

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of Political Studies
Department of Security Studies

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Mgr. Matěj Denk

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
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Institute of Political Studies
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**Breaking Free from the Dominance and
Establishing Independent Policy: The Analysis of Saudi-
Qatari Relations and its Implications on the Region of
the Persian Gulf**

Master's thesis

Author: Mgr. Matěj Denk

Study programme: Security Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. Jan Daniel, Ph.D.

Year of the defence: 2021

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 26 July 2021

Matěj Denk

References

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Abstract

The main topic of the thesis *Breaking Free from the Dominance and Establishing Independent Policy: The Analysis of Saudi-Qatari Relations and its Implications on the Region of the Persian Gulf* is a thorough analysis of the historical developments of bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar. This hierarchical relationship between the two states is analysed according to the theories of alliance formation, MENA foreign policy analyses and international hierarchy. The aim of the thesis is to ascertain how Qatar was able to break free from the subordinate position within the hierarchical relationship with Saudi Arabia. Contrary to other existing research within the field which explains the end of subordination mostly with the crisis in the dominant state, the present thesis addresses other possible factors in the subordinate state that ultimately cause the evasion of the subordination with particular emphasis on the case study in question. The thesis proposes a classification of several distinct eras in Saudi – Qatari relations and verifies them against the theories described above. The thesis' findings support the hypothesis that subordinate states can evade the subordination without a crisis in the dominant, but only in a very specific set of circumstances, which include favourable regional and international environment, vast resources, apt and determined political leadership and proactive foreign policy which is working incessantly on establishing strong relations with as many partners as possible.

Abstrakt

Ústředním tématem diplomové práce *Vymanění se z nadvlády a ustanovení nezávislé politiky: Analýza saúdsko-katarských vztahů a jejich dopad na oblast Perského zálivu* je popis historického vývoje bilaterálních vztahů mezi Královstvím Saúdské Arábie a Státem Katar. Tyto vztahy jsou následně analyzovány na základě teorií formování aliancí, zkoumání zahraniční politiky států Blízkého východu a severní Afriky a mezinárodních hierarchií. Cílem práce je objasnit, jak byl Katar schopen vymanit se z podřízené pozice v rámci hierarchického vztahu se Saúdskou Arábií. Oproti předchozímu výzkumu, který dává konec hierarchie do souvislosti s krizí v dominantním státě, se tato práce zabývá možností vymanění se z podřízeného postavení na základě posílení vlastní pozice, k čemuž využívá danou případovou studii. Práce rozlišuje a přichází s návrhem klasifikace několika etap saúdsko – katarských vztahů, a každou z nich analyzuje na základě výše uvedených teorií. Nález studie podporuje prvotní hypotézu, že podřízený stát je schopen vymanit se ze své podřízenosti bez nutnosti krize v dominantním státě, ale pouze při splnění několika specifických předpokladů, zejména příznivé situace v regionu i ve světě, možnosti využít rozsáhlé zdroje, odhodlání a schopnosti politického vedení země a proaktivní zahraniční politiky, která neúnavně pracuje na ustanovení silných vztahů s co největším počtem mezinárodních partnerů.

Keywords

Hierarchy, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, alliances, dominance, subordination

Klíčová slova

Hierarchie, Saúdská Arábie, Katar, aliance, dominance, subordinace

Title

Breaking Free from the Dominance and Establishing Independent Policy: The Analysis of Saudi-Qatari Relations and its Implications on the Region of the Persian Gulf

Název práce

Vymanění se z nadvlády a ustanovení nezávislé politiky: Analýza saúdsko-katarských vztahů a jejich dopad na oblast Perského zálivu

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Note to transliteration

To ensure the utmost precision in transliteration of Arabic this work uses the English edition of the Hans Wehr transliteration of Arabic, with following exceptions:

- For letter Ghayn (غ) it uses the standard Hans Wehr symbol **ġ** instead of **g̃** present in the English edition.
- The letter Hamza (ء), or the so-called glottal stop, is not represented at the beginning of the word as it is pronounced automatically.
- The letter °Ajn (ع), is represented as an index ° to distinguish it more clearly from the letter Hamza.
- The tā' marbūṭa (ة) is represented as **t** only in the first noun of the construct state (status constructus), otherwise only the preceding vowel **a** is represented.
- To clearly distinguish proper names, the capitalization in this transliteration occurs according to the grammatical rules of the English language.
- The definite article “**al-**“ is assimilated according to the grammatical rules of the so-called sun and moon consonants in Arabic.

This transliteration applies to all nouns and names of Arabic origin with following exceptions:

- Names of states, which follow standardized English transliteration, e.g. **Iraq** and not **al-°Irāq**
- The names of capitals, which the author feels are too enrooted in English language and their strict transliterations would seem unnatural, e.g. **Baghdad** and not **Baġdād**
- For overall lucidity, this text sticks to the versions **Shi'i** and **Shi'a** / **Sunni** and **Sunna** for describing the two main branches of Islam and their adherents, instead of applying strict rules of transliteration
- Names of dynasties, e.g. **Umayyads** and not **al-Umawīyūn**

Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) was always turbulent. That sentence might sound as a cliché but it is hard to deny the scope of political and social events which unroll in this region and the perpetual state of political crisis. As the current CIA Director William J. Burns remembers his old colleague at the United States' Department of State put it: “three simultaneous wars are considered average.”¹ Any analyst of Middle Eastern politics, who has been fortunate enough to study the region, certainly knows the historical changes of seats of power, ever changing alliances and rivalries. But historically, one part of the region remained until recently relatively omitted – the southern shore of the Gulf.²

The main topic of the present study is the changing paradigm and powerplay in the bilateral relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and their qualitative analysis. The thesis describes the historical events that shaped the relations, classifies the relationship into several historical eras based on the changing dynamics within the relationship and analyses each of the eras based on the theory of alliance formation, MENA foreign policy analysis and theories of hierarchy.

The objective is to understand the dynamics of the relationship and the broader implications this case study has for the theories of hierarchy, especially the question how hierarchies could end. Previously, the end of hierarchy was connected to the crisis within the dominant state. This thesis aims to propose a different approach to the end of hierarchy and fill in the identified research gap.

This work is based and derived from existing research in the field and takes into the consideration the whole gamut of dynamism of Saudi-Qatar relationship, which has seen many phases of interaction, from subordination, through negligence, rivalry and open conflict to (at least proclaimed) partnership.

¹ William J. Burns, *The Back Channel: A Memoir of American Diplomacy and the Case for its Renewal* (New York: Random House, 2020), 29.

² In this work we refer to the gulf which is separated from the Indian Ocean by the straits of Hormuz simply as the Gulf, as is the current trend, given the existence of two competing names – the Arabian Gulf and the Persian Gulf; a rivalry, which is nowadays not only a matter of prestige and history, but of politics and ideology.

The main question this work aims to answer based on the case study is: “What was the nature of the hierarchical relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and what factors allowed or enabled Qatar break free from the dominance and establish an independent policy?” In order to address the main research question, the author will rely on additional research sub-questions such as “What regional and international circumstances allowed or enabled evading the dominance?” or “Is the change in the policy driven by any particular policy-maker or is it a spontaneous development?”.

The thesis works with several guiding hypotheses. The first supposes that the rise of Qatar, regardless of its cause, would be impossible without extraordinary economic power which Qatar possesses. Given the autocratic nature of Qatar, another hypothesis presumes a strong link between the person of the emir and the chosen policies of the state. Finally, the thesis works also with the hypothesis that the change of the Qatari position towards Saudi Arabia was possible because Qatar was able to establish strong partnerships with other states, which helped ensure its security and thus break free from the dominance.

The geographical scope of the work is straightforward. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are at the centre of the present analysis. Other states are mentioned only if omitting them would distort the analysis. This is especially true about Iran and the United States of America (USA), which both play significant roles in the Gulf. Although The United Arab Emirates (UAE) are on their own a rivalry of Qatar, this bilateral relation is out of scope of the present analysis.

The historical scope of the work is quite extensive and the historical dimension of the present work is important in order to understand the development of the bilateral relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the work focused on the relationship from the nascent years of both states in the 19th century up to 2021. Necessarily, the emphasis is put on eras, which are most important for answering the research question, that is since 1971, when Qatar appeared on the world stage as an independent state, to 2017, when the blockade of Qatar, orchestrated by Saudi Arabia and known as the Gulf crisis began.

To this day no academic book has been written specifically about the Saudi Arabia – Qatar relationship. Saudi Arabia was always in the centre of academic attention partly due to its hydrocarbon wealth and importance for global economy and partly due to the persisting religious character of the state, which provides many interesting topics for those studying Islam and Islamic conservatism.

Qatar was for decades totally omitted from serious academic interest. Only in recent years works of K. C. Ulrichsen, but also Roberts, Fromherz, Kamrava and others broke the silence, filling the gap of works describing the historical development, internal political structure and society of Qatar. The growing interest of Qatar, which is a reflection of its growing power and importance led the first books to focus solely on Qatar's foreign policy and posture within the region and in the international community. *Constructivist Niche Diplomacy*³ is the prime example of this new trend. Recently, there appeared works analyzing the so-called Gulf crisis⁴, which put Saudi Arabia and Qatar one against the other.

To achieve the goal of this work three main theoretical pillars are used. First is the theory of alliance formation according to Stephen Walt, the second is the foreign policy analysis according to Gerd Nonneman and the third are the theoretical findings on hierarchical relationships by David Lake and Daniel McCormack. Nevertheless, none of these theoretical approaches describes the hierarchy as a process, from its establishment to its demise. The aim of this thesis is to fill this gap.

The first chapter will set the theoretical framework by explaining the existing theories and their contribution to the case study in question. The second chapter will offer a historical analysis of Saudi – Qatari relationship, which is a fundamental prerequisite for the analytical part and to which has been paid only little attention so far in the academic writings. The third and most substantive chapter will analyse the historical periods identified in the second chapter through the lenses of the theories explained in the first chapter and assess their contribution to understanding the case study.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the key findings answering the main research question of how a subordinated state can escape its subordination and establish independent foreign policy. The conclusion will also elaborate on the contribution of this work to the existing academic scholarship and literature.

Lastly, the author of this analysis would like to eschew the random nature in which names whose origins lie in Arabic are transliterated to English. For this purpose, a strict

³ Fromm, Nicolas. *Constructivist Niche Diplomacy: Qatar's Middle East Diplomacy as an Illustration of Small State Norm Crafting*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019.

⁴ Most notably Krieg, Andreas, ed. *Divided Gulf: The Anatomy of a Crisis*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019 and Zweiri, Mahjoob, Md Mizanur Rahman and Arwa Kamal, ed. *The 2017 Gulf Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Singapore: Springer, 2021.

transliteration method, described closely in the appropriate section is used throughout the work, with the exemption of topographical names of states and cities, whose usage in English is established only too well.

1 Theory

1.1 Chapter Introduction

The Gulf is, especially since the discovery of oil, an extremely volatile region of the world. It has experienced three major wars since 1980. Not one year passes without any act of violence and not even one month passes without the Gulf being at the headlines of the world's most renowned newspapers for some crisis or another. This eventful geographical area seemed for many decades to largely overlook the tiny and seemingly uneventful emirate of Qatar, although the inner Qatari history can hardly be described as such. But for the better part of the 20th century, the inner power struggles of the Qatari royal family were of concern to only a few British experts and political agents.

The year of 1971, which brought formal independence to Qatar, seemed to bring very little change and Qatar was still considered to be the backwaters of world's politics.⁵ Nevertheless, since the early 1990s Qatar started to progressively rise in both importance and influence and its presence on the world stage began to be noticed. Nowadays, Qatar is one of the major powerhouses not only in the Gulf, but also in the whole MENA.⁶

This change of power status was very closely watched by the biggest Arab country of the Gulf and aspiring regional hegemon – Saudi Arabia. The rise of Qatar⁷ provided Saudi Arabia with yet another contender for power and influence in the region, only more frustrating given Qatar's comparative smallness in both area and population. What bittered the Kingdom even more, was the fact that Qatar was once the most loyal of allies, closely copying Saudi Arabian political orientation and steps, and now it opposed its neighbour in almost every regional theatre.⁸

This change in political orientation has been profound. To understand it, one must first and foremost consider the relation between the two countries. The relation was for many

⁵ Allen J. Fromherz, *Qatar: Rise to Power and Influence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 1.

⁶ Adham Saouli, "Introduction: Middle Powers in the Middle East," in *Unfulfilled Aspirations: Middle Power Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Adham Saouli (London: Hurst & Company, 2020), 2.

⁷ But other smaller Arab states are rich in oil also, notably the United Arab Emirates.

⁸ Neil Partrick, "Saudi Arabia and the GCC States," in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 80.

decades hierarchical. Saudi Arabia, as a regional dominant power, had an indisputable influence on Qatar's policy making. Qatar followed closely Saudi Arabian foreign policy orientation, without establishing independent diplomatic relations, and it acknowledged the Saudi regional leadership. But this hierarchical relationship ended, even though Saudi Arabia did not fall from its power. On the opposite, the relative power projection capabilities of the Kingdom are greater than ever, embodied especially by the massive arms procurement initiative in recent years,⁹ ambitious plans for economic and social reforms and its clear regional ambition to lead as visibly proven by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen and foremost by the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar, which took place in 2017 – 2021.

So, while growing in power, how could the Saudi leadership simultaneously lose the control over the most miniscule of Gulf countries? Three sets of theories should be of use while explaining this fascinating case – the alliance formation, MENA foreign policy analysis and the theories of hierarchical relations. Before considering these three approaches, one important remark on the application of the International Relations (IR) theory on the MENA is necessary.

1.2 General Remarks on MENA's Position within the Field of IR

The task of analysing the IR in the MENA and the foreign policies of the respective states within an existing theoretical framework proves uneasy in several ways. The field of IR was born in the West, the Anglosphere to be more precise, and its theories were historically drawn up from mostly Western data. That led to separate evolutions of the field of IR and the field of Middle Eastern Studies, which “for the most part ... remain strictly segregated from each other.”¹⁰

Too often one may encounter claims of MENA exceptionalism in this or that aspect.¹¹ But aren't these inconsistencies with the theory truly demonstrations of exceptionalism or rather

⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *International arms transfers level off after years of sharp growth; Middle Eastern arms imports grow most, says SIPRI*, March 15, 2021, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/international-arms-transfers-level-after-years-sharp-growth-middle-eastern-arms-imports-grow-most>.

¹⁰ Fred H. Lawson, “International Relations Theory and the Middle East,” in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 23.

¹¹ Fred Lawson, *Constructing International Relations in the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), ix. OR Pietro Marzo and Francesco Cavatorta, “An exceptional context for a debate on international relations?: Toward a synthetic approach to the study of the MENA's international politics,” in *The Routledge*

imperfections of the theories? This claim of limited utility of IR theories in the MENA region is held by many, for the sub-region of the Gulf it is present for example in Matthew Gray's writings.¹² Fortunately, the change in the approach towards MENA can be seen among several scholars, who aim to describe the region more conceptually and their work can provide us with some necessary theoretical background for exploring the nature of Saudi – Qatar relations.

1.3 Alliance Formation

The basis of alliance formation theories can be found in Stephen Walt's classical treatise. *The Origins of Alliances* elaborates on the concepts of *balancing* a *bandwagoning*. According to Walt this behaviour is not caused by the wish to *balance the power*, but to *balance the threat*. Walt proves his theories on cases drawn from MENA, especially the aligning and re-aligning of MENA powers from 1955 to 1979.

In contrast to previous belief that the balancing of states against other states is measured by the relative accumulated strength of one or the other (factors such as economy, military might, manpower...), Walt argues that states do balance against the threat they perceive and the power of others is merely one element in their calculations.¹³ As sources of threat Walt lists aggregated power of one state, the geographic proximity, the offensive power and the aggressive intentions. Walt assesses that balancing is more common, but the weaker the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon¹⁴, e.g. to ally itself with the stronger state with the aim to appease it. He sees shared ideology and the amount of foreign aid as incentives in allying with a particular state, but they are not enough for creating a viable alliance on their own.

The problem in Walt theories is the fact that we can with some probability see the argument why Qatar should either balance against or bandwagon with Saudi Arabia but it does

Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (New York: Routledge, 2020), 312. OR Morten Valbjørn, "International Relations Theory and the New Middle East: Three Levels of a Debate," in *POMEPS Studies 16: International Relations Theory and a Changing Middle East*, ed. The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) (Washington, DC: The George Washington University, 2015), 74-79.

¹² Matthew Gray, "Qatar: An ambitious small state," in *Routledge Handbook of International Relations in the Middle East*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh (New York: Routledge, 2019), 196.

¹³ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), x

¹⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 29.

not provide us with the tool to understand why the behaviour should change. Walt states that the reasons to balance are that either the very survival of the state is at risk or that joining weaker state increases relative influence of the joining state,¹⁵ Nonetheless, in the deciding moment of the start of the transition, Qatar was at no bigger risk from Saudi Arabia than it was for several decades before and it did not join any opposing alliances and not for the shortage of possibilities, for in that time it had even two possible states to ally with – Iraq and Iran.

Also, to stop bandwagoning and start balancing, Qatar should have seen Saudi Arabia as a growing threat, but actually, none of the Walt's sources of threat did change more advantageously for Saudi Arabia. The geographic proximity between the states was a constant and none of the aggregate power, offensive power or aggressive intention was higher than before, in fact, considering the Kuwait crisis and the possible military danger to the Kingdom itself it could be argued that the perceived threat was even lessened, for Saudi Arabia had to prioritize its forces elsewhere.

There are also several other inconsistencies of Walt's theory of alliances with the case study in question, which shall be discussed in the analytical part.

Steven David followed upon Walt with his concept of *omnibalancing*. In omnibalancing, which was designed to explain the behaviour of the third world leader, the leader must constantly balance against both international and domestic threats.¹⁶ Although this theory brings into the discussion the so-called domestic dimension, its utility for the presented case study is nevertheless limited. Qatari domestic politics played an important role in the relation towards Saudi Arabia, but given the autocratic nature of Qatari society, no substantial pressure to disentangle with Saudi Arabia from either public or other political players was in place, so there was nothing to balance against domestically. Nevertheless, one possible feature of omnibalancing is exceptionally notable given our case study - the practice of allying with a global power that would help a local regime counter its own home-grown or internal threats.¹⁷ As we shall see in the description of the historical context in the next chapter, the alignment of

¹⁵ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 18.

¹⁶ Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 233-256.

¹⁷ Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991).

several individuals within the Qatari royal family with the Saudi leadership, albeit a regional and not global power, provided necessary leverage in the domestic political struggle.

1.4 Theoretical Pluralism

Gerd Nonneman is certainly one of the scholars who try to conceptualise MENA aptly and thoroughly. His “Analysing Middle East Foreign Policies” calls upon the researcher to provide explanations that are multi-level, multi-casual as well as contextual.¹⁸ This approach of *theoretical pluralism* has been taken up by many specialists, as witnessed by Ryan.¹⁹ The need for conceptuality in Nonneman's view proves the importance of area specialists. He further stresses that “the enquiry should be open to the range of possible determinants that different schools in IR theory and Foreign Policy Analysis have drawn attention to.”²⁰ This amalgam of mainly realist and constructivist approaches is the best possibility to grasp the MENA region in its complexity.

Nonneman partially incorporates Steven David's theory of omnibalancing by saying that “the room for maneuver ... emerges from the combination of two sets of circumstances, domestic and external.”²¹ He further proposes four steps of analysis: (1) domestic environment and the survival imperative of regime and state, (2) regional environment and transnational ideological factors, (3) limits and enabling effects of the international environment and finally (4) decision-making structures and decision makers' perceptions. This comprehensive approach to understanding MENA states foreign policy orientation and practice provides a useful tool for the case study in question and we shall incorporate the suggested steps into our analysis in chapter three.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell also warn against downplaying either domestic or international influences on foreign policy decisions and define their approach as neoclassical

¹⁸ Gerd Nonneman, “Analyzing the Foreign Policies of the Middle East and North Africa: A Conceptual Framework,” in *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe*, ed. Gerd Nonneman (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7.

¹⁹ Curtis R. Ryan, “Alliances and the balance of power in the Middle East,” in *The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Jasmine Gani (New York: Routledge, 2020), 340.

²⁰ Nonneman, “Analyzing the Foreign Policies,” 11.

²¹ Nonneman, “Analyzing the Foreign Policies,” 15.

realism, whose basic assumption is that the external environment provides a room of constraints and opportunities which are filtered through the intervening domestic-level process of perception, decision-making, and policy implementation, which is in turn affected by a range of state and sub-state variables, including leader images, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions.²² In the case of the MENA it seems thus that “whether there will be a trend toward regional conflict or peace will depend not only on the regional distribution of power and the role of extra-regional states, but also on the strategic choices that local and regional states pursue, which in turn is affected by their domestic makeup.”²³

This last remark is of particular interest to us, for it provides a potential explanation to the change of Qatari politics toward Saudi Arabia in spite of constancy in the relative distribution of power. While Nonneman is oriented more on the domestic level policy making and how it enables foreign policy decisions, Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell are more concerned with the external room of possibilities and domestic politics only enables the level of possibility of how to use them. As the historical overview in the next chapter shows, both approaches should be taken into consideration.

1.5 Theories of Hierarchy

Necessarily, the problem of security among the smaller or less powerful states must arise together with the fear of being subordinated by its more potent peers. Traditionally, this question has been dealt with by creating alliances. Starting once again with Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, we must say that although Walt's theory largely enriches the knowledge on relations between equally strong states, its flaw is that it does not deal with relations of a (relatively) stronger state towards a (relatively) weaker ones for in his theory the superpowers balance superpowers and the regional powers balance regional powers and so on.²⁴ The alliance is thus in his view not built to balance a state which is in a different category, but to counter a state which is in the same category. Walt's theory is built on a bipolar world, in

²² Ripsman, Norrin M., Jeffrey W. Taliaferro and Steven E. Lobell. *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

²³ Thomas Juneau, Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman and Lawrence P. Rubin, “Neoclassical realism: Domestic politics, systemic pressures, and the impact on foreign policy since the Arab Spring,” in *Routledge Handbook of International Relations in the Middle East*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh (New York: Routledge, 2019), 11.

²⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 161-164.

which the superpower is too strong to be bothered to feel threatened by mere regional power, and supposes that regional power can never constitute a threat to a superpower. The possibility that one state changes the category by becoming stronger or weaker is not mentioned at all.

David Lake recognizes the problem of the relations between unevenly powerful states which, according to him, stems from the realist presupposition that for states to be recognized as such, they must have broadly accepted sovereignty over smaller or bigger area and population, and takes the necessary logical step of introducing hierarchy to the realist theory. Lake states that hierarchy is a given fact of international politics – even though they are nominally independent and formally equally sovereign, the Marshall Islands are not as powerful as the United States of America. States do have impact on each other and some have incommensurably more profound and influential effects upon others than the rest.

Lake rightfully criticizes the preceding research for treating the sovereignty as indivisible, which he deems not true.²⁵ In his views, states may submit parts of their sovereignty to others while maintaining it in other areas. To put it differently, sovereignty is not a zero-sum constant. Nor is (some amount of sovereignty) given to the dominant state necessarily forcefully. “States do willingly subordinate themselves to another, but typically only for something in return.”²⁶ Lake describes hierarchical relationships as one from which both sides benefit. The dominant state gets compliance with its wishes and thus has no fear of its own security from the subordinated state, can bias the rulers of the subordinated state for its benefit and can gain legitimacy for actions against third parties.²⁷ On the other hand the dominant state must assure the survival and integrity of its subordinates and it must establish and enforce the rules of conduct and that the promises are kept.²⁸ The subordinate state benefits as well, for its security and territorial integrity is enhanced and the property rights and the standards of conduct in the international arena are more clearly defined and enforced. The subordinate state thus reduces its own defence efforts and participates in the international trade which is increasingly open while benefiting materially.

²⁵ David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 48.

²⁶ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 7.

²⁷ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 96.

²⁸ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 99-100.

Lake describes several indicators of both security and economic hierarchy.²⁹ Stated indicators of economic hierarchy are the monetary policy of the subordinate state – mainly, whether or not its currency is pegged to the dominant's, and the trade dependence of subordinate to the dominant.³⁰ As the historical overview demonstrates, Lake's indicators of economic hierarchy were never at place in the Saudi – Qatari relationship. Qatar pioneered its own independent monetary policy since its independence. As far as the trade dependency is concerned, both states were rather independent of each other given the economic might provided by their hydrocarbon wealth. Moreover, trade dependency is rarely one-way street as Walt notes.³¹ *Because the economic hierarchy was never established between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, these indicators will be omitted in the rest of the analysis.*

The indicators of security hierarchy should be, on the other hand, of greater interest to us. Lake lists two such indicators – (1) presence of military forces from the dominant state on the territory of the subordinate state and (2) the number of independent alliances possessed by the subordinate. As the historical overview shows, only the latter indicator played some role during the developments of Saudi – Qatari relationship, for Saudi army was never stationed in Qatar. Overall, Lake's indicators of hierarchy are useful in characterizing the nature of the relationship between the two observed states in any particular historical period, but they are of very limited help to understand the change in Qatari politics toward Saudi Arabia.

An important update to understanding the hierarchies was made by Daniel McCormack. McCormack goes deeper into the relationship between dominant and subordinate states by focusing on the question how dominant states influence the domestic politics of their subordinates or potential subordinates. McCormack criticizes the concept of anarchy as being the state of nature of world politics. The concept of 'state of anarchy' appeared in the reasoning of the IR theorists because their knowledge about state behavior had been derived from very narrow and specific examples of mostly European states of the last few centuries. McCormack proves that omitting the better part of the world had necessarily distorted the views of politics the leading scholars of that day had.

²⁹ The indicators are drawn from patterns of U. S. hierarchy from 1950 to 2000, another example of the bias for Western-oriented case studies.

³⁰ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 71-76.

³¹ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 238.

The end of colonial empires did not simply give the former colonies the same level of power and sovereignty as their former colonial masters were enjoying. There has only been a shift from formal empires to informal hierarchies and the great powers or superpowers do not fight each other directly but do so within the smaller players.³² “Dominant states came to equate hierarchy with the leaders and coalitions that held power within subordinate states”.³³ McCormack sees hierarchical relations as a product of negotiation between dominant states, governments of subordinate states and opposition groups within subordinate states.³⁴

He further elaborates on the means of the dominant states to maintain or extend their hierarchies. There are two mechanisms to maintain a hierarchy – the dominant state can either provide resources to the subordinate leader to use domestically or it can threaten the unfriendly opposition groups.³⁵ Likewise, there are two mechanisms to extend hierarchy, e. g. to subordinate a state, which has not yet been subordinated. The dominant state can encourage groups within the potential subordinate state to engage in political competition on their behalf.³⁶ McCormack thus claims that dominant states can induce regime change, but only so in states that are relatively autocratic, because the effect of expected resources is conditional on domestic institutions and on the feeling of “missing out” on free resources.³⁷

More importantly, he is also preoccupied with the possibilities of the subordinate states to eclipse hierarchy, a subject of our preeminent interest. McCormack sees the end of a hierarchy or the “decreased ability of dominant state to underwrite political outcomes within subordinate” when no one among the subordinate decisionmakers (or want-to-be decision makers) believe that dominant state has the capacity or will to act either in support of his preferred rulers or against their contenders. The loss of patronage of the dominant state leads to more vigorous internal competitions for power inside the subordinate state. “There is a strong

³² Daniel McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 72.

³³ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 113.

³⁴ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 119.

³⁵ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 120.

³⁶ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 154.

³⁷ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 155.

correlation between economic crises in dominant states and civil conflict in subordinate states.”³⁸

While studying McCormack one inevitably wonders whether his theory permits the subordinate state to end subordination on its own. His theory links the end of hierarchy and subordination with the decline of the might of the dominant state, not seeing the possibility of growing might of the subordinate. Like the subordinate was perpetually deemed to be subordinate to one or other great power / superpower, each change of the leadership linked to one dominant patron or another. This work does not dare to claim that this very well cannot be the case of many but it insists that there are more paths to the end of the hierarchy than just the deterioration of the dominant state.

What feels like a shame is that although McCormack acknowledges the preponderance of Europe-oriented (or Western-oriented) cases as a basis for research of the IR and the contortion of description which goes necessarily with it, he does not go far enough as to substantively change this attitude and his cases are of a rather frequent nature.

Although McCormack acknowledges the possibility of hierarchies within hierarchies,³⁹ both him and Lake deal only with the hierarchy of great powers or superpowers. As if they cannot imagine that the ladder has not only two steps but possibly three or more. A regional power may construct a hierarchy of its own while being in some sort of subordination to the superpower. Such a relationship would be even more complicated (and thus more interesting to analyze) if the regional subordinate would have (and there is every reason to suppose it would) some kind of hierarchical relationship directly with the superpower. Which part of its sovereignty would thus go to the regional power and which to the superpower?

It's puzzling that such ultra-level hierarchical relations have not been examined so far despite their evident existence. For example, after the end of a much protracted fifteen years-long civil war in Lebanon, Syria was playing an unprecedented role in its domestic politics. But Syria was not, and so far has never been neither a superpower, nor a great power⁴⁰, thus falling

³⁸ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 207.

³⁹ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 54.

⁴⁰ There could be a discussion about that utterance given the fact that the Umayyad caliphate which ruled the better part of North Africa and Middle East from 661 to 750 had Damascus as its capital, but the concept of Syria as a national state is of far more recent origin.

under the influence of a superpower. Similarly, the Kingdom of Bahrain is, especially after what comes to be known as the Arab Spring, extremely servile towards its neighbouring Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, exactly copying every foreign policy decision of Riyadh, but Saudi kings are dependent on the USA at least in the area of their security, thus Saudi Arabia is on both the subordinate and the dominant positions within the international hierarchy.

1.6 Chapter Conclusion

Our main interest is nevertheless Saudi – Qatari relations, their qualitative change over time and especially how Qatar was able to loosen the grip of Saudi dominance and establish itself as independent political actor, even though Saudi Arabia did not experience any dramatic decline in its powers, on the contrary, its importance, and that of the whole Gulf, has only risen recently. The main assumption of the thesis is that Qatar was able to do so by strengthening its relative position towards Saudi Arabia, which was enabled by several factors, among others by the unparalleled financial possibilities, apt leadership, minimal internal political constraints and proactive foreign policy.

Our analysis should follow chronologically the evolution of Saudi – Qatar relations and examine each phase of the relationship while considering the three main theoretical approaches it has outlined in this chapter, namely Walt's alliance formation theory, Nonneman's foreign policy analysis in the MENA and Lake's and McCormack's hierarchy relations theory.

The alliance formation theory will be used to understand the general state of the relationship. In order to determine the nature of the relationship between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, two concepts of the alliance formation theory will be used: balancing and bandwagoning. These concepts will help us assess whether or not Saudi Arabia was seen as a threat, and thus, whether there was an intention, among Qatar's policy-makers, to change the nature of the relationship. None state would be able to break free from dominance if it is actually content with the hierarchy.

Nonneman's foreign policy analysis of the MENA region will be applied to understand and determine the tools and constraints of the practical pursuit of the relationship. Based on the so-called theoretical pluralism, we will follow Nonneman's four steps to determine the tools that the decision-makers could apply to qualitatively change the hierarchical relationship, whether their position within the state allowed pursuit of such a dramatic change in the relationship and whether the regional and international milieu made such a change possible or if it even supported it.

Finally, the theories of hierarchy shall put these findings into the context of hierarchical relations and their rules as observed by Lake and McCormack. Using all three above-mentioned theories, the thesis aims to expand the theories of hierarchy further by considering the hierarchical relationship as a process rather than as a status quo. Considering hierarchy as a process will bring the question of hierarchy's inception and demise into the focus.

The next chapter is dedicated to the history of Saudi – Qatar relations. A thorough historical analysis is an essential prerequisite for a comprehensive analysis of the bilateral relations. The historical overview also aims to come up with a classification of the identified historical periods of the bilateral relations.

2 Historical Overview of Saudi – Qatar Relations

2.1 Chapter Introduction

While considering the history and evolution of Saudi - Qatari relations one must necessarily deal with the creation and internal political developments of both Qatar and Saudi Arabia for they all are deeply intertwined matters. The regional instability, the encroachment of great powers and the aggressive expansionist politics of the third Saudi state, especially under its founder Ibn Su'ūd, all influenced the nature of Saudi - Qatari relations profoundly. Because the history in question is apart from those who specialize in its relatively unknown subject, a rather detailed description is in place.

2.2 History of Qatar up to its Independence

The beginnings of the modern history of Qatar were not connected to Doha, the today's capital, but with the western-coast az-Zubāra which was a haven of splinter groups of Banī al-°Utūb, powerful tribe migrating through the area of the Gulf, which had recently fallen into quarrel with Kuwaiti ruling family aṣ-Ṣabāḥ.⁴¹ The most important of these groups was the Āl Ḳalīfa fraction, which established itself together with another group Āl Jalāhima in the aforementioned az-Zubāra. Neither was the nascent history of Qatar connected with the current ruling aṭ-Ṭānī dynasty which resided at Fuwayraṭ at that time. Āl Ḳalīfa soon conquered Bahrain and moved there, but still considered az-Zubāra as part of their territory, fact which had grave consequences up to the modern era. With Āl Ḳalīfa gone to Bahrain, the power vacuum was filled with the aṭ-Ṭānī dynasty which started to consolidate power among the Eastern coastal towns and villages.

An inevitable conflict over the authority on the peninsula took place between the aṭ-Ṭānīs, now residing in Doha and Āl Ḳalīfas, with their outpost in az-Zubāra between 1867 and 1868.⁴² By that time the Gulf had been penetrated and influenced for centuries by European maritime powers, first the Portuguese than the British. The British who had been more and more present in the region since the 16th century were involved in the security matters of the Gulf at least from 1835 when they enforced maritime truce agreements which, at least theoretically,

⁴¹ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 41.

⁴² Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30.

ended piracy. The at-Ṭānī - Āl Ḳalīfa conflict was blatant violation of this truce and the British had no choice but to get involved. The conflict ended with the British signing the Treaty of 1868 with Muḥammad at-Ṭānī which is the first recognition of at-Ṭānī family as rulers of Qatar,⁴³ albeit still semi-dependant on Bahrain, which was seen by the British as a more powerful and reliable partner.

Shortly after the Ottoman empire started encroaching in the region when it occupied al-Ḥasā` in 1871. So far, at-Ṭānī used Saudis as a counterweight to their Bahraini overlords, but with the rise of Saudi powers, the Ottomans seemed to be the best antidote to being swallowed up by the Wahhabite state.⁴⁴ Thus Muḥammad's son Qāsīm ibn Muḥammad at-Ṭānī accepted the Ottomans as patrons, with their help destroyed az-Zubāra as a bridgehead of Āl Ḳalīfa`s position in Qatar and then cunningly rebelled against them. The deciding battle at al-Wajba took place in 1893 and Qāsīm emerged victorious. This battle is seen as a founding heroic moment of Qatar as an independent state and since then Qāsīm has been honoured as a hero and his descendants are seen as more entitled to rule than those of his brothers.⁴⁵

The economy of the Gulf up to the 1920 was overwhelmingly dependent on pearling.⁴⁶ Qatar was in the vicinity of the best pearling field in all the Gulf, but its riches could not cope with those of Kuwait, which was the best natural seaport in the Gulf. This fact contributed to the relative poverty of Qatar, even for the Gulf context but also in the relative unattractiveness for the vulture-like great power, especially the Ottomans and British Empires, but to certain extent also Saudi Arabia, Iran or Oman.

As the Ottoman were increasingly withdrawing their powers from the Gulf in the first decades of the 20th century, British were filling the power vacuum on the sea and the Saudis on the land. With no clear borders and in the context of highly tribalized and nomadic society, Saudis exercised at least some sovereignty over tribes in Qatari hinterlands. The founder of modern (third) Saudi state °Abd al-Azīz Ibn Su°ūd considered Qatar to be part of his domain.⁴⁷ In 1902 Qāsīm formally accepts Wahhabism as a creed, due to the increasing Saudi pressures,⁴⁸

⁴³ Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 108.

⁴⁴ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 35.

⁴⁵ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 61.

⁴⁶ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 109.

⁴⁷ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 74.

⁴⁸ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 62.

for which reason he sought the patronage of the British empire as a guarantee against both Ottomans and Saudis. During Ibn Su'ūd's visit in 1905 he served as a judge in inter-Qatari conflict, showing clearly his authority over the territory. Moreover in 1913 al-Ḥasā' fell into Saudi hands once more which meant end of Ottoman sovereignty in Eastern Arabia.

In the July of the same year Qāsim ibn Muḥammad at-Ṭānī died and his successor, °Abd Allāh ibn Qāsim at-Ṭānī was contested by his 12 brothers - most of them turned for support to the Saudis.⁴⁹ To ensure prevailing of his rule, °Abd Allāh was forced to turn to the British and in November 1916 a new treaty with Britain was signed similar to those used in the trucial states. Britain offered protection (by sea) and allowed import of some arms in exchange for surrendering of independent foreign policy and extensive economic rights.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, if threatened by land (by Saudis to be specific) °Abd Allāh was told that Britain cannot help him. Given the vast potential contenders which were plotting with Saudis, °Abd Allāh struck a secret deal in which they agreed to pay Saudis 100 thousand riyal yearly.⁵¹

This payment shows a broader and important pattern in Qatar history. The ruler's position towards his family was weak and the malcontents were often plotting with Saudis, which tied the ruler more closely with the British.⁵² Saudi interest in Qatar strengthened with the first oil concessions which were given in 1926, but serious discussion about long term contracts didn't begin as soon as 1933. °Abd Allāh's position was clear – he was willing to concede the drilling rights to British companies in exchange of security guarantees by land, meaning against Saudi meddling or expansive desires.⁵³ In may 1935 such agreement was signed. Drilling was nevertheless soon stopped by the events of the Second World War which brought to Qatar severe economic crisis hands in hands with drastic depopulation. But this was the country's breaking point, because in the same year not only export of oil had begun but also the first offshore concession was given to US companies.

In May 1948 the heir apparent Ḥamad died which meant immediate succession crisis. There were two main contenders to the post – °Alī ibn °Abd Allāh and Ḳalīfa ibn Ḥamad. °Abd Allāh then decided in favour of his son °Alī but declared that his grandson Ḳalīfa will be next

⁴⁹ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 114.

⁵⁰ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 71.

⁵¹ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 115.

⁵² Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 112.

⁵³ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 116.

in line.⁵⁴ This decision shall prove enormously important for the future of Qatar and its relation to Saudi Arabia. The ruling family rioted, mostly because all money from the drilling rights went straight to the ruler's pockets. In spite of these internal pressures, °Abd Allāh resigned on 20th August 1949.

°Alī's position as a ruler was undermined from the start given the fact that his father as a part of the abdicating process took all state finances with him. Ibn Su'ūd tried immediately to exploit the internal political weakness of the state and in October 1949 claimed the Qatari oasis of Līwā and Buraymī.⁵⁵ Thus, °Alī became even more dependent on the British and awarded them further rights.⁵⁶ The British started to be closely involved in Qatar's daily matters such as financial questions or establishing the police force. In March 1950 °Alī separated the state's finances from his own; since now one quarter of the oil revenues belonged to the ruler and the rest to the state. °Alī had two main family pressures to deal with – the dispute about the amount of financial allowances and pro-Nāşirist pan-Arabic opposition. In 1956 grave anti-British sentiments rose as a consequence to the events in Egypt's Suez Canal and were put down only with the combine Qatari-British action. As far as allowances were concerned, °Alī decided that the genealogical proximity to the ruler decides the amount of finances obtained. Thus, the important family al-°Attīya, which often intermarried with at-Ṭānīs was left behind.⁵⁷

The relentless squabbling for money which his family ceaselessly perpetrated left °Alī disgusted and in October 1960 the ruler put an end to his troubles by abdicating. In contrast with his father's wish Ḳalīfa did not become the new ruler, as previously acknowledged, but the throne was taken by °Alī's son Aḥmad. Aḥmad ibn °Alī at-Ṭānī had been given progressively more and more executive powers since 1956. Ḳalīfa was aware of this trend and was trying to undermine Aḥmad's position.⁵⁸ Ḳalīfa's brother Nāşir even tried to shot °Alī in Lebanon, unsuccessfully. To get the family on his side, Aḥmad immediately after his accession to the throne raised the allowances. The new formula for distribution of the oil wealth was one quarter

⁵⁴ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 76.

⁵⁵ James Barr, *Lords of the Desert: Britain's Struggle with America to Dominate the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 113.

⁵⁶ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 120.

⁵⁷ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 129.

⁵⁸ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 152.

for the ruler, one quarter for the family and half for the state. This dramatic cut in public spendings had an unfortunate effect of slowing development.

Aḥmad was never really keen on his role as a ruler and power-eager Ḳalīfa was slowly but surely getting the day-to-day state management under his control, especially when Aḥmad started to spend more and more time abroad spending his fortunes.⁵⁹ In the fifties and sixties, although “the Britain was de jure suzerain of Qatar, Saudi Arabia was the de facto suzerain.”⁶⁰ In no incident is that clearly seen as in the 1965 borders negotiations. Ḳalīfa as the heir apparent went to Saudi Arabia to deal with the nonexistence of border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The result of the secret negotiations was Qatar’s ceding of the area of Ḳawr al-ʿUdayd which meant the end of terrestrial border between Qatar and UAE and Saudi access to the Gulf south of Qatar. In return Ḳalīfa was given 75 square miles of formerly-Saudi land. Roberts hints that the borders were actually only one part of the negotiating between Ḳalīfa and Saudi representatives. Ḳalīfa, already denied twice what he saw as given right to rule was afraid, that the situation may repeat itself. By ceding the strategically important territory to Saudi Arabia, Ḳalīfa obtained their support to his rule and possibly to the existence of Qatar as a sovereign nation.⁶¹

2.3 Modern History of Qatar: In the Shadow of Saudi Arabia

For in 1968 Britain declared its wish to withdraw from the Gulf which brings about the question of the future. Aḥmad promoted the vision of Qatar as a member of the future United Arab Emirates, Ḳalīfa was for independence. By this time Ḳalīfa was already strong enough to enforce his will and so in September 1971 Qatar celebrated its formal independence. Aḥmad, the ruler, did not bother himself to arrive from Switzerland, which effectively sealed him as a has-been ruler. On 22 February 1972 while hunting in Iran Aḥmad was informed that he was no longer a ruler.⁶² Saudis with accord to their agreement with Ḳalīfa “backed the coup

⁵⁹ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 76.

⁶⁰ David B. Roberts, *Qatar: Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State* (London: Hurst & Company Publishers, 2017), 30.

⁶¹ Roberts, *Qatar*, 30.

⁶² Fromherz, *Qatar*, 79.

financially, politically, and with a show of armed force at the border”⁶³ Not even the British raised their voice on Aḥmad’s defence realizing what a weak ruler he had been.

Ḳalīfa’s reign and the one of his son Ḥamad are of pivotal importance for understanding Saudi – Qatari dynamics. Sure of the Saudi backing, Ḳalīfa was now allowed to move against his family whose allowances were radically cut and the acquired means were put on development, especially on education and health care.⁶⁴ Since 1977 by being appointed as the defence minister, Ḳalīfa’s son Ḥamad was effectively recognized as heir apparent.

Saudi leadership had unprecedented amount of influence over Ḳalīfa. The Qatari foreign policy, if existent, was following unwaveringly Saudi leadership and Saudis had the power to influence the matters of utmost national importance and security, when for example they were mediating the Qatari-Bahraini dispute over Faṣṭ ad-Dībal island in 1986.⁶⁵ Qatar was also the only country apart from Saudi Arabia, who followed all 40 days of mourning after the deaths of Saudi kings Fayṣal (1975) and Ḳālīd (1982).⁶⁶ The ties between the two countries were formerly bound in bilateral defence agreement⁶⁷ Qatar joined the Saudi Arabia-led and dominated Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981. The certainty with which Saudi Arabia approached its smaller neighbour could be visibly seen in the 1974 secret border agreement with the United Arab Emirates, which affected Qatar’s border without Qatar’s consent.

The change of these placating policies can be tracked to the later years of Ḳalīfa's rule. As late as 1987 Qatar took strongly pro-Saudi stance during its clashes with Iran but in mere five years the friend changed into foe with the September 1992 border disputes and Saudi attack of al-Ḳufūs. Although Saudi leadership proclaimed these incidents to be scuffle among tribes, Qatar’s reaction was to withdraw its presence from GCC Peninsula Shield Force and to revoke the border agreement of 1965.⁶⁸ This dramatic symbolic move resulted in further border clashes in following years and Qatar’s complete blockade of GCC.

⁶³ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 155-6.

⁶⁴ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 80.

⁶⁵ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 166.

⁶⁶ Roberts, *Qatar*, 31.

⁶⁷ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 71.

⁶⁸ Roberts, *Qatar*, 32.

Meanwhile the tension between Ƙalīfa and his son Ḥamad was rising dangerously. Since his appointment in 1977 Ḥamad's influence rose and he started to appoint his devotees to important offices. After grave quarrel with his uncle Ƙālid, Ḥamad initiated government reshuffle in 1989, succeeded in 1992 by yet another reshuffle. The old office-holders belonging to the circle loyal to Ƙalīfa were sidelined and new, more dynamic and aggressive generation was put forward.⁶⁹ Ƙalīfa, beware of his receding authority sought to solidify his position by heading a diplomatic mission to Egypt, Tunisia and Switzerland in 1995 but the same fate as he had prepared for his father awaited him – Ƙalīfa was dethroned by his son while abroad. The coup didn't go well with Saudi Arabia, who saw their client overthrown. Within two years two counter-coups had been planned, both of them thwarted and both with the support of Saudi leadership.⁷⁰

Ḥamad proved out to be reformer both in internal and foreign politics, under which Qatar changed profoundly. He ended the censorship practice and started the cable news channel al-Jazīra, which was echoing Qatari foreign policy objectives and thus was often critical towards Saudi leadership.⁷¹ al-Jazīra proved to be such a nuisance that Saudi ambassador in Qatar was recalled in 2002 because of its coverage.⁷²

The détente process started in 2008 by the return of Saudi diplomatic mission to Qatar lasted only until the event known as Arab Spring in which Qatar's active foreign policy was seen by Saudi Arabia as undesirable and together with Bahrain's and UAE's the Saudi ambassador was recalled.⁷³

Meanwhile Qatar witnessed the first peaceful power transition in its history, when on June 25 2013 Ḥamad transferred his power onto his son Tamīm. The change on the throne did not mean any significant change in the Saudi – Qatari relationship as Tamīm continued his father's policies. The accession of Salmān to the Saudi throne was an impulse for yet another détente process and renewal of diplomatic ties in November 2015. But when Salmān's son Muḥammad gained more prominence within the Saudi establishment and with him the more

⁶⁹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 114.

⁷⁰ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 85.

⁷¹ Roberts, *Qatar*, 99.

⁷² Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis* (London: Hurst & Company Publishers, 2020), 35.

⁷³ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*, 43.

confrontational Saudi approach in foreign policy.⁷⁴ The event known as Gulf Crisis or the Qatar blockade definitely thwarted the relations in June 2017.

The full circle of Saudi-Qatari relations was completed with the breaking GCC summit of al-^ʿUlā in January 2021, where the newly established diplomatic ties were symbolically sealed by a long embrace between Saudi Muḥammad bin Salmān and Qatar's Tamīm bin Ḥamad.

2.4 Periodization of Qatari History

Although the history of relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar is certainly a continuous process, several breaking points are stemming out:

Ḳalīfa's accession to throne (1971)

Ḥamad's power reshuffles (1989 and 1992)

Ḥamad's coup d'état (1995)

Qatar blockade (2017)

al-^ʿUlā summit (2021)

Ḳalīfa's accession to throne marked the golden era of Saudi influence over Qatar. Although nominally independent, during Ḳalīfa's rule, the traditional dominant power – the Great Britain – was replaced by emerging regional power – Saudi Arabia. Saudi dominance started to crumble in three steps – two of them being the Ḥamad's power reshuffles and the third the coup d'état in which he overthrew his father. Since then, Saudi power on Qatari foreign policy decision-making was ceding. Thus, the relation between the two countries worsened and progressively changed from that of dominance and submission to that of rivalry. There were occasional processes of détente and appeasement, but the track of the relationship headed unavoidably to confrontation during the Qatar blockade. Because the blockade not only failed in its aim to tame Qatar, but actively strengthen its position and because Saudi position was at the same time undermined by other regional and global events, the confrontation was ended in al-^ʿUlā summit, which marked the beginning of reconciliation. Thus, Qatar emerged, within the scope of merely fifty years, from fully dominated state to partner of even successful adversary with no trace of any subordination to its former master.

⁷⁴ Madawi Al-Rasheed, "King Salman and his Son: Winning the USA, Losing the Rest," in *Salman's Legacy: The Dilemmas of a New Era in Saudi Arabia*, ed. Madawi Al-Rasheed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 235-6.

This analysis, based on the identified breaking points, suggests delineation of Saudi – Qatari relation into several eras. During the formation of both states and the British patronage over Qatar, Saudi Arabia was more a threat than a dominant state, so the era up to Qatari independence is marked as the Era of Fear. Ḳalīfa’s rule was signified by strong hierarchical relationship towards Saudi Arabia, which ended with the rise of his son Ḥamad within the Qatari power structure, thus the years between 1971 and 1989 bear mark of the Era of Hierarchy.

The period of great uncertainty in both Qatari internal politics due to the power transition from Ḳalīfa to Ḥamad and regional and global politics, given the end of Cold War and the First Gulf War, is labeled as The Turning Point, because Qatar’s policy orientation was beginning to change. The growing rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and the Saudi discontent with Qatari foreign policy which gradually evolved during Ḥamad’s rule and the beginning of Tamīm’s rule is called the Era of Disintegration for within it the hierarchical relationship was progressively dismantled.

Finally, the blockade of Qatar, also known as the Gulf Crisis, which took place between 2017 and 2021 is designated as the Era of Conflict. Although the blockade was not an armed conflict per se, it was certainly an act of aggression with the clear aim to subdue Qatar, so this appellation seems justified.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

Before we will discuss how and by what was this change enabled, let us mention several general remarks which can also be drawn from the historical overview of Saudi – Qatari relationship.

Firstly, Saudi politics towards Qatar was always expansionist. Since Ibn Su‘ūd's times, Saudi Arabia has sought to either conquer or dominate the smaller Arab states on the littoral of the Gulf. Qatar, being one of the smallest and for a long time one of the poorest among those chiefdoms and sheikhdoms, was not swallowed up by the Saudi state only because of its link to Great Britain. The exodus of the colonial power thus caused a great headache for the Qatar’s rulers, for the emirate could be no match to the Saudi kingdom. Since then, the Saudi question was of utmost pre-eminence for any Qatari ruler, though they approached this question differently, because on this question Qatar's independence was dependent.

Secondly, even during the era of Qatar’s colonial submission to the British Empire, the Saudis had a strong influence upon Qatari politics. The British knew that if there was an open confrontation with Saudis, they could not hold Qatar. They were fearful especially during the

1920s, when the militant Iḳwān brotherhood, loyal to Saudi king, was rampaging the vicinity of the kingdom.⁷⁵ Any internal struggle within Qatar was usually resolved by one party's departure for Saudi Arabia, which thus had a limitless pool for potential power pretenders and held Qatar's ruler always at check. The most visible proof of the Saudi power is the support which they were able to provide to their client Ḳalīfa during his preparation for political takeover.

Thirdly, given the autocratic nature of both Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the policy shifts were usually marked by political ascendancy or decline of a specific person. Because neither of these states could be worried about an election outcome, the policy was always firmly in the hands of the ruler or the chief-executive, usually the crown prince. The change on the throne is thus often simultaneous to the change of the policy. This factor and its implications will be discussed more broadly later.

Fourthly, even though the rulers were free of the constraint political manoeuvring well known to politicians in democracies they must have been nonetheless watchful of their family, for it is the family who provides the most serious political danger. This is especially true about Qatar. The family rifts and animosities were always an aim of the competing power and especially Saudis were always trying to use them to bring about a favourable government in Qatar. There are numerous Qatari coups d'état, successful or not, which bear the mark of Saudi sponsorship.

Finally, given the aforementioned autocratic nature of both states, the security of Qatar and Saudi Arabia is closely linked to regime security of its ruling families. This feature should be constantly borne in mind for it has serious implications on the policy choices which influenced the Saudi-Qatari relations.

⁷⁵ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 73.

3 Analysis of Saudi – Qatar Relations in Historical Perspective

3.1 Chapter Introduction

Based on the findings provided by the preceding chapter, we can clearly distinguish six distinct phases of Saudi – Qatari relationship, namely Era of Fear, Era of Hierarchy, The Turning Point, Era of Disintegration and Era of Conflict. In each of these eras we shall consider the Saudi – Qatari relation through the lens of the three relevant theories of alliance formation, MENA foreign policy analysis and hierarchy to determine the means and processes which enable Qatar to dispose of the Saudi dominance.

Each of these three approaches will be applied to each of the distinct periods. The alliance formation theory will assess the general behaviour of Qatar towards Saudi Arabia – whether Qatar was balancing or bandwagoning based on the threat perception of its leadership.

The MENA foreign policy analysis will follow the four steps proposed by Nonneman, namely the domestic political and social environment in Qatar, the regional environment, the international environment and finally decision-making structures. Given the autocratic nature of Qatar, the decision-making structures are closely connected to the first step – the domestic politics – for they could be simply identified as the emir and his immediate collaborators. Thus, the fourth step will be only auxiliary to the first three.

Finally, each period will be assessed by Lake's and McCormack's definitions of hierarchy and offers an assessment on the phase of hierarchical relationship. The main objective will be to trace how the hierarchical relationship started and mainly how it ended and what caused or enabled its end. For Lake the most important indicators are the presence of armed forces of the dominant state and the number of independent alliances / relations of the subordinate state. For McCormack the most important proof of hierarchy is the link between the ruling party / ruler of the subordinate state and the government of the dominant.

3.2 Era of Fear (until 1971)

As demonstrated in the historical overview, the presence of the potent Saudi state was always an existential security threat to Qatar. Saudi state was from its beginnings closely linked to expansionist ethos with clear ambition to unite the Arabian Peninsula under Saudi rule and

Wahhabi creed.⁷⁶ It posed a primal existential threat to the very existence of Qatar as an independent or semi-independent state.

The whole project of formal British rule over Qatar can be seen as an act of balancing the Saudis (and at that time also the Ottomans). Aḥmad was reportedly fearful of the end of British patronage and it was precisely this fear which pushed him to favour the Qatar's alliance with the nascent United Arab Emirates,⁷⁷ which he saw as a possible counterbalance to the Saudi regional hegemon. Aḥmad simply feared the dominant position of Saudi Arabia which was inevitably going to happen once Qatar was independent.

That is consistent with Walt's concept of balance of threat. Even though The Great Britain was for the better part of the 20th century a great power, and in total much more powerful than Saudi Arabia, it was seen as a lesser threat to the existence of Qatar, albeit as a semi-independent nation. The aggregated power was not as important a source of the Qatari threat-perception as the geographic proximity and aggressive intentions. As far as the offensive power of Saudi Arabia and Great Britain is concerned, although Great Britain possessed incomparable military superiority over the desert kingdom, its military presence in the Gulf was mainly naval and it could have very well succumbed to substantive Saudi land attack. There is thus little doubt as to who was perceived as a bigger threat by Qatar's rulers.

The unevenness of the terrestrial military might suggest that Qatar, being so weak, would rather bandwagon with the Saudi Arabia. This Walt's claim, that the weaker the state the more likely is to bandwagon,⁷⁸ is based on the examples of post-Second World War examples, when the United Nations were already established and the international equilibrium of power was closely watched by its Security Council and the interstate wars became scarce. At the beginning of the formal British oversight of Qatar, the possibility of Saudi attack and annexation of Qatar without any international repercussions was very much real.⁷⁹ For Qatar's ruler, the security of their region was far surer with distant London.

Now that we have established the general orientation of the Qatari policy, let us follow Nonneman's four steps in analysing Qatari foreign policy in this era. The domestic environment

⁷⁶ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 62.

⁷⁷ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 155.

⁷⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 29.

⁷⁹ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 73.

of Qatar was troublesome for decades. Heavy disputes between the ruler and his family, particularly about the amount of allowances attributed to them, created a space for Saudi pressure. Consistently with centuries-long tradition of seeking outside sponsors when pretending the claim to the throne, contenders within the family were throughout Qatari history plotting with Saudi Arabia to enhance their claim. The rulers had to constantly watch their backs and their capability to steer the domestic politics was rather limited. Nonetheless, the authority over the foreign policy of the state was basically non-existent and fully granted to London.

Regionally, Saudi Arabia was observed watchfully because of its potential to destabilize the internal political equilibrium within the ruling family. What no doubt contributed to Qatar's survival during the first half of the 20th century was the waning power of radical expansionist elements within Saudi Arabia from 1930 onwards, notably the *Iḳwān* brotherhood. Ibn Su'ūd realized that although this radical force proved most useful for conquering the peninsula, for maintaining the power, their combatant zeal proved troublesome. *Iḳwān*s alienated neighbouring states and could, in the end, contribute to the downfall of the Kingdom as a whole. Thus, by limiting the *Iḳwān*s and by promoting the Kingdom as less expansionist the Saudis had very little incentive to physically threaten Qatar. Especially, as well into the latter half of the 20th century Qatar was of little interest to anyone. To put it simply, Qatar was not worth it to antagonize the British (or anyone else).

Ideologically, although shielded from the direct Saudi threat of invasion by accepting the British patronage, Qatar was still subjected to Saudi influence.⁸⁰ One of the most visible demonstrations of this influence was the acceptance of Wahhabism, which ensured that the potential invasion of Saudi forces cannot be ideologically justified.

The international environment changed profoundly in the described era, most important factors being the progressively decaying power of Great Britain, which changed from bandwagoning under the British to balancing with the British.⁸¹ Another important change was the growing importance of the Gulf in the world's affairs due to the oil riches, and the economic development that came necessarily with it. Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar had sudden sources of income that could progressively more and more finance their political and developmental projects. The bipolar Cold War World had little impact on the case study in question as both states firmly belonged to the West-oriented sphere.

⁸⁰ Roberts, *Qatar*, 30.

⁸¹ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 73-74.

Given the autocratic nature of both Qatar and Saudi Arabia the security of both states is closely linked to regime security of its ruling families. Saudi Arabia's decision-making structure in the foreign policy was, for the better part of Saudi history, a sort of consensus between the Al Saud family, Wahhabi clerics, important tribes and powerful entrepreneurs.⁸² Qatar, on the other hand, was more dictatorial in the sense that the emir had the absolute and unquestioned authority of politics. During colonial times, the emir's powers were encroached by London, but with regard to the Saudi question, their interests overlapped.

Lake's two indicators of security hierarchy are both applicable to Qatar in this period, albeit to its relation to Great Britain and not Saudi Arabia. British army was present on Qatari soil and it was in sole command of its foreign policy orientation, thus, no independent Qatari alliance was possible. Saudi Arabia possessed no such formal influence upon Qatar but its informal power over Qatar is hard to deny.

The link between Riyadh and individuals within the Qatari royal family is fully in accord with McCormack's theories of influence of dominant state within the subordinate. McCormack speaks of dominant states ensuring their position by promoting and supporting certain political parties in their endeavour to win elections, but if we transpose this behaviour to tribal and autocratic milieu, and substitute political parties for individual political players within the royal family, the description fits perfectly. If an unfavourable ruler is positioned in power within the subordinate state, the dominant power supports his contenders to change the tide. During the colonial era the British were still the deciding power and thus only once was Saudi plotting fully successful and only at the very end of British rule.

Let's consider McCormack's two dimensions of hierarchy – how formalized the rule between dominant and subordinate state is, and the degree of institutionalisation within subordinate state.⁸³ Although the institutionalisation of Aḥmad's rule, based on the traditional tribal authority was rather well-established.⁸⁴ The formal aspect of the hierarchy ceased to exist with the formal independence of Qatar. In full support of McCormack's assumption, that

⁸² Neil Partrick, "Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy," in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 3.

⁸³ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 63.

⁸⁴ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 130-136.

creation of new hierarchy is easier if the subordinate state is autocratic⁸⁵, the decaying hierarchical relationship between Qatar and Great Britain was swiftly replaced by a hierarchical relationship between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

3.3 *Era of Hierarchy (1971 – 1989)*

After attaining independence, the strategic milieu changed and Qatar's position towards Saudi Arabia took a staunch bandwagoning stance, although none of the four sources of threat which Walt lists, had changed. We could argue that given the new international order which frowned upon aggressors generating interstate conflicts, the aggressive intentions of Saudi Arabia to existentially threaten Qatar was lessened in comparison with the previous decades.

Walt further states that “states are more likely to bandwagon when useful allies are unavailable, for they will face the threat alone if they choose to resist.”⁸⁶ Could the end of the formal British oversight mean that Qatar was left alone and had no choice but to ally with Saudi Arabia? Even if we do not consider the fact that being allied to the former colonial power is possible even after obtaining independence⁸⁷, at the time of its appearance on the regional stage, Qatar had other options. For in 1971 Saudi Arabia had several opponents with whom Qatar could have joined forces.

The first is Israel whom the Saudis (together with Egypt and Syria) were planning to attack.⁸⁸ Israel had arguably far superior offensive power than Saudi Arabia, the alliance would thus be logical. But although Walt argues that ideology has limited application in forging an alliance,⁸⁹ it certainly can prevent one. There were nevertheless at least two more options and in close vicinity to Qatar – Iraq and Iran. Saudi – Iranian rivalry was not yet in its full swing as it has become after the events of 1979, but even in the early 1970s Saudi Arabia was worried about Iran's ambitions and the relations were never easy.⁹⁰ Even greater rival for Saudi Arabia

⁸⁵ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 119.

⁸⁶ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 175.

⁸⁷ Gabon, among others, being a prime example of the fact that colonies can remain strongly allied to their former colonial power.

⁸⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 124.

⁸⁹ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 37.

⁹⁰ Neil Partrick, “Saudi Arabia and Iran,” in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 112.

at this time was Iraq. The overthrow of monarchy and the establishment of leftist republic with strong links to Moscow was one of the reasons, prevailing Iraqi claims over Kuwait another.⁹¹ While allying with any of these, Qatar could have easily balanced Saudi Arabia.

The domestic environment after the independence changed in comparison to the previous era in the sense that the colonial power was gone. Emir Aḥmad was no longer shielded from his incompetence and power-hunger Ḳalīfa was ready to step in.⁹² Partly because of his personal links to the Saudi leadership, which endorsed his long-overlooked claims and partly due to the sheer necessity connected with the power vacuum created by the departure of the British, Qatar slipped into almost utter reliance on Saudi leadership.

Ḳalīfa was more than happy to serve as the beacon of Saudi power. He wanted to establish himself as a ruler of at least a formally independent country. Consistently with previous tradition Ḳalīfa turned to Riyadh for help, when neglected by the British. In exchange for the strategically important Ḳawr al-ʿUdayd ceded to Riyadh, Ḳalīfa ensured the Saudi support for his coup d'état and also the very existence of Qatar as an independent country.⁹³ Saudi support for Ḳalīfa was thus driven not only by the desire to secure friendly and loyal head of neighbouring state, but also by the intent to disintegrate federation (of the forming UAE) which might become adversary in the future.

The growing economic might of the country gave Ḳalīfa the possibility to pursue developmental projects inside the country.⁹⁴ Ḳalīfa's foreign policy was not in clash with the Saudi wishes simply because it was non-existent. Since the colonial times, Qatari rulers were used to cede all foreign policy decision making process to its patrons whether in London or Riyadh.⁹⁵ Ḳalīfa saw nothing strange in following the given line,⁹⁶ especially as the line reflected his own priorities, mainly counterbalancing revolutionary states, whether oriented

⁹¹ Neil Partrick, "Saudi Arabia and Iraq," in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 131.

⁹² Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 152.

⁹³ Roberts, *Qatar*, 30.

⁹⁴ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 156.

⁹⁵ Roberts, *Qatar*, 30.

⁹⁶ Roberts, *Qatar*, 41.

religiously (Iran) or socially (Iraq) or driven by pan-Arab ideology (Egypt). The shared ideological and religious values helped to strengthen that relationship.

The reliance on Saudi support helped Ƙalīfa to consolidate his power internally and it disposed his potential contenders of the possibility to seek Saudi patronage. Saudi leadership assured Qatar's obedience by introducing the mutual defence agreement. Since the Iranian revolution in 1979, the two states were further bonded by their fear of Iran and its revolutionary rhetoric and politics and Qatar joined the anti-Iranian Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council. At that time, Qatar was following the policy orientation of Saudi Arabia, mainly anti-USSR stance.⁹⁷ The extent of Qatar's servility can be visibly proved by the territorial disputes of Faṣṭ ad-Dībal island, contested by both Bahrain and Qatar. Saudi Arabia played the role of arbiter in this dispute and ruled for demolition of the island rather than granting it to any of the parties.⁹⁸ Although Iran took a strongly pro-Qatari stance during the dispute, Qatar did not reciprocate and supported Saudi claims in their dispute with Iran in 1987.

The international attention focused on the Gulf more closely since the Iranian revolution. The western orientation of both Saudi Arabia and Qatar was yet another prerequisite for a functioning relationship. It could be argued, that even if Ƙalīfa did chose to change its foreign policy orientation and started to balance Saudi Arabia, it would mean to ally with one of the revolutionary states, thus, it would have to effectively change its Western-orientation to pro-USSR stance and that was both unimaginable and undesirable.

The Qatari decision-making structures were strongly inclined towards deep collaboration with Saudi Arabia as Ƙalīfa installed trusted loyalists with strong personal relations with Riyadh to all key posts within his administration. The absence of a functioning opposition in Qatar meant utter reliance and obedience of the emir's foreign policy directives.

McCormack's remark that „there is a strong correlation between economic crisis in dominant states and civil conflict in subordinate states“⁹⁹ and his overall claim, that the end of hierarchical relationship is linked to the crisis in the dominant state can also be applied to Qatar's situation. Although no armed conflict emerged within the emirate, Ƙalīfa's coup d'état can be seen as such conflict given the miniscule demography of the emirate and its strongly

⁹⁷ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 105.

⁹⁸ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 165-6.

⁹⁹ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 207.

authoritarian nature, in which the absence of Qataris in the politics of their state is compensated by generous allowances from the state. Since the end of the Second World War Great Britain was increasingly losing power and in the end was unable to project it in the far region of the Gulf.¹⁰⁰

„In highly autocratic states, the level of regime subsidisation necessary to ensure that opposition groups do not challenge for office is too high. Under these conditions, dominant states are incentivized to rely more heavily on the threat of coercion.“¹⁰¹ After its formal departure from the Gulf, the Great Britain was unable to incentivize Qatar's opposition (e.g. Ḳalīfa) to stay away from the political contest and Saudi Arabia was, on the other hand, able to use its proximity and coercive power to change the regime in neighbouring Qatar and establish its dominant position in the emirate.

Moreover, the success of the Saudi intervention was due to the fact that the regime change was foreign-induced rather than foreign-imposed. Saudi establishment simply used already existing ruptures in the Qatari royal family and the personal grievances of Ḳalīfa, who was snubbed twice already in his quest for power. By enabling his coup Saudi Arabia clearly showed its ability to project power, and the title of the guardian of the two holy mosques, which is the prerogative of the Saudi king gave the Saudi leadership the necessary religious and traditional legitimacy¹⁰² to establish such a hierarchical relation.

The period of Ḳalīfa's rule is pure example of hierarchical relationship. We shall nevertheless argue that Saudi hierarchy was somewhat weaker than the British one. Saudi army was not to be found on Qatari soil. Qatar established independent monetary policy by introducing riyal and the trade dependency, although notable for Qatar, was necessarily undermined by the growing Qatari economic might due to its hydrocarbon wealth, although the 1980s slowed this development due to the falling of oil prices.¹⁰³ Out of Lake's four aspects of hierarchy, only the absence of independent alliances of Qatar clearly showed its reliance on Saudi Arabia in its foreign policy. Nevertheless, this behaviour could be rather due to the

¹⁰⁰ Barr, *Lords of the Desert*, 337.

¹⁰¹ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 134.

¹⁰² Menno Preuschaft, "Islam and Identity in Foreign Policy," in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 16.

¹⁰³ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 81.

customs of non-engagement in foreign policy, which the Qatar's rulers practised already for decades under the British dominance.

To sustain hierarchy means for Lake to follow three imperatives. Firstly, to produce political order which benefits both the dominant and the subordinate. Secondly, the dominant power must discipline the subordinates and thirdly, the dominant must not abuse its power. If we want to unravel the rudiment of the end of Saudi dominant position in Qatar, we must explore the nature of its position and of the hierarchical relationship. Although partially capable of producing political order in its immediate vicinity, its capability to discipline the subordinates was in this time rather limited. Moreover, Saudi Arabia abused the power vested in the kingdom, when it reached a secret agreement with the UAE regarding the common border, which encroached into Qatari territory. As the threat from Iran and Iraq was more and more pressing and Riyadh had to focus its limited military resources on countering these rising threats, the ability to project power was less and less visible in Qatar.

Institutionalization of Saudi influence in Qatar during *Ḳalīfa*'s era was at least as strong as the British during his predecessors due to the same reasons of autocratic, traditional and tribal society. It could be argued, that Saudi institutionalisation could be stronger given the stronger position of *Ḳalīfa* within Qatar. The clear proof of that is the semi-autonomy of Na'im tribe in the north of the country, whose leader held up to 1980s the title of emir¹⁰⁴ and which was slowly but surely brought more tightly under *aṭ-Ṭānī* rule.

Another proof of strong institutionalization of Saudi power inside Qatar is the financial homage¹⁰⁵ which was paid by *Ḳalīfa* to the Saudi kings for their protection. Especially this point was the bone of contention between *Ḳalīfa* and younger generation of Qataris represented by Hamad who saw this payment as unbecoming.¹⁰⁶

Formalisation of the Saudi influence was demonstrated by the formal forty-day period of official mourning for deceased Saudi kings Fayṣal and *Ḳālid*. No other country (except for Saudi Arabia, naturally) followed the whole forty-days period. This act of obeisance is a formal sign of subordination within the hierarchical relationship.

¹⁰⁴ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 71.

¹⁰⁶ Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf*, 164-5.

3.4 *The Turning Point (1989 – 1995)*

The era called the Turning Point witnessed a profound change in Qatari politics towards Saudi Arabia, specifically a change from bandwagoning to balancing. According to Walt's theory, the threat perception of Qatar had to change – but why? Not only the sources of threat remained constant in the relationship, some of them became even more marginal. Apart from geographic proximity, which understandably remains constant, both the offensive power and the aggressive intentions were marginal toward Qatar, for Saudi Arabia had to face Iraqi aggression in Kuwait. The relative position of Saudi Arabia in the region was weakened. Qatar had to be afraid of Iraqi ambitions, so why suddenly balance Saudi Arabia, who was clearly the weaker state and thus posed a lesser threat to Qatar.

The relation with Iran improved considerably, Iran had just got out of the bloody Iraq – Iran war, so it posed minimal security threat to Qatar and both states had the common interest in developing the North Field gas reservoir,¹⁰⁷ which the two countries share. But Qatar did not join the Iranian axis or ally with the Islamic Republic. It's only conceivable reason would be Arab monarchical solidarity, an ideological motive, which Walt recognises only reluctantly.¹⁰⁸

The end of Saudi dominance in Qatar is undoubtedly connected to emir Ḥamad, but it would be a mistake to overlook the importance of nascent Qatari national feelings and the troublesome position in which Saudi Arabia and the Gulf as a whole found themselves in the beginning of 1990s. Qatar's rise was thus as much a personal wish of a young ruler as it was to certain extent security necessity.

At the end of his rule, *Ḳalīfa's* position was as disintegrated as was *Aḥmad's* two decades ago. The fall of oil prices in 1980s forced Qatar in debt and the grip over country was undermined by *Ḳalīfa's* reported inkling to alcohol¹⁰⁹ and other worldly pleasures.¹¹⁰ As was his young son Ḥamad slowly but surely concentrating more and more power into his hands, the Saudi dominant position within the country was nearing its end.

¹⁰⁷ Roberts, *Qatar*, 71.

¹⁰⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 182.

¹⁰⁹ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 85.

¹¹⁰ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 95.

Domestically, since 1989 the tide of power began to shift from *Ḳalīfa* to *Ḥamad*, who achieved, with two government reshuffles and finally a coup d'état, to gradually usurp the throne. The change was profound, for given the autocratic nature of Qatari politics, the emir is the sole central point of all decision-making process¹¹¹ and as such his political opinions and orientation equal the political orientation of the whole country. *Ḥamad* brought to power a new generation of bureaucrats, whose opinions on the role of Saudi Arabia in the Qatari security and foreign policy were starkly different from *Ḳalīfa*'s administration.

The final coup succeeded also because *Ḥamad*'s position was unique in Qatar's history. He was not dependent on the support of a foreign power, but his legitimacy stemmed rather from his military career, exemplified by his combat experiences in the First Gulf War.¹¹² His power within the state was increasingly being further solidified by his growing power over the question of military procurement and since the end of Iraq-Iran war also by the chance to explore the North Field natural gas reserve, which Qatar shares with Iran.¹¹³ The field couldn't be explored earlier because of the tanker war which accompanied the Iraq-Iran conflict and which prevented any such work in progress.¹¹⁴

Saudi grip over Qatar proved weak in the light of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Not only it proved Riyadh unable to protect Kuwait, another state in its sphere of influence, against Iraqi threat, but Saudi Arabia itself feared of Iraqi invasion and had to call for US help, unable to protect itself. This clear demonstration of Saudi limits undoubtedly pushed *Ḥamad* to seek more independent policy. Although the formalisation of Saudi role in Qatar did not change under *Ḥamad* – they were still strong allies under the auspices of GCC, the institutionalisation of Saudi power within Qatar ceded together with the personal changes in the government and in 1995 also on the throne. As all eye in the region were turned to Kuwait and the Iraqi threat, *Ḥamad* used this window of opportunity to make profound internal changes which would in the latter years enable changes in foreign policy as well.

International milieu during this era changed also substantively with the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the USSR. Suddenly, to disentangle from Saudi Arabia and the Western block in the Gulf did not necessarily mean to oppose US / Western policy. To put it simply, the

¹¹¹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 42.

¹¹² Fromherz, *Qatar*, 85.

¹¹³ Roberts, *Qatar*, 20.

¹¹⁴ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27.

two blocks ceased to be viewed in black and white but in (fifty) shades of grey. But Ḥamad's true intentions to change his country's foreign policy were visible already in 1988 when Qatar, without Saudi lead and approval, established formal diplomatic relations with the USSR.¹¹⁵ This diplomatic step was a reaction to Bahrain's acquisition of Stinger missiles from the USA.¹¹⁶ Qatar's purchase of the same military equipment on the black market temporarily damaged Qatar – US relations, but an important step in strengthening Qatari security was made in 1992 by a defence alliance with the USA.¹¹⁷ This document became the backbone of Qatari independent policy. This alliance was enabled by uneasy relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia during Bush's administration, which Ḥamad and his cousin Ḥamad bin Jāsim masterfully capitalized.¹¹⁸ This growing strategic partnership was confirmed by US support to Ḥamad's coup d'état in 1995, which was reportedly negotiated by Ḥamad bin Jāsim.¹¹⁹

With the ascension of Ḥamad's loyalist within the upper echelons of Qatar's administration, the decision maker's perspective toward Saudi Arabia changed. Ḳalīfa and his generation represented the more traditional segment of society, connected personally with Saudi Arabia and used to live in the shadow of stronger partners. They saw the subordinate position of Qatar as a price for formal independence.¹²⁰ Ḥamad and his generation, on the other hand, were already used to the independence, took it for granted, and were frustrated by the minor role Qatar was given in regional and international affairs. Especially in view of Saudi Arabia's own fragility of power, this subordination was something demeaning to the new ascending elite.

McCormack notes that the traditional writers of history of colonialism consider the collapse of hierarchy to be sudden and linked to some strong political personality in combination with growing national identity. McCormack on the other hand asks whether the collapse of hierarchy is not connected more to the decreased power projection abilities of the

¹¹⁵ Roberts, *Qatar*, 36.

¹¹⁶ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 107.

¹¹⁷ Roberts, *Qatar*, 38.

¹¹⁸ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 31.

¹¹⁹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 117.

¹²⁰ Roberts, *Qatar*, 31.

dominant state.¹²¹ When considering the changes during the late 1980s and first half of 1990s which culminated in Hamad's coup d'état, both of these perceptions should be taken as valid. Ḥamad was certainly seen by the young Qatari generation as a beacon of national aspirations, something the more traditional generation of Ḳalīfa, whose identity was more derived from tribal and clannish structures was unable to fully grasp. At the same time, Saudi Arabia's precarious position of a hegemon, who cannot defend its subordinate against foreign aggression clearly demonstrated the limits of Saudi power projection, albeit only for a brief period of time.¹²²

„Dominant states will be particularly harsh in their opposition to rebel groups within subordinate states who oppose the status quo, including continued subordination to the dominant state ... and to states as a whole that reject the dominant state's rule“¹²³

That Saudi Arabia was losing its position within the emirate was clearly understood among the Saudi leadership at least as late as 1992, when the first problems in the relation started with the border clash near al-Ḳufūs.¹²⁴ Although the Saudi side claimed it to be only a skirmish among tribes, the Saudi Arabia clearly used its power over some tribes in Qatari hinterland to send a signal. This act of limited aggression also breaks one of Lake's rules for sustaining a hierarchy, namely that the dominant state must not abuse its powers.

Moreover, Saudi Arabia sponsored two counter-coup within two years after the Ḥamad's takeover. The first was reportedly sponsored through the Syrian government and its main perpetrators were the Lebanese Druze community based in Saudi Arabia. The second and more substantial attempt included two thousand mercenaries of Ḳalīfa's personal guard. Consistently with their waning power, and with the strong support which Ḥamad immediately secured from the USA and France, both counter-coups failed.¹²⁵

The foreign support was not the only reason, why Ḥamad was able to stay in power. His link to Qatari security forces, especially the Army was stronger than Ḳalīfa's due to Ḥamad's history of serving within the force and his personal role during the liberation of Kuwait.¹²⁶ Also,

¹²¹ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 191.

¹²² Citace jak saudi měli problém

¹²³ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 114.

¹²⁴ Roberts, *Qatar*, 31.

¹²⁵ Roberts, *Qatar*, 32.

¹²⁶ More about this subject to be found in Fromherz, *Qatar*, 85-6.

given the reputation which K̄alīfa had for years of not being as devoted Muslim as a ruler of a conservative society should be and due to his mismanaged policies, the coup was largely popular among common Qataris.

3.5 Era of Disintegration (1995 – 2017)

Once the immediate threat posed by Iraq ceased to be so acute, Saudi Arabia sought to strengthen again the grip over its subordinates. One of them, Qatar, resisted this tendency and continued progressively its politics of balancing. As the aggregated power of Saudi Arabia rose, given its considerable hydrocarbon wealth, the rivalry was more and more bitter. Aggressive intentions rose as well, especially since the establishment of al-Jazīra, which the Saudi regime saw as a direct threat.¹²⁷ Saudi Arabia also started to invest heavily in developing its armed forces. This continuation of balancing is actually fully in agreement with Walt's findings. As the perception of Saudi Arabia as a threat progressed and solidified among the Qatari decision-making elite, especially after several Saudi-sponsored coup attempts, Qatar gradually hardened its balancing position towards Saudi Arabia.

Qatar continued building relations with other nations, notably Iran, but there was never clear Qatari-Iranian alliance.¹²⁸ Especially under Ḥamad Qatar sought to establish as much diplomatic relations as possible.¹²⁹ The aim was not only balancing the Saudis but to balance anyone – if Qatar had a good relation with most of the regional and global players, it would not be dependent on any particular ally.

As Ḥamad and his clique were cementing their position within the emirate, Ḥamad immediately started broad social, economic and educational reforms – formal abolishment of censorship, establishment of al-Jazīra, emphasis on education (authority over which was given to Ḥamad's powerful wife šayka Mūza), but also limiting the succession to his sons. Interestingly enough, the succession incidentally skipped Ḥamad's first-born son Fahd, who was seen as too religiously conservative.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, Ḥamad had to face several counter-coup attempts which were all linked to more or less serious domestic opposition.

¹²⁷ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*, 35.

¹²⁸ Roberts, *Qatar*, 72-74.

¹²⁹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 71-72.

¹³⁰ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 138.

In 2005 Qatar stripped of citizenship the members of al-Murra tribe, who had strong links to Saudi Arabia and could be seen as a fifth column within Qatar.¹³¹ It is rumoured that this act had much to do with the role of the tribe in the 1996 coup attempt. Yet another Saudi-sponsored coup attempt reportedly took place on 30 July 2009, including a major-general and other members of the Qatar armed forces, but Fromherz warns that these reports should be treated with scepticism for “they may have been simply an elaborate public relations ruse by Saudi Arabia to paint the Emir’s position in Qatar, falsely, as unstable.”¹³²

The relation toward Saudi Arabia, although sometimes confrontational, was formative for the nascent and growing Qatar. “Actors from modern-day Saudi Arabia have provided both challenges and answers to Qatar’s security.”¹³³ It was especially the constant Saudi meddling in Qatar’s internal affairs that solidified aṭ-Ṭānī rule.¹³⁴ Ḥamad understood that the biggest threat to his regime comes from his own family and with that in mind he limited the power of aṭ-Ṭānī family to few trusted members¹³⁵ and thus deprived the Saudis of many possible contenders to his rule.

Not only Saudis were losing the formal aspects of their dominance, due to the growing maturing of Qatari politics, they were also losing the institutionalisation. Fromherz characterises this era by saying that “the politics of Qatar has become increasingly sticky, increasingly complex and dependent on historical, local and tribal factors.”¹³⁶ Little has changed with the ascension of Tamīm in 2013. The first ever peaceful power transition in Qatar only saw continuation of policies established throughout the 1990s.

Regionally, Ḥamad established truly impressive foreign policy based especially on mediation. Qatar functioned, with greater or lesser success, as a mediator between Ḥamās and Fataḥ (2008), quarrelling Lebanese factions (2008), Ḥūṭīs and Yemeni central government (2009-10), parties of Sudan civil war (2010) or Djibouti and Eritrea (2010) to name just a few. “Qatar [was] seeking to carve out for itself the image of an experienced mediator with a proven

¹³¹ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 111.

¹³² Fromherz, *Qatar*, 148.

¹³³ Roberts, *Qatar*, 16.

¹³⁴ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 94.

¹³⁵ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 140.

¹³⁶ Fromherz, *Qatar*, 131.

track record.”¹³⁷ In addition, Qatar started to host a wide array of émigrés from all around the world, most famously the popular Egyptian cleric with close links to the Muslim Brotherhood Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, with the aim to create network of connections and links in the region and beyond.¹³⁸ Especially the working connection to Muslim brotherhood was and still is widely criticized and opposed by Saudi Arabia.

Another proof of growing Saudi - Qatari competition, and maybe the most visible, is the “newspaper wars”. Qatari al-Jazīra became from the beginning the herald of Qatari influence and was often highly critical toward Saudi leadership. Saudis reciprocated using London-based aš-Šarq al-Awsaṭ or UAE-based Saudi-sponsored al-ʿArabīya. It was precisely al-Jazīra news reports and commentaries which sparked several diplomatic clashes between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and its closure was one of the demands put forward by Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis.

The escalation of the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Qatar accelerated with the events of the Arab spring. Qatar strongly supported the protests in Libya, Syria or Egypt.¹³⁹ Saudi Arabia watched fearfully and resentfully Qatar's support and vast investments into Mursī's Egyptian administration. The Arab Spring provided Qatar with the possibility to mark itself distinct and to position itself to the role of a bridge between West and MENA.¹⁴⁰

Tamīm's ascension changed little although the policy towards Egypt had to be adjusted after the fall of Mursī's regime and Tamīm had to distance himself from his father's policies, but in general, Qatar's foreign policy orientation remained the same. It is probably so, because Ḥamad still exercises a vast influence on Qatar's policy. Tamīm got to his position only because of his servility and obedience of his father, the very qualities which his brother Jāsīm lacked which deprived him of the throne.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Kamrava, *Qatar*, 95.

¹³⁸ Roberts, *Qatar*, 33-34.

¹³⁹ Qatar's position towards Arab Spring events in Bahrain is noteworthy in this respect. Given the geographical proximity and the similitude of regimes, Qatar actually joined other GCC states in sending repressive forces to Manama which ensured the continuation of Al Chalifa's rule. In this particular state, Qatari and Saudi objectives met without difference.

¹⁴⁰ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, 112.

¹⁴¹ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring*, 84.

The era of disintegration can be simply characterised as a Saudi Arabia's constant failure to discipline the subordinate. The political order which Saudi Arabia was attempting to create in the previous decades was seen by Ḥamad and later Tamīm as adversarial to the interests of their country. Since the beginning of 1990s Qatar was progressively establishing independent diplomatic relations of various intensity and applied thoroughly independent foreign policy, which was often in direct contrast to Saudi's priorities.

Qatar sought to strengthen its alliance with powerful global powers, mainly the United States, whose military was physically present on Qatari soil.¹⁴² Qatar invested largely in the facilities used by the US Army to incentivise the United States' presence.¹⁴³

Apart from Saudi encroachments into Qatari sovereignty, another Lake's explanation is fitting to describe the fraying hierarchy of Saudi Arabia. "International legitimacy must be carefully nurtured and protected if it is to endure. If lost, legitimacy can be restored only with substantial effort."¹⁴⁴ Saudi legitimacy as a leader of Arab states in the Gulf was built on the assumption that it can shield the smaller states from the menacing influence of either Iraq or Iran. When confronted with the failure to do so and protect Kuwait, the legitimacy of Saudi leadership was undermined. In addition, Saudi Arabia was unable to restore the faith in its powers, and thus also the legitimacy, in the years that followed. Moreover, after the fall of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's regime in Iraq, Riyadh concentrated more and more on countering Iran,¹⁴⁵ which, given the relatively friendly relations of Qatar with the Islamic Republic, was not in line with Qatar's interests. Exactly because of the friendly relationship, Qatar felt no immediate security threat stemming from Iran and given the political implosion of Iraq, it was given a relatively fear-free position to pursue its independent policies.

"Dominant states came to equate hierarchy with the leaders and coalitions that held power within subordinate states" states McCormack.¹⁴⁶ This is a very much true description of Saudi approach towards Qatar. Ḳalīfa was seen as a friendly proxy and Qatar's docility was

¹⁴² Roberts, *Qatar*, 35.

¹⁴³ Roberts, *Qatar*, 39.

¹⁴⁴ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 41.

¹⁴⁵ Bahgat Korany and Moataz A. Fattah, "Irreconcilable Role-Partners? Saudi Foreign Policy between the Ulama and the US," in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 380-381.

¹⁴⁶ McCormack, *Great Powers and International Hierarchy*, 113.

connected to his staying in power. When Ḥamad took over the throne, Saudi Arabia attempted several times to overthrow him, for his leadership directly threaten Saudi dominance in Qatar.

3.6 Era of Conflict (2017 – 2021)

On 5 June 2017 in the early morning news agencies were quickly reporting about the latest developments in what became to be known as the Gulf Crisis. One by one, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Saudi-based Yemeni government all cut diplomatic relations with Qatar. Saudi Arabia closed the land border between the states and all countries closed their air space and ports to Qatari planes and vessels.

The era of conflict between Saudi Arabia (and other nations) and Qatar, albeit it has never graduated into open combat, shows Qatar's capability to withstand orchestrated pressure. It would almost appear as if it was Saudi Arabia who was now balancing Qatar when it summoned its fellow Arab peers. In this time of crisis, Qatar was forced to deepen its balancing relationships, especially with its new Saudi rival – Turkey.¹⁴⁷ That created another disgust in Riyadh given the opposition to Turkish troops being present in the Gulf since the end of the First World War, which Saudi Arabia managed to keep even in the First Gulf War.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Qatar used the crisis in developing deeper relations with Russia.¹⁴⁹

The most important in keeping Qatar able to withstand the pressure proved nevertheless the strategic link to Washington. Although president Trump sided with Riyadh on Twitter,¹⁵⁰ Qatar proved to be too important for the US security in the region to allow for full scale conflict. It shows the hybridity of modern balancing, in which regional players balance regional power while both being allied to the same global power.

Domestically, the Qatar blockade put Qatar into strain economic and political situation, but the Saudi grouping of Qatar's adversaries and concerted diplomatic attack solidified Qatari national identity and help at-Ṭānīs to portray themselves as protectors of the nation. The fact, that long-promised establishment of Qatari Consultative Assembly could be postponed again

¹⁴⁷ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Neil Partrick, "Saudi Arabia and Turkey," in *Saudi Arabian Foreign Policy: Conflict and Cooperation*, ed. Neil Partrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 239.

¹⁴⁹ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*, 224-5.

¹⁵⁰ Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Gulf Crisis*, 3.

and again (in 2013, 2016 and 2020) is a clear proof of strong position of at-Ṭānī dynasty in the country, unshaken by the outside pressure.

Regionally, Qatar had to face new Saudi leadership personified by the young and ambitious crown prince Muḥammad bin Salmān (MBS), who felt so confident that he gambled to try to subdue Qatar in a way, of which the several sponsored and failed coups d'état fell short. MBS, certain of his strong connection with the White House and close friendship to UAE's Muḥammad bin Zāyid tried to portray Qatar as a supporter of radical elements in MENA and the blockade as a rightful action.

Qatar had little choice but to strengthen relations with Saudi adversaries and rivals, notably Turkey. Turkey established its military base in Qatar to protect it further from any potential land attack. Qatar also heavily invested (literally) in the relationship with Russia and reinforced links to Iran, on which Qatar was now dependent on food deliveries. Moreover, both states are important exporters of natural gas, Qatar's main source of income.

During the Era of Conflict, we cannot talk of the hierarchical relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar any more. The blockade of Qatar was the last attempt to subdue the revolting (former) subordinate. But by 2017 it was already too late. Qatar had established a vast gamut of independent relations and alliances outside the Saudi-led block of states, its leadership was firmly holding the power within the state, domestic political opposition was basically non-existent and resources to withhold the pressure and to pursue independent policy were plentiful.

How thus pushed Saudi Arabia out of Qatar? McCormack supposes that some other powerful player must have taken the patronage. The USA suggests themselves as such a new patron. Despite the strong security-related partnership between Qatar and the USA, Qatar could be hardly seen as American subordinate. Far too often Qatar pursues independent policy, particularly towards Palestinian movement Ḥamās, Afghan Taliban or Iran. Although the US Army is present on Qatari soil, the number of independent alliances, notably with Turkey and also the close strategic relation to Russia does not suggest US dominance and control over Qatar's foreign policy decisions.

4 Conclusion: Era of Partnership?

The analysis in the preceding chapter discussed a number of theories which should help us to understand the nature Saudi – Qatari relation and its qualitative change over several decades. The theory of alliance formation focused on threat perception, theoretical approaches to MENA foreign policies provided the necessary domestic, regional and international environment and finally the theory of hierarchies attempted to explain the unevenness of Saudi – Qatari relationship.

Nevertheless, none of the theories could provide the reader with an exact description which would fit the case study in question. This conclusion provides an amalgam of the theoretical findings with the aim to clarify the answers.

It seems that the discussed theories are spot on in describing particular moments in the relation, but all of them are short to describe the process of change. The author would like to suggest several preconditions which enabled Qatar to break free from the Saudi dominance.

First of them is the leadership. Given the autocratic nature of Qatar, the character of the emir is of utmost importance for the development of the country. *Ḳalifa* was firmly personally connected to Saudi Arabia, thus Qatar followed Saudi leadership. *Ḥamad*, either driven by disenchantment with Saudi treatment of Qatar or by personal ambition, chose to lead his country through different path. *Tamīm* was handpicked by his father, when two of his older brothers were overlooked, so continuation of *Ḥamad*'s policies is no surprise.

Secondly, the critical moment of breaking from the dominance was both enabled and accelerated by the regional and international environment. Regionally, Saudi Arabia was in dire trouble concerning the Kuwait Crisis, its own territory could have been invaded anytime, so Qatar was not the most important issue to deal with for Saudi leadership. After Iraqi threat was subdued, Iran started to pose more and more menacing to Saudi interests. *Ḥamad* skilfully manoeuvred regional politics and used the existing rivalries and conflicts to Qatar's benefit.

International situation also permitted Qatar to grow independent. The end of the Cold War meant that the cohesion of pro-Western block was not an important topic for the USA anymore and the international milieu of the 1990s permitted Qatar to distance itself from Saudi Arabia while continuing a friendly relationship with Washington. Qatar could also establish warmer relations with Russia.

All these steps and reorienting could not be possible without Qatar's economic independence. Given the oil and especially gas reserves, Qatar was not substantively connected

to Saudi Arabia via joint economic activities, but it rather grew important for its international customers. Furthermore, the establishment of al-Jazīra in early 1990s enabled Ḥamad to shape the narrative throughout the Arab world, which gave him important tool in promoting Qatar's objectives.

All this time the unique riches of Qatar were matched by minuscule population, which meant that any possible internal dissent towards the emir and his decisions could be paid off. Given the smallness of the Qatari population, no viable internal political opposition outside of the royal family is feasible. Ḥamad was nevertheless able, in contrary to most of his predecessors, to control the royal family and his rule sustained several attempted coups d'état and his rule was generally unquestioned.

Last but not least, strong relations with plenty of international partners, most importantly the USA, allowed Qatar his policies. The overreliance of Ḳalīfa on Saudi Arabia and the failure of this policy vis a vis Iraqi aggression in Kuwait is probably the main reason behind Ḥamad's hedging.

This unique set of enablers caused Qatar's foreign policy. The example of Qatar is instructive for it shows:

- That small country, given apt leadership, is able to play outsized role in global affairs;
- That country's importance and relative strength is changeable within time and if country's leadership is able to summon the necessary resources and use the regional and international milieu to its benefit, it could largely improve its country's stance;
- That hierarchies are not something constant and that countries are able to break free from the hierarchical relationship without falling under the domination of another powerful state.

In general, both fields of International Relations and Security Studies could highly benefit from the present analysis and case study. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar offers prime example of inception, course and demise of hierarchy. This thesis' modest contribution is the change of perception and approach to international hierarchy. It suggests that hierarchy is rather a process than a status quo and that hierarchies can be broken without a crisis in the dominant state by a combination of deliberate policy options of the subordinate state.

The blockade of Qatar was terminated during the GCC summit in Saudi al-Ula. The symbolic embrace between Tamīm ibn Ḥamad and Muḥammad bin Salmān was meant for the region, the new US administration and the whole world to show the once regained unity of Gulf

Arab states. This embrace did not erase all the grievances that Saudi Arabia and Qatar have had but it showed that at least for the time being, Saudi Arabia has come to terms with Qatar not being their vassal anymore. Whether this warming of relations be permanent or just temporary is hard to tell, but Qatar certainly rose from the blockade stronger than ever and Saudi leadership will have to treat it more like a partner and not a subordinate.

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Master's Thesis Summary

The analysis is concerned with the evolution of a hierarchical relationship between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Its main research question is “What was the nature of the hierarchical relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and what factors allowed or enabled Qatar break free from the dominance and establish an independent policy?” This question is relevant, because, after its independence Qatar was a subordinate state within a hierarchical relationship with Saudi Arabia and was copying Saudi foreign policy orientation and priorities. Nevertheless, since 1990s Qatar developed distinct foreign policy, which often goes contrary to Saudi interests. Most of the hierarchical literature associate end of hierarchy with crisis in the dominant state, but Saudi Arabian position in the world and region was not lessened. The thesis explores hypotheses, that Qatar was able to break free from the dominance because of determined policy and not because of power crisis of Saudi Arabia.

The thesis uses three main theoretical starting points. The first is Stephen Walt`s theory of alliance formation, which outlines the general nature of the relationship. Nonneman`s theoretical pluralism describes the tools the Qatari policy-makers had at their disposition. Also, it provides the analysis with regional and international context.

Third group of theories used in the thesis is Lake`s and McCormack`s theories of hierarchy. Approaches of both are considered while applying them to the case study in question. The main shortcomings of these theories are that they approach hierarchy as if it was unchanging fact. This thesis proposes studying hierarchy as a process, with its beginning, course and end.

The end of hierarchy is of an utmost interest to the thesis. After detailed description of historical developments of Saudi-Qatar relations, the thesis divides the chronological line into several distinct periods: Era of Fear, Era of Hierarchy, the Turning Point, Era of Disintegration and Era of Conflict.

In the third chapter the thesis takes each period and applies on them the theoretical matrix. The findings support the hypotheses that a subordinate state truly can escape the hierarchical relationship if certain conditions are fulfilled. The state must have enough resources, the must be led by apt and determined leadership and it must follow proactive foreign policy, which ensures alliances with other friendly nations. Finally, the breaking free from the dominance must be allowed by favourable regional and international milieu.

These findings support the main message of the thesis, that hierarchy is a process prone to changes and thus enriches the current research.