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From Rise to Crisis: The Qatari Leadership

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Abstract

Qatar, a young and tiny Gulf State, realized a remarkable transformation through an immense economic development between 1995 and 2013, and emerged as an active and influential actor at the international stage, receiving worldwide attention and scholarly interests. However, in the post-Arab Spring context, Qatar became the linchpin of a regional crisis as a consequence of the emerging political clash among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States. This paper analyzes Qatar's distinctive policies throughout its rise (1995-2013) and the recent period of the regional crisis within the framework of leadership conception. It is argued that the leadership factor played a key role in transforming both the auspicious circumstances of the previous term and the challenging circumstances of the recent term into great advantages to promote Qatar's autonomy. Through this perspective, it is aimed to address why and how Qatar differs from other small Gulf States, and how this affected Qatar's emerging as a rising power and as a major party to the regional crisis.

Keywords: Qatar, Persian Gulf, Middle East, GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), Gulf Crisis

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Yükselişten Krize Katar'ın Liderliği

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Öz

Oldukça yeni ve küçük bir devlet olan Katar, 1995-2013 periyodunda büyük bir ekonomik büyüme paralelinde gerçekleştirdiği dönüşüm sonucunda aktif ve etkin bir aktör olarak uluslararası arenaya katılarak dikkatleri üzerine çekmiş ve akademik çalışmaların ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Ne var ki "Arap Baharı" sonrası bağlamda Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi (KİK) ülkeleri arasında ortaya çıkan siyasi çatışma sonucu Katar'ın adı bölgesel bir krizi ifade eder hale gelmiştir. Bu makale Katar'ın hem 1995-2013 yükseliş döneminde hem de halen devam eden kriz döneminde, kendine özgü politikalarını liderlik konsepti çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Bu çalışma liderlik faktörünün yükseliş döneminin oldukça elverişli şartlarının olduğu kadar kriz döneminin zorlu şartlarının da Katar'ın ilerlemesi yolunda önemli avantajlara dönüştürülmüş olmasında anahtar rol oynadığını iddia etmektedir. Bu yaklaşımla, Katar'ın neden ve ne şekilde diğer küçük Körfez ülkelerinden farklılaştığı ve bunun etkin bir uluslararası aktör olarak yükselmesi ve de bölgesel krizin ana tarafı haline gelmesi üzerindeki etkileri ortaya konmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katar, Basra Körfezi, Ortadoğu, KİK (Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi), Körfez Krizi

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1. Introduction

Qatar has emerged perhaps as the most controversial Gulf State in the last decades becoming a central focus in changing geopolitical dynamics of the Persian Gulf in particular and the Middle East in general. While Qatar was at the focus of international attention as the rising power of the Gulf, its rise was going to be dramatically challenged by several obstructions conducted by neighbors in the post-Arab Spring era, in which regional power balances have shifted from regional integration to regional conflict. The post-Arab Spring era has introduced the toughest conflict among GCC states as a result of the political clash between the status quo and change that emerged in the Arabian Gulf. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) led bloc has adopted two embargos on Qatar to prevent Qatar from pursuing independent policies, which are conflicting with and challenging the regional status quo. The first embargo was carried out in 2014 against Qatar for eight months, imposing change on certain policies, however was resolved by Qatar's reconciliation. The second one, launched in May 2017 with a multilayered blockade imposed on Qatar resulted in the so-called Qatar or Gulf Crisis within the ongoing stalemate in the third year. Eventually, the name of Qatar, which was representing prosperity and glory, has become the name of the regional crisis.

This paper argues that the leadership has been the key factor playing crucial role in both Qatar's transformation and crisis management through a distinctive, independent and strategic roadmap. In the first part of this paper, the first phase (1995-2013) as the period of Qatar's phenomenal transformation is analyzed based on its distinctive policies and achievements leading Qatar to upgrade to an internationally influential state. Subsequently, in the next phase (2013-), Qatar's policies and approaches towards the ongoing embargo are assessed in the framework of the political conflict emerged in the post-Arab Spring period in the Gulf. In both parts, Qatar's policies and approaches are analyzed within the framework of the leadership conception as the central determinant. The definition of the political leadership as an historical and universal phenomenon is made in broad terms depending on the political culture and system, within relation to power at core.[1] As the power of leadership in

[1] Jean Blondel, *Political Leadership Towards a General Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 1987); Robert C. Tucker, *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia MO:

monarchies similar to Qatar, where leaders can exercise absolute power, is much less restricted by the institutional structure than that of democracies, the impact of leadership is quite significant in a change or conflict. Therefore, since a political process in autocratic regimes develop rather as a product of a leader`s initiative in a less complicated institutional structure and procedure, the leadership efficiency matters significantly.

Political leadership is a dynamic and multidimensional conception in which historical, geographical, social, institutional, and structural factors are taken into account besides the traits and personality of a leader. This conception enables the comparison between individual leaderships in Qatar as well as between Qatari leadership and other Gulf countries' leadership both sharing historical, geographical, systemic and political similarities. Several basic principles are defined for an effective or good[2] political leadership and leadership categories include strong, wise, charismatic, intellectual, pragmatic, revolutionary, democratic etc. Mascuili, Molchaov, and Knight sum up important aspects for an effective leadership in three key factors; strategic, tactical and innovative adaptation.[3] Similarly, the methodological approach by Andrea K. Grove defines strategies as independent variables that explain the ability of a leader to achieve successful outcomes when structural or environmental clauses enforce the conditions in both foreign and domestic policies.[4] With this perspective, the leadership conception - applied to Qatar's success - focuses on the strategies used in foreign and domestic policies demonstrating leadership skills such as strategic thinking, consistency with vision and strategic road map to explain Qatar's success rather than personality traits of leaders. In this article, the role of leadership is examined considering Qatar's exceptionalism, which helps us to understand why and how Qatar has differed from other small Gulf States emerging as the rising state and then becoming the victimized state of the region. Leaderships of two particular emirs; the former Emir Sheikh

University of Missouri Press, 1995); Joseph Mascuilli, Milkhail A. Molchaov, and W. Andy Knight, "Political Leadership in the Context," *Ashgate Research Companion to Political Leadership*, (January, 2009): 2-26.

2 Joseph Nye defines good leadership based on the ability to achieve results. See Joseph Nye, *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3 Mascuilli et al., "Political Leadership," 4-14.

4 Andrea K. Grove, *Political Leadership in Foreign Policy Manipulating Support Across Borders* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5-11.

Hamad bin Khalifah Al-Thani, whose vision and policies remarkably promoted and transformed Qatar to an internationally influential state and the current Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who has pursued Qatar's strategic interests despite the blockade with a remarkable success in the crisis management, lie in the scope of this article.

2. Qatar's Distinctive Policies and Transformation

Three main, concurrent, and interconnected successful policies; a visionary, proactive and autonomous foreign policy, strategy of branding Qatar, and political stability and modernization determined Qatari exceptionalism and Qatar's emergence as an active and influential state in the 1995-2013 period. As this term started and ended simultaneously with the beginning and end of the rule of the former Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah Al-Thani (1995-2013), the policies and outcomes of Qatar's transformation were developed and achieved under his leadership.

Sheikh Hamad became emir in 1995 by undertaking a bloodless coup against his father, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, and ruled until he unprecedentedly handed his rule over his son, Tamim b. Hamad Al-Thani, in 2013. Hamad had gained leadership skills and power with substantial state experience before he took over in 1995. After graduating from the British Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, he became the major general of the Qatari army in 1972, where he rapidly gained power and was called a 'hero'. In 1977, he was appointed heir as he gained the trust of family members due to successful work. During the cabinet reshuffle in 1989, Hamad put many of his allies into key positions in the cabinet. This was considered the starting of a coup, and was followed by another cabinet reshuffle in 1992, which granted Hamad further power consolidation. When he started to rule, he was ready and determined to govern Qatar with new aspirations and policies both inside and outside the country. First, he accelerated the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) production that had been started by his father in the early 90s, by massive investments through the state-owned company Qatar Petroleum in cooperation with international oil companies. Qatar started exporting LNG in 1997, and a new era started in Qatar's history bringing a massive economic development that gave Emir Hamad a great fortune to achieve his high goals.

2.1. Visionary, Pro-Active, and Autonomous Foreign Policy

Qatar remarkably adopted a more independent and pro-active foreign policy by the mid 90's under the rule of Sheikh Hamad, which enabled a foreign policy based on new and broader interests and goals. In this way, Qatar acquired a new profile as an active international actor beyond what could be expected from a tiny state located in a region, in which balances of power are set by the competition of regional and global hegemonic powers.

Two significant elements, a diplomatic mastership and balancing strategy, were essential in the sustainability of Qatar's pursuit of proactive and independent foreign policy. In fact, diplomacy along with the balancing strategy has historically been among the principle assets of Qatari foreign relations in a region of never-ending power struggles.[5] Based on traditional diplomatic skills, a remarkable balancing strategy was employed with a quite pragmatic approach in foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad. Qatar strategically used advantages such as its economic power and natural gas resources as leverage in diplomacy for achieving a balance between powers.[6] Wright remarks that Qatar achieved a truly independent foreign policy and a global diplomatic role beyond the tradition of hedging in the Gulf by using its political-economic leverage as the global LNG supplier, and showing a clear shift away from the norm of traditional diplomacy within the GCC.[7] Qatar, by pursuing an independent foreign policy, could succeed to diversify its security agreements among regional and extra-regional powers. The achievement of a relatively independent and autonomous foreign policy went along with the achievement of a considerably proactive foreign policy, which usually is not a characteristic of a small and young state. This reveals visionary foreign policy goals pursued with a quite strategic approach.

The international mediating role Qatar has assumed in the last twenty years is the most prominent practice displaying the country's visionary and proactive foreign policy, which contributed substantially to its international

5 Allen J. Fromherz, *Qatar: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 33.

6 Steven Wright, "Foreign Policies with International Reach the Case of Qatar," in *The Transformation of the Gulf Politics, Economics and the Global Order*, ed. David Held and Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (London: Routledge, 2011), 303-4.

7 Ibid., 303-6.

reputation. Qatar involved in many conflict resolution initiatives as a peace broker in Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, and Iraq, including several other regional conflicts by running a remarkable backchannel diplomacy. Especially Qatar's mediation in the Lebanon conflict in 2008, its most famous success, granted the country great credibility. Sheikh Hamad and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim along with his delegation achieved an agreement to establish a long-lasting peace between Hezbollah and other parties, whereby the Arab League, the UN, and France had previously failed to resolve the conflict. As a result of numerous mediation initiatives, Qatar proved a diplomatic mastership, and became a brand state in mediating, which was not the case for other small Gulf States. Qatar's proficiency and credibility in mediating attracted demands of regional actors such as South Cyprus, who requested Qatar's involvement to resolve the long-standing Cyprus conflict.[8] Qatar's reputation as an international peace broker became a phenomenon that was even reflected in pop culture, as the American TV series 'Veep' depicted Qatar as the mediator in a China related conflict in 2016.[9] The motivation behind Qatar's will to get involved in international mediation is explained in several aspects such as increasing influence, gaining value, assuming regional leadership as a prominent player at the international stage, granting access to leaders and channels of communication, and spreading ideas to help enhance personal status.[10]

Qatar's Iran policy was a significant example of an independent and autonomous foreign policy in which the balancing strategy was extensively employed. Iran, as an historic regional power with a great geopolitical importance in Middle East politics, has been a strategic partner of Qatar on geographic, historic, and energy related grounds. Qatar and Iran have developed cooperative relationships based on mutual economic and strategic interests that were mainly linked to their shared 'North Field/ South Pars' natural gas field, the largest non-associated field in the

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8 David Roberts, "Qatari Mediation," accessed May 25, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/336597/Qatari_Mediation.

9 Peter Kovessy, "We are counting on your leadership Ban Ki-moon Tells Qatar's Emir," *Doha News*, May 22, 2016, https://dohanews.co/counting-leadership-ban-ki-moon-tells-qatars-emir/.

10 Roberts, "Qatari Mediation," 8-16; Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar Small State Big Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 93-5; Wright, "Foreign Policies," 305.

world. Qatar's strategic relationship with Iran was indeed challenging to its strategic alliances with both regional and global hegemonic powers, especially Saudi Arabia and the U.S. Despite Qatar's security dependence on the US, who adopted an anti-Iranian policy since the Iranian revolution, and Qatar's close partnership with the regional leader, the KSA, who has been the major rival of Iran, Qatar could manage to develop close and strategic relations with Iran based on the balancing strategy. This equipped Qatar with a reasonable autonomy against Saudi hegemony and the ability to maneuver between the US and Iran.[11]

Qatar's cultivating of relations with Israel was also a significant indication of autonomy, pragmatism, and strategic approach to foreign policy. An Israeli trade office was established in Qatar in 1996 following Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres' Doha visit, and Qatar became the first GCC State granting Israel de facto recognition.[12] Historically considered, while showing genuine and great interest in the Palestinian cause, Qatar did not hesitate to develop relations with Israel openly unlike other Gulf States during the rule of Sheikh Hamad.[13]

2.2. A Brand State

A great branding campaign was implemented in several fields including foreign policy. As such, branding Qatar in international mediating as a diplomatic force presents an example. The branding campaign was initiated along with the building of a new international profile of Qatar during Sheikh Hamad's reign.[14] The new profile or image of Qatar that was designed and strategically built in multiple areas contains two main missions. One is to demonstrate that Qatar is a benevolent and humanitarian state promoting universal values such as peace, human rights, equality, and altruism. The other is to demonstrate that Qatar is a pro-modernist state catching up with the highest technology to meet the latest standards in the fields such as

11 Kamrava, *Qatar*, 72-5.

12 Wright, "Foreign Policies," 300.

13 Uzi Rabi, "Qatar's Relations with Israel: Challenging Arab and Gulf Norms," *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 448-9.

14 Wright, "Foreign Policies," 309.

education, health and sports in line with cultural codes indicating "Qatari high modernism."[15]

Qatar's benevolence is actually attributed to its traditional background. Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Thani (1825-1913), the founder of Qatar, described Qatar in a poem he wrote as a shelter for the homeless (*Kaaba lil Madiyoum*). Hereby, he made an analogy between the Kaaba, the Muslims' Holy House that embraces all people regardless of socio-economic status, color, and ethnicity, and Qatar for hosting people, who sought refuge from persecution in the nineteenth century. Today, the modern Qatari state has provided protection for numerous people, who were exiled due to political reasons, committing to this traditional mission. Besides the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Hamas leaders, Yusuf Al-Karadavi and Khaled Mishaal, Qatar has hosted a variety of profiles of exiled people from different regional and ideological backgrounds such as the controversial Indian artist M.F. Hussain, former Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri Al Hadithi, former Chechen leader Zalimkhan Yandarbiyev, Osama bin Laden's son Omar, and many of Saddam Hussain's family members including his wife Sajida Khayrallah, controversial Islamic preachers including the Canadian Bilal Philips and the American Wagy Ghoneim, Muawiya Wuld Sid Ahmed Taya, former Mauritanian president and his family, Abbasi Madani, former leader of Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, prominent Libyan cleric Ali Al Sallabi, and former Palestinian Knesset member Azmi Bishara.[16]

While Qatar's hospitality was used as a foreign policy strategy providing Qatar leverage against other regimes,[17] the variety of the profiles belonging to different political and ethnic backgrounds that Qatar has hosted, indicates an implication of branding Qatar as a benevolent state advocating universal values such as promoting human rights and peace as seen in the peace negotiations. Indeed, Qatar is one of the states involved in humanitarian diplomacy with its active use of humanitarian and development assistance that reach more than 25 countries.[18]

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15 Kamrava, *Qatar*, 153-6.

16 David Roberts, "Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?," *Middle East Policy* XXI, no. 3 (Fall, 2014): 90; Fromherz, *Qatar*, 90.

17 Fromherz, *Qatar*, 90.

18 Antonio De Lauri, "Humanitarian Diplomacy: A New Research Agenda," *Michelsen Institute CMI Brief*, no. 4 (2018): 1-4.

The Al-Jazeera news network is one of the major brands of Qatar, and has had a great impact on Qatar's regional influence and worldwide reputation. Established in 1996 by Sheikh Hamad and unlike other Arabic state sponsored channels, Al-Jazeera has obtained a broadcasting quality and advocated freedom of speech especially for people under oppression. In 2006, Al-Jazeera International (in English) was launched, and became an alternative to big international media channels such as CNN or BBC. Al-Jazeera's critical broadcast rapidly helped Qatar to exert influence in the Middle East by rising political awareness in Arab societies. In the beginning of the Arab Spring, Al-Jazeera played a critical role in spreading ideas throughout the Middle East, and informing both regional and international audiences of the revolutions. In fact, Al-Jazeera has been considered a soft power tool providing Qatar with a comparative advantage over its neighbors in exerting influence, branding, and profile-building.

Qatar's involvement in hosting major international sports events such as the 2006 Asian Games, IAAF World Indoor Championships, and the successful bid of hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, have also contributed to its international reputation. Major Qatari brands such as Qatar Airways that launched in 1997 and emerged as an international brand in competition with European and American firms such as the Qatar Foundation, a great entrepreneurship in education and culture, and Qatar's grand museums that are significant examples of Qatar's branding emphasizing the pro-modernization profile of Qatar constructed in cultural and technologic realms at the global level.

Another field, in which Qatar has emerged as an international actor, is finance. The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) established in 2005 manages Qatar's Sovereign Wealth Funds' global investments. The majority of investments were made in major European firms such as Porsche with 10%, Volkswagen Group, Siemens, Deutsche Bank, London Stock Exchange with 24%, Barclays and Harrods, Total, GDF Suez, France Telekom, and a 10% share in OMX, the Nordic Stock Exchange in Stockholm, are among Qatari investments along several others in New York and Washington.[19] A substantial stake of Qatar's investments is made

[19] Tarek Cherkaoui, "Qatar's Public Diplomacy, International Broadcasting and the Gulf Crisis," *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3, no 3 (December 2018): 132-3.

in the Middle East as foreign aid in many countries like Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan, Eritrea, Indonesia are crucial for development projects in infrastructure, health, energy and communication.[20] Foreign investments have provided Qatar with substantial gravity in foreign policy, diplomacy, regional influence, and in branding Qatar.

2.3. Domestic Achievements

Qatar realized a remarkable transformation at domestic level through two major and concurrent achievements under Sheikh Hamad. The first one is the rapid economic and social development and modernization towards a knowledge-based economy. Qatar's economic growth went in parallel with its growth as a LNG exporter that started in 1997, and so Qatar became the world's largest LNG exporter by 2006. The LNG business granted Qatar enormous wealth with the highest growth rate in its Gross Domestic Product among the GCC and countries with large economies like China, Singapore, and Norway between 2000-2011.[21] Qatar accomplished a rapid and great modernization project along with economic growth building on its cultural heritage and identity. While Qatar was adapting to globalization through modernization, Qatari high modernization was created with formations of its own designs and interpretations of Qatari culture that are mainly rooted in Islamic and Arabian Gulf traditions. This innovative approach was reflected in the life style ranging from architecture to arts in rebuilding Qatar.

The other equally significant achievement at the domestic level was the achievement of Qatar's political stability. While Qatar's political system was remaining the same, namely an autocratic monarchy, which was even strengthened, the state power and political stability have been consolidated upon the achievement of a state-society alliance. The state, which consists of the ruling family, reinforced relations with the society by including major tribes into state mechanisms and granting them shares in terms of profit and participation. Kamrava explains how new established institutions, mostly state-owned corporations, have functioned significantly in restructuring

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20 Roberts "Qatari Mediation," 8-20; Kamrava, *Qatar*, 97-9.

21 Ibrahim Ibrahim and Frank Harrigan, "Qatar's economy: Past, present and future," *QScience Connect*, no. 1 (January 2012).

state-society relations by rearranging the distribution of power and wealth among influential families and effective merchant groups.[22] The fact that Qatar's indigenous population is very small provided advantageous conditions in restructuring state-society relations for the Qatari government. As a result, the achievement of a powerful and politically robust state with a wealthy society promoted Qatari nationalism and pride.

2.3.1. Qatari Wahhabism and the Muslim Brotherhood

Qatar's religious orientation adheres to the Wahhabi creed that follows the Hanbali school of thought of Sunni Islam. The provenance of Qatar's Wahhabism rooted in the fact that the Al-Thanis, the ruling family of Qatar, immigrated to Qatar in the 17th century from the town of Ushayqir in the Najd province of Saudi Arabia, where the founder of Wahhabism, Imam Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhabi's tribe resided.[23] This affinity of creed constituted a special tie between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and proved essential in their historic kinship. The Qatar National Mosque, opened in 2011, was named after Mohammad bin Abdel-Wahhab to show the loyalty of Qatar to the roots of the nation's creed.

However, Qatari interpretation of Wahhabism demonstrates substantial differences from Saudi Wahhabism. It has traditionally followed a more moderate line than Saudi Wahhabism. Especially during the 1990's, liberalism spread in the society. For instance, women rights in Qatar were much more advanced than in Saudi Arabia, which is one of the concrete indicators of Qatar's moderation. Saudi women just recently obtained the right of driving, while Qatari women already had driving and travel rights without needing approval of a male guardian as well as they hold equal public presence with men unlike Saudi women. Similarly, the right to vote was recently granted to Saudi women for the first time in the municipal elections of 2015, while in Qatar, women can vote and candidate in elections since the 1997. In 1998, female participation in municipal elections was 47%. The percentage of Qatari women in the total workforce is with 51.8% the highest in the Gulf. Several outstanding profiles have

[22] Kamrava, *Qatar*, 149-52.

[23] Yousof Ibrahim Al-Abdulla, *A Study of Qatari-British Relations 1914-1945 (*Doha: Orient Publishing, 1985), 15.

represented Qatari women at high level positions such as Sheikha Moza, the Chairperson of the Qatar Foundation, the wife of Sheikh Hamad, who has an outstanding profile representing modern Qatari women with her fashionable hijab style and her international connections.[24] Alya bint Ahmed Al-Thani, the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN, the fifth President of Qatar University (2003-2015), Prof. Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad and the Chairperson of the Qatar Museums, Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al-Thani, the daughter of Sheikh Hamad are other famous examples of women empowerment.

There is a substantial link between Qatar's distinctive interpretation of Wahhabism and Qatar's historical relations with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) organization. Qatar's affinity with the MB dates back to the time of British hegemony. In the early 1950's, Muslim Brotherhood teachers had come to Qatar to start informal teachings, and later got involved in the institutionalization of national education. MB scholars who were leading members of the organization like Yusuf Al-Karadawi and Hasan Al-Banna and their friends were very influential in Qatar's education and bureaucratic systems throughout the state formation.[25] Personal affinities came along with ideological affinity, and the MB ideology had a significant impact on the state of Qatar with political and social implications. Sheikh Qaradawi, the founder and dean of the Sharia Faculty of the Qatar University, was quite influential in Islamic theology as well as Islamic law, and his teachings had great impact on shaping the country's religious identity and education.[26] Therefore the MB-inspired approach, defined as moderate political Islam, reshaped Qatar's religious and ideological identity differing from Saudi Wahhabism. Moreover, this approach adopted by Sheikh Hamad was an effective factor in Qatar's achievement of modernization. According to Andrew Hommand, the mosque of Abdel-Wahhab opened by Skeikh Hamad in Doha "represented a challenge to Saudi Arabia for implying that Qatar's moderated Wahhabism – its Salafi-Brotherhood hybrid – is

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24 "Moza Bint Nasser" accessed May 23, 2019, http://www.mozabintnasser.qa/en/Pages/MozabintNasser/Biography.aspx.

25 See Roberts, "Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood," Kamrava, *Qatar*, xiii-xiv.

26 David H. Warren, "Qatari Support for the Muslim Brotherhood is More Than Just Realpolitik, It has a Long Personal History," *The Maydan*, July 12, 2017, https://www.themaydan.com/2017/07/qatari-support-muslim-brotherhood-just-realpolitik-long-personal-history/.

the true representative of Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab's message as a "renewer" (mujaddid) of the faith."[27] Qatar's affiliation with the MB had also major impact on Qatar's distinctive foreign policy and in Sheikh Hamad's regional power projection through the MB and other MB-linked groups like the Hamas.

2.4. Assessment of the Leadership in a Transforming Qatar

Qatar's phenomenal transformation from a tiny unpopular Gulf monarchy into a modern, politically robust, and internationally influential state exceeding its small size and population, historical, and geopolitical limits, brought about a relative state power that it never had before. The state power Qatar gained at the international stage is widely referred to as 'soft power' in the literature. Kamrava defines the kind of power that Qatar obtained as *subtle power* distinct from hard, soft, and smart power types.[28] His definition of subtle power indicates the role of agency rather than size and institutional capacity of the state, as he explains: "More specifically, subtle power emerges not so much as a result of a confluence of institutional and structural forces, but instead a product of deliberate decisions and carefully choices made by policymakers."[29] This conception indicates that centralized decision-making mechanisms of Qatar's political system lacking in institutional tradition and democracy is actually advantageous for providing the ruler with much more agility to pursue great aspirations. Thus, such power projection can be pursued through less complicated procedures of policy making and implementing by the centralized authority depending on the leadership aspects. This is the core of how leadership as an independent variable can vitally matter in such political systems. Therefore, Qatar's transformation was accomplished due to leadership success that merged central political power with maintaining consistency in key leadership aspects that significantly matter in transforming state assets into the state power. The key leadership aspects as main determinants of success can be briefly defined as wide vision and strategic thinking.

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27 Andrew Hammond, "Qatar's Leadership Transition: Like Father Like Son," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, no. 95 (February 2014): 4.

28 Kamrava, *Qatar*, 53-68.

29 Ibid., 65.

Projecting high aspirations and goals for his country at domestic, regional, and global levels is a clear indication of Sheikh Hamad's wide vision. Through such a wide vision, he shaped and developed distinctive foreign and domestic policies to initiate reconstruction of Qatar through economic and social development and rapid modernization, in parallel to the construction of a new international profile of Qatar based on strategic thinking. Pursuing great ambitions in international conflict mediation and international investment, using Al-Jazeera along several other branding campaigns that all together built a new international profile of Qatar in consistency, is overall the product of a remarkable vision of the ruler of a tiny and young state. The strategic approach adopted in pursuing such assertive policies towards high goals on the new road map and resulted with the success and sustainability is the significant indicator of the strategic thinking ability of the ruler. The key strategy used by Sheikh Hamad was the balancing strategy as Kamrava remarks.[30] A multilevel balancing strategy was employed between the state and society, tradition and modern, and between the powers in foreign relations in Qatar's autonomous path.

3. Qatar under Attack in the Post-Arab Spring Context

3.1. Political Clash in the Gulf

Qatar's spectacular rise has been exposed to a great obstruction of the dramatic changes in regional political dynamics in the wake of the Arab Spring. Arab uprisings in 2011 spread throughout the Middle East with a domino effect including the Gulf, particularly Bahrain and Oman. It created great fear for the regimes of Gulf States, and regime security became the central matter in the emergence of the political clash between GCC States, which were divided into two blocs with different approaches towards regime security in the post-Arab Spring period. The KSA - United Arab Emirates (UAE) - Bahrain bloc has adopted the policy of safeguarding the regional status quo to secure their regimes against the Iranian regime, the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups like Hamas representing political Islam that has been perceived as a great threat. The rising popularity of moderate political Islam among Middle Eastern societies, inspired by Turkey's

[30] See Kamrava, *Qatar*, 133-7.

ruling Islamic oriented Justice and Development Party that proved being politically and economically successful, made Gulf Monarchies fear for their regimes security, and prompted them to fight it by using their financial powers. Therefore, the first democratically elected government of Egypt, government of the Freedom and the Justice Party founded by the MB, was overturned by a military coup that was supported financially and politically by the KSA. The KSA and the UAE started to impose oppressive measures against the MB that has been at the very center of the threat perception of political Islam undermining the legitimacy of Gulf regimes. The other bloc, without alliance, consisted of Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman whose regime security approaches did not have the same threat perceptions against these groups for different reasons.

Qatar did not define political Islam as a source of threat for its regime unlike the Saudi led bloc because of its ideological preferences[31] and its reliance on political stability. On the contrary, Qatar supported popular movements in the Middle East against the dictatorships for democratic change, the MB in Egypt, Al-Nahda in Tunisia, Hamas in Palestine and the oppositions in Libya and Syria. Based on the historical Qatar-MB alliance as explained above, Qatar ideologically and politically favored the MB, and did not see it as a threat. Moreover, MB members in and outside Qatar were already allied with the Qatari state. Qatar's relatively benign and stable autocratic regime has not been threatened by a serious opposition or uprising during and after the Arab Spring except rare individual and symbolic criticisms.

Although Qatar's power projection in the region did not succeed along with the failure of Arab uprisings, except Tunisia, Qatar has pursued similar independent foreign policy approaches in the post-Arab Spring era. It has continued to hold close relations with the MB, while keeping distance to the military government in Egypt. It has also continued its support to the opposition in Syria and Libya, and maintained relations with Iran. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and the UAE officially designated the MB as a terrorist group in 2014. The Saudi government banned the Saudi branch of the MB from operating in the Kingdom, and in 2015 ordered the removal of books authored by MB scholars from the schools. The conflict between the policies of Qatar and the KSA-BAE-Bahrain bloc resulted in a political

[31] See Hammond, "Qatar's Leadership," 4-5; Roberts, "Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood."

clash emerged in the Gulf in the post-Arab Spring context. Qatar, whose regional power projection was a challenge to the Saudi-UAE led regional status quo, was seen as a threat backing "terrorist" groups, and has thus been put at the target. Consequently, Qatar found itself in the middle of anti-Qatar campaigns and was exposed to two subsequent embargos launched by the regional status quo powers. The aim was to deter Qatar from pursuing its policies by accusing the country for supporting terrorism in the first phase, and then to punish it with isolation and the imposition of an unproportioned embargo.

This obstruction, which Qatar was confronted with on the way of rising, coincided with the beginning of the term of the new emir, Sheikh Tamim, who took over after his father Sheikh Hamad in 2013. Sheikh Tamim, a Sandhurst graduate, joined Qatar's Armed Forces, and was appointed heir in 2003. He underwent a leadership training through which he had gained remarkable military and political experience as the Deputy Commander in Chief of Armed Forces as well as the chair of a number of state institutions such as the Supreme Education Council, Supreme Council of Health, Supreme Council of Environment, Natural Reserves, and several others. He had proved his success with the military involvement in Libya in the overthrow of Qaddafi. However, the timing of his father's passing the rule onto him, while he was young enough and able to rule, was controversial regarding changing dynamics in the regional political landscape. Sheikh Hamad's unexpected decision in such a critical time has been interpreted as a maneuver to prevent the Qatari government of being accused for backing Islamists, as a result of the failure of the regional policies that Qatar pursued in Egypt and Syria under his leadership that has changed Qatar's leadership profile.[32]

In March 2014, the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain initiated a boycott on Qatar by withdrawing their ambassadors from Doha and cutting diplomatic relations in an unprecedented way. In return, Qatar avoided reciprocating and did not withdraw Qatari ambassadors from these neighboring countries. Instead, the Qatari leadership under Sheikh Tamim made a remarkable effort towards promoting dialogue and maintaining relations with these states during eight months of the crisis.

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[32] Hammond, "Qatar's Leadership," 7-8.

Although relations turned to the normal in the end, the 2014 crisis was actually signaling a deepening of the political division in the Gulf that paved the way to the dissolution of the GCC based on the clash of ideologies, interests, and preferences. Both sides, the KSA-UAE-Bahrain bloc and Qatar, continued with their clashing regional policies. In October 2014, the KSA launched an oil price war against Iran and its ally Russia by increasing the oil production in order to decrease prices. Oil prices experienced a sharp fall from the monthly peak of $112 pro barrel to the lowest point falling under $35 pro barrel in February 2016. The Saudi launched oil war had effect even on Gulf States' economies including the KSA itself. It added economic disadvantages to challenging geopolitical circumstances, and the new Emir had to urge restrictive measures such as budget cut. The anti-Qatar campaign was expanded including the accusation of Qatar with bribery in obtaining the bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2022. The UAE, in rivalry with Qatar for hosting this event, launched media campaigns to preclude Qatar's bid.[33]

After the new Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz took office in 2015, he adopted a flexible policy towards the MB decreasing tensions. However, the regional tension and polarization against Iran was re-escalated following the Iran Nuclear Deal. The deal, promising a gradual normalization after decades of hostility and sanctions, met great opposition from the status-quo powers, namely the KSA and Israel[34] while it was welcomed and supported by Qatar.[35] Iran reemerged as the greatest threat and became the central matter in the regional political rift. Although the GCC's anti-Iranian campaign was resulted with some fluctuations in Qatar-Iran relations in the aftermath, the essential friendship remained through mutual approaches avoiding conflict.[36] The KSA-UAE coalition started a war in Yemen in 2015 against the Houthis, which were perceived as Iranian proxies. So the war aimed to weaken Iranian influence in the region. Qatar had to join the

33 Cherkaoui, "Qatar's Public Diplomacy," 138-9.

34 Mehran Kamrava, "Hierarchy and Stability in the Middle East Regional Order," *International Studies Journal*, 14, no. 4 (Spring, 2018): 11-4.

35 Mehran Kamrava, "Iran-Qatar Relations," in *Security and Bilateral Issues between Iran and its Arab Neighbours*, ed. Gawdat Bagdat, Anoushiravan Ehtehami, and Neil Qulliam (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 178.

36 Ibid., 168.

coalition initially but with a limited involvement, and remained within this coalition until being expelled by the KSA on the course of the Gulf crisis.[37]

3.2. Eruption of the Qatar Crisis

The new US administration under Donald Trump, who won the 2016 presidential elections, provided great support for the power projection of the regional status quo. President Trump immediately positioned himself on the side of Israel, and strengthened the US alliance with the KSA-UAE bloc whose interests and security policies have aligned with that of Israel in the regional status quo framework that is mainly based on the hostility towards Iran and the MB.[38] In fact, Trump immediately announced his anti-Iran policy, declaring Iran as the greatest enemy demonstrating a sharp U-turn from Obama's stance and denying the Nuclear Deal. It meant a great revival for KSA-US relations, which had deteriorated recently under Obama, and the US emerged as the biggest power backing the KSA-UAE coalition. Trump's first overseas trip to the Middle East that was pictured with the symbolic pose of Trump, the Saudi King Salman, and the Egyptian leader Sisi holding the globe together was a clear hint at the implications of a new regional order. Just within a couple of weeks, the KSA, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt announced that they severed ties with Qatar, and launched an air, land, and sea blockade accusing Qatar of fomenting regional unrest, supporting terrorism and getting too close to Iran, what has triggered off the ongoing Gulf crisis. Kuwait and Oman have adopted neutral positions.

In the same time, Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), the young son of the Saudi King, was appointed crown prince replacing his cousin, Mohammed bin Nayef, who was the first-in-line to succeed the king. MbS was granted power as the de facto ruler of KSA, which was the result of his commitment to American authorities with whom he had made contact through the support

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37 "Qatar was Obliged to Join Saudi Coalition in Yemen," *Middle East Monitor*, July 19, 2017, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170719-qatar-was-obliged-to-join-saudi-coalition-in-yemen/.

38 See Adam Entous, "Donald Trumps's New World Order," *The New Yorker*, June 18, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/06/18/donald-trumps-new-world-order.

of Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ).[39] Therefore, the Qatar blockade was carried out in the framework of recently shaped power trajectory led by the empowered Saudi authority and backed by the Trump's America. In the aftermath of the eruption of the crisis, Trump made a statement to blame Qatar for supporting terrorism indicating his position in supporting the blockade to punish Qatar although other US authorities such as the Foreign Secretary and the Pentagon presented contrary attitudes towards the blockade. The President's son in law and advisor for the Middle East region, Jared Kushner's close friendship with both crown princes of the KSA and the UAE was an important factor in his alliance with the KSA-UAE bloc.[40]

In the following days of the blockade, Qatar was requested 13 demands, which were undermining Qatar's sovereignty and incompatible with the principles of international law.[41] Curbing diplomatic ties with Iran, severing all ties with "terrorist organizations" like the MB, the Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda, shutting down Al-Jazeera, and immediately terminating the Turkish military presence were among the 13 demands, which were expected to be met within ten days in order to lift the blockade. However, Qatar did not compromise upon any of the impositions that all meant to breach Qatari sovereignty including the abandoning of own policies. The stalemated and unreasonable blockade from land, the border between the KSA and Qatar, sea and air routes, which were all closed to Qatari transportation and trade, caused devastating economic and social challenges for Qatar. The Qataris have been exposed to severe conditions of food shortage, travel ban, deportation, and family separation imposed by their neighbor countries.[42] The blockade created considerably serious emergency for the security of Qatar as Saudi forces were deployed on the Qatar-Saudi border. A military attack aiming to overthrow the regime in Qatar was a possibility. Overall, the embargo was aiming to force Qatar to change direction in independent and pro-active foreign policy and branding, which have

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Richard Falk, "The Gulf Crisis Reassessed," *Foreign Policy Journal*, March 14, 2018, https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2018/03/14/the-gulf-crisis-reassessed/.

42 See Tamara Kharroub, "Understanding of the Humanitarian Costs of the Blockade," in *The GCC Crisis at One Year: Stalemate Becomes New Reality,* ed. Zeina Hazzam and Imad Harb (Washington DC: Arab Center, 2018), 91-9.

been strategically cultivated since the mid 1990's. In response, the Qatari government did reciprocate neither with an aggressive discourse nor by launching restrictions. For instance, Qatar did not stop supplying LNG to the UAE despite the embargo[43] proving its capability of keeping rationality within a strategic approach.

The crisis hit Qatar substantially, however, it hit the GCC too, considerably damaging the regional unity and solidarity, which had been achieved mainly through socio-economic integration in decades. The political conflict and division in the GCC resulting in the most serious crisis has caused the GCC to lose ground and relevance as an institution able to function in conflict resolution and in being a platform of shared interests and unity.[44] The blockade of Qatar was launched against the principles of the GCC Common Market signed in 2007 that called for the free flow people, goods, and capital between member states. The blockade thus undermined the Common Market.[45] The 2017 GCC Summit, the first one after the eruption of the Gulf Crisis, could not bring Gulf leaders together except for the Qatari Emir and the hosting leader, the Kuwaiti Emir. The Saudi and Emirati crown princes formed a bilateral KSA-UAE cooperation agreement instead of reviving the GCC, and announced that they would develop a new political and military alliance, which meant the deepening of the division in the declining unity of the GCC.

Following the initial period of shock, Qatar quickly adopted a strategic approach to transform challenging circumstances into the advantages. The emergency situation arising with food shortage and national security urged Qatar to empower its state capacity in two ways; to diversify its economy and security relations and to improve its energy capacity. Qatar improved its trade relations with regional allies such as Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan,

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43 Qatar's LNG supply to the UAE through the Dolphin pipeline has been integral for the UAE's energy security while major Qatari LNG exports are delivered beyond Gulf countries. See Gabriel Collins, "Anti-Qatar Embargo Grinds Toward Strategic Failure," in *The GCC Crisis at One Year: Stalemate Becomes New Reality,* ed. Zeina Hazzam and Imad Harb (Washington DC: Arab Center, 2018), 61-4.

44 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Missed Opportunities and Failed Integration in the GCC," in *The GCC Crisis at One Year: Stalemate Becomes New Reality,* ed. Zeina Hazzam and Imad Harb (Washington DC: Arab Center, 2018), 54-6.

45 Abdullah Babood, "The International Implications of the GCC Stalemate," in *The GCC Crisis at One Year: Stalemate Becomes New Reality,* ed. Zeina Hazzam and Imad Harb (Washington DC: Arab Center, 2018), 112.

and quickly secured food supplies. The Turkish government immediately issued fast-tracking deployments of several troops to the Tarik bin Ziyad military base in Qatar, in the second day of the blockade.[46] The Qatar Emiri Armed Forces (QEAF) improved their capacity by restructuring and advancing naval, land, and air forces through joint exercises and trainings with the US, British, and French military forces. Qatar has also expanded the defense cooperation with the US through the enlarging the American base in Qatar.[47] Hence, Qatar has strategically embarked on advancing its security capacity within a diversified security system.

3.3. Confidence and Strategic Steps

Having completed a year by overcoming the challenges under the blockade, Qatar has entered a new phase in which it gained confidence and strength in pursuing an independent path outside the regional hegemony and status quo despite the continuity of the embargo. Qatar successfully managed to transform grave conditions of the siege into opportunities to strengthen its capacity based on the strategic use of advantages and leverage under Sheikh Tamim's leadership. Significant steps were taken that showed the increased confidence of Qatar in the fields of energy, economy, and autonomous foreign policy in the new phase. For instance, on May 27, 2018, Qatar gave the order to ban KSA-UAE-Bahrain-Egypt products on Qatari markets, which indicates that Qatar has achieved trade security and is no longer depended on the neighbors.

Qatar, being aware of its advantages such as hosting an American military base, occupying the leading position in the LNG export and having substantial investments in European countries, has strategically used these advantages not only for overcoming the blockade but also for reinforcing relations. Hosting the largest American overseas air base, Al-Udeid, with about 11.000 personnel and a very strategic position and facilities, has provided Qatar with a significant diplomatic leverage to neutralize Trump's political biases against itself. Qatar has strategically sought to expand the

46 Baabood, "The International Implications," 113.

47 ACW Research Team, "Qatar's Military Response to the National Emergency," *The GCC Crisis at One Year: Stalemate Becomes New Reality,* ed. Zeina Hazzam and Imad Harb (Washington DC: Arab Center, 2018), 77.

level of cooperation with the US through arms purchase and investments. As the largest LNG supplier to many European and Asian countries, Qatar's worldwide relations have played a considerable role in reinforcing its sovereignty and reaffirming the importance of its security and stability in the international arena. Qatar announced a strategic decision to increase LNG production by 20% in order to enlarge its exporting capacity and with it the Qatari impact on global energy markets.[48] Qatar's purchase of arms and large investments in European countries such as the UK, Germany and France, have gained the support of these countries against the blockade. This indicates that Qatar has obtained an inevitable position due to its energy power and financial and commercial capacities in the West despite the quartet's anti-Qatar lobbying efforts and media campaigns launched in the US and Europe. Likewise, Qatar-Russia s considerably strengthened through military and economic cooperation and Russia's political support for Qatar in the blockade.

The developments related to the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2, 2018, leaving MbS and his government in trouble, urged the Saudi government to present an ostensibly softened approach towards Qatar in order to fix its highly damaged image and to appease growing international criticism. King Salman invited the Qatari Emir to the 2018 GCC Summit in December. Emir Tamim's refusal of the Saudi invitation to attend the summit was significantly strategic, namely not to let the KSA government to use Qatar's attendance to recover its heavily damaged international credibility and to demonstrate Qatar's contravention to the GCC, which was an individually driven institution and no longer relevant for regional unity. Consequently, the Emir did also not attend the next summit in December 2019, which was a reaction to the continuing blockade imposing 13 demands.

Qatar's surprising decision to leave the OPEC by January 2019 due to invest in the LNG field was a clear indication of Qatar's refusal of Saudi hegemony, which shaped regional energy affairs within the OPEC. However, this decision has broader strategic implications for Qatar's future plans in terms of energy investments and cooperation beyond regional borders.[49]

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48 Collins, "Anti-Qatar Embargo," 63-4.

49 Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Why is Qatar Leaving Opec," *New York Times*, December 10, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/opinion/qatar-leaving-opec-saudi-arabia-blockade-failure.html.

Qatar's investment of $500 million in Lebanese government bonds was also a very strategic move to exert influence by filling the vacuum left by the declining Saudi influence in Lebanon.[50] Besides Lebanon, Qatar's continuing pro-active involvement in the Middle East with generous investments in Palestine, Sudan, and Iraq has challenged the KSA-UAE led status quo in the region. Emir Tamim's Iran visit during the US-Iran tension following the assassination of General Qassem Souleimani in January 2020 was also significant in demonstrating Qatar's consistency in pursuing an independent foreign policy by showing support for the regional ally as well as assuming the role of a mediator between the parties.

3.4. An Assessment of Qatari Leadership in the Crisis

These strategic steps show that Qatar has grown stronger and more confident under the embargo based on a successful crisis management and an active international profile with impact on the regional balance of power. It indicates the continuity of the trend adopted in Qatar's transformation under Sheikh Tamim's leadership. Sheikh Tamim's determination has been essential in pursuing Qatar's independent path despite challenging circumstances, as he stated in a speech: "We don't live on the edge of life, lost without direction, and we are not answerable to anyone or wait for anyone for instructions. Qatar is known for its independent behavior now and those who deal with us know we have our own visions."[51] Sheikh Tamim's remarkable success in crisis management led Qatar to overcome the crisis strongly and confidently. As a result, Sheikh Tamim has not only guaranteed the survival of Qatar but also managed to keep intact the country's transformation by strengthening state capacity and pursuing independent foreign policy. Therefore, the success of Hamad's leadership must not be underestimated compared to the phenomenal success of his father.

The success of Sheikh Tamim's leadership proved that the leadership conception of Qatar was already consolidated and sustainable enough to

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50 Giorgio Cafiero, "Qatar Challenges Saudi Influence in Lebanon," *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2019, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/01/qatar-challenge-saudi-influence-lebanon-tamim.html.

51 Hammond, "Qatar's Leadership," 6.

be transferred to the new leader, who had gained the same vision and could pursue Qatar's independent path. From this perspective, Sheikh Hamad's early retirement can be the result of the likelihood that he wanted to give his son an opportunity for in-power training by granting him support and consultancy while maintaining remote control when he was still healthy. These factors however would not have played an effective role if they had not met matching leadership skills of Sheikh Hamad.

4. Conclusion

Qatar realized a sharp transition from the context of the rising period to the context of the ongoing crisis period in parallel with dramatically changing regional and geopolitical balances. Nevertheless, Qatar has preserved its political and economic stability and distinctive policies; with having goals and strategies remained intact. Qatar's success overall highlights the impact of such a strong and effective leadership conception that was shaped by Sheikh Hamad and inherited to Sheikh Tamim. Sheikh Hamad transformed Qatar from a tiny state to a popular state and the world's largest LNG supplier. Sheikh Tamim, while having advantages of running an already established successful system, has been challenged with greater disadvantages to maintain power in the face of dramatically changing regional dynamics and the brutal conditions of isolation.

The political conflict emerged in the Gulf in the wake of the Arab Spring between the status quo and change, which was the result of a regional rift. The hostility of the neighbors led Qatar to adhere more firmly to own policies and interests instead of making compromise. Consequently, the embargo resulted in the opposite of what had been intended. First of all, by imposing such an embargo on Qatar, the blockading quartet could not achieve the goal of making Qatar surrender or weaken. On the contrary, embargo conditions forced Qatar to grow stronger politically, militarily and economically, and the crisis has resulted in the increase in Qatar's confidence, political stability and national solidarity. The ongoing blockade could not change the preferences of Qatar's autonomous foreign policy, on the contrary, contributed to Qatar's further improvement of the relations with Iran and other regional actors like Turkey and Pakistan. Qatar has kept its support for the MB and Hamas, and maintained its Al-Jazeera

broadcasting. Qatar is still an active and influential international actor in several fields from finance to diplomacy. Therefore, the embargo imposed on Qatar is considered a total strategic failure.[52]

Qatar today is still seen as a brand state of international mediating, a financial hub, and a strategic destination in the global map hosting hundreds of international events a year. It can be presumed that Qatar will continue to follow its strategic road map under the leadership of Sheikh Tamim in medium and long terms, while the regional conflict will continue to deepen the political rift towards dissolution of the GCC and the destruction of regional unity.

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[52] Collins, "Anti-Qatar Embargo," 59-69.

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