some regional issues by focusing on its strategic interests and political calculations. In the Syrian case, Riyadh and Doha supported the Syrian rebels against the al-Assad regime. Doha manoeuvred diplomatically in the summit of the Arab League held in Doha in March 2013. Emir Hamad invited the Syrian National Coalition to represent Syria in the League despite some countries' objections and Damascus protests.¹³⁴⁸ It indicates that Qatar never missed an opportunity to pursue an independent policy and safeguard its national interest. As a result, Qatar and Saudi Arabia provided military and diplomatic aids to the Syrian opposition. All above, in the Gulf region Qatar allied with Saudi Arabia for regional

¹³⁴⁴ Cinzia Bianco and Gareth Stansfield, "The intra-GCC crisis: mapping GCC fragmentation after 2011", *International Affairs*, 94: 3, (2018), 613-635, DOI: 10.1093/ia/iyy025, p. 634.

¹³⁴⁵ Peterson, p. 746; Nadide Frisk Abdullah, "Qatar and the 2017 Gulf Cooperation Council Diplomatic Crisis", *Academic Project Paper*, Department of International and Strategic Studies Faculty of Arts and Social Science University of Malaya, 31 May 2019, p. 27.

¹³⁴⁶ Ulrichsen, *The Gulf States in International Political Economy*, p. 126-202.

¹³⁴⁷ Marc Lynch, "How Trump's alignment with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is flaming the Middle East", *The Qatar Crisis, Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS)*, Briefings No: 31, October 2017, p. 34, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

¹³⁴⁸ Zafirov, p. 193.

stability and regime survival. They both fought against the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels and Iran's political and ideological expansion in Yemen.

On the other hand, Qatari leadership perceived Saudi hegemony as a foremost threat to its regime survival and domestic stability. Thus, they sought to form a strategic alliance with Turkey to balance the imminent threat. In other words, Turkey became Qatar's regional ally at the expense of confronting the KSA- led camp. Within their alliance relationship, Qatar let Turkey build a military base in the country, which meant that Ankara strengthened its political ties as well as military ties with Doha. Turkey's military presence in the Gulf region highly discomforted the rival actors. Especially, Riyadh did not seek Qatar to go out of the orbit of its regional influence.

The tension between Qatar and neighbouring states rose again in 2017. The striking aspects of the 2014 and 2017 Qatar crises were mainly the foreign policy divergence and security perception between the two-member countries of the GCC. Qatar's multifaceted foreign policy at the regional rivalry after the Arab Spring quietly differentiated from Saudi Arabia's policy.¹³⁴⁹ In this perspective, the KSA- led camp perceived Qatar's approach to the Arab Spring upheavals and the countries in transition "as a hostile entity and a direct threat to their concepts of national and regional security."¹³⁵⁰ In the end, Qatar confronted the challenge of the KSA- led camp.

There were significant differences between the Qatar crises of 2014 and 2017. The 2014 Qatar crisis was only limited to the diplomatic crisis. In the latter crisis, Qatar's neighbours imposed heavy political and economic sanctions and desired to isolate it in the region.¹³⁵¹ In essence, we should bear in mind that Turkey's urgent decision for its military deployment to Qatar within the framework of the military agreement prevented Qatar from a possible Saudi attack.¹³⁵² Eventually, Qatar's alliance relation with Turkey helped it secure its regime survival and balance the perceived threat from the rival neighbouring states in the region.

¹³⁴⁹ Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, Temmuz-Ağustos 2017, p. 29.

¹³⁵⁰ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Perceptions and Divisions in Security and Defense Structures in Arab Gulf States", in Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2019, p. 34.

¹³⁵¹ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 29.

¹³⁵² Cherkaoui, p. 139.

6.3. The Main Drivers and Motivations Behind the Gulf Arab States to Impose a Blockade Against Qatar

The US President Donald Trump's first visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after his presidential election initiated a new phase for the interrelations of the Gulf Arab states. On 20 May 2017, President Trump met 55 leaders at the Riyadh summit to unify their powers against terrorism.¹³⁵³ President Trump and King Salman's holding globe¹³⁵⁴ and "sword dance"¹³⁵⁵ heralded a forthcoming crisis while the US consolidated its relations in the Gulf region. In this sense, Trump's visit to the KSA encouraged the regional actors' mobilisation towards Qatar.¹³⁵⁶ Saudi Arabia assumed to count on Trump's support to unify the regional states against Qatar.¹³⁵⁷ Qatar and US relations had already been tensed due to Doha-owned Al Jazeera's coverage and Doha's backing for the Islamist groups such as Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East. Hamas was viewed as a terrorist organisation by the USA. Thus, the Gulf monarchies preferred to make a contact with the secular Fatah rather than Hamas in Palestinian issues. However, Doha openly backed Hamas vis-à-vis its neighbouring Gulf monarchies and the US. Even, in May 2017, it attempted to push Hamas to issue a policy document which could be considered as an effort to soften Hamas's image as an extremist group.¹³⁵⁸

An internet publication on the official site of Qatar or cyber-attack to the official site of Qatar's news agency apparently helped to trigger the regional challenge towards Qatar. At the military school graduation ceremony Qatari Emir's speech in favour of Iran and criticism on US President Donald Trump was published at Qatar's official news agency QNA at the end of May. In the so-called news of the agency, Emir Tamim of Qatar was accusing the KSA and other Gulf states of "being allied with Israel and puppet of the USA."¹³⁵⁹ Just after the publication, ties between the Gulf states became strained. This harsh criticism towards the KSA and other Gulf states on the internet site was immediately denied by the Qatari executives. They explained that their official site was

¹³⁵³ Alia Chughtai, "Understanding the blockade against Qatar", **Aljazeera**, 05 June 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2018/05/understanding-blockade-qatar-180530122209237.html>, (10 February 2019).

¹³⁵⁴ **The New York Times**, "What Was That Glowing Orb Trump Touched in Saudi Arabia", 22 May, 2017.

¹³⁵⁵ Eric Levenson and Noah Gray, "Trump, White House officials bounce along Saudi sword dance", **CNN**, 21 May 2017. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/20/politics/trump-saudi-arabia-dance/index.html>, (25 February 2019).

¹³⁵⁶ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "What's going on with Qatar", **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 7, (12 February 2019).

¹³⁵⁷ Saeid Jafari, "Saudi-led Qatar blockade brings Iran, Turkey together", **Al Monitor**, 3 July 2017.

¹³⁵⁸ David Roberts, "Qatar row: What's caused the fall-out between Gulf neighbours?", **BBC**, 5 June 2017.

¹³⁵⁹ **CNN Turk**, "Katar krizi nedir? Nasıl ortaya çıktı?", 22 June 2017.

hacked and the news was fake. Saif bin Ahmed al-Thani, director of the Qatari government's communications office, voiced that it was a hacking incident and his country was a victim of fake news.¹³⁶⁰ Marc Jones claims that a new type of cyber and information warfare appeared in the Qatar crisis by changing their classical methods of surveillance and propaganda among the Gulf neighbours. The bots targeted to organise “an orchestrated and organized campaign” both to legitimize the discourse that Doha was a supporter of terrorism and create a misleading impression for the existing opinions. As a reaction to the UAE, “GlobalLeaks”, a group of hackers, hacked the UAE's Washington ambassador Yousef al-Otaiba's emails, which indicated the link between the UAE and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a pro-Israel think tank in Washington.¹³⁶¹ In a sense, two states-Qatar and the UAE- responded to each other through the tools in the cyber world.

However, the KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt immediately imposed an embargo on Qatar on 5 June 2017.¹³⁶² Later, Yemen, Libya, Maldives and some others joined these countries for the embargo.¹³⁶³ Riyadh and other Arab states cut off the diplomatic and economic relations with Qatar and blockaded from air, land and sea.¹³⁶⁴ The KSA- led camp asked Qatar to end the crisis by complying with the 13 demands within 10 days as follows:

1. “Scale down diplomatic ties with Iran and close the Iranian diplomatic missions in Qatar, expel members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and cut off military and intelligence cooperation with Iran. Trade and commerce with Iran must comply with US and international sanctions in a manner that does not jeopardise the security of the Gulf Cooperation Council.
2. Immediately shut down the Turkish military base, which is currently under construction, and halt military cooperation with Turkey inside of Qatar.

¹³⁶⁰ Patrick Wintour, “Donald Trump tweets support for blockade imposed on Qatar”, **the Guardian**, 6 June 2017.

¹³⁶¹ Marc Jones, “Hacking, bots and information wars in the Qatar spat”, **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, p. 8, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

¹³⁶² **Yeni Şafak**, <https://www.yenisafak.com/katar-krizi-nedir-katar-krizi-neden-cikti-h-2700402>, 16 February 2019.

¹³⁶³ Diriöz, “Körfez’de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayırışma ve ABD’nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri”, p. 29.

¹³⁶⁴ Hatice Cengiz, “Körfez’deki yeni ittifak arayışları”, **Anadolu Agency**, 28 June 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz-haber/katar-krizi-ve-korfezdeki-yeni-ittifak-arayislari/1189813>, (09 February 2019).

3. Sever ties to all “terrorist, sectarian and ideological organisations,” specifically the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIL, al-Qaeda, Fateh al-Sham (formerly known as the Nusra Front) and Lebanon’s Hezbollah. Formally declare these entities as terror groups as per the list announced by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt, and concur with all future updates of this list.
4. Stop all means of funding for individuals, groups or organisations that have been designated as terrorists by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, the US and other countries.
5. Hand over “terrorist figures”, fugitives and wanted individuals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain to their countries of origin. Freeze their assets, and provide any desired information about their residency, movements and finances.
6. Shut down Al Jazeera and its affiliate stations.
7. End interference in sovereign countries’ internal affairs. Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for nationals where such citizenship violates those countries’ laws.
8. Pay reparations and compensation for loss of life and other financial losses caused by Qatar’s policies in recent years. The sum will be determined in coordination with Qatar.
9. Align Qatar’s military, political, social and economic policies with the other Gulf and Arab countries, as well as on economic matters, as per the 2014 agreement reached with Saudi Arabia.
10. Cease contact with the political opposition in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Hand over files detailing Qatar’s prior contact with and support for opposition groups, and submit details of their personal information and the support Qatar has provided them.
11. Shut down all news outlets funded directly and indirectly by Qatar, including Arabi21, Rassd, Al Araby Al Jadeed, Mekameleen and Middle East Eye, etc.

12. Agree to all the demands within 10 days of list being submitted to Qatar, or the list will become invalid.
13. Consent to monthly compliance audits in the first year after agreeing to the demands, followed by quarterly audits in the second year, and annual audits in the following 10 years.”¹³⁶⁵

Miraslav Zafirov claims that the demands of the blockading states were worded as “ultimatums” and therefore Doha didn’t take it seriously, at least not as it was expected by Riyadh. He also underlined that the demand list was considered to be Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman’s manifestation of his personal dislike for Doha and seize an opportunity to discredit it.¹³⁶⁶ Also, the Qatar crisis showed that the young generation in the decision making of the Gulf monarchies competed with each other in terms of the geopolitical and regional balance of power.¹³⁶⁷ They were more inclined to take risks in interrelations with other states and it makes it difficult to predict the end of the crisis accordingly.¹³⁶⁸

Once the Qatar crisis appeared, Qatar’s great support to the Muslim Brotherhood and the similar movements and Al Jazeera’s broadcasting were seen as the main factors of the crisis.¹³⁶⁹ Hence, the Saudi Arabian Information Ministry (SAIM) cancelled the broadcast license to Al Jazeera, blocked access to the websites and closed Al Jazeera offices in the country. The ministry cited the allegations that the channel supported the terrorist groups in the region and the Houthi rebels in Yemen and encouraged partition in Saudi Arabia.¹³⁷⁰ It was followed by the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, and the publications of the Al Jazeera group were also blocked in these countries. The Egyptian government also responded to Al Jazeera with the intention of its closure. They believed that the channel encouraged the Arab Spring, gave a positive approach to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, openly supported the MB and Mohammed Morsi rule, and criticized the new

¹³⁶⁵ **Al Jazeera**, “Arab states issue 13 demands to end Qatar-Gulf crisis”, 12 July 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/arab-states-issue-list-demands-qatar-crisis-170623022133024.html>. (09 February 2019).

¹³⁶⁶ Zafirov, p. 196.

¹³⁶⁷ Russel E. Lucas, “How a few young leaders are shaking up foreign policy in the Gulf Cooperation Council”, **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, p. 32, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

¹³⁶⁸ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Can the Gulf Cooperation Council Survive the Current Crisis?”, Arab Center Washington DC, 7 September 2017, p. 5.

¹³⁶⁹ Devran and Özcan, p. 311.

¹³⁷⁰ Arslan, p. 79.

Sisi government.¹³⁷¹ Ibrahim Efe emphasizes that during the Qatar crisis, an organized and ideological propaganda was carried out against Al Jazeera by pointing out that the main reason for this debate and the propaganda was the USA, which steered the bid for influence in the region.¹³⁷²

The Qatar crisis largely initiated the reshaping of interrelations in the region. The relations between the Gulf countries (intra-Gulf states) and the Gulf countries and others (exco-Gulf states) were re-evaluated. The attitudes towards Qatar changed after the emergence of the crisis as the KSA- led camp affected the other actors in their sphere of influence. For example, the Khalifa Haftar-led Tobruk administration in Libya was contented with the crisis. Dependence on the economic and political support of the UAE was effective in their move. The support of the Eastern Libyans for the embargo decision by triplets was better understood when Egyptian and the UAE military jets were often used in Libya. On the other hand, the Jordanian leadership reduced the level of its relations with Qatar. Yet, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco remained neutral. Although they acted with an independent political motive to remain neutral, the desire to balance Qatar against the Saudi-UAE allies was mostly at the forefront. The relatively poor and weak north African states, when compared with the rich Gulf states such as the KSA, the UAE and Qatar, were stuck between the two sides owing to their economic dependencies or weak economy. The GCC countries had large investments in African countries. The Gulf countries, which focused on the regional dynamics along with the Arab Spring, tried to strengthen their political and economic positions in these African countries.¹³⁷³ In the rivalry of the Middle East, these given states strengthened their relations with local actors from the countries in transition to increase their influence.

Russel E. Lucas identifies that during the Arab Spring, Qatari foreign policy depended on twin pillars, Al Jazeera and the Emir's personal diplomacy.¹³⁷⁴ The Qatari FPEs successfully sought to increase their sphere of influence in the region. They pursued effective policies toward the countries in transition. They also used their media outlet as a political tool. Al Jazeera network particularly played an important role during this

¹³⁷¹ Devran and Özcan, p. 313-318.

¹³⁷² Ibrahim Efe, "Katar Krizi ve Al Jazeera", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, Temmuz-Ağustos 2017, p. 40-41.

¹³⁷³ Youssef Cherif, "Everyone is taking sides in the Qatar crisis. Here's why these four North African states aren't", *The Qatar Crisis*, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 20-21, (12 February 2019).

¹³⁷⁴ Lucas, "The Persian Gulf Monarchies and the Arab Spring", p. 316.

period with the live broadcasts and the news of the protestors from the hot spots. Despite the domestic constraints in the transition countries, Al Jazeera transparently broadcast the protests worldwide. Thus, it showed the power of the media outlet to influence and shape public opinion in the region. Al Jazeera news channel managed to stand as an autonomous and credible actor which struggled for the protection of the rights of the common Arab people and strengthened Qatar's prestige and credibility in the international community via its influence in Arab politics.¹³⁷⁵ Moreover, the state-sponsored Al Jazeera was thought to be a significant political tool of Qatar and became one of the disputes among the rival states accordingly.¹³⁷⁶ Finally, the rival neighbouring states forced the Qatari FPEs to close the channel.

Given this background, The Qatari FPEs showed a clear stance on the closure of the Al Jazeera channel. That is to say, they showed their clear political determination that the channel would not be closed with an emphasis on press freedom.¹³⁷⁷ The Qatari leadership perceived that the closure of the Al Jazeera channel was perceived as a political decision, namely, blocking members of GGC countries including Egypt determined to destroy the channel's independence and change its broadcasting policy.

Equally, Doha-based Al Jazeera TV received harsh responses from the authoritarian leaders. They emphasized that Al Jazeera TV never criticized the Qatari regime. Also, they tried to underscore that Al Jazeera TV followed a biased publication policy directed by its host country Qatar. Traditionally, the media outlets in the Gulf region usually broadcast in a line with their host countries' foreign policies. In addition to the discussion above, Saudi media power Al Arabia had the same function as Al Jazeera.¹³⁷⁸ Given this background, it is significant to note that the state-sponsored media in the Gulf, even very often in the Middle East, avoid criticizing the regimes' policies in their publications as a kind of payoff for their survival.

¹³⁷⁵ Al Horr et al., p. 358.

¹³⁷⁶ Ulrichsen, **Small states with a big role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the Arab Spring**, p. 14.

¹³⁷⁷ Mahjoob Zweiri, Md Mizanur Rahman, and Arwa Kemal, "The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Introduction", in Mahjoob Zweiri, Md Mizanur Rahman and Arwa Kemal (Eds.), **The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Approach**, Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2021, p. 2.

¹³⁷⁸ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 30.

Al Jazeera was seen as a channel broadcasting on Qatar's foreign policy axis.¹³⁷⁹ More notably, it succeeded in becoming a channel that overturned the one-way news flow from the west to the east, which eliminated the monopoly of the Western media for journalism and broadcasting, and acted as the main transmitter of the events related to the region. Moreover, the Al Jazeera media outlet niched Qatar in the world's political map and labelled it with great prestige not only in the Arab region but also across the globe. In this regard, Qatar used the Al Jazeera network as a significant immaterial power to achieve its rise regionally and internationally. However, the regional states under the leadership of the KSA sought to balance the rise of Qatar through the blockade decision. They demanded to close Qatar's media power in order to halt its increasing influence in the region.¹³⁸⁰

In this dispute, the Qatari leadership and Al Jazeera administration acted in a measured, rational and responsible manner by relying on international diplomacy.¹³⁸¹ From the standpoint of their political approach towards the given dispute, they totally rejected all the accusations on their opponents' list of the 13 demands. Qatar's Ankara Ambassador Salem Mubarak El-Safi urged that what the blocking countries had done was unlawful and unethical by adding that the blockade was against Islam, Arab, and human values.¹³⁸² Additionally, Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman al Thani voiced at Chatham House in London that Al Jazeera independently informed the people regionally and internationally about the social, political and economic developments in the region.¹³⁸³ They believed that Al Jazeera was an independent media institution and had rights within the universal frame of freedom of the press. El-Safi underscored that urging for closure of the given channel was considered an unacceptable intervention on their domestic issues.¹³⁸⁴

After the criticism and blockade decision, Al Jazeera Arabic (AJA) strategically continued its journalistic norms rather than exaggerating its tone in its broadcasting. However, it maintained its critical position towards the KSA- led camp. It focused on the

¹³⁷⁹ Devran and Özcan, p. 318; Abdullah, p. 50-51.

¹³⁸⁰ Devran and Özcan, p. 313-317.

¹³⁸¹ Devran and Özcan, p. 318.

¹³⁸² **Sabah**, "El Safi: Türkiye ile olan dostluğumuzdan rahatsız oluyorlar", 30 June 2017. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2017/07/01/el-safi-turkiye-ile-olan-dostlugumuzdan-rahatsiz-oluyorlar>, (26 February 2019).

¹³⁸³ Patrick Wintour, "Anti-Qatar alliance renews attack on al-Jazeera Arabic", **the Guardian**, 12 July 2017.

¹³⁸⁴ **Sabah**, "El Safi: Türkiye ile olan dostluğumuzdan rahatsız oluyorlar", 30 June 2017.

GCC coalition forces' intervention in Yemen by highlighting the difficult situations of civilians and bombed areas.¹³⁸⁵ From this perspective, Al Jazeera preserved its autonomous position in its broadcast policy even during the regional spat.

6.4. Qatar's Response to the Challenge of the Blockading States

The KSA- led camp decided to impose a blockade on the State of Qatar by targeting to isolate Qatar with their 13-point demands which were particularly based on economic, political and military restrictions. They tried to force Qatar to act in accordance with what they ordered through their demands. Likewise, they sought to influence Qatar's foreign policy behaviours and change them in line with their own leadership vision and regional objectives.¹³⁸⁶ In this respect, they accused Qatar of supporting terrorism. They also wanted to shut down the Doha-based Al Jazeera channel and Turkish military base in Qatar. Thus, they closed all roads that could be linked to Qatari territories. In other words, Qatar's neighbours closed all connections by air, land, and sea to the Qatari peninsula. Saudi Arabia was the only country where Qatar had a motorway transit to reach the outside world. Moreover, Qatar airlines were not allowed to use the airspace of the blocking countries. Despite the restrictive efforts of the blocking countries, Qatar struggled to survive. Doha responded to the blockading decision taken by its neighbouring states in many ways to safeguard its national interests. In this regard, the Qatari FPEs perceived the systemic stimuli and interpreted them to conduct a policy response. They concluded that they had to diversify their political, economic and security relations with the regional and global partners to respond to the challenges.¹³⁸⁷ Then, the Qatari leadership pursued an optimal policy response to end the ongoing crisis.

6.4.1. Qatari leadership's Counteraction towards the Accusations

Sheikh Saif Bin Ahmet Al-Thani as Director of the Government Communication Office of Qatar (GCO) clearly refused the blocking countries' accusations for violating commitments for Riyadh agreements in 2013 and 2014. He claimed that the Gulf Arab states' demands including closing down Al Jazeera and damaging payments and breaking up of families in the GCC countries had no direct relationship with the aforementioned Riyadh agreements. He counteracted their challenge by accusing the neighbouring Gulf

¹³⁸⁵ Cherkaoui, p. 141.

¹³⁸⁶ Abdullah, p. 66-69.

¹³⁸⁷ Ulrichsen, "Can the Gulf Cooperation Council Survive the Current Crisis?", p. 3.

countries of violation of the commitment of the Riyadh agreement 2013-2014, which was claimed to be against international law.¹³⁸⁸ NCR contends that the leaders construct an external policy by relying on their perceptions of capabilities and other states' intentions.¹³⁸⁹ To put it clearly, Qatari leadership perceived this challenge as a direct attack on their sovereignty by the blocking states and promptly rejected their demands by claiming that they were illegitimate to the provisions, articles, and even to the mechanism of Riyadh agreements.¹³⁹⁰

Qatari leadership strongly and repeatedly rejected the accusations of the blockading countries and interpreted their decision as a violation of Qatar's sovereignty.¹³⁹¹ They called the KSA- led camp to end the Qatari crisis. They offered diplomatic ways for a solution and respect for the national sovereignty among the parties.¹³⁹²

Jamal Abdullah asserts that Saudi Arabia and some Arab countries were uncomfortable owing to the fact that Qatar was a significant actor which pursued an active and independent foreign policy. In doing so, Saudi Arabia sought to put an end to Qatar's active role in the international arena and pressed it to return to Riyadh's security umbrella as it used to be before 1995.¹³⁹³ To clarify it, Qatar tried to mediate in the regional issues in order to leverage its position in the pre-Arab Spring and became a key mediator state in Libya, Sudan and Yemen. Then, during the Arab Spring, it emerged as an active interventionist actor in the region at the expense of strife of its rivals, predominantly the KSA and the UAE.¹³⁹⁴

The Qatari leadership remained calm and continued to hold their presence in international politics as an independent and unprecedented Gulf state. Despite being blockaded, the leadership tried to pose that Doha still dealt with both regional and international issues. In this context, on the international platform, Emir Tamim showed his concern on the

¹³⁸⁸ Sciutto and Herb, "Exclusive: The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis".

¹³⁸⁹ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 485-486; Foulon, p. 641.

¹³⁹⁰ **The Peninsula**, "Siege on Qatar a clear violation of Riyadh agreement", 11 July 2017.

¹³⁹¹ Chughtai, "Understanding the blockade against Qatar".

¹³⁹² **Al Jazeera**, "Qatari emir condemns 'unjust blockade' in UNGA speech", 19 September 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/qatari-emir-condemns-unjust-blockade-unga-speech-170919185253541.html>, (10 February 2019).

¹³⁹³ Muhammed Ali Akman, "Arap siyasi uzmanlar Katar'daki siyasi krizi degerlendirdi", **Anadolu Agency**, 06 June 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/arap-siyasi-uzmanlar-katardaki-siyasi-krizi-degerlendirdi/835425>, (16 February 2019).

¹³⁹⁴ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, p.121.

international matters linking with the Muslim community anywhere in the world and called on the Myanmar government about the violence against the Rohingya minority and Israel about its settlement policies in occupied Palestinian territories.¹³⁹⁵

Also, Qatari leadership successfully manoeuvred against the KSA- led camp's pressure to alienate Qatar in the regional and international arena. They tried to strengthen their position against the blockade and protect the country from possible damage. In a sense, they sought to counteract the blockading countries by mobilizing their resources, which demonstrated that in the anarchic and self-help structure of the international political system, states must rely on their own means for their survival. From this realist perspective, Qatar had to take many political, military and economic measures in order to stand against the blockade and to safeguard its survival.

With huge investments around the world markets through its Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWF), Qatar sought to bolster its regional and international position. In line with this, it managed to enhance its relations with Germany significantly on the basis of economic investments. It apparently benefited from its economic relations with Germany during the Qatar crisis. Germany openly gave diplomatic support to Doha. Additionally, it sided with Qatar's policy approach towards the regional shift although Saudi Arabia and the UAE were its two key partners in the context of economic interests as well.¹³⁹⁶ When the German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel met Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, he underscored that the existing blockade on Qatar was obviously a violation of international rules and humanitarian rules with the negative regional consequences.¹³⁹⁷ Against this background, the prime motivation for Germany's policy towards the Qatar crisis resulted from the preservation of its economic interests as well as the stability in the Gulf.¹³⁹⁸

On the other hand, Qatar's domestic institutions appeared to be effective in their political response to the regional challenge. Qatar acted strategically during the crisis and invited a lot of people from the western world, who had the capacity to influence others. They

¹³⁹⁵ **Al Jazeera**, "Qatari emir condemns 'unjust blockade' in UNGA speech", 19 September 2017.

¹³⁹⁶ Jeremias Kettner urges that "commercial interests" cannot be a sole explanation for Germany's stance towards Qatar on the crisis. Jeremias Kettner, "Making Sense of Europe's Response to the Gulf Crisis", in Andreas Krieg (Ed.), **Divided Gulf: An Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 254-255.

¹³⁹⁷ **Reuters**, "Germany urges diplomatic solution to Qatar crisis", 9 June 2017.

¹³⁹⁸ Kettner, p. 252- 253.

aimed to display the public as well as their policies to these influential people. Also, its National Human Rights Committee (QNHRC) actively played a role in the Qatar crisis by holding a joint conference with the International Press Institute (IPI) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFC) in Doha with the participation of many representatives from civil society, intergovernmental human right organizations and media to reinforce and discuss the ongoing threat on the media freedom.¹³⁹⁹ Given this discussion, it can be evaluated that Qatar strategically sought to prevail over the regional competition by drawing the west's attention and sensitivity on an international issue such as freedom of media through an international conference.

6.4.2. Turkey and Qatar Alliance Against the Blockade

Turkey's relations with Qatar and other GCC countries were generally based on intense economic cooperation. Qatar invested in various fields in Turkey. Both countries pursued multilateral foreign policy towards the regional dynamics. They didn't perceive the Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood as a direct threat to the regional instability. Qatar and Turkey attached importance to their relations with their neighbour Iran. They tried to continue their relations with Iran in a good neighbourhood.¹⁴⁰⁰ Additionally, Turkey-Qatar relations were evolved into military cooperation in the post-Arab Spring. They signed an agreement to build a Turkish military base in Doha in 2014.¹⁴⁰¹ However, the KSA- led camp saw the Turkish base as a proximate threat and desired it to be shut down.

However, the Qatari leadership showed that they were ready to stand behind the military agreement at the expense of facing strong challenges from its neighbouring states. More notably, although the deployment of Turkish Armed Forces to Qatar had been agreed upon before the Qatar crisis, the process was immediately activated just after the crisis.¹⁴⁰² This rapid step proved the strong alliance relationship between the two countries.¹⁴⁰³ In

¹³⁹⁹ Cherkaoui, p. 140-141; **International Press Institute**, "Freedom of Expression: Facing Up to the Threat (24-25 July 2017)", 24 July 2017, <https://ipi.media/freedom-of-expression-facing-up-to-the-threat-july-24-25-2017/>, (10 October 2019).

¹⁴⁰⁰ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 31.

¹⁴⁰¹ Ebrar Şahika Küçükaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", Discussion Paper, **TRT World Research Centre**, Istanbul, February 2019, p. 8-11, (researchcentre.trtworld.com).

¹⁴⁰² Yusuf Devran and Ömer Faruk Özcan, "Katar Krizi ve El Cezire: Ortadoğu'da Özgür Yayıncılığın Geleceği", **Gümüşhane University Communication Faculty e-Journal**, Vol: 6, Number: 1, pp. 305-325, March 2018, p. 319.

¹⁴⁰³ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri p. 31.

this regard, Turkey's leadership sent a clear message to the Gulf leaders that they would defend their ally Qatar by their material power if necessary.¹⁴⁰⁴

According to the NCR, the leaders perceive the systemic stimuli through their images and domestic variables affect them to construct a policy response to them.¹⁴⁰⁵ The Turkish leadership utterly rejected the four blockading Arab states' call for closing the Turkish military base in Doha and evaluated that its military base in Qatar also had a guarantor role for regional security and stability. Turkish President Recep T. Erdoğan also underlined that the isolation of Qatar by its neighbouring states was "inhumane and against Islamic values." More significantly, the Turkish FPEs urgently got sufficient permission from the Turkish Parliament to deploy its troop to Qatar. Then, Turkey deployed five armoured vehicles with 23 military personnel to Doha as a part of a military training and alliance deal.¹⁴⁰⁶ In this regard, Turkish leadership reacted against the regional threat which emanated from the geopolitical rivalry in the region. Their political decision was a strategic response to the KSA-led camp, which meant that Turkey strategically backed its ally Qatar against the regional rivals with its material capabilities and assumed a critical role for an external balancer in the Qatar crisis within the context of its new political vision for the regional politics.¹⁴⁰⁷ Salem Mubarak Al- Safi, Qatar's Ambassador to Ankara, emphasized the importance of the alliance between Turkey and Qatar during the Qatar crisis as well as condemning the KSA- led camp for closing borders and airspace to Qatari planes. He stressed that they enabled to overcome the issue by using the airspace of Iran and Turkey.¹⁴⁰⁸

Doha relied on its imports particularly in its daily consumption needs such as water, food and medicine owing to geographical constraints.¹⁴⁰⁹ When its land and air borders were closed by the blockading states, it sought to find out an urgent solution to meet the daily consumption needs. Turkey gave great support to Qatar by sending thousands of tonnes of food as well as offering to supply the crucial construction materials for the FIFA World

¹⁴⁰⁴ Bakir, p. 212.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, p. 28-29; Baun and Marek, p. 31-32.

¹⁴⁰⁶ **Al Jazeera**, "Turkey dismisses demand to close Qatar military base", 23 June 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/turkey-dismisses-demand-close-qatar-military-base-170623082705489.html>, (09 February 2019).

¹⁴⁰⁷ Murat Yeşiltaş, "Making Sense of Turkey's Strategy towards the new Gulf Crisis", **Al Jazeera Centre for Studies**, 22 June 2017, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰⁸ **Sabah**, "El Safi: Türkiye ile olan dostluğumuzdan rahatsız oluyorlar", 30 June 2017.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Küçüktaşçı, "Entente Cordiale: Exploring Turkey-Qatar Relations", p. 11.

Cup 2022 projects.¹⁴¹⁰ More notably, the daily flights between Turkey and Qatar reached a record number during the crisis. Turkish government allocated a terminal solely for Qatar Airways at Sabiha Gökçen International Airport in Istanbul to transport the Turkish goods to Doha.¹⁴¹¹ Consequently, it significantly demonstrated how Ankara attached importance to its alliance building with Doha.

6.4.3. Strategic Relations with Iran and Oman

In the early phase of the Qatar crisis, Qatari leadership sought to tolerate the impact of the blockade as the neighbouring countries closed their borders to Qatar. Al Rowais Port located in the north of the country played a key role in transporting the food supply from foreign countries. High demanded goods initially reached the port from Iran and Oman. Later state-owned Hassad Food started to coordinate the delivery of the goods and mostly supplied the demanded food in the country within a short time. Smith Wright urges that:

“adequate stocks in significant supermarkets existed as both perishable and non-perishable goods were being proactively replenished, which underlined a recognition of the need to ensure public confidence through a visible abundance of consumer goods.”¹⁴¹²

In this regard, Hassad Food’s effort and capacity in supplying food during the crisis probably helped the Qatar leadership to foster societal confidence in the country. However, the rift between Doha and the Saudi-led boycotting states was widened. As a consequence of the Qatari crisis, Qatar and Iran ties were strengthened.¹⁴¹³ In fact, the regional rivalry between Qatar and the KSA- led camp pushed Qatar towards Iran although Iran was a traditional rival for the Gulf Arab states and to some extent had diplomatic and economic ties with the other GCC countries. To put it differently, the KSA- led camp perceived Qatar-Iran relations as a greater threat to their security owing to the increasing regional influence of Iran and Qatar through the non-state actors.¹⁴¹⁴ After the Qatari crisis, Qatari leadership acted strategically towards Iran to balance the KSA- led camp as well as ensuring the economic interests in the shared gas field in the

¹⁴¹⁰ Yusuf Sahbaz, “First ship carrying food departs Turkey for Qatar”, **the Peninsula**, 22 June 2017.

¹⁴¹¹ Bakir, p. 211.

¹⁴¹² Steve Wright, “Political Economy of the Gulf Divide”, in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 153.

¹⁴¹³ Glen Carey and Vivian Nereim, “Qatar Emir Snubs Saudi Summit Invite as Gulf Rift Festers”, **Bloomberg**, 9 December 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-04/crypto-exchange-founder-dies-leaves-behind-200-million-problem>, (07 February 2019); Julien Barnes-Dacey, Ellie Geranmayeh and Hugh Lovatt, “The Middle East’s New Battle Lines”, **Introduction Essay, European Council on Foreign Relations** (ecfr.eu), May 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/mena/battle_lines/, p. 3, (13 October 2019).

¹⁴¹⁴ Abdullah, p. 71.

Gulf region.¹⁴¹⁵ When Qatar's airspace and land border were blocked by the blockading states, Iran could provide an alternative way out to ensure Qatar's security and survival.

Iran posed a direct threat to the KSA- led camp in terms of its domestic stability because Iran exploited its regional influence through Shia groups. To put it simply, the Shia population in the Gulf states made them fear from Iran's expansion.¹⁴¹⁶ In this sense, Qatar re-evaluated its position during the crisis and tried to shoulder its relations with Iran, which was another regional powerhouse in the Gulf. In return, Iran benefited from the Qatar crisis to avoid the regional isolation attempted after the US's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal. It was a win-win situation for both neighbouring states.

Oman preferred to remain neutral in the crisis in the Gulf. Weak states sometimes follow the neutrality and independent policy. With these given policies, they desire to show that they do not take sides in the power conflicts and they do not pose a threat against the other states. They also use such a political behaviour as a way of managing tension with neighbouring states and guaranteeing sovereignty.¹⁴¹⁷

Also, Muscat didn't perceive Qatari foreign policy as a threat to its domestic and regional interest contrary to the KSA and the UAE.¹⁴¹⁸ Moreover, Qatar-Oman relations especially on trade considerably rose after the crisis.¹⁴¹⁹ In this regard, the trade between Qman and Qatar increased 2000% in three months just after the Qatar crisis.¹⁴²⁰ The increase in Oman's trade volume indicates that it benefited from the rift inside the GCC. The fact that the blocking countries closed all trade routes in the Gulf led Qatar to look for alternative ways. At last, Qatar found its way out of the region using Oman's ports and airspace. In a sense, Qatar needed seaports, airports and air space in Oman to maintain its regime survival.¹⁴²¹ The new shipping lane between Oman's Sohar and Salalah ports and

¹⁴¹⁵ Nyshka Chandran, "Middle East rift could push Qatar closer to Turkey, Iran", **CNBC**, 05 June 2017. <https://www.cnb.com/2017/06/05/gulf-crisis-qatar-may-move-closer-to-turkey-iran.html>, (12 February 2018).

¹⁴¹⁶ Barnes-Dacey, Geranmayeh and Lovatt, p. 3.

¹⁴¹⁷ Kume, p. 32.

¹⁴¹⁸ Giorgio Cafiero and Theodore Karasik, "Kuwait, Oman and the Qatar Crisis", **Middle East Institute**, 22 June 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/kuwait-oman-and-qatar-crisis>, (13 October 2019).

¹⁴¹⁹ Megan O'Toole, "What is Oman's stance on the Qatar-Gulf crisis?", **Al Jazeera**, 1 December 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/1/what-is-omans-stance-on-the-qatar-gulf-crisis>, (18 January 2019).

¹⁴²⁰ **The Peninsula**, "Qatar-Oman trade volume increases", 10 September 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/oman-stance-qatar-gulf-crisis-171125061013462.html>, (17 September 2021).

¹⁴²¹ Stacey Philbrick Yadav, "Oman is a mediator in Yemen. Can it play the same role in Qatar?" **The Qatar Crisis, POMEPS Briefings No: 31**, October 2017, p. 23, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

Qatar's Hamad port supported their mutual economic benefits and increased the trade volume between the two parties as well as the number of passengers of Qatar Airways.¹⁴²²

Additionally, Muscat which continued to broker in the Yemen conflict was ambitious to be a mediator in the Qatar crisis.¹⁴²³ It permanently continued its balance of power strategy in its relations with the regional actors to avoid conflicts and risks. Underscoring the dialogue among the states, it openly offered to mediate in the Qatar crisis.¹⁴²⁴ In this context, Muscat sought to find out a diplomatic solution for the Qatari crisis and sent its Foreign Minister Yousuf Bin Alawi to the GCC countries accordingly. However, he came back empty-handed.¹⁴²⁵

6.4.4. Arm Purchase from Western Powers and Security Dilemma in the Gulf Region

The KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt decided to cut ties with the state of Qatar and relatively closed all borders, land, air, and sea after the announcement of the blockade decision.¹⁴²⁶ Kuwait was willing to be a mediator between the parties and broker a resolution to the Qatar crisis. In addition to Kuwait, the US, the security provider of the Gulf states, started a diplomatic effort to end the crisis despite President Trump's support to the KSA- led camp's decision of isolation towards Qatar in the early days of the crisis. In this regard, State Secretary Rex Tillerson paid a visit to the region and met with the Turkish and Kuwait officials. Additionally, he had a diplomatic talk with Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Kuwait Foreign Minister and Mark Sedwill, British National Security Advisor in Kuwait. They called the boycotting states to end the crisis through dialogue.¹⁴²⁷

Despite the US peace-seeking diplomatic initiatives later, President Trump posed that he had supported the orchestrated blockade of the Gulf states towards Qatar when they moved to cut ties with it.¹⁴²⁸ He openly asserted that Qatar had to end its financial support

¹⁴²² Megan O'Toole, "What is Oman's stance on the Qatar-Gulf crisis?".

¹⁴²³ Stacey Philbrick Yadav, "Oman is a mediator in Yemen. Can it play the same role in Qatar?", **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, p. 23, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, (12 February 2019).

¹⁴²⁴ Abdullah Baabood, "Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman", **European Council on Foreign Relations (ecfr.eu)**, 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/mena/battle_lines/oman, (13 October 2019).

¹⁴²⁵ Habib Toumi, "Oman: No solution in sight for Qatar crisis", **the Gulf News**, 19 March 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/oman/oman-no-solution-in-sight-for-qatar-crisis-1.62767417>, (13 October 2019).

¹⁴²⁶ Chughtai, "Understanding the blockade against Qatar"; **Al Jazeera**, "Qatari emir condemns 'unjust blockade' in UNGA speech", 19 September 2017.

¹⁴²⁷ Sciutto and Herb, "Exclusive: The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis".

¹⁴²⁸ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 29.

to terrorism.¹⁴²⁹ In a similar vein, the Saudi and Emirati leadership perceived that the Trump administration aligned with them much more closely than the rival Qatari leadership over the regional policies and security issues. Unlike the Obama administration's involvement with the GCC, the Trump administration preferably concentrated mainly on the KSA and the UAE. More significantly, Jared Kushner, Trump's adviser and son-in-law, Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Crown Prince, and Yusuf al-Otaiba, the UAE ambassador in Washington formed closer ties.¹⁴³⁰ From this standpoint, Qatar wilfully excluded from the emergent US and Gulf cooperation due to the personal links among the above-mentioned statesmen.

Despite Tillerson's efforts to de-escalate the regional tension, Trump's tweets in the opposite direction surprisingly appeared to be the US divergent and puzzling foreign policy approach towards the Qatar Crisis.¹⁴³¹ To analyse the US political approach, President Trump acted independently from the established mechanism of the US policymaking, which meant that they (at least President Trump and State Secretary Tillerson) didn't act in an orchestrated way in the process of decision making. President Trump posed that he ruled the country by "tweet diplomacy" as a quick response to the challenges rather than the conventional wisdom in the decision-making process.

Since the US preserved its unique position as a hegemon in the Gulf, Qatar strategically tried to solve the regional spat through US support. It also attempted to balance the relations between the US and the KSA. After the US sold US\$460 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia, Qatar also signed an agreement with the US on the purchase of a US\$12 billion F-15 warplane, in turn, the US offered to help solve the worsening crisis. The US leadership advised the Gulf countries to end the crisis through the channel of mutual dialogue.¹⁴³² As another counter-move, Qatar quickly reached a bilateral agreement with the US to avoid the accusations of financing terrorism. Additionally, Qatar carried out a military exercise with the US Navy and signed a 12-billion-dollar military equipment agreement. In this context, the US and Qatar signed bilateral agreements in the field of military, technology and security. Contradictory statements of the US leadership during

¹⁴²⁹ Sciutto and Herb, "Exclusive: The secret documents that help explain the Qatar crisis".

¹⁴³⁰ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "What's going on with Qatar", **The Qatar Crisis**, POMEPS Briefings No: 31, October 2017, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/POMEPS_GCC_Qatar-Crisis.pdf, p. 6, (12 February 2019).

¹⁴³¹ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 30.

¹⁴³² Arslan, p. 80.

the given crisis process, arms sales agreement with Saudi Arabia and Qatar during Trump's visit led to the suspicion that the US consciously provoked the region in order to sell its weapons.¹⁴³³ The reason behind the continuous efforts above lies in Qatari leadership's strategic and political calculations for regime security and stability as well as ending the regional spat. To put it clearly, the Qatari leadership sought to enhance its relations with the US and win over it to stand against the challenges of the KSA- led camp via arm purchase and direct investments. In line with this analyse, Qatari Emir paid a visit to the US and made considerable arms and commercial deals with his counterpart.¹⁴³⁴

The US leadership surprisingly changed the tone of their discourse towards the Gulf dispute. Qatar's strategic position and US facilities in Doha helped the US administration change its political approach.¹⁴³⁵ The US leadership made an official call for mutual cooperation and attention for the political rhetoric to end the existing crisis.¹⁴³⁶ Also, Iran's increasing position became an effective factor in the shift of the US policy towards the dispute. The tension in the Gulf region appeared to hurt the US strategic interests in the region. The US clearly urged the Gulf states to struggle against terrorism and Iran. However, the Qatar crisis disrupted the collective stand of the GCC against their traditional rival Iran, whereas Iran partly improved its ties with Qatar due to the crisis. More significantly, the crisis created vulnerability in the region in favour of the US rivals.

However, the other western powers consolidated their ties with Doha after the ongoing crisis. Qatar especially made military agreements with the western countries to strengthen its military capacity. We should bear in mind that the challenges/threats during the crisis pushed the Gulf rival states for a security dilemma in the Gulf region. Simply put, the Qatar crisis largely increased the arms race among the regional countries in the region recently.¹⁴³⁷ Military build-ups stir up the security dilemma among the states because they seek to respond properly to their rivals' enlargement of arms. In the context of a security dilemma, they try to increase their military size and technology.¹⁴³⁸ Likewise, in the

¹⁴³³ Dirioz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 30-31.

¹⁴³⁴ Tracey Shelton, "US and Qatar ink deals for 'tremendous amounts' of military weapons and Boeing planes", **ABC News**, 12 July 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-10/qatar-donald-trump-military-and-commercial-deals/11294500>, (13 October 2019).

¹⁴³⁵ Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", p. 102.

¹⁴³⁶ Zafirov, p. 198.

¹⁴³⁷ Wezeman et al.

¹⁴³⁸ Hancock and Lobell, p. 150.

anarchic system, the states try to ensure their security and survival by arms deals and the great bulk of arms purchases as they do not trust others.

France has had considerable political and commercial relations with Doha. Qatari economy giants has already invested France nearly US\$10 billion. On the other hand, France supplied 24 Rafale fighter jets with missiles with a deal in 2016. Qatar will additionally purchase 12 Dassault Aviation-made Rafale fighters and 490 armoured vehicles from Nexter. President Macron explained that the deal which they agreed was for 12 billion euros. Emphasizing the importance of the stability in the Gulf, he wanted a resolution to the crisis.¹⁴³⁹

England has had close ties with Qatar since colonial times. Qatar has heavily invested in England through their Sovereign Fund Authority. London considered Qatar as one of its key strategic partners in the Gulf and signed a defence contract with it. In this context, they made a deal to purchase 24 Typhoon fighter jets from England.¹⁴⁴⁰

Additionally, Qatar bought seven warships from Italy, which cost nearly US\$6 billion. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani stressed that Qatar desired to continue its political and economic ties as well as its military (defence and security) cooperation with Italy.¹⁴⁴¹ In this context, the Qatar Crisis opened a window for Qatari leadership to enhance their interests with the regional powers as well as other western powers.

6.4.5. The International Court for Crisis Solution

In the Qatar crisis, the blockading countries forced the Qatari citizens to return to their homeland within 14 days. These countries tried to squeeze Doha to act as they desired through the 13 demands. However, the reactions of the countries embracing the embargo towards Qatari citizens settled in their countries were different from each other. Egypt behaved more moderately for Qatari citizens in order to prevent any retaliation for its citizens working in Qatar. It considerably relied on its expatriates in the Egyptian economy as Egyptian expatriates in Qatar brought a large amount of money to Egypt.

¹⁴³⁹ Hadeel Al Sayegh, "Qatar flexes financial muscle with 12 billion euros of French deals", **Reuters**, 7 December 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qatar-france-contracts/qatar-flexes-financial-muscle-with-12-billion-euros-of-french-deals-idUSKBN1E1162>, (23 February 2019).

¹⁴⁴⁰ **Al Jazeera**, "Qatar to buy 24 fighter jets from Britain", 18 September 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/qatar-agrees-buy-24-fighter-jets-britain-170917174003165.html>, (23 February 2019).

¹⁴⁴¹ Shabina S. Khatri, "Qatar to buy \$5.9 billion worth of warships from Italy", **Doha News**, 3 August 2017. <https://dohanews.co/qatar-to-buy-5-9-billion-worth-of-warships-from-italy/>, (23 February 2019).

Simply put, Egypt with a weak economy needed the income of its expats in Qatar and its economic weakness as a domestic constraint affected the Egyptian leadership political behaviour towards Qatar.

Jordan as another Arab state approached the issue cautiously. It preferred to reduce the level of diplomatic representation from the level of ambassadors rather than heavy sanctions.¹⁴⁴² Having a rentier economy, it needed the rich Gulf fellow states' financial aids. In this sense, Jordan-Saudi Arabia ties have strengthened since the Arab Spring. However, we should always remember that no country in the Middle East can be one hundred per cent positive about their future relations with others.

Qatar took the issue of expelled Qatari citizens and students to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in June 2017. It claimed that the UAE violated international law by expelling Qatari citizens including students, freezing the Qataris' assets and closing Doha-based Al Jazeera's news operations. The Court said in a provisional order that the UAE must allow the families to reunite and the students to return to their studies.¹⁴⁴³ Nearly 13,000 Qatari nationals were believed to be affected and 6,474 mixed marriages that involved either Qatari citizens or the blocking states' citizens were separated by the decision of the blockading states.¹⁴⁴⁴ By this decision, the UN court showed that the UAE as a blocking state was not right to expel the Qatari citizens including students. To make it clear in the context of Qatar's claim against the UAE, the ICJ agreed with Qatar about its neighbour state's execution towards the Qatari citizens in the Gulf diplomatic spat/Qatar crisis.

Moreover, the expelled Qatari citizens during the crisis caused many social problems. The families were separated and the students couldn't continue their studies in those states. The citizens suffering from the blockading rules applied to some human rights mechanisms. Also, several victims of family disintegration applied to the European Parliament to solve the existing problem in the Gulf. In return, the parliamentary authorities took these requests into account.¹⁴⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴² Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayırışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 29.

¹⁴⁴³ Bethan McKernan, "Gulf blockade: UAE must reunite Qatari families, UN court finds", **Independent**, 24 July 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/gulf-blockade-qatar-uae-family-reunite-un-court-rules-middle-east-a8461501.html>, (24 February 2019).

¹⁴⁴⁴ OHCHR, "Report on the impact of the Gulf Crisis on human rights", December 2017, <http://nhrc-qa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/OHCHR-TM-REPORT-ENGLISH.pdf>, (24 February 2014).

¹⁴⁴⁵ **Gulf Times**, "European Parliament hears testimonies of blockade victims' suffering", 20 February 2019.

The given efforts can be taken into account as political reactions of Qatar and its citizens against the blockading environment. Qatar strategically sought to prevent the crisis by attracting the attention of the international community against the regional challenge as well as incorporating them in the process.

6.4.6. Contact With Lobby Agencies

As a reaction to the blocking countries, Qatari leadership tried to expand its PR activities in the US. They tried to change its image in the US administration and public. In other words, the Qatari leadership attempted to change the negative minds of American politicians about the Qatari nation.¹⁴⁴⁶ Lobbies have a considerable capability to affect the alliance relations with the US as well as the US political behaviours towards others. They can change public perceptions towards the allies through an efficient organisation as well.¹⁴⁴⁷ With the help of the US lobbies Qatar sought to influence Washington to change its policy towards Qatar, because the Trump administration, somehow, agreed with the blockading Arab states' Qatari policy by claiming that Qatar funded terrorism in the region.¹⁴⁴⁸ In this regard, Doha spent \$16.3 million on lobbying activities in 2017 when the Qatar crisis started. It employed 23 lobbying firms from 2016 to 2018 to influence the policy-making processes in the US. Simply put, the lobbyists targeted the "Trump influencers". In this regard, the Qatari officials and some Trump associates came together at the meetings arranged by the lobbyists. Qatar's Embassy spokesman Jassim al-Thani claimed that they needed much more efforts to respond to their rivals' lobbyists in the US in the following citation.

"Without question, it took time and resources to replace the blockading states' lies with the truth, including inviting delegations to visit Qatar and investigate the blockade for themselves."¹⁴⁴⁹

The KSA- led camp tried to expand its influence against Qatar around the globe. In line with it, Saudi Arabia attempted to establish PR hubs in the important cities in the world

¹⁴⁴⁶ Amir Tibon, "Qatar Doubles Down on PR Campaign Appealing to U.S. Jews and D.C. Insiders", **Haaretz**, 20 January 2018.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power", p. 30-32.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Lawrence Delevingne, Nathan Layne and Karen Freifeld, "Inside Qatar's charm offensive to win over Washington", **Reuters**, 5 July 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-qatar-lobbying-insight/inside-qatars-charm-offensive-to-win-over-washington-idUSKBN1JV0DB>, (30 September 2019).

¹⁴⁴⁹ Julie Bykowicz, "The New Lobbying: Qatar Targeted 250 Trump 'Influencer' to Change U.S. Policy", **The Wall Street Journal**, 29 August 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-lobbying-qatar-targeted-250-trump-influencers-to-change-u-s-policy-1535554647>, (30 September 2019).

such as London, Berlin, Paris, Beijing, Moscow and Tokyo. These PR activities would help both to promote Saudi culture and respond to negative publications about the country.¹⁴⁵⁰ The UAE also launched a lobbying campaign in the US to discredit and silence Doha-based Al Jazeera. The lobbyists tried to persuade “the Trump influencers” such as journalists, officials, think tanks and pro-Israel groups in favour of the UAE.¹⁴⁵¹ In this context, the Gulf’s rival states reached to the lobbying companies in the US to persuade the Trump administration to consolidate their positions on the Qatar crisis.

6.4.7. The Impact of Doha’s Strategic Decision not to Join the GCC Meetings

Qatari Emir did not attend the 39th GCC summit in Riyadh in 2018, on the behalf of him Qatar’s state minister for foreign affairs solely joined the summit.¹⁴⁵² In the summit, it was seen that the boycotting states still insisted on their allegations, which Doha strictly denied.¹⁴⁵³ During the summit, the Saudi leader King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz emphasized the importance of the GCC’s unity to stand against the imminent threats and challenges to the regional stability. He accused Iran of threatening regional stability. He suggested that the members of the GCC should work together to ensure regional security and stability.¹⁴⁵⁴ More significantly, his words coincided with the founding purposes of the GCC. To clarify these purposes in the historical context, the six Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman and Bahrain founded a regional organization called the GCC to foster cooperation and unity among its members in 1981. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the war between Iran and Iraq, the regional dynamics, specifically perception of proximate threat, forced the Gulf states to focus on defence cooperation. The Gulf Arab states shared a fear that Iran was a direct threat to their inner security. Their regime characters, mutual interests and common identity helped them to come together under the roof of a regional organisation.¹⁴⁵⁵

¹⁴⁵⁰ Courtney Freer, “Social Effects of the Qatar Crisis”, **IndraStra Global**, 10, 1-4, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-54113-4>, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵¹ Joe Light, “Al Jazeera Target of U.A.E. Campaign in U. S. To Hobble Network”, **Bloomberg**, 11 October 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-11/al-jazeera-target-of-u-a-e-campaign-in-u-s-to-hobble-network>. (12 October 2019).

¹⁴⁵² **Gulf News** “Bahrain criticises Qatar emir for not attending GCC summit in Riyadh”, 09 December 2018. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/bahrain-criticises-qatar-emir-for-not-attending-gcc-summit-in-riyadh-1.60837546>, (20 October 2019).

¹⁴⁵³ Stephen Kalin, “Qatar rift overshadows Gulf Arab summit as emir stays away”, **Reuters**, 9 December 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁴ **Gulf News**, “King Salman inaugurates the 39th GCC summit in Riyadh”, 09 December 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Yoel Guzansky, “Defence Cooperation in the Arabian Gulf: The Peninsula Shield Force Put to the Test”, **Middle Easter Studies**, Vol. 50, No. 4, 640-654, 2014, p. 640-641.

However, Qatar's attempt not to join the GCC summit in Riyadh strived for speculation that there could be a possible "Qataexit" as the member states hadn't found a solution in sight for the ongoing crisis. The UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash emphasized in his tweeter message that the GCC would continue despite the unsolved Qatar crisis.¹⁴⁵⁶ On the other hand, the rift among the members of the regional organisation yielded some negatives results. The GCC posed divided and vulnerable to foreign interventions during the Qatar crisis. The US hegemony tried to solve the issue in the Gulf because the unity in the GCC was important for its members as well as the US to cope with their rival Iran in the region.

Besides, the US sought to establish Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) with the GCC states including Egypt and Jordan.¹⁴⁵⁷ The US ruling elites were willing to build a profound cooperation called "Arab NATO" to strengthen economic, military and diplomatic ties among the partners.¹⁴⁵⁸ The partners attended a meeting in the US and tried to build new regional cooperation in the Gulf against their common threat. They collectively condemned the attacks on the oil facilities in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁵⁹ The attacks on the oil facilities in the Gulf and the US's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal reescalated the tension and increased the perception of Iran's threat in the region. More notably, the Iran threat was perceived at an alarming level by the members of the GCC after the Arab Spring.¹⁴⁶⁰

Apparently, Qatar's decision not to attend the GCC summit in Riyadh during the Qatar crisis was a strategical and diplomatic response to the KSA- led camp. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't sufficient to put pressure on the blockading states and change their decision.

6.4.8. Withdrawal From the Membership of the OPEC

Qatar manoeuvred politically against the blockade and announced that it withdrew from the intergovernmental organisation of OPEC. Qatar's withdrawal probably wouldn't

¹⁴⁵⁶ Habib Toumi, "Qatar's exit will not implode GCC", **Gulf News**, 08 December 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Stephen Kalin, "Qatar rift overshadows Gulf Arab summit as emir stays away", **Reuters**, 9 December 2018.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Yara Bayoumy, Jonathan Landay and Warren Strobel, "Trump seeks to revive 'Arab NATO' to confront Iran", **Reuters**, 27 July 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-gulf-alliance/trump-seeks-to-revive-arab-nato-to-confront-iran-idUSKBN1KH2IK>, (21 October 2019); Abdullah Baabood, "The Future of the GCC Amid the Gulf Divide", in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2019, p. 172.

¹⁴⁵⁹ **US Department of State**, <https://translations.state.gov/2019/09/18/joint-statement-by-middle-east-strategic-alliance-mesa/>, (21 October 2019).

¹⁴⁶⁰ Guzansky, "Defence Cooperation in the Arabian Gulf: The Peninsula Shield Force Put to the Test", 2014, p. 652.

affect the volume of oil supplies in the world oil market. Despite the GGC states' considerable influence on OPEC with their large proven oil and gas reserves,¹⁴⁶¹ the smaller members of OPEC had a less effective role in its mechanism of decision making in the organisation. Generally, the big suppliers such as Russia and Saudi Arabia have had leading roles in its decision making.¹⁴⁶² Doha's decision to exit from OPEC can be evaluated as a political reaction to safeguard its national interests towards Saudi Arabia's political and economic blockade imposed in 2017. To put it clearly, the Qatari leadership strategically responded to the KSA- led camp over the economic field. Qatar, which produced less than 2% of OPEC's entire oil production, decided to withdraw from the long-termed membership of OPEC in January 2019 and Qatar's economy seemed not to have been affected by its withdrawal.¹⁴⁶³ In this sense, we should analyse Qatar's decision in the context of the leaders's political and strategic calculations in their responses. The former prime minister HBJ evaluated it in terms of Qatar's interests. He underscored that Qatar acted wisely in its decision as OPEC gradually lost its functionality in terms of Qatar's national interests.¹⁴⁶⁴

6.5. Results of the 2017 Qatar Crisis

Mike Pompeo as US Secretary of State made a call for the Saudi leadership to end the dispute with the Doha administration on his first foreign trip to Saudi Arabia. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of the Gulf unity.¹⁴⁶⁵ Additionally, at a seminar at Qatar University, William Grant, a diplomat from the US embassy voiced the US position towards the dispute, "We believe it is hurting our interests in this region. We're not happy with the dispute, we want to see it end."¹⁴⁶⁶ Depending on the discourse and political approach to the dispute, the US desired to end the Qatar crisis, which also affects the US

¹⁴⁶¹ Ulrichsen, *Insecure Gulf: The End of Certainty and the Transition to the Post-Oil Era*, p. 69.

¹⁴⁶² Will Kennedy, Nayla Razzouk and Grant Smith, "Qatar's OPEC Exit Shows Growing Sway of Moscow-Riyadh Oil Axis", *Bloomberg*, 3 December 2018.

¹⁴⁶³ *World Bank*, "Qatar: Macro Poverty Outlook (April 2019)", p. 172, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/669561556573880727/pdf/Macro-Poverty-Outlook-for-Qatar.pdf>, (01 July 2019).

¹⁴⁶⁴ Kennedy, Razzouk and Smith, "Qatar's OPEC Exit Shows Growing Sway of Moscow-Riyadh Oil Axis".

¹⁴⁶⁵ Gardiner Harris, "Pompeo's Message to Saudis? Enough is Enough: Stop Qatar Blockade", *the New York Times*, 28 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/28/world/middleeast/mike-pompeo-saudi-arabia-qatar-blockade.html>, (09 June 2021); *Qatar Tribune*, "Pompeo's Message to Saudis? Enough Is Enough: Stop Qatar Blockade", 29 April 2018.

¹⁴⁶⁶ *Gulf Times*, "Blockade hurting US interests in region: envoy", 20 February 2019. https://www.gulf-times.com/story/622797/Blockade-hurting-US-interests-in-region-envoy#section_178, (22 February 2019).

regional interests. In fact, the US attempted to press on the Saudi leadership to restore its ties with Qatar after Khashoggi's murder, which affected the kingdom.¹⁴⁶⁷

When the recent developments were analysed, the Qatar crisis also generated some positive results in terms of Qatari Emir's local and regional image. The constructive and rational attitude of the Emir of Qatar towards the dispute in the Gulf region leveraged its image as well as its government legitimacy.¹⁴⁶⁸ Simply put, the Qatar crisis strengthened Emir Tamim bin Hamad's position in the country. "The personality cult" of Emir Tamim grew in the country.¹⁴⁶⁹ In this sense, the Qatari citizens drew his portraits and wrote their comments on the city walls as a demonstration of their respect, compliment and support.

Emir Tamim tried to reduce challenges and solidify his legitimacy domestically and regionally. He struggled against the KSA- led camp in the regional issues. In the last crisis of 2017, the KSA- led camp intended to leave him alone in both domestic and regional politics. However, they couldn't drive him in their direction. In return, the Qatari FPEs produced a rationalist, constructive and positive approach towards the regional dispute and Qatari society welcomed their approach with sympathy accordingly.¹⁴⁷⁰

NCR defends that leaders often face some difficulties in convincing their public to make sacrifices for national security strategies.¹⁴⁷¹ However, in the restrictive environment Qatari leadership successfully managed to extract and mobilize the resources from the society. Even, the young Emir's position against the KSA- led camp increased sympathy in the society. He navigated the domestic constraints appropriately and managed to convince the societal forces in line with his strategic decisions. Qatari people including some oppositional regional tribes appreciated Emir Tamim in his Gulf policy. Shortly after the crisis, the Emir strengthened his domestic power and legitimacy. More strikingly, the Qatari national identity, which the Qatari elites had tried to construct in the country, found a suitable ground to increase its popularity with the young leader figure.¹⁴⁷²

¹⁴⁶⁷ Stephen Kalin, "Qatar rift overshadows Gulf Arab summit as emir stays away", **Reuters**, 9 December 2018; Glen Carey and Vivian Nereim, "Qatar Emir Snubs Saudi Summit Invite as Gulf Rift Festers", **Bloomberg**, 9 December 2018.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Cihat Battaloğlu, "Körfez Krizi: Katar'da Yeni Lider Figürü ve Ulusal Kimlik İnşası", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, Temmuz-Ağustos 2017, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Richard Spencer, "Saudi blockade backfires as Qatari's hail 'hero' emir", **the Times**, 11 July 2017. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/saudi-blockade-backfires-as-qataris-hail-hero-emir-vl5c5gt59>, (12 February 2019).

¹⁴⁷⁰ Battaloğlu, "Körfez Krizi: Katar'da Yeni Lider Figürü ve Ulusal Kimlik İnşası", p. 14-15.

¹⁴⁷¹ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State", p. 490.

¹⁴⁷² Battaloğlu, "Körfez Krizi: Katar'da Yeni Lider Figürü ve Ulusal Kimlik İnşası", p. 14.

On the other hand, the Qatari FPEs were well-positioned towards the challenge which was prompted by the KSA- led camp after 2017. Doha consolidated its position particularly by using diplomatic channels through its soft power assets. In other words, Qatar managed to use its own leading institutions such as Qatar Foundations, Al Jazeera network and QNHRC to prevail over the effects of the quartet's blockade. Consequently, it benefited from the Qatar crisis to strengthen its position regionally and internationally when compared with its rivals.¹⁴⁷³

6.5.1. An Attempt to Change the Regime and Leadership in Qatar

Egyptian and Emirati media presented some people from the Qatari royal family living in the other countries as so-called opposition leaders for Qatar.¹⁴⁷⁴ Such a presentation for alternative rule and ruler to Qatar seemed to increase the spat among the neighbouring states. While a legitimate leader was still in power, it was considered an intervention to the sovereignty of the states. Additionally, such playmaking would also pave up the feelings of hostility in the Arab society, where tribal life reigned and intertwined with the ruling governments. It is well known that there are kinship relations among the Arab countries, especially among the Gulf Arab countries besides the historical and cultural background. Such attitudes which implied to change the ruler in power by the one abroad would possibly poison the relations among the Arab countries.

Indeed, after Emir Hamad came to power in 1995 by a bloodless palace coup, his neighbours (the KSA and the UAE) backed his father Sheikh Khalifa, former Emir of Qatar. Then Emir Hamad faced two failed coups attempted by Sheikh Khalifa and claimed that the plotters received arms and support from Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁷⁵ In this sense, Emir Hamad accused the neighbouring countries of backing his father to retake the government.¹⁴⁷⁶

The Qatari rulers never forgot the negative experience of coup attempts that occurred more than twenty years ago. On the occasion of the Qatar Crisis, Emir Tamim re-called it in the following citation. "history as well tells us, teaches us they tried to do that before,

¹⁴⁷³ Cherkaoui, p. 143-144.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Courtney Freer, "Social Effects of the Qatar Crisis", *IndraStra Global*, 10, 2017, 1-4, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-54113-4>, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Zafirov, p. 195.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Peterson, p. 742.

in 1996 after my father became the emir.”¹⁴⁷⁷ He clearly accused his neighbours of seeking to take him out of the administration and that they also had intended to change the regime in his country.¹⁴⁷⁸ Conversely, the blockading states, mainly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, tried to exploit political dissidents from the al-Thani family and al-Murrah tribe to garner political support against the Qatari leadership.¹⁴⁷⁹ Finally, it was believed that the Qatar crisis was political as well as personal as the leaders in the Gulf countries had family/tribal ties each other. More notably, the political manoeuvres of Saudi Arabia and the UAE made the ongoing crisis harder to solve. Additionally, personal aspects and old experiences affected the leaders’ political approaches to the dispute.¹⁴⁸⁰ To make it clear, strategic culture and leaders’ images affected the leaders’ responses towards the challenges.

6.5.2. Losing Ground in Africa

The Qatar crisis was a large political conflict rather than an intra-Gulf rivalry. It expanded and escalated the existing conflicts throughout the region. The KSA- led camp attempted to weaken Qatar’s position in the conflicting states such as Libya and Syria.¹⁴⁸¹ Additionally, the competition between Qatar and the KSA- led camp extended to Africa, primarily in the region called the Horn of Africa. In fact, many actors, regional or international, such as China, Russia, the US, Turkey, Qatar, Iran, the KSA and the UAE intensified their strategic interests towards the region with different motivations and political calculations.¹⁴⁸² Seemingly, its geo-strategic and geo-economic value had a great impact on the actors’ increasing interests towards the region. Thus, the rival actors considerably competed in establishing military bases in the regional states to expand their

¹⁴⁷⁷ **ABS-CBN NEWS**, “Qatar emir accuses blockade countries of wanting ‘regime change’”, 30 October 2017, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/10/30/17/qatar-emir-accuses-blockade-countries-of-wanting-regime-change>, (28 February 2019).

¹⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Noof ALDorasi, “Tribe and Tribal Ideology in Arabian Gulf States Foreign Policy Making: A Case Study of the Qatar Crisis”, **Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM)**, Analysis No: 233, July 2019, p. 9-11; **Yeni Şafak**, “UAE actions indicate fresh attempts to stage coup in Qatar”, 21 February 2018.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Randeep Ramesh, “The long-running family rivalries behind the Qatar crisis”, **the Guardian**, 21 July 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/21/qatar-crisis-may-be-rooted-in-old-family-rivalries>, (28 February 2019).

¹⁴⁸¹ Köse and Ulutaş, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸² Mehmet Cem Oğultürk and Fatma Yılmaz, “Katar’ın Afrika Boynuzu Politikasının Arabuluculuk Kapsamında Analizi”, **International Journal of Economics, Business and Politics**, 2019, 3 (1), 95-108, p. 96.; İsmail Numan Telci, “Krizlerin Gölgesinde Afrika Boynuzu’nda Mücadele”, **SETA**, 28 April 2018, <https://www.setav.org/krizlerin-golgesinde-afrika-boynuzunda-guc-mucadelesi/>, (24 November 2019).

sphere of influence in the region. Consequently, the regional African states started to host the military bases of the global and regional powers.¹⁴⁸³

On the other hand, Qatar's relations in Africa established multi-dimensional relations with some African states from trading to peacekeeping. However, Qatar was not a sole external actor in the region. It started to compete with its rival UAE in many fields. Qatar Airlines and Emirates expanded its flight network to the African states. In this context, two worldwide famous airways, Qatar Airways and Emirates, competed each other. Additionally, Doha-based Al Jazeera's English and Arabic channels enabled to broadcast via satellite in Africa.¹⁴⁸⁴ In doing so, Qatari leadership desired to increase their influence vis-à-vis their rivals.

However, the KSA and the UAE wanted to see the Qatar crisis as a good opportunity to reduce Qatar's influence in Africa, chiefly in the Horn of Africa.¹⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, African countries, especially those that were geographically close to the Gulf countries, became the main zones for struggling to increase their influence. The KSA-led camp sought to weaken Qatar's position in the Eritrean and Djibouti, where Qatar well-positioned for nearly eight years. Qatar was not only the mediator state between Eritrea and Djibouti but also was the guarantor state of the peace agreement between the two countries in 2010. The political manoeuvres of the KSA and the UAE jeopardized the role of Qatar in this issue. Eritrea and Djibouti joined the KSA-led camp due to their strong economic ties. As a result of this novel alliance building, Qatar had to withdraw its 500 troops from the region. Just after Qatar's decision, Eritrea mobilized its troops on the island of Dumeira because of a power void in the region. The military mobilization of Eritrea was expected to create a conflict between the two countries.¹⁴⁸⁶

Another African country, Somalia, became one of the key countries in the Qatar crisis. Qatar, whose airspace was closed by its neighbouring countries, had difficulty in finding an air space for the state-owned Qatar Airways. Then it began to use Somalia airspace as a way out. The KSA-led camp seeking to re-tighten Qatar contacted with Somalia and

¹⁴⁸³ Telci, "Krizlerin Gölgesinde Afrika Boynuzu'nda Mücadele".

¹⁴⁸⁴ Serhat Orakçı, "Katar Krizinin Afrika'daki Yansımaları", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 81, p. 22-23.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Abdinor Hassan Dahir, "Horn of Africa Caught in Between the Qatar-GCC Crisis. Case Studies of Somalia and Sudan", *TRT World Research Centre*, March 2018, p. 12-14. <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/HornOfAfricaCaughtInBetweenTheQatarGCCCrisis.pdf>. (10 August 2021).

¹⁴⁸⁶ Orakçı, p. 23.

forced it to close its airspace.¹⁴⁸⁷ By realizing Somalia's economic hardship, the KSA and the UAE demanded Somalia leadership to end their relations with Qatar in exchange for financial aid,¹⁴⁸⁸ which meant that they used Somalia's economic weakness as a political bargain.

The close ties between the TR and QA- led camp and Somalia or the UAE's position towards the conflict between Mogadishu and Hargeysa played an important role in Somalia's taking the stand against the pressure of Saudis and Emiratis during the Qatar crisis.¹⁴⁸⁹ Firstly, Turkey's support for Qatar and Qatar's large-scale humanitarian assistance to Somalia were thought to be effective in Somalia's stand in favour of Qatar. In other words, Somalian leadership, at least, became neutral against the Qatar blockade at the cost of losing Saudis and Emirati's support. Secondly, the UAE started a direct flight to the central city of Hargeysa in Somaliland and rented a former military base in Barbera. The leadership in Mogadishu perceived the UAE's activities including military establishment in Barbera and bilateral agreement with Somaliland without the approval of Mogadishu/Somalia government in the region as a threat to its national unity. As a result of the competition in the region, Somalia did not act in the direction of the KSA-led camp while Hargeysa, which claimed to represent Somaliland, announced his full support for the KSA-led camp.¹⁴⁹⁰ In essence, Qatar and the KSA- led camp found different allies in Somalia ,which backed Qatar or the KSA- led camp on the Qatar crisis in terms of their interests.

In Sudan, Turkey and Qatar had a close political and economic cooperation with the Omar al Bashir regime because they had well-cooperated with it with their financial and diplomatic support. In regards to economic cooperation, it had significant initiatives in various economic fields through the QIA.¹⁴⁹¹ However, the al Bashir's regime changed after a military coup in April 2019, which meant that the TR and Qatar-led camp lost a strategic ally in the region. Moreover, Sudan became a country where the regional rivalry was intensified between the two rival camps, the KSA- led camp and the TR and QA- led

¹⁴⁸⁷ Orakçı, p. 23.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Muhammed Abdullah Fermacu, "Somali Körfez'in Katar rüşvetini reddetti", **Yeni Şafak**, 13 Haziran 2017. <https://www.yenisafak.com/dunya/somali-korfezin-katar-rusvetini-reddetti-2717410>, (24 November 2019).

¹⁴⁸⁹ Orakçı, p. 23; Telci, "Krizlerin Gölgesinde Afrika Boynuzu'nda Mücadele".

¹⁴⁹⁰ Orakçı, p. 23.

¹⁴⁹¹ Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Waqi' Mohammad Al-Jaali, "Economic cooperation between Sudan and Qatar", **Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (Doha Institute)**, Research Papers, January 2012, p. 9, www.dohainstitute.org.

camp. States prefer material assistance/aid to lead the alliance relations effectively.¹⁴⁹² Just after the military coup, Saudi Arabia and the UAE immediately gave economic aid to the military government to support Sudan's economy and humanitarian issues.¹⁴⁹³ The two top officials General Abdul Fattah and Abdullah Hamdounk visited Riyadh to strengthen their ties. On the other hand, Doha sought to enhance the mutual ties with the new Sudan government and balance the KSA-led camp in the country. In this context, Sudan's new leadership was officially invited to Doha. Additionally, Mutlaq Al Qahtani, a special envoy on his visit to Khartoum, officially offered Qatar's diplomatic relations to assist "peace, stability and security" in the country.¹⁴⁹⁴ With the diplomatic manoeuvres, Qatar tried to balance the KSA- led camp's strengthening position in Sudan. The Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani contended that:

"some countries, especially those in need of help and support from Saudi and the UAE, have been blackmailed to follow the same policy against Qatar. So, it creates a lot of instability in the Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan area."¹⁴⁹⁵

In this context, he underscores that the KSA-led camp created regional instability by citing the Qatari crisis.

6.6. The KSA-led Camp and Increasing Pressure on Qatar

The KSA- led camp/the blockading countries accused Qatar of supporting terrorism in the region and demanded 13 items (mentioned earlier) for Qatar to maintain their diplomatic relations. In doing so, they aimed to isolate Qatar in the eyes of the Arab and international community. The KSA- led camp saw Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood (MB) relations as Qatar's support for terrorism. In fact, Qatar's relationship with the MB goes back until the middle of the last century. In the 1960s, when Egyptian authority exiled some members of the MB, they settled in the regional Arab countries, especially in the KSA. However, ideological and political conflict between the MB and the Saudi government became evident just after the Gulf war. The security and stability of the Saudi regime were jeopardized by serious opposition of the Saahvewa movement, which could

¹⁴⁹² Walt, *The origin of Alliance*, p. 221-242.

¹⁴⁹³ **TRT Haber**, "Suudi Arabistan ve BAE'den Sudan'a 3 milyar dolarlık yardım", 22 April 2019. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/suudi-arabistan-ve-baedon-sudana-3-milyar-dolarlik-yardim-412716.html>, (24 November 2019).

¹⁴⁹⁴ **The New Arab**, "Qatar officially invites Sudan's leadership to Doha following Saudi visit", 10 October 2019. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2019/10/10/qatar-invites-sudan-pm-to-visit-doha>, (25 November 2019).

¹⁴⁹⁵ Tom Wilson and Andrew England, "Middle East's power struggle moves to the Horn of Africa", **the Financial Times**, 30 June 2019.

be regarded as the branch of the MB in the KSA.¹⁴⁹⁶ As a result, the exiles of the MB and its affiliates didn't largely find a suitable ground in the Gulf countries except for Qatar.¹⁴⁹⁷ In Qatar, the exiled members found various activities for themselves. They even engaged in pioneering activities in key areas such as Qatar's education. Yusuf al-Qaradawi as a leading member of the MB, for instance, got a post at Qatar University. He became a significant figure in the Arab world and enabled him to make his voice heard in the region through the regular shows in which he participated on the Doha-based Al Jazeera TV channel and communicated with the Arab community.¹⁴⁹⁸

The MB exiles, with whom most of the Gulf regimes and their ruling families also had long-standing cooperation, managed to find a safe haven in Qatar. Doha was in the pursuit of its policy as being close to the MB although Saudi Arabia perceived it as a danger to its regime survival. Their own experience and perceptions about the MB relatively helped the leaders to shape their responses and regional position towards the regional political changes.¹⁴⁹⁹

In 2011, Muslim Brotherhood or the Islamic Movements gained momentum along with the Arab Spring movements. In other words, the new regional dynamics forced the region to change in favour of the Islamists. Qatar provided economic and political support to the Islamic Movements. To put it clearly, Qatar supported Ennahda Party led by Rashid al-Ghannouchi in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party led by Mohammed Morsi in Egypt. Particularly the MB and its affiliates gained power in the region and the large masses' support to them disturbed the other regional actors. The KSA and the UAE, which perceived the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to their regime and stability, took a stand for the status quo. Thus, they had a political stance against the political transition in the region. Accordingly, Qatar's attitude to support democratic movements in the region disturbed its relations with its neighbours. The KSA- led camp kept supporting a return to the status quo, which caused a strong wave to reverse the Arab Spring into their favour. The status quo states assumed a key role in the rapid establishment of

¹⁴⁹⁶ Telci and Rakipoğlu, p. 140-146.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Allen J. Fromherz, **Qatar A Modern History**, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012, p. 23.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Toby Matthiesen, "Renting the Gasbah: Gulf States' Foreign Policy Towards North Africa Since the Arab Uprisings", in Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (Ed.), **The Changing Security Dynamics of The Persian Gulf**, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 48-49.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Matthiesen, "Renting the Gasbah: Gulf States' Foreign Policy Towards North Africa Since the Arab Uprisings", p. 50.

counterrevolution movements in the region in the post-2013 period. In Egypt, the democratically elected Morsi government was removed from power by General Sisi's military coup. In 2013, The Ennahda Party supported a decision to restore the country and take a democratic election at the expense of losing ruling power in Tunisia.¹⁵⁰⁰ In 2014, the Ennahda Party endorsed a conciliatory attitude by a decision to prevent the country from skidding by forming a coalition with its political and ideological rival Nida Tunisia. However, some regional actors have still been against the Ennahda Party in the region.¹⁵⁰¹

After the Sisi government came to power, Egypt and Saudi Arabia officially declared the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization by aiming to sustain the activities of the MB in the region as well as breaking the close ties between Qatar and MB. From this perspective, the KSA- led camp including Egypt hoped to achieve a multifaceted gain through their political approaches to Qatar and the MB. Against this backdrop, I put their objectives in their approach to Qatar and MB below.

1. To minimize the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, which were perceived as a threat by the KSA- led camp.
2. To disqualify an important ally of Qatar in the region.
3. To prevent the pursuit of Qatar's independent political behaviour by restricting its manoeuvres.
4. To reset Qatar's long-termed gains (branding efforts) in the eyes of the regional and international community by introducing it as a terrorism supporting country.
5. To compel Qatar to follow the KSA-led Gulf policies or stay in line with Saudi Arabia's policy.
6. To weaken Qatar's rising influence in the region.

Yet, blockading countries couldn't provide sufficient evidence to support their accusations.¹⁵⁰² Also, they made efforts to make concrete claims against Qatar. The Gulf

¹⁵⁰⁰ Özge Özkoç, "Arap Dünyasında Demokratikleşme Süreçleri ve Siyasal İslam: Müslüman Kardeşler ve En-Nahda Hareketi Üzerine Bir Karşılaştırma", **Mülkiye Dergisi**, 40 (1), 2016, 29-56, p. 47.

¹⁵⁰¹ Nebahat Tanrıverdi Yaşar, "Analiz-Devrimin Yıldönümünde Tunus'ta Siyasetin Yeni Hatları", **Anadolu Agency**, 17 December 2018.

¹⁵⁰² Arslan, p.82.

countries made another attack by jointly issuing an alleged terrorist list. They strained interrelations with the given terrorist list. In a sense, they blazed the crisis.

In particular, the Saudi Arabian press released the Qatari citizens on an alleged terrorist list to attract the world's attention to Qatar. They tried to prove that Qatar had close relations with terrorists. There were 59 names that were declared as terrorists on the list, and 18 of them were Qatari citizens. Others were from Egypt, Libya, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, UAE, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. There was no clear information why the people who weren't Qatari but took their place on the given list. Additionally, it wasn't clear how they related them to Qatar.¹⁵⁰³ However, the striking point about the terrorist list was that the people on the list were the important figures in Qatar. Since they were in the top social layer of Qatar, it might create a significant inconvenience in terms of state and society relations in Qatar.

Some individuals mentioned in the released terrorist list by the Saudi press had important duties in Qatar. Abdullah al Thani who served as interior minister during Sheikh Hamad was one of the names close to Sheikh Hamad. Abdulaziz al Atiye was from one of the most important families in Qatar. Al Atiyas still has members in Qatar's present ruling team. More names in the list consisted of people from the local tribes of Qatar. Any restriction by Qatari rulers for those who were called terrorists in the list meant that the rulers would confront a large social segment.¹⁵⁰⁴ For this reason, Qatari Emir was politically and strategically challenged by his neighbours. To put it simply, they tried to drive the Emir into a corner. The Qatari leaders have been in a position to balance the Qatari tribes to maintain their political legitimacy and ruling power. Thus, there is always a fine balance between the ruling family and the local tribes for social coherence.

The list of terrorists included several people from other Arab countries. Ali al Salabi and his brother Ismail al Salabi were from Libya. The first one was close to Yusuf al Qaradawi. He was an important member of the International Scholars Association

¹⁵⁰³ Feyza Gümüşlüoğlu, "Katar Krizi: Terör Listesinde Kim Kimdir?", **ORSAM**, Cilt: 9, Sayı 81, 2017, p. 9; **DW. Com**, "Saudi Arabia and allies release Qatar 'terror list'", <https://www.dw.com/en/saudi-arabia-and-allies-release-qatar-terror-list/a-39172917>, (19 September 2021); Michelle Nichols, "No apparent Arab plans to push U.N. sanctions-diplomats", **Reuters**, June 14 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-gulf-qatar-sanctions-un-idAFKBN1952KV>, (19 September 2021).; Asa Fitch and Margherita Stancati, "Qatar's Regional Rivals Ratchet Up Pressure in the Middle -East Rift", **the Wall Street Journal**, 9 June 2017.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Gümüşlüoğlu, "Katar Krizi: Terör Listesinde Kim Kimdir?", p. 9; **Gulf News**, "Qatar-linked people, groups on terror list", 09 June 2017. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/qatar/qatar-linked-people-groups-on-terror-list-1.2040686>, (10 September 2021).

founded by Yusuf al Qaradawi. The latter was the founder of the Benghazi Defense Brigade, which fought against Gaddafi's regime. Also, Mehdi Harati was the commander of the Tripoli Revolutionary Brigade and then founded the Liva-I ummah in Syria. The association of Qatar with the Libyans on the list is based on Qatar's active participation in NATO-led operations.¹⁵⁰⁵ Qatar adopted an active and interventionist foreign policy in Libya, supporting both anti-regime forces and taking an active part in the operations.¹⁵⁰⁶ Al Jazeera, the significant intangible power of Qatar, supported the anti-regime forces. During the same period, Qatar's Special Forces Commander Hamad Abdullah al Marri organized the economic and military support for anti-regime groups in Libya. He was included in the list as well. Al Marri's presence in the military unit of Qatar as well as being a member of one of the most important families of Qatar pushed the Emir of Qatar. On the other hand, Caliph al-Subei, Ibrahim el-Bekir, Salim al-Kuvvari, Abdullah al-Havar, Saad al-Kaabi, Abdullatif al-Kuvvari, Abdurrahman al-Nueymi were also accused by the United States and/or the UN of giving financial support to al-Qaeda in different countries.¹⁵⁰⁷ In this respect, it can be read as a political move of the blockading countries. The KSA- led camp, which was trying to persuade the international community about Qatar's support for terrorism, probably tried to provide legitimacy for their accusations against Qatar. However, they had to show concrete evidence to convince the regional and international actors and support their accusations.

6.7. The 2017 Qatar Crisis Solved

The power shift in leadership of the KSA highly affected regional politics, because the leaders' perceptions and strategic calculations affect their foreign policy behaviours. The leaders who perceive the external threat prefer to align with others. However, it is very significant for the leaders to decide when and with whom to build alliance.¹⁵⁰⁸ Mohammad bin Salman (MbS) and Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan (MbZ) consolidated their alliance in the GCC and pursued aggressive policies to shape the regional dynamics.¹⁵⁰⁹ They launched military operations under their allies' Operation

¹⁵⁰⁵ Gümüşlüoğlu, "Katar Krizi: Terör Listesinde Kim Kimdir?", p. 9; **Gulf News**, "Qatar-linked people, groups on terror list", 09 June 2017.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Ulrichsen, **Qatar and the Arab Spring**, p. 121; Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", pp. 539-556.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Gümüşlüoğlu, "Katar Krizi: Terör Listesinde Kim Kimdir?", p. 9; **Gulf News**, "Qatar-linked people, groups on terror list", 09 June 2017.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Walt, *The Origin of Alliance*, p. 21-22.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Neil Quilliam, "The Saudi Dimension: Understanding the Kingdom's Position in the Gulf Crisis", in Andreas Kreig (Ed.), **Divided Gulf the Anatomy of a Crisis**, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Decisive Storm against the Iran-aligned Houthi forces to restore the order in Yemen. Then, they backed the Sisi government in Egypt and the Khalifa Haftar group against the Fayiz al-Sarraj- led Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya with their material capabilities. Similarly, they challenged to balance the TR and QA- led camp in the transition countries. More specifically, they tried to design the Qatari foreign policy behaviours in the region as they perceived Qatar's regional policy as a threat to their regime survival and regional stability. As a result, MbS and MbZ-led regional politics paved the way for the Qatar crisis and created an unstable and insecure environment in the GCC and the Gulf.

Kuwait voluntarily mediated between the parties to end the 2017 Qatar crisis. However, Kuwait's mediation did not produce the desired result in the solution of the crisis. On the other hand, the Trump administration, which encouraged the KSA and other Gulf countries against Qatar at the beginning of the crisis, abandoned its attitude later in 2018 and struggled to end the crisis in the region.¹⁵¹⁰ The Qatar crisis had important downsides for the USA as the instability in the Gulf region or, in other words, the disagreement between the Gulf allies of the USA, could have weakened their alliance against Iran in the region. The Trump administration clearly demonstrated its stance against Iran by breaking the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and made further moves, including counter-embargoes, with the support of the Gulf countries. In this respect, ending the dispute between Qatar and the Gulf countries was important for the US regional policy due to the geopolitical and geostrategic position of the Gulf region. Thus, it was in the US interest to have a stable relationship among the Gulf countries. In line with this rationale, the Trump administration tried to consolidate the relations among its allies (including Israel) in the region against the Iranian threat.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior advisor, was appointed to resolve the given dispute in the Gulf. Kushner brokered interrelations between Qatar-Gulf countries as well as the Gulf states and Israel. In this respect, his travel to the Gulf countries and diplomatic meetings with the leaders of the Gulf countries weighed in interrelations among the Arab states. Then, the Trump administration's effort to normalize relations between Israel and

¹⁵¹⁰ **BBC News**, "Qatar crisis: Saudi Arabia and allies restore diplomatic ties with emirate", 5 January 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55538792>. (25 April 2021).

Arab countries yielded positive results. Bahrain, the UAE, Sudan and Morocco normalised their diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020.¹⁵¹¹

Although the Trump administration initiated the diplomatic effort to solve the Qatar crisis, the newly elected Biden administration was more effective in the Gulf countries' willingness to end the regional crisis. It may have emanated from the Gulf countries' desire to re-position themselves against the forthcoming US government and establish good relations with the Biden government.¹⁵¹² On the other hand, the inability to influence Qatar despite the longstanding blockade was an important factor for the blockading countries. To highlight it, Qatar was not affected by the blockade as the blockading countries calculated, at the same time it did not lose its strength or change its stance. Similarly, the blockade did not achieve its goal. As a result of all these, in January 2021 the KSA- led camp announced that they lifted the blockade on Qatar. On this occasion, the GCC members and Egypt came together. MBS personally welcomed Tamim bin Hamad al- Thani, the Emir of Qatar, at the airport.¹⁵¹³ Thus, they posed that Riyadh and Doha ended their dispute. In fact, the Gulf countries did not mutually resolve the disputes that caused the crisis. Qatar did not take a step back against the MB and Iran, Al Jazeera's broadcasts and requests for the closure of the Turkish base in Qatar.¹⁵¹⁴ Even though the Qatar Crisis has ended, Qatar and the neighbouring Gulf countries still continue to follow different policies against the regional dynamics. As a result, it seems likely that the Gulf countries, adopting different foreign policies and alliance politics, will experience a dispute again in the future. At the same time, with the end of the Qatar crisis, the US influence in the region, particularly in the Gulf region, can be predictably on increase.¹⁵¹⁵

Conclusion

In 2014 and 2017 the KSA- led camp imposed severe blockades on Qatar and withdrew their diplomats from Doha. Despite many allegations of the blockades/Qatar crises, it was concluded that the crises mainly related to Qatar's foreign policy and security perception,

¹⁵¹¹ Abigail Ng, "Saudi Arabia and its allies restore diplomatic ties with Qatar after three-year rift", **CNBC**, 5 January 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/05/saudi-arabia-restores-diplomatic-ties-with-qatar-after-three-year-rift.html>, (25 April 2021).

¹⁵¹² Sanam Vakil, "Qatar crisis: A beginning to the end?", **Chatham House**, 8 January 2021, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/01/qatar-crisis-beginning-end>, (25 April 2021).

¹⁵¹³ Ng, "Saudi Arabia and its allies restore diplomatic ties with Qatar after three-year rift".

¹⁵¹⁴ Giorgio Cafiero and Claire Fuchs, "Three months since the Qatar blockade lifted, what's changed?", **TRT World**, 02 April 2021. <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/three-months-since-the-qatar-blockade-lifted-what-s-changed-45541>, (25 April 2021).

¹⁵¹⁵ Samuel Ramani, "The Qatar Blockade Is Over, but the Gulf Crisis Lives On", **Foreign Policy**, 27 January 2021.

which were different from the inter-Gulf security perception in the post-Arab spring.¹⁵¹⁶ From this perspective, Qatari FPEs quickly perceived the regional challenge and the changing dynamics. They sought to steer the course as an active player. Even, it actively joined the NATO-led military campaign to oust the Gaddafi regime in Libya. Also, it significantly increased its influence in the region by providing economic, political and military assistance to the rebels in the transition states including the Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood. Regarding the security concern, it chose to stay outside the security umbrella of the KSA, which was the dominant power in the Gulf region. In fact, it had pursued an independent policy from the KSA- led GCC countries for a long time and achieved to maintain the same attitude during the Arab Spring. Moreover, it formed an alliance with Turkey, which was another dominant actor in the region. They (the Turkey and Qatar- led elected-reformist camp) backed the MB and its affiliates in the region. Their alliance unrested the KSA- led camp. As a result, the KSA- led camp urged Doha to agree with Riyadh's policies towards the regional dynamics.

One of the prime issues that caused the tension between the KSA- led camp and Qatar was undoubtedly Doha-based Al Jazeera's broadcast although its innovative and critical broadcasting policy contributed greatly to the regional politics. In this context, Al-Jazeera's continuous broadcast for the 2003 Iraqi invasion, the Palestinian intifada and similar regional issues radically changed Arab public opinion as well as political and strategic aspects of the Arab region. The search for identity and the sense of exclusion nourished by Al Jazeera's broadcast raised the feelings of protecting the interests of the Arab public.¹⁵¹⁷

In the 2017 Qatar crisis, it is clearly seen that the blocking states/the KSA- led camp did not calculate its longer-term consequences rationally in their political manoeuvres. This political miscalculation generated a much weaker Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as long as they continued to increase their pressure to isolate Qatar or when the spat deepened. In addition to these, it created vulnerability for the external powers' involvement in the inter-GCC crisis. Non-members of the GCC such as Turkey and Iran played an important role to safeguard the Qatari regime.

¹⁵¹⁶ Bianco and Stansfield, p. 634.

¹⁵¹⁷ Devran and Özcan, p. 316.

Apparently, the GCC as a regional economic and security organisation had no major contribution to the crisis resolution during the Qatar crises, which leads to questioning the existence of the GCC. Additionally, the developments give the impression that an alternative security organisation to the GCC has been sought. The US tried to motivate the Gulf Arab countries to establish a new security organisation that could replace the GCC to fight primarily against terrorism and Iran's expansionism. In this regard, US president Trump dealt with similar issues during his visit to Riyadh and followed a contradictory approach which played a major role in escalating the Qatar crisis.¹⁵¹⁸ To put it simply, the US behaviours strengthened this view.

On the other hand, new co-operations emerged in the rivalry Middle East, where the distinction between friends and enemies did not crystallize completely. Iran sought to develop its relations with Qatar at least by providing food aid during the Qatar crisis. Oman and Kuwait also tried to benefit from the Qatar crisis in their favour. Both countries demonstrated their neutrality in the recent crisis and wanted to act as mediators. Thus, while Kuwait gained both regional and international prestige as a mediator state, Oman exploited great economic benefits.

In conclusion, the KSA- led camp attempted to put pressure on Qatar mainly to end its rise in the region after the Arab Spring. Despite the restrictive strategic environment Qatari leadership responded very quickly and wisely to their challenges and managed to safeguard the survival of the regime. As a result of the given crises, Qatar enhanced its political stability, confidence and national solidarity in the country.¹⁵¹⁹ Likewise, the Qatar crises paved the way for Qatar to be a more robust and autonomous state in the regional system.¹⁵²⁰ At last in January 2021, the blockading states ended the crisis via the US diplomatic efforts although Qatar insisted on different foreign policy and alliance choices toward the regional dynamics.

¹⁵¹⁸ Diriöz, "Körfez'de Katar Krizi Sonucu Bölgesel Ayrışma ve ABD'nin Bölgesel Vizyon Eksiklikleri", p. 31.

¹⁵¹⁹ Çavuşoğlu, "From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership", p. 105.

¹⁵²⁰ Zweiri, Rahman, and Kemal, "The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Introduction", p. 10.

CONCLUSION

The Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia in 2010 spread quickly to the other regional states. Arab people protested the regimes and the long-seated leaders mainly with the expectations such as “political reforms, social justice and good governance”. Thus, the Arab Spring turned into a great regional challenge/constraint for the Middle Eastern countries and led to significant impacts on the region. Firstly, it triggered changes in the regional balance of power among the states in the Middle East. It shifted the regimes and their long-seated leadership of the regional states such as Tunisia, Egypt and Libya while creating a chaotic environment and impotent leadership in Syria and Yemen. In other words, the regional challenge forced to change the current balance of power among the regional states and resulted in demolished and/or weakened regional states in the volatile region.

Secondly, the Arab Spring generated threats and/or opportunities for the regional states. In this context, neoclassical realists urge that states build their foreign security policies commonly regarding the threats and opportunities, which emerged in the system. Also, they believe that those threats and opportunities influence the political options of the states.¹⁵²¹ Yet, the regional states responded to the systemic pressure in terms of their own perceptions and political calculations. The KSA- led conservative-moderate camp perceived the challenge as a threat to their regime security and regional stability. Their leadership sought to preserve the status quo by backing the authoritarian regimes in the region. In this line, they perceived the strengthening position of the Islamists/the Muslim Brotherhood in the region as a threat to their survival of the regime. They shared the fear that the MB/the Islamists would threaten their regime survival and favour Iran- led conservative-resistance camp. The Egyptian leadership during the democratically elected Morsi government took steps in the name of normalizing the relations with Iran, which caused to deepen the hostility of the KSA towards the new administration/the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁵²² Thus, the KSA- led camp backed the al-Sisi military coup in Egypt for their own interest and security concerns. Owing to their threat perceptions, the regional

¹⁵²¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 19.

¹⁵²² Telci and Rakipoğlu, p. 159.

states had different security concerns. Thus, they co-operated against an imminent threat to their regime security and stability through different alliances.

On the other hand, the TR and QA- led camp backed the popular uprisings and rebels throughout the region. Particularly, Qatari leadership perceived the regional dynamics as an opportunity to increase their influence in the region. They pursued an independent policy towards the regional pressure and actively intervened in the regional issues. Qatar joined the NATO-led military operation to end the Gaddafi regime in Libya and provided economic, military and diplomatic support to the anti-regime forces. At the same time, it backed the Islamists groups such as Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the region.¹⁵²³ The Islamist movement enhanced its influence in a number of Arab states through its social presence and organisational capacity.¹⁵²⁴ To put it clearly, the Islamists parties gained weight in the region during the Arab Spring. As a result, Qatar benefited from the uprisings/regional dynamics and expanded its influence in the transition states.¹⁵²⁵

Thirdly, the popular uprisings inflamed mistrust and antagonism in the interstate relations in the present anarchic regional system.¹⁵²⁶ The traditional rivals Iran and the KSA sought to increase their sphere of influence throughout the region. The KSA- led camp accused Iran of inciting the Shia population in Bahrain and Yemen and tried to stop the popular uprisings in Bahrain and Yemen accordingly. The Gulf forces managed to repel the rebels in Bahrain but they failed to stop the clashes in Yemen because the Iran-aligned Houthi forces gained a large ground against the internationally recognized Hadi government. In fact, while identity politics and sectarianism rose in the region after the Arab Spring, the radicalism and violence of the terrorist groups were galvanized and popularized in the region.¹⁵²⁷

Despite this, the impetus towards the reforms or changing status quo within the region which the Arab Spring triggered gradually loosened. During this period, Qatar emerged

¹⁵²³ Berger, p. 262.

¹⁵²⁴ Nathan J. Brown, "Changes in the Domestic Order", in Sinan Ülgen et al. (Eds.), **Emerging Order in the Middle East**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp. 1-24, 2012, p. 2.

¹⁵²⁵ Marina Ottoway, "The Consequences of the Internal Power Shift", in Sinan Ülgen et al. (Eds.), **Emerging Order in the Middle East, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, pp. 1-24, 2012, p. 6.

¹⁵²⁶ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 293.

¹⁵²⁷ Kamrava, **Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf**, p. 143.

as an influential player in the regional order of the Middle East by increasing its sphere of influence in the region as well as consolidating its power by forming new alliances and re-negotiating its traditional alliances. The Turkey and Qatar alliance was easily formed in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East because states which pursue similar foreign policy interests are more likely to be allies.¹⁵²⁸ However, the long-standing rivalry and fragmentation were increasingly embedded in the region. Israel continued to be a common adversary for Iran and Arab states, even some of them had implicit relations and normalized their relations.

In Syria, the neighbouring countries, especially Turkey and Qatar, which counted on their close relations, initially tried to negotiate with the regime about the increasing tension and violence in the country. NCR defends that political leaders do not always respond rationally to systemic imperatives.¹⁵²⁹ Likewise, they may miscalculate the imminent threats and incentives. In line with this theoretical assumption, President Assad's misperception and miscalculation of the domestic and regional environment affected Syria's domestic and external policy against the systemic stimuli (threats). He disregarded Turkish and Qatari leaders' warnings and maintained his tyranny in the country. However, an unstable domestic environment prevailed in the country. At this point, Qatar urged the Arab League for involvement and resolutions in the Syrian crisis. Additionally, since the Bashar al-Assad regime failed to respond to the domestic and regional challenges, it created a power void in Syria, which made it vulnerable to foreign interventions. Qatar allied with Turkey and the KSA to remove the Bashar al-Assad regime from the ruling power by backing the Syrian opposition groups to liberate the country and ensure security in the region. The pressure from this alliance ultimately pushed Syria and Iran into closer alignment.

According to the assumption of NCR, states are forced to fit the systemic stimuli in the anarchic and self-help system where security and survivals are constantly at great risk,¹⁵³⁰ which explains why during this period the regional states reconsidered their own security and survival strategies. The KSA- led conservative camp favoured the status quo in the transition countries and attempted to ensure the survival of their regime and maintain the

¹⁵²⁸ Walt, **The Origins of Alliances**, p. 198.

¹⁵²⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 22-23.

¹⁵³⁰ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 17.

stability in the Gulf against the regional challenge. On the other hand, Iran tried to expand its influence to the regional states where the Shia population was dense. The TR and QA-led camp endorsed the public uprisings as well as MB and its affiliates in the region. Qatar supported the protesters with its own national resources including Doha-based Al Jazeera. The Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates initially appeared to gain considerable ruling power in the region, as exemplified by the Ghannouchi government in Tunisia and the Morsi government coming to power in Egypt.

Moreover, NCR defends that a state's power and position in the system shape its foreign policy behaviours. Also, leaders' perceptions and strategic calculations of relative power and others's intentions are significant in policy making as well as external policy choices.¹⁵³¹ Relying on its material and immaterial capabilities Qatar sought to protect its regime survival as well as increasing its regional influence through its proactive and interventionist policy toward the regional dynamics in the post-Arab Spring. In a similar vein, Qatari leadership attempted to pursue an autonomous foreign policy to achieve their regional goals.

In Libya, Qatar supported the anti-government forces with political, military, financial capabilities as well as joining the NATO-led military operation with its military capabilities. This proved that Qatar could use its material capabilities when necessary. However, a stable government couldn't be established in the country after the NATO-led operation because the militia groups continued to fight against each other to gain power in ruling the country. At last, two rival governments emerged in the country: the UN-recognised Tripoli government in western Libya which was backed by Qatar and Turkey, while Egypt and the KSA and the UAE backed the other emergent government, General Haftar's Tobruk government in eastern Libya. Given the political polarization in Libya, instability in the country paved the way for the regional rivalry in the post-Gaddafi period.

Qatar under Emir Hamad's leadership consolidated its position in the transition countries. However, Qatar's foreign policy preferences, including its support to the MB-attached governments, and increasing influence in the transition countries disturbed the KSA-led camp. They wanted to balance its rise in the region and cease its unorthodox regional

¹⁵³¹ Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, p. 56; Foulon, p. 641; Rose, p. 147; Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and Resource-Extractive State", p. 485-486,

policy. Then, Emir Hamad unexpectedly transferred his ruling power to his crown prince, Emir Tamim. In this respect, the regional environment during the Arab Spring affected the political power shift in Qatar. Depending on the assumption that a leader's vision and perception are very significant to understand the challenges (threats) and opportunities and determine a convenient strategy or political preference against the perceived threats and opportunities, I can analyse the political power shift in Qatar. Emir Hamad read the regional environment during the Arab Spring and pursued a new strategy, which was against the traditional way of reign shift (either die in rule or toppled down by a coup) in the Gulf region, by handing over his ruling power in order to safeguard the survival of the al-Thani regime. With his farsighted political vision, he saw the regional changes and interactions beforehand. In line with this rationale, Emir Hamad calculated the political costs of his manoeuvres against the regional challenges during the Arab Spring.

Additionally, Emir Tamim's leader images played an important role in Father Emir's political decision. Firstly, Emir Hamad was deeply engaged with the MB while Emir Tamim was less eager on it. The power shift prevented Emir Hamad from encountering any challenges from the KSA and the UAE, which perceived the MB as a threat to their regime survival and regional stability, and from letting the MB members and the MB-attached governments down against the KSA-led camp. However, Emir Tamim had to deport some members of the MB to ease the tension with the KSA-led camp during the 2014 Qatar crisis.¹⁵³² In the same position, Emir Hamad could not act against the MB after their long-seated relations.

Secondly, unlike his father, Emir Tamim had no political baggage against the regional states. He was ready to establish good relations with the other countries, primarily the Gulf countries as their relations were highly tensed and considerably deteriorated. He even sent a message to the Sisi government (just after the toppled Morsi government) in order to open a new page in their soured relations. By doing so, Emir Tamim focused on foreign policy to restore the damaged relations with the neighbouring countries.¹⁵³³

¹⁵³² CNN Turk, "Katar krizi nedir? Nasıl ortaya çıktı?", 22 Haziran 2017.

¹⁵³³ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Foreign policy implications of the new emir's succession in Qatar", Policy Brief, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), August 2013, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/170552/Foreign%20Policy%20Implications%20of%20the%20New%20Emir%20in%20Qatar.pdf>, (17 September 2021).

However, counterrevolutions and proxy wars at various fronts put their weight on the Middle East policy. The Saudi leadership sought to return to the status quo in the pre-Arab Spring as they perceived it to their advantage. They backed the counterrevolutions in the transition countries to consolidate their strength. The KSA-led camp's efforts affected the regional dynamics of the Middle East by causing the weakening of both the Turkey and Qatar-led camp and the Iran-led camp.¹⁵³⁴ More notably, the Arab Spring movement failed to meet the Arab citizens' demand for democracy: the democratically elected Morsi government in Egypt was overthrown by the Sisi government in 2013. Also, Egypt, which was the traditional leader of the Arab world, got weaker in power and appeared not to achieve its historical standing in the region.¹⁵³⁵ Instead, it focused on its domestic issues by allying with the KSA- led camp on external issues.

In Bahrain and Yemen, Qatar allied with the KSA and the other GGC members. This alliance confirms the assumption that the regional states in the Middle East cooperate to withstand the local threats and avoid a possible challenge from their rivals nearby towards their political legitimacy.¹⁵³⁶ The KSA- led coalition force interfered to end the popular protests in Bahrain in order to protect the al-Khalifa regime. In Yemen, Qatar also backed the KSA political stance against the Saleh regime by changing its earlier attitude. They politically launched President Hadi government in the country. The US also cooperated with the coalition force and gave support to the Hadi government. Then, they jointly intervened in Yemen when President Hadi lost ground against the Iran-aligned Houthi forces in the country. However, the external forces couldn't solve the political problems in the country and the clashes between the parties continued.

Middle Eastern countries are generally weak and fragmented which causes them to rely on the support of external actors, primarily the US and Russia, to ensure their security concerns. In other words, they align with the US and Russia to ensure their position in the rivalry Middle East. While alliances may be advantageous in protecting security, their vulnerable position in the system coerces the regional countries to make security commitments or engagements with the superior actors even when these engagements restrict their freedom of action to some extent. To make it clear through a theoretical eye,

¹⁵³⁴ Amour, "Israel, the Arab Spring, and the unfolding regional order in the Middle East: a strategic assessment", p. 301.

¹⁵³⁵ Makdisi et al., p. 5.

¹⁵³⁶ Walt, **The Origins of Alliances**, p. 163-164.

weak states which do not possess sufficient resources often prefer alliance building with the superior actors with greater resources in the system because they have a lot to provide for weak ones. Primarily in the context of security provisions they guarantee their allies' security against threats.¹⁵³⁷

Russia and the US attempted to protect their clients' interests vis-à-vis their regional objectives. In its alliances, therefore, Russia sought to balance the US in the Middle East. Thus, it allied with Iran and the Bashar al-Assad regime to fight against the Daesh terrorist organisation and the anti-regime forces and accordingly, ensure the survival of the al-Assad regime.¹⁵³⁸ On the other hand, the US favoured the Syrian opposition groups as well as the terrorist groups PYD/YPG, doing so by giving air support to their regional allies and the proxy groups. It avoided deploying significant land troops to the war fields. In other words, the US was initially reluctant to deploy its troops to the region again because the US had just withdrawn its troops from the Middle East in 2011 due to the high military cost and loss of prestige.

However, after the new seat shift in the US the new leader's perceptions and calculations of the systemic stimuli (threat and/or opportunity) affected the US external policy towards Iran and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Trump perceived the deal as a threat to the US strategic interests towards the region. Thus, the Trump administration reacted differently towards the regional dynamics and withdrew from the deal signed by the Obama government. After the US decision, which means the dissolution of an international deal, a new tension was initiated between the US and Iran. At the same time, the US decision opened a new phase in the context of regional security concerns. However, Qatar strategically preferred to remain neutral to the nuclear deal-based dispute calculating that it shared the rich gas fields, the North Field, with Iran. Against the final declaration of the emergency meeting where the regional organisations, primarily with the support of the KSA, announced that they condemned Iran for the attacks on the oil tankers in the Gulf in 2019, the Qatari leadership underscored that they didn't share their decision, openly revealing that Qatar tried to maintain its regional interests and balance the KSA- led camp.

¹⁵³⁷ Kitchen, "Systemic pressure and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation", p. 136

¹⁵³⁸ Yüce and Amour, p. 51-54.

Despite the regional challenges, Qatar successfully managed to leverage its position in the region following its foreign policy preferences. In order to understand it better, we should look into Qatar's domestic factors/intervening unit-level variables. NCR defends that the effective components of intervening unit-level variables (the state leaders' images and perception, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions) influence decision making and policy preferences. In a similar vein, the intervening variables, which have close interactions with each other shape the state's policy response and policy preferences against the stimuli.¹⁵³⁹

In Qatar's case, political power is highly monopolized by a handful of political actors. The Qatari Emir is the most powerful actor in the top-down ruling political system by holding absolute power. Under his ruling power, he appoints the top executives to the key positions in the country with the navigation of the ruling balance in administration and distribution of state wealth. In this sense, he grants some members of the royal family and the key tribes important posts. In return, he primarily expects loyalty from these granted people and through this loyalty strengthens his ruling position/political legitimacy in the country.¹⁵⁴⁰ In doing so, Emir avoids any possible stake and guarantees his position in the country.

Although Qatar is a constitutional country and defines its political system as democratic, no opposition group or party is allowed in the political system of the country. Also, the political elites introduce various reforms related to economic, social and cultural fields to bypass the political constraints and opposition emanating from their own displeased society.¹⁵⁴¹ Yet, the municipal elections are periodically held and Qatari women have the right to vote and to be elected in municipal elections. Nevertheless, political representation and participation are still limited in the country, particularly when compared with the western norms.

The Shura Majlis and the Council of Ministers are effective in decision making and policy implementation. The Qatari emir appoints all ministers in the Council but its key ministers are chosen from the loyal people and royal family. Also, the emir chooses the fifteen

¹⁵³⁹ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 59-61.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Kassem and Al-Muftah, p. 214; Al-Sayed, p. 88.

¹⁵⁴¹ Mustafa Yetim, "State-led Change in Qatar in the Wake of Arab Spring: Monarchical Country, Democratic Stance?", **Contemporary Review of the Middle East**, 1(4), 2014, 391-410, DOI: 10.1177/2347798914564847, p. 392.

members of the total 45 members in the Shura Majlis. In this regard, the Emir not only strengthens its ruling position but also ensures regime security by appointing the members of the key institutions in the country. In return, he doesn't face any challenge or opposition against his ruling position. For example, during the Arab Spring, Qatar didn't have a serious challenge against its domestic institutions because the Qatari leadership had successfully established social cohesion in the country despite centralization of political power, unequal distribution of income among the citizens, and the lack of social rights. More significantly, Qatari leadership perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity to increase its regional influence. The state-owned institutions and social cohesion helped Qatari leadership to extract and mobilize the nation's resources to determine optimal policy responses.

As a significant rentier state, Qatar generates large revenues from the rich hydrocarbon resources in the country. The Qatari emir distributes the wealth to his citizens to some extent through the state-owned institutions, which are the drivers of politics, economy, and education in the country. Simply put, Qatar offers higher welfare to its citizenry, and in return, the citizens abide by the law and order. It can be considered as a ruling bargain between the government and society because state-society relations influence the ability of the states to put the political decisions into effect.¹⁵⁴² During the Arab Spring, the Qatari leadership benefited from the social cohesion in the society to extract and mobilize the state power. If states are not fragmented and weak vis-à-vis their societies, they can pursue appropriate responses to the perceived threats and opportunities.¹⁵⁴³ Without sensing any threat from the social forces, they responded to the regional challenge.

Additionally, the Qatari ruling elites fostered the state branding activities by using the revenues. Thus, they sought to promote its regional ambition such as leadership in the Arab world and augment its international recognition and credibility. In this regard, the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which will be held in an Arab country for the first time, indicates Qatar's success in the state branding. Also, Qatar Airways as a worldwide name exhibits Qatar's branding niche in the world.

¹⁵⁴² Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, p. 33-34.

¹⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 27-28.

Al Jazeera's prominent influence during the Arab Spring brought Qatar to the forefront. It achieved to announce the popular uprisings against the long-termed authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. However, Al Jazeera was criticized because of its uneven broadcasting of the popular uprisings in the region and was claimed to be the 'mouthpiece' of Qatar's foreign policy. As an example, its broadcast for Bahrain's uprisings was not as critical as the uprisings in Egypt and Libya, which implies that Qatar supported the KSA- led camp to ensure the survival of the al-Khalifa regime in Bahrain. Later, Al Jazeera became the source of the tense relations between Qatar and other Gulf monarchies. These tensions were demonstrated by the KSA- led camp's reaction against Doha-based Al Jazeera and desire to shut it down during the diplomatic blockades in 2014 and 2017.

Qatar uses its indirect institutions (economic-oriented institutions) to enhance its position and ensure its goals regionally and globally. Thus, they act strategically in their activities following the national goals. The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) diversifies its economic earnings by acquiring important world brands and at the same time, help Qatar improve its political relations with others via its huge investments abroad. Also, in order not to take risks while making investments, it calculates to invest in worldwide brands. Simply put, Qatar uses its economic assets and revenues to consolidate its strength in regional and international politics.

The neoclassical realists also consider the material capabilities of the states in their political analysis.¹⁵⁴⁴ Qatar had a small size of population and territory when compared with the other countries in the region. It also appeared to have a lower military capacity than its rivals in the region, but some other examples suggest that the number of troops or the possession of small pieces of land may not be disadvantageous. Moreover, it sought to equip its small number of military personnel with advanced technology weapons and military vehicles. Thus, it strategically desired to compensate for its relative weakness in the number of soldiers. Apparently, it tried to establish particularly a strong air force with the large exports of weapons. Qatar, on the other hand, has a considerable wealth of natural resources. This means that it can use its rich natural resources to increase its power projection. In other words, it can convert its huge economic power into military power

¹⁵⁴⁴ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 43-45.

projection by purchasing weapons with advanced technologies and forming alliances with others. However, states possess different amounts of power capabilities.¹⁵⁴⁵ States, primarily through the domestic factors/intervening variables, extract and mobilize their capabilities/resources appropriately towards the systemic stimuli when required. More strikingly, their leadership evaluate their power capabilities, material or immaterial, to construct political preferences towards perceived threats and opportunities. From this standpoint, it is concluded that Qatar can use its immaterial capabilities more efficiently regionally and globally, especially through its state-owned institutions (economic-oriented institutions) than its material capabilities.

The KSA- led camp imposed two blockades (Qatar crises in 2014 and 2017) on Qatar for balancing it in the unfolding regional order of the Middle East. In the crises, Qatar's support for the MB/ the Islamists, its efforts to expand its influence in the region, its ties with Iran, and Doha- based Al Jazeera media's broadcasts were the key points of Saudis' contention to sever relations with Doha and call the other states in the region to do the same. Despite many allegations on Qatar crises, they mainly related to Qatar's foreign policy behaviours during the Arab Spring. The Qatari leadership quickly perceived regional challenges and the changing dynamics. They sought to steer the course as an active player. Even, it actively joined the NATO-led military campaign to oust the Gaddafi regime in Libya. Also, it significantly increased its sphere of influence in the region by providing economic, political and military assistance to the rebels including the Islamists/Muslim Brotherhood in the transition states. Regarding the security concerns, it chose to stay under the security umbrella of the GCC but it continued to pursue an independent policy. More notably, based on the strategic culture the Qatari leadership often perceived the KSA as a threat to the regime survival. Thus, they followed a balanced relation with Riyadh. On the other hand, Qatar formed a strategic alliance with Turkey during the Arab Spring. As the TR and QA- led camp they backed the MB and its affiliates in the region. Their alliance discomfited the KSA- led camp. Then, the KSA- led camp urged Doha to agree with their policies towards the regional dynamics by imposing a restrictive blockade. Against this, the KSA- led camp attempted to put pressure on Qatar mainly to end its rise in the region after the Arab Spring because rising states in the system

¹⁵⁴⁵ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extraction State", p. 485.

pose an immense challenge to the others and motivate them either to balance it or build an alliance with other states.¹⁵⁴⁶

Nonetheless, the Qatari leadership strategically responded to the challenges of its Gulf neighbours by their own capabilities and alliances. Then, they successfully managed to ensure the survival of the regime and provide domestic stability. Viewed in this light, Qatar and Turkey came closer after the 2017 Qatar crisis. Turkey helped Qatar politically, military and economically to ease the Qatar crisis. Surprisingly, Iran attempted to help Qatar by sending food cargoes in the wake of the crisis. Thus, new co-operations emerged in the rivalry Middle East. Qatar and Iran approached each other to counter the Gulf challenge. Oman and Kuwait also tried to benefit from the Qatar crisis in their favour. Both countries demonstrated their neutrality in this crisis and wanted to act as mediators. While Kuwait gained both regional and international prestige as a mediator state during the Qatar crisis, Oman exploited the crisis regarding its economic benefits.

On the other hand, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a regional security organisation did not have sufficient capacity for crisis resolution in the Gulf affairs. It couldn't end the inner spat among the member states during the Qatar crises in 2014 and 2017, which leads to questioning the existence of the GCC towards the challenges and threats. In the context of the 2017 Qatar crisis, it was clearly seen that the blocking states/the KSA-led camp did not calculate its longer-term consequences rationally in their political manoeuvres. The GCC posed a much weaker as long as the KSA-led camp continued to increase their pressure to isolate Qatar and/or when the spat deepened. Similarly, the recent Qatar crisis proved that the Gulf Arab states were in lack of full integration despite signing various security and economic agreements but fragmented and vulnerable against the immediate security challenges. Another example for the weakening position of this security and economic integration/cooperation model (the GCC) in the Gulf Arab region, the US tried to motivate the Gulf Arab countries to establish a new security organisation that could replace the GCC to fight primarily against terrorism and Iran's expansionism/threat.

In addition to the analysis above, the 2017 Qatar crisis clearly showed that Qatari leadership was very orchestrated in their response to threats. Political elites' cohesion and

¹⁵⁴⁶ Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, **Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics**, p. 17.

consensus influence their political response to balance the perceived threat.¹⁵⁴⁷ Furthermore, the stable domestic environment and political power composition in government (mentioned earlier) fostered the Qatari leaders' ability in extraction and mobilization of their domestic resources/state power including societal forces against the perceived threat. Thus, Qatar powerfully and successfully withstood against the proximate threat emanating from its neighbouring states through its own capabilities and alliance relations and further safeguarded the al-Thani regime survival. Against this background, Qatar openly determined its position in the regional order of the Middle East by using its material and immaterial capabilities against the regional and international challenges. At last, in January 2021, the KSA- led camp decided to end the Qatar crisis via US diplomatic initiatives. Yet, the controversial issues between the parties evidently remained unsolved. This seems likely that the GCC countries or the Gulf Arab states may experience new disputes in their interrelations. Consequently, Qatar has been well-positioned as a significant player in the regional politics of the Middle East since the Arab Spring despite the serious opposition of its rivals.

In the final analysis, this research presumably provides a new perspective to those who will study the Gulf region and the Middle East as demonstrating the effects of the systemic and domestic factors in policymaking in the example of Qatar. It also puts forward some suggestions for further studies in the following thematic topics:

- a) the impact of sports and sports activities on the domestic politics of the regional countries as an intangible power.
- b) the political power shifts and balances in the Gulf monarchies and their impacts on regional and international policy.
- c) the importance of balancing the ruling family members in political legitimacy and political stability of the Gulf monarchies from the perspective of leader images.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Schweller, "Unanswered Threat: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing", p. 169.

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