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Diploma thesis project

What could De Gaulle teach Qatar? A comparative analysis of the struggle for greater autonomy in Intra-Alliances



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). has been an unstable region for the last three decades. Some experts have stated that since the end of the colonization period, the Middle East has remained in conflict. The direct clashes such as the Arab-Israel war, the Iraq-Iran war during the 1980s, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 – which resulted in the first Gulf war – and, lately, the Arab uprising consequences, have all had an impact not only on the regional security but also on international security. Within this dare situation, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have had a vital role in all of these issues. This is why it is important to examine the organization, its politics, and the politics of its members.

The end of the colonization era did not end the instability of MENA. The region remains volatile because of a number of complex factors such as, ideology, regional and external interventions, and power competition. For instance, some of the studies of conflicts attribute wars in the MENA to religious reasons such Sunni and Shia rivalry. For example, MENA specialists Schwedler and Angrist (2010, 111) argue that “from the Arab-Israel conflict to the Iranian revolution to the emergence of an extremist group such as Al-Qaida, religion has indeed been at the center of major political struggle in the region, with regimes, opposition groups, and everyday citizens routinely invoking religious rhetoric and symbolism”. In the last two decades, however, the MENA region has experienced some issues against this premise. Certainly, power maximization, regional ambitions, autonomy seeking, and security concerns seem to be the main causes of wars and instability in the area. Hostile relations between the KSA and Qatar, which is the core case of this study, are an example. The two not only share the same religion but also

belong to the same sect. Since Wahhabi¹ is the Islamic doctrine that adopted in KSA and Qatar. In this regard, Dorsey (2013, 2) argues that Qatar, is “the only other country whose native population is Wahhabi and that adheres to the Wahhabi creed”. Despite this religious similarity, the disputes between the two countries exist. In the same respect, the ‘Shia’ Iran enjoys relatively good relations with the ‘Sunni’ Qatar. The rivalry between Qatar and KSA caused structural rifts inside the GCC and undermined the gulf regional order, adding many fragmentations to this penetrated region (Ehteshami and Hinnebusch 2016).

Relatively speaking, little work has been done on Qatar’s foreign behavior and the structural problems within the GCC. Using a comparative analysis as a methodology, this research compares the France’s withdrawal from NATO in 1967 with the recent rift within the GCC. It argues that such comparative analysis gives give a better explanation to Qatar’s behavior inside the GCC.

Case Rationale

There are several reasons for choosing de Gaulle's France and analyzing Qatar’s foreign behavior as a case study. First, the changing of leaders caused changes in the states’ grand strategy. Both countries manifested a significant change in their security strategies when a change occurred in the government. These changes have affected their international and regional policies. For example, De Gaulle “resented the objective deterioration of France's position within the Atlantic Alliance and the 'subordination' of French leaders to their American counterparts” (Martin, 2011,234). So, when he arrived in power, he intended to make France independent and robust in international affairs “with a clear political philosophy that shaped his approach to the world stage” (Martin, 2011, 232). Indeed, “since NATO was the main locus of the Western Alliance, it made sense that de Gaulle would view it as a major stage to demonstrate his country's independence and ability to stand up to the US” (Martin, 2011, 234). However, France’s government led by De Gaulle aimed to act in the international

¹ In its religious dimension, Wahhabism is defined as a willingness to take as a model the authentic Islam practiced by Muhammad and his companions, refusing any other source than the Qur'an (Islam holy book) and Sunnah (the way of the prophet) (UNGUREANU, 2008,141).

sphere to create a strong position regionally and internationally, but it was struggling due to the US dominance over NATO and countries in Europe such as West Germany. In this regard, France was challenging the US-Britain coalition.

Similar to France, when the leadership in Qatar changed in 1995, the country's policy changed to different paths. In other words, the change of leadership caused a change of strategy outlook of the country. The new government aimed to gain a strong position in both the international and regional arena. Since he seizing power from his father in a peaceful palace coup in June 1995, Qatar Amir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, has made several changes that indicate his involvement to political and economic modernization (Canfield, 2001). Most importantly, he sought for more independence within the GCC. Therefore, it began to endorse security cases that are against the core strategy of the GCC. The Iranian nuclear program, which was deemed to be at the heart of GCC security strategy. The GCC members condemned the Iranian dealing with 5+1 countries. Qatar openly, and surprisingly, endorsed Iran's right to utilize nuclear technology (Ehteshami, Quilliam and Bahgat, 2017). Such an act goes against the spirit of the creation of the GCC, which was established primarily to counter the Iranian influence in the region following the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Nevertheless, from some GCC states' viewpoints, these strategies instill regional peace. For example, following the Arab uprising in 2011, Qatar used both of its soft powers, the media platform *Aljazeera* and gas revenue to support the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt. In this regard, Qatar challenged two KSA-UAE coalitions.

Secondly, both France and Qatar faced multilateral collective defense measures - Qatar in the form of the GCC and France in NATO. Both also found themselves at odds with the organizations' main strategic aims, namely the deterrence of the USSR and Iran, respectively. Moreover, "De Gaulle's philosophy of history pushed him to believe in 'Russia' and to call for dialogue many times during his career" (Martin, 2011). In the case of Qatar, it began to perceive Iran as less of a threat and even potentially, "a useful security partner" (Ehteshami, Quilliam and Bahgat, 2017). contrary to other GCC members such as KSA and UAE, Iran has no interest in intervening in Qatar's domestic affairs. However, in the case of the KSA, the country has the two biggest and holiest Islamic sites, and

a Shia minority, which, arguably, could tempt Iran to export its revolution inside the Kingdom. In regard to the UAE, Iran has had a long rivalry with the country since the occupation of three islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) in 1970.

Thirdly, disputes between two states from the same alliance. France was challenging the US and opposing its international military operations, for example, in Vietnam, which brought France closer to Russia because Russia condemned the same operation. In the case of Qatar, it was challenging the KSA in many disputes in the MENA area, for instance, during the early years of the Syrian civil war, Qatar had challenged the KSA. Each one of these GCC states had a different agenda and various plans. “Qatar and Turkey disproportionately favored the Muslim Brotherhood, while Saudi Arabia actively backed anyone but them” (Phillips, 2017).

The fourth subject that makes Qatar a case similar to France is rapprochements with the alliances’ historical enemy and the enduring threat. As this study will argue, when Charles de Gaulle felt abandoned and injustice from the US-Britain arrangement plus West Germany, he changed his direction to the east and the Soviet Union. The same with Qatar, when it was challenged by the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain, the decision-makers moved quickly toward Iran. However, this study will examine whether these rapprochements helped to increase the chances of peace in the region or, on the contrary, escalated the tensions. Or will this kind of convergence encourage the threatened state to change its behavior in the area or not such as Iranian behavior in the Middle East?

By examining De Gaulle’s initiatives towards the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, it appears that he felt less threat from communist danger. In some cases, he stood with the Soviet Union against the United States “such as their opposition to the US role in Vietnam or their opposition to West Germany acquiring a nuclear role with the MLF” (Martin 2011,238). Therefore, the French President's behavior was clear evidence of the rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union. At the same time, such rapprochement sparked a disagreement inside NATO. Martin (2011) argues that France withdrew from NATO first to reaffirm their

independence and national identity, and second, to decrease the tensions between the Eastern and Western Blocs, something that President De Gaulle wanted to do.

This research tries to explain this puzzle. It investigates the drivers that made the state of Qatar act outside the strategic security structure of the GCC. Drawing on France's struggle for intra-alliance autonomy within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the 1960s, this research argues that one of the reasons that could have led Qatar to act outside the GCC is greater independence within the GCC.

States and alliances

"Alliances can be defined as formal associations of states bound by the mutual commitment to use military force against non-member states to defend members states' integrity" (Reiter and Gärtner, 2000). They "are a critical tool in international politics" (Morrow, 1991). To deter any threat, a small state will seek a strong alliance so that the commitment will ensure peace and stability. According to (Reiter and Gärtner, 2000), "alliances will not survive without threat". They add, "small states join an alliance because they take refuge in alliances to be safe from the big state". Since small states seek security by joining an alliance, it can be challenged by intra-alliance power. The disputes among alliance members can be caused by many reasons. For instance, the hegemony of large states and small states' attempts to achieve autonomy. These disputes will appear on the surface during their establishment or afterwards. Interestingly, small states challenged by dominant states that influence other states' decisions inside the organization. Noticeably, the country with massive military power which is considered a super-power in an alliance has been seen as having superiority in an alliance (e.g., the US in NATO and the KSA in the GCC).

In order to enrich the arguments, it is fundamental to discuss the reasons that make states enter an alliance and how would alliances be withstanding during intra-alliance disputes. Both NATO and the GCC were established to deter threats; NATO vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the GCC vis-à-vis Iran. Perhaps the bible of interpretation for the state motivation for alliance is Walt's book *The Origin of Alliances*. He includes some definitions of alliances such as Morgenthau who refers to alliances as "a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system (Walt 1987, 7).

So, since state decision-makers assume the threat, they are the ones to decide on the need for cooperation or not. Hence, their perception of the threat operates as an intervening variable to determine the state's behavior. As Cohen (1978, 93) noted, "Threat perception is the decisive intervening variable between action and reaction in the international crisis". On that account, the threat is the contributing reason to utilize military assets or join the alliance. Hence since there are neighbors, the threat is still assumed. Nevertheless, the decision-makers

consider the threat sources could change based on international interactions, political movements and any crisis in the region. For instance, when the German army invaded some of the Czechoslovakia territories in 1939, the British policymakers perceived that Germany's intentions were unlimited, which caused change in British policy in the region such as the British-Poland alliance treaty (Cohen, 1978). Apart from intelligence reports, recently, the press platforms are playing a huge role to create specific perceptions by publishing news in different ways. Empirically, in the case of Qatar, since the establishment of the GCC, Iran is considered the threat, but lately, Qatar sees Iran no longer as a threat. In addition, border disputes between Qatar-KSA and Qatar-Bahrain have played a role regarding threat measures in Qatar's policy. For example in 1992, "Saudi forces seized a Qatari border post and expelled its occupants today, one day after a clash in the disputed region left two people dead" (Qatar Says Saudis Seized Its Border Post, 2020) while Saudi Arabia responded that the clash was on Saudi territory and it happened between tribes from the two sides. On the contrary, most of the GCC states still consider Iran as a threat to all the regions, not only in the Gulf states. Thus, the interpretation and calibration of risk and security are not similar among GCC states.

Interestingly, during the tensions between the Gulf states in 2014 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain against Qatar), the state of Qatar signed a defense agreement with Turkey, aimed at deploying armed forces in Qatar. In June 2017, Turkish defense minister Fikri Isik told the press that "The strengthening of the Turkish base would be a positive step in terms of the Gulf's security; moreover the base in Qatar is both a Turkish base and one that will preserve the security of Qatar and the region" (Butler, 2017). The Qatari policymakers understood the bilateral relation between the KSA and Turkey, which deteriorated due to regional crises such as the crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt brought Qatar and Turkey closer. This supports Snyder's argument when he said (Snyder, 1984, 464) that "states will expect to be supported to some degree by those with whom they share interests and to be opposed by those with whom they are in conflict" (Snyder, 1984, 464). Snyder continued, "There are two types of interest, the general interest which touches the attraction between state and its neighbors to

create the balance of power; the second type is particular interest, which includes on the ground of territorial interest and on the ideological ground” (Snyder, 1984, 464–465).

The anarchy in the international system is not generous enough to afford many choices to the states, especially small states. Since other states' intentions (good or evil) could not be predicted or guaranteed, the probability of threat is always high. The most convenient choice is to find an appropriate alliance to ensure its security. According to (Snyder, 1984, 462), alliances are established for two reasons; “(1) some states may not be satisfied with only moderate security, and they can increase it substantially by allying if others abstain; (2) some states, fearing that others will not abstain, will ally in order to avoid isolation or to preclude the partner from allying against them”. With an understanding of alliance commitment and consequences, the states face how difficult it is to work with restraint among alliance systems, and how wide a strategy they will sacrifice to get alliance satisfactions. Moreover, when a state over relies on its ally against an enemy, it will suffer because of its partner’s behavior with the enemy. Practically, the KSA assumed that all partners in the GCC would deal with Iran as the crucial risk and avoid any rapprochement. Instead, Qatar worked with the Iranian regime as a partner and neighbor that shared the same geography. This behavior has angered the KSA and some other GCC states.

Methodology

While the design of this research is comparative analysis, the methodology is qualitative. The use of such methods of research will help to achieve qualitative insights into previous findings and explanations about aspects which define the politics of Qatar in the Middle East. Also, this study will include audience opinions, which will reflect a wide image of situations. The audience will be communicated with via emails, phone calls, and Skype calls. The interviews will be semi-structured. They will be asked some (open) questions such as, why and how, beliefs, opinions, in order to obtain open and long answers (Pierce 2008). To achieve balance, and since in the case of the GCC there are disputes still unresolved, it is fundamental to include audiences from both sides (the KSA, the UAE, Bahrain – Qatar) and from neutral states (Kuwait and Oman). This will provide the close examination to the crisis. In this regard, Mahoney (2007, 128) argues that “The close examination of cases in qualitative research further helps comparative analysts avoid measurement error, a goal shared by scholars of all orientations in political science”. This strategy will assist in avoiding any bias and help to analyze and critique the status quo from a different angle. Moreover, the explanation will use as the basis of the comparison process the strategies of de Gaulle in the NATO alliance after World War II. Based on the topic of this study, Pierce (2008, 52) argues that “Comparative politics, international relations and development studies tend to use the comparative method.” This comparison will be adopted from primary and secondary data. A combination of the two sources of data will be crucial for the study findings.

Primary data will be derived from the literature following the classic process of data collection and data analysis. The data will be collected from Primary sources such as books, Wikileaks, official statements, newspaper archives, online interviews, policy papers, and academic research. The secondary data will be obtained from the qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts, and political elites from the Gulf region. Political elites provide a significant source of information in politics research. These interviews will be via emails, Skype calls, and phone calls.

This research uses a comparative analyzes to analyze the Qatar crisis. It argues that the crisis is similar to France's withdrawal from NATO in 1967. This first chapter of the research include a piece of literature review work relating to both GCC and NATO cases with an explanation of each case history of the disputes, specifically those intra-alliance disputes involving Qatar and France. In order to give a close image about GCC, The second chapter will approach the historical context with some explanation of GCC states behavior, also, the impact of these crises on regional security will include understanding the effectiveness of intra-alliance disputes over the regions. Moreover, both chapters, will include the similarity between both cases by comparing the causes of the disputes and the results.

The third chapter will analyze the core point of this research. Qatar's behavior will be analyzed to explain the cause of disputes in the GCC and the consequences. In order to enrich this paper, the writer had to ask expert audiences from the region some questions relating to the research; hence the answers will include in this part. Moreover, by examining Qatar's policy from its overview and from its neighbors and GCC partners, the research will offer a wide understanding of the issue.

In the fourth chapter, the research will focus on the current situation in the GCC and future expectations. However, this section will take advantage of audiences who had practiced work within the GCC countries such as, official jobs, or close observers, with high qualifications from the Gulf countries' universities. Practical experience will help the writer and reader to explore the issues from the official side. Consequently, their opinions will shape what to expect for the future of Qatar in the GCC.

Finally, the conclusion of this research will include the lessons learnt from the case of France in NATO which Qatar may use to maintain its relation within the GCC. Moreover, it will interpret the anarchy in the MENA which is strongly linked to the disputes in the GCC.

Literature review

This research argues that the best way to explain the Qatar crisis since 2014, backgrounds, effective and future expectations, is by looking at the de Gaulle withdrawal from NATO in 1966. The similarity could be applied from a different perspective. Led by de Gaulle, France had a new strategy and ambitions, even though these ambitions will cost rapprochement with the main enemy (USSR). As with Qatar, when Shaikh Hamad replaced his father, and changed all the government strategies to gain autonomy and improve his position in the political arena, even though it would bring rapprochement with the enemy (Iran), de Gaulle had a challenge with the hegemonic power in NATO, the US. Just as when Qatar challenged the hegemonic power in the GCC, the KSA, de Gaulle challenged NATO by developing its economic relationship with the USSR. Similarly Qatar developed its economic relationship with Iran. When de Gaulle had a dispute with the US and moved in an eastern direction toward the USSR, he had been welcomed and supported because it was an excellent opportunity for Moscow to increase the rift in NATO. It is likely, that when GCC countries fall into deep disputes in 2017, Iran takes advantage and stands with Qatar to fuel the cracks inside the organization. However, de Gaulle assumed that the Russian doctrine was not real, and that the notion of threats disappeared, but were de Gaulle's assumptions correct or not? How would de Gaulle have reacted if he saw Russian tankers invade Ukraine? Interestingly, what could Qatar's policymakers learn from de Gaulle to influence its relations with Iran and its conduct in the GCC?

This literature review provides a background to the de Gaulle withdrawal from the NATO crisis, and the GCC crisis. It aims not only to cover what has already been written on the topic but also to identify gaps in the research that can help the research's investigation. Indeed, this process can help identify the patterns that occurred during the de Gaulle crisis with NATO, which might help to give an analysis of the Gulf crisis and Qatar's foreign behavior.

The French withdrawal from NATO in 1966 was the most traumatic crisis that had struck the organization since its establishment in 1949. The 1960s proved to be a period of strong transatlantic tension, and no action caused more consternation amongst France's allies than its decision to withdraw from the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization's integrated military structure in March 1966 (Martin, 2011, 235). Research that is written on de Gaulle crisis with NATO has provided arguments to explain why France suspended its membership of NATO. These arguments explained how states challenged each other inside the alliance. This literature review will try to explain that the case of France in NATO is similar to the case of Qatar in the GCC. Even though there are differences between the two cases, comparisons can be made from three positions.

Perhaps the first argument is President De Gaulle's resentment against the United States (Gregory 2000; Wenger 2004). He felt in many cases that the United States was abandoning France and not cooperative. In this regard, Gregory (2000) said, the cornerstone of the French behavior in NATO was the dominance of the United States whether in the political sphere or in command of military operations. In the same respect, Blakemore (2018) attributed France's withdrawal to de Gaulle's resentment against the United States, saying that "de Gaulle still resented what he saw as the United States' abandonment during the 1956 Suez Crisis²". Similarly, Wenger (2004, 22) argues that "de Gaulle claimed that in this new environment NATO, dominated by the United States, had lost not only its credibility as an integrated military structure but also its legitimacy as a political forum for the coordination of its members' détente policies".

So, military integration disagreements, mistrust of the United States' capability to deter Soviet Union nuclear power and increase of intra-alliance pressure caused by Anglo-American bilateral cooperation encouraged de Gaulle to challenge NATO. "He had done so from two perspectives: from the national perspective, by stressing the primacy of states, and France to begin with, in the military and strategic decision-making within NATO; and from the West European perspective, by emphasizing the need for the Six, and specifically

² In 1956, the Egyptian government launched a military operation to nationalize the Suez Canal, which was operated by French and British companies. France, Britain, and Israel launched a military operation against the Egyptian military, but after a while, the US and the Soviet Union supported by United Nations' decision over the ceasefire evacuated all French and Britain forces from the region. In consequence, Britain and France lost their influence in the Middle East (Suez Crisis, 1956, 2020).

France and Germany, to organize themselves into an entity capable of checking the United States' dominance in the audience and making it evolve into a more balanced Euro-American relationship” (Boz 1998, 345).

The second argument that made de Gaulle think about the disintegration with NATO was the intra-alliance challenges (Wenger 2004; Martin, 2011). For instance, Wenger (2004, 26) wrote that in 1958, “de Gaulle had demanded that NATO be reorganized to form a Trilateral Directorate that would accommodate France's status as a great power, but his demand had been rejected”. In fact, the Anglo-American cooperation resulted in strong dominance over NATO’s decisions, strategy, and policy, which, consequently caused anger of other members of NATO, for instance, France. So, when the French government had sent some signs to NATO in order to clarify its difficulties and challenges inside the alliance, “In March 1959, France withdrew its Mediterranean Fleet, then three years later, it announced that the troops coming back from Algeria would not be integrated into NATO, and the Atlantic Fleet was withdrawn soon after in June 1963” (Martin, 2011, 235).

The issue of the Nuclear Multilateral Force (MLF) within NATO had a robust influence and created disruption inside the alliance. President de Gaulle rejected the project and considered it as a conspiracy that would negatively impact the German-France relations. Due to these fragmentations, one year before withdrawal, de Gaulle informed the US ambassador in Paris that the NATO treaty needed to be re-examined (Wenger, 2004). Regarding the nuclear issue, the Cold War era witnessed the nuclear arms race between the US and the USSR. The US played a guarantor role that protects Europe from any attack from the USSR by “umbrella”. But from de Gaulle’s perspective, and as Wenger (2004, 22) said, for many years “he had argued that the growing vulnerability of the United States to Soviet nuclear attack meant that the US nuclear ‘umbrella’ for Europe had lost credibility”. However, Boz (1998, 343) argued that the Harmel report³ clarified

³ “Harmel Report in 1967 was a seminal document in NATO’s history that reasserted NATO’s basic principles and effectively introduced the notion of deterrence and détente, setting the scene for NATO’s first

that “the US – France crisis in NATO was based on the notion of legitimacy”. He added, “The Harmel exercise was indeed, in many ways, an answer to the Gaullist challenge to NATO's existence as an integrated military organization in an era of decreasing East-West confrontation” (Boz 1998, 343).

The third explanation is attributed to so-called ‘French exceptionalism’ (Martin, 2011; Fortmann, Haglund, and von Hlatky, 2010). This term is also called ‘Gaullist doctrine’ which can be summarized as “France's position in relation to the alliance as friends, allies, but not aligned” (Fortmann, Haglund and von Hlatky 2010, 1). In that regard, Martin said that “when President de Gaulle came back to power in June 1958, he did so with a clear political philosophy that shaped his approach to the world stage” (Martin, 2011, 232). However, in 1966 Charles de Gaulle withdrew France from NATO's military structures, and aimed to make the country strong and free of any foreign dictations. Furthermore, Charles de Gaulle had a future vision, which reflected the French desire for its autonomy in defence strategy and to achieve an independent foreign policy (Fortmann, Haglund, and von Hlatky, 2010). From de Gaulle’s point of view, the long integration with other states’ forces would decrease the national forces’ abilities. Moreover, it would keep them relying on the alliance for defending national sovereignty in the case of any threat. Also, the unity of command would force French armed forces to follow specific strategies created by another state such as the US which could not match the national future strategy.

In order to restore France's European position, de Gaulle had another political maneuver by proposing the signing of the Élysée Treaty.⁴ From his perspective this treaty between France and West Germany would support his opposition in facing the US-British hegemony over Europe. Rather than the treaty

steps toward a more cooperative approach to security issues that would emerge in 1991” (Harmel Report, 2020).

⁴ “The Elysée Treaty is a rapprochement step between France and Germany that was signed by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and French President Charles de Gaulle” (Elysée Treaty, 2020). “They wanted to indicate a lasting commitment between their two countries that went beyond any future political changes and to make their cooperation official and systematic” (Ibid).

succeeding in the social sphere, from the political perspective it was disappointing, because it wasn't bringing West Germany closer to France. Instead West Germany moved towards the Britain – US coalition. Hence De Gaulle declared his future plan to one of his ministers saying that when the Germans go far against what we expect, we will move toward the Russians (Boz, 1998).

When de Gaulle figured that small or weak states were suffering due to the consequences of superpower disputes, he decided to pull France out of this critical gap. From de Gaulle's point of view, since the small states could not mediate between the two superpowers, the US and the USSR, there were two scenarios; a direct clash between bipolarity which would cause disaster or mutual agreements. Hence the weak states would be in a critical situation whether internally or internationally because their governments would lose their credibility (Kolodziej, 1971). The US practiced its dominance inside NATO, because of its global position as a superpower. de Gaulle rejected the limited position in NATO and, in the international arena, and, moreover, refused to remain under the US umbrella. Furthermore, de Gaulle's government attempted to rival not only the US but many other countries and organizations, in order to show that it was able to act as a superpower and was confident of maintaining its independent foreign policy. "The French rejected the notion that global peace could only be preserved through the continued military monopoly and interventionist schemes of the superstates or through collective security arrangements - whether through NATO, the Warsaw Pact, or the United Nations - that in the Gaullist view obscured the particularistic drives of the superpowers and their clients" (Kolodziej, 1971, 456)

Rather than the Soviet Union having an aggressive behavior during the Cold War era, this behavior had been curbed by establishing NATO by different countries, those who had a "shared perception of threat from the Soviet Union" (Thies, 2009, 87). However, the Soviet Union would take any chance to interfere in NATO and disrupt its strength. The France crisis with NATO was a vital opportunity that attracted the Soviet Union to strengthen the bilateral relationship with France and cause alarm to NATO members. In the mid-1960s, France and the Soviet Union became very close and shared the same point of view about some international issues such as, opposing US military operations in southeast Asia.

“In February 1965, the US ambassador to Moscow, Foy Kohler, had warned that ‘the Soviets have entered on the current dialogue [with France] in order to exploit to the hilt de Gaulle’s disruptive value; the opportunities must seem particularly tempting to the Soviets in view of the coincidence between Soviet and French views on certain key East-West issues’”(Ellison, 2006).

The examination of Charles De Gaulle's rapprochements with the Soviet Union is robust to this study. Interestingly, the case of France moving towards Russia is similar to the case of Qatar’s rapprochements with Iran. May this action will interpreted why do state moved towards alliance historical enemy when the state feel of intra-alliance pressure? How do the intra-alliance challenges lead states to change their behavior? Do the states have specific measures to re-evaluate the threat? Do the states consider that autonomy is more essential than deter the threat? However, some research argues that states launch political maneuvers in order to increase the pressure over the alliance to gain a strong position. From another point of view, states have another political vision that is opposite to that of the alliance, such as France moving toward the Soviet Union from a containing perspective. The same with Qatar, many of its policymakers thought that containing Iran would assist in alleviating the tensions between both banks of the Gulf.

Interestingly, decades later, France started a move toward NATO by participating in the organization's initiatives. For example, in 1995 France deployed soldiers under NATO command in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These initiatives were followed by President Sarkozy’s formal announcement in March 2009, which, in consequence, US President Barack Obama endorsed by saying on 21 March 2009 that “I enthusiastically welcome the decision made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to fully reintegrate France into the NATO Alliance, France’s full participation in the NATO military command structure will further contribute to a stronger alliance and a stronger Europe’ (Obama 2009a cited in Pesme, 2010, 45).

Chapter 2: GCC in Historical Context

since the establishment of the organization on 25 May 1981, there have been territorial disputes challenging the inter-alliance of the GCC that have shaken the organization, but these crises remained hidden inside the organization for a while. Territorial disputes over land and water rights have plagued the Gulf since the creation of modern states, notably Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawar island, the UAE and Saudi Arabia over rights to territorial waters and the adjacent coastline, and disagreement among tribes from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman over the Al Buraimi Oasis (Martini et al., 2016, 9). Sometimes disputes were solved inside the organization through mediation initiatives and sometimes through international attributions. “Despite strong interests in cooperation, the GCC states often require a crisis to break through the barrier of sovereignty sensitivities” (Martini et al., 2016). For instance, the Qatari and Bahraini disagreements over the sovereignty of some islands and delimitation of maritime issues were solved by the International Court of Justice in 2001 in Qatar's favor (Judgments | International Court of Justice, 2001). However, the decision was objected to by Bahrain.

Two main arguments have been written to explain why the rift within the GCC took place. The first one is the change of leadership (Hall 2013; Rathmell; Kamrava, 2009; Schulze 2000; Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1991; and journal articles); and the second one is related to the regional security and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt after the Arab uprisings (Antwi-Boateng, 2013; Kinninmont, 2019; Black, 2014; Akbari, 2012; Roberts, 2017; Kerr, 2017; Naheem, 2017; Qiblawi et al., 2017; Naheem, 2017; Dorsey, 2015; Peterson, 2006; Neville, 1973 and Martini, et al., 2016).

For instance, “Sheikh Hamad saw his chance to claim complete power, however, waiting for his father to leave the country on a visit to Switzerland before deposing him in a bloodless coup” (Hall, 2013). The new government restored in Doha, had extensive efforts aiming to create a new vision of prosperity to elevate Qatar to the level of the strong states. The practitioners argued that the change of leadership changed the behavior and strategy. So, the former ruler of Qatar, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani adopted a foreign policy which mostly matched

Qatar's neighbors' (GCC members) policies. On the contrary, his successor, Sheikh Hamad adopted a new policy that aimed to give Qatar extensive independence and release it from neighbors' subordination. Indeed, Sheikh Hamad has made this objective one of the central strategies of his rule. Similarly to Hall, Rathmell and Schulze (2000, 53) argue that Sheikh Hamad has aggressively used these reforms as a means by which to assert Qatar's autonomy and distinctiveness from its GCC neighbors, especially the KSA from under whose shadow the Qataris are struggling to emerge.

This power transformation in Qatar caused a hesitation in the mutual trust between Qatar and its neighbors. The mutual trust has been tarnished from two opposite angles. The GCC states perceived this unusual behavior (coup) and interpreted it as having been betrayed. Hence the GCC members considered the new regime in Qatar as a threat. On the contrary, Qatar's new regime was warring from the reaction of GCC states such as the KSA, which hosted Shaikh Hamad's father. Moreover, these monarchy states also feared facing the same faith "coup d'état" from the internal elite. Kamrava (2009) describes this type of regime, that they were remaining in fear from internal dangers. Challenges to the ruler from within coalition partners and inner circles are a problem endemic to all authoritarian political systems (Kamrava, 2009, 412). Hence, Shaikh Hamad faced both internal and external opposition, which was based on condemning his coup against his father. "one counter-coup attempt and involved considerable tension with Bahrain, KSA, and UAE, all of whom backed the erstwhile Emir, Sheikh Khalifa, at various times" (Schulze, 2000, 54). These attempts proved to be negative over regional security. The consequences of the failed coup attempt and the ambitions to play a role in the region encouraged Shaikh Hamad to compete with other GCC members specially KSA.

In the gulf monarchy states, the citizens pay their loyalty not to the government but to the leader, so how would a new leader in Qatar, Shaikh Hamad, solve internal opposition and convince most of the elite to support his future line? Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (1991) examined the leadership in the Gulf states from various angles. They answered the previous question in a simple definition. The followers benefit by having a leader who organizes and achieves mutually

desired goals and objectives. For their part, leaders benefit by having followers who grant them status, prestige, and, on occasions, material benefits (Cooper, Higgott and Nossal, 1991, 397). Hence, Shaikh Hamad took advantage of massive mineral resources (gas) to contain elite opposition in Qatar, hence uniting the internal frontier. The quick recovery internally assisted his ambitions. Moreover, he took advantage to engage in some regional disputes, such as Afghanistan, Syria and Libya.

With regard to the second argument about regional security, Shaikh Hamad launched the *Aljazeera* channel, which had a significant impact on the security of the Gulf region (Byrne, 2002; Kinninmont, 2019; Lynch, 2005; Lebron, 2009 and Samuel-Azran, 2013). Because of the massive revenue from gas exporting and the rising media platform (*Aljazeera* channel), Qatar placed itself in competition with the KSA in order to seek hegemony over the region. Qatar used its soft power to “maximize its interests and influence on countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Sudan that have traditionally fallen under Saudi Arabian influence thereby upending the mantle of domination and influence of a strong regional hegemony” (Antwi-Boateng, 2013, 44). The *Aljazeera* platform was the place where Shaikh Hamad had the opportunity to pursue his ambitions. Since the GCC members used to employ their channels to government advantage, such behavior like introducing *Aljazeera* was considered as intervention. In consequence, the Qatar officials had many diplomatic tensions because of the *Aljazeera* outlet.

Regarding the dynamics of interactions between small states, such KSA and large states such Qatar (Peterson, 2006; Neville, 1973, and East, 1973) have a broad debate about the challenges that small states face from neighboring larger states. The competition between regional superpowers over regional hegemony undermines small states' independence. Even though each state has control over its territory, matters such as trade, international interactions, and military capability are mostly subject to the regional superpower decisions. For instance, some of the Soviet republics remained under Moscow's influence even after the fall of the Soviet Union. China also practices hegemony over the south Asia region. Similarly, Gulf small states are surrounded by big states, but there are

some factors that make these states different, such as prosperity conditions and the type of regime.

Moreover, in the GCC, all these small states are sharing the same beliefs and culture with the large states. However, the big countries keep influencing the small ones. Peterson (2006) said that interaction between small states and large states who are sharing the same geography, increases the pressure on the small states to adopt large state strategy. In this regard, Neville (1973 cited in Peterson, 2006, 739) argued that such scenarios “ include adherence to foreign-policy lines, participation in a collective security arrangement or defense pact with a major power, granting military facilities, purchasing arms, or even agreeing to support freer trade, which generally benefits the larger power more.” Nevertheless, the efforts of small states to compete with the large states may lead to disruption of regional security. This is particularly true when small states have a great opportunity that attracts external powers to the region which, “increases security concerns for both the small states and the international system as a whole” (Peterson, 2006, 739). East (1973) discusses the different calculations between large and small states and he assumes that “small states may engage in risky foreign-policy behavior because of their inability to monitor developing international situations as thoroughly as the larger states” (East, 1973 cited in Peterson, 2006, 739). For instance, Turkey had a chance to return to the Gulf by signing defense agreements with Qatar during the last disputes inside the GCC. This step increased militarization in the region.

The race for influence over the region was not only the core of the disputes, but the term of *threat* was also vital. As the evidence in this research will present, Qatar’s relations with and backing of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah, along with Qatar’s engagement in some regional military operations, such as in Libya and Yemen, had an effect on the performance of the organization and created mistrust among the GCC members. Eventually, it caused autonomy friction within the organization when Qatar interfered in major conflicts in the region – arguably to pursue autonomy within the GCC, which in some cases, harmed the GCC members. To keep the alliance within the GCC solid and cooperative, Kuwait and Oman have usually played the role of a mediator during

yearly summits and kept the conflict to a low intensity. The dispute escalated in the post-Arab uprisings of 2011.

Despite these crises and disagreements, “the first agreement with the KSA, signed in 2013, was mediated by Kuwait and signed by Qatar’s Emir in which he promised to implement the terms of the agreement before the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council”⁵. The agreement included three commitments; the KSA and Qatar “would not interfere in each other’s internal affairs, support each other’s dissidents or ‘antagonistic media’, or give asylum to oppositionists from other Gulf countries; that they would not support the Muslim Brotherhood or other organizations that threatened security and stability; and that they would not support any faction in Yemen that could threaten the country’s neighbors” (Kinninmont, 2019, 17).

The GCC keeps surviving, but the 2014 crisis produced hard fragmentation that widened the cracks inside the organization. This crisis was made public when the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain announced that “they will take what they deem to be the appropriate steps to protect the security and stability of their nations by withdrawing their ambassadors from Qatar, the Saudi foreign ministry said on Wednesday, the unprecedented decision was made after Qatar failed to uphold an agreement on the security and stability of the six-member GCC, it added” (Black, 2014). However, the disputes started months before the three states called their ambassadors back home. The Emir of Kuwait, Sabah Al-Sabah made vital efforts to persuade all members to sign the security statement, especially Qatar. This statement concludes with the speaker of the GCC asking Qatar “not to support any party aiming to threaten the security and stability of any member” (Black, 2014). By ‘party’ they meant Muslim Brotherhood. The three countries clarified four reasons for this step of diplomatic objection. The anti– Muslim Brotherhood monarchies accused Qatar of not committing to the principles of the GCC, interfering in the internal affairs of their fellow Gulf states, supporting

⁵ (EXCLUSIVE: Documents prove Qatar failed to comply with GCC agreements, 2017).

organizations detrimental to their security, and backing “hostile media” (Martini et al., 2016, 17). Kinninmont (2019) argues that the three countries blamed Qatar for (1) attacking friendly Gulf regimes about the conduct of *Aljazeera* and its intervention in the gulf’s internal affairs; (2) its aggressive behaviour towards current events in Egypt; (3) the strong relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, which the UAE and the KSA consider a terrorist group; (4) the nature and quality of relations with Iran.

The division between the Gulf states regarding Egypt started these events during Arab uprising in 2011. All the GCC countries understood the importance of Egypt, but they were divided into two parties. On the one hand, Qatar worked to restore the Muslim Brotherhood party into the government. On the other hand, the KSA, Kuwait, and the UAE supported any candidate but not the Muslim Brotherhood (Kinninmont, 2019). When the Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate, Mohamed Morsi, won the presidency, Qatar put its weight to assist the new regime in Egypt. It had the huge advantage of taking Egypt under its shadow by using the ‘carrot-and-stick’ strategy. “By providing financial assistance to Egypt at a critical time of need, Qatar was positioned to influence Egyptian politics and at the same time ingratiate itself to Egyptian public opinion in the post-Mubarak era” (Antwi-Boateng, 2013, 44). The Egyptian military leaders took advantage of the outcry in June 2013 and launched a coup d’état. Hence, the coup succeeded in overthrowing President Morsi and began to chase Muslim Brotherhood members, accusing them of conspiring with Qatar.

Another issue of the dispute that is related to the matter of regional security is the insistence of Qatar to support the Muslim Brotherhood (Peterson, 2006; Martini, et al., 2016. Martini, et al., (2016) argue the impact of this solid cooperation between Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood by saying, “on the threat posed to regional security by political Islam in general — and, in particular, the Muslim Brotherhood — Doha was much more open to the Muslim Brotherhood’s project than its counterparts” (Martini, et al., 2016, 7). The KSA and the UAE classified the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization in 2014, when most of them had escaped to Qatar after the coup in Egypt 2013 and settled in Doha hotels. Moreover, while Qatar hosted Muslim Brotherhood members, it gave them

an opportunity to express their anger and accuse not only the government of Egypt but also any state which provided assistance such as the KSA and the UAE, by using platforms such as the *Aljazeera* news channel. The other issue was the Iranian threat. The KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain accused Qatar of rapprochement with Iran. The three countries confirmed that Iran's behavior in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen was clear evidence of the threat to regional security. Hence, Qatar's rapprochement with Iran meant it contributed to regional (in)security. In this regard, Peterson (2006, 742) postulates that in addition "to veiled Qatari accusations of Saudi support to Shaikh Hamad's father, improvement in relations was hampered by differing views on policy towards Iran".

Martini and his colleagues argue that "sensitive political issues, such as the role of political Islam in the region and the wisdom of engagement with Iran, have also created fissures among the GCC states" (2016, 17). They added, "Qatar's pro-Islamist tendencies under Sheikh Hamad put it at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in particular" (ibid). In this regard, the KSA and the UAE evaluation of the Muslim Brotherhood concludes that they use the same strategy as the Iranian regime. The examiner Literature confirmed that the similarity between political Islam in Egypt and Iran, rather than the sect differences. One of the most striking similarities is the status of the Supreme Leader (Murshid).

The most threatening perception from the Muslim Brotherhood doctrine is that they are recognizing that the only Muslim who has the right to lead the Muslim world as (Khalifate) is only the (Murshid Al Ikhwan) Muslim Brotherhood supreme. Hence all Muslims must pay their loyalty to him. Consequently, this doctrine is transnational, similar to the Iranian supreme (Wilayat Alfaqeeh), which does not recognize international borders or laws. So, the rising of this notion will cause huge fragmentations inside the states. For instance, if part of state A citizens pay their loyalty to Iran supreme based on their sect as Shia, and another part pays their loyalty to Muslim Brotherhood supreme in Egypt as Sunni sect, the internal security will be gravely harmed and the state A government will lose its credibility and legitimacy. In practical examples, this current situation is evident in Yemen.

Regarding Yemen, GCC members made many efforts at feeding billions and trying to keep the country stable because the disturbances in Yemen will directly impact the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, due to geographical factors. Yemen is one of the Arab countries influenced by the Arab uprising of 2011. The sub-state actors made political stability in Yemen impossible. In order to keep the territorial integration of Yemen, the GCC called for political reform initiative. Similar to the notion that Russia uses to intervene in neighboring states (to protect the Russian minority), Iran uses the same strategy, but from a religious perspective, to help the Shia minority, the Zaydi Houthis. This gave Iran a chance to interfere with the political scene in Yemen. Iran gave strong support to the Houthi rivals who took power in Yemen by a coup d'état in 2014 – 2015.

The question that relates to this matter is, will the Kuwaiti initiative to rebuild trust and save the GCC succeed? Do the Gulf countries need a period like France had to reintegrate their regional strategy under one single command of the GCC? This research attempts to approach all these matters in the following sections.

Chapter 3: Analytical of Qatar's Grand Strategy post the Arab uprisings

Most of the Arab countries witnessed the breaking events in 2011, which were described as Arab uprisings or the Arab Spring. Davis (2016, 15) defines the term 'Arab Spring' as a "popular term in the media to refer to a progression of uprising and protests in the area broadly known as the Middle East in the spring of 2011". Throughout this research, the term Arab uprisings will be used as it , arguably, gives a better sense of this phenomenon. As al-Sumait, Lenze, and Hudson (citation) argue "there is still little formal consensus on the boundaries (definitional, temporal, spatial, etc.) encapsulated by the term "Arab uprising" not to mention the host of ramifications that observers have continued to tie to it. Furthermore, there are numerous debates over the utility of the "Spring" metaphor, contesting such issues as its foreign origins or its temporal and optimistic implications. To that list of critiques, we add that referring to an "Arab Spring" has the negative and significant side effect of implying a singularity to events in a manner that often defies the varied conditions on the ground".

The technology platforms such as Facebook and TV channels such as *Aljazeera* eased the spread of revolutions all over the Arab world. Some practitioners argue that TV channels had robust effects in this regard. For instance, the *Aljazeera* media center was focusing on the protestors and airing videos that were recorded by individuals. In this regard, Abdul Qadir Mushtaq, Assistant Professor at the University of Faisalabad, explained the role of news television over the Arab revolutions. He said, "Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia were the important television channels that were responsible for both spreading the information among insurgents and the transmission of news throughout the world" (2017, 7). By recognizing the technologies as the backbone of rising Arab events, Tucker (2012) calls the events of the Arab revolutions as "social network revolutions" (Tucker, 2012 cited in (Mushtaq, 2017, 7). This clarification shows the crucial role of *Aljazeera* during the Arab uprisings.

Moreover, the Arab uprisings, caused three civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. They also caused a striking phenomenon of regional intervention where

states, namely the KSA, UAE and Qatar intervened in these aforementioned civil wars. These interventions have escalated the intra-state and inter-state tensions and increased the disputes between GCC states in the region. It also harmed some states' reputation in the international arena. For example, "Qatar's foreign-policy trajectory certainly damaged Doha's regional and global reputation" (Hedges and Cafiero, 2017, 147).

Many countries were involved, directly and/or indirectly, in the Arab uprisings. Each state had been engaging for different incentives to spread their regional influences over the struggling rules that were impacted by revolutions. Hence, these unstable states during uprising events turned out to be battlefields for other countries over regional influence. In consequence, all these confrontations and disputes had a negative impact on the stability of the state in general and produced enmities, moreover, disrupting the regional security.

There is no doubt that interventions were fueling the disputes in the Arab states, but what are the advantages for states to intervene in the internal affairs of other nations? The term intervention has linked both cases in this study, robustly. The US was intervening in Vietnam in the 1960s, to defeat the communism that was backed by Russia. Hence, France was criticizing the US. The same with the KSA intervening in Yemen to defeat Houthi rebels backed by Iran. Hence, Qatar criticized the KSA heavily.

In particular, this section tries to examine Qatar and its strategies towards intervening in other states' affairs during the Arab uprisings and what instruments it used. Moreover, did these interventions have a positive or negative impact on Qatar and other GCC states? Hence, the impact of these interventions over the GCC will be debated and analyzed. Furthermore, this section will try to explain that Qatar rivalled the KSA in many unstable states such as Yemen to achieve autonomy and weaken the KSA's position. Similarly, when de Gaulle opposed the US in Vietnam, he sought to make it clear that France had its foreign policy decisions which were without any external dictation. Hence, from de Gaulle's perspective, this behavior would ensure France's autonomy outside and inside NATO, and it did, at least from the French point of view.

However, Logevall (1992) explains that de Gaulle's attempt to oppose the US in Vietnam angered US policymakers. Hence, de Gaulle "emerged as the leading international critic of American policy in Vietnam, and his pronouncements and recommendations on the war did much to strain relations between France and the United States" (Logevall, 1992, 69). The dispute inside NATO had influenced the US military operation in Vietnam. The neutral position of France was considered a rival act from the US perspective.

This seems similar to the behavior of Qatar with regard to the KSA operations in Yemen. Qatar assumed that KSA military operations in Yemen would escalate the conflict in the country and declared that political solutions were the only path of peace. From the KSA's point of view, the harsh rhetoric of Qatar aimed to support the role of Houthi rebels in Yemen and challenge the KSA's stand. However, Qatar "began to air criticism of the Saudi-led war in Yemen only after its row with Saudi Arabia began in 2017" (Kinninmont, 2019, 13). Both France and Qatar seem to have chosen their positions in the wars in Vietnam and Yemen respectively as an attempt to gain a vital player image in the international sphere.

Regarding the instruments that states use, Qatar employs soft power for its incentive and strategies against the KSA. Both gas revenue and media platforms (*Aljazeera*) are vital and clear instruments used by Qatar governments. Similarly, de Gaulle employed soft power instruments (media and economy) to achieve autonomy and emerge out of the US's shadow. Both instruments that de Gaulle used have been widely argued in his book (Martin, 2013). Martin said that de Gaulle utilized international conferences to criticize his internal and external foes and clarify his future strategies. For instance, at the 9 September 1965 conference, de Gaulle was proud of the prosperity of France's economy and clarified that this development would assist in ending the subordination era (2013). Similarly, Chalaby (1998) argues that de Gaulle depended heavily on the media. He confirmed that the government-controlled media in France and the television news prepared to meet the government's order (Ibid).

The speeches of de Gaulle reflect clearly the desire to gain independence in economic as well as in military affairs. Martin argues that de Gaulle's efforts to

make Europe an independent economy increased US administration anger. For instance the Franco-Germany economy integration was considered as evidence of de Gaulle's plan to kick the US out of Europe both economically and militarily by destroying NATO (2013). Moreover, de Gaulle challenged the US in economic affairs not only in the European context, but he was urging Latin American states to take responsibility and end the US hegemony over the Latin American economy (Ibid).

Interestingly, the Qataris' interference in the Arab uprisings took three different ways. First, military interventions, such as in the case of Libya and Syria; second, the monetary aids; third, the media-intensive influences by *Aljazeera* platforms which extensively covered the events 24 hours a day. In the case of the latter, Ulrichsen (2014, 1) postulates that "Qatar played a vital role not only in shaping the emerging narratives of protest, through the Doha-based *Aljazeera* network, but also in mobilizing Arab support, initially for the NATO-led intervention in Libya in March 2011, and later for the diplomatic isolation of Bashar Al-Assad's regime as the civil conflict in Syria escalated".

There are three cases that affected the GCC heavily and are deemed to be important to be analyzed in detail for the sake of a better understanding of the GCC crisis of 2017. **First**, Qatari relationships with the Muslim Brotherhood, including all the party branches in the MENA such as Hamas in Palestine and al-Islah in Yemen. **Second**, Qatar's soft power, which includes the Aljazeera media network, gas revenue, **and** the military operations and military support to groups in Libya. **Finally**, the impact of Qatar's policies on the GCC during and after the Arab uprisings will be debated also.

GCC divisions regarding the Muslim Brotherhood

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has its unique social structure, which influences politics. Both ideology and religion have enormous roles. The term Arab nationalism has been used by many Arab leaders to attract Arab nations' attention. For example, President Nasser took advantage of this phenomenon to gain the sympathy of Arab nations during the 1960s, and he

succeeded in shaping the ideology of some Arabs and turned them against their leaders. Also, religion was strongly employed for political purposes. “Several Middle Eastern regimes depend on religion for their legitimacy” (Bensahel and Byman, 2004, 167).

Before going deeper into the case study, it is fundamental to approach one of the contemporary issues, which concerns the differences between idea and ideology or Islam and Islamism. “When security experts posit the questionable idea that Islam is a threat to the West because of the alleged unity of action claimed by the Islamists, it becomes necessary to clear up this misinterpretation through more precise analyses” (Jacoby, 2002, 67). In short, Islam is a religion that teaches people how to practice their rituals. Islamism, on the other hand, is the way of using Islam by one group to achieve a political objective. In the words of Pipes (2000, 90), “Traditional Islam seeks to teach humans how-to live-in accord with God’s will, whereas Islamism aspires to create new order”. Hence, one of Islamism’s main features is “the transformation of faith into ideology” (Ibid, 89). In this regard, Jacoby, (2002) confirm that social groups use religion for their ambitions whatever the faith. Moreover, they say that “the politicization of religion is not restricted to Islam, insofar as it can be observed in other religions as well, be it Hinduism or Judaism” (Ibid, 63).

The twentieth century witnessed the rise of many Islamic movements, and each one of them claimed to protect Islam. Mostly, these movements had political ambitions and rejected others for example, Fatah and Hamas in Palestine. One of the most popular and widespread groups is the Muslim Brotherhood. Since the foundation of the latter in the 1930s, it began to practice politics based on their agenda. The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood focused on influencing the hearts and the minds of Muslim Arabs, and conducted charity works in order to gain members. The most critical condition in Muslim Brotherhood doctrine is legitimacy of the ruler. Hence, they began the rivalry against other regimes in the 1940s. Also, Great Britain “transformed the Muslim Brotherhood from a force primarily concerned with fighting Western colonialism into a ‘true’ counter-hegemonic force desiring the overthrow of, first, the indigenous Royalist forces and, subsequently, the Nasser regime” (Jacoby, 2002, 145). These confrontations

tarnished the Muslim Brotherhood's reputation among Arab regimes. However, in the 1950s some Muslim Brotherhood members were expelled to the GCC countries which showed sympathy to the party, such as in Kuwait, Qatar, and the KSA. This harmony between the monarchs and the Muslim Brotherhood lasted for almost four decades. This harmony ended with the Kuwait crisis 1990-1991. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, the KSA figured that Kuwait's liberation depended on inviting great military powers led by the US to push the Iraqi forces back out of Kuwait. This approach was condemned by the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, they went to extremes to support the Iraqi position (Lipp, 2019). This was a major blow against the GCC countries that hosted the party, except Qatar. Ever since the Muslim Brotherhood is considered in all GCC states as untrustworthy and a threat, except in Qatar.

At the beginning, Qatar's policymakers were suspicious about Muslim Brotherhood activities, so they were not allowed to publish any textbooks without the government's permission, and the charity was prohibited except by an official channel, the same as the Muslim Brotherhood condition's in the KSA (Roberts, 2014). Instead of expelling the Muslim Brotherhood members after the liberation of Kuwait, Qatar continued to host them. Hence, other GCC members felt the threat of this behavior by Qatar. The insistence of Qatar to host Muslim Brotherhood members was the first sign of the alliance between Doha and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, when Shaikh Hamad seized power from his father in 1995, he changed all of Qatar's foreign policy. He aimed to make Qatar influential in the regional and international sphere by using all the possible instruments, one of them was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Doha. "The emergence of Sheikh Hamad and his entourage of political elites worried Riyadh and Cairo as Doha's reinvestment in the Muslim Brotherhood and the emergence of [*Aljazeera*] challenged KSA's regional dominance" (Hedges and Cafiero, 2017).

From the early age of *Aljazeera*, the Muslim Brotherhood participants criticized the Egyptian government and former President Hosni Mubarak personally. Furthermore, the governments in Egypt, the KSA and the UAE assumed that because of quick developments in Doha and the evident rise of the

Muslim Brotherhood in Qatar the *Aljazeera* channel would impact not only all these three countries' security but the entire region (Hedges and Cafiero, 2017). All three states realized the threat from two paths. First, the Muslim Brotherhood's influence was not just particular in Qatar or Egypt. Its members were spreading since the 1970s, so any disputes with the headquarters of the party in Doha would encourage the followers to attack those three states internally. Second, the Aljazeera channel offered the Muslim Brotherhood's clerics in Doha a chance to have revenge from these three states. Moreover, Qatar "hosted one of its most influential clerics, Yusuf Al Qaradawi, and provided him with a platform on [*Al Jazeera*] to exponentially increase his influence" (Roberts, 2014, 84). However, both expectations happened, hence, it created tension between Doha and Cairo for a long time.

During the Arab uprisings in 2011 Qatar had an extremely efforts to restore Muslim Brotherhood party in the states that's protestors overthrow dictators. During the early months of the uprisings in 2011, Qatar invested in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Egypt by supporting Muslim Brotherhood branches in these countries, but the robust support was for Egypt. For example, since the collapse of Mubarak's regime, *Aljazeera* had launched a new news channel specially for Egypt "*Aljazeera Masr*". Moreover, most of "oil-rich Gulf Arab monarchies had cut their aid to Egypt fearing possible perceived destabilizing effects of the Muslim Brotherhood on their rule – except for Qatar, which had spent 4 percent of its GDP to help Egypt before Morsi's downfall" (Alianak, 2014, 91).

Given the centrality of Egypt in the geopolitics of the Arab world, it is the center of Arab decision-making. As such, GCC states raced to make it ally in their country. Both the KSA and the UAE were close allies to the former regime ever since the Kuwait crisis because of its strong position against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. This, by default, sustained the disputes with the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar. The political movements since Morsi won the presidency of Egypt in 2012, draw an ambitious line for Egypt's future policy. Specially, the enhancing of triangle diplomacy concerning Egypt – Turkey – Iran. Both Turkey and Iran supported the Muslim Brotherhood before and after the Arab uprisings. So, if these three countries worked together, the Gulf states would be surrounded by

enemies. Moreover, the government in Sudan belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, “The Muslim Brotherhood was not expecting and thus not prepared to be a governing party and, like all other political forces, had a very vague political program and no experienced administrators and statesmen” (Pioppi, 2013, 60).

The coup d'état in July 2013 had changed the political scene in Egypt and inside the GCC members as well. Moreover, it fueled the disputes between Qatar and the KSA and the UAE. So, Qatar did not recognize the new president of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and considered his government illegitimate. In contrast, the KSA, the UAE and Kuwait recognized the government and supplied generous financial aid to Egypt. As a consequence, “the situation in Egypt continued to be a particular source of tension, as was evident in November 2014 when Qatar asked Egypt to return \$2.5 billion that it had provided to support the Egyptian currency during Morsi’s presidency” (Kinninmont, 2019, 17).

In consequence, when Egypt’s former president Morsi visited Iran and re-cultivated Egypt’s relations with Iran, the KSA, the UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain had a suspicious feeling about the engagement of the two powers with Qatari mediation. During Morsi’s visit, an observer assumed that “not only would this alienate the United States and Israel, but also relations with Gulf states, particularly KSA, would be severely damaged” (Akbari, 2012).

Since 1979, the relation between Egypt and Iran was inactive. Also, Egypt’s policymakers avoided any developed relations with Iran because of their concerns about Iranian ambitions in the area, and any rapprochement would anger GCC members. However, the visit of Iranian president Ahmadinejad to Egypt in 2013 flamed the Egyptian streets against the Muslim Brotherhood. During the visit, Mr. Ahmadinejad declared that Iran would send thousands of religious tourists to visit Shia historical places in Cairo. This event united internal and external Muslim Brotherhood opposition. Most of the politicians in Egypt admit that this visit gravely harmed the relationship with the Gulf states, for example, Egypt’s former ambassador to Syria, Mahmoud Shukri confirmed, “Now relations with Gulf Countries are not that good” (Safari, 2013).

In conclusion, the historical analysis shows how the tensions between the two blocs, the KSA and UAE in one side and Qatar on another side have escalated from the 1990s because of the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, these tensions had deepened after the Arab uprisings. From the KSA side, “Riyadh has not forgiven it (Muslim Brotherhood) for supporting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1990 and blames it for radicalizing Saudi youth” (Roberts, 2014, 24). And from the opposite side of the dispute, the Muslim Brotherhood’s cleric in Qatar, Yusuf Al Qaradawi angered KSA officials when he accused them of backing General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to launch a coup in 2013 (Roberts, 2014). From the UAE side, the US embassy in Abu Dhabi leaked a cable reflecting the opinion of Mohammed bin Zaid, the deputy of the president, about the Muslim Brotherhood and their ties with Qatar. He mentioned that the Muslim Brotherhood was using the same strategy as Iran to urge the Arab nations over the behavior which will increase the gap between nations and rulers. Moreover, he confirmed that 90 percent of *Aljazeera* employees belong to the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the massive financial support from Qatar to Hamas and Hezbollah was mentioned in the cable (Cable: 09ABUDHABI193_a, 2009).

Yemen crisis and its links to Muslim Brotherhood’s issue:

The three factors that caused most agreements or disagreements between "state-state," "state-non-states actors" and "non-state-non-state" are religion, nationalism, and identity. Each one of these factors is present in recent issues in the MENA. Professor Waleed Hazbun (2017), a specialist in Middle East politics affairs at the University of Alabama, argues that an understanding of the status quo in the Middle East area requires a broad studying of the interactions between state-non-state actors and the way of states to export their agendas by containing and supporting non-state actors. Moreover, how do states adopt the ideology of sub-state actors to spread their influence. In the case of Yemen, the sectarian and non-state actors played an essential role in the Yemen crisis. Before the outbreak of the Yemen crisis, many non-state actors cultivated transnational relations with

some regional states without consulting the center of government in the capital Sana.

The GCC members made many efforts to keep the country stable because the disturbance in Yemen would directly impact the GCC security. The sub-state actors made political stability in Yemen nearly a mission impossible. In order to keep the territorial integrity of Yemen, the GCC called for political reform initiative. In 2011 the GCC initiative was signed with the participation of the Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary-General, the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the Security Council, and the GCC Secretary-General and the European Union, to ensure the peaceful transfer of power in Yemen.⁶

Similar to the Russian use of intervention in neighboring states (to protect Russian minorities), Iran uses the same strategy, but from a religious perspective, that of helping the Shia minority such as the Zaydi Houthis and Hezbollah in Lebanon. This gave Iran a chance to interfere with the political scene in Yemen. Iran gave strong support to the Houthi rivals who took over power in Yemen by a coup d'état in 2014 – 2015. These non-official connections caused “a sectarian framing of longstanding political and economic grievances unfolded in a context of greater regional polarization and escalating conflict between KSA and Iran, in particular” (Yadav, 2017).

Qatar was involved in the Yemen crisis in two different ways. It was a member of the Arab Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen at the beginning of the operation, but, instead of working with the coalition “Qatar used its relationship with the local Muslim Brotherhood party to assert Doha's influence, challenging Riyadh's in the impoverished nation” (Hedges and Cafiero, 2017). Furthermore, after the crisis inside the GCC broke out in 2017, Qatar employed its media platform to accuse the coalition. Hence from the KSA perspective its stand supported the position of Iran (from the KSA and UAE point of view).

⁶ (Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) | UN Peacemaker, 2011)

The complicated scenario in Yemen between Qatar and the KSA may remind us of the dispute between the US and France during the Vietnam War. The US administration felt that de Gaulle aimed to go against US directions, not only inside NATO but also internationally. Logevall argues the US policymakers' point of view regarding de Gaulle's behavior; "They were certain that de Gaulle would automatically oppose any US initiative that did not immediately benefit France, and often speculated that Franco-American friction would end once De Gaulle left office (1992, 72). Hence, he achieved one of his goals in taking France out of the US shadow by distinguishing his country's position as natural regarding Vietnam, not as a follower of US decisions. This international achievement raised de Gaulle's voice in Europe and inside NATO. In other words, "The Vietnam conflict, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Economic Community, offered de Gaulle an opportunity to put some diplomatic distance between Paris and Washington, and to establish what he often referred to as a new "global role" for France, particularly in relation to the emerging Third World" (Logevall, 1992, 71).

In this regard, the states that are seeking autonomy and independence take advantage of an international crisis to practice their ambitions. Furthermore, they take the chance to challenge international or regional superpowers. This issue had two sides of understanding. On the one hand, the large states interpreted the opposition of small or weak states during the crisis as betrayal and direct harming of their strategies against the historical enemy, for example, US vs USSR and KSA vs Iran. Moreover, large states see the efforts by small or weak states as aimed at weakening their forces and delaying the victory. For instance, France used the tool of a political solution to end the Vietnam War, similar to Qatar, who used its media platforms to show the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and put more pressure on the coalition led by the KSA.

On the other hand, the small or weak states see these situation as a chance to criticize large states' operations, but with tangible tools and considerable notions such as humanitarian. Interestingly, in the case of Vietnam, France intervened in the state heavily, then when the US engaged, "did not want the US to success where it had failed" (Logevall, 1992, 90). Similarly, Qatar was involved

in the military operations in Yemen, then when the fragmentation happened in 2017, it started working against the victory that the coalition did not achieve before the disputes between Qatar and KSA. However, both cases involving the US in Vietnam and the KSA in Yemen confronted the historical enemy. Hence, both civil wars in Vietnam and Yemen had the same triangle dynamics dispute. So, during the Vietnam War, the US targeted the Communists that were backed by the USSR. Hence, de Gaulle was standing with the USSR because of his opinion about the war and the rapprochement with the USSR. The same as in Yemen, where the KSA targeted Houthi rebels that were backed by Iran. Hence, the KSA considered the huge criticism of its operations and hosting the Houthi rebels in *Aljazeera* programs to insult the KSA, as standing with Iran. In short, unstable states turned out to be theatres of operations for proxy wars. In these wars, superpowers (regional or international) compete for hegemony, at the same time as small or weak states are seeking autonomy.

Aljazeera: Freedom of press or flame of a dispute among GCC states

By examining both cases, France during the de Gaulle era, and Qatar during Sheikh Hamad's time, from the early days of their power, they employed the media considerably. However, de Gaulle took advantage of the rise of television and employed it to introduce and convince people about his strategies. Furthermore, his image as a strong leader during World War Two eased the way to gain people's admiration. (BRIZZI, 2018) clarified how de Gaulle employed the television to attract people's attention and spread his new vision. (BRIZZI) said "the press conferences were the great ceremonies of the regime celebrated by de Gaulle, the embodiment of a strong nation who commanded the respect of his citizens and foreign nations alike" (BRIZZI, 2018, 147). He adds, "through the symbolic power exercised by television, the General appeared framed in an image of solemnity so that it was impossible to forget, even for an instant, the representative role of the Head of State" (BRIZZI, 2018, 147). Similarly, Shaikh Hamad founded the *Aljazeera* channel to ease the future plan.

The establishment of the *Aljazeera* channel in 1996 by Qatar's Amir Shaikh Hamad had a vast influence not only on the matter of television news channel but also its policies were critical and suspicious for Arab world leaders (Khatib, 2013). However, "Qatari emir provided the [*Al-Jazeera*] founding team with \$137 million to create the channel" (Samuel-Azran, 2013, 1306). From the beginning, *Aljazeera* had access to the Arab public with no competitors. Hence it started criticizing Arab regimes, which fueled enmity with Qatar. The GCC countries were hugely influenced by the channel outlet. The real reason for the Qatari Emir's decision to launch *Aljazeera* was to achieve greater leverage against rival Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia (Khatib, 2013).

Moreover, when *Aljazeera* took on its responsibility to be the first channel that broadcasted the speeches of al-Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden, the KSA assumed that the channel was created to attack its internal stability. Kinninmont (2019) argues that this "attitudes in Saudi Arabia changed after Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) started to carry out attacks in the country, from 2003 onwards; conversely, Al-Qaeda has never targeted Qatar". In this regard the KSA government considers both Qatar, and the Iran regime, which harbored Al-Qaeda's fighters, as threats to its national security. Kuwait also had massive criticism by *Aljazeera*, which resulted in the shutting of the channel's office and expelling its correspondents. The Kuwaiti government had shut the *Aljazeera* office twice, in 1999 and 2002, for two reasons. First, *Aljazeera* programs harmed the country's interests, and second, the government informed that the office was closed because the channel was not objective by airing the negative side of the facts (Byrne, 2002).

Lynch (2005) argues *Aljazeera* influence from one hand was by saying it provided all Arab nations with unprecedented space of freedom news and dialogue, hence succeeding in attracting their attention, moreover, taking advantage of being the only channel to shape their thinking. But from another hand Lynch (2005) mentioned that *Aljazeera* caused a negative impact to the security of Arab states and its programmes turned to blame the Qatar government. He also provides evidence when, "Bush administration has allegedly pressured the government of Qatar to close down, privatize, or censor *Aljazeera*" (Lynch, 2005,

45). Rather than *Aljazeera* pretending that it is not following any particular regime interest or under pressure from any ruler, the literature confirms the opposite of these claims. Samuel-Azran (2013) had published research focusing on the influence of *Aljazeera* regarding the case of Qatar-KSA relations. His research concluded that “*Aljazeera* Arabic.net dramatically increased the volume of articles portraying Saudi Arabia in a negative light when the conflict erupted and ceased criticism of Saudi affairs altogether in the year following the resolution of the conflict” (Samuel-Azran, 2013, 1306). Furthermore, the study found that *Aljazeera* Arabic had a clear favor for Qatar’s interests, but *Aljazeera* English had a credibility to attract western viewers. Another example of Qatar’s use of *Aljazeera* was to achieve political gains. For instance, “the US ambassador’s cable exposed on WikiLeaks, which alleges that before Mubarak’s fall the Qataris offered him a deal that included the cessation of *Aljazeera*’s broadcasts in Egypt in exchange for Mubarak’s increased support of the Palestinians” (Lebron, 2009 cited in Samuel-Azran, 2013, 1308).

During the Arab uprisings of 2011, *Aljazeera* methods were substantially to bring the protestors into the gathering points and employed the new technology to change the facts. “In order to spread the real and fake pieces of information, *Aljazeera* has collected the information disseminated on the Internet by the people using them as sources and organized groups on Facebook, then retransmitting free news on mobile phones” (Castells, 2011 cited in Khondker, 2011, 678). The famous voice of *Aljazeera* is the reformation and democracy, however, there was no democracy in Qatar or other Gulf states except Kuwait.

The roots and consequences of disputes in the GCC 1995 - 2017

After Shaikh Hamad seized power from his father in 1995, the neighboring countries were skeptical about the motivations of the palace coup. Moreover, because of strong relations between former ruler Sheikh Khalifa and the GCC state rulers, the new government was unwelcomed by some states, such as the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain. Whether or not these four states’ reactions were officially announced, they showed sympathy with Sheikh Hamad's father by hosting him,

and attempted to restore his rule. Some sources argue that nine months after Shaikh Hamad assumed the throne, those three countries attempted to launch a coup d'état inside Qatar. Shaikh Hamad, from his early period of government faced massive internal opposition, which was based on condemning his coup against his father, and “one counter-coup attempt and involved considerable tension with Bahrain, KSA, and UAE, all of whom backed the erstwhile Emir, Sheikh Khalifa, at various times” (Schulze, 2000, 54).

This action emphatically damaged the trust between Qatar and the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain. Furthermore, it encouraged Qatar's policymakers to start rivalry with these countries. However, by analyzing the events and their consequences, Qatar's government remained calm for two reasons. First, in accordance with uncovered documents by Qatar's intelligence during the early days of the boycott in 2017, the organizers of the coup were shown to be from the second line of government in three countries (the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain). So, the leaders of these three countries had space to apologize for the failed coup organizers' behavior, and to show good intentions. Second, Qatar's new government found that escalation with these countries may create a surge in internal opposition.

The minor rift inside the GCC in 2014 had ended through great efforts of Kuwait after eight months of diplomatic tensions. The GCC statement said that the meeting had reached what it described as an understanding meant to turn over a new leaf in relations between the six members of the Gulf organization, which also includes Kuwait and Oman⁷. Consequently, ambassadors of three countries had returned to Doha. After the Emir of Kuwait's mediation, Qatar agreed to fulfill the demands of the three countries. “The episode marked the apex of Intra-GCC tensions over Qatar's foreign policy orientation, a rift which has been mitigated by what is generally viewed as Doha's capitulation to its neighbors by its expelling of Muslim Brotherhood leadership and shutting down of [*Al-Jazeera*] al-Mubasher” (Martini et. al., 2016, 17).

⁷ (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain end rift with Qatar, return ambassadors, 2014)

The status quo in the MENA area and disagreements increased the rift inside the GCC. The competition to gain hegemony between two blocs, the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain vs. Qatar, attracted regional powers, for example Turkey. Disputes never reached direct confrontation, but rather occurred in the form of proxy wars. In 2017, in his speech, Emir Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad mentioned the tensions “between Qatar and the United States questioned how long US President Donald Trump would remain in power, argued that Hamas was the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, reaffirmed Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood” (Roberts, 2017, 1). This speech caused a significant escalation. From Qatar’s side, many sources talked about attacks of Russian hackers on the Qatar News Agency QNA. Moreover, Qatar denied the speech (Roberts, 2017).

The Omani political expert, Ba Abood, argued the importance of the GCC to stabilize the region and ensure the security. Hence the disputes will destabilize the region and will fuel the disputes, moreover, prolonging the ongoing conflicts such as in Yemen (Ba Abood, 2020). The deep disputes emerged again in 2017, but this time were significant and harmed the GCC enormously. The political, analytical and regional experts confirmed that the unsolved issues and disagreements about regional conflicts such as Yemen, Libya, and Egypt caused deep disputes, which resulted in an increase in the tensions in the MENA area. The Associate Professor Almiqbaly was certain that the impact of the divisions inside the GCC wrecks the regional security in the MENA, and, also, causes fragmentation in the Arab world (2020). He adds that Qatar had no choice to sign a defense agreement with Turkey, but instead, the increase of militarization in the region will prolong the conflicts and add more darkness to the future (Almiqbaly, 2020). This interpretation was based on the escalation of the ongoing conflicts such as Syria and Libya and, moreover the sense of fear of any military operations. The MENA observer Zafer Alajmi clarified that the Gulf crisis in 2017 makes it difficult for other Arab states to remain neutral because each bloc from the disputes was hurrying to achieve more solidarity (2020). As a consequence, this critical situation makes the task of Kuwait and Oman as mediators much more tricky.

However, the crisis in 2017 “created a deep and lasting rift with ripple effects across the Middle East and the Horn of Africa” (Kinninmont, 2019, 2). Nevertheless, the KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut down their diplomatic relations with Qatar, and shut all land, air, and naval borders with Qatar (Kerr, 2017). Qatar was accused of supporting terrorist groups financially (Naheem, 2017, 266). There were also further “accusations against Qatar’s state-sponsored news network Al Jazeera for functioning as a platform for rebel and terrorist groups throughout the Middle East and North Africa region (Qiblawi et. al., 2017 cited in Naheem, 2017, 266). In the same regard, Bahrain accused Qatar of financing the opposition aiming to change the regime in Manama. The UAE accused Qatar of supporting and hosting a terrorism group (Muslim Brotherhood), and the KSA accused Qatar of close and developing relations with Iran and financially supporting some clerics in the KSA who are considered as opposition. But Qatar denied these accusations and restated its right to achieve an autonomy in the regional and international spheres (Kinninmont, 2019).

During the early days of the boycott, the four countries of the KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt asked Qatar to meet some required conditions: (1) cut down its diplomatic relations with Iran; (2) discontinue its relationship with the terrorist group and hand over any person who has been requested from neighboring countries; (3) close down the Turkish military base in Doha and evacuate the Turkish soldiers; (4) stop its intervention in the interior affairs of all four countries; (5) shut down an Al Jazeera channel. However, Doha viewed these demands as an attack against its sovereignty and rejected these demands.

From Qatar’s perspective, this was a conspiracy that was aimed at limiting its autonomy and a kind of punishment because Qatar endorses democracy. Moreover, Qatar accused these countries of attempting to attack freedom of speech and opinions (Kinninmont, 2019). Also, Qatar rejected all these allegations as ‘baseless’ and stated that such behavior by its neighbors is an infringement on its sovereignty and a violation of international law (Kumar, 2017, 241). Furthermore, it has clarified its opinion about the Muslim Brotherhood from a position that the party is not a terrorist group. Since the boycott bloc requested Qatar to close *Aljazeera* because it hosted terrorist leaders such as Bin Laden, “the

UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein on June 30 said the demand to close [Aljazeera] represented an unacceptable attack on the right to freedom of expression and opinion" (Iqbal, 2017, 11).

The official statements from both sides may explain the vast rift between the two blocs. The KSA Foreign Minister, Adel Al Jubeir, said that nobody "wants to hurt Qatar, we believe that common sense and logic will convince Qatar to take the right steps, Qatar has to stop these policies so that it can contribute to stability in the Middle East".⁸ From the opposite side of the dispute Qatar's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani said that, "Qatar continues to call for dialogue, despite the violation of international laws and regulations". He adds that, "Qatar never compromised collective security of the region".⁹ Without doubt Qatar policymakers take advantage of gas revenue and the famous press platform to practice its regional ambitions. It assumes that backing the most widespread Islamic party the Muslim Brotherhood will ease its path to influence many MENA countries. The victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was the historical chance for both Qatar and the party.

The boycott bloc had shared interests to force Qatar into changing its ambitious strategy. For example, Qatar vs UAE rivalry in Libya since the collapse of al-Gaddafi's regime. Hence, from a Qatari perspective, it will not lose any more ground to any one of its competitors like what happened in Egypt. Interestingly, Qatar's competitors use its relations with al-Gaddafi both before and after the Arab uprising events. The role of Qatar in Libya before and after the overthrow of al-Gaddafi is a piece of evidence. However, the study by Dorsey (2015) found that Qatar's efforts in the Middle East are not entirely objective. The study discusses that the struggle to attain intra-alliance autonomy is hindered by other factors and desires. It provides crucial information about the role of Qatar in the Middle East, specifically in the issues that impact GCC members' interests. "The GCC's trajectory seems consistent with alliance formation — formed in response to

⁸ (Saudi foreign minister: Qatar must end support for Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, 2017)

⁹ (Foreign Minister : Any Threat to Region Is Threat to Qatar, 2017)

specific security threats, enduring as those threats endure, and fraying as those threats recede” (Barnett and Gause, 1998 cited in Jefery et. al., 2016, 12).

CHAPTER 4: FUTURE OF THE GCC REGARDING THE QATAR CRISES IN 2017

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is one of the relatively successful regional organizations. The organization has provided security and stability to its member states at the times of crises. The strong cooperation and unified decision-making helps to ensure the stability of members. The liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and resettlement of the security in Bahrain in 2011 are evidence of the organization's credibility. Yenigün argues that, “by the request of the Bahraini government on the 14th of March 2011, the PSF (Peninsula Shield Forces) entered Bahrain” (Yenigun, 2013, 36). He also adds, “this issue demonstrated the PSF’s mobility, capability, and willingness to take a role in the region, if necessary” (Ibid, 36). The observers realized that the robust cooperation between GCC states appeared most when the threat has a direct impact on its leaders. However, Martini et. al., (2016, 5) “suggests that absent a shift in GCC leaders’ priorities, upticks in cooperation will be reactive to shocks that threaten the states’ security or political structures rather than the product of a sustained effort”. The director of the *Alnferaad* Research Centre in Kuwait, Dr. Alshammari, told the researcher in an interview that the future of the GCC is ambiguous, and the unstable situation requires a trustworthy organization to ensure the security of the Gulf states (Interview, 2020). He refers to the recent fraction within the GCC and the role of the media, which assists in the spread of hate environments between Gulf nations (Ibid). Here, one could perceive that public opinion has been playing a robust role since the early days of disputes, Moreover, it could also fuel the disputes.

However, before the disputes in 2017 caused the rift within the organization, the GCC member states had a strong and united voice in all international theatres. H.E. Mr. Rashed Alhajri, the Ambassador of Kuwait in

Prague, served more than twenty years as a diplomat and witnessed many issues regarding the GCC. He said that before the disputes in 2017, we [GCC members and diplomats] worked as one team for one goal, which was usually to guarantee both security and economics (Interview, 2020). On the contrary, following the 2017 rift, the GCC members split apart, which weakened their position, he postulates (Ibid). Mr. Alhajri adds that the hot issues such as Red Sea security, Iranian rhetoric and the expanding, instability of Yemen were robust reasons to take into consideration and reunite the GCC members (Ibid). However, there are several threat sources around the GCC states, especially those militia backed by Iran, and terrorism which are the most vital threats. Moreover, the vacuum of power in Iraq eased the Iranian infiltration of the country, which militarized some Shia groups resulting in posing a threat to GCC neighbors (The GCC and Gulf Security, 2005).

By taking all these factors into consideration, both blocs of the disputes (KSA, UAE, and Bahrain - Qatar) and the neutral states understand the need for continuing the organization. The regional observer, Zafer Alajmi, said that the GCC would remain despite the fragmentation (Interview, 2020). He adds, military exercises under PSF supervision and some economic agreements are still working, which means that the organization still has a life (Ibid). Similar to the case of France in NATO, Alajmi mentioned the importance of the time factor, and said that France took a long time to return into full integration with NATO; both parties needed time to return to the negotiating table. Nevertheless, when France withdrew from NATO, there was no ongoing war in Europe. On the contrary, there are many civil wars in the MENA in which those GCC members are engaging. Moreover, the Iranian threat to the GCC region remains eminent. The killing of the commander of Iranian military operations in the Middle East, General Qasem Soleimani in January 2020 has escalated the tensions between Iran and the US and its GCC allies in the region. So, the fragmentations inside the GCC could help Iran to implement its strategies.

However, some research suggests that Qatar's rapprochements with Iran were actually not meant to provoke the KSA, or to decrease the Iranian threat on Qatar. For instance, Ulrichsen (2014) argues the different classification in the

Iranian revolution policy towards the GCC states. However, from the beginning of the Iranian revolution in 1979, it has shown no tolerance with the Arabian Gulf states, but the Iranian ambitions in Qatar are less than in other GCC states such as the KSA and Bahrain. Ulrichsen (2014) mentioned the main reason for this different Iranian policy towards Qatar and that is because the latter has a small number of the Shia population. On the contrary, Bahrain has a majority Shia population, and the KSA has relatively a large number of Shia. From this perspective, the calculation of the threat is different from one state to another inside the GCC. Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, both the KSA and Bahrain have suffered from its consequences, because of Ayatollah Khomeini's 'export of revolution' or Shi'ization of the region policy. Friedman (2012) provides two tangible pieces of evidence in this regard, the first was in Bahrain saying that there were strong "links between these [Iranian] Shiite activists and Bahrain's Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB), led by Hadi al-Mudarrisi who claimed to be Ayatollah Khomeini's representative in Bahrain in 1979"(75). Hence, in 1981, the Iranian-backed IFLB plotted to overthrow the Al-Khalifa House in Bahrain (Ibid, 75). The second piece of evidence was in the KSA, when, "Shiite protesters in Saudi Arabia held posters of Ayatollah Khomeini's image and carried placards with anti-Saudi slogans" (Ibid, 75).

Despite these different Arab Gulf perceptions of Iran, the latter's threat to the region remains against the entire region. More specifically, Iran's regional ambitions will continue to be based on export of the revolution doctrine in which Qatar is not an exception. Hence, the instability in any of the GCC states will directly impact the rest of the organization's members.

In the case of NATO, the organization was established primarily to counter the Soviet Union. Hence, the latter put lots of efforts into fueling the disputes inside the organization. Similarly, Iran considers the GCC as the only unified political, military, and economic organization that challenges its expanding policy in the Gulf region. Zafer Alajmi confirmed that any attempt to dissolve the GCC would be an incentive for the Iranian regime to continue its influences over the region (Alajmi, 2020). Furthermore, Dr. Alshammari argues that Iran takes advantage of Turkey's position against the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain bloc,

because this situation will ensure the fragmentation inside the GCC and a rift in the Turkey-KSA relationship (2020).

Dr. Jamie Shea, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges in NATO held a lecture about NATO. He clarifies that when de Gaulle stepped forward to attempt rapprochement with Russia, there was an important question which emerged; “Would NATO survive if one group of allies was not only distancing from the US but coming closer to Moscow in the hope of negotiating a political solution to the division of Europe (2009)”. One could ask the same question in the context of the GCC; would the GCC continue while one of its members enhanced its relations with an enduring enemy?

In this regard, the Associate Professor Almiqbaly (2020) said that the GCC must cooperate with Iran in issues related to stability and regional security. However, the clear link between Iran and some Shia militia groups in the Middle East ensures that the Iranian regime remains a serious threat to the stability of the region, and there is no indicator which shows that its aggressive foreign policy will change. The killing of Quds Forces’ commander Qasem Soleimani by the US in Iraq in January 2020 had encouraged the Iranian-backed militia to call for revenge, even louder than the calls from Iran itself. Obviously, these militias settle in strategic locations of the GCC’s security. For example, Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq, Houthi rebels in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon, are all considered a threat to the GCC region. Dr. Alshammari said that Iran had many chances to ensure its good intentions with the GCC states, but its aggressive behavior is clear. He adds, the US tried to contain Iran, but the results were more expansion of Iranian influence (2020).

Moreover, the connection between the Iranian regime and these groups is public and not hidden. After the assassination of Qasem Soleimani, “Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force, held a press conference in which the various flags of Iran’s regional (militias) allies were ostentatiously displayed behind him” (Anderson, 2020). Consequently, the Qatari rapprochement with Iran will possibly assist the latter to pursue further influence in the region. On the one hand, the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain must open up channels of negotiation with Qatar and go back

to the negotiating table to avoid any dissolution within the GCC. On the other hand, Qatar might need to take a lesson from de Gaulle and open up channels of negotiation with GCC countries. De Gaulle believed that Moscow had no evil intentions toward its neighbors, and it might after all be a security partner. His calculations proved to be wrong. The Soviet Union continued its aggressive behavior towards Europe. Even after the fall of the Union, Moscow continued to seek influence in Europe for geopolitical reasons. The crisis of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion south of Ukraine in 2014 are seen as examples. So, Qatar may need to reconsider its strategy to meet the demands of GCC members. Specifically, it needs to stop intervening in domestic affairs of the states. Moreover, Qatar may take advantage of these rapprochements to mediate between both banks of the Gulf.

Considerably, the state of Qatar made a great effort in the field of international mediation. Gärtner argued that small states are willing to play a peace role in the international arena to gain a unique position, these efforts being based on the principle of “the ‘we-too’ phenomenon” (2001, 6). He mentioned that, "Being smaller, they tend to be more flexible" (Ibid). However, Qatar has more than the small-size feature, such as the kind of mineral revenues and the widespread media platform *Aljazeera*. For instance, it succeeded in mediating between the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan. This issue remained long until Qatar made the initiative to cease war and instability in Afghanistan. This positive role has increased the reputation of Qatar as an international mediator due to the strong efforts and huge payments to bring both conflicting factions to the negotiating table. Gärtner assumes that small states, “On certain occasions and under the right circumstances, they might actually exercise a certain degree of influence, whether acting through international organizations or on a bilateral basis” (2011, 85). Furthermore, Qatar can achieve sovereignty and stronger alliance. Also, it can achieve its regional ambitions but not at the expense of other GCC states. The KSA must also compromise with the rest of the GCC countries and create a balance between its interests and other GCC interests.

Qatar may have to use its soft power in the field of mediation in the conflicts in the MENA area. For example, the civil war in Libya. Instead of

standing with one side opposite another, Qatar and the UAE may need to lead both parties into resolutions. Such efforts will enrich the GCC's reputation and may end the civil war in Libya.

That being said, soft power could be used negatively. Brannigan and Giulianotti's study (2018) focused on the correlation between soft power and soft disempowerment, and the misuse of soft power may prove to be negative to the states. Both scholars examine Qatar's strategies to employ soft power to create a bright global image and ensure its security (2018). Brannigan and Giulianotti add that Qatar's disputes with its neighbors, the accusation of corruption in the issue of hosting the World Cup in 2022, and human rights violation issues had impacted the state's reputation and delayed its future vision (2018).

The regional practitioners were divided regarding the continuity of Qatar in the GCC. From the positive point of view, the Emir of Kuwait's mediating efforts cannot be ignored, because he is respected by both blocs. Interestingly, in the Arab world in general and in the Gulf states especially, there is a unique type of dispute resolution. Zafer Alajmi calls it the diplomacy of the oldest leader which usually works to contain crises and alleviate the tensions (2020). During the crisis in 2014 inside the GCC the diplomacy of the oldest leader succeeded in reducing the tension and later solved the problem. Moreover, in the early days of the 2017 disputes, the Emir of Kuwait made vital efforts to avoid any direct clash or withdraw from the GCC. Almiqbaly states that the neutral position adopted by Oman and Kuwait maintains a balance that safeguards the GCC from dissolution (2020).

From another point of view, the behavior of Qatar toward the KSA, the UAE and Bahrain will remain long due to the deep rift. Moreover, the continuing airing of critical reporting against those three countries' regimes makes the resolution quite impossible. Ba Abood mentions that both blocs launched a media war against each other, hence, the crack is widening (2020). Furthermore, the officials of both blocs have been exchanging accusations since the breakout of disputes, not only by officials' platforms, but rather by social networking. The use of social network platforms such as Twitter increases the dispute.

However, Shea argues that when de Gaulle withdrew from NATO, France's military expenditure increased massively more than its contribution to NATO. He explains the change because of the NATO members being dependent upon the US, but when France withdrew it was required to meet the needs of defense as one state alone to deter threats (2009). Similarly, Qatar, since 2014, started negotiations regarding a defense agreement with Turkey. While public opinion in Qatar was against this agreement because of the enormous cost, Qatar, however had no choice but to sign the agreement during the early days of the 2017 crisis.

To sum up, the GCC states have many social factors strengthening the various community and government relations. The six Gulf states are sharing the same beliefs, speaking the same language, and sharing the same land. They are taking the expansion of Iranian into consideration, even though there are recent differences of perception. Nevertheless, the history of the GCC confirms that the birth of the organization was an Omani idea, and that all states have a robust contribution to the establishment of the PSF. Moreover, the leaders kept their speeches respectful and optimistic when they approached the 2017 crisis. Additionally, the older man diplomacy, which can be seen in the efforts of Shaikh Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, is taking its principles from society. Hence it succeeded in 2014 and is moving forward in the current crisis. All of these factors are signs of the continuation and development of the GCC.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the main reasons for establishing alliances. States make great efforts to ensure their sovereignty and internal security to exercise their role in the international sphere. So, when states have limited material power and weak military forces, they often become subordinate to large states. In a self-help system, and because of anarchy, the risk of aggression remains unless the states achieve their own security. The sense of threat encourages states that share the same security perceptions to establish the alliances. For instance, NATO vis-à-vis the USSR threat and the GCC vis-à-vis the Iranian threat. Some of the practitioners assumed that an alliance would not survive without threat. However, the small states have a significant advantage to enter into security organizations with larger countries, because they ensure security with less military expenditure. Alternatively, when a small state takes the responsibility of defence, the military expenditure will increase — such as the case of France when it withdrew from NATO.

The central theme of this research was to investigate intra-alliance disputes. In particular, the case of GCC. However, Large states practice their dominance over the organization, small or weak states have either to accept subordination or challenge the large states. Interestingly, the case of France in NATO may be similar to the case of Qatar in the GCC. Both France and Qatar witnessed an essential change in future policies once the leader had changed. The primary goal for both France and Qatar was to achieve autonomy and end subordination to the USA and the KSA respectively. These changes caused a fragmentation in the organizations they belonged to, NATO and GCC. Also, this research adduced the relevant similarity regarding policy instruments that France and Qatar used. Both states used the same paths, economy, and media in their foreign policy to achieve greater independence within their organization. Moreover, de Gaulle's doctrine led him to establish close ties with the historical enemy of NATO, the USSR; and it was the same with Qatar, the dispute within the GCC led Qatar to establish close ties with Iran, the traditional foe of the GCC.

However, the tangible evidence which can be taken from the case of France is that historical enemies do not change their aggressive behaviour. More specifically, de Gaulle had a wrong assumption when he believed that he could change the Russian behaviour towards Europe through developing economic relations. Moreover, he thought that the Russians might share the same concerns about regional security. Nevertheless, the Russian behaviour did not change, neither before nor after the collapse of the USSR. Similarly, the current Iranian behaviour and rhetoric in the Middle East is tangible evidence of the continuation of its expanding doctrine. The Assistant Professor at Islamic Azad University, Kayhan Barzegar argues that King Abdullah of Jordan warned the Middle East regimes of what he called “Shia crescent” (2008). He adds that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 eased the way for Iran to complete the crescent, which included Iraq, Syria, Lebanon (Ibid). So, ever since the invasion of Iraq, Iran has been backing Shia militia in Iraq, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Syrian ruler Basher Al-Assad. This research, hence, makes the claim that the Qatari rapprochement towards Iran will not help to encourage the latter to cut the support to these militias.

Since the 1980s, the geopolitics in the Middle East has pushed the Gulf states to establish their political and economic organizations. Motivations of establishing such regional organizations were linked to security measures in the region, specifically the Iranian revolution and the ongoing Iran-Iraq war. The early years of the GCC witnessed only cooperation in economic and political affairs, ensuring the security of all members. GCC members may have delayed the declaration of the organization’s armed forces to avoid any adverse reaction from Iraq or Iran. However, the changing course of the Iraq-Iran war encouraged the GCC members to form closer military ties. Hence, the GCC established the Peninsula Shield Forces (PSF). These collective forces succeeded in maintaining the security in some critical situation areas among GCC states, such as 2011 in Bahrain.

However, the Gulf states share many factors on three levels; political, economic, and social. Regarding the political level, all the six states have the same type of regime (monarchy), which makes them different than their direct neighbouring republics such as Yemen and Iraq. Furthermore, the social

connections between families and tribes has played a vital role in creating the environment of mutual trust that binds those states. For instance, the secure link between the Royal Family in the KSA with the Royal Family in Kuwait endures as an instrument to solve any disputes between these two states. Also, the oil production revenue ensures these states share the same future economic ambitions.

The GCC, like any other organization, links a number of states, but each state has its strategy and ambitions. So, the interactions between these states can produce disputes which might profoundly impact the organization. This research has discussed the disputes between the GCC states over the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar takes advantage of the Muslim Brotherhood and its presence inside its territory. Qatar offered the organization complete access to Aljazeera platforms to achieve two crucial goals; first, to mitigate the hegemony exercised by the KSA, and second, to gain more influence over the region.

This research has made a distinction between Islam and Islamism with a clarification that Islam is the way of people to practice their religion, whilst Islamism is the ideology that is used by some groups to achieve political goals. The concept of Islamism has been widely argued by practitioners, this research focuses on the case of the Muslim Brotherhood and their influences over the region, and more specifically, causing fragmentation between GCC states. The literature review showed that foreign powers and group ideology changed the line of the Muslim Brotherhood. In consequence, they turned from a religious group to a political rival. The Muslim Brotherhood had many direct clashes with the Egyptian regime. For example, the Brotherhood was accused of the assassination attempt against President Nasser in 1954, which concluded with dramatic action against the group. Zollner described the result of the action on the group saying that, “thousands were sent to prison with or without trial, and a number of leading figures were sentenced to death by military tribunals while others managed to flee the country” (2007, 431). Because of that, most of the group members remained in exile in the GCC states for a long period of time.

However, the Arab uprisings witnessed the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially when the group won the elections in 2011. From the perception of some

of the GCC members, the relations between Iran and Egypt will put the Gulf states in a critical situation. The Iran-Egypt relations were not active for long, but when the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, they revived these relations. Why so? The similarity in doctrine between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian revolution could be the answer. For instance, Samuel Helfont (2009), the Assistant Professor and affiliate scholar in the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University confirmed the coincidence between the two groups. He confirmed that, “Large and influential Sunni organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood are more closely aligned with Iran and Hezbollah than they are to the Sunni Arab regimes” (Ibid, 298). Consequently, the rapprochement between Iran and Egypt when the Muslim Brotherhood won the presidential chair in Egypt had warned most of the GCC states about the surrounding threat.

Qatar has a vital role in supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in many countries in the Middle East. On the contrary, the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain rejected the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and considered the group a threat not only to their internal security but for the entire region. This enmity has a long history that began in 1990 when the Muslim Brotherhood showed solidarity with Saddam following the invasion of Kuwait. Moreover, the Arab uprisings fueled the tension between the Gulf states and the Muslim Brotherhood even further, except for Qatar.

Robustly, the Turkey-Egypt-Iran triangle was threatening the Gulf states’ security. The Qataris were blamed by the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, and rapprochement with Iran. Moreover, the mutual defense agreement that Qatar signed with Turkey was considered as confirmation of Turkey's ambitions in the region, from the perception of the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain. However, the consequences of the coup against the Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013, resulted in a drastic change in Egypt’s foreign policy. The country decreases the cooperation with Qatar, Turkey, and Iran, and worked to gain the trust of the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain

This research has clarified the profound impact of the Aljazeera channel on the relations between Qatar and other GCC states. Aljazeera has a long history of intervening in the internal affairs of the Arab states. This has influenced Qatar's relations with Arab states negatively. Specifically, this research shows some

tangible evidence that Aljazeera serves Qatar's regional ambitions, and that it is not a promotion of free press, as claimed by Qatar.

Most of the disputes between Gulf states have been solved by mediation. This research has called it *old man diplomacy*. This unique type of diplomacy has been practiced many times, for example, the tension in 2014 between the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain vs. Qatar, when the Emir of Kuwait, Shaikh Sabah Al-Sabah succeeded in containing the crisis and alleviating the tension. Meanwhile, the 2017 crisis inside the GCC has caused fragmentation in the societies, which has made each bloc move far from logical thinking. This research includes some opinions from the aligned countries Kuwait and Oman.

In conclusion, this research is not meant to apportion blame for any part of the disputes inside GCC. Instead, it has argued that Qatar has a vital soft power instrument that can assist it to achieve autonomy and play a significant role in the international political sphere. At the same time, it can strengthen its relationship with GCC members to ensure their security. From investigation of the behavior of Iran since the revolution in 1979, and specifically, in recent years, it can safely be said that the country continues its policy of expansion in the region. Its aggressive behavior and support of different militia in the Middle East will shut any doors for mutual trust with GCC states. So, the Qatari decision-makers may have to rethink about their rapprochement with Iran, taking into consideration what happened to de Gaulle with Russia.

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Secondary data:

ALHAJRI, RASHID, Ambassador of Kuwait to Czech Republic, phone interview, 11 March 2020.

ABDULLAH BAABOOD, Visiting Research Professor at Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore, email interview, 21 March 2020.

Dr ALMIQBALY, MAZEN, research fellow, Peoples Friendship University of Russia, email interview, 21 March 2020.

Dr ALSHAMMARI, ABDULMOHSEN, director of the *Alnferaad* Research Centre in Kuwait, phone call, 27 April 2020.

Dr ALAJMI, ZAFER, Executive Manager of Gulf Monitoring Group in Kuwait, phone interview, 5 April 2020.