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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO  
الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

**QATARI FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ARAB SPRING:  
FROM MEDIATION TO INTERVENTION  
(2011- 2013)**

A Thesis Submitted to  
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Masters in Arts in International Relations

By Basma El Etreby  
Under the Supervision of Dr Riham Bahi

December 2014

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the Palestinian children who lost their lives in the 2014 summer massacre of Gaza.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Had it not been for my parents and siblings and their support, I would not have been able to pursue my dreams. I owe them my past, present and future success. Without my husband, I would not have survived such a tough year and for whom I am eternally grateful. I would also like to thank Dr Riham Bahi for her unparalleled insight as my thesis advisor and for her extraordinary emotional support as a friend. Last but not least, I want to thank Dr Ibrahim Elnur and Dr Bahgat Korany for their mentoring as my readers.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Qatari Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring:  
From Mediation to Intervention  
2011-2013**

**Basma El Etreby, MA Political Science  
The American University in Cairo, 2014**

**Advisor: Dr Riham Bahi**

This thesis examines the controversial role that Qatar has been playing in the Arab Spring, specifically from 2011 to 2013. Evidently, Qatari foreign policy will be assessed to comprehend the power this small state has been gaining in Middle East politics in a region plagued by never ending manifestations of power struggles and turbulent developments. The case studies of Egypt, Libya and Syria in which Qatari foreign policy involvement deployed the same rationale will be investigated to examine the increasing involvement of Qatar in Middle East politics. It concludes that the foreign policy of Qatar was both opportunistic and pro-Islamist and cannot be sustained as a distinctive foreign policy in the Middle East.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Alj	Aljazeera News Network
CENTCOM	United States Central Command
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association
FJP	Freedom and Justice Party
ICJ	International Court of Justice
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LSE	London School of Economics
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTC	Libyan National Transitional Council
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
QAF	Qatar Air Force
QNB	Qatar National Bank
QRC	Qatar Red Crescent
QIA	Qatar Investment Authority
SIS	Egyptian State Information Service
SMC	Syrian Military Council
SNC	Syrian National Council
SOC	Syrian Opposition Coalition
SWF	Sovereign Wealth Fund
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	4
<b>Lists of Acronyms and Abbreviations</b> .....	5
<b>Chapter I</b>	
<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	9
Research Question.....	14
Hypothesis.....	15
Literature Review.....	12
Conceptual and Theoretical Framework.....	24
Methods.....	28
Research Limitations.....	29
Significance of the Research. ....	30
<b>Chapter II</b>	
<b><i>Qatar in the International System</i></b> .....	31
Origins of Qatari Foreign Policy.....	34
The Turning Point.....	37
Quest for Recognition.....	38
1. <i>The Aljazeera Effect and Qatari Soft Power</i> .....	39
A. News or Propaganda.....	42
B. Qatari Geomedia.....	44
C. Defending Aljazeera.....	45
2. <i>Maverick Foreign Policy</i> .....	46
A. Mediation.....	47
B. Checkbook Diplomacy.....	48
3. <i>Regional Hub</i> .....	50
4. <i>Global Investments</i> .....	51
Emir Tamim.....	52
<b>Chapter III</b>	
<b><i>Qatar's Geopolitical Context</i></b> .....	54
Introduction.....	54
1. <i>Qatar and the U.S.</i> ....	55
2. <i>Qatar and Saudi Arabia</i> ....	58
3. <i>Qatar and Iran</i> .....	61
4. <i>Qatar and Israel</i> .....	63
Conclusion.....	65
<b>Chapter IV</b>	
<b><i>Qatar and the Arab Spring</i></b> .....	67
Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood.....	68
1. <i>The Qatari Role in Syria</i> .....	75
A. The origins of Qatari Meddling.....	75
B. Qatari Endorsements.....	78
C. The Aftermath.....	79
2. <i>The Qatari Role in Libya</i> .....	81
A. Shift to Interventionism ....	81
B. Military Assistance and Interventionism.....	82

C. The Aftermath.....	.85
3.The <i>Qatari Role in Egypt</i> .....	.86
A. Partisan Aid.....	.86
B. Aljazeera and Egypt.....	.88
C. The Aftermath.....	.91
<b>Chapter V</b>	
<b><i>Conclusion: The Future of Qatari Foreign Policy</i></b> .....	93
Introduction.....	93
The limitations of Qatari Foreign Policy.....	97
Empirical Research Limitations.....	98
Further Research.....	98
Conclusion.....	99
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	103





**Map of Qatar**

## Chapter I

### Introduction

The Middle East is being reshaped with the unfolding Arab uprisings that are sweeping the region. This historical phenomenon is creating a New Middle East with civic consciousness rising, role of public opinion being detrimental and evolving political forces surfacing the regional as well as the international political scene. In Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and Egypt the Arab populations have broken the barrier of fear that characterized the previous eras, fighting for their demands and hoping for a brighter tomorrow and prosperous future. Such aspirations have not yet been met but these developments have resulted in a new regional system that is evolving consequently. As countries are evolving, their regional and international roles are redrafted as well. The rise and fall of Middle Eastern countries is still too early to predict with this limited time frame since the beginning of the Arab Spring in Tunisia in December 2010, yet the drastic changes in the role of small Arab countries such as Qatar in the Arab Spring is garnering international and regional attention alike.

This 'tiny' state in terms of size and population has been playing an influential role in near present and current Middle East politics in its controversial support of Islamist forces and parties. The disputed new arbitrator and the political maverick of the Middle East is, the World's richest country in terms of GDP per capita and is one of the smallest Arab states with a native population of under quarter a million<sup>1</sup>. Its expansive foreign policy in the region in context of the Arab Spring in form of support to Muslim Brotherhood in North Africa in Tunisia, Egypt and militarily

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<sup>1</sup> Lina Khatib. "Qatar's Foreign Policy: The limits of Pragmatism". *International Affairs*. 89.2 (March 2013): 417- 431. p 417.

aiding the Islamist Rebels in Libya have spurred controversies pertaining to the regional aspirations of this wealthy Gulf nation. In fact, Middle East regional power politics has seen the rise of swing states such as Qatar and The Qatari-Turkish pro-Islamist alliance on one hand, whereas an opposing regional alliance between Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt, has emerged to curtail political Islam ascendancy in the region in the unfolding events of the Arab Spring.

This contentious and unique Qatari foreign policy has not been overlooked by other GCC members or Arab states. In March 2014, three GCC countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, along with Egypt have unprecedentedly withdrawn their ambassadors from Doha “in protest at Doha’s interference in their internal affairs”, in objection to the pro-Islamist Qatari role in the Arab Spring and in protestation to Qatari defiance to the principles of the November 2013 Riyadh GCC Summit<sup>2</sup>, which entailed that Qatar doesn’t support parties that threaten the security and stability of any GCC member<sup>3</sup>. Intriguingly, Qatar has not shown any signs of backing down in its unequivocal support to the Muslim Brotherhood until recently. The Qatari government has requested the departure of the MB members from its territories amid rising regional pressure especially from other GCC members. In a statement published online, Dr Amr Derag, prominent member of the MB and its banned political party the FJP, has officially thanked the Qatari government for supporting “The Egyptian people in their revolution against the military junta” and will honor their request to leave Qatar “in order to avoid causing any embarrassment for the state

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<sup>2</sup> Ian Black. “Arab States Withdraw Ambassadors from Qatar in Protest for “Interference””. *The Guardian*. 5 March 2014. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick. “Egypt Pulls Ambassador from Qatar”. *The New York Times*. 6 March 2014. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

of Qatar”<sup>4</sup>. These developments shed light on the exponential significance of Qatar and its foreign policy. Questions arise as to how and what characterizes this small nation’s foreign policy apparatus and its orientations that enabled it to gain such momentum and vitality in context of the Arab spring.

Moreover, the grandiose Qatari foreign policy plans are disputed to be filling the security and leadership vacuum in the Middle East. This debatable rising power of Qatar is attributed to specific elements; its financial power, its strategic branding and quest for recognition, its Aljazeera’s soft power, its networking and mediation and its ‘maverick’ foreign policy. For instance, one of the most academically investigated factors is Aljazeera that has propelled Qatar to global politics and the international scene. Despite the fact that the Arab uprisings are predominantly perceived as genuine uprisings, Qatar’s Aljazeera is argued to have utilized this historical phenomenon to harness more regional power for Qatar due to its claimed support for the impoverished and voiceless Arab populations that were revolting. Qatari diplomatic support was granted and media support was provided, through its platform Al-Jazeera, to the Arab revolts. It is contested that the so-called ‘green light’ given by the Qatari authorities to Al-Jazeera to cover the protests galvanized more masses and echoed the demands of the revolting Arab masses to the world. This Qatari soft power of Aljazeera was magnified in the Libyan uprising and has been drastically complimented with the monetary, military and logistical support to the Libyan Islamist-led rebels, which toppled the Qaddafi regime in 2011. This signaled a major shift in Qatari foreign policy and its once limited regional role. This intensification was not limited to the Libyan uprising alone, as Egypt, Tunisia and Syria have had a significant share.

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<sup>4</sup> Ashley Fantz and Salma Abdelaziz. “Muslim Brotherhood Leader: Qatar Asked Us to Leave”. *CNN*. 15 Sep. 2014. Web. 20 Sep. 2014.

In light of the 24<sup>th</sup> Arab summit that was held in Doha, Qatar in March 2013, former Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani called for more economic aid to Egypt, as it deserves support due to its historical sacrifices for the entire Arab World. The Emir called for assistance to Egypt in its economic difficulties and downturns with the budget deficit reaching LE 180 million till March 2013<sup>5</sup>. Nonetheless, the controversy surrounding this excessive economic and financial support of the Qatari regime to the toppled MB leadership in Egypt is exacerbated by the continued antagonistic relations between Qatar and Egypt as evident in a recent statement by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in which he accused Qatar, Turkey along with the Muslim Brotherhood of plotting to spread chaos in the Arab World and destabilize Egypt.<sup>6</sup> The drastic contrast between Al-Sisi's government along with its Arabian Gulf benefactors such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE and Morsi's government along with its Qatari and Turkish support under the leadership of the AKP is explicitly evident with the continuous rhetoric exchange<sup>7</sup>.

The Qatari-Egyptian relations have definitely had their downfalls pre the Arab Spring but galvanized with the rise of Islamists to power. Furthermore, the repeated visits by Qatari prime minister and Iranian foreign Minister to Cairo during the MB's leadership have also indicated change in the foreign policy orientations in Egypt that was led by the MB before its government was toppled. The continuous rhetoric that was adopted by the ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi claiming that there were no foreign interventions allowed in Egyptian politics along with the increasing involvement of Qatar in assisting the Islamist government in rebuilding the Egyptian

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<sup>5</sup> "Qatar Calls on Arab Countries to Support Egypt". *Egypt Independent*. 26 March 2013. Web. 4 April 2013. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Ariel Ben Solomon. "Egypt's Sisi Says Qatar and Turkey are spending Millions to spread Chaos in Arab Lands". *The Jerusalem Post*. 26 Aug. 2014. Web. 18 Oct. 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Erin Cunningham. "Egypt's Break With Qatar Could Contribute to a Scorching Summer for Country's Residents". *The Washington Post*. 21 May 2014. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.

economy and the accusations of Qatari funding to Islamists parties have heightened the interest in comprehending the Qatari regional role especially in the evolving Arab Spring events, the New Middle East.

Whether Qatari foreign policy is momentarily shaping the Middle East that is evolving, or merely empowering Islamist parties in the Arab Spring to ensure its targeted regional power status or acting primarily in defiance of the Saudi dominated GCC affairs are all not uncontested and have not yet been investigated. Egypt couldn't simply have been a ripe investment environment with all Qatari aid promised to the former Egyptian MB government and disregard the political implications of the previous alliance between Qatar and Egypt under the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood led by ousted President Mohamed Morsi. Siding with the Arab revolutionaries in the onset of the uprisings may have shown that Qatar is promoting democracy outside of its borders and is an influential member of the international community. But this unprecedented and exponentially growing role comes with a priceless advantage in which Qatari regional powers were reinforced and contextualized in the Arab spring, accordingly a thorough investigation needs to be conducted to comprehend such change.

This thesis, therefore, attends to these several contingent issues. Given the transformation of Qatar's foreign Policy that has transformed Qatar from a small rich Gulf to the forefront of Middle East politics, a quest to comprehend its foreign policy, especially in context of the Arab Spring is over due.

## **Research Question**

The thesis attempts to analyze the position and role of Qatar in the events of the unfolding Arab Spring and comprehend its contentious pro-Islamist foreign policy in the evolving Middle East. Assessing the most notorious Qatari foreign Policy in Syria, Libya and Egypt as case studies of the rising Qatari involvement in Middle East politics January 2011 till the end of 2013 will be the designated time frame. In order to be able to answer this, the main question is divided into the following sub-questions in the form of dependent and independent variables:

1. What constitutes Qatari Foreign Policy?
  - A. What are the determinants of Qatari foreign policy?
  - B. How is Qatar a rising power?
  - C. What is the geo-political context of Qatar?
2. What characterizes the Qatari role in the events of the Arab Spring?
  - A. Can it be defined as pro Islamist involvement or merely opportunistic?
  - B. How did Qatar intervene in Libya, Syria and Egypt during the first two years, 2011-2013, of the Arab Spring?
3. What are the limitations and opportunities of Qatari foreign policy in the Future, especially in the changing political map of Middle East?

## **Hypothesis**

The ascendancy of political Islam in the Arab Spring has given the Qatari leadership the opportunity to transform Qatar from a regional mediator to an interventionist player, as Qatar has become the controversial supporter of Islamists. This transition was enabled through Qatar's accrued financial power, extensive state banding, Aljazeera's soft power, checkbook diplomacy, disputed maverick foreign policy and distinctive geopolitical status.

## **Literature Review**

Academic Literature covering Qatari foreign policy and the Arab Spring are not abundant as it is still a current affair that is unfolding. However, the majority of the available sources are scholarly articles with the exception of few books and investigative journalistic articles that offer a preliminary milestone to the research in question.

### **1. Qatar and Qatari Foreign Policy Orientations**

Hugh Eakin examines the rising power of Qatar in a comprehensive satirical manner in an attempt to explain its unprecedented rise in international politics in the Middle East. He states that the leadership vision of the previous Emir Sheikh Hamad is the driving force behind its growing power, "In the end, Sheikh Hamad's particular genius, it seems, has been to promote Qatar as one of the most sophisticated and open societies in the Arab Gulf, all the while being careful to keep its own closed political and social system—and its status in the Islamic world and among the traditional Gulf



monarchies—largely intact”<sup>8</sup>. This article focuses on what Qatar preaches but doesn’t implement within its own borders. Qatar is by far not a democracy, as it doesn’t have an independent legislature or political parties or independent civil society organizations<sup>9</sup>. Hugh Miles, the award winning journalist specializing in the Middle East, reiterates Eakin’s perception of Qatar from a Media political angle, which is critical to understanding Qatar’s state branding tactics, as he states,

*“The emir is neither a Westernizer nor a democrat but a modernizer who seeks at the same time to run his state on Islamic principles adapted to current international circumstances... because he wants to promote the emergence of other modern Islamic states like his own, and because he wants to promote his own position as a Muslim leader, a crucial role in Islam.”*<sup>10</sup>.

Paradoxically, this portrayal of Qatar and its quest for recognition and branding is reinforced by its mediation in Middle Eastern politics towards Islamist-led solutions through its financial and diplomatic efforts in the region to support Islamist forces. For instance, the Qatari diplomatic and military support in the case of Libya post Qaddafi, for instance, is followed by investments with Qatar national bank (QNB) acquiring 49% of Libya’s Bank of commerce and development in April 2012. As a result, Qatar is attempting to enlarge its sphere of influence in North Africa. This engagement in Libya, signaled a new tactic in its foreign policy forays in the Middle

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<sup>8</sup> Hugh Eakin, "The Strange Power of Qatar." *The New York Review of Books*. 27 Oct. 2011. Web. 4 Apr. 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 430.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Miles. "Al-Jazeera Boss Steps Down: Strains with Qatar Royals?". BBC News: Middle East. 1 Oct. 2011. Web. 10 March 2013.

East, which is no longer limited to aligning opposing factors together or merely mediation efforts but more aggressive strategies of backing military interventions<sup>11</sup>.

James Gavin's article in the Middle East Economic Digest, offers an indispensable insight on the financial and military contributions of Qatar in Arab Spring politics, which are, as a result, reshaping the region. This evolving role, from the previous notions of high-level diplomacy efforts that characterized the majority of Qatari foreign policies in the region, still baffles analysts. Whether the Qatari government is pursuing a defined sustainable strategy of re-engineering Arab Spring stricken countries through empowering and funding Islamists or being opportunistic with the power void in the region through planting and harvesting the seeds of its economic largess and surplus abroad is yet to be agreed upon.

## 2. Qatar as an Emerging Power

One of the most comprehensive and significant research papers conducted on Qatar's role in Arab Spring is by Dr. Kristian Ulrichsen's breakdown of the leadership vision with an international profile and the historical rising power status projected by Qatar, which is thoroughly presented. The case studies methodologies and contrasting UAE and Qatar in his paper, *Small States with a Big Role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the Wake of the Arab Spring*, showed how these states are transforming the region through their foreign policies. He attributes the rising power of Qatar to its resource-rich polity that is characterized with highly concentrated decision making apparatus that are not confronted with participatory

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<sup>11</sup> James Gavin,. "Mediation Strategy Under Scrutiny". *MEED: Middle East Economic Digest* 56.20 (2012): 32-33. *Business Source Complete*. Web. 4 April 2013.

political systems or its consequences<sup>12</sup>. Moreover the second factor is the ambitious diversified economic projects that Qatar has undergone in 2000s with the rise of state capitalism and the thriving of diplomatic mediation in Middle East conflicts. However, one of the drawbacks of Ulrichsen's research is the lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework for analyzing the emergence of small states' power despite its various restraints. He only covers the factual developments of Qatar and UAE's escalating international profiles in the context of 'state branding' and 'soft power' and the eroding correlations between state size and power in international relations.

Mehran Kamrava addressed the ascendancy of Qatar in the international relations of the Middle East in his book, *Qatar: Small state, Big politics*, in a cohesive comprehensive and historical manner<sup>13</sup>. The well researched and exclusivity of the information gathered through Kamrava's residency in Qatar and his work in Georgetown's Doha branch makes his book one of the most substantial for this thesis. He carefully positions Qatar's rising role and its balancing policies in the Arabian Gulf through what he calls "subtle power". Qatar's emerging influence in the region till it became a regional actor in the Arab Gulf is chronologically traced in the book through Kamrava's analysis, which resulted in the first dedicated book to Qatari foreign policy under the leadership of Shiekh Hamad Al Thani before he abdicated to his son, Sheikh and Current Emir Tamim in the summer of 2013.

#### A. *Qatari Soft Power.*

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<sup>12</sup> Kristian C. Ulrichsen. "Small States With a Big Role: Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in the Wake of the Arab Spring". *Durham University Research, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah Publication Series*, No. 3 (October 2012): 1-21.

<sup>13</sup> Mehran Kamrava. *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2013. p 47.

There is rich literature covering Al-Jazeera and its linkages to Qatari foreign policy advancement as Khaled Hroub, director of the Media program at the Gulf Research Center at the University of Cambridge, notes, “Al-Jazeera is neither CIA nor Israel tool, nor Al-Qaeda mouthpiece. But it is the sophisticated mouthpiece of the state of Qatar and its ambitious Emir”<sup>14</sup>. This media tycoon has given Qatar international leverage<sup>15</sup>. Intriguingly, the “Conservative” nature of the Qatari society conflicts with the image that Qatar propels through its Aljazeera outlet and its advocacy for freedoms and democracy in the region.

Hroub argues extensively and verifies it with factual evidence that Al-Jazeera’s significance is crucial for Qatar to have established its national branding and fulfill its foreign policy objectives of harnessing more regional power. The reason for such “high stake foreign policy game” has no clear answer to Hroub, however he proposes some possible explanations. Qatar used Al-Jazeera, to navigate its hostility, to attack Saudi Arabia and Egypt for several years after they were suspected of orchestrating the military coup in 1996 to reinstate Sheikh Hamad’s father, Sheikh Khalifa, after the previous Emir Sheikh Hamad Al Thani disposed him in a bloodless palace coup in 1995<sup>16</sup>. Along with its immense gas resources, hosting the biggest American military base outside of the US, and its amicable links with Israel and Islamists such as Hamas and HezboAllah, Qatar attempts to “cut out any regional third parties like the Saudis that might seek to exercise control over the smaller Gulf States”<sup>17</sup>. It created its own political sphere and leverage. The regional power void left by the Arab Spring events and prior to that with the demise of Egypt and Saudi

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<sup>14</sup> Khaled Hroub. “How Al-Jazeera’s Arab Spring Advanced Qatar’s Foreign Policies”. *Europe’s World*. Autumn 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Ulrichsen. *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Hroub. “How Al-Jazeera’s Arab Spring Advanced Qatar’s Foreign Policies”.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Arabia's regional leadership coupled with the fall of several Arab regimes gave Qatar the needed circumstances that it exploited to gain regional power.

Qatari consolidation of the Arab Spring was vivid in its Media support conducted through its platform Al-Jazeera to Arab revolts in which full and live coverage of the 2011 evolving events were conducted and televised unremittingly by AL-Jazeera in Tunisia and Egypt despite local security crackdown on media. Al-Jazeera even devoted a channel for momentarily live coverage of Tahrir square and the updates occurring in Egypt. Hroub went as far as expecting historians to examine the history of the Middle East as pre and post Al-Jazeera due to its unlimited impact and involvement in Arab Politics as "accusations by falling Arab regimes that Al-Jazeera wasn't neutral are true"<sup>18</sup>. Hroub reiterates the advancement of Qatari foreign policies through Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Arab Spring in another article *Qatar's source of Arab Spring is Al-Jazeera*, as Al-Jazeera's endorsement of the uprisings empowered Qatar and its rising role as a supporter of the destitute Arab populations and their rightful freedoms. Qatar itself came to be portrayed as the sole Arab advocate of democracy when it is definitely not a full-fledged democracy with unlimited powers of the ruler, the Qatari Emir and his Royal Family<sup>19</sup>.

#### *B. Checkbook Diplomacy:*

Another crucial factor in Qatari foreign policy is its financial inducements and economic largesse, which compliments the political alliances between Qatar and its alliances, specifically in the context of the Arab Spring and its support to Islamists.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Khaled Hroub. "Qatar's Source of Arab Spring is Al-Jazeera". *Today*. 21 Oct 2011. Web. 15 Aug. 2013.

For example, till March 2013, Qatar has promised the former MB Egyptian government which ruled Egypt since June 2012 till their ouster in July 2013, billions of dollars in aid as announced by the Qatari Finance Minister. This aid has been claimed to be in the form of soft loans and deposits in Egypt's Central Bank<sup>20</sup>. With Qatar promising Egypt in April 2012 \$400 million to Egypt's Mostorod refinery in financial support, another \$300 million in equity by Qatar Petroleum and \$100 million in loans from Qatari National Bank, and these aid packages diminishing with the ouster of the Islamist government, Qatari aid in the Arab Spring countries is galvanizing more speculation for its objectives.<sup>21</sup> Despite that these loans were not be instigated due to the deteriorating Egyptian-Qatari relations post the toppling of the MB leadership in Egypt, such plans were symbolic of the financial backing of the Qatari regime to the MB in Egypt during their short lived rule.

### 3. Qatar's Geopolitical Context

The geopolitical context of Qatar is rather confusing as it maintains amicable relations with nearly all conflicting parties in the Middle East. For instance, the Qatari-Israeli relations are examined by Hugh Eakin, senior editor at the New York Review, to shed the light on the paradox of Qatar's peculiar vision of leadership and power relations in the Middle East. He clarifies that in contrast to the Islamist led sentiments and alliances spread and secured by Qatar throughout the region, it is one of the few Arab states, the only Gulf nation, that maintained close diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel while simultaneously provided millions of dollars to

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<sup>20</sup> "Qatar Says No More Aid to Egypt for now". *Egypt Independent*. 11 March 2013. Web. 4 April 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Gavin, *op cit*.

rebuild the Lebanese demolished Hezbollah villages which were bombed by the Israelis in 2006<sup>22</sup>. These juxtaposing relations provide it with unique status in the form of a mediator in a turbulent region with its strong ties with adversaries' including Israel, Shiites Islamists and even Iran. He affirms that Qatar's national security and survival are guaranteed by its unyielding relations with the US, its most vital ally, as Qatar hosts the US Central Command's Forward Headquarters and the Combined Air Operations Center.

#### 4. Qatari Foreign Policy in the Arab spring

Mohamed Ayoub examines the geostrategic significance of the Arab Spring with no special focus on Qatar, as he doesn't include it in his list of pivotal regional players. Correspondingly, this establishes the notion of conventional Middle East studies, until recently, didn't consider Qatar as an influential player in Middle East politics. While Egypt, the traditional leader of the Arab World, has been plagued by political crises and a declining economy, whereas the Middle East and precisely Qatar are both evolving, Egypt's regional role is consequently affected<sup>23</sup>. Ali E. Hilal and Bahgat Korany assess the evolution of Arab foreign policies in the pre Arab spring era in their book, *Foreign policies of Arab States: The challenge of Globalization*, which was published almost two years before the Arab Spring erupted. Intriguingly, from all the case studies from the Arab World discussed, Qatari foreign policy was not inspected, which symbolically infers to the previous limited role of Qatar relative

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<sup>22</sup> Eakin, *op cit*.

<sup>23</sup> Mohamed Ayoub. "The Arab Spring: Its Geostrategic Significance". *Middle East Policy*. 19.3 (Fall 2012): 84-97. p 89.

to the increasing significance it is gaining nowadays. However, the description of foreign policy changes in behavior deserves quoting at length:

*“Foreign policy restructuring entails a major alteration or breakup in the orientation of an actor in favor of establishing a new set of commitments and alliances. It is more than a change in tactics or instruments of policy implementation and goes beyond the routine fluctuations and oscillations of the foreign policy behavior of developing countries. It involves a basic reconsideration of an actor’s perceptions of the global or regional system and of its role within that framework. Indicators of the restructuring of foreign policy orientations include patterns of diplomatic, commercial, military and cultural relations between the country and the outside world”*.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, this conceptual analysis and especially foreign policy of small states is pivotal in explaining the recent Qatari foreign policy drivers and orientations that jumped from mediation to intervention and consequently, its examined role in the Arab Spring from 2011 till March 2014 with the withdrawal of UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain’s ambassadors from Doha.

### C. The limitations of Qatari Foreign Policy

Lina Khatib published in March 2013 an exceptional assessment of the Qatari foreign policy objectivities and its limits. She explains that Qatar lacks a consistent coherent foreign policy strategy that jeopardizes its own basic foreign policy objective

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<sup>24</sup> Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal. Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization. American University in Cairo Press (2008). P 167



of securing its national security and maintaining its stability in the region<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, Paul Salem reiterates Khatib's sentiments and attributes these limitations of Qatari foreign policy sustainable advancement to its institutional and pragmatic restrictions that will not allow it to maintain its performance with the fast moving events in Libya and Egypt<sup>26</sup>. In addition to the limitations expressed, Doha didn't take into consideration the repercussions and ramifications of its foreign policy in the Arab Spring on Arab media and the Arab masses. Doha has been subjected to the rise of antagonism, among Arab masses and in the media, against its involvement in the domestic politics of the countries where uprisings took place, such as Libya and Egypt in which incident where the Qatari flag was burned in protests. Such negative publicity regarding the Qatari role in the Arab Spring and its portrayal in Egyptian media has propelled the former Qatari Foreign Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jasim AlThani to criticize Egyptian Media and argue for the neutrality of Qatari foreign policy and its cooperation with all governments of Egypt, Islamist or Military backed<sup>27</sup>.

Lucid and objective accounts of Qatari foreign policy in the Arab spring was not amply found especially in light of the real dearth of academic studies on Qatar in general and specifically, its foreign policy. However the sources presented in this literature review provide the research with the comprehensive input of integral analytical, factual and theoretical milestones, on which the matrix of investigation was drawn to provide linkages, evaluations and conclusive outcomes, which enabled a

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<sup>25</sup> Khatib, *op cit*.

<sup>26</sup> Gavin, *op cit*.

<sup>27</sup> Nouran El-Behairy,. "Qatar Foreign Minister Criticizes Egyptian Media". *Daily News Egypt*. 27 March 2013. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

fair assessment of the controversial Qatari role in the Arab Spring, especially to examine Qatar's role in Egypt, Syria and Libya from 2011 till 2013.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Foreign policy analysis is utilized to be able to answer and comprehend the questions posed in this research through the examination of the controversial Qatari foreign policy in context of the Arab spring. The establishment of foreign policy analysis since the late 1950s and early 1960s as a particular sub-discipline within the realm of International Relations is credited to many scholars, especially James Rosenau who underscored the need to for information integration at various levels of analysis to comprehend foreign policy. Moreover, Laura Neack builds upon Rosenau's theories and investigates thoroughly this crucial field in international relations in her book, *The New Foreign Policy: Power Seeking a Globalized Era*. Neack explains foreign policy through the lens of Charles Hermann as "a guide to actions taken beyond the boundaries of the state to further the goals of the state" and Deborah Gerner's definition as "the intentions, statements and actions of an actor, often but not always a state directed toward the external world and the response of other actors towards these intentions, statements and actions".<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, there is no consensus on the definition of power as it is an elusive concept, most importantly Neack highlights that capability does not necessarily yield influence. Yet it is mainly narrated as developing national assets and resources into means of influence relative to other actors and states. Great powers are the countries with large military and economic capabilities. Neack distinguishes between middle powers and

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<sup>28</sup> Laura Neack. *The New Foreign Policy: Power Seeking in a Globalized Era*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers (2008). P 9

small powers. A middle power entails countries that act as peacekeeping and mediators such as Scandinavian countries and Canada whereas small powers are the countries that “punch over their weight class” by aligning themselves with a great power in a strategically reciprocal relationship.

Qatar’s rising international profile despite its grandiose branding lies in the small state and powers category. On the other hand, the Realist international relations theorists perceive rising powers as revisionist states that will cause disruptions to the status quo power structures. Hans J. Morgenthau emphasized that revisionism most probably manifested through foreign policies aims to increase the power of a nation is linked with military confrontations and wars that come with rising powers. In a preliminary analysis of Realist theoretical framework, Qatar as a nation that hasn’t been involved with military confrontations, except that it was part of a collaborative military effort with NATO in Libya, doesn’t fit as a revisionist rising power. Neorealism as illustrated through the works of Randall Schweller, explains how rising powers are compelled to gain more power based on the void left by the weaknesses of the neighboring states and are not only products of internal and national pressures which is reflected in the factual regional leadership void that Qatar utilized and exploited to rise to power. With Neorealism chosen as the umbrella and theoretical framework, it will be complimented with the concept of soft power that contributes to the analysis of the accumulation of Qatari growing power and its soft powers manifestations in the past two decades.

Through the works of Joseph Nye and new international relations theory of Neorealism, Qatari rising power status can be categorically explained but not fully. Nye’s conceptual approach assesses foreign policies in the post Cold War era as the traditional definition of power, which entails resources acquisition, military buildup is

not enough for the evolving behavioral definition of power in this new globalized era. Nye, the prominent policy oriented institutionalist, introduced the concept of soft power in 1990. From the nine elements of national power that Morgenthau adheres to, four of them, which are national character, national morale, diplomatic quality and the quality of government, are integral constituents of Nye's soft power factors. In other words, the country's culture, political values and foreign policies are its soft power<sup>29</sup>. Although Nye's analysis relies on American Foreign policy as an example, yet he establishes basics for soft power understanding and how it can advance nation's foreign policy as it legitimizes its power in the eyes of others. Nye states that "Soft power rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others...the ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as attractive culture, ideology and institutions"<sup>30</sup>. This soft power concept is critical in comprehending the ascendancy of Qatar on the global political scene as will be exemplified in chapter two.

It is also worth mentioning that Shibley Telhami illustrates how Neorealism doesn't dictate a theory of foreign policy yet it informs the study and creates a framework as power and security are not self-sufficient elements in explaining the motives of states. However Neorealism explains how the regional security framework in the Gulf has changed with the presence of US troops that have diminished the importance of the conventional power distribution, both military and economic, among Arab countries. Accordingly, this context created a window of opportunity for

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Nye. Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. p 11.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Nye. The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Do it Alone. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. p 9.

Qatar to pursue an independent foreign policy<sup>31</sup>. This is when the theory of small states foreign policy within Neorealism will be deployed as an outlook to compliment the Neorealism umbrella along with the soft policy analytical tool.

The majority of the literature of international relations situates small states on the receiving end of power in global politics, and not the sources of power or influencers in power politics<sup>32</sup>. According to Stephen Walt, small states are more likely to bandwagon against great powers. Due to small states' vulnerability in the international systems, these states create alliance patterns, which is explained through the international level of analysis<sup>33</sup>. It is also proposed that risky foreign policy by small states could occur due to their inability to monitor comprehensively the international affairs as larger states do<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, accommodative strategies are adopted by these "small states" to position themselves in the shadows of greater powers as Mehran Kamrava investigates the rising role of Qatar in his recently published book, *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics*, and how the theory of small states in world politics cannot alone be utilized to examine Qatari ascendancy. Kamrava reiterates that structural conditions alone, such as the small states' vulnerability, should not be the only defining notions of small states that have been galvanizing attention. Resilience that results from strategy and agency, which if incorporated and adopted in the 'right conditions', can make the small state overcome the limitations that its size and demographics inflect upon them. In such optimum scenarios these small states can become more influential within their regional politics "to the point of

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<sup>31</sup> Shibley Telhami. "Kenneth Waltz, Neorealism and Foreign Policy". *Security Studies* 11.3 (Spring 2002): 158-170. Web. 30 April 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.* p 47.

<sup>33</sup> Miriam F. Elman. "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in its Own Backyard". *British Journal of Political Science*. 25.2 (Apr. 1995): 171-217. Pp 177-179

<sup>34</sup> J.E Peterson. "Qatar and the World: Branding for a Microstate". *Middle East Journal*. 60.4 (Autumn 2006): 732-748. p 739.

exerting significant amounts of power and influence in their immediate neighborhood and beyond”<sup>35</sup>. Kamrava argues that Qatar has overcome such structural conditions and established rigid resilience due to the adoption of four main strategies which are hedging, assertive global branding campaign, state growing capacity, and far sighted use of Qatar comparative advantage of having no historical baggage compared to other states in the region. These strategies contextualized Qatar’s defiance of its dictated limits as noted, “the opportunities of small states abounded as the link between size and power eroded”<sup>36</sup>. Consequently, Qatar due to its foreign policy became one of the most influential players of regional as well as international politics within the Middle East and North Africa<sup>37</sup>.

## **Methods**

The employed data collection methodologies for the purpose of this research project will be the use of primary sources such as interviews with leading scholars on Middle East politics and Qatari Foreign policy. The selection was based on the experience of the scholars in addition to their extensive knowledge and publications on Middle East politics in general and GCC politics specifically. The matter in question. Among these leading scholars who have accepted to cooperate and be interviewed are Riad Kahwaji, Mehran Kamrava and Theodore Karasik. These scholars upon background research have been found to be among the most resourceful with regards to the investigated research topic. These interviews will provide insightful perspectives and crucial information on Qatar and its foreign policy. In

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<sup>35</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, p 48.

<sup>36</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*, p 10.

<sup>37</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, p 48.

addition to secondary sources such as academic and newspapers articles, books, and book reviews.

The theoretical frameworks and concepts will be drawn from books, book reviews and academic articles. On the other hand, the utilization of newspapers articles will be limited to situations where academic literature and sources are insufficient, especially in light of the research question being a recent matter, pertaining to the latest Arab Spring evolving events and inter Arab relations, and significant daily developments in the current Egyptian government and the Qatari regime.

### **Research Limitations**

Assessing the contentious Qatari Foreign Policy can be a PhD dissertation topic. Hence, the thesis will limit its focus to the Qatari role in the Arab Spring from 2011 till the end of 2013 and will not focus on the Qatari role in Tunisia, Yemen or Bahrain as extensively as in Syria, Libya and Egypt. Nonetheless, an overview of the other regional pivotal players will be explained to assess the geopolitical context of Qatari foreign policy. The second limitation is the time barrier since President Morsi's ouster, and the Muslim Brotherhood led presidency. Therefore, there is not any sufficient academic literature published that covers this less than one year of the debatable Islamist-Qatari backed rule of Egypt. The third limitation is the availability of information from both the Qatari and Egyptian official parties due to the lack of transparency, which is attributed to foreign policy being 'high politics' and secret diplomacy considerations.

## **Significance of the Research**

In light of the ongoing debates pertaining to Qatari involvement in the Arab spring, Qatari support to the Muslim Brotherhood and Qatari regional Pro-Islamist support, and the recent strife in Inter-Arab Relations due to Qatari foreign policy, this research is much needed. This thesis attempts to assess academically the blatant involvement of Qatar in Arab politics, connect the existing links and reach a comprehensive understanding of Qatar in the New Middle East and its involvement in Egypt during the early years of the uprising up until the end of 2013.

My research was first inspired by a paper I wrote in 2010 on Media Politics and role of Al-Jazeera in Arab politics. Aljazeera's involvement into the most influential Qatari soft power tool, and its alleged role in toppling the fallen Arab regimes in Egypt and Libya has resurged my interest in Qatari foreign policy.

Most importantly, this thesis doesn't aim to chronicle the events in which Qatar has played a critical role in the Arab Spring. It rather argues that Qatar has transformed itself from relative obscurity to international recognition through the opportunistic means deployed in the several factors expressed in the hypothesis.



## Chapter II

### Qatar in the International System

*“Qatar’s rise is as extraordinary as it is shocking because of the stark difference in scrutiny and success, from its former status as an international afterthought to its current status as a regional force”<sup>38</sup>*

The previous quote summarizes the blatant growth that Qatar has experienced in the past two decades. Such frenzy and attention are not only attributed to its economic largesse and status as the world’s richest country in GDP per Capita as its GDP jumped from merely \$8 billion in 1995 to exceed \$200 billion in 2013, but also to its increasing involvement in Middle East politics<sup>39</sup>. In a 2011 lecture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, the previous Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al Thani, addressed the acclaimed audience’ interest in the exponential growth of Qatar’s international profile<sup>40</sup>. The foreign policy of Qatar was defined to be based on the “the basis of

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<sup>38</sup> Joseph Hawkins. M.A thesis 2011, Political Science Department, American University in Cairo

<sup>39</sup> Sultan Barakat. “Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement”. *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper*; No. 12, Nov. 2014. Web 30 Nov. 2014. P 7

<sup>40</sup> Sheikh Hamad Al Thani, “The Current Arab Situation and Future Prospects. Oxford Center for Islamic Studies. 2011. The British Library.

beliefs, values and national heritage represented in the Islamic religion and Arab Civilization”<sup>41</sup>. He reiterated that Qatar was visionary in its approach to Middle East politics and it has organized several conferences on reform prior to the Arab Spring eruption but it mostly fell on deaf ears among Arab leaders and was considered merely rhetoric as he notes,

*“We, in the state of Qatar, have confirmed on many occasions that reform and popular participation represent an entitlement that stems from the original right of peoples to self determination... we have warned that the people’s anger is ruthless, and we should not ignore the absence of the rule of law, the spread of corruption and the high cost of living. We see a political impetus for change. We support it and in turn support the will of the people”*.<sup>42</sup>

With Sheikh Hamad's statement as an illustration of Qatari official rhetoric along with its foreign policy, that will be elaborated upon in this chapter and chapter three, Qatar has carved itself as a significant political player in the region due to its financial, economic largesse that were pivotal for its political leverage. With huge surpluses from its LNG and oil exports, the immense wealth of Qatar is utilized by the QIA its SWF arm in high profile mega business deals that have garnered international business attention to this small Gulf state. Moreover the fact that Qatar is the first Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern nation to host the biggest global sports event, the FIFA World Cup 2022, has put it in the forerunner of global headlines. It is debated almost unanimously among established among scholars that the economic and financial surplus that are the product from the Qatari economy are the catalysts for its

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p 14.

foreign policy powers that are not only exhibited in the Arab Spring events but encompass its full foreign policy doctrines<sup>43</sup>.

Riad Kahwaji, Founder and CEO of Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, prominent Emirati think tank, stated that Qatar is merely a conglomerate small state based on its oil and gas economic strongholds that are reinforced with its soft power apparatus “Al Jazeera” which are both fortified with the presence of the second command headquarters of the US with its largest air force base in the region<sup>44</sup>. The attention regarding its growing influence in the region is soon to fade away as it lacks the means to uphold its recent interventionist role in the Arab Spring. According to Theodore Karasik, director of research at ENIGMA, Qatari rise to Middle East politics is attributed to its consistent and prolific state branding agenda. As the events of the Arab Spring started to unfold in the December 2010 and January 2011, Qatar saw this as an opportunity to gain more leverage in regional affairs and be the voice of regime dissidents, which were predominantly Islamists. Correspondingly, this came in the form of supporting political Islam. This Qatari attempt to engulf the opposition was successful at first with the Muslim Brotherhood leading in Egypt and Tunisia post the toppling of their former dictators Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali respectively. However when the MB was falling apart amidst rising public outrage in Tunisia and Egypt, Qatar’s endeavor came to a halt. Concurrently, “The gulf states see that Qatar’s experiment to create a new order in the Arab World has failed. It needs to be put back in their box”<sup>45</sup>. In an attempt to surge the rise of political Islam in the region and curb the regional role of Qatar, GCC countries under the leadership of Saudi Arabia are trying to reverse the damage done by Qatari

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<sup>43</sup> Riad Kahwaji, (Dubai, United Arab Emirates). Interview with author, 12 Mar. 2014.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Karasik. (Dubai, United Arab Emirates), Interview with author. 12 Mar. 2014.

foreign policy though its endorsement of Islamists in Arab spring countries, especially Egypt<sup>46</sup>. This highlights the predicament of comprehending the origins of Qatari foreign policy that enabled it to reach the point of intervening in the domestic politics of the once traditional leader of the Arab World, Egypt.

The question arises as to how did Qatar support the will of the people as its former Foreign Minister asserted, how has it gained such international recognition and what are the mandates on which its foreign policy operates. During the Arab spring the Qatari government is accused of supporting the MB despite the fact that the MB is accused of aiming to topple the Gulf Monarchies. Qatar is portrayed as the endorser and supporter of opposition movements in various countries in the Middle East. The initial question that compliments this puzzling question would be how this Qatari status came to be.

### **Origins of Qatari Foreign Policy**

As history is the prologue of the present, a brief background of Qatar is required to construct the origins of its contested foreign policy. Sir Graham Boyce, former British ambassador to Qatar, Kuwait and Egypt, elucidates Qatari foreign policy and its background in an attempt to alter the lack of comprehension and perplexity, as he claims, that many perceive of the current Qatari involvement in Arab affairs<sup>47</sup>. Boyce asserts that the Qatari foreign has no long history that needs to be explored. Its short political history can be traced in its foreign policy origins through two defining moments. The first defining moment is divided in two main events; the

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Sir Graham Boyce. "Qatar's Foreign Policy". *Asian Affairs*: Vol. XLIV, No. 3, 2013: 365-377. p 365

first of which is the June 1913 Anglo Ottoman Convention, which ended the claims of the Ottomans to the Qatari Peninsula and it also ensured that Bahrain wouldn't interfere in Qatari internal affairs.<sup>48</sup> The second main event of the the first defining moment was the Exclusive Agreement signed between Britain and the Al Thani Qatari ruling family in 1916 that was ratified after two years which safeguarded the fundamentals of Qatari sovereignty.

In between the two defining moments, Qatar's economy that depended on pearling suffered catastrophic decline with the collapse of the pearling industry in the 1930s as this decade coincided with the Great Depression and Japan's cultured pearl industry.<sup>49</sup> This signaled the end the pearling economy till the emergence of the oil era of Qatari economy from its discovery in the late 1930s and 1940s, which signaled the indispensable economic surge that Qatar is relying upon for its economy and accordingly its foreign policy<sup>50</sup>. The second defining moment for Qatari foreign policy was the decision to become fully independent after the 1971 British withdrawal from the Gulf that shielded Qatar's sovereignty over its small territorial peninsula. Nevertheless, the most critical Middle East event that impacted Qatari foreign policy is the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1990 and the subsequent 1990-91 Gulf War. This verified the defense and security vulnerability of small states, especially the wealthy small Gulf States including Qatar against regional and international threats. This has engraved the deepest survival threat against Qatari existence, hence the

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<sup>48</sup> Mohamed A.J. Althani. Jassim the Leader: Founder of Qatar. London: Profile Books Ltd, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew Gray. Qatar: Politics and the Challenges of Development. Colorado; Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2013. p 29

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p 29.

major component and factor in the orientations of its foreign policy, its national security and survival<sup>51</sup>.

For the next decades, the main aim of Qatari foreign policy was to work on its borders, maritime and territorial disputes with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In respect to the Qatari-Bahraini disputes, it ended in 2001. The ICJ ruled, in the only dispute between Arab countries to be settled by the court, that Bahrain would have the disputed Barren Hawar Islands and Qatar would gain most of the territorial waters, which were later discovered to be rich in hydrocarbons. In reference to the Qatari-Saudi Arabian territorial dispute, the Crown Prince then Sheikh Hamad, in 1992, came to an agreement regarding the south borders with Saudi Arabia. These disputes were the initial phases in which the current Qatari state was being contextualized in the region territorially<sup>52</sup>. With its territorial borders finalized, Qatar's foreign policy commenced its current regional aspirations.

The Qatari foreign policy, as Sir Graham explains, is built on one main mandate; the state's survival in a volatile and turbulent region. However its characteristics are built on the internal politics of the state as well as the character of its leaders. The modern history of Qatar as a power seeking small nation is concurrent with the ascendancy of its former Emir and father of modern Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Al Thani and the overthrow of his father, Sheikh Khalifa in the June 27<sup>th</sup> 1995 coup d'état while he was on vacation in Switzerland.<sup>53</sup> Sheikh Hamad wanted to develop the huge gas reserves that were discovered in Qatar, as he despised the time-consuming nature of development that his father was adopting and wanted to rapidly modernize the small nation. This major difference in vision ended in a bloodless coup

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p 46.

<sup>52</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 366.

<sup>53</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 46.

in which “preventative diplomacy by the Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al Thani travelled to Washington and London to get their agreement that they would not intervene on Sheikh Khalifa’s behalf”<sup>54</sup>. As a result, the devious Emir Hamad, then emir of Qatar ensured that the rest of the GCC countries will not intervene as long as the US and Britain guaranteed no-objection and smooth transition of power. With this green light, Sheikh Hamad embarked on the first steps of wealth generating policies strategies. The Qatari government signed agreements with international oil companies such as Shell and ExxonMobil in which joint ventures were established between these oil tycoons and the state partner, Qatar Petroleum.

After the Emir worked on instating revenue sources, he started working on long-term prosperity plans for the general Qatari public with a population of 150,000 Qataris when he overthrew his father. Challenging the predominantly Wahhabist Qatari society and creating a knowledge based society was one of the major Qatari quests for modernization. Sheikha Mozah, mother of the current Emir Tamim, ruler of Qatar, was the architect of this educational development strategy. Sheikha Moza defended this modernization from the top-down in several speeches that Sir Boyce praises, as she repeatedly resembled the true Islamic fundamentalism to the victorious and scientifically affluent days of the Islamic history, in which the capitals of the Islamic world were the global centers of learning as she reiterated<sup>55</sup>. This Islamic pride nostalgia is evident in the rhetoric adopted by Sheikha Mozah. Her modernization quest was applied in adopting new curriculums and opening new foreign universities campuses in Doha. All these modernization strategies that were deployed by the Qatari ruling family and the new government post 1995 coup d’etat couldn’t have been constructive had it not been for the authoritarian nature and small

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<sup>54</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 367.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p 368.

size of the state of Qatar. As Sir Graham notes, “one of the advantages of not being a democracy is that the state can make very long term investments to see through its policies”.<sup>56</sup>

### *The Turning Point*

The distinctive Qatari foreign policy was mainly influenced by the case of Kuwait before 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the US liberation of Kuwait in 1991. The Kuwaiti lesson would always be the scenario that Qatar would become fearful of. With small states in the volatile Middle East limited by options when it comes to foreign policy strategies, Kuwait was the perfect example of a state that resorted to being a member in crucial “political packs” such as the GCC, the Arab League, the UN and the Islamic Conference Organization “and hope that no one noticed you were there” that proved to be insufficient for its survival<sup>57</sup>. Such very low profile foreign policy was proven to be deadly in the case of Kuwait and this is the strategy that Qatar has worked vehemently to contest. The unique Qatari foreign policy “was to set out to become indispensable partner to a number of key countries in the political energy and financial spheres”<sup>58</sup>. This will be later examined in depth in the third chapter while describing the geo political context of Qatar and its foreign affairs.

With the origins being illuminated, comprehending the determinants of Qatari foreign policy can help us understand its seemingly unique reaction to the Arab spring. Changes in the political map of the Middle East facilitated the rise of Qatar as

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p 369.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p 370

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p 370



well. The decline of the traditional Middle East powers such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia triggered a major structural change that altered the political topography of the Middle East, according to Lawrence Rubin, Middle East expert and Assistant Professor in international Affairs at Georgia Institute of Technology.<sup>59</sup> This major change along with its accrued wealth and the developments in technology, communication, trade and globalization have enabled small wealthy states such as Qatar to play a bigger role in Middle East politics, relative to the past.<sup>60</sup>

### **Quest for Recognition**

To establish its significance in the international community, Qatar embarked on a global state branding campaign and transformed itself into a proactive player in regional affairs and consequently international affairs. Its national security and foreign relations imperatives rely on its global constructed image as this branding originates from its needs to ensure its economic and political viability and are built mainly upon international linkages, protective alliances and economic ties and its media conglomerate Aljazeera<sup>61</sup>. Moreover the state branding strategy illustrated in Qatar's Aljazeera along with the cultural initiatives have cohesively created a commendable global Qatari brand<sup>62</sup>. As one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, Qatari ability to play a detrimental role in Middle East politics was galvanized by the creation of Aljazeera in November 1996 which presented an alternative to the state owned news media outlets that monopolized the Middle East during those times.

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<sup>59</sup> Lawrence Rubin. "A Typology of Soft Powers in Middle East Politics". Harvard Kennedy School: Belfer Center for Science and international Affairs and Dubai School of Government. Working Paper No. 5. Web. 10 Aug. 2014. p 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p 14.

<sup>61</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 161.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p 164.

## 1. The Aljazeera Effect and Qatari Soft Power<sup>63</sup>

*“Aljazeera was never really a media project. It was, and is, a political project. It’s about being an extension of the state of Qatar. The Qataris wanted something that could both enhance their prestige and give them power and influence. This gave rise to Al-Jazeera and it has been enormously successful at achieving it”.*<sup>64</sup>

Since the commencement of its operations in 1996, Alj has established its uniqueness among Arab Media outlets. An integral component of the former Emir’s, Sheikh Hamad, image construction of Qatar, Aljazeera signaled the state’s liberalization relative to its other Arab neighbors and acted as a window through which the Qatari government transmitted its ideas to the Arab World<sup>65</sup>. With Qatari state funding of Aljazeera, it was transformed into not only a regional foreign policy tool but a global soft power platform for Qatar<sup>66</sup>. In less than two decades since its establishment, Aljazeera has become a global media conglomerate with numerous broadcasting offices, sixty-five bureaus worldwide, three thousand staff at its headquarters and reaches staggering 220 million households’ n more than a hundred countries<sup>67</sup>. As Qatar’s international publicity vehicle symbolized the most critical national branding and public policy tool from its headquarters in Doha and to Qatar as a modern state<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Megan Elizabeth Zingarelli. “The CNN Effect and the Al-Jazeera Effect in Global Politics and Society”. Thesis. Washington/ Georgetown University, 2010. Web. 20 April 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Nabil Sultan. “Al Jazeera: Reflections of the Arab Spring”. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf and the Red Sea* 3.2 (December 2013): 249-264. p 256.

<sup>65</sup> Gray, op. cit., p 168

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p 170

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p 167

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p 169

Hilal Khasan supports this notion. Khasan perceives Al Jazeera since its establishment as merely a political tool of Qatar as he reports, “Qatar probably has the best soft power projection of any small state- apart from the Vatican, which has been in the game rather longer. It is based on regional public recognition first of all through Aljazeera”.<sup>69</sup> The audacious nature of the satellite news channel signaled it out from all other Arab speaking news outlets and enhanced its public recognition<sup>70</sup>. Its coverage of 1998 British and American attack on Iraq (the Desert Fox campaign) along with the coverage of the horrors of the second Palestinian *Intifida* in 2000 along with the war and invasion of Iraq in 2003 made it the primary source of information to millions of Arab homes which enhanced its popularity and its rising credibility. Its Aljazeera has not only established itself due its expansive coverage but has paid a hefty price for its growing role in media coverage as on 1 April 2003, its Baghdad office was hit by a US air strike and killed one of its journalists, Tarek Ayoob and on 13 November 2011, its offices in Kabul, Afghanistan, were hit by US bombs<sup>71</sup>. Such tragedies attracts more international attention and portrays Aljazeera and its Qatari affiliation as the beacons of freedoms in the Arab World and Middle East which enhances the Qatari international image.

Furthermore, Aljazeera not only challenged the censorship engulfed in national news outlets in the Middle East, it challenged the status quo of the ruling regimes through providing opposition leaders in the Middle East region a high penetration platform. Another major contributor to the prominence of Aljazeera lies in its exclusive coverage of allied air strikes that devastated Afghanistan following the events of 9/11 as it was the only media channel which had a team on the ground

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<sup>69</sup> Boyce, op. cit., p 376

<sup>70</sup> Marc Lynch. Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera and the Middle East Politics Today. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. p 125

<sup>71</sup> Gray, op. cit., p 167.

covering the unfolding war zone. Sultan attempts to comprehend the fact that Qatar was the only nation state, despite being a strategic U.S. ally, that was leading this rising media powerhouse as he states,

*“Significant in this case of Al Jazeera is the fact that the freedom it enjoys emanates from a country governed by a neo-patrimonial regime and not from any of the post independence and self proclaimed ‘revolutionary’ and ‘progressive’ Arab regimes”.*<sup>72</sup>

This coverage did enhance its reach to the international community yet shed the light on the Qatari state as neo-patrimonial undemocratic state that doesn't adopt what it preaches to the outside world. This accusation is to be magnified as a result of Doha endorsement of the Arab Spring and the swift uprisings that toppled other undemocratic regimes in the Arab World.

#### *A. News or Propaganda*

During the Arab Uprisings in the Arab spring, Alj exceeded the limitations of professional journalistic coverage and incorporates propagandist tactics. Various slogans were abundantly shown in the news coverage of the uprisings, such as but not limited to the following, “Egypt’s...people’s victory”, “Libya...the collapse of the wall of silence”, “Yemen...revolution in the squares of change”. However such solidarity wasn't manifested in the coverage of the Bahraini uprising that was contained with the influx of Saudi troops. This lack of objective coverage was reinforced when claims of editorial tendencies in Al Jazeera's coverage of the Arab

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<sup>72</sup> Sultan, op. cit., p 251.

Spring events were confirmed with various resignations from the staff members<sup>73</sup>. This not only questions the credibility of the news network, it sheds the light on Qatari foreign policy in the events of the Bahraini short-lived uprising. Any widespread coverage of the Bahraini uprising would have put the whole GCC countries at risk of a spill over effect that had to be avoided and confined.

This controversy surrounding Qatar and its Al-Jazeera became more blatant as the Qatari flag flew next to the pre Qaddafi Libyan flag, which the National transitional Council adopts, in Benghazi after the fall of the Libyan regime. Qatar not only provided humanitarian aid to the rebellious Libyan regions, Qatar funded a channel based in Doha to fight back the Qaddafi media campaign as will be further examined in chapter four<sup>74</sup>. Phillip Seib, professor of journalism and public diplomacy at the University of South California, perceives Al-Jazeera as a descendant of former President Gamal Abdel Nasser's propagandist radio broadcast in the twentieth century Saut El Arab "Voice of the Arabs" and equates both in terms of propaganda effectiveness. He states in his 2008 book *The Aljazeera Effect*, "There is more to Al-Jazeera than journalism... it is the latest in line of media ventures that have sought to use media to help establish a pan-Arab identity". Al Jazeera as Seib confirms is not only a news outlet but it constitutes a phenomenon led by Qatar, especially at the times of extreme censorship and autocracy that was spread among Arab countries.<sup>75</sup>

Many scholars credit Alj for its galvanization of Arab masses as March Lynch, Director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and Middle East Studies Program, George Washington University, states, "a new generation of Arabs had come of age

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<sup>73</sup> Nada Altuwaijri. " 'We Aired Lies': Al Jazeera Staff Quit Over 'Misleading' Egypt Coverage". *AlArabiya English*. 9 July 2013. Web 30 Aug. 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Sultan, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>75</sup> Phillip Seib. *The Al Jazeera Effect: How the New Global Media Are Reshaping World Politics*. Poromac Books, Washington, D.C 2008. Pp 20-21.

watching Alj, the Qatari satellite television station; connecting with each other through social media; and internalizing a new kind of Pan-Arabist identity”.<sup>76</sup> Lynch sustains that the crucial role that Alj has played is not only limited to the events of the Arab Spring. Protests among Arab youth in support of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000 as well as protests against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in 2006 were all connected virtually through the power of media and news coverage that Alj maintained. Nabil Sultan, Head of division of management, business and enterprise at the School of business, leadership and Enterprise at University Campus Suffolk investigates the role played by Aljazeera in the evolvment and coverage of the Arab Spring<sup>77</sup>. Sultan attributes the birth of Aljazeera in 1995 to the changing policies of the GCC Gulf Cooperation Council countries to reduce its reliance on oil and gas and “position themselves as future world centers of finance, technology and first class education”. Qatar chose that its national interest would be better served with the establishment of an uncensored satellite news channel in the midst of all the censored national news channels in the Middle East during those times. The manifestation of media power was evident in CNN’s coverage of the Iraq War and the recapture of Kuwait in 1991. Qatar’s then emir, Sheikh Hamad, utilized this rising power of media and he materialized this to establish Aljazeera with the human capital of BBC’s Arabic disbanded staff. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa heralded the true initiation of the Arabic Speaking Aljazeera with a ‘loan’ of \$140 million. The continuous Aljazeera state affiliation was later confirmed in a leaked diplomatic US cable, the former US ambassador to Doha, Joseph Lebaron, commentated on Aljazeera’s neutrality and contested independence

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<sup>76</sup> Marc Lynch. The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East. New York: Public Affairs, 2013. Pp 23-24

<sup>77</sup> Sultan, *op. cit.*, p 251.

from the regime, “despite government of Qatar protestations to the contrary, Aljazeera remains one of Qatar’s most valuable political and diplomatic tools”.<sup>78</sup>

### *B. Qatari Geomedia*

Due to the unequivocal impact that Aljazeera had on Qatar and its soft power, Hroub extends the notion of “geopolitics” as a term and offers the term “geomedia”. This term is coined in an attempt to analyze the successful dynamics of states that use global and transnational media to compensate for the lack there of their conventional geo political or geo economic strengths to rise to global prominence. Hrob utilizes this geomedia perspective in linking Aljazeera’s influence and the ascendancy of Qatari foreign policy and its assertive role in Middle East politics. The favorable coverage of the protests reflected the policy of Qatar and gave it more leverage in the Arab Spring. He concludes by stating, “the accusations of the collapsing regimes that Aljazeera was not neutral in its coverage of the protests movements against them were clearly true.”<sup>79</sup>

### *C. Defending Aljazeera*

In rejection to the argument that perceives Al Jazeera as a foreign policy tool of Qatar, Mohamed Zayani, associate professor of critical theory at the American University of Sharjah along with Sofiane Sahrouni, associate professor of management information systems at the American University of Sharjah, coauthored

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<sup>78</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*, p 14.

<sup>79</sup> Khaled Hroub. “Qatar: Geostrategic Media and Foreign Policy”. *Norwegian Peace Building Resource Center*. Policy Brief (Feb. 2013). Web. 10 Sep. 2014.

the commended book in 2007 *The Culture of Aljazeera: Inside an Arab Media Giant*<sup>80</sup>.

*“People relate to al Jazeera because it both shares and stages the malaise and sorrow of Arabs. Aljazeera emerged in an environment marked by a succession of wars and crises during a time marked by the spirit and defeat of disappointment. As such, Aljazeera is the channel of Arab disenchantment, articulating what people want to say but cannot say with a rare sense of audacity”.*<sup>81</sup>

Zayani and Sahrouni reiterate their defense in explaining that the former Qatari Emir, Shaikh Hamad Bin Thamer Al Thani, abolished the ministry of information and stated that there is no positive role that the abolished ministry can play in the future media projects in Qatar<sup>82</sup>. Thus created a media friendly environment in which freedom of expression was granted though Aljazeera for all Arabs, which needs to be commended. In addition, more scholars defend Al Jazeera and its claim of objectivity and independence from the Qatari state. As Sultan dictates, “Employing a media channel as a political or foreign policy tool is unlikely to be a sustainable strategy, since a strategy of this type is unlikely to succeed in an increasingly globalized, technology-savvy well-connected world”<sup>83</sup>. However such defense is minimal compared to the compounding evidence portrayed in Aljazeera and Qatari role in the Arab spring.

## **2. Maverick Foreign Policy**

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<sup>80</sup> Mohamed Zayani and Sofiane Sahrouni. *The Culture of Al Jazeera: Inside an Arab Media Giant*. North Carolina: McFarland and Co Inc, 2007. p 66

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p 66.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p 71.

<sup>83</sup> Sultan, *op. cit.*, p 257.



Its complex and maverick foreign policy is attributed to the void in regional leadership in the Middle East. As Hroub claims, “The Qatari adventure is driven by the emir himself, who believed that there was a regional leadership vacuum into which he could step, despite his country’s size and demography. Qatar’s assertive role is thus designed to compensate for the lack of Arab influence in the Arab region”<sup>84</sup>. This void, as Karim Makdisi, Associate Professor of International Politics in the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration at the American University of Beirut argues, provided the space in which the strategic policy expansion entailed attempts of assertiveness on behalf of Qatar in Middle East politics that multiplied and were transformed from merely political through mediation to military intervention<sup>85</sup>. It was in fact mediation that put Doha on the global political radar.

#### *A. Mediation*

Mediation is “foreign policy as in a broader framework of strategic action within the international and domestic political systems” which on its own is insufficient element of conflict resolution<sup>86</sup>. Qatar’ perceived impartiality relative to other regional payers that have vested interests of leniencies in regional affairs equipped it with the utmost element for credibility as kamrava argues<sup>87</sup>. In all the mediation cases in which Doha involved itself into, prior to the Arab spring, Qatar had the advantage of having no historical or rooted ideological positions in contrast to

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<sup>84</sup> Hroub, *op. cit.*, “Qatar: Geostrategic Media and Foreign Policy”.

<sup>85</sup> “Qatar: Aspirations and Realities”. *Perspectives: Political Analysis and Commentary from the Middle East & North Africa*. Heinrich Boll Foundation- Middle East and North Africa. November 2012. p 8

<sup>86</sup> Mehran Kamrava. “Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy” *The Middle East Journal* 65.4 (Autumn 2011): 539-556. pp 552-554.

<sup>87</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, p 542.

other Arab states are often compelled by the past<sup>88</sup>. It is through mediation and involvement in the international diplomatic scene, Doha's objective was to avoid being shoved aside by larger adversaries in the region. As a result, Doha established international recognition for its efforts, and created more political leverage in international affairs as a credible negotiator prior to the Arab Spring events<sup>89</sup>.

This determinant will be further examined in the following chapter, as a breakdown of its foreign relations with its most prominent allies is addressed. Mediation was based upon its expansive networking that included hostile Middle Eastern states such as the Iranian regime and Israel, as well as pivotal non-state actors such the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hizboallah. This networking strategy of a minefield of challenging relations enabled the Qatari foreign ministry to be an essential player that mediates in several conflicts in the region<sup>90</sup>. However this was not possible with the financial and economic clout that was associated with Qatari mediation.

### *B. Checkbook Diplomacy*

The economic clout is the most critical factor in Qatari mediation efforts. Qatari financial resources enable the small Gulf state to offer donations to deprived conflict-stricken areas in a form of reconstruction efforts, which act an incentive to succumb to its diplomatic efforts. Such mediation is critical that former minister of Foreign affairs Sheikh Hamad stated, "We are sparing no effort to settle intra-Arab problems, as we all Arab problems with others, without having a special agenda,

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<sup>88</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 371

<sup>89</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, p 542

<sup>90</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, p 12.

through conciliation and mediation, because we believe that it is our duty to prevent the exacerbation of difference and conflicts, as their continuous impacts negatively upon everyone”. However this would not surface without the promises of financial backing that Doha provides to the parties involved in any negotiations<sup>91</sup>. Success stories such as the Lebanese political paralysis that occurred in 2008 verify such claim. The Qatari government brought two planes full of all the principal Lebanese leaders to Doha and had them bargain for five days. The result was a successful short lived end to the political stand off in which all immediate issues were resolved except for the Hizbolallah weapons that still shows no signs of being debated or resolved. On the other hand, another success story is the agreement signed between the Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels in March 2010 and the aftermath of the Israeli Hezbollah war in 2006 in which the Qatari government has vowed hefty donations to reconstruct the devastated Lebanese areas.<sup>92</sup>

Doha proceeded with its initiatives in Sudan as it in April 2013 in which an agreement was signed between the Justice and Equality movement and the Sudanese government. A Qatari donor pledging conference preceded the latest agreement in 2013, which is nothing unusual for the Qatari foreign policy mediation and complementary financial backing strategy as “It is, of course, no secret that part of Qatar’s negotiating armory is the offer of financial support to the parties should there be a successful outcome”.<sup>93</sup> In addition to its financial incentives, the Qatari Red Crescent, QRC, through its development work in Darfur establish the image of Qatar as a benevolent mediator in the eyes of the impoverished Sudanese people<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Al Thani. *op. cit.*, p 17.

<sup>92</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p 15.

<sup>93</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 371

<sup>94</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, p 21.

There are three main reasons as to why Qatar is involved in strategic mediations. The first reason as Sir Graham explains is the abundance of resources at the disposal of the Emir. This is strengthened by the fast decision taking process, which is in the hands of the Emir as well as the “moral obligation” that Qatar displays towards regional crises.<sup>95</sup> The Second reason is commercial and financial benefits. This “naked commercial opportunism” is evident in the case of Egypt while under the leadership of the MB and in the case of Libya in the first year after Qaddafi was toppled. The third reason is attributed to the state branding strategy that the Qatari state has been adopting since Sheikh Hamad toppled his father in 1995. With Qatar being an indispensable international player in Middle East politics, it gains international and diplomatic recognition, which is an integral mandate of Qatari foreign policy as previously explained. Kamprava concedes that Qatari foreign policy is predominantly perceived to be punching above its weight, however he refutes this perception as he states, “Nevertheless, on closer examination, Qatari foreign policy pursues an actually quite logical, a product of the country’s successful, and in so many ways fortuitous, positioning of itself as a small but highly influential actor in fostering regional peace and stability in a neighborhood that is justifiably renowned for its instability”.

### **Qatar As A Regional Hub**

With Aljazeera’s soft power and its mediation strategies as part of its state branding campaign, the Qatari government has established Doha an education, aviation and sports regional hub. First, Qatar’s financial largesse was utilized to

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<sup>95</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 372

transform the tiny gulf nation into a regional cultural center in the form of education, and economic center in the form of global trade conferences. With regards to education, the government of Qatar has provided financial incentives for prominent global universities to, not only establish partnerships, but to construct satellite campuses on its territory. These university campuses in its acclaimed 'Education City' include Georgetown, Virginia, North Western and University College London. In addition to establishing Doha based branches of prominent global thinks such as the Brookings Institute and the RAND Corporation<sup>96</sup>. With regards to trade, Qatar has hosted the Doha round of trade talks<sup>97</sup>. Secondly, Qatar Airways has made Doha an acclaimed global transport hub that connects the small sheikhdom to the rest of the world with 11 million passengers having travelled through Doha in 2011<sup>98</sup>. Thirdly, the 2006 Asian games was an important milestone in Qatar's quest for recognition and branding that later enabled it to win the 2022 World Cup Bid in late 2010<sup>99</sup>. All these events boost the Qatari state brand worldwide, which is a main mandate of its foreign policy. This is intended to be reflected in Doha's increasing diplomatic and economic role in regional affairs and Middle East politics.

### **Global Investments**

The last and most visible foreign policy mandate is the global investments strategy. Qatar's global investment arm is its SWF, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) that is valued at \$170 billion as of 2014 despite its short history as it was

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<sup>96</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, p 7.

<sup>97</sup> Rubin, *op. cit.*, p 16.

<sup>98</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, p 8

<sup>99</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 172.

established in 2005.<sup>100</sup> QIA and its subsidiaries have established a web of Qatari strategic level stakes in international companies and stock exchanges. With 15% in the London Stock exchange, 17% of German car manufacturer Volkswagen, 6% of the French media conglomerate Lagardere, and the ownership of London's Landmark Harrods for a hefty \$2.23 billion in May 2010, QIA has created its increasing stakes in the global business sector<sup>101</sup>. The QIA has also expanded its scope into Asia and the emerging economies with a \$6 billion investment into the Agricultural bank of China, which is an addition to the 2009 deal with China that makes Qatar its largest supplier of LNG<sup>102</sup>. Most importantly, the political ties between the Qatari government and Europe have been enhanced as a result of these massive global investments as Sven Behrendt, visiting scholar at the Carnegie's Middle East Center, confirms<sup>103</sup>. One could argue that the QIA is independent politically from the Qatari state and its leadership. However this is not the case, as the QIA's board is chaired by the former hier and current Emir Shiekh Tamim bin Hamad<sup>104</sup>. Nevertheless, the Qatari government, especially the Al Thani royal family, utilized QIA to diversify the Qatari economy. This global investment strategy ensures economic security from non-energy investments for future Qatari generations. In addition, it enhances the Royal family's legitimacy in the eyes of the international community as part of Qatar's global branding mandate in its foreign policy.<sup>105</sup>

## **Emir Tamim**

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<sup>100</sup> "Qatar Investment Authority" The Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute. Web. 30 Nov. 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 106.

<sup>102</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*, p 5.

<sup>103</sup> Sven Behrendt. "Sovereign Wealth Funds and the Santiago Principles". *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Carnegie Middle East Center, No. 22, May 2010. Web 15 Nov. 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 107.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* p 108.

It is important to note that all the Qatari foreign policies examined in this thesis, and specifically its mandates that are examined in this chapter, were effective prior to prince Tamim's ascendancy to the Qatari leadership. With the coronation of new prince of Qatar in July 2013 and his claim that Qatar "was not part of any regional trends against any other" along with the fact that he led Qatar for only 5 months in the time frame specified from this research, his leadership of Qatari foreign policy is not examined. Moreover, major foreign policy shifts were unexpected till recently with the Riyadh Pact and Doha's GCC Summit in December 2014 in which Qatari MB support should be minimized or halted<sup>106</sup>. Any changes pertaining to period after 2013 in which Emir Tamim has led Qatari foreign policy for a significant period should be examined in a separate research as will be mentioned in the last chapter.

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<sup>106</sup> Marc Pierini. "Qatar's Foreign Policy Under the New Emir." *Carnegie Europe*. 28 June 2013. Web. 15 Aug. 2014.

## Chapter III

### Qatar's Geopolitical Context

*“The second plank of Qatari foreign policy is being friends with everyone”*<sup>107</sup>

#### Introduction

The contentious role that Qatar has been playing in Middle East politics can be explained through the examination of its peculiar geo political context. In doing so, a breakdown of its somewhat contradictory strategic alliances and foreign relations with Arab and Non Arab partners will be addressed in depth in this chapter. The international branding strategy deployed by the state of Qatar is part of its geopolitical context that it created. In other words, its global branding campaigns ensures its security and provide it with an indispensable leverage, especially that it hosts CENTCOM and maintains active diplomatic and economic relations with adversaries such as Iran and US<sup>108</sup>. Matthew Gray argues in his book *Qatar: Politics and the Challenges of Development*, that Qatar is establishing its unique geopolitical status as he notes, “To an activist state, the best insurance against security threats or economic coercion is to ensure that all major actors in a position to be a threat have a strong stake in not being so” which Qatar has dubiously achieved<sup>109</sup>. Its web of strategic alliances ensures its survival in the Middle East and crafted its unique status as a friend not a foe to the most pivotal players in the Middle East till the onset of the Arab spring.

#### Qatar and the US.

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<sup>107</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 371.

<sup>108</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 12.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p 12.



Overcoming its geostrategic vulnerability and defense limitations is Qatar's, as a small state, main policy driver for its alliance with the U.S.

*“Qatar in short is trying to make itself indispensable not just in security terms to key western states (like the United States of America) but in financial terms to northern based multinational companies and institutions. Their hope is that such deep institutional, economic and security linkages with the West (and, in parallel, China) will protect them from regional hegemons such as Saudi Arabia and Iran”.*<sup>110</sup>

This indispensable alliance, which is vital for Qatar's sustainability is derived from the turning point of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Since the Qatari-US defense agreement was signed on 11 December 1992 between former Sheikh Khalifa and the Clinton administration, while Sheikh Hamad was Minister of Defense and Commander in Chief, the military links between Qatar and the US have been detrimental to the survival of this small Persian Gulf nation. Guido Steinberg, senior associate in SWP, the German Institute for International and Security Studies, examines the depth of such pivotal alliance to Qatari foreign policy, which has provided it with the political leverage that it needed to secure its independent foreign policy. Its main mandate is the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar which has been in operation since 2003 and is the US most strategic and significant air base in the Middle East<sup>111</sup>. Al Udeid air base, which is granted to US air force, was financed and built by Sheikh Hamad at a stunning cost of more than a billion US dollars<sup>112</sup>. Qatar,

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<sup>110</sup> “Qatar: Aspirations and Realities”, *op. cit.*, p 9.

<sup>111</sup> Guido Steinberg. “Qatar and the Arab Spring”. *German Institute for International and Security Affairs* (Feb. 2012).

<sup>112</sup> Mary Anne Weaver. “Qatar: Revolution from the Top Down”. *National Geographic*. March 2003.

in 2003, reportedly paid \$400 million to update the facilities in Al Udeid air base to ensure the longevity and sustainability of this detrimental military alliance<sup>113</sup>.

Nonetheless, Al Udeid Air Base, longest runway in the Middle East and Camp Sayliyah, the U.S. largest pre-positioning base outside of continental United States, to the West of Doha, accordingly, became the centers of operations in the Gulf for CENTCOM<sup>114</sup>. Prior to this major Qatari-US defense pact, the Prince Sultan air base in Saudi Arabia was the focal point for CENTCOM in the Gulf but this diminished with Qatar's Al-Udeid that became indispensable, still is, to the US role and military presence in the Gulf<sup>115</sup>. Despite a strong military cooperation the Qatari US relations, but Doha's foreign policy hasn't always been spared from criticism. Qatar's Aljazeera has not only intimidated Arab regimes, Donald Rumsfeld, George W. Bush's first Defense Secretary, has also criticized it repeatedly for its coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld was quoted in a Pentagon Briefing in 2004 attacking the news channel while stating that its coverage is "vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable" and accordingly harming the US image worldwide and especially within the Middle East<sup>116</sup>. In addition, David S. Cohen, the U.S. Treasury Department's Under Secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, stated that Qatar is "a permissive terrorist financing environment"<sup>117</sup>. With that being said, no major changes in the US Qatari relations have surfaced as necessity ties them both to one another; Doha hosts the command center for operations in Uldeid US air base and U.S. provides Doha with its security umbrella.

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<sup>113</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, p 15.

<sup>114</sup> Jeremy Shapiro. "The Qatar Problem". *Foreign Policy: The Middle East Channel*. 28 Aug. 2013. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

<sup>115</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 196.

<sup>116</sup> Sarah Baxter. "Rumsfeld's Al-Jazeera Outburst", *The Sunday Times*, 27 Nov. 2005.

<sup>117</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

Ahmed M. Abizaid reiterates that the strategic alliance with the US and the CENTCOM location in Qatar is what enabled the Qataris to deploy an independent risky pro Islamist foreign policy behavior that is on some level a supporter of moderate Islamists as in the case of Egypt and Libya. This, he explains, is evident prior to the Arab Spring but on a smaller scale and clearly evident in the investigated time frame between 2011 and 2013 of Qatari involvement in the Arab Spring<sup>118</sup>. Abizaid concludes that it is mutually beneficial relation as the US is gaining a military platform in the region whereas Qatar is gaining political leverage that it couldn't acquire previously as a small state. On the other hand, Jeremy Shapiro, visiting fellow with the foreign policy program at Brookings and US state department researcher on the Policy Planning staff and in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, asserts that the US Qatari alliance is not always constructive to the US especially with the controversial role of Qatar in the Syrian uprising that will be further examined in chapter four. Shapiro perceives this alliance between the US and Qatar as a conspicuous bilateral situation in which the US's costs outweigh the benefits as he states, "But at the end of the day. U.S. policy on critical Middle East issues like Syria is being held hostage by the contrary agenda of a tiny country that the United States defends militarily"<sup>119</sup>. Nevertheless, Doha's mediation was crucial to the US in two cases during the Arab Spring. First, Qatar is credited for the successful swap of U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. Secondly, the Qatari intelligence chief, Ghanim khalifa Al-Kubaisa, directly managed

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<sup>118</sup> Ahmed Abu Zid. (Dubai, United Arab Emirates), interview with scholar, March 11, 2014.

<sup>119</sup> Shapiro, *op. cit.*

the negotiations with the Syrian Islamist military group, Al-Nusra front, Al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, to free Peter Curtis, American writer<sup>120</sup>.

Intriguingly, other critics of the US-Qatari alliance perceive the nature of this strategic relation differently as they view it from a conspiracy-oriented angle. Kahwaji, for instance, stated that Qatar is and has been pursuing and leading a political Islamist agenda in the Arab Spring not from an opportunistic realm alone. According to him, Qatar strongly believes that "Moderate political Islam can subordinate Al Qaeda" which is reflected in former Emir Hamad and his foreign Minister and Prime minister Shiekh Hamad's speeches that encourage the inclusion of Islamists in the political processes to curb extremism. This stance, "with Qatar being the executer of this scheme", has been pushed and implemented in cooperation with the United State from the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011, as he claims. However Qatar did not take into consideration the other Gulf countries stance to move firmly against it and take a detrimental stance to halt its actions as seen in the support of the post Muslim Brotherhood Egypt<sup>121</sup>. Kahwaji stated that based on confidential sources, "Confirmed from Iranian and Hezbollah officials, Qatar is a puppet of American intelligence" a reliable government source in Dubai has informed him<sup>122</sup>. With such an argument in need for more factual evidence, it cannot be verified yet it sheds the light on the image that Qatar has gained as a consequence of its foreign policy in the Arab spring.

## **Qatar and Saudi Arabia**

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<sup>120</sup> Elizabeth Dickinson. "The Case Against Qatar". *Foreign Policy*. 30 Sep. 2014. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.

<sup>121</sup> Kahwaji, *op. cit.*

<sup>122</sup> Kahwaji, *op. cit.*

“300 people with a TV station”, Bandar Bin Sultan Al-Saud, Saudi Arabia’s former Internal Security Chief is quoted describing Qatar<sup>123</sup>. The Qatari Saudi relations haven’t always been amiable as explained in the origins of Qatari foreign policy in chapter two and Qatar has been trying to emancipate itself from Saudi patronage since Sheikh Hamad abdicated his father and rose to power<sup>124</sup>. Its roots stem from the early days of the territorial disputes mentioned in chapter two. Main tensions rose in 1996 when Saudi supported a countercoup to reinstate Sheikh Khalifa and remove his self-acclaimed Emir Hamad. Saudi Arabia also supports pro-saudi members of the royal AlThani family in Qatar, which has resulted in diplomatic tensions between the two countries<sup>125</sup>. Saudi- Qatari tensions were recurrent between 2000 and 2010. Diplomatic tensions rose in 2000 when Saudi crown prince AbdAllah refused to attend a Doha summit for Islamic states in objection to the Israeli trade office presence in Doha. The Yemeni succession crisis was another mediation effort by Qatar to gain more political leverage to end the internal Yemeni strife but such attempts were short-lived successes. Qatar despite all its interventions in the crises of the Arab Spring that will be examined in chapter four, couldn’t risk further intervention in Yemen as it is within the Saudi sphere of influence<sup>126</sup>.

Furthermore, the Qatari relations towards are claimed to be based primarily on Saudi antagonism<sup>127</sup>. Khatib echoes Riad Kahwaji’s claim that this rivalry around Saudi Arabia and Qatar’s degree of regional influence and its objective to expand its political clout in Middle East politics to enjoy independence from the Saudi sphere of influence in the Gulf . This is evident as the Saudi Qatari relations have had tense

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<sup>123</sup> Simeon Kerr. “Qatar Set to Adopt More Consensual Foreign Policy”. *Financial Times*. 24 Sep. 2013. Accessed 20 Oct. 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>125</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>126</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 372.

<sup>127</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 3.

times, which are not exclusive to Qatari foreign policy in the Arab Spring. For example, Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Qatar in 2002 in objection and anger over a report conducted and aired by Aljazeera, that highlights the zero tolerance policy that Saudi Arabia maintains towards its opposition<sup>128</sup>. It is also argued that Qatar's commercial ties with Iran, as will be explained in the following section, are exploitative of the Saudi-Iranian rivalry to enhance the Qatari clout in Middle East politics and limit the Saudi sphere of influence<sup>129</sup>. This contentious Gulf rivalry in the Syrian crisis as will be examined in chapter four, yet the Qataris attempts to punch over their weight in Arab spring events were met with a fierce stand by Saudi Arabia to curb the growing Qatari influence as noted,

*“While Saudi Arabia has adjusted to regional change on a reactive case by case basis by recently launching a successful counter revolutionary effort in Egypt and trying to counter the Brotherhood's influence among Syria rebels, Qatar has sought to embrace it head on as long as it is not at home or in its Gulf neighborhood”<sup>130</sup>.*

Moreover, Having established the nature of this complicated Gulf intra affair, it is crucial to highlight that the fierce stance by Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatari foreign policy and its questionable Aljazeera coverage during the Arab protests, prevented Qatar's Aljazeera from covering the short-lived uprising in Bahrain in a controversial manner that would jeopardize Gulf regional security as a whole. Despite Qatar being active, yet with a minimal number, in the GCC regional forces that went into Bahrain to suppress the protests, there were fears among Gulf monarchs that Aljazeera would cover the ‘disruptions’ in a Gulf country in the same

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<sup>128</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 188.

<sup>129</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 189.

<sup>130</sup> James M. Dorsey. “Wahhabism vs. Wahhabism: Qatar Challenges Saudi Arabia”. *S. Rajartnam School of International Studies, Working Paper*. 6 Sep. 2013. Web. 20 Sep. 2014. p 6.

manner it did in Egypt, and Libya to galvanize the masses<sup>131</sup>. However, the Qatari-Saudi relations haven't always been tense, with Doha implicitly admitting that it cannot function unilaterally and apart from the Saudi sphere of influence over Gulf regional politics. Amicable commercial ties exist, prior to the Arab Spring events, especially with the 2007 visit by Emir Shiekh Hamad and his then prime minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim to Saudi Arabia. In this visit, economic ties between the two rich Gulf States were enhanced which later paved the way for Saudi state owned and private firms to win infrastructure contracts in preparation for the 2022 World Cup<sup>132</sup>. Lastly, Qatar's deployed strategy as a small state to bandwagon against Saudi Arabia and its alliance is also complimented with another great power in the Middle East, Iran.

### **Qatar and Iran**

The vitality of the Qatari economy and wealth relies on its relations with Iran. With Qatar's North Dome field being characterized as the largest non-associated gas field in the world in terms of its oil equivalent reserves, Doha maritime boundary with Iran is critical not only for its economy but for the global economy as well. It is calculated that Qatar's North Dome's proven recoverable reserves are estimated to be 903 trillion cubic feet, which is 13.7% of the world reserves as of 2012<sup>133</sup>. From the onset of the discovery of the North Dome by Shell in 1971 and the onset of the North Dome's massive exploitation that started in 1981, Qatar has become increasingly

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<sup>131</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 374.

<sup>132</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 189.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* p 94.

dependent on its maritime boundary with Iran<sup>134</sup>. In other words, due to the fact that Qatar shares the single largest source of state revenue with Iran, the North Dome/the South Pars gas field, Doha has sought to maintain cordial relations with Iran and Iran's Arab ally, Syria till the eruption of the Syrian uprising in 2011<sup>135</sup>. Qatar's relations with Iran stems from its leadership perception of pragmatic foreign policy and bandwagoning as Emir Tamim ruler of Qatar once stated to the US ambassador to Qatar. The Qatari government strongly believes that it will be the party harmed, not Iran, if there are no cordial relations between the two neighboring states in the volatile Persian Gulf as he notes "Qatar's boycotting Iran will not hurt Iran but will hurt Qatar- including our shared gas supply"<sup>136</sup>. The extent of Qatari-Iranian affiliation was claimed to be as strong as its relations with other Gulf States. This attributed to the shared wealth along the Iranian Qatari maritime borders and the absence of any Iranian intervention in Qatari domestic affairs, in contrast to other gulf states and having historical turbulent relations such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain through their Shiaa populations<sup>137</sup>.

The strategic Qatari-Iranian ties are further enhanced and embedded in the defense cooperation agreement between Iran and Qatar that was signed in February 2010. This defense pact doesn't include joint defense or exercises but it ensures cooperation on antiterrorism and rudimentary level training. In other words, it is not to be compared to the Qatari US mutual defense agreement in terms of its national security assurance to the Qataris but it verifies the unique status of Qatar among its

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p 94.

<sup>135</sup> Frederic Wehrey. "Gulf Calculations in the Syrian Conflict". *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 4 June 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.

<sup>136</sup> Kamrava. *Small State, Big Politics*, *op. cit.*, p 75.

<sup>137</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 186.



Arab neighbors as a friend and not a foe to the Iranian regime<sup>138</sup>. This expands the number of states with stake in Qatari long-term national security and makes Doha the only viable negotiator with Tehran from either the US side or other side. It is also important to note that former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinnejad made two official visits to Qatar during his presidency whereas Former Qatari Emir, Sheikh Hamad, visited Tehran four times during his reign up till 2011, the most visits by an Arab leader to Iran<sup>139</sup>. This doesn't only accentuate the unique nature of Qatari Iranian relations but confirms the exceptional status that Qatar sustains from this relation among its Gulf and Arab peers, which gives it more leverage in mediation efforts pertaining to Iranian affiliates such as Hezbollah in Middle East politics.

### **Qatar and Israel**

The geopolitical context of Qatar is lastly influenced by its relations with Israel, yet the logic behind the Qatari-Israeli cooperation is still elusive and has caused tension between Doha and other Arab countries. However, the commencement of trade links between the two states started in 1996 but was short lived as the trade office was closed in November 2000. The closing was stirred by the criticism of Doha to the Israeli suppression of the Al-Aqsa intifada that broke out in September 2000 and the growing Saudi and Iranian pressure against Doha to cut its limited diplomatic and trade ties with Israel. Intriguingly, the limited diplomatic and trade ties were utilized in the Qatari post conflict aid as a result of Israeli aggression and its war against Hezbollah later. Qatar's active diplomacy and leverage was exemplified by its provision of 300 peacekeepers to southern Lebanon, as Israel approved, in the

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* p 200.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* p 199.

aftermath of the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel<sup>140</sup>. Despite the lack of an operational Israeli office in Doha, meetings still occurred between Israeli and Qatari officials such as Tzipi Livni's, former foreign Israeli minister, in Doha in April 2008 in which ministerial meetings were conducted between the two nations. It wasn't till later that Qatar severed its links with Israel with the launch of Israel's operation Cast Lead attacks against the people of Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009<sup>141</sup>. Since then and with the controversial role of Qatar in the Arab Spring, Israel and Qatar have exchanged accusations with regards to terrorism and fueling violence in the region.

This deterioration in Qatari-Israeli relations is exhibited in the Israeli Ambassador to the UN and his remarks on Qatari foreign policy in which he called it, "the Club Med for terrorists" in which its funding of Hamas and other Islamits is jeopardizing the security and future of the region. However, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Avidgor Liberman, stated that Qatar is paying these sums to Hamas to guarantee that it doesn't operate within the Qatari borders, same as in its support to the MB as will be examined in the following chapter. In Liberman's remarks he stated that, "It is paying protection money in order to ensure security and quiet and calm inside Qatar, so they would work only outside, I don't know how much they are able to influence Hamas. I think Hamas has more influence on Qatar, than Qatar does on Hamas<sup>142</sup>. This echoes the same sentiments that Shiekha Mozza, asserted to Saad Eldin Ebrahim, with regards to the MB's power in Qatari domestic politics as will be further assessed in chapter four.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the first visit of an Arab leader to the war stricken Gaza strip after Hamas took control in 2007, was by Emir Hamad in

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<sup>140</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 202.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p 201.

<sup>142</sup>Herb Keinon. "Qatar's Ties With the US Deterring Israeli From All-out Diplomatic Offensive, Official Says". *Jerusalem Post*. 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 30 Aug. 2014.

October 2012. This visit has caused quiet a stir in the Israeli government with its condemnation of the visit in which Sheikh Hamad called for the unity of all Palestinians, however, such visit could not have been allowed without the prior knowledge of the Israeli government. This visit was also not welcomed by Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian authority, as he is the recognized leader of Palestinians in the eyes of the international community and this was not respected or conveyed in Shiekh Hamad's visit to Hamas-led Gaza<sup>143</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

The geopolitical context in which Qatari foreign policy operates propels its quest for the independence of its foreign policy along with the assurances for its survival through the alliance with a superpower, the US. Qatar maintains its bandwagon against regional states such as Saudi Arabia to craft its own sphere of influence despite being a small state as it deploys the accrued gains from the mandates and branding strategies explained in chapter two. Its relation with Iran while maintaining strong US alliance adds to the complex and maverick foreign policy that Sheikh Hamad led in Qatar in which the economic vitality and the military protection are acquired and maintained by Qatar to signal its distinctive and unique foreign policy in the Middle East. Making friends and reinforcing its alliances increase the number of states with stakes in Qatari survival and its sustainability in the region. This geo political context along with the void that Qatar utilized to gain momentum for its foreign policy due to the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian decay in regional leadership in the past decade before the Arab Spring is what provided Qatar with the

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<sup>143</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 203.

courage and leverage to act accordingly in the events of the Arab Spring. This was translated into the Qatari opportunistic foreign policy that will be explained thoroughly in the coming chapter.

## Chapter IV

### Qatar and The Arab Spring

*“Qatar’s immediate response to the Arab Uprisings was effective deployment of its media arsenal, diplomatic activism, financial support and even military backing if requested by some parties.”<sup>144</sup>*

The trajectory of the Arab Spring has altered the mediation role that Qatar once played in Middle East politics. It has transitioned itself from a facilitator and mediator into a regional actor. This opportunistic and controversial role that at first glance conflicts with the small size and relatively new power ascendancy of Qatar is attributed to its active and assertive foreign policy over the preceding decade<sup>145</sup>. It is argued that this originated from the 1990s and the refuge it offered to Islamists and the media platform it provided for their rhetoric on Aljazeera<sup>146</sup>. Doha’s ‘pragmatic’, yet opportunistic, foresight saw the Islamists as the future leaders of North Africa and Middle East politics and endorsed them to gain more leverage in regional affairs. This is exhibited in an interview of former Emir Hamad with Aljazeera in September 2011 in which he argued for the inclusion of Islamists including Salafists and MB leaders in the political process in the Arab World, especially the post Arab Spring phase. He stated that,

*“Extremism is the result of tyrannical, dictatorial governments or leaders who give their people no justice and no security. That is what turns people into extremists. However if people can participate in the political process, I am*

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<sup>144</sup> “Qatar: Aspirations and Realities”, *op. cit.*, pp 36-37

<sup>145</sup> Hroub. “Qatar: Geostrategic Media and Foreign Policy”, *op. cit.*

<sup>146</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

*certain that you will see this extremism transform into a civil/civilized life and society”.*<sup>147</sup>

From this stance, the Qatari foreign policy was not limited to its advocacy of the inclusion of Islamists, but also its contested affiliation with Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood has attracted global attention.

### **Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood**

David Roberts, lecturer in the defense studies department at King’s College London, re-examines “the long standing and mutual beneficial relationship” Qatar has with the Muslim Brotherhood and claims that this relationship is the reason why Qatari foreign policy is in the midst of intra-regional glitches. The iterations of antagonism faced by Qatar from its Arab neighbors and states as illustrated by the sentencing of three Aljazeera journalists by an Egyptian court to lengthy prison terms along with the withdrawal of the UAE, Bahrain and UAE ambassadors early in March 2014, are attributed to the following, as Roberts states,

*“The root of Qatar’s current set of problematic relations is quite clear: the state’s modus operandi during the Arab Spring of channelling financial, diplomatic and material support through moderate Islamic groups usually affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.”*<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> David. B. Roberts. “Qatar and the Brotherhood”. *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*. 56.4 (August-September 2014): 23-32. p 23.

The origins of this relationship with the MB are traced to the 1950s and 1960s in which Islamic scholars such as the Egyptians; Yusuf Al-Qaradwi and Abdul Badi Saqr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi is unquestionably one of the most influential brotherhood intellectuals who has been living in Qatar since the 1960s and became the Dean of the College of Sharia at Qatar University where as Saqr became Qatar's director of education and subsequently head of Qatar's National library.<sup>149</sup> During Saqr's leadership, many pro MB figures were drafted into the education system, which has led to the concern of Sheikh Khalifa (ruler of Qatar 1972-1995) who was managing the education portfolio between 1956-1957. This concern was crystallized in replacing Saqr with a Syrian Pan-Arabist Abdullah Abd AlDaim. Despite such concerns from the future Emir during that time, recruitment of MB figures from Cairo continued during the 50s and 60s to the extent that Abdel Moaz Al Sattar, Hassan AlBanna's personal emissary to Palestine in 1946 would become the head of Islamic Sciences at the Ministry of Education.<sup>150</sup>

Beguilingly, these historical origins that exhibit the prevalence of MB figures in Qatar's bureaucracies since 1950s haven't been translated in any domestic pressures by those were indoctrinated by these scholars. In fact, the receptive nature of the Qatari regimes to the influx of Brotherhood figures "has not proved to be good ground for proselytization" as Roberts asserts. Qatar, at the institutional level, does not provide leverage for religious scholars to exert any influence on politics, which is not the case in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>151</sup> The MB ascendancy in domestic Qatari affairs was also impaired by the lack there of its classic social functions such as running food banks, small mosques or managing local sports facilities in poor areas.

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<sup>149</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, p 24.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p 24.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* p 25.

Accordingly, the MB in Qatar had an outward focus, not an inward focus. The MB through its scholars residence in Qatar and the immense wealth of the Qatari state, created a launching pad for the MB's expansion. This outward focus was crystalized and evident in the official closure of the MB's Qatari branch in 1999 as it was no longer important.<sup>152</sup>

According to Roberts, the MB has provided Qatar with scholars and jurists who weren't Saudis that enabled it to maintain its independence from Saudi Arabia's direct Wahhabi influence. He reiterates the mutually beneficial relationship as follows,

*“Qatar’s hosting of Brotherhood scholars also allowed the state to cultivate its standing in the wider Middle East, where the Brotherhood’s ideology was more popular than Wahhabism. This enabled Doha to become a key spike in the Brotherhood wheel. The members of the group attracted to Qatar by its open door policy were to prove useful in the Arab Spring.”*<sup>153</sup>

Contemporaneously, Roberts mentioned that Qatar penalized for its MB support in context of the GCC affairs prior to the withdrawal of the ambassadors as it was not included in a GCC meeting on Syria and Iran that was held in February 2012, because the GCC countries perceived the Qatari government as “unreliable when it comes to Iran” which pertains to the nature of Qatari-Iranian relations as in chapter three<sup>154</sup>. The ideological ties that Qatar shared with the MB was not that significant as claimed by Khatib in her recently published article, *Qatar and the Recalibration of*

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p 26.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p 27.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* p 28.



*Power in the Gulf*, as published by *Carnegie* in September 2014. Doha long standing relationship with the MB was to be utilized pragmatically, especially that the MB was thought to prevail as the political leaders in post Arab Spring countries. As the most organized political group in several Arab countries, which had their leaders toppled, Qatar weighed on being the financier and political supporter of a moderate Islamist political movement that would later be toppled due to various reasons that will not be discussed in this research. This shortsighted adventurism in which Qatar bet on the MB showed the rapid rise and decline of MB<sup>155</sup>

This partisan agenda is confined in its historical relations with the MB as Saad Eldin Ebrahim, the prominent Egyptian-American sociologist and human rights activist, examined in his memoirs his knowledge of Sheikha Mozza, wife of the former Emir, Sheikh Hamad, and mother of the current Emir Tamim. Ebrahim explains that Sheikha Mozza was dismayed at the negative portrayal of Qatar and its foreign policy in Egyptian Media. When Ebrahim highlighted that Qatar has harbored many of Egypt's MB figures and that has consequently fueled the growing hostility against Qatar, she emphasized that "what many people don't know is that the MB has a lot of control over Media and education in Qatar which are the most critical apparatuses in the country"<sup>156</sup>. This criticism and hostility has not affected or dictated a shift, even if apparent and not intrinsic, in the Qatari support till in the last months of 2014 with the GCC summits. The economic support granted to the MB was one of the key factors in the Qatari support to this most established grass root Islamist organization in the Middle East and Arab World. Despite the fact the MB has suffered

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<sup>155</sup> Khatib. *op. cit.*, p 6.

<sup>156</sup> Al Sayed Al Hurani. "El Watan Continues to Publish the Memoirs of Saad El Din Ebrahim". *El-Watan*. 8 Nov. 2014. Web 10 Nov. 2014.

major setbacks since 2013, Qatar has remained a friend till the end of 2013, which has angered GCC countries. This anger towards Qatari foreign policy is not only pertinent to Qatari MB relations but also to Qatar's cordial relations with Iran despite the Iranian involvement in the Syrian civil war. Qatari Foreign minister has visited Iran in late February 2014 and advocated, while on his visit, the inclusion of Iran to political talks to end the crisis in Syria. This attempt and suggestion is utterly rejected by Saudi Arabia, which has become the main influencer among Arabs with regards to the Syrian crisis <sup>157</sup>.

The expansionist foreign policy was transformed into more aggressive and miscalculated strategies as Doha started “picking winners, riding political trends, and engaging with multiple actors, even volatile ones like jihadist groups” <sup>158</sup>. Consequently, these miscalculations along with domestic challenges and international pressure led to demise in Doha's role in Middle East politics as Khatib claims as it couldn't sustain the repercussions of regional and international pressures<sup>159</sup> The Main two challenges that Doha couldn't resolve were its involvement in Syrian through funding Jabhat AlNusra in addition to its support to Egypt's MB. These opportunities that failed to materialize in Doha's favor, were to be the main reason for the investigation of Qatari foreign policy as it's claimed to be its main shortcoming in the past two decades as noted,

*“Betting on the brotherhood was the culmination of Qatar's long standing goal to supplant the Middle East's traditional powerbrokers*

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<sup>157</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>158</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 3.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* p 3.

*Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, by visibly allying itself with a rising power”.*<sup>160</sup>

This bet was catastrophic for Qatar as it lost its credibility and confirmed its partisan expansionist agenda and constituted the major shift in its foreign policy. This shift in the nature of interventionism in the Middle East and the GCC is assessed by Karen E Young. Young argues that this current shift in the nature of interventionism in the GCC entails departing from Saudi supremacy and the emergence of new players that are engaging in regional as well as international politics of the Middle East. She attributes this major shift to leadership changes at the national, regional levels as well as the international economy which has empowered “different, yet both assertive, interventionist foreign policies to emerge from Qatar and the UAE. The result is a moment of financial and military interventionism unprecedented in Arab Gulf politics”.<sup>161</sup> This opportunistic foreign policy was optimized when the Tunisian uprising was evolving end of 2010 and early in 2011. The Qataris had foreseen that there would be real change and a domino effect as the Arab Masses were furious with their dictatorial and anticipated hereditary leaderships that they, the Qataris, chose to engulf change and side with the new evolving events that are still shaping the Middle East. And Shiekh Hamad sought this moment and pursued a pan-Arab political identity throughout his reign and most specifically through the early days of the Arab spring<sup>162</sup>. Qatar through Aljazeera have given undisputed support to populist

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<sup>160</sup> Aryn Baker. “Qatar Haunted by its Decision to Back the Arab Spring’s Islamists”. *Time*. 26 Sep. 2013. Web 14 April 2014.

<sup>161</sup> Karen E. Young. “The Emerging Intervionists of the GCC”. *London School of Economics Middle East Center Paper Series/ 02*. December 2013. P 4

<sup>162</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, p 14.

uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria but not Bahrain and Yemen as the former states fall under the direct Saudi sphere of influence.

Khaled Hroub investigates the Qatari role in the Arab Spring pedantically in a chapter in the quarterly journal, *Perspectives: Political Analysis and Commentary from the Middle East and North Africa*. He attributes the Qatari transformation from a “negligible small peninsula to an assertive political actor in the region” to its unorthodox leadership and immense wealth. These two main factors, based on Hroub’s analysis, along with Aljazeera’s power enabled the small Gulf state to extract itself from being shepherd by Saudi Arabia and form its independent foreign policy that was later augmented during the events of the Arab Spring<sup>163</sup>. During the Arab Spring as Hroub asserts “support for the Arab Revolutions and their accompanying new generation of leaders, would maintain the favor of these emerging regional surges and grant vast credit to Qatar-all of which fall within the Emir’s scheme of leadership”<sup>164</sup>. Hroub verifies this thesis’ argument that Qatar perception of a regional leadership vacuum was met with compensatory proactive foreign policy with the Arab Spring as it was the ripe moment that acted as the catalyst.

*“The Qatari adventure is driven by the Emir himself who believes that there has been a regional leadership vacuum, where he can step in against all odds related to his country’s size in terms of geography and demography. In this sense, then, Qatar’s assertive role is designed to compensate for the lack of Arab influence in the Arab region itself”.*

The most startling assertive and opportunistic Qatari foreign policies are evident in the Syrian and Libyan crises. This section aims to grasp how and why

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<sup>163</sup> “Qatar: Aspirations and Realities”, *op. cit.*, p 35.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* p 36.

Doha became the main regional hub for logistical and diplomatic support for the Syrian and Libyan uprising<sup>165</sup>.

## **1. The Qatari Role in Syria**

### *A. The origins of Qatari Meddling*

Despite the development of a friendly relationship between former Emir Hamad and Syrian President Bashar and their two wives Asma Al Assad and Sheikha Moza respectively and the strong trade and investment links between Doha and Damascus, the Qataris failed to convince the Syrian leadership to implement structural reforms before Syria was doomed to face the same fate of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in which their leaderships were toppled. In the past, Doha maintained cordial relations with Damascus through a \$5 billion joint holding company that was set up in 2008 to ensure investments in the Syrian economy, specifically infrastructure projects such as power stations and in the Syrian real estate sector<sup>166</sup>. These investments were disregarded in favor of a heightened criticism of the Syrian regime. However, the Qatari response was not as swift as in Libya in the beginning of 2011. With the outburst of protests in March 2011, Aljazeera and Doha were not paying much attention to Damascus but this all changed when Al-Qaradawi became vocal about Al-Asaad regime. As a result, the Syrian regime requested from Doha that Al-Qaradawi to halt his criticisms and Doha rejected. Consequently, Syrian state media initiated an offensive media campaign against Doha and Aljazeera started its aggressive coverage

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<sup>165</sup> Mohamed M. Al Zayat. (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates), interview with author. 30 Oct. 2014.

<sup>166</sup> Young, *op. cit.*, p 22.

of the Syrian Uprising<sup>167</sup>. When the Syrian leadership did not take into consideration the Qatari and Saudi concerns, for Qatari leadership and Emir Hamad as Sir Boyce notes, “the matter then became personal for the Emir, who again was in the vanguard of those calling for Al Asaad’s removal.”<sup>168</sup>. This would later be escalated by the fact that Qatar was the first Arab country to close its embassy in Damascus in July 2011 and started publicly condemning Al Asaad regime and its suppression of its people through its rhetoric and through the deployment of its media arsenal Aljazeera<sup>169</sup>.

Doha with the perception that the Islamists are the ones with the highest probability of ousting President Al Asaad embarked on its islamists-leaning proxies of Syrian nationals residing in Qatar to create a pool of middlemen who can implement its foreign policy of endorsing the Syrian opposition. These middlemen were mainly Syrian expats and businessmen who supported the Syrian rebels and vowed to provide financial backing for their cause of toppling the Syrian Al Asaad regime<sup>170</sup>. Since then, the Qatari support for the Syrian National Council, SNC, and financial support to Syrian opposition groups has grown exponentially over the past three years since the onset of the Syrian uprising in 2011 to reach \$3 billion<sup>171</sup>. The Qatari support to the Syrian opposition has taken all forms; humanitarian, media, military and financial backing. However Doha has started aiding the Syrian opposition secretly in 2012<sup>172</sup>. Specifically, by the end of 2012, Doha was publically supporting the Syrian rebels and hosted a conference of Syrian opposition groups in November 2012<sup>173</sup>. A main

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<sup>167</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>168</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 374.

<sup>169</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 208.

<sup>170</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>171</sup> Shapiro, *op. cit.*

<sup>172</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 208.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p 208.

factor that enabled Qatar to arm and support the Syrian opposition was its Rotating presidency of the Arab league till March 2012, and during which Syria was suspended from the Arab League in November 2011 as Doha has leveraged its economic wealth and leadership in the Arab League to support the Syrian opposition since the onset of the crisis in 2011. In January 2012, Doha attempted to follow the same path as in Libya with it calling for military action and the referral of the Syrian crisis to the UN Security Council but its attempts were in vain<sup>174</sup>.

The regional context is critical to understand how Qatar was able to act so definitively in Syria. The reasons for Gulf States' intervention in the Syrian Conflict are complex which have further deepened the conflict that has been ongoing for the past 3 years. The Qatari role in the Syrian crisis reflects a geostrategic, domestic driven, economic and personal interests of its leaders. The geostrategic factor is power projection in the region by backing the Muslim brotherhood in Syria, which was assumed to be the sturdiest candidate for influence in Syria<sup>175</sup>. Consequently, Doha has become at the forefront of the Gulf's support to Syrian opposition till the summer of 2013. By that time, Riyadh was moving aggressively to remove the Syrian file from Doha's hands while the New Qatari Emir Tamim was, concurrently, seeking recalibration with the other GCC states to absorb the mounting opposition that Qatar was facing due to its Muslim Brotherhood patronage<sup>176</sup>. Fredric Wehrey, senior associate at the Middle East program at Carnegie, claims that Saudi Arabia is utilizing "the Syrian war to reassert its primacy within the Gulf Cooperation Council and in particular, check the growing assertiveness of Qatar" since the summer of 2013 correspondingly with ouster of the MB in Egypt to curb Qatari pro-Islamist foreign

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<sup>174</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>175</sup> Wehrey, *op. cit.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

policy in the Arab spring<sup>177</sup>. The Qatari government could not reap the same result it gained in Libya as its involvement in Syria was desired to “Qatar’s vocal flexible, and proactive role in the Syrian crisis failed to trigger an immediate or far-reaching impact as it had in Libya the year before” due to the difference in the geopolitical context of Alqaddafi and Al Assad regimes, their leaderships and their alliances. But this is a different thesis on its own to compare Libya and Syria’s revolutions’ scenario<sup>178</sup>.

### *B. Qatari Endorsements*

In August 2011, Doha hosted the conference in which the Syrian National Council, SNC, was created. In this opposition bloc, Doha supported the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood as the key party in the SNC. This is a blatant miscalculation by the Qatari regime similar to the case in Libya in which both MB entities didn’t have strong presence on the ground with no popular support<sup>179</sup>. Moreover, the Qatari Ministry of Endowments and Islamic affairs invited the Kuwaiti Salafi cleric in June 2012 to speak in Qatar about the need for funding in Syria, not limited to humanitarian aid, as it wouldn’t overthrow Al Asaad’s regime. Under the auspices of the Qatari government, he argued in Alkhor, a city 30 miles from Doha, that the priority in the Syrian crisis was to provide financial aid to the Jihadists to arm them. This Kuwaiti cleric was marked as a funder of terrorism by the U.S. Treasury department. Similarly, the same Qatari ministry invited Saudi salafi cleric Mohamed

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<sup>177</sup> Wehrey, *op. cit.*

<sup>178</sup> Kristian C. Ulrichsen. “Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policy Drivers and Regional Implications”. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*; Sep. 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 7.



Al-Arefe, known for his support for arming jihadists in Syria, in March 2012 and later in January 2014 to deliver Friday sermons and lectures in Doha<sup>180</sup>.

Doha showed no signs of ending its endorsements as in 2013; Doha hosted the inaugural conference to establish a Syrian coalition, the Syrian National Coalition of Revolutionary and Opposition forces, which would incorporate the SNC as a member. However Saudi Arabia bolstered its influence within this coalition through the presidency of pro-Saudi, rather than pro-Qatari figures such as Ahmed Al-Jarba and Hadi Al-Bahra<sup>181</sup>. This reflects not only the Saudi Qatari rivalry but the inability of Qatar to sustain a fully independent foreign policy within the Middle East due to the revival of the Saudi regional role in context of the Arab spring. More accusations claimed Qatar and its role as Saddam Al-Jamal, former Dier Ezzor Free Syrian Army commander, that Qatar funded, defected from the FSA and joined the Islamic state. While Qatar hosted the leadership of the free Syrian Army, FSA, which is the military wing of the Syrian National Coalition, Al-Jamal stated that the main reason for his shift in allegiance is due to the realization that “as days passed, we realized that the FSA was a project that was funded by foreign countries, especially Qatar”<sup>182</sup>. Nevertheless, the Qatar influence of the FSA couldn’t sustain the Saudi pressure and declined with the change of leadership in February 2014 from a pro Qatari leader, Salim Idris to a pro Saudi leader, AbdulAllah Al Bashir<sup>183</sup>.

### *C. The Aftermath*

Qatari foreign policy in Syria has yielded catastrophic results with Doha funding of Alqaeda affiliated groups such as Jabhat AlNusra which is no longer

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<sup>180</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>181</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 8.

<sup>182</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>183</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 9.

fighting on one front against the Syrian regime, but fighting Saudi-funded Gaysh alislam and fighting one another while fighting the Islamic state. With no coherent Qatari military strategy, till the end of 2013, to support the Syrian fighters and the abundance of players in the Syrian conflict, Jabhat AlNusra's status was weakened relative to the growing wealth and victories of the Islamic state. This has resulted in some Jabhat AlNusra brigades joining the Islamic state that is threatening the whole region, which marked a major setback to Qatar in the region over all, and in Syria specifically. Syrians on the opposition front have also criticized Aljazeera's, Qatari soft power apparatus, coverage of the Syrian conflict as being "unprofessional, maudlin, biased and often untrustworthy"<sup>184</sup>

The Qatari government, in its defense, has alienated itself from accusations of funding Islamist groups in Syria in stating that these fundraising activities were all carried by individuals, but which doesn't provide evidence in Qatar's defense as "by relying on middlemen, Doha not only outsourced the work but also the liability of meddling"<sup>185</sup>. These arguments were falsified as Qatari funding to hardline Jihadists and the lack of assurances that it would not reach the adversaries made the U.S administration pressure Doha to put an end to its support of Jihadists. With international concern rising about the repercussions of Islamic state and Jabhat Alnusrsa and the potential return of these Jihadists to their homelands in the Gulf countries, the United Nations Security Council issued a resolution to halt and condemn funding of the Islamic state and Jabhat Alnusra<sup>186</sup>. With the Qatari role created its own web in the crisis in Syria and the advancements of the Islamic state into Iraq, Qatar has lost major clout of its leverage acquired prior to the Arab spring.

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<sup>184</sup> Blake Hounshell. "The Qatar Bubble". *Foreign Policy*. 23 April 2012. Web. 15 April 2014.

<sup>185</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

<sup>186</sup> Khatib. *op. cit.*, p 11.

Moreover, Criticisms of the drastic Qatari role in the Syrian crisis have reached the extent that argues that these repercussions were intended, as stated,

*“If Qatari involvement in Syria has hindered the prospects for the emergence of a stable, functioning and representative Syrian opposition, this is not the unintended consequence of a poorly designed or implemented policy. Rather it is the logical culmination of a strategy that privileges Qatari influence and favored actors over peace in Syria and the stability in the region”<sup>187</sup>.*

However, no verifications can be made regarding this argument. Lastly, the Syrian file is under the Saudi’s primacy and leadership as military losses incurred by the free Syrian army and Jabhat Alnusra and the political losses of the MB in the region mark the shortcomings in the once opportunistic foreign policy of a small state, Qatar.

## **2. The Qatari Role in Libya**

### *A. Shift to interventionism*

Qatar was persistent in its intervention efforts since the beginning of the Libyan uprising. It was proactive in the GCC, the Arab League and urged the UN for western intervention in the oil rich state with the eruption of mass protests. Qatar was also the first Arab country (second overall after France) to recognize the Transitional National Council, TNC, the Libyan rebel government and then it was the lifeline to the rebels as it sold Libyan oil on their behalf to avoid sanctions<sup>188</sup>. Qatar funded and

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<sup>187</sup> Shapiro, *op. cit.*

<sup>188</sup> David Roberts. “Behind Qatar’s Intervention in Libya: Why Was Doha Such a Strong Supporter of the Rebels?”. *Foreign Affairs*. 28 Sep. 2011. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.

supervised the establishment of *Libya TV*, as a soft power tool that was deployed to counteract the Qaddafi propaganda<sup>189</sup>. Doha has also supplied the Libyan rebels in Benghazi with Diesel as they were running out of fuel supplies<sup>190</sup>. It was the coordinated diplomatic efforts of former Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa and the former affluent prime minister Hamad Bin Jassim led to the implementation of the no fly zone in Libyan air space in March 2011. Not only were the funding resources of the rebels' predominantly Qatari money, but also Doha provided military and combat training for the military brigades that were assigned to protect the oil pipelines in eastern Libya.

#### *B. Military Assistance and Intervention*

It is reported that, in Nafusa Mountains, Qatari Special Forces provided basic infantry training to Libyan rebel fighters and that other rebel fighters were brought to Doha by the Qatari military for special training<sup>191</sup>. Qatari Special Forces also trained the Tripoli brigade, a core force of the Libyan national liberation army, which played a critical role in the final stages of conflict against Qaddafi's army<sup>192</sup>. These claims were confirmed by the Qatari chief-of-staff, Major-General Hamad Bin Ali Al-Attiya as he reiterated, "we were among them and the number of Qataris on the ground were hundreds in every region. Training and communications had been in Qatari hands"<sup>193</sup>. The bulk of the Qatari arms and funding in Benghazi were given to Militias

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<sup>189</sup> Barakat. *op. cit.*, p 33

<sup>190</sup> James Gavin. "Mediation Under Scrutiny". *MEED: Middle East Economic Digest* 56.20 (2012): 32-33. Web. 6 April 2013.

<sup>191</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*

<sup>192</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 208.

<sup>193</sup> Ian Black. "Qatar Admits Sending Hundreds of Troops to Support Libya Rebels". *The Guardian*. 26 Oct. 2011. Web. 20 Nov. 2014.

associated with the MB<sup>194</sup>. Without any clear legal basis, Qatar provided the rebels with \$400 million in financial aid, water supplies and heating gas and essential goods other than selling Libyan oil till the fall of the Qaddafi regime<sup>195</sup>. Mostafa Abdel-Jalil, former leader of Libya's National Transitional Council has admitted the unprecedented Qatari role in the over throw of Qaddafi's regime as he described the Qataris assistance "as having planned the battles that paved the way for victory".<sup>196</sup>

Specifically Doha sent six Mirage fighter jets to join the NATO air force operations in March 2011 and these military support strategies signaled a major shift in Qatari foreign policy as David Roberts states, "never before has Qatar so overtly supported one side or made such an intervention"<sup>197</sup>. The accumulated Qatari commitment during the authorized Security Council Resolution 1973 in Libya represented half of its modest operational air capability<sup>198</sup>. In April 2011 Transport aircraft flights from Doha were continuously carrying arms to the rebels<sup>199</sup>. Qatar stationed two of its C-17 transport aircrafts in Crete, Greece, to assist in the efforts in the no fly zone above Libya<sup>200</sup>. Most strikingly, Qatari Special Forces were present on the front lines of Qaddafi's Bab AlAziziya Compound during the final assault on Aug. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

This unequivocal support and unprecedented military involvement of Qatar in the Libya is traced to Doha's historical relations with senior Libyan officials. The most prominent of these Libyans were the Al-Salabi Islamist brothers; Ah Alsalabi and Ismail Alsalabi. Ah Alsalabi was a Libyan cleric exiled in Doha whereas Ismail

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<sup>194</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>195</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*, p 13.

<sup>196</sup> Black, *op. cit.*

<sup>197</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*

<sup>198</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 208.

<sup>199</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*

<sup>200</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 208.

Alsalabi who managed the 17 February military faction, which protected oil facilities in east Libya during the onset of the uprising.<sup>201</sup> Intriguingly, the Qatari relations with influential Libyan Islamists has extended from these brothers to the NTC, the National Transitional Council. Abdul Aziz Belhadj, the head of the Tripoli Military Council is AlSalabis confidant. On the other hand, the NTC's former prime minister is Mahmoud Jibril who was backed by western powers. This diplomatic and military Qatari relation to leading Libyan Islamists was followed by deals of massive investments in the Libyan economy, especially its underdeveloped finance market. QNB in April 2012 acquired a 49 percent stake in Libya's Bank of Commerce and Development, which has 32 branches and assets worth of \$2bn<sup>202</sup>.

Bilal Saad, senior fellow for Middle East Security at the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security at the Atlantic Council, critiques the Qatari role in the Arab spring of endorsing the rise of Islamists as this not only accumulated resentment among other leading Arab and Gulf Nations, specifically U.A.E., Saudi Arabia and Egypt, but it has signaled a risky foreign policy behavior that Qatar couldn't maintain such as the present strife and chaos in Libya<sup>203</sup>. To avert being politically isolated, Qatar has created its own proxy with Turkey led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan<sup>204</sup>. However, later developments in Libya and Qatar's 'impulsiveness' and 'naivety' had made its role to be scrutinized and accused of 'political meddling', 'commercial greed' and 'of pushing a Pan-Arab Islamist agenda'<sup>205</sup>. The shortcomings of Qatari role in Libya were illustrated in the failure of

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<sup>201</sup> Gavin, *op. cit.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Bilal Y. Saab. "The Dishonest Broker: Why Qatar's Peacemaking Shouldn't Be Trusted?". Foreign Affairs. 30 July 2014. Web. 30 Oct. 2014.

<sup>204</sup> Saab, *op. cit.*

<sup>205</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 375.

MB to win the majority seats in the parliamentary elections and the current lawlessness of the Libyan state.

### *C. The Aftermath*

With claims that 75% of Qatari military personnel being foreign nationals, it is troublesome to comprehend the vitality of its assertive role in Libya<sup>206</sup>. With reports that the Qatari Special Forces being Pakistani mercenaries in Qatari reform and the site of the Qatari flag next to the Free Libya flag in August 2011 in Gaddafi's bab Al-Aziziya, Qatar has puzzled scholars<sup>207</sup>. Whether Qatar was involved militarily in Libya's uprising from March to October 2011 to enhance its global image as a western-aligned Middle East pivotal actor or to secure long-term commercial and economic interests in Libya is still argumentative, possibly a combination of both explanations. Ali Tarhouni, the Libyan interim oil and finance minister summarized Qatar's role in the Libyan uprising as follows,

*"I think what they have done is basically support the MB and I think that is an infringement on the sovereignty of the country... they have brought armaments, and they have given them to people that we don't know- I think paid money to just everybody. They intervened in committees that have control over security issues"*<sup>208</sup>.

Qaddafi once described Qatar as a tiny "thumb" ejecting itself from the Arabian Peninsula, not anticipating the role of this small state in toppling his regime. Rahman Shalgham, Qaddafi's former U.N. ambassador who defected from Qaddafi's regime denounced Qatari meddling in Libyan domestic affairs as he said " Qatar might have delusions of leading the region. I absolutely do not accept their presence at

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<sup>206</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 191.

<sup>207</sup> Steinberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>208</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.* p 16.

all”<sup>209</sup>. With more domestic criticisms against Qatari foreign policy, the only viable explanation is its opportunistic nature in which its networking of Islamists prior to the Arab spring was to be utilized for this small state to further enhance its global state branding as a pivotal actor in the Middle East.

### **3. The Qatari Role in Egypt**

#### *A. Partisan Aid*

From 2011-2012, Qatar endowed the Egyptian government with \$500 million in grant money, but with the ascendancy of the MB to the presidency in summer 2012, Doha provided Egypt with \$5 billion and promised additional investments to reach \$18 billion <sup>210</sup>. In contrast to the US pledge of a few hundred million dollars to the Egyptian government and the IMF conditions of structural reforms, Qatar had promised Egypt \$8 billion with no conditions during Morsi’ presidency<sup>211</sup>. Such Qatari money that was not fully delivered due to the ouster of the MB government in Egypt was to be lent at 6% interest. This was indeed a very low interest rate considering the volatile state of the Egyptian Economy at those times. Such depreciated risk can only be explained through the political alliance that Qatar had with the MB and the promise given by the MB of more commercial ventures in the Egyptian economy once it would recover. The unconditional support Doha granted Morsi’s MB government in Egypt despite the MB’s attempts to monopolize power as shown in Morsi’s presidential decree in November 2012 and its shortcomings in

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<sup>209</sup> Hounshell, *op. cit.*

<sup>210</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, p 30.

<sup>211</sup> Boyce, *op. cit.*, p 373.



managing the Egyptian economy antagonized not only the Egyptian masses, but Qatar's Gulf rival and regional power, Saudi Arabia. This was shown in Saudi support to the Military led ouster of Morsi in June 2013<sup>212</sup>. With Saudi Arabia pledging \$5 billion in aid whereas the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait pledged another \$7 billion, the Qatari financial aid and its partisan role diminished<sup>213</sup>. With the consequential Qatari-Egyptian fissures, Cairo had returned the \$2bn Doha has deposited in Egypt's Central bank during the short-lived reign of Mohamed Morsi, due to the failure of the Egyptian-Qatari negotiations to convert this sum of money to a three-year bond.<sup>214</sup>

However, Qatar's role was not limited to its financial aid alone, as it acted as the broker between the US and the MB that safeguarded the MB rule of Egypt despite being short-lived. The Qatari leverage with the US faced a major setback with the ouster of the MB's President Mohamed Morsi from Egypt. This resulted from the false promise given by the Qatari that the Egyptian political situation was still under control and there is no need for the US administration to exercise any diplomatic pressure on the MB's leadership to curtail its partisan rule of Egypt<sup>215</sup>. This was not translated in reality with these reassurances proven in vain and the occurrence of the second wave of the Egyptian revolution in June and July 2013.

Amid the massive backlash that Qatar was facing in Egyptian Media in the first and second quarter of 2013 as the result of its support to the MB, rumors circulated that claim more Qatari ventures and investments in matters of national security to Egypt. The former Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad dismissed rumors that Qatar was buying the Suez Canal or leasing the pyramids. He confirmed that the

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<sup>212</sup> Khatib, *op. cit.*, p 6.

<sup>213</sup> Baker, *op. cit.*

<sup>214</sup> Kerr, *op. cit.*

<sup>215</sup> Khatib. *op. cit.*

Qatari government has not taken sides between Liberals and Islamists in Egypt and highlighted that Qatar has given Egypt \$2bn prior to the election of Mohamed Morsi in June 2013. In Qatar's defense, Sheikh Hamad rejected all these accusations and generalizations as he stated in April 2013 "We are now being blamed for anything that happens in Egypt"<sup>216</sup>.

### *B. Al Jazeera and Egypt*

"Institutionalized bias" and "deliberate distortion" have characterized Aljazeera's coverage of the post Mubarak era in Egypt, especially during the short lived rule of Mohamed Morsi in which high profile depiction of the MB was unmistakable and this was not limited to Egypt<sup>217</sup>. This is attributed to the Qatari affiliation with the MB as well as the fact that Key members of Aljazeera are associated with the MB as Ahmed Azem, visiting fellow at the university of Cambridge, asserts. These include the previous general manager who resigned in September 2011, Waddah Khanfar and the Egyptian TV presenter Ahmed Mansour<sup>218</sup>.

Factors that led to the Egyptian revolution in 2011 vary from coercion, poverty, unemployment and neglect that characterized the dictatorial regimes. Regardless of the reasons that ignited the revolution and culminated in the preceding decades, the intensity and pace of the protests spread is exhibited in the media coverage. On January 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, the Egyptian authorities, as a result of Al Jazeera's coverage of the anti government protests and providing images of security forces using live ammunition against the massive peaceful demonstrators, has ordered the

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<sup>216</sup> Roula Khalaf. "Qatar Gambles on Egypt Power Struggle". *Financial Times*. 1 April 2013.

<sup>217</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*, p 15.

<sup>218</sup> Ahmed Azem. "Qatar's Ties with the Muslim Brotherhood Affect the Entire Region". *The National*. May 18, 2012. 20 April 2014.

closure of AlJazeera's Cairo offices<sup>219</sup>. Then the Egyptian authorities removed the Qatari media network from Nielsat, Egyptian Owned Satellite. On the other hand, Aljazeera evaded the blockage by providing viewers with alternative frequencies to watch its coverage of the unfolding news. Khanfar explained how the media giant relied on amateur video clips that were not necessarily of good quality, sent from protestors in the streets of Egypt and Tunisia<sup>220</sup>. Khanfar illustrated the crucial role played by Al Jazeera in the early days of the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, in which peaceful and frightened protestors would call him urging him not to stop the coverage of Aljazeera so that world would know what was happening in Egypt. He mentioned a specific story of a demonstrator who was at Tahrir Square claiming that there will be a massacre if Aljazeera would halt its 24/7 of the unfolding events at Tahrir square, indicating the imperative role that Aljazeera played since the beginning of the Egyptian uprising in 2011.

Till the end of 2013, Aljazeera continued to be perceived by the Egyptian state as the media wing of the enemy state of "Qatar" that provides a platform for the MB figures, and its hostility and antagonism will not cease to exist. This increasing strains between Egypt and Qatar is attributed to "al Jazeera Arabic's sympathetic coverage of Islamist leaders" and providing a safe haven and media platform for the MB's officials such as Essam Abdel Magid, who was indicted for his role in the assassination of former President Anwar El Sadat in 1981, and Gamal Heshmat, the infamous MB leader.<sup>221</sup> While the Egyptian government requested from Interpol to arrest Essam Abdel Maguid as he is to be prosecuted in Egyptian Courts for charges

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<sup>219</sup> Sultan, *op. cit.*, p 253.

<sup>220</sup> Waddah Khanfar. "A Historic Moment in the Arab World". TED Conference, Mar. 2011. Web. 20 April 2014.

<sup>221</sup> Gregg Carlstrom. "Why Egypt Hates Al Jazeera?" *Foreign Policy*. 19 Feb. 2014. Web. 14 April 2014.

of incitement to murder, Al Jazeera Arabic hosted the Gema'a Alislamiyya leader in Doha, Qatar on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 and disregarded the international warrant for Abdel Maguid's arrest. This highlights and reiterates the independence of Qatari foreign policy, at least till the end of 2013, and the incomparable status of Aljazeera as a soft power foreign policy tool that projects its own agenda on Middle East politics.

While the former Aljazeera English bureau chief in Egypt, Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, remains to be imprisoned in the infamous Egyptian prison Tora, along with fellow journalists from Aljazeera English news channel and its Arabic channel losing its credibility and audience as it is no longer among the ten most watched channels in Egypt, it is important to track the crackdown on Aljazeera's operations and staff in Egypt from 2011 till 2013 as shown below in figure 4.1 <sup>222</sup>. Antagonism against Aljazeera was refueled by its pro MB coverage of the Egyptian Military crackdown on the Islamists post the ouster of Mohamed Morsi, and the insistence of Qatar through its platform Alj that the Egyptian army and political forces should accept the demands of the MB and reinstate the ousted president and support his legitimacy "Alshari'yah"<sup>223</sup>. Despite the ascendancy of a new regime, post the MB, that has claimed international recognition, Qatar's Aljazeera through one of its most popular shows "Ashariah wal Hayat" that is run by Qarawdi issued a fatwa in Doha that "declared the coup unconstitutional and in violation of Islamic law" and called for Morsi to be reinstated<sup>224</sup>.

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<sup>222</sup> Dorsey, *op. cit.*, p 20.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* p 7.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* p 18.

*Table 4.1 The Timeline of Aljazeera and the Egyptian Authorities' Feud  
2011-2013*

Date	Event
30 January 2011	The Egyptian authorities ordered the closure of Aljazeera's Cairo Office.
Feb. 2014	The Egyptian authorities removed Alj from Nielsat, Egyptian Owned Satellite.
July 2013	Mohamed Badr, from Alj's Arabic Channel, got arrested.
July 2013	Abdel Fattah Fayed, Alj's Cairo bureau chief was expelled from a military organized news conference
August 2013	Abdullah Al-Shami, from Alj's Arabic Channel was detained and has not yet been released.
August 2013	Egyptian Authorities raided Alj' English Channel offices in Cairo.
29 December 2013	Police arresting Mohamed Fahmy, Peter Greste and Baher Mohamed from Aljazeera English Channel news.
24 June 2014	Greste and Fahmy were sentenced to seven years in prison, while Baher Mohamed was sentenced for an additional three years for possession of ammunition.

### *C. The Aftermath*

The perceptions that Qatar and its Aljazeera promoted MB or assisted in the ascendency of the MB to Egypt's leadership have been recognized. With financial aid to Egypt being repaid to Doha in 2013 and 2014, Qatar has been losing the leverage it once had via the MB. In Qatari defense, the Qatari Foreign Minister, Khalid Al Attiya, has defended Qatari relations with Egypt in a speech at Chatham House in London in December 2013. He affirmed that the state of Qatar did provide economic aid and LNG shipments during the leadership of General Tantawi, Adly Mansour and

AlSisi. He reiterated that Qatar worked with governments and not with specific parties and has no partisan affiliation in Middle East politics, especially in the Arab spring. He finalized the section on Egypt by stating, “It is ultimately beyond question that the stability of Egypt is in the interest of everyone”<sup>225</sup>. Additionally, Salah Eddin Elzein, head of Aljazeera Center for Studies, which is an affiliate of the media conglomerate Aljazeera, argues that pragmatism, not opportunity, is the main reason for Qatari endorsement of Islamists, as in the case of Egypt, and it is not that Qatar maintained a pro-Islamist agenda<sup>226</sup>. Nonetheless both claims are falsified through the sustained support given to the MB specifically, not only in Egypt, but in other Arab spring stricken countries such as Syria and Libya.

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<sup>225</sup> “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: HE Dr Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar ”, *Chatham House*, London. 4 Dec. 2013. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

<sup>226</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

*“The proposition that Qatar doesn’t have a culture of strong strategic vision simply doesn’t stand the test of objective scrutiny”*<sup>227</sup>

### Introduction

In the previous chapters, it was illustrated that Qatar held divergent preferences on the region’s revolutionary outcomes in the Arab Spring due to the utilization of its accrued wealth, soft power and its Islamist ties. With its foreign policy garnering significant attention, claims of hyperactivity, shortsightedness, and miscalculations surfaced to which Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiyah testified to the contrary. During an Oxford Circle lecture at Oxford University in December 2013, Dr Al-Attiyah stated that Qatar’s vision and foreign policy strategy are not only sustainable but serve in the long term interest of the state of Qatar and its future role in world politics as he stated. He reiterated that article 7 of the Qatari constitution is the founding principle of its foreign policy as he claims. It stipulates the following,

*“The foreign policy of the state of Qatar is based on the principle of preserving international peace and security by means of encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes; shall support the right of people for self determination; and shall not interfere in the domestic affairs of states; and shall cooperate with peace loving nations”*.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: HE Dr Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar”, *op. cit.*, p 4.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* p 5.

Al Attiya's statement and usage of this article conflicts with the verified accusations pertaining to Qatari involvement in domestic affairs in Egypt, Libya, and Syria, during the Arab spring which were highlighted earlier. These actions have resulted in hostile public reactions in several Arab nations such as Egypt, Libya and Syria in addition to the diplomatic retaliation of ambassadors' withdrawal by Gulf countries in March 2014<sup>229</sup>. The matter remains as to what does the future hold for Qatari foreign policy in a region where it suffered major setbacks and lost its credibility as a 'benevolent' and neutral broker and turned into an opportunistic Islamists supporter that seeks individual ambitions and defies the long-term interest of the region's stability, as claimed by other GCC countries.

Qatar indeed played a significant role in the Arab spring due to its utilization of the windows of political opportunity created by the absence of an effective and active regional power. Doha might have defused short-term crises in the past through its mediation efforts but it has submerged itself in the Arab Spring and has been antagonized for its contentious role as it encroached on the sovereignty of other Arab states. Nonetheless Qatar and its Aljazeera turned a blind eye to the suppression of protests in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain as Doha couldn't bare the consequences of risking the stability of a fellow gulf state and antagonize Saudi Arabia. This being said, the Syrian conflict, on the other hand, flooded the limited opportunistic nature of Qatar as other regional states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia have taken the lead and became more involved. The matter remains that the military and political assistance from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran have come to be strenuous to control as this exacerbated the fragmentation of the international community to reach an end to the

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<sup>229</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*



conflict in Syria and increase the factionalization within the Syrian front<sup>230</sup>. In assessing Qatari role, the concepts of inclusion of Islamists extremists in the political process and economic development through foreign aid were integral components of Qatari foreign policy strategies in the conflict as Qatari Foreign Minister, Khalid Al Attiya has elucidated, despite Qatar having no democratic political system to lead by example<sup>231</sup>. However Qatari money in the form of investments or military aid or financial support was involved in all three cases examined, Syria, Libya and Egypt and it was all transferred through Islamists channels in these respective states.

There are scholars who adhere to the notion that Qatari foreign policy is merely pragmatic with no specific ideology or tendencies. David Roberts and Mehran Kamrava argue that Qatari foreign policy, in the context of the Arab spring, is not ideologically Islamist but the support Doha gave to the MB was based on a structural networking need that Qatar lacked to gain more regional power<sup>232</sup>. This relationship was miscalculated and can be described more like gambling and it misfired as Roberts claims<sup>233</sup>. In other words the Qatari MB links have been either “checkmated or their usefulness otherwise degraded” and this constitutes the most essential challenge to the ‘pragmatic’ Qatari foreign policy argument<sup>234</sup>. Gray also argues that there is insufficient evidence to claim that Qatar is endorsing political Islam in the Arab Spring. Doha has hosted meetings and figures from influential Islamists in the region such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Libyan rebels, but this, as he argues, is not a foreign policy driver for Doha. According to Gray, all foreign policy aspects of Doha are

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<sup>230</sup> David Held and Kristian Ulrichsen. “The Arab Spring and the Changing Balance of Global Power”. *Open Democracy*. 26 Feb. 2014. Web. 19 Sep. 2014.

<sup>231</sup> “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: HE Dr Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar”, *op. cit.*, p 8.

<sup>232</sup> Mehran Kamrava. Skype Interview. Interview with author. 17 Sep. 2014.

<sup>233</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, p 28

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p 29.

attributed to its political economy and its economic considerations on the long term as it always seeks areas to invest its wealth surplus and economic largesse<sup>235</sup>.

There are other proposed policy drivers that compliment the limited comprehension of Qatari foreign policy in the Arab Spring. The first theory is the historical animosity that Qatar has with Saudi Arabia. With Qatar's terrible past with power transition that has been the forms of coup d'états, Qatar possesses this survival threat perception in which the Gulf countries and specifically Saudi Arabia adopts a hegemonic approach towards this small state<sup>236</sup>. Thus Qatar wants to carve its own destiny and significance in international affairs to avoid such scenario as clarified, "Qatari leaders have crafted foreign policy with the country's physical and political security paramount in their minds. In the process, they have transformed survival strategies into sources of influence and perhaps even power"<sup>237</sup>. Another theory that Kahwaji mentioned is that Qatar is the mediator and broker for western intelligence agencies in the MENA region. In return for Qatar negotiating on behalf of the US with Islamists extremists such as Taliban, the US grants the Qatari regime insurance for its security and sustainability<sup>238</sup>.

Putting aside conspiracy theories, it is true that Qatari involvement in Libya, in the beginning, enhanced its international profile as it was praised for its leadership in the Libyan uprising from Washington and Paris and accordingly enhanced its state branding policy, which is its first foreign policy mandate<sup>239</sup>. Yet, this image is contrasted by the opportunism of Qatari foreign policy and its contradictory networking that is visible in its hosting of several adversaries or adoption of

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<sup>235</sup> Gray, *op. cit.*, p 210.

<sup>236</sup> Kahwaji, *op. cit.*

<sup>237</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, Small State, Big Politics. p 72

<sup>238</sup> Kahwaji, *op. cit.*

<sup>239</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*

incompatible stances within the same conflict during the Arab spring to enhance its networking database and acquire more political leverage<sup>240</sup>. For instance, while Qatar was endorsing Islamists in Libya, it offered high profile defector from the Qaddafi regime, Moussa Koussa, long-term residency in Doha's extravagant Four Seasons hotel. After Koussa was forced to depart from the United Kingdom in which he took refuge after he defected, Doha saw him as a negotiation card and potential leverage as he is knowledgeable of Libyan domestic affairs and could be utilized in prospective negotiations or conflicts between the old and new regimes in Libya<sup>241</sup>. The opportunistic nature of Qatari foreign is further asserted in how Roberts concluded his imperative article, *Qatar and the Brotherhood*, describing the leverage that Qatar needed and established as he remarked,

*“Support of the MB and the associated groups is not as much of a preference of Qatar as it may seem. It originated as a structural need for staff who wouldn't establish systems that deferred authority to Saudi Arabia. Such support also established and preserved Qatar's position as an important part of the wider brotherhood, raising the state's standing across the Middle East”.*<sup>242</sup>

It was in fact the need for power generation in the midst of a tectonic shift in the Middle East, the Arab spring, which made Qatar utilize its Islamist connections, accrued branding and wealth to transform itself from a mediator to a partisan interventionist, but it couldn't sustain its involvement.

### **The limitations of Qatari Foreign Policy**

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<sup>240</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, Interview.

<sup>241</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.* p 28.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* p 28.

Looking further afield, there are several limitations to Qatari foreign policy that can be deduced from its involvement in the Arab spring. The main challenge to its bid for regional leadership is credibility. Qatar in itself is not a democratic state, which contradicts its rhetoric and endorsement to topple authoritarian regimes in the region and being the voice of the voiceless. It preaches to other Arab States what it lacks internally which is an effective democratic system<sup>243</sup>. Mohamed Megahed Al Zayat, former deputy of the Egyptian Intelligence and director of the National Center for Middle East Studies, confirmed this lack of credibility as a major obstacle that hinders any present or future role played by Qatar in the region<sup>244</sup>. The second challenge is the dearth of institutional capacity at the disposal of the Qatari foreign ministry. These lacks of Qatari administrative and on the ground resources constitute the diplomatic and bureaucratic capabilities that Qatar lacks to effectively intervene or sustain its achievements in Middle East affairs<sup>245</sup>. However, the same argument of the second challenge could be used to explain its strengths as Qatar's swift decision making in the past were unhindered by bureaucratic structures, but this ensures short-term and short-lived successes that Doha should derail from. The third challenge is that it is seen to be unworthy of inheriting the regional role of Egypt or Saudi Arabia in the region as it lacks the historical capacity, population, political capabilities, significance in international politics and vision to lead such tempestuous region<sup>246</sup>.

### **Empirical Research Limitations**

The anticipated limitations dictated in the first chapter were not the only ones faced while conducting this thesis. Some scholars refused to be interviewed in fear of

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<sup>243</sup> "Qatar: Aspirations and Realities", *op. cit.*, p 39

<sup>244</sup> Al Zayat, *op. cit.*

<sup>245</sup> Ulrichsen, *op. cit.*

<sup>246</sup> Al Zayat, *op. cit.*

attacking Qatar or its foreign policy whereas others were cautiously answering questions and mentioning comments that were requested to be off the record. Having chosen not only a controversial topic but also a current affair one has made me utilize news articles more than expected, but not for analysis but rather for chronological display of events that strengthens the argument.

### **Further Research**

This thesis examines Qatari foreign policy in this most critical time in the Arab World, its Arab Spring, which hasn't till this present day come to an end. The presently evolving Middle East will see the rise and fall of states and their powers, and Qatar is among the most watched players. In light of the recent strains among GCC countries, the sustainability of the independence of Qatari foreign policy remains to be in question. The fact that Aljazeera enabled Qatar to circumvent some of its geopolitical shortcomings is no longer debatable, however will Al Jazeera change with changes in Qatari foreign policy. This remains to be investigated and to be foreseen. Assessing Qatar's underestimation of the depth of the antagonism its foreign policy has created and investigating Emir Tamim's impact on Qatari foreign policy and its orientations in the Middle East must be examined as well. The matter of whether the Qatari networking spectrum can maintain its inclusion of adversarial parties and accordingly return to its mediation role now that it has lost its neutrality stance is questionable, yet remains to be observed. Most importantly, Gulf foreign policy with its personalized and informal nature has become no longer a monolithic or cohesive entity in which its states' divergences are illustrated in the Syrian Crisis,

specifically how the Saudi-Qatari rivalry impacted the Arab spring<sup>247</sup>. These topics are not exhaustive, and it is hoped that future research will explore these ideas further.

## **Conclusion**

Abdel Moneim Saeed, prominent political scientist and former Chairman of Al Ahram, iterated that the “controversial Qatari role in Arab politics of the past” and that Qatar has gained more attention than it should have<sup>248</sup>. Its ‘uncalculated’ ambitions and orientations in context of the Arab Spring are being backlashed by the other GCC countries and Qatar will succumb to the rising pressures as it lacked strategic depth<sup>249</sup>. Despite Qatar being a “quintessential broker of Joseph Nye’s soft power”<sup>250</sup> Qatar’s short-lived moments of glory during the onset of the Arab Spring is conflicted with its current diminution in Arab politics as other Gulf countries are trying to suppress Qatar’s support to Islamists and specifically, the MB. The Qatari Foreign Minister immensely contests this as he states,

*“Indeed it has been argued at times that Qatar’s actions tended only to reap short term results and that its strategy remained largely opportunistic. It has been suggested also that our foreign policy was more concerned with public diplomacy than strategic achievement. Obviously, I couldn’t disagree more. On a number of critical issues, the state of Qatar*

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<sup>247</sup> Wehrey, *op. cit.*

<sup>248</sup> Abdel Moneim Saeed. (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates), interview with author. 13 Nov. 2014.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Davidson, Christopher M. After the Sheikhs: The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2011. P 230

*has made significant and at times decisive contributions to international peace and security”*.<sup>251</sup>

Despite such grandiose rhetoric, few scholars echo Dr AlAttiya’s sentiments, as “the substance of the country’s mediation efforts may be lacking in depth and long term resilience”<sup>252</sup>. As Paul Salem, founding director of the Carnegie Middle East Center is quoted in May 2012, “Essentially, it is two people-and they are dealing with very complicated and fast moving events”. Salem was referring to the former Emir Sheikh Hamad and the former prime minister Sheikh Haman Bin Jassim. The implementation of “Scattergun” diplomacy”, lack of institutionalization and lack of extensive foreign policy bureaucracy resulted in the fact that Qatar couldn’t sustain its active foreign policy in the Arab Spring and was marginalized by the regional power, Saudi Arabia<sup>253</sup>. Qatar did not carefully weigh the risks in seeking alternative means to hosting the CENTCOM as a survival strategy indefinitely<sup>254</sup>. Its risky foreign policy behavior has strengthened the notion that it is unworthy of inheriting Egypt<sup>255</sup> or Saudi Arabia’s regional-leadership role.

Qatari foreign policy in the Arab Spring has compromised Qatar’s position in the Middle East not only as a mediator but as it caused security risks that Doha would not be able to handle<sup>256</sup>. The repercussions have ranged from “bad to catastrophic in the countries that are the beneficiaries of Qatari aid: Libya is mired in a war between proxy funded militias, Syria’s opposition has been overwhelmed by infighting and

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<sup>251</sup> “Qatar’s Foreign Policy: HE Dr Khalid Bin Mohamed Al-Attiya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar”, *op. cit.*, p 9

<sup>252</sup> Kamrava, *op. cit.*, “Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy”. p 556.

<sup>253</sup> Gavin, *op. cit.*

<sup>254</sup> Ayoob, *op. cit.*, p 87.

<sup>255</sup> Elizabeth I. Monier and Annette Ranko. “The Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt”. *Middle East Policy* 20:4 (Winter 2013): 113-123. Web. 19 Aug. 2014. p 122.

<sup>256</sup> Sultan Barakat. “The Qatari Spring: Qatar’s Emerging Role in Peacemaking”. *London School of Economics and Political Science, Kuwait Program on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States* (July 2012). Web. 30 April 2014.

overtaken by extremists” and these two cases haven’t yet shown signs of stability or peacefulness <sup>257</sup>. As Qatar wanted to buy more into hyper capitalism under Islamist auspices upon rising in leadership in the Arab World during the Arab Spring, it has inflicted more damage on its status and on the domestic affairs of other countries. With signs of GCC collaboration in the end of 2014, the fate of Qatari foreign policy remains to be seen.

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<sup>257</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*



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