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Qatar and Omnibalancing
Escaping the Saudi Regional Hegemony
By

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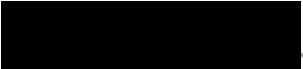
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Qatar and Omnibalancing

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ABSTRACT

Taking as its backdrop the severing of diplomatic ties and the imposition of economic sanctions on Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies in June 2017, this thesis examines the sources of the turbulent relationship between Qatar and its larger neighbor: Saudi Arabia. The thesis analyzes this critical relationship from the perspective of Qatar. Its aim is to explain why Qatar has historically pushed back against toeing the Saudi foreign policy line; and why it has largely succeeded in achieving this feat. The thesis interrogates Qatari contemporary history and its external relations in order to discern the factors that encouraged, and enabled, Qatar to pursue a policy of balancing against – rather than bandwagoning with – Saudi Arabia. The thesis draws on the theoretical framework provided by the International Relations theory of omnibalancing. It argues that Qatar’s historic alliance with the United States and its close relationship to Iran (at least in comparison to the other Gulf States) were driven by a Qatari quest to deter any possible Saudi military intervention and (more broadly) to escape Saudi regional hegemony. A brief comparison between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar regarding their stances towards Saudi Arabia shows that Bahrain bandwagoned with Saudi Arabia due to regime security calculations. Kuwait and Oman maintained more independent foreign policy stances, but without defying Saudi Arabia. Qatar was the only Gulf state to challenge Saudi regional hegemony. The thesis argues that the political, economic, and military ties that Qatar established with regional (Iran) and international actors– as well as its oil wealth and reliance on “soft power” – supported its quest to balance against Saudi regional hegemony.

Keywords: Qatar – Saudi Arabia – Foreign Policy- Omnibalancing- Bandwagoning – Balance of Power Theory – GCC Countries

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
1.1 Thesis Contributions and Highlights	1
1.2 Hypothesis and Research Questions.....	5
1.3 Research Methodology	6
1.4 Significance	7
1.5 Theoretical Analysis.....	9
1.5.1 Balancing	9
1.6 Map of Thesis.....	10
The Emergence of the State of Qatar: A Historic Overview	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 The Formation of the state of Qatar	13
2.3 The Emergence of Al Thani Rule	15
2.4 Qatari Alliances Are not New	18
2.5 Qatar's Independence and the 1868 Agreement:	20
2.6 Qatar's Foreign Policy Drivers:	21
2.6.1 The Kuwaiti Experience.....	22
2.6.2 The Branding of a State	24
2.7 Conclusion	25
Qatar and Regional Omnibalancing	27
3.1 Introduction.....	27
3.2 Balance of Power Theory	30
3.3 Omnibalancing	35
3.4 Qatar: A Developing Nation	38
3.5 Omnibalancing and the Developing Nations.....	39
3.6 Qatar and Omnibalancing	42
3.6.1 Maintaining a content public.....	43

3.6.2	Khalifa bin Hamad's Tenure.....	44
3.6.3	Establishing a Regional Qatari Identity	45
3.6.4	Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's Tenure	46
3.6.5	Qatari Omnibalancing: Aligning with the US.....	47
3.6.6	Qatari Omnibalancing: Establishing Ties with Iran	51
3.6.7	Qatari Omnibalancing: Inevitable Tensions with Saudi Arabia	53
3.6.8	Neutral GCC Countries: Kuwait and Oman	57
3.6.9	Bahrain: Bandwagoning with Saudi Arabia.....	59
3.7	Border Disputes after 1991	61
3.8	The Gulf Cooperation Council.....	62
3.9	Conclusion.....	63
	Qatar's Soft Power Instruments	64
4.1	Introduction.....	64
4.2	Qatari Gas Policies	65
4.3	International investments	67
4.4	The significance of Al Jazeera	73
4.5	Aljazeera as a Soft Power Tool.....	74
4.6	Conclusion.....	75
	Conclusion.....	77
	Bibliography	84

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis sheds light on the recent tensions in Saudi-Qatari relations that surfaced a few years ago in 2017. It provides a theoretical framework for understanding the sources of these tensions and explaining the defiant Qatari stance towards Saudi Arabia. It addresses the question of why Qatar refused to toe the Saudi line by pursuing an independent foreign policy stance from that of its larger and more powerful neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Qatar is a small state that is rich with natural resources (oil and gas). It exists in a troubled region, characterized by regional rivalries and foreign interventions. However, Qatar was able to choose not to bandwagon with Saudi Arabia and seek an independent path in terms of foreign policy challenging the Saudi hegemony. Bahrain, on the other hand, is bandwagoning with its Saudi neighbor. As will be discussed in this thesis, Kuwait and Oman, which are other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, maintained a neutral foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia. Qatar's alliances, stable domestic environment, natural resources, and economic connections all helped the small country maintain an independent foreign policy and increase its regional and international influence.

1.1 Thesis Contributions and Highlights

Each Gulf state has its regime security calculations, and they should not be viewed as a homogeneous entity. The aim of this thesis is to come to grips with the drivers of the Qatari foreign policy, focusing in particular on

understanding why Qatar has opted not to toe the Saudi line. The thesis will track the emergence of the Qatari state as an independent entity using secondary data. The Qatari state gained its recognition after recognizing Muhammad Al-Thani as the first Qatari ruler in 1868 after signing an agreement with Britain. He secured the British interests in the region without being over-associated with the country as a British protectorate. The history of the country shows that Al-Thani rulers protected the country from being swallowed up by competing sides by forming alliances. Thus, developing ties to balance against threats is rooted in history, as chapter two discusses.

Similar to any small state that is in a troubled region, such as the Gulf region, Qatar's primary foreign policy goal is to maintain its security and the stability of its regime. Two theoretical approaches can provide us with an understanding of the behavior of the Qatari state and the determinants of the state's alliances. These are 1) the realist and neo-realist balance of power theory, and 2) the theory of Omnibalancing. Realism prevailed during the Cold War era, and it focuses on the attempt of powerful states in their competition to maximize their power and materialistic capabilities seeking security and stability. Stephen Walt (1998) argues that such a competition is rooted in human nature and "... the desire to dominate others." and compete leading to the eruption of wars and conflicts. Theories of International Relations view the international system as an anarchic system.

Nevertheless, the balance of power theory offers a strategy for survival by balancing against another state that is a threat instead of bandwagoning with it. Instead of focusing on human nature, it emphasizes the importance of the international system as a structure to determine the behavior of states. They

form alliances to ensure their survival against countries that are a threat to those countries. The unit of analysis for both realist and neo-realist theory is the state as a unitary actor forming decisions to confront threats or potential threats of states of unknown intentions.

On the other hand, Omnibalancing focuses on internal threats that states confront, and that might pose a threat to the state's leadership and not just external threats. Thus, it will provide better explanatory power to alliances formation and decision making aimed to achieve and maintain the survival of the political regime. However, the unit of analysis is the ruler and not the state. Forming alliances seeks to ensure the survival of the political system even if it led to compromising the interests of the country for that goal. Given that the balance of power theory focuses on external threats that exist on an international level, it underestimates the role of internal threats domestically to the leadership of a country like maintaining a content public. As will be discussed later in the chapter, omnibalancing will help understand the Qatari foreign policy decision making and will explain the state's relations with its neighbors regionally and countries internationally.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is one of the incidents that shaped the Qatari foreign policy in terms of forming alliances to maintain security and stability with a degree of independence and autonomy when it comes to relying on an external source of protection like the US. The historical chapter will show that the rulers of Qatar maintained its independence in terms of alliances even after becoming a British protectorate. Moreover, given that Qatar's relationship with Iran is not troublesome as the Saudi and the Bahraini relationship with it and given that Iran shares with Qatar the world's largest

gas field, which can be both an asset and a liability, Qatar allied with Iran. The Qatari state aimed to balance the relationship with the US by establishing ties with Iran, especially after the US-led operations in Iraq in 2003. Furthermore, the Qatari relationship with the US will increase the security of the state since the presence of the military base will work as a deterrence against possible threats.

Establishing a close relationship with Iran happened amid a deterioration in the relationship with Saudi Arabia. Moreover, an alliance with Iran aimed to balance the Qatari relationship with the US, given that Qatar became a host of an American military base. However, initiating a relationship with Israel came to balance the relationship with Iran and the Qatari relationship with non-state actors like Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood movement to balance the ties with Israel (Roberts, 2017, p. 79). Those ties and the existence of the gas field and oil wealth are foreign policy tools that helped Qatar maintain its independence and autonomy away from the Saudi hegemony. In his book, *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics*, Mehran Kamrava, maintains that Qatar's leaders "...firmly committed to remaining within the Western economic and diplomatic orbits while doggedly unwilling to abandon those causes or entities—such as the Hamas or Ahmadinejad's Iran—to whom the West strenuously objects" (Kamrava, 2013, p.74).

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on the foreign policy of the Gulf region and the field of international relations, given that Qatar is challenging the Saudi hegemony, unlike Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. The theory of Omnibalancing helps understand the behavior of the Qatari state. The thesis discusses independent variables. Those variables are establishing alliances,

having a stable domestic environment, natural resources, and developing economic connections. They are foreign policy drivers that helped the small country maintain an independent foreign policy.

Additionally, those tools helped increase Qatar's regional and international influence. They helped secure the survival of the Qatari leadership, which is the dependent variable. Although Qatar is a small state like Bahrain and Kuwait, a comparison with these similarly situated states helps us understand their different stance towards Saudi Arabia (in contradistinction to that of their Qatari counterpart). Bahrain has a demographic composition that poses a threat to the survival of its regime, and Kuwait got invaded by a neighboring country. Both countries are Saudi allies with Kuwait maintaining its relative neutrality regarding the current Gulf crisis. Domestic politics provided the Qatari leadership with a broad margin to negotiate foreign policy because of the content public and the oil and gas wealth. Also, the population granted the Qatari leadership the leeway to govern, and it allowed the Qatari rulers to be capable of maintaining and steering the foreign policy of Qatar.

1.2 Hypothesis and Research Questions

This thesis argues that the more diverse are the foreign policy tools of a small state, the more independent and autonomous the country would be on a regional level, challenging larger and more powerful neighbors based on the experience of the Qatari state in comparison with the Kuwaiti and Bahraini experience. It addresses two intertwined research questions: First, why did Qatar refuse to toe the Saudi line following a distinct foreign policy?

Second, what are the essential tools that enabled Qatar to pursue an independent, indeed defiant foreign policy?

1.3 Research Methodology

To answer the research question, the thesis relies on secondary literature, examining the emergence of the Qatari state as an independent entity, historically. The history of Qatar shows that the Saudi-Qatari tensions that surfaced in 2017 are not new as they are rooted in history. Moreover, the thesis uses secondary data like foreign policy journals and books to draw a comparison between Qatar and other Gulf countries regarding their stance towards their larger and more powerful neighboring country, Saudi Arabia. It illustrates that Qatar enjoys an autonomy in terms of foreign policy and decision-making choices that other gulf countries do not have. Given that Gulf countries cannot be viewed as a homogenous entity as each state is driven by different foreign policy calculations, some states decided to keep a neutral stance regarding the Gulf crisis of 2017 like Kuwait and Oman.

Regarding the theoretical framework, explaining Qatar's independent foreign policy will be based the theory of omnibalancing that draws on balance of power theory. Forming alliances is one the foreign policy instrument that Qatar used to omnibalnce against Saudi Arabia. For example, the Qatari alliance with the US aims to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia by deterring any possible military interventions. Furthermore, literature indicates that Qatar's oil and gas wealth is a powerful economic capability that helped the country maintain a conforming public and establish international connections that can work as a deterrence against military threats. Al-Jazeera is another

soft power instrument that helped Qatar pursue an independent foreign policy by shifting from the role of a mediator at the beginning of the Arab Uprisings to actively engaging in shaping the course of events regionally.

The independent variables discussed are establishing Qatari alliances, having a stable domestic environment, natural resources and developing economic connections. The dependent variable is securing the survival of the Qatari leadership.

1.4 Significance

The thesis focuses on one crucial dimension of the international relations of the Gulf region, bearing in mind that the region cannot be viewed as a homogenous entity. Each Gulf state is driven by its interests and foreign policy drivers, thus playing an essential role in shaping the course of events in the Gulf and Middle Eastern regions. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) failed to execute the federal model of the Union of the Arab Emirates anticipated by Britain upon its withdrawal in 1968 as Qatar and Bahrain sought separate independent paths. However, their forms of governance are similar (Peterson, 2006). Peterson (2006) mentions that “differences emerged over the structure of the federation and the predominant positions demanded by Bahrain (because of its larger educated population) and Qatar (because of its newly acquired oil wealth).” Foreign policy motives are what drive each Gulf country. The thesis examines the reasons that are motivating Qatar to challenge the Saudi hegemony regionally. Moreover, shedding light on this topic will contribute to the literature on the international relations of the Middle East. Additionally, examining the Saudi-Qatari conflict will contribute

to the efforts of linking the Middle Eastern region to mainstream international relations theory.

The Gulf region is part of the Global South. The latter plays a crucial role in understanding conflicts and war and peace decisions. Here, Steven David (1991) states that “understanding why states go to war has traditionally been at the heart of the study of international relations.” The developing countries of the Global South have been facing multiple challenges since the end of the Second World War. Studying and understanding the behavior of those countries will facilitate understanding the motives that lead to the eruption of wars and the ways to resolve them, given that disputes have been dominating those countries.

Moreover, understanding the Qatari foreign policy towards its larger and more powerful neighbors is crucial. It contributes to the literature on small states that are surrounded by more substantial and more powerful neighbors in terms of understanding foreign policy tools that are used by small countries to balance against other countries that are perceived by small states as a source of threat.

The relationship between Qatar and the other Gulf countries deteriorated following the announcement, on June 5, 2017, by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt that they were severing diplomatic and other ties with Qatar. The current rift between the two sides of the conflict has some deep roots. It is the latest phase in a sequence of developments that reflect the unstable relationship between them that has persisted for several decades. Examining this intra-Gulf lingering conflict will

contribute to the literature on the relationship between small states and their larger neighbors theoretically. Furthermore, it will make it possible to generalize regarding this topic, given that Qatar's relationship with Saudi Arabia is not a unique case in the field of international relations. The thesis tracks the evolution of Qatari foreign policy concerning its Gulf neighbors to be able to understand the sources of Qatar's independent behavior. It also explains links to the formation of alliances to balance against states given that those actors can threaten the survival of the Qatari regime.

1.5 Theoretical Analysis

Analyzing alignments formation in a theoretical context is crucial to the understanding of the behavior and foreign policy of the states. Thus, it will help understand the actions of the Qatari state with its neighboring countries and provide an answer to the research questions.

1.5.1 Balancing

Kenneth Waltz, the founder of the neo-realist theory, views the international system as an anarchic order. He coined the balance of power theory, emphasizing the importance of the international system in shaping the behavior of the states. In this regard, Stephen Walt (1998) maintains that according to the neo-realist school of the thought the balance of power theory, weak states seek to survive, and they are motivated by the anarchic nature of the international system. The structure of the international system and distribution of power among great powers who seek survival as a foreign policy goal constrains the behavior of states. Thus, weak states tend to form

alignments to balance against the countries that are external sources of threat instead of bandwagoning with it.

Balancing is the strategy of establishing alliances with states to balance against a country that is perceived as a source of threat. States aligning with each other, seek survival, and maintaining their security. The source of threat should not necessarily be strong in terms of materialistic capabilities to be perceived as an existential threat to other states. However, Bandwagoning is the strategy of forming alliances with stronger, more powerful countries that are perceived as a source of threat. As will be explained below, there are significant factors that shape how countries are being perceived.

1.6 Map of Thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of an introduction to the topic and its significance, explaining how it'll contribute to the literature on the relationship between small states and larger and more powerful neighboring countries to be able to bridge the gap in the literature by the research conducted. Moreover, it provides a brief explanation of balancing that will be explained in detail in chapter three within a theoretical framework to understand the behavior of the Qatari state towards its neighboring countries.

The following chapter will examine the evolution of Qatar as a small country of independent foreign policies to be able to understand the motives and drivers of those policies. The historical record of the country presents an essential source of information to understand its foreign policies and the

national strategy of Qatar in dealing with its neighboring countries. It will discuss the regional rivalries and the Qatari ties with other countries in a historical context. Furthermore, the chapter will expand on the relationship between Qatar and Britain, given that Qatar is a British protectorate to counterbalance regional relationships with larger neighbors. Although Qatar is not a British creation, Britain did contribute to the emergence of the Qatari state while protecting the British interests in the region. Small countries like Qatar align with great powers to maintain an independent foreign policy. Moreover, the chapter will discuss the main Qatari foreign policy drivers, mainly maintaining security, seeking survival, and being a mediator challenging, in turn, the Saudi regional leadership and mediating efforts. The chapter will address how the gas policy is used concerning other countries as well as Iran.

The third chapter will shed light on the relationship of Qatar with its neighbors Saudi Arabia and Iran, as regional players. It also discusses the Qatari alliance with the US, which, at a minimum, minimized the risk of an invasion of Qatar. Qatar's tacit alliances and understandings with neighboring countries, and with regional powers (e.g. Iran), also served to promote Omnibalancing and maintain security and survival as foreign policy goals. The chapter will provide a theoretical framework that explains Qatar's foreign policy towards those countries, highlighting threat determinants, and describing how Omnibalancing can explain the behavior of the small oil and gas-rich Qatari state.

The fourth chapter discusses the evolvement of gas policies, investments, and economic connections that maintains the independence and security of

Qatar. Furthermore, those soft power tools provide the country with both political and financial influence, given that ties are established with countries in Europe and Asia that would act as a deterrence against any military interventions. The critical role of Al-Jazeera as a soft power tool of foreign policy will also be highlighted. The last chapter will be the concluding chapter.

Chapter Two

The Emergence of the State of Qatar: A Historic Overview

2.1 Introduction

The independence of Qatar is rooted in the history of the country since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although Qatar was a British protectorate, it was not a British creation. History shows that Qatari and British interests intertwined. Fromherz (2017) notes that, unlike the rulers of the other Gulf countries, the emergence of Al Thani rulers was a relatively new phenomenon. The treaty of 1868 with Britain was the “first formal recognition of a Sheikh of Qatar” (p.41). Britain sought to protect its interests in the region. Al-Thani rulers were aware of the importance of maintaining the independence of Qatar by paying tribute to the Bahraini and Saudi rulers. The chapter also discusses the history of the Qatari alliances, revealing that they are not contemporary but rooted in history. The Qatari rulers were successfully able to maintain the independence of Qatar despite the alliances and the complex system of governance that the Qatari peninsula falls under. Moreover, the chapter includes a discussion of the main foreign policy drivers of the Qatari state, which are seeking survival, regional influence, and branding.

2.2 The Formation of the state of Qatar

Qatar's aim to maintain its independence as an entity can be traced back to the beginning of the 19th century as the rulers of the Gulf region signed the agreements of the Trucial system with Britain in 1820. In *Qatar: Rise to Power and influence*, Allen Fromherz (2017) maintains that those agreements were responsible for achieving "regiment and organize the fluid social patterns of the Gulf..." (Fromherz, 2017, p.44). Those agreements not only secured British interests against piracy but it fulfilled a sense of sovereignty as Sheikhs were given the responsibility of areas of the entity (Fromherz, 2017, p.44). Those treaties turned the coastal emirates and sheikhdoms into semi British protectorates. Both of Fromherz (2017) and Peterson (2008) notes that those Trucial agreements varied in terms of their aims. One of them aimed at confronting piracy as it put the British interests at stake, given that Britain sought to secure a trade route to India via the Gulf region competing with the French interests in the region. Piracy was carried out by some tribes at that time, and it led Britain to use its naval force to target some Sheikhdoms opposing the British domination of the region.

Regarding Britain's interests in the Gulf region, Fromherz (2017) notes that "Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 caused the British to refocus their attention to the Gulf" (p.44). Britain aimed to secure a trade route to India via the Gulf region, competing with the French interests in the region. The system of truces that was established by Britain aimed at protecting its interests in the region, and they were temporary treaties. The first treaty was signed in 1820, and its main goal was to disarm tribes and ban the attacks that are launched against the British ships. However, it did not prevent internal maritime-related conflicts within tribes from erupting. As a result, a

truce was signed by Britain in 1835, and it was renewed every year to halt the attacks initiated by local tribes against each other. The tribes that get assaulted should inform the British officials instead of returning the attacks.

It was only a century later, however, that those agreements became effective in providing some semblance of independence and sovereignty for the nascent states of the region. Fromherz (2017) maintains that stability and freedom were achieved only a century later after the signing the first conventions of 1820. He argues that, "it has only been in the past 20 years that final, legal, recognized borders have begun to stabilize" (Fromherz, 2017, p.45).

2.3 The Emergence of Al Thani Rule

Fromherz (2017) notes that, unlike the rulers of the other Gulf countries, the emergence of Al Thani rulers was relatively new. The treaty of 1868 with Britain was the "first formal recognition of a Sheikh of Qatar" (p.41). In the middle of the nineteenth century, the city of Doha emerged with the name of Bidaa at that time, containing the headquarters of Al Thani rulers. However, the town of Zubara was the central city in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Fromherz (2017) states that the city of Zubara is considered as an addition to Bahrain, as will be mentioned later. Bahrain controlled the city in 1783, and the Qatari population that surrounded the city was not satisfied with Bahrain extending the area that was under the Bahraini rule. Thus, they would align against the Bahraini attempt to expand in the region.

Although Qatar was a British protectorate, the Qatari state did not emerge solely because of the British efforts. Al Thani rulers played a significant role in the creation of the country by succeeding in obtaining independence and in governing the state. Here, Fromherz maintains that the rulers paid “protection money, or khuwa, to powerful neighbors such as Bahrain and Abdalaziz bin Saud, ruler of Al Saud to the west, while maintaining its effective independent status” (Fromherz, 2017, p. 42). Similarly, Bahrain used to pay tribute to the Wahhabi ruler. Here, it is essential to mention that Al Saud was “...interested in maintaining Bahrain in a subject state” (p.46). However, Bahrain was not the only threat to the independence of Qatar as the Al-Sudan tribe could have succeeded in leading Qatar if it was not for the British intervention (Fromherz, 2017, p.46). The possibility of the Al-Sudan tribe succeeding in driving Qatar was facilitated by rights like trade-related privileges the former enjoyed like being spared from paying taxation in the pearl industry.

It is essential to mention that although Doha or Bidaa at that time was assumed by Britain to be under the rule of the Bahraini Sheikhdom, it was governed independently by Sheikh Buhur bin Jubran, given that the other Sheikhs have left it. Fromherz (2017) notes that he was “...aware of the advantages to be gained by being an independent outpost of the more closely monitored Bahrain.” (p.45). Moreover, it was only after the recognition of Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani by Britain as a ruler that Qatar was perceived as a distinct political entity (Fromherz, 2017, p.46). Although Britain supported Sheikh Isa bin Tarif before that, Fromherz (2017) argues that Sheikh Mohammed bin Al Thani was able to secure the British interests, and he maintained the independence of Qatar as an independent entity by

choosing not to give in to entirely to the British orders. (p.46). If it was not for his diplomatic efforts and leadership skills, "...Qatar could have easily become a part of the Kingdom of Bahrain or even Kuwait," maintains Fromherz (p.46). Moreover, being ruled by Bahrain, the Al-Sudan tribe, or being a target to any possible intervention by an external power were not the only threats to the independence of Qatar. Fromherz (2017) contends that the small Gulf Emirates was threatened by being "...swallowed up either by the tribes of Al-Saud to the west or by Persia to the east" (p.46).

Although Qatar is not a creation of Britain as a great power, Britain did contribute to the emergence of Qatar as an entity. Britain was not interested in the internal arrangements of the Peninsula that is dynamic as the primary goal was to secure its interests in the region, as was mentioned above. Thus, Britain was able to limit the attacks of piracy initiated by the tribal Sheikhs or chiefs against the British ships. The British interests constituted of establishing and securing trade connections, so the attention was diverted to the leaders that shared similar interests than that of Britain. In this regard, Fromherz (2017) argues that "...Britain sought specific chiefs with whom it could do business and from whom guarantees of security for shipping and trade could be wrested", as Britain wanted to win the support and alignment of the chiefs whose interests are hand in hand with the British interests (p. 51). The superiority of the British naval force gave it the upper hand and facilitated maintaining its interests secured. As was mentioned earlier, Britain aims to achieve a trade route to India. Therefore, it can be argued that although Britain was not interested in the domestic arrangements of the Qatari peninsula. Fromherz (2017) mentions that "the Qatari monarchy

emerged as an expression of the general needs of British imperial policy...” even if Britain did not prepare for the rise of Al-Thani leadership.

2.4 Qatari Alliances Are not New

Forming alliances is not new to Qatar, and they are rooted in the history of the Qatari state aiming to balance against threats and maintaining the independence of the Qatari Peninsula amid the competition between different actors to take it over. Examining the balancing efforts regionally and internationally and the formation of alliances that occurred in the history of the country in the late eighteenth century helps understand the independent behavior of modern Qatar.

In his book, *Securing the Global Ambitions of a City-State*, David Roberts (2017) discusses the example of the coastal town of Zubara of the Qatari peninsula and the Bahraini island, which can be a perfect illustration of how forming alliances is not a new strategy for Qatar. Both the Qatari town and the Bahraini island witnessed competition over governing both in the late eighteenth century. The competing sides were the Persians (over Bahrain), the Utub tribes who migrated from Kuwait to the Qatari- Bahraini region, Oman (over Bahrain), and the Wahhabis at a later stage. The Utub tribes and the Persians were enemies at some point when the Persians attacked the Bahraini- Qatari region to take control between 1777 and 1801. However, the Utub tribe sought protection from the Persians against Oman, when the latter attacked Bahrain to take it over. The tribe’s strategy failed as Oman successfully took over Bahrain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a result, the Utub tribe settled in the town of Zubara (Roberts, 2017, p.25).

Then they sought the help of another adversary, which is the Wahhabis, to recapture Bahrain from the Omani authority. Consequently, Roberts (2017) mentions that “The Al Khalifa – the leading family in the Utub tribal group – was reinstalled in Manama under a Wahhabi ‘tribal commonwealth’ in 1802 (p.26).

Nevertheless, the Al-Khalifa family showed some independence in terms of the degree of commitment in the relationship with the Wahhabis. Roberts (2017) points out that the former sought the help of the British in 1805, and it was a failed attempt (p.26). Oman was able to successfully oust the Wahhabis from Bahrain after a part of the Utub tribe sought the assistance of Oman against the Wahhabis. Given that Oman is an enemy of the Wahhabis, the former was able to overthrow the latter. Thus, the Al-Khalifa family was able to rule Bahrain under the protection of Muscat. Here, Roberts (2017) holds that the governing tribe, which is the Utub were independent to some extent, even with the overlap of authority between the Wahhabis and Oman (p.26).

Roberts (2017) argues that the competition to take over the Arabian Peninsula is what makes Qatar’s case distinctive, and it is not the shift in alliances that the country’s history has witnessed (p.26). There was no hegemonic power back then filling the power vacuum in the region. Moreover, Roberts (2017) points out that as the region evolved, Qatar falls under a “multi-layered nature of protection system” from Britain, the Ottomans, and Al Khalifa family in Bahrain (p.26). After the British withdrawal from Qatar and the country gaining its independence in 1971, Qatar fills

under the protection of Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi- Qatari relations were improving gradually (Roberts, 2017, p.27).

Al Thani family rulers secured the independence of the Qatari peninsula as it was mentioned earlier, especially from that of Bahrain. Here, Fromherz (2017) notes that Doha being the capital in modern Qatar after being a small village in the past compared to Zubara that was a “the only truly urban settlement in the peninsula is an evidence of the successfulness of Al Thani rulers in maintaining the independence (p.47). The town of Zubara was established by the end of the eighteenth century to conduct trade operations. However, “only the later Al-Thani domination of Qatar as an independent sheikdom in the second half of the nineteenth century would rebalance Qatari trade and contacts towards Doha and the north” (p.47).

2.5 Qatar’s Independence and the 1868 Agreement:

The 1868 agreement that was signed by the first Al-Thani ruler of Qatar and Sheikh Muhammad Al-Thani and Bahrain was formal but not the early recognition and an indicator of the evolvement of Qatar as an independent entity. A year before signing the agreement that was more of a list that restrains the responsibilities of the governor, a dispute erupted between the Bahraini governor and Sheikh Muhammad Al-Thani over putting his son in prison in Bahrain (Fromherz, 2017, p.55). In 2001, Bahrain mentioned that the agreement does not support the independence of Qatar as the keeps the Bahraini- Qatari relations as they were before the convention. The vital aim of the agreement is to rule between Bahrain and Qatar to solve a territorial dispute in 2001, mentioning in a report for the International Court of Justice

that both of the Bahraini and Qatari rulers have been acknowledged equally and there's no affiliation between both countries (Fromherz, 2017, p.56). Moreover, the agreement asserted the predominance of the Al-Thani family as rulers of Qatar warning the other sheiks from breaking the maritime peace at that time by acts of piracy. Although Britain recognized Sheikh Muhammad bin Thani as the representative of the Qatari chiefs and tribes, not all the sheiks accepted such a recognition. However, Britain did not play a role in creating the domestic societal arrangements of Qatar, yet they intentionally or unintentionally mastered the emergence of Al-Thani (Fromherz 2017, p.57).

2.6 Qatar's Foreign Policy Drivers:

Lina Khatib (2013) maintains in her critique of the Qatari foreign policy drivers that the "high profile for Qatar has been carved out through years of astute public diplomacy supporting an expansive foreign policy that has often seen the country hailed as the 'new Saudi Arabia'." She mentions that the country's foreign policy during the Arab Upheavals showed inconsistency in terms of strategy. In this regard, she argues that such an inconsistent strategy challenges one of the main drivers of the Qatari foreign policy which is maintaining security and stability as Qatar's foreign policy motives go beyond the mediating image that the country tried to emphasize for a long time. Qatar aims to safeguard its national interests, upholding security, and stability to balance against the threat that a county as small as Qatar might face. Here, Khatib (2013) maintains that by "increasing its international

profile, Qatar aims to protect itself from the perils of small-state anonymity and vulnerability—perils of the kind from which Kuwait suffered in 1990.”

2.6.1 The Kuwaiti Experience

Learning from the Kuwaiti experience regarding the Iraqi invasion, the ties between Qatar and the US grew stronger upon the execution of the operations that aimed at freeing Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion and safeguarding Saudi Arabia. Roberts (2017) argues that this incident only emphasized the importance of having an external protector for the Qataris, which is, in this case, the US (p.21). Moreover, Qatar seeking protection was encouraged by the similarities that Kuwait holds with Qatar in terms of size, the regional environment, and wealth. Peterson (2006) contends that Qatar’s wealth that is derived from oil and gas “...may provoke envy and hostile action as happened in Kuwait.” Moreover, the smallness of the state and its geographic location will only exacerbate threats that are related to security calculations. Thus, Roberts (2017) points out the following: “...it is difficult to emphasize enough the importance of the invasion of Kuwait as a driver of Qatar’s subsequent actions” (p.21). Given the similarities between Kuwait and Qatar, the latter’s foreign policies and arrangements were shaped by the incident of the invasion of Kuwait.

Another driver of the Qatari foreign policy is Qatar’s mediating and humanitarian efforts. This goal is linked indirectly to the aim of preserving security and stability, given that Qatar is in a troubled region. The Qatari state played an active role as an arbitrator between several countries in the region. Khatib (2013) discusses Iran as an example as an active regional player with

“expansionist foreign policy” goals in the region. She argues that, “Qatar can be seen as attempting to contain those conflicts and prevent their spreading closer to home.” In this regard, Iran has established ties with non-state actors like Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Qatar sought to arbitrate between those non-state actors and their political rivals, aiming to contain those conflicts from spilling over. Moreover, Iran shares with Qatar, the world’s largest oil field. Thus, Qatar may be trying to limit Iranian influence in the region while maintaining ties with it.

Another foreign policy goal for Qatar that motivated the country to mediate between political rivalries is the country’s aim to become an active regional player. As it was mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia managing to fill the power vacuum in the Gulf region in terms of leading the Arabian Peninsula in the late eighteenth century is an example that the kingdom’s leadership of the Gulf region is not new. It is rooted in history. Qatar’s goal is to challenge the Saudi leadership and the Saudi role as an arbitrator as well. At some point, the Saudi mediation efforts could not be perceived as neutral, taking the side of one of the two sides. One example can be the Kingdom’s relationship with the 14th of March bloc in Lebanon. Khatib (2013) contends that Qatar’s “...involvement in conflicts across the Middle East and beyond represents an effort to present itself as a viable alternative to Saudi Arabia and a potential new leader in the Middle East.”

Qatar is one of the main exporters of Liquefied Natural Gas. It is considered as another foreign policy determinant for Qatar, given that it is one of the three major resource producers in the world, Russia and Saudi Arabia being the other two (Fang, Jaffe, & Loch-Temzelides, 2014). Qatar, primarily a gas

producer, is the largest supplier of globally traded LNG. (Fang et al., 2014) maintain that the Qatari state aims to maintain the security of the regime, fulfill an economic goal having an active role in the gas market, and to increase its regional influence as will be discussed in chapter three.

2.6.2 The Branding of a State

Creating a Qatari brand is another foreign policy driver for the Qatari leadership in establishing ties with the Western countries "...defining itself as an ally to the West.", argues Khatib (2013). Creating such a Qatari brand helps the country to grab the attention of the international community. Qatar hosts the largest US airbase in the world, which is Al-Udeid Airbase. The existence of the US military base on the Qatari territory enhances security, given that the Qatari peninsula is in an unstable region. (Khatib, 2013). Another benefit of appealing to the international community is fulfilling the Qatari economic ambitions to become a "...modern, business-oriented state that can compete in the international economy." The country will benefit from gas exports and finding a long-term substitute for oil revenues as an economical source for the country (Khatib, 2013).

Back to the importance of alliances in the evolvment history of the Qatari peninsula, Qatar established connections with states and state actors. In this regard, Khatib (2013) contends that "Qatar has also pursued an open-door policy towards various, often clashing, political actors in the region." Qatar's foreign policy towards Syria during the Arab Spring can be an example. Although Qatar supported specific Islamist groups amid the eruption of the revolution against the Syrian president, the Qatari state's goal has always

been not to over-associate with any actor. An illustration can be Qatar hosting the unity summit for the Syrian opposition in Doha in 2012 that included many opposition factions while being the main supporter for the Syrian National Council (SNC) in terms of finance. (Khatib, 2013).

The independence of the behavior of the Qatari state that is rooted in the history of the country is confirmed by more historical evidence. Roberts (2017) argues that Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa played an active role in the major shifts that occurred in the relationships of the Qatari country with the great powers, according to Nixon's ambassadorial note during the late twentieth century (Roberts, 2017, p.28). Here, just like Khatib (2013), Roberts (2017) maintains that it confirms the tendency of the Qatari state to diversify its relationships. Thus, it will help understand and explain the Qatari foreign policies as will be discussed in chapter three. The relationship between Qatar and the US can be a good example. Robert (2017) mentions that Qatar would attempt to balance any over-association with the US, given that the latter was not an ally at that time. It can be another example that illustrates Qatar's independence in her alignments and foreign policy decisions. Yet, once the Qatari state established ties with the US after the Iraqi invasion after the operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield - given that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a turning point for the Qatari foreign policy - Qatar became the primary host for US forces (and the relations were based on mutual interests and evident benefits derived from those relationships between both countries).

2.7 Conclusion

Both of the historical evolvement and the foreign policy drivers of modern-day Qatar shows that as the country avoids, being overly dependent on an external power or an ally or a protractor. Such a goal is achieved by diversifying ties and alliances that Qatar forms with state and non-state actors like the US. Another example is the country's relationship with non-state Syrian actors during the Arab Upheavals, as was discussed above. Furthermore, Qatar aimed to establish a Qatari identity or a brand that catches the attention of the international community as an ally of the great powers which will provide the country with security and help the country to further its economic ambitions. Thus, modern-day Qatar refusing to be under the Saudi umbrella should not be surprising.

Chapter Three

Qatar and Regional Omnibalancing

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical framework that helps understand the Qatari foreign policy using the theory of omnibalancing that is coined by Stephen David. The approach emphasizes the role of perceived threats to the leadership of a country in shaping foreign policy and alignment decisions. Thus, it will help understand the motives that shape the alliances formed by Qatari decision-makers regionally and internationally. It emphasizes the role of alliances as a foreign policy tool that allows the Qatari rulers to maintain an independent behavior away from the hegemony of the Saudi Kingdom. Omnibalancing theory was developed to understand foreign policy choices and alignment decisions that developing countries make to secure and maintain their survival. There are a lot of developing countries making “Third World” -which is the term used by David (1991) to describe those countries “... central to understanding the course of international politics” (David,1991).

Each Gulf state has its regime security calculations, and they cannot be viewed as a homogeneous entity. The aim of this thesis to understand the drivers of the Qatari foreign policy and why Qatar is not toeing the Saudi line as the Kuwaiti and the Bahraini counterparts. The Kuwaiti state remains neutral amid the Gulf crisis that erupted in 2017. For that purpose, secondary data will be used to track the emergence of the Qatari state as an

independent entity gaining its recognition after recognizing Sheikh Muhammad Al-Thani as the first Qatari ruler in 1868 after signing an agreement with Britain. He was able to secure the British interests in the region without being over-associated with the country as a British protectorate. The history of the country shows that Al-Thani rulers secured the country from being swallowed up by competing sides by forming alliances. Thus, forming alliances and ties to balance against threats is rooted in history, as it was discussed in chapter two. Additionally, this chapter compares the Qatari, Kuwaiti, Bahraini, and Omani relationship with Saudi Arabia as part of answering the research question. The chapter also provides a brief history of the creation of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Like any small state located in a troubled region like the Gulf region, Qatar's main foreign policy is maintaining security and stability. Two theoretical approaches can provide an understanding of the behavior of the Qatari state and the determinants of the state's alliances, which are the realist and neo-realist balance of power theories and omnibalancing. Realism prevailed during the cold war era, and it focuses on the attempt of powerful states in their competition to maximize their power and materialistic capabilities seeking security and stability. Walt (1998) argues that such a competition is rooted in human nature and "... the desire to dominate others." and compete leading to the eruption of wars and conflicts. Theories of International Relations view the international system as an anarchic system.

Nevertheless, the balance of power theory is a strategy for survival for states by balancing against another state that is perceived as a threat instead of bandwagoning with it. Instead of focusing on the human nature, it

emphasizes the importance of the international system as a structure in determining the behavior of states to ensure their survival by forming alliances against states that are perceived as a threat. The unit of analysis for both realist and neo-realist theory is the state as a unitary actor forming decisions to confront threats or potential threats of states of unknown intentions.

On the other hand, Omnibalancing focuses on internal threats that states confront, and that might pose a threat to the state's leadership and not just external threats. Thus, it will provide better explanatory power to alliances formation and decision making aimed to achieve and maintain the survival of the political regime. However, the unit of analysis is the ruler and not the state. Alliances are formed to ensure the survival of the political regime even if it led to compromising the interests of the state for that goal. Given that the balance of power theory focuses on external threats that exist on an international level, it underestimates the role of internal threats domestically to the leadership of a country like maintaining a content public. As will be discussed later in the chapter, omnibalancing helps understand the Qatari foreign policy decision making and will explain the state's relations with its neighbors regionally and countries internationally.

The chapter will also discuss the relationship of Qatari rulers with both the US and Saudi Arabia. It will compare the different relationships of Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman with the Saudi neighbor to be able to understand the foreign policy motives of the Qatari state.

3.2 Balance of Power Theory

A state's power is usually estimated by its materialistic and military capabilities according to the realist thought, motivating a state to bandwagon or balance against a threat. However, Stephen M. Walt (1987) argues that this argument should be reviewed given that power is not the only determinant of a state being perceived as a threat or not. In his book, *The Origins of Alliances*, Walt (1987) argues that "because balancing and bandwagoning "...are more accurately viewed as a response to threats," other factors are major determinants of how powerful a state is such as "...aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions" as Walt (1987) puts them (p.21-22). In other words, power can't be the only determinant of the strength of a state, Here, Walt (1987) maintains that "...states may balance by allying with other strong states if a weaker power is more dangerous for other reasons." Walt (1987) classifies them as "sources of threat" (p.22).

A state's aggregate power can determine if a state can be perceived as a threat or not. Power includes a state's population and its military, industrial and technological advancements (Walt, 1987, p.22). Given that acquiring power capabilities can increase the risk of viewing a state as a threat, it will motivate other states to bandwagon or balance against that threat by forming alliances. A state's supremacy in terms of acquiring a certain capability will allow it to determine punishments and rewards regarding other states as well as determine if those states would bandwagon or balance against the state with aggregate power. Qatar's gas policies can be an example of aggregate

power. The Qatari state shares with Iran the world's largest gas field, and Qatar was the first Gulf country to establish relations with Iran after the Iranian revolution, as it will be discussed later in the chapter. Political ties, trade-related ties, and defensive cooperation were established during the early nineties between Qatar and Iran. Qatar investing heavily in the gas and entering the LNG market during the nineties presents Qatar as a state with the competitive economic capability and establishing ties with a country of a regional influence like Iran increases Qatar's aggregate power.

Another factor that determines if a state is perceived as a threat is geographic proximity. In this regard, Walt (1987) points out that "because of the ability to project power declines with distance, the states that nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away" (p.23). The nearer the state, or the non-state actor, is the higher its ability to display its power. Thus, it will motivate a balancing or a bandwagoning response from the states that perceive the threat. Sharing borders with a supreme power that is perceived as a threat to the neighboring country will motivate the latter to bandwagon with the threat, especially if the supreme power can display its capabilities to assert compliance (Walt, 1987, p.23). If the state is relatively geographically distant, yet a neighbor of a neighboring country, the state at risk will most likely establish alliances with other countries against the threat (Walt, 1987, p.23). As will be discussed later in the chapter, Qatar chose to balance against Saudi Arabia by aligning with the US and Iran. Qatar has a variety of foreign policy tools and a domestic environment that is free from any political pressure, providing the Qatari leadership with independence in terms of decision making and foreign policy. As a result, the Qatari state has the

freedom to challenge the Saudi hegemony and not toe the Saudi more powerful neighbor like the Bahraini counterpart.

Regarding the Bahraini kingdom, however, demographic composition plays a crucial role in shaping the relationship between both Gulf Cooperation Council members (GCC). Most of the Bahraini population is Shia, and both Sunni Bahraini and Saudi leadership view it as a threat to the survival of their regimes, given that the population is assumed to be backed by Iran. Security measures were intensified amid the outbreak of the Bahraini protests in 2011 and Saudi led-GCC troops intervened in Bahrain. Oil profits helped maintain a content population, yet as the oil revenues declined, Bahrain had to rely on Saudi Arabia for financial support. Bahrain chose to bandwagon, whereas Qatar chose to balance against the latter despite the proximity of both Gulf countries to Saudi Arabia. As it shall be discussed later in the chapter, it is important to mention that the Saudi – Iranian geopolitical contestation is mainly because of the regional competition for influence, the different interpretations of political Islam, and Qatari gas policies that will be discussed in chapter four.

The ability of a state to initiate attacks as an offensive capability is another determinant of the level of the perceived threat. Walt (1987) mentions that states who enjoy greater offensive capabilities are more likely to motivate the act of establishing alliances than countries that are incapable of initiating attacks due to their materialistic capabilities or their geographical location (p.24). He points out that offensive capabilities are different than geographic proximity and a state's aggregate power as threat determinants as discussed earlier and as he puts it, "...offensive power is the ability to threaten the

sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost.” The impact of having such offensive capabilities depends on the time and the situation at hand. Walt (1987) mentions that the “...effects of offensive power may vary,” in terms of motivating a balancing or a bandwagoning act (p.24).

Regarding the importance of the material capabilities of powerful states and how small states perceive stronger and larger neighbors, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is an important incident that shaped the foreign policy of small countries in the region. Kuwait shares similarities in terms of geographical location, wealth, and size with the Qatari state. This incident only strengthened ties and alignment with the US as a protector against any external military interventions. The presence of the US base in Qatar acts as a deterrence to any similar threats of military intervention from Saudi Arabia or Iran. However, the Bahraini experience is different as security calculations of the Saudi regime are involved, which explains the Saudi intervention amid the outbreak of protests in 2011.

The state that is perceived as an actor with hostile intentions that can motivate states and actors to form alliances against it as well. Walt (1987) argues that “...states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them” (p.25). Moreover, a state does not have to be powerful to pose a threat against other countries. Having hostile intentions and expansionist ambitions triggers initiating alliances against such a state. In this regard, Walt (1987) highlights the importance of intentions by arguing that “intention, not power, is crucial” (p.26). The role of state power should not be marginalized, but it is not enough to provoke alliances. There is a higher chance that states would balance against and not bandwagon with a

state that has hostile intentions to avert being victimized and swallowed by the aggressive state if the other state perceiving the threat is weak.

In this regard, it is important to note that Iran is not only a regional competitor for Saudi Arabia but is also perceived as a threat by the GCC countries. It has expansionist intentions as it was mentioned in the previous chapter.

Qatar has the largest gas reserve that is shared by Iran, and it can be an asset and a threat to the country. As will be mentioned later in the chapter, Qatar is the first GCC country to establish relations with the Iranian republic. Moreover, the Qatari alliance of the US and the military existence of the latter in the Qatari peninsula deter any possible interventions based on hostile intentions from Iran or Saudi Arabia, unlike the case in Bahrain as it was discussed earlier. Bahrain bandwagoned with Saudi Arabia, given that the former is financially dependent on the latter and the importance of the stability of the Bahraini kingdom domestically to the stability of the Saudi regime in terms of regime survival and regime security calculations.

Moreover, Qatar did not experience with Iran any territorial dispute like the Emirati counterpart. However, the Emirati experience with Iran is different.

There is a territorial dispute over three islands that are shared, which would only exacerbate tensions, which are Abu Musa and the two Tunbs. Those territorial claims only increased the distrust between the UAE and Iran.

William Rugh (1997) mentions that Iranian territorial claims only took place a few hours before the independence of the UAE. The tension between the two countries only made UAE view Iran as a threat. The UAE, sharing borders with Iran, would only exacerbate tensions over possible expansionist

attempts, given that Iran has a regional influence. However, Qatar's relations with Iran are stable, as the chapter will discuss later.

When decision-makers form alliances, Walt (1987) argues that balancing against a threat should be a favorable strategy (p.29). As it was discussed, earlier intentions that drive states to make alignment choices are essential, and the way countries are being perceived is equally crucial. Both intentions and interpretations are dynamic, meaning that they are not fixed, and they can't be predicted. Thus, balancing against a threat seems a preferable option instead of bandwagoning with a powerful state, increasing its power and capabilities while not being sure of its intentions (Walt, 1987, p. 29).

3.3 Omnibalancing

Steven David (1991) maintains that omnibalancing bridges the theoretical gap in understanding the alignments of "Third world" countries, which is the term he used to describe developing countries. He offers omnibalancing as the most suitable theoretical alternative to the neo-realist theory of balance of power theory. It provides theoretical key assumptions that help explain common themes among those countries that do occur elsewhere but more extensively in the developing countries, given that balance of power theory can't illustrate those themes that are related to state behavior. An example can be that omnibalancing acknowledges the importance of considering internal threats as much as external threats to understand state behavior and foreign policy.

As it was mentioned earlier, the balance of power theory is a strategy of survival for states that are perceiving other countries as a source of threat. Moreover, it was mentioned that a state's power could be shaped by determinants that go beyond materialistic capabilities. Both David (1991) and Walt (1998) maintain that according to the balance of power theory, threats are external as they are shaped by the structure of the international system and the distribution of power among great powers. On the other hand, Omnibalancing departs from realist and neo-realist assumptions that it focuses on internal threats that states confront. Thus, it will provide better explanatory power to the alliance's formation and rearrangements of the order of the nations of the Global South. Here, David (1991) claims that the primary motivation for the leaders of the developing countries to establish alignments is "...the rational calculation of the Third World leaders to which outside power is most likely to do what is necessary to keep them in power." Such motivation is shaped by internal and external threats as outcomes of an unstable region. As David (1991) puts it, it is because of "... the unstable, dangerous, and often fatal nature of the international and domestic political environment that characterizes the Third World." Thus, it is the survival of the rule of the leaders, and not the survival of the state is what matters so state interests might be compromised by those leaders for them to maintain their rule (David, 1991). Those rulers seek to secure their rule because it is "weak and illegitimate, and the stake for domestic politics is very high" (David, 1991).

Another vital motivation to make alignment decisions that are based on the theory of Omnibalancing to explain state behavior of the developing

countries in a way that balance of power theory cannot, according to David (1991), is the strategy of appeasement. Leaders would align with other leaders with aggressive intentions but are only minor threats to be able to focus on major threats. The aim is to secure the survival of the political regime. To apply this strategy to the developing countries, leaders will appease the allies of their domestic rivals to be able to focus on confronting major security threats that are domestic (David,1991).

As will be discussed below in the Omnibalancing and GCC countries section, the former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who became the president in 1970 till 1981, chose to ally with the US post-1973 war and decided not to bandwagon with Israel. The alignment was driven by the intension of balancing against a domestic threat, which is the Egyptian population that demanded to free the Egyptian territory Saini from the Israeli occupation. Thus, as an Israeli ally, the US would be able to convince the Israeli counterpart to withdraw (David, 1991). However, for the Qatari leaders, they had more freedom in terms of foreign policy and decision-making using oil and gas wealth to keep a content public.

Omnibalancing not only has explanatory power, but it shares some realist assumptions with the balance of power theory, as it was mentioned earlier. Although Omnibalancing shares main realist assumptions with that of the balance of power that determines the decisions to form alliances with other states, which are “power, interests and rationality” (David, 1991), both theories claim that the international system is anarchic, different interests of countries may clash. They can resort to using power as a possible choice (David,1991).

Moreover, the objective of seeking survival is prioritized and rooted in human nature as it is based on rational decision-making. It is essential to mention that unlike the balance of power theory that focuses on the behavior of the state to understand alliances formation, omnibalancing focuses on the behavior of state leaders who want to maintain their power, as a unit of analysis (David, 1991). Thus, states are not the unit of analysis as it the case for the balance of power theory.

3.4 Qatar: A Developing Nation

Qatar is a developing country with a Human Development index of 0.848, indicating a high life span, education level, and Gross National Income (GNI), which higher than that of Bahrain, UAE, and Kuwait. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Qatar is 112532 per capita (2011 PPP \$), which also indicates a high economic performance and living standards, and it is higher than that of the Gulf states mentioned earlier (UNDP, 2018). Furthermore, given that the country relies on gas and oil profits massively and given its small size, the Qatari states fit into the category of developing nations.

The geography of the Qatari state, as the historical chapter of the thesis suggested earlier, gave the country freedom of action in terms of the establishment of relations with tribes and regional competitors. They aimed to take over the Qatari- Bahraini peninsula as the country evolved before gaining its independence. Here, Fromherz (2017) argues that with “its 559-mile coastline, it has most of the advantages of an island without the risks of isolation” (p.38). He describes its geographical location as both “an asset and a risk” (p.39). Its location allowed the country to be independent yet be an

essential regional international player after the discovery of oil and gas. However, other Gulf States made several territorial claims that are related to their borders with Qatar.

3.5 Omnibalancing and the Developing Nations

Omnibalancing is more inclusive in terms of explaining alliances formation than the balance of power theory when it comes to developing countries. Subscribers to the balance of power theory underestimate the role of domestic politics in seeking survival for the states in an anarchic order. They emphasize states' attempts to balance against threats they confront on an international level in a system where a central authority to settle disputes is absent. This argument is justified by the assumption of the availability of a government that is ruling the state. This government is a recognized central authority by a society that is assumed to be unified (David, 1991). Although advocates of the balance of power theory acknowledge that balancing happens within a state between groups in an assumed unified society, they argue that balancing on an international level is more important than the internal level of balancing. As David (1991) puts it, "...supporters of the balance of power theory assert that balancing is of much less importance in domestic politics than it is in international politics." Instead of analytically separating the developing nations from the rest of the world, it is essential to acknowledge its role in shaping the course of events internationally.

As it was mentioned earlier, the balance of power theory focuses on the state as a unit of analysis. The reasoning behind such emphasis is that the state is assumed to have full control over what happens within the states. Groups

within the state are compliant with the authority that enjoys autonomy over the governed territory, which is not always the case when it comes to the developing countries. Thus, "...according to the theory, this justifies a focus on the behavior of the state" (David, 1991). The attributes of developing countries are best explained by omibalancing, given that the states include a variety of groups that will not necessarily comply with the authority of the country. Those groups show resistance. It makes the leadership of the state the unit of analysis instead of the country itself, shaping foreign policy and mainly alliances. Thus, leaders who worry about staying in power would prioritize their interests and compromise the interests of the country for their survival.

The loyalty of citizens has always been a challenge since the development of countries in the region. As the states developed, exercising authority over the governed areas and the public contributes to decreasing the power and role of non-state actors. However, it may not guarantee the loyalty of the governed people. Gause (1999) argues that it limits "the ability of non-state actors (be they ethnic groups like Kurds or transnational ideological movements) to overthrow ruling regimes or dictate their foreign policies." He holds that those changes that are on the domestic level can help explain changes that happen on a systemic level like the stability of the countries of the region.

Likewise, David (1991) maintains that the balance of power theory, focusing on external threats and underestimating internal threats, entails ignoring a source of threat to the leadership of the developing countries. External threats depend on their efficiency in domestic politics and the environment

within a state. As a result, ignoring it will affect the evaluation of those external threats that are dependable on internal circumstances that are vulnerable and easily affected by any sort of external manipulation (David, 1991). The demographic composition of the Bahraini Kingdom shapes the relationship with Saudi Arabia, as it will be discussed later in the chapter. Most of the population is Shia, which is, according to Moban (2012) estimated to be 75% of the population, posing a threat to both the Sunni Bahraini ruling family, Al-Khalifa and to the Sunni Saudi leadership given there are allegations of possible ties between the people and Iran.

Furthermore, the balance of power theory empathizes the importance of expansionist intentions and attempts that are meant to increase the power of the state with those intentions. One example can be the one that was discussed in chapter one about Qatar trying to engage in mediating efforts to limit the Iranian regional influence as a country of an expansionist policy. They contribute to shaping the behavior of the threatened country in terms of forming alliances to balance against the threat, as was mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the leaders of the developing countries prioritize their survival over balancing against the expansionist attempts. Thus, increasing the power of the state is not the primary motivation to establish alignments, but the main motivation is for the ruler to stay in power (David, 1991).

Former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat who became the president in 1970, is one of the examples that David (1991) discusses to show the ability of the omnibalancing theory in explaining why the leaders of the developing countries form alliances. Moreover, it shows the limitations of the balance of power theory when the Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat allied with the Soviet

Union. The Soviet Union supported the Sadat militarily during the 1973 war Arab Israeli war. The Soviet military assistance decreased at some point. Thus, Sadat re-aligned with the United States. David (1991) maintains that neither ideology nor bandwagoning (appeasing) determined the alignment with the US. Sadat aligned with the Soviet Union than with the United States without showing any sort of commitment to a particular ideology. Similarly, Sadat did not choose to appease or bandwagon with the source of the threat, which is Israel.

Omnibalancing theory can explain the Sadat's alignment with the US post-1973 war when focusing on internal threats as it was discussed earlier. Sadat was pressured by groups in Egypt to free Saini from the Israeli occupation as an outcome of the 1967 war. Consequently, given that the US is an Israeli ally, the former would be able to convince the latter to return the seized Egyptian territory. Here, the Egyptian groups are an internal threat to Sadat's power and leadership (David, 1991). The Soviet Union did not agree to assist Sadat militarily to end the Israeli occupation, and as David (1991) puts it, "...fearing a confrontation with the United States and believing that Egypt would lose any war with Israel." As a result, Sadat decided to end the alignment with the Soviet Union and establish an alliance with the US. The rationale behind such an agreement is that Sadat attempted to bandwagon with the United States as an international but secondary threat to be able to balance against the principal, more pressing threat, which is the domestic or internal threat of the groups to his leadership (David, 1991).

3.6 Qatar and Omnibalancing

Explaining the Qatari foreign policy using the omnibalancing theory will help us develop an answer to why did Qatar refuse to toe the Saudi line like Bahrain and Kuwait did?

Roberts (2017) maintains that, "...the first professional bureaucracy was started in Qatar" (p.17). It was formed by the Ottomans, who arrived in Qatar in 1871 as they formed governmental posts. Roberts (2017) argues that creating Qatar's administrative system under the Ottoman rule only emphasized the emergence of Qatar as an independent state at a later stage (p.17). Qatar was governed by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani who was chosen by the Ottomans. Doha was recognized as the capital. However, the city of Dukhan gained more popularity after Qatar started producing oil. The Ottomans were defeated by Qatar at the battle of Wajbah in 1893, and they were replaced by British rule in 1916. Qatar fell partially under British protection, since Qatar did not approve all the articles of the protection's agreement, as it was mentioned earlier in the previous chapter. Qatar became independent after the withdrawal of Britain in 1971.

3.6.1 Maintaining a content public

Qatar started producing oil in the 1930s. Thus, it became a rentier state after becoming heavily dependent on oil and gas revenues. Oil revenues witnessed a noticeable increase in the following twenty and thirty years. Al Thani leaders had to use oil wealth to keep a conforming public and to guarantee the loyalty of the royal family. In this regard and based on Sadat's example discussed earlier, maintaining a content public is necessary for the political survival of Al-Thani rule, thus securing the rule from a potential

internal threat and for allowing the Qatari leadership a sense of freedom when making foreign policy decisions. Here, Kamrava (2015) argues that the Qatari state's "autonomy is rooted in two distinct yet complementary sources: massive revenues accrued from hydrocarbon exports, specifically from liquefied natural gas; and elite institutional cohesion, thus streamlining policymaking decisions and ensuring political and diplomatic agility" (p. 70).

This goal was achieved by using oil revenues to improve the standards of living in the underdeveloped state by enhancing the infrastructure and creating jobs (Roberts, 2017, p.18). As will be discussed below, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa enjoyed the freedom of action with no internal pressures from the public regarding his decisions.

3.6.2 Khalifa bin Hamad's Tenure

Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani was acknowledged as the leader of Qatar in 1972 by Britain and Saudi Arabia. As for the latter, the acknowledgment was based on an agreement signed in 1965. Unlike the previous leaders of Qatar, Roberts (2017) holds that Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani who ruled Qatar from 1972 till 1995, prioritized the importance of keeping a content public (p.18). Sheikh Khalifa put himself forward as a pan-Arabist while remaining privately cordial with the British" (Roberts, 2017, p.18). In this regard, Sheikh Khalifa distinguished himself as a different leader as he executed domestic policies that gave the Qataris a sense of inclusion using oil revenues such as creating jobs and implementing policies related to housing and social aid (Roberts, 2017, p.19).

3.6.3 Establishing a Regional Qatari Identity

Moreover, on a domestic level, Sheikh Khalifa aimed to create a Qatari identity that is based on a sense of belonging to the newly independent country. This identity must be established as a secure connection to the country, transcending any other affiliation. Roberts (2017) argues that “as a result, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad sought to ‘find’ Qatar’s history” (p.19). Thus, one of the measures was to establish a museum. It is essential to mention that creating an international image or branding internationally and the attempt to create a Qatari national identity that gives the population a sense of inclusion only confirms Qatar’s independent behavior from that of the hegemony of the Saudi kingdom internationally. Accordingly, it can be argued that Qatar choosing not to bandwagon with or appease Saudi Arabia is an attempt to present the country as an independent state with independent national interests.

In terms of external relations, oil profits made it possible for Sheikh Khalifa not only to create an identity and help grow the organizations of the state but also to establish diplomatic ties with a lot of countries and support causes (Roberts, 2017, p.20). The rise in oil prices facilitated the implementation of those external policies during the 1970s. However, during the 1980s, oil prices witnessed a drop affecting the public sector widely in terms of the increase in prices. Government spending exceeded oil revenues. This incident only decreased the popularity of Sheikh Khalifa as the leader. It increased the reputation of his son Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa who was the crown prince at that time (Roberts, 2017, p.20). Another theme that gave

Sheikh Hamad's reputation a boost was his troubled relationship with the interior minister at that time, who was his father's brother Khalid bin Hamad. It resulted in a re-establishment of the government in terms of changing the number of ministers and assigning new ones (Roberts,2017, p.20). Roberts (2017) maintains that Sheikh Hamad was able to exert power by creating a supreme council that alternated the role of the existing ministries as they were managed by "dynamic Qataris loyal to Hamad" (p.21).

3.6.4 Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's Tenure

On the domestic level, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa acknowledged the importance of maintaining a content public as much as his father did as it was mentioned earlier (Roberts,2017, p.22). Roberts (2017) describes Sheikh Hamad's policies as "progressive" (p.22). Domestic policies witnessed significant changes that are related to policies from that of the previous ruler. Doha Stock Market was initiated, foreign investment was promoted, and state resources transitioned to be owned by the private sector (Roberts, 2017, p.22). Those represent some of the changes in terms of policies.

From an international perspective, Qatar's mediating efforts were limited to separate attempts in the 1990s. However, those efforts became steady, starting from the beginning of the 21st. Qatar's unsuccessful mediation attempt to facilitate a Palestinian unity government in 2007 can be one example. Roberts (2017) maintains that Hamad was the first ruler to visit Gaza globally in 2007 after Hamas was able to come into power (p.23).

Roberts (2017) argues that although Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani taking power as the Emir in a coup in 1995 only exacerbated the deteriorating Qatari-Saudi relations. Moreover, Qatar accuses Saudi Arabia of taking the side of his father, the former Emir of Qatar Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Thani. It was hoped that border disputes would be resolved by the efforts of the new emir. Thus, an agreement was signed in 2001 between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The following sections will discuss the relationship of Qatar with the US and Iran in terms of alliances. Those sections will also discuss the Qatari, Bahraini, Kuwaiti, and Omani stance towards Saudi Arabia to understand why Qatar choose to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia and not to bandwagon with it like Bahrain.

3.6.5 Qatari Omnibalancing: Aligning with the US

The Iraqi invasion to Kuwait played a significant role in shaping the Qatari foreign policy vis-à-vis the United States in terms of providing Qatar with security, which a main foreign policy goal as it was discussed in the previous chapter. As was discussed in the historical chapter, which is chapter two, the history of the emergence of the Qatari state has been dominated by competition for power by several actors and the Qatari rulers forming alliances to balance against the competing actors trying to take over the Qatari-Bahraini region. The Qatari ruler's goal was to maintain and secure his position, governing a territory with the least dependence on any external power possible (Roberts, 2017, p.39). Qatari police and military power were only formed under British rule but with no real effect in protecting the country.

Despite aiming for an independent, autonomous Qatar in terms of state behavior and foreign policy, Sheikh Khalifa and his son Sheikh Hamad showed a different degree of commitment to the relationship with the neighboring country Saudi Arabia. After the British withdrawal from Qatar in 1971, Roberts (2017) argues that there was some hope that "...they could return in emergency (as they had when Kuwait was threatened immediately after independence in 1961)" (p.40). However, given that Qatar lacked both military capabilities and the population base, and considering its geographic location being surrounded by more extensive and more powerful countries, Sheikh Khalifa chose to establish close relations with Saudi Arabia. Here, such a decision aims to avert the potential external threat of a larger, more powerful country even if it did compromise the degree of Qatari's state autonomy.

On the contrary, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa preferred establishing strong ties with the US instead of Saudi Arabia. He preferred omnibalancing against Saudi Arabia instead of bandwagoning as a foreign policy choice. He has a military background that might have represented a "...different appreciation of Qatar's security appreciation" (Roberts, 2017, p.40). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the relationship with Saudi Arabia witnessed tensions over the Qatari claim that Saudi Arabia supports the former ruler Sheikh Khalifa after the coup. The Qatari alignment with the US can be understood as an attempt to consolidate and strengthen his rule (Roberts, 2017, p.41).

Additionally, Qatar did not only seek US protection after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Hamad shifted the direction of education in Qatar to adopting the American education system. Roberts maintains that such a decision was

taken by the Qatari ruler and his allies mainly to sign a security agreement. Qatar's relationship with the US represents additional historical evidence that the independence of the behavior of the Qatari state is rooted in the evolution history of the country, as it was discussed in chapter two. Roberts (2017) argues that Hamad bin Khalifa played an active role in the major shifts that occurred in the relationships of the Qatari country with the great powers, according to Nixon's ambassadorial note during the late twentieth century (Roberts,2017, p.28). Here, He mentions that it confirms the tendency of the Qatari state to diversify its relationships. It is important to mention that maintaining security was not the only foreign policy driver to establish ties with the US. Still, it was also to deter possible Saudi military intervention amid the outbreak of tensions between Qatar and its Saudi neighbor. The following section will show that Qatar, as a GCC member, was able to establish ties with Iran, unlike other GCC countries. Iran did not pose a direct threat to the survival of the Qatari regime, like how it is the case for Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, as will be discussed in the section on Bahrain. Furthermore, Qatar does not have a sizeable Shia population that is assumed to have ties with Iran. Thus, the survival of the Qatari regime is not threatened. Here, it is important to note that the alliance with the US represents another Qatari foreign policy tool that supported Qatar in its reliance on omnibalancing against Saudi Arabia, instead of pursuing a policy of accommodation.

Before concluding this section, it is essential to mention that the Qatari alignment with the US has its consequences on Qatari domestic politics. Such effect was evident before and amid the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings.

As it was discussed earlier in the chapter, Sheikh Hamad shifted the direction of education in Qatar to adopting the American education system. Qatar is one of the GCC countries that did not get affected by the spillovers of the uprisings like Bahrain. Justin Gengler (2012) discusses the decrease of public trust in government institutions based on the findings of a set of public-opinion surveys conducted by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) of Qatar University. The participants of the survey did not show interest in political issues, as only 5% addressed political issues to be the biggest problem facing Qatar in 2012. (Gengler, 2012). Gengler (2012) argues that “the small size and relative homogeneity of Qatar’s citizenry compared to other Gulf populations... Doha might seem to militate against the rise of identity politics.” Given that the number of expatriates outnumbered the number of Qatari nationals, it makes the divide socially and politically related among the population residing in Qatar. “...Qatar’s population has nearly doubled, from around 880,000 in 2006 to almost 1.7 million in 2011” (Gengler, 2012). Although the small country was able to make changes in the educational sector over concerns of cultural openness to a western-oriented education, the Qatari- US ties did not witness similar scrutiny. Gengler (2012) maintains that “this is due not only to the recognized sensitivity of the subject but also to efforts to downplay the extent of the cooperation.” Based on the results of a nationally representative survey for the years 2011 and 2012, Gengler draws a connection between those who view the US as Qatar’s greatest threat and having negative orientations towards the government. He mentions that “ while these findings do not suggest the impending rise of organized political opposition in Qatar, they do help explain the state’s

puzzling failure to secure a political boost following two unprecedented decisions intended to operate simultaneously on the political and economic levels.” Those two decisions are the 60% increase in the salary of Qatari nationals working in the private sector, followed by an announcement to hold elections in the second half of 2013. The results of the survey show concern about the cultural influence of foreigners on the Qatari society. As was discussed earlier, there is no domestic pressure on the Qatari leadership when it comes to making foreign policy decisions or to have a political say. Here, Gengler (2012) contends that “So far, the state has been able to strike a balance between the sensitivities of nationals and the liberties enjoyed by other residents. But there is no guarantee that the next matter of public concern will allow the same political flexibility.”

3.6.6 Qatari Omnibalancing: Establishing Ties with Iran

Qatar’s relationship with Iran has never been hostile, except for a few historical encounters (Roberts, 2017, p. 42). However, it can always be perceived by GCC countries as a potential threat given that it’s a “...fervently anti- monarchial, anti – Sunni, revolutionary Shia regime that stood accused of exporting terrorism and unrest to the Gulf in the 1980s” post the revolution of 1979 (Roberts, 2017, p. 42). Moreover, Iran shares with Qatar the world’s largest gas field, which can be an asset for the country but also a liability if the state got accused of recovering oil more than its fair share like what happened with Kuwait before the Iraqi invasion. It is important to mention that given that Qatar is investing in the gas field, establishing close ties with the

US will enhance the security of the state, since the existence of the military base will work as a deterrence against possible threats.

Qatar took the lead in improving its relations with Iran post the Iranian revolution and the Iran- Iraq war. Roberts (2017) mentions that “as a sign of improving relations after a break of more than a decade, Qatar and Bahrain on 1 January 1991 resumed a freighter and passenger shipping link to the south-western Iranian port of Bushehr” (p.71). The renewal of the Saudi relationship with Iran was welcomed by Qatar. Qatar emphasized the necessity of involving Iran in regional security related issues or, as Hamad stated that Iran, “ must have a say in any security architecture devised for the region in the post-crisis era” (as cited in Roberts, 2017, p.72). Political ties, trade-related ties, and defensive cooperation were established during the early nineties. Roberts (2017) mentions that after the Saudi-Qatari border tensions that erupted in 1992 and 1993 and the bloodless coup against Hamad’s rule in 1995, reports claimed that the Qatari political system sought the protection of Iran against the Saudi threats (p.72). Those claims may not be valid. However, they give an idea of the possible Qatari stance towards Iran. Roberts (2017) maintains that, “Indeed Hamad bin Khalifa himself hinted that he believed a rapprochement with Iran could help bring the US to the negotiating table...” to provide Qatar with security in case the US did not (p.72). Furthermore, Qatar initiating ties with Iran was in part to balance US operations in Iraq amid Iraq war 2003. As Roberts (2017) puts it, Qatar maintaining relations with Iran amid the US-led operations in Iraq “...neatly balanced the state’s role in the military operations in Iraq” and emphasized that “...Qatar was not a slavish supporter and facilitator of the US” (p.73).

Thus, the Qatari – Iranian relations is another foreign policy tool that allowed Qatar to pursue an independent foreign policy from Saudi Arabia. It also allowed Qatar to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, despite being an ally to the US, Qatar cannot sever ties with US competitor Iran. Here, Fromherz (2017) argues that given that “... Qatar shares the world’s largest known gas field, the Field/South Pars with Iran means that it is unlikely that Qatar ever fully break relations with it willingly.” (p.100)

Qatar not only established ties with Iran but also trade relations with Israel were initiated in 1996 with an opening of an Israeli trade office in Doha that was officially closed in 2011. Here, Roberts (2017) states that establishing relationships with Iran and Israel would have been impossible if Qatar toed the Saudi line (p.75).

3.6.7 Qatari Omnibalancing: Inevitable Tensions with Saudi Arabia

Regarding the most recent tensions that escalated in 2017 between Riyadh and Doha in the form of a blockade against Qatar, they have been ongoing for decades. Stated otherwise, those tensions are not new. They are rooted in the history of both countries, as it was discussed in the previous chapter. It is essential when trying to understand the behavior of the Qatari state and its foreign policy calculations to take into consideration its Saudi neighbor. Saudi Arabia enjoys some advantages in the region in terms of size and regional influence over the other Gulf States. As was discussed in chapter one, Saudi Arabia is a powerful neighbor of Qatar. It has always played a role in shaping Qatari foreign policy and state behavior. For multiple reasons grounded in its history, regime calculations and regional relations, Qatar has opted to

omnibalancing against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, instead of bandwagoning with it. The disputes can be traced ever since the late eighteenth century, meaning that it started before Qatar gained its independence in 1971 after the withdrawal of Britain. Moreover, border-related tensions only exacerbated those tensions between both countries.

Another reason for imposing a blockade is Qatar establishing ties with a regional competitor of Saudi Arabia, Iran. Here, Gause (2017) contends that regional competition between the Saudi Monarchy and the Iranian republic is not about Iran. Still, it is about “very different understandings of how political Islam should relate to the state among the Sunni powers of the Middle East.” The Saudi and the Emirati monarchs represent a different point of view from that of Turkey and Qatar, for example, as Sunni countries.

Neither the Gulf States nor other Sunni states like Egypt and Turkey have a unified stance towards Iran. Their foreign policies are driven by regime security calculations, given that both Qatar and Turkey support the Muslim Brotherhood. In contrast, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE perceive this movement as a threat to their regimes domestically (Gause, 2017). In this regard, Gause (2017) holds that Turkey hoped to lead a bloc of regimes that will adopt the Muslim Brotherhood as a “populist Sunni Islamist stance” that is based on elections to take power.

Saudi Arabia represents another interpretation of Political Islam derived from the Wahhabi religious teachings that are Salafi based. They are one of the pillars of the Saudi royal rule. Here, Gause (2017) contends that this form of the religious ruling is called a “top-down, not bottom-up, political Islam.” It

supports loyalty to the kingdom and obedience of the ruler, aiming to spread that type of ruling throughout the region (Gause, 2017).

It is important to point out that Iran is a regional competitor not only for Saudi Arabia but also for the US. Given that Qatar hosts the largest American military base in the region, which is Al-Udeid airbase, Qatar's approach towards Iran amid the Gulf crisis threatens the American interests ("Gulf plunged into a diplomatic crisis", 2017). The base includes the US military's central command and 10,000 American troops and aimed to provide Qatar with security as it was discussed earlier.

Earlier discussions prove that the ruling elite is the ones responsible for decision making and leading the country. Understanding the behavior of the Qatari state requires understanding the regional environment of the country that helped shape its foreign policy. Roberts (2017) argues that, "...there were lack of impediments to Hamad bin Khalifa's freedom of action. There was not a significant domestic pressure on Hamad when he took over Qatar in 1995 (p.76). Moreover, given that the country subscribes to the Wahhabi doctrine, it only emphasized the necessity of the public to follow the leader. As it was mentioned earlier, both emirs managed to maintain a content public.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, Saudi Arabia played a significant role in shaping the behavior of the Qatari state. The close ties between the Qatari state and Iran, establishing relations with Israel, the engagement of women in politics are some of the policies that Hamad sought are opposite to those of the Saudi Kingdom (Roberts, 2017, p.78). Thus, emphasizing the

independence and autonomy of Qatari state in terms of its diverse ties and foreign policy, trying not to over associate with any state or non-state actor.

Based on what has been discussed above regarding the relationship of the Qatari state with Iran, the US, and Saudi Arabia, Roberts (2017) maintains that balancing can best describe those relations (p.79). He mentions that establishing a close relationship with Iran happened amid a deterioration in the relationship with Saudi Arabia for the reasons discussed earlier. Moreover, an alliance with Iran aimed to balance the Qatari relationship with the US, given that Qatar became a host of an American military base. Thus, he argues that "...balancing this West-leaning relationship with continued Iranian support had a logic to it" (Roberts, 2017, p.79). However, initiating a relationship with Israel came to balance the relationship with Iran, and the Qatari relationship with non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah are to balance the ties with Israel (Roberts, 2017, p. 79). The diversity of alliances provided Qatar with the opportunity to become independent in terms of behavior and foreign policy.

It is important to mention that the end of the Cold War represented a new opportunity for the Qatari ruling elite to establish alliances and ties with other states. As it was mentioned earlier, Qatar witnessed internal changes before Hamad's rule in terms of "...policy initiatives, cabinet reshuffles, and the creation of new influential supreme councils." (Roberts,2017, p.80). Such changes took place amid changes on the level of the structural arrangements of the international system post the cold war era. That period had different consequences on the Middle Eastern region than that of the Soviet bloc when it comes to the "New World Order," a term coined by US President

George H Bush (As cited in Roberts, 2017, p.80). The post-Cold War era represents a period of opportunities for a small state like Qatar to enhance their regional influence in a new order of the international system ‘...characterized by a greater diffusion and decentralization of power (p.81). Such a period facilitated the establishment of the Qatari ties and balancing relations with states and non-state actors, as was discussed earlier.

3.6.8 Neutral GCC Countries: Kuwait and Oman

The previous chapter and earlier discussions here have highlighted the similarities between Kuwait and Qatar in terms of wealth, geographic location, and country size. The recent Gulf crisis that erupted in 2017 not only helps understand the behavior of the Qatari state, which is the main focus of the thesis but also helps to understand the behavior of Kuwait and Oman. They can be classified as neutral actors. Understanding their foreign policy of the Gulf crisis will prove that both the Omani Sultanate and the Kuwaiti state do not have an option but to toe the Saudi line partially. It is yet maintaining a level of neutrality in a way that will serve the interests of both countries and avert possible threats from other, more powerful GCC countries like Saudi Arabia. Kuwait got invaded by Iraq in 1991, and it did not just shape the Qatari foreign policy by aligning with the US. Still, also it differentiates the Kuwaiti and the Qatari perception of threat and balancing by establishing ties. Kuwait, who got invaded by a neighboring country, cannot challenge Saudi hegemony the way Qatar is, and it limits the former’s freedom of action. In contrast, Qatar did not get invaded by a neighboring country.

Jonathan Schanzer and Varsha Koduvayur (2018) argue that both Kuwait and Oman are affected the most among the GCC members by the 2017 Gulf crisis after the blockade that was imposed on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt. It is in the interest of both countries for the Gulf cooperation council to make sure that the GCC would not fail. In this regard, both analysts maintain that, "They gain the most from the protective umbrella of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is now unraveling." Moreover, both countries are the least involved countries in the regional geopolitical contestation between Saudi Arabia and Iran for achieving regional dominance and hegemony.

Kuwait played the role of the mediator, and Oman strengthened trade ties with Qatar as it serves the former's interests. Kuwait has played the same role in the 2014 Gulf crisis between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. In 2014 Qatar's relations with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain witnessed tensions over the Saudi accusation that Qatar is supporting extreme Salafi Islamist groups ("Gulf plunged into diplomatic crisis", 2017). Unlike the current rift, the crisis in 2014 did not include land, air, and sea blockade, and relations between Qatar on one side and UAE and Saudi Arabia on the other were resumed within eight months. Saudi Arabia and UAE reassured European countries that the blockade imposed on Qatar is not driven by family feud but due to the Qatari ties established with Islamist groups ("Gulf plunged into diplomatic crisis, 2017). Moreover, Qatar did not follow the Riyadh Agreement that was signed in 2014. The crisis put Kuwait in a vulnerable position in terms of internal threats to the Kuwaiti leadership.

Schanzer and Koduvayur (2018) argue that, “privately, some Kuwaiti officials have expressed concerns that Saudi Arabia might interfere with its leadership succession process,” with a “combative and populist parliament” internal threats only intensify. The difference between Kuwait and Oman is that the latter maintained and strengthened trade relations with Qatar. Oman signed trade agreements and exchanged non-oil exports and benefited from the air blockade that was imposed against Qatar by making Oman Air fly all over the Gulf region (Schanzer and Koduvayur, 2018). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and the UAE may interfere with leadership succession. Oman and Kuwait would most likely always keep a relatively neutral stance when it comes to intra-Gulf conflicts.

3.6.9 Bahrain: Bandwagoning with Saudi Arabia

The demographic composition of the Bahraini Kingdom shapes the relationship with Saudi Arabia in a geopolitical Saudi- Iranian contestation. Most of the population is Shia, which is according to Simon Mabon (2012) estimated to be 75% of the people, posing a threat to both the Sunni Bahraini ruling family, Al-Khalifa and to the Sunni Saudi leadership given that it is assumed that the population is supported by Iran. Given the demographic composition of the country with most of the people being Shia, it would only exacerbate sectarian divisions, given that the leadership is Sunni amid allegations of possible links between them and Iran (Mabon, 2012). Bahrain is of the high importance of the Saudi regime in terms of regime security calculations. However, divisions within the country are not only sectarian-based, but also there are conflicts among the Al-Khalifa ruling family as well

over the methods of approaching social tensions (Mabon, 2012). Given the importance of Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, it is not surprising that unlike the independent foreign policy of Qatari state, and the neutral foreign policy of Kuwait, Bahrain toes the Saudi line. Mabon (2012) argues that “while Bahrain has long endured social tensions, the prosperity fostered by the sale of oil helped reduce them.” Thus, oil revenues help ease tensions by keeping a content public. Furthermore, Mabon (2012) argues that the steady decline of resources had meant that the Al Khalifa are increasingly reliant upon Saudi Arabia for financial support, especially when the protests erupted in 2011, making the Bahraini kingdom vulnerable to any external intervention.

The protests that called for political reforms that erupted in 2011 only triggered an intervention from the Saudi-led GCC troops. It indicated the difficulty of the security situation in Bahrain and its implications on the survival of the Bahraini regime (Mabon, 2012). Additionally, Moban (2012) argues that the “presence of Saudi troops was also an attempt to prevent the Shia of Bahrain from gaining more democratic power, which could have serious implications for the internal stability of Saudi Arabia.”

Given the geographic proximity of Bahrain to the neighboring Saudi kingdom, and the existence of a Shia Saudi population, Saudi Arabia’s intervention to protect Al-Khalifa is not surprising.

Before concluding this chapter, it is crucial to shed light briefly on border disputes between Qatar and its Saudi and Bahraini counterpart as they played an important role in exacerbating tensions between Qatar and the other two GCC countries. Moreover, when discussing Gulf politics, it is

important to provide a brief history of the creation of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

3.7 Border Disputes after 1991

Border disputes are another reason for the troublesome relationship between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The nineties witnessed a period of instability regarding the relations between the two countries over border disputes after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as this incident awakened decades of territorial grievances on an inter-Gulf relations level (Heard-Bey, 2006). Moreover, Qatar had boarder related tensions with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands and the town of Zubara.; those issues were settled in 2001. However, Bahrain re-claimed what it considers " rightfully hers" in a statement issued amid the Saudi-Qatari crisis in 2017 ("Bahrain re-opens border dispute", 2017).

Another border-related problem was settled between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in 2008. In 1992, Qatar suspended the 1965 border agreement with Saudi Arabia after an incident of armed confrontation at Al-Khafus border post with both sides accusing each other of causing the conflict. Moreover, in the same year, amid the Qatari-Bahraini dispute, Qatar considered leaving the GCC organization after Saudi Arabia accused it of stepping into the Saudi territory during Gulf War; however, Egyptian mediation efforts resolved the conflict (Heard-Bey, 2006). Those events reflect the unstable relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and the independent behavior of Qatar from that of the other GCC countries, which explain the behavior of Qatar in terms of challenging the Saudi hegemony. It is important to note that considering the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Given the similarities between Kuwait and Qatar

that were mentioned earlier, Roberts (2017) argues that “Qatar’s security in respect of Iran and Saudi Arabia would have to be termed low-probability, high impact events...” (p.42). The Gulf war showed that the Saudi Kingdom is incapable of protecting itself. The intervention of Desert Storm and Desert Shield were needed to free Kuwait and to safeguard Saudi Arabia. Roberts (2017) mentions that the US had to withdraw its troops from the Saudi kingdom as it was affecting the latter’s relationship with the former, causing only tension. Furthermore, Roberts (2017) describes the idea of a “...pan GCC military force that might offer Qatar any measure of security has long been, in reality, as unrealistic as any Saudi security guarantees” (p.43).

3.8 The Gulf Cooperation Council

It is worth noting that the mediating efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) seemed to be effective in easing the tensions among the GCC countries over the past decades. Yet, they are incapable of resolving the Saudi-Qatari crisis. When discussing Gulf politics, it is important to provide a brief history of the creation of the Gulf Co-operation Council. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) sub-group was established in 1981 in Abu Dhabi amid an unstable period for the Persian Gulf region. The members of the organization agreed to coordinate on a social, economic, and cultural level. Regarding resolving inter-Gulf conflicts and tensions between the GCC countries and the neighboring countries, a third party was always needed to mediate diplomatically or to resolve issues by military intervention. Similarly, regarding the disputes between the members of the GCC the, capability of the Gulf Cooperation Council to resolve conflicts on its own proved to be

limited as the members preferred bilateral negotiations and other mechanisms of conflict resolution (Heard-Bey, 2006).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides a theoretical framework that helps understand the Qatari foreign policy using the theory of omnibalancing that is coined by Stephen David. It explains why Omnibalancing can be a theoretical alternative to the balance of power theory in explaining the foreign policy behavior of Qatar. It provides a slight comparison between the approach of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad towards Saudi Arabia and the US that is different from the path of his son Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa. Moreover, the chapter highlights the relationship of Qatar with the US and Iran in terms of alliances. It discusses the Qatari, Bahraini, Kuwaiti, and Omani stance towards Saudi Arabia to understand why Qatar chooses to Omnibalance against Saudi Arabia and not to bandwagon with it like Bahrain, which provides an answer to the research question of the thesis. The chapter also sheds light on border disputes between GCC countries that only exacerbated tensions during the nineties that surfaced in June 2017. It also provides a brief history of the GCC sub-group.

Chapter Four

Qatar's Soft Power Instruments

4.1 Introduction

Qatar is a rich gas and oil country. Qatari foreign investments in Europe that have been provided to several countries that are mostly based on oil and gas revenues are other foreign policy tools. They maintain and enhance the security and sovereignty of the Qatari state. Those foreign policy tools help strengthen the independence of Qatar that is rooted in history in terms of its relations with its neighbors like its larger neighbor, Saudi Arabia, thus provide an answer to the research question. Those tools helped Qatar balance against threats instead of bandwagoning with them. For that goal, Qatar has diversified its relationships, as it was discussed in the third chapter. As it was mentioned in the historical chapter, Qatar appealed to the west and the international community as an ally by the strategy of branding or creating a Qatari identity internationally. Here, Timur Akhmetov (2012) maintains that “as an oil and gas-rich exporter Qatar was an interesting candidate for partnership in the eyes of many western countries, especially in Europe, who in turn was looking for more carbon suppliers.” The independent foreign policy behavior of Qatar helped redefine the role and impact of small states regionally and internationally.

Moreover, media has played an essential role as a foreign policy instrument, with the establishment of satellite news Al Jazeera to act as a “cultural bridge” as he puts it. Establishing the channel as a soft power tool aimed to

give the Qatari state's image a boost by presenting itself as a country of good relations with different actors and regional players like western countries, Islamic countries, and non-state actors, diversifying relationships. Here, Akhmetov (2012) argues that Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa maintained those relations, and the reason that such foreign policy received criticism is "the skillful manipulation of multiple "identities" by the Qatari Emir," referring to the Islamic and Western identities. Furthermore, Al-Jazeera contributed to shaping the Arab identity by encouraging arguments and presenting different points of view regarding political issues.

4.2 Qatari Gas Policies

Qatar's gas policies can be an example of aggregate power, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter. The Qatari state shares with Iran the world's largest gas field, and Qatar was the first Gulf country to establish relations with Iran after the Iranian revolution. Political ties, trade-related ties, and defensive cooperation were built during the early nineties between Qatar and Iran. Qatar investing heavily in the gas and entering the LNG market during the nineties presents Qatar as the state with the competitive economic capability and establishing ties with a country of a regional influence like Iran increases Qatar's aggregate power. Both former Qatari rulers Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad and his son Sheikh Hamad not only had a different stance regarding the Qatari relationship towards Saudi Arabia, as was discussed in the previous chapter but also regarding Qatari gas policies.

Qatar entered the LNG market in 1997. Sheikh Khalifa was not enthusiastic about the discovery of the largest gas field in Qatar, given that his focus was on oil. Roberts (2017) argues that only prior Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's rule, during the mid and late 1980's that Qatari gas policy came into effect "as the new elite led by Hamad bin Khalifa rose to power." (p.51). LNG policy only helped Qatar appeal internationally and behaved independently, fulfilling a foreign policy goal of the Qatari state. Taking risks and attempting to develop state resources only happened during Sheikh Hamad's tenure. However, Roberts (2017) contends that "both the old and the new elite felt the pressure to use the gas industry to diversify Qatar's oil income to maintain the ruling bargain and the generous Qatari welfare state." (p.52). Despite the reluctance to develop a gas policy.

Sheikh Khalifa's tenure, the ruling bargain, did not change when Hamad's elite took over (Roberts, 2017, p.52). The ruling bargain of people not having a political say in how the country is being governed in exchange for governmental support being provided to people without paying taxes (Roberts, 2017, p.52).

As was mentioned earlier, the drop in oil prices in the 1980s affected the popularity of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad who became the ruler of Qatar in 1972. Moreover, it showed the need for diversifying, not just Qatari relationships with other countries but also Qatari economic resources and not to be heavily dependent on oil. The ruling bargain only became stable in the 1990s after "it suffered in the 1980s when the constriction in global oil prices and production meant that services and jobs had to be cut, and charges introduced" (p. 53).

From a regional perspective, it is important to note that after the deteriorating bilateral relationship between Saudi Arabi and Qatar over Sheikh Hamad becoming the ruler in a bloodless coup in 1995, exporting LNG was essential to assert the independence of the Qatari state from that of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia viewed Qatar as a competitor regarding gas exports. Furthermore, Qatar meets the domestic needs of energy supplies for the Omani and Emirati markets by exporting natural gas to both countries amid experiencing shortages in gas (Roberts, 2017, p.55). Such a step would only emphasize Qatar's independence and increase its regional influence and not to toe the Saudi line.

Internationally, Qatar exports gas to many international actors who might help deter security threats for the small state. For example, although the existence of the Al-Udeid American military base in Qatar would deter security threats from Iran given that Iran and Qatar share the largest natural gas field in the world, Roberts (2017) contends that Qatar exporting LNG internationally to Japan can help act as a tool to protect Qatar from those Iranian threats, given that Japan and Iran established strong ties. It may pressure Japan to use those ties to seek an agreement to avoid the lack of gas supplies (p.55). It will help safeguard Qatar against potential military interventions. Thus, it can be argued that the Qatari gas policy is one of the instruments that helped Qatar to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia.

4.3 International investments

Qatari international investments abroad serve as a foreign policy tool that would help the Qatari state maintain an independent behavior, independent

economy, and international economic recognition. These investments provided Qatar with yet another soft power instrument that supported its efforts to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia. The primary Qatari investment tool is the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) that was established in 2005, which is relatively new when comparing it to the Kuwaiti Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) in 1953. Another important investment actor is The Qatar Foundation (QF). It is owned and run by the current Emir's mother, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Misnad. It has its own Sovereign Wealth Fund, which was established "...to foster a knowledge based economy in Qatar..." (Roberts, 2017, p.84). Roberts (2017) mentions that "the QIA's stated goal is to develop investments to secure Qatar's long-term financial future through economic diversification" (p.84).

Moreover, Qatar Petroleum (QP) is an oil company owned by the state and is responsible for all oil and gas activities in Qatar. Qatar Petroleum International (QPI) got integrated within Qatar International (QI) in 2015, the former being Qatar's institutional investor that is based in the state. Roberts (2017) mentions that the "...explicit goal is to invest in both upstream and downstream energy ventures to expand Qatar Petroleum's footprint across the world" (p.84).

The QIA under the current Qatari ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad witnessed changes in terms of significant positions that indicated a shift of focus from Europe to Asia. It "...reflected a perception within Qatar's elite that the QIA was too exposed to Europe and needed to readjust while maintaining Europe's investments. (Roberts, 2017, p.85). Moreover, the shift in Qatari investments included focusing on the US rather than Europe. An analysis

conducted by the EIU Digital Solutions shows that there is a recent tendency for Qatar to focus more on the US in terms of direct investments. The analysis discusses the attempt of an affiliation of QIA to invest in Oryx Midstream Services, which is a Texas-based oil pipeline operator. Qatar assigned Mansour Ibrahim al-Mahmoud as chief executive of the Qatar Investment Authority (Arnold, 2018). The former chief executive of QIA was Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. The new leadership shifted the focus of Qatari investments to the US and away from Europe. The analysis mentions that a “target was set of increasing investment in the US to US\$35bn by 2020” (EIU Digital Solutions, 2019). Moreover, “The QIA's total assets under management stand at about US\$335bn” (EIU Digital Solutions, 2019). Those investments aim to strengthen the US-Qatari relationship as the stance administration of the current US president, Donald Trump, toward the Gulf crisis, remained uncertain in 2018.

Although there are no accurate numbers available that indicate the size of QIA, Roberts (2017) maintains that “...the QIA is clearly by no means the largest SWF in the world (p.85). Although there are larger investment funds, QIA gains the focus of media due to being managed by Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim, former Qatari prime minister and foreign minister as the QIA. He maintained “...unusually close relations with the financial media, as well as focusing on taking often large stakes in high profile companies” (Roberts, 2017, p.86).

Aiming to diversify the Qatari economic resources, maintaining the independence of the behavior and the economy of the Qatari state, and increasing the international influence of the small state are not the only

motives that led to establishing financial connections and international investments in Europe and Asia. To maintain the ruling bargain of providing government support to the public, "...which calls for the state pay a vast array of cradle-to-grave entitlements for its citizens." (p.86). It aims to diversify the economic resources of the country to avoid relying heavily on the oil sector for revenues. For that aim, the QIA invests not only internationally but also domestically. In this regard, it's important to mention that amid the economic trade and travel embargo imposed against Qatar by the four countries, Qatar focused its investments domestically.

Simeon Kerr (2018) maintains that the Qatari government is "offsetting the economic impact of the embargo by ploughing ahead with its \$200bn infrastructure development programme, building roads and railways." Moreover, the Qatari government "redirected \$50bn from the country's sovereign wealth fund and reserves to protect the banking sector and exchange rate" (Kerr, 2018). Unlike Bahrain's financial independence on Saudi Arabia amid the Bahraini uprising of 2011 that have been discussed earlier in the previous chapter, Qatar doesn't need to rely financially on a larger neighboring country. Thus, asserting and maintaining Qatari independence in terms of national strategy and Qatari foreign policy due to its richness with oil and gas and its variety of foreign policy tools.

Just like the importance of Qatari-Japanese ties regarding Qatari gas exports to Japan, discussed earlier, Qatari gas importers like the UK can play a similar role using their ties to avert any potential threat or military intervention against Qatar. It can be argued that Kuwaiti investments abroad might have played a role in uniting the international community to liberate the state from the Iraqi

invasion. Similarly, the Qatari investments in Europe and Asia could play the same secondary role in Safeguarding Qatar against possible military intervention from its neighbors Iran and Saudi Arabia. In this regard, Adam Wolfson (1999) argues that “the war to liberate Kuwait was clearly in our economic and strategic interests.”

It is important to mention that investments are linked to branding, the latter being a strategy that was discussed in chapter two. Qatar aimed to appeal to the international community not just as an ally to the west by establishing alliances or as a gas exporter but also as a recognizable small state of international economic and financial global influences. Máté Szalai (2017) draws a connection between nation branding and investments. He argues that investments are a goal of nation branding. Gaining political influence and enhancing state-society relations that have also been discussed by Gause, as mentioned in chapter three, can also be achieved by nation branding. Regarding the importance of nation branding to small states like Qatar, Szalai (2017) contends that for small states, “... the availability of foreign policy tools is restricted, and their international leverage is limited in terms of the usual ways and means of pursuing state interests and to maintain security,” which encourages those states to adopt the strategy of nation branding.

Domestically, nation branding would also create and national identities of small states giving that many of them were results of decolonization, and the process of constructing those nations is slow. Thus, it would reconstruct state-society relations (Szalai, 2017). As it was mentioned in chapter three, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad aimed to establish a Qatari identity that is based

on a sense of belonging to the newly independent country. This identity must be established as a strong connection to the country, transcending any other affiliation. On an international level, Szalai (2017) argues that, "...knowledge about the Gulf States has been limited until recently." As it was discussed earlier in this chapter, Saudi Arabia views Qatar as a competitor when it comes to gas exports.

Similarly, there is a competition between the Gulf States regarding investments. Szalai (2017) points out that the unique nature of the gulf states should be highlighted in terms of having competitive economies and that "...they are rivals when it comes to selling hydrocarbon products and attracting investment." Szalai (2017) argues that for GCC countries, "...foreign direct investments can be seen as a tool in nation branding," facilitated by the availability of information and the rise of oil prices from 2002 to 2008. The Sovereign Wealth Funds of the Gulf States were created as a decision to utilize the surplus in oil and gas revenues (as cited in Szalai, 2017, p.163). Szalai (2017) mentions that Sovereign Wealth Funds aim to be "...a direct public control of strategic investments, which allows the Gulf regimes to align their nation branding activities with investment policy." It is important to mention that the European financial crisis constituted an opportunity for the investments of the Gulf States in 2008. Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) are considered non-conventional actors of investment that EU countries welcomed. The Qatari investments focused on France and the UK. Regarding France, Szalai (2017) argues that Qatar "might have used its investments in France to evoke political support from the government and then President Nicholas Sarkozy for its 2022 FIFA World Cup bid." It means

that Qatari investments are politically driven and not just economically to gain political influence. Moreover, Qatar did not only invest in the UK but also established ties with the government. Small states like the Gulf States investing in Europe will fulfill nation branding. It can be inferred that domestic and international Qatari investments encouraged Qatar to behave independently and not to toe the Saudi line, choosing to omnibalance instead of bandwagoning.

4.4 The significance of Al Jazeera

David Roberts (2017) describes what was originally Qatari TV channel that was established in 1996, evolving later to a media network as, “truly revolutionary,” mentioning that “never before had there been an Arab television news network as outspoken, outlandish, watched or influential” (p.93). It was established after a set of reforms that were made by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa. Louay Bahry (2001) mentions that “one of the most significant reforms sponsored by the emir was abolition of censorship over the media in Qatar.” The channel’s uniqueness is being an Arab TV channel established by an Arab state for an Arab audience who would have to rely on popular western channels for information. In this regard, Bahry (2002) mentions that these “...stations were considered foreign sources of information whose ultimate goal was to serve their own countries,” who can “...be easy targets of attack by anti-Western individuals and groups.” Moreover, the Arab audience that the Qatari tv channel targeted of Arabs wasn’t accustomed to controversial talk shows like the ones of the channel when it got established. Bahry (2002) argues that “before al-Jazeera, Arabs

were not accustomed to TV discussions of sensitive political, social, economic and even religious subjects.” The channel hosted controversial guests as well, “...ranging from Arab heads of state and university professors to political opposition figures” (Bahry, 2002). Moreover, the establishment of the channel was facilitated by the fact that the new Qatari elite that came to power in the early 1990s were able to implement policies with no domestic opposition from the public. Roberts (2017) maintains that, “Al Jazeera is but one outcome of this relatively pliant atmosphere, in which the emir’s whims could be enacted with relative ease” (p.96).

4.5 Aljazeera as a Soft Power Tool

Al-Jazeera is considered one of the Qatari state’s soft power tools as it played an active and influential role during the Arab Spring. However, Roberts (2017) maintains that, “... it would be too simplistic to suggest that Al Jazeera is merely a tool of Qatari foreign policy” (p.127). He describes the transformation of Al Jazeera’s role before and during the uprisings as follows, “...Al Jazeera moved swiftly from arbitrating, showing both sides of the argument as it did a few months in Syria and a few days in Egypt, to becoming an actor, taking part in the revolution, to an activist increasingly supporting on side” (Roberts, 2017,p.127). Such an active role was evident in Libya before ousting the former Libyan ruler, in Egypt during Mohammed Morsi’s presidency and in Syria to oust Al Assad’s regime. Being able to influence the course of events regionally through Al-Jazeera, helped Qatar omnibalance against Saudi Arabia, thus escaping its regional hegemony.

In his book, *Voices of the New Arab Public*, Marc Lynch discusses the emergence of what he coins as the “new Arab public.” Lynch (2006) argues that “This new public was highly self-aware of its own role in challenging the status quo, giving it a self-defined sense of mission that sometimes sat uneasily with the standards of objective journalism” (p. 3). He emphasizes the role of the new Arab public in contributing to shaping the Arab identity by presenting both sides of the argument about different political issues. The new public challenged the dominance of governments and “...attempts of states to maintain their dominance over all aspects of life” (p.5). Moreover, Al-Jazeera’s talk shows encouraged “... open arguments over the most sensitive issues, involving strong representatives of both sides of the dispute, represent the hallmark of Al-Jazeera’s approach to Arab politics” (p.2).

4.6 Conclusion

Qatari soft foreign policy instruments discussed in this chapter, are among the main factors that helped Qatar maintain an independent behavior away from the Saudi regional hegemony over other GCC countries. Being a gas supplier fueled the competition between Saudi Arabia and Qatar more, as Saudi Arabia is a gas exporter as well. However, establishing ties with the countries that are benefiting from the Qatari LNG can act as a deterrence against any source of threat from the neighboring countries. Moreover, investments only asserted the Qatari aim of diversifying the small country’s relationships to preserve its independence. They also helped Qatar appeal to the US and the West as an ally, gaining international recognition. The emergence of Al-Jazeera helped Qatar actively engage in changing the

course of events in the Arab Spring without being only an arbitrator. The TV channel created a change in the Arab media by engaging the Arab audiences in talk shows that encourage them to express different points of view towards many political issues.

Conclusion

To conclude, the collective decision by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain to sever ties with Qatar on June 5, 2017, was only the latest phase in a sequence of developments that reflected the unstable relationship between these states, on the one hand, and Qatar, on the other hand, that has persisted for several decades. This thesis examines Qatari foreign policy instruments that helped it pursue an independent foreign policy vis-à-vis its larger neighbor, Saudi Arabia, instead of choosing to toe the Saudi line like the Kingdom of Bahrain. Those foreign policy instruments enabled Qatar to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia and not to bandwagon as a foreign policy option. At the same time, both Oman and Kuwait maintained a neutral foreign policy. For that purpose, the thesis tracks the emergence of Qatar as an independent entity gaining its recognition after recognizing Muhammad Al-Thani as the first Qatari ruler in 1868 after signing an agreement with Britain. He was able to secure the British interests in the region without being over-associated with the country as a British protectorate. The history of the country shows that Al-Thani rulers secured the country from being swallowed up by competing sides by forming alliances. Thus, forming alliances and ties to balance against threats is rooted in the history of the Qatari state, and it helped understand the independent behavior of the Qatari state towards the neighboring countries. History also shows that the tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia as neighboring countries are not new as they are rooted in history.

The theory of omnibalancing provides a theoretical framework to understand the independent behavior of the Qatari state towards Saudi Arabia. Qatar has a diversity of foreign policy tools that the small state enjoys from the various alignments, economic relations, stable domestic environment that facilitates decision making, and the availability of rich natural resources. The theory focuses on internal threats that states confront, and that might pose a threat to the state's leadership and not just external threats like realist and neo-realist theories.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is one of the major incidents that shaped the Qatari foreign policy regionally with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Despite aiming for an independent, autonomous Qatar in terms of state behavior and foreign policy, Sheikh Khalifa and his son Sheikh Hamad showed a different degree of commitment to the relationship with the neighboring country Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa preferred establishing strong ties with the US instead of Saudi Arabia. Establishing an alliance with the US was to maintain the security of Qatar and to balance against Saudi Arabia as a source of threat and against any interventionist attempt from other neighboring countries like Iran. Iran sharing with Qatar the largest oil field in the world is another motivation to establish the alignment.

Moreover, Qatar initiating ties with Iran was in part to balance US operations in Iraq amid Iraq war 2003. On the other hand, given the importance of Bahrain to Saudi Arabia in terms of the survival of the regime, and unlike the independent foreign policy of the Qatari state, and the neutral foreign policy of Kuwait, Bahrain toes the Saudi line. The Bahraini kingdom relied financially on Saudi Arabia after not being able to maintain a content public

due to social and sectarian tensions that were reduced by the oil profits. However, the decline in the resources made the Bahraini kingdom dependent on Saudi Arabia. However, Qatar was able to maintain the ruling bargain without the need to depend on Saudi Arabia to keep the ruling bargain of maintaining a content public.

Furthermore, as an oil and gas-rich country, exporting Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) helped Qatar appeal internationally and behave independently, fulfilling a foreign policy goal of the Qatari state. The drop in oil prices in the 1980s affected the popularity of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad who became the ruler of Qatar in 1972. Moreover, it showed the need for diversifying Qatari relationships with a host of countries in the region and internationally. This diversification in political, military and economic relationships coincided with a quest to diversify Qatari economic resources in order to reduce the heavy dependence on oil and gas exports. Given that both Qatar and Saudi Arabia are hydrocarbon suppliers exporting LNG was essential to assert the independence of the Qatari state regionally from that of Saudi Arabia who viewed Qatar as a competitor regarding gas exports. On an international level, Qatar exports gas to many international actors who might help deter security threats for the small state. It will help safeguard Qatar against potential military interventions. However, exporting LNG was not the only foreign policy tool that Qatar relied on as a small state to maintain its security and independence away from the neighboring countries. Yet, it is important to mention that it contributed to the efforts of the Qatari state to maintain its independence and security and omnibalance against potential threats emanating from neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Aiming to diversify the Qatari economic resources, maintaining the independence of the foreign policy and the economy of the Qatari state, and increasing the international influence of the small state led Qatar to establish financial connections and international investments in Europe and Asia. Qatar aimed to appeal to the international community not just as an ally to the west by establishing alliances or as a gas exporter but also as a recognizable small state of international economic and financial global influences. Those investments are considered as a soft power that serves as a foreign policy tool like the LNG policy, encouraging Qatar to omnibalance against Saudi Arabia. The main Qatari investment tool is the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) that was established in 2005, which is relatively new when comparing it to the Kuwaiti Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) in 1953. Additionally, those investments are important in maintaining governmental support to the public, which is the ruling bargain of keeping a content public. The QIA invests not only internationally but also domestically. Amid the economic trade and travel embargo imposed against Qatar by the four countries, Qatar focused its investments domestically. Furthermore, given that Qatari investments are focused in UK and France, such economic connections can play a crucial role to avert any potential threat or military intervention against Qatar from any neighboring country aiming to protect those investments.

The thesis also discussed the role of investments as a tool of the branding strategy of Qatar. Branding helps to gain political influence and enhance state-society relations—the rise of oil prices between 2002 and 2008 facilitated foreign direct investments for the Qatari state. The European

financial crisis in 2008 constituted an opportunity for the investments of the Gulf States. Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) are considered non-conventional actors of investment that EU countries welcomed. Nation branding would also create a national identity of small states giving that many of them were results of decolonization, and the process of constructing those nations is slow. In this regard, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad aimed to establish a Qatari identity that is based on a sense of belonging to the newly independent country. This identity must be established as a strong connection to the country, transcending any other affiliation.

The last foreign policy tool that the thesis discusses is Al-Jazeera TV. The emergence of Al-Jazeera helped Qatar actively engage in changing the course of events in the Arab Spring without being only an arbitrator. The TV channel created a change in the Arab media by engaging the Arab audiences in talk shows that encourage them to express different points of view towards many political issues.

The contribution of this thesis to the politics of the Gulf region opens up more research opportunities regarding the foreign policy of small states to be able to understand their relationship with their neighboring countries. This thesis argues that the more diverse are the foreign policy tools of a small state, the more independent and autonomous the country would be on a regional level, challenging larger and more powerful neighbors based on the experience of the Qatari state in comparison with the Kuwaiti and Bahraini experience. Addressing the tools that helped Qatar not to toe the Saudi line will help understand the behavior of small countries and their foreign policy choices.

The case of Qatar as a small country is an example of how small states can be strong and survive in an anarchic order without the necessity of having sufficient military capabilities. The Qatari leadership enjoys a domestic environment that is free of political pressure when it comes to decision making and foreign policy choices. The thesis compared several GCC countries to understand the independent behavior of the Qatari state towards the neighboring countries. Omnibalancing is offered as a theoretical alternative to the balance of power theory to understand and compare the relationship between those countries, including Qatar vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia. Leaders being unitary actors as the omnibalancing theory suggests, the main driver of decision making would be maintaining the survival of the political regime. Instead of bandwagoning with the neighboring Saudi country, Qatar chose to establish alliances to balance against regional threats. Given Bahrain's financial independence on Saudi Arabia and the importance of the survival of the Bahraini regime to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain chose to bandwagon with the Saudi Kingdom. The domestic environment in both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia is not free of political pressures or internal threats, given the demographic composition of both countries. Oman kept a neutral stance like Kuwait towards the Gulf crisis of June 2017. The crisis motivated Oman to strengthen regional ties with Qatar. For Kuwait, who always maintained a role of a mediator in the previous Gulf crises, keeping a neutral stance to avoid the possibility of Saudi interference in the Kuwaiti domestic politics. The political, economic, and military connections that Qatar established with regional and international actors gave the country's international image a boost, and it works as a tool to deter the possibility of outright military

interventions. Lastly, the thesis has demonstrated a number of foreign policy options that are available for small states in dealing with their neighbors. Although a strategy of omnibalancing comes with risks, it is still a viable foreign policy choice for certain states.

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