

POLITICAL ASSESSMENT OF QATARI CRISIS ON THE GCC SECURITY

Mohammed Salam Al-Hashami and Noor Sulastry Yurni Ahmad

Department of Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman

E-mail: n.ahmad@ squ.edu.om

ABSTRACT. Through investigating the conception of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, it is obvious that the unity is the main factor that ensured the stability and security of the state members. Due to some political concerns, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE) and State of Bahrain launched boycott policies against the State of Qatar. Accordingly, Qatar has increased its alliance with Turkey and Iran to ensure its national security. The focal aims of this thesis are to explore the consequences of the Qatari Crisis on social, economic, political and mainly on the security sides. Moreover, identifying the key sources of friction between Qatar and the blockading states and how other factors, both historical and contextual have contribute and shaped these differences to the point that the states were willing to engage in such dramatic moves against each other. To achieve these objectives, the study applied qualitative method. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to conduct elite interviews. A semi-structured interview was developed by the researcher for collecting the required data. The interviews focused on the three main political levels which are the strategic, supervisory and executive level. The research provides important solutions for the states in the Gulf region and how to go about their diplomatic and political maneuvers given the significant risks that may be involved. This research used the Theory of Alliance to explore the attitude of the gulf countries along with the situations held on the blockade. The findings revealed that the root causes of the Qatari Crisis are multi-dimensional and include historical, political, economic factors and the media.

Keywords: Qatar; Crisis; GCC; Security; Blockade

ABSTRAK. Dengan mengkaji konsepsi negara-negara anggota Dewan Kerjasama Teluk (GCC), terlihat jelas bahwa persatuan merupakan faktor utama yang menjamin stabilitas dan keamanan negara-negara anggota. Karena beberapa masalah politik, Kerajaan Arab Saudi (KSA), Uni Emirat Arab (UEA) dan Negara Bahrain meluncurkan kebijakan boikot terhadap Negara Qatar. Dengan demikian, Qatar telah meningkatkan aliansinya dengan Turki dan Iran untuk memastikan keamanan nasionalnya. Tujuan utama dari tesis ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi konsekuensi dari Krisis Qatar di bidang sosial, ekonomi, politik dan terutama di sisi keamanan. Selain itu, mengidentifikasi sumber utama friksi antara Qatar dan negara-negara yang memblokir dan bagaimana faktor-faktor lain, baik historis maupun kontekstual, telah berkontribusi dan membentuk perbedaan-perbedaan ini ke titik di mana negara-negara tersebut bersedia untuk terlibat dalam gerakan dramatis semacam itu terhadap satu sama lain. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Kuesioner semi-terstruktur digunakan untuk melakukan wawancara elit. Penelitian ini menggunakan Teori Aliansi untuk mengeksplorasi sikap negara-negara teluk beserta situasi yang terjadi pada blokade. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa akar penyebab Krisis Qatar bersifat multi-dimensi dan mencakup faktor sejarah, politik, ekonomi, dan media.

Kata kunci: Qatar; Krisis; GCC; Keamanan; Blokade

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was a cohesive political, economic as social party as compared to the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries. In the last six years, a number of factors influenced the stability of GCC states members. One of the most important factors was Qatar Crisis, which has significantly negative impact on the international security of the GCC. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt have blockaded Qatar over a variety of allegations, including Qatari funding of terrorist activities, a breach of the 2014 GCC agreement, a growing relationship with Iran and Turkey, and Al-Jazeera's unacceptable news reporting activities. These nations accuse the Qatari government of encouraging uprisings in some of their countries and of financing channels that create news that are detrimental to their interests. In addition to cutting off air and maritime connectivity with

Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) blocked the country's only land border. However, the fundamental causes of Qatar's isolation remain unclear and need additional investigation, given that Qatar has fiercely disputed the charges (Naheem 2017) and regards them as a significant threat to its sovereignty.

After the Saudi-led Quartet boycotted, Qatar launched political and economic ties with Iran and Turkey. That was expected, as Qatar wanted to ensure its national safety and provide the basic needs for its nation. Al-Rantisi (2020) stated that Qatar Crisis strength the Iranian and the Turkish power in the area. Accordingly, there was an understandable concern from the world leading countries as both Iran and Turkey has been infiltrated in the Gulf.

Researchers have not treated Qatar crisis in much details especially the impacts on security of the GCC. This article is to provide a conceptual framework based on the alliance theory to investigate the impact of Qatar crisis on the GCC security. The

study also will findings that have been ignored by some of the States of the Cooperation Council in order to maintain the unity as one of the member countries. It also discusses the practices that some countries use to exert their power and authority over others and control the policies of other Member States.

According to Milton-Edwards (2020), the Gulf conflicts demonstrate the enduring nature of crises and war. Several states in the region are now routinely engaging in interventionist activities that contradict historically existing authority and non-interventionist norms. Fragmentation is a term that describes what were once thought to be reasonably stable institutions of cooperation and long-term regional organization. New modes of coercion and interventionism among Gulf players, which deepen rather than address security dilemmas, put theoretical norms that presuppose non-intervention to the test. While Partrick (2011) explains that the GCC was established as a coalition of politically similar countries making an attempt to figure along within the face of growing security threats. Also believes that it's common for governments to contemplate foreign and defense policies that have vital impacts determined by domestic concerns.

While Partrick, claimed that the heavier economic weight of the GCC states has motivated them to manifest their overall ambition as "regional" ness but it has taken the form of leadership. Due to a lack of traditions or capabilities for delegation of power, politics rely heavily on leadership. As such, a significant shift of political power to supra-state GCC entities is also a long shot. However, Gengler, & Al-Khelaifi, (2019) found that there are significant policy disagreements between GCC members as the reasons for the dispute. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1981 to promote economic and security cooperation among the Gulf's six politically, culturally, and economically similar Arab states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Nonetheless, the company has made only modest strides toward these goals. In 2003, a customs union was formed, but proposals for a single GCC currency were abandoned. Such convergence projects, such as the long-discussed GCC power grid and rail network, have also failed to materialize. The unwillingness to cede state sovereignty, especially to the more populous and economically powerful Saudi Arabia, has been a persistent impediment to cooperation.

Although Sadiki & Saleh (2020) argued that the current intra-GCC order cannot be divorced from either domestic or international Realpolitik. At the moment in history, the six Gulf states seem to be mired in mismatches between one state's view of

the behaviors and acts of the others and a tendency toward non-compliance with putative (local and international) norms regulating collective political conduct. In an attempt to deconstruct this sobering Gulf scene, their Special Issue provides a platform for urgent, vibrant, and inflammatory claims and inquiries. Our focus is not only analytical and methodological but also normative, as we argue that normlessness jeopardizes regional and international security. As such, it merits additional study by scholars in Gulf and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) politics and foreign affairs. In the same vein, Sadiki (2020) states that at the heart of the GCC's "disembodied regionalism" is an inability to promote more representative and sensitive modes of politics. Other than that, elite-to-elite ties are a defining characteristic of Gulf politics. He agrees that top-down administration of politics fosters discord and disintegration rather than incorporation, marginalizing the sub region's agenda for multi-level governance.

This reinforces what Gengler & Al-Khelaifi (2019) realizes that the Coordination of Gulf defense has also been shown to be inefficient. For instance, in 1984, the GCC formed the Peninsula Shield, a joint military force of 10,000 troops tasked with the responsibility of defending the area from external aggression. However, the ineffectiveness of this token force was readily demonstrated in 1990, when Iraq occupied Kuwait, which the GCC neither deterred nor defied. Similarly, the GCC was unable to mediate a territorial dispute between two of its members, Bahrain and Qatar, that erupted in a brief military conflict in 1986 and festered throughout the 1990s before being resolved by the International Court of Justice in 2001. Additionally, Saudi Arabia backed a botched coup attempt in Qatar in 1996, precipitating a lengthy rift and hastening Qatar's adoption of independent foreign and national security policies. While Al-Rantisi (2020), indicated that the Gulf crisis erupted after the Saudi-led Quartet boycotted Qatar on June 5, 2017, and events unfolded after the Qatar News Agency website was hacked on May 23, 2017, when the false comments of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Which Doha described with false allegations, despite Qatar's willingness to mediate and the Kuwaiti Emir's haste to fabricate false allegations. On June 5, 2017, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and other countries announced the severance of diplomatic relations with Doha, as well as the implementation of a blockade on the region, which included the closure of all air, land- land areas and sea ports.

In addition, Al-Rantisi mentioned that Turkey is aware that the Gulf division serves Iran's interests

and policies, with which Turkey has expressed frustration. In February 2017, Iran summoned Turkey's ambassador to Tehran in response to comments made by Turkish Foreign Minister and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accusing Iran of destabilizing the region, for which Iran needs Turkey's cooperation.

Rivalries between Gulf monarchies as Kinninmont, (2019) mentioned are not recent, but this crisis has been magnified by the Gulf monarchies' extraordinary international scope, as a result of their active foreign policies, trade and investment ties, and sovereign wealth fund operations. Kinninmont, (2019) pointed that Qatar has been boycotted by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt since June 2017 (the Arab Quartet). This has generated a profound and pervasive schism that has repercussions in the Middle East and Horn of Africa (HoA). It has also splintered the GCC, formerly one of the Arab world's few active regional bodies, which has been effectively disbanded as a result of three of its members boycotting Qatar.

Moreover, Ulrichsen (2020), sees although the blockade did not involve military force action, it was considered as the most serious rupture in Gulf region since 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The blocked in Ramadan the holy month of Islam, cut the social and familial ties then have the connected the people of Arabian Peninsula. He emphasis that not only Qatar who shocked of Trump's decision to tweet in supporting the blockade, but also to America's security partners in the Gulf for whom belief in the United States of America (USA) as the ultimate guarantor of their security was a pillar of their post 1990 Kuwait innovation strategic assumption. Trump upended three decades of assumptions about the USA role in the Gulf. He appeared to give Saudis and Emiratis the green light for any further measures they intended to take against Qatar including military action. So, if this is often the case, then we have a tendency to see that the Qatar crisis is that the opposite of everything that has been established within the Gulf Cooperation Council. Therefore, mending the Gulf rift goes through a tough part, notwithstanding it begins with a gradual come back.

This study makes both theoretical and practical contribution. Through investigating the available literature, there are few qualitative analyses of Qatar crisis on GCC security. Most studies in Qatar crisis have been carried out in the social and economic areas. The issue of GCC security has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of Qatar crisis. It is anticipated that this study adds to the body of knowledge on how the separation of GCC members stated expose their security to danger. In addition, this study provides a framework

to the political agencies in GCC to develop a new understanding about how to deal with any future crisis that might affects that unity and security.

METHODE

This section describes research philosophy, research design and methodology, as well as data sources, aggregation, analysis, and triangulation.

Research philosophy and approach

This STUDY relies on the qualitative method used to provide a comprehensive analysis and reach the most accurate results. Regarding the qualitative method, the case study technique will be used as a primary method for conducting this study. As such, the literature-based content analysis is utilized. Several studies also applied the qualitative method to investigate the impacts of Gulf crisis on state members.

Data Sources

Primary sources

This study uses primary sources to achieve the intended aims and goals. It is anticipated that the researcher conducted semi-structural interviews. The interviews focused on the three main political levels which are the strategic level, supervisory level and executive level. The strategic level has been interviewed to understand the Sultanate position from Qatar crisis and the way that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carried out its relations with State of Qatar. Then, the supervisory level interviewed to understand to what level they are informed with the impact of Qatar crisis on their daily practices and the GCC security. Finally, the emotions, value, norms and attitudes of the executive level towards Qatar crisis has been investigated. A set of criteria on the interviewees depending on their position were developed. The semi-structured interview facilitates the exploration of experts' opinion in all Gulf crisis related areas.

Secondary sources

This study used secondary sources, such as literature-based content such as books, magazines, movies, archives, articles, journals etc. that were collected by the research and has be analyzed based on various sets of criteria to avoid biased conclusion. The criteria are the date of publication as the materials reviewed are not exceed the past five years except for the review of the literature related to the theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effects and Consequences of the Crisis on Qatar Internal Security

The Qatari crisis came at a huge social cost to the societies of the states engaged in the crisis. It has also

been suggested by the majority of the analysis that it is largely the mounting social cost that convinced parties in the conflict, and those with a stake in the region, to the negotiating table to end the dispute. Even with the end of the blockade, several authors have postulated that the social costs of the GCC's longest and most dramatic conflict will continue to be felt for many years to come.

A deep analysis of the social costs and impacts of the Qatari crisis is provided by Freer (2017), in which he pinpoints the rise of creative nationalism as one of the effects of the Qatari crisis. According to the author, there has been a surge of creative nationalism even before the Gulf crisis, but this was elevated to new heights when the Gulf crisis unfolded. The author observes this surge of creative nationalism to run counter to the events at the time, noting that there had been implementation of conscription laws in Kuwait, the UAE as well as Qatar.

There have also been consistent reductions in subsidized on key products and services, while states in the GCC have sought to shower up their coffers with the introduction of Value Added Taxes (VAT) actions which were expected to lead to resistance and refinance from the citizenry. Instead, there has been a rise in creative nationalism, national pride and loyalty, which were expected to wane with these measures. While there have been concerted efforts from the state to boost nationalism and loyalty through states organized events such as national days, the recent Qatari crisis has seen these emerge organically from the public.

GCC nationals, including Qataris, have creatively employed both social media and traditional media to achieve their ends. In Qatar, a noteworthy case was one of a Qatari national, Tamim bin Majed, who made a drawing of the Qatari emir on his car and drove it around Doha to show support for their leader. This has been taken up by other Qataris who are using the drawing as an actor on their social media accounts. This has only fuelled creativity, nationalism and national pride across Qatar as well as the entire GCC region.

Music has also been employed to convert feelings of nationalism and loyalty, including the "One Nation" song that has been dubbed as a National Anthem to demonstrate solidarity with Qatar. However, creative nationalism has not just been employed to show up feelings of national pride and nationalism, but has also at time been laced with provocative statements against states regarded as opposing their standpoints.

Vitriolic media coverage is a consequence of the Qatar crisis's social security consequences. It is no secret that the blockading quartet's official declaration of the boycott of Qatar was followed

by intensive media coverage campaigns and international lobbying in order to sway public opinion and media coverage in their favour. These media campaigns became vicious as each used highly sensitive information spinning and at times what would be considered "fake news" to discredit the rival party and undermine its integrity and faith in the world community.

Freer (2017) notes that it's almost borders on irony that the one of the core demands and accusations levelled against Qatar was the "political" nature of Al Jazeera media coverage regarding some of the neighbouring countries and their leadership. Yet, the blockading quartet employing their media houses to achieve the very same ends. Moreover, the blockading states criminalized any favourable coverage or divergent coverage of the state of Qatar, demanding that all media houses comply with the national stand with regards to Qatar. This had the net effect of politicizing media coverage, making media coverage one sided and eroding any trust that the public would have of their press systems.

The claims made in each of these media sides grew increasingly outlandish, with some even claiming that Qatar had sided with Iran to delay the execution of a convicted Muslim Cleric in Saudi Arabia. Allegations in these media sites have largely been out sized and sometimes over-exaggerated, even at times outlandish. One online article in Saudi Arabia had cast doubts on Qatar's financial soundness and the true levels of its foreign currency reserves, while another in Abu Dhabi claimed that Qatar had handed to Al Qaeda information about UAE troop positions in Yemen. At the same time, loyalty and support for the Emir in Qatar had been skyrocketing, while some other news sites have claimed that such support is overstated and resistance or opposition downplayed. Both Qatar and the blockading quartet have strongly employed the services of Public Relations (PR) firms in their communications, influencing news and other information available to the public, which makes it even harder to establish the true state of affairs in the region.

External efforts to destabilize Qatar were also made via the rearing of factions within the Qatari royal family by certain members of the ailing quartet. These developments, the writer believes, are among the most stunning, with flagrant efforts to provide an alternative leadership to Qatar, including public remarks by officials of the embargo, as well as orchestrated activities aimed at presenting Qatar as in disarray. The governing family is ideologically fractured and works in opposition to one another.

It is noteworthy that the Qatari royal family has remained notoriously factious, but the introduction of deliberate and systematic foreign players as a

key driver of this factionalism is surprising and equally dangerous. Outside countries commenting on the domestic political arrangement in Qatar is unprecedented, and especially when the same happens to be in direct challenge of the sitting government. These are directly aimed at regime change, and could lead to even greater support and feelings of nationalism towards the Emir, and yet further restrain relations between Qatar and the blockading quartet.

Moreover, this risk of inflaming tensions and creating instability, while also further entrenching suspicions between the Qatari leadership and the Blockading quartet, jeopardized future cooperation or even negotiations. These comments on the political arrangement are also regarded as a direct personal attack on the emir, and makes concessions nearly impossible.

The Qatar crisis has also created and worsened already problematic tribal and family ties both in Qatar and across the region (Freer, 2017). The blockade has created unmitigated difficulties for families seeking to cross borders, yet Qatar and its neighbours are so deeply integrated and connected with social ties that they see one tribe or even family living across borders, governed by different regimes. This crisis has seen families split, as well as tribes and clans, and asked to pay strong allegiance and loyalty to only their leaders without showing any sympathy to the leadership or populace of a different, competing country. This has severely strained familial and tribal ties and prevented the majority of them from crossing borders to visit and spend time with their friends and relatives, all of these caught up in political mind games of their leadership.

There was a spike in claims of harassment of Qatari citizens across the period of the crisis. Freer (2017) debates that vitriolic statements about each other's states by the leadership from the three countries was enough to fuel strong nationalism and push the citizens towards near violence in the involved States. This was especially evidenced by claims in the New Arab media about the arrest, torture and imprisonment of their Qatari officials in the UAE. There have also been reports of the arrest, assault and imprisonment of Qataris returning from Haj by Qatari authorities, which have been billed as a violation of human rights. He added there have been rising debates on Islam - that is the sects of Islam that are accorded space and liberty to worship and perpetuate their ideology across the Gulf region. The author debates that with the criminalizing of some Islam groups, it has been suggested that some sects of Islam that are regarded as conducive to the leadership of certain countries are being accorded the right of worship, while others are being restricted. There

have been systematic attempts by the leadership of the blockading countries to link groups such as the Muslim brotherhood with violent extremism, and at the same time cut any links and funding to these groups by Qatar. This has also served as an excuse for a violent crackdown on the followers of these groups, which in large proportions serves to curtail the freedom of worship and opinion.

The Qatar crisis of 2017-2021, which was precipitated by the diplomatic disputes between Qatar and three of its neighbours in 2014, was a severe diplomatic and economic boycott of the state of Qatar, described as the most severe and dramatic dispute among the GCC members for the last several decades. This dispute has opened new insights into how the region operates and the nature of both bilateral and multilateral relations within this region, and has significantly upended long held understanding and perceptions about the GCC and the larger Middle East. This severe crisis has left an indelible mark on relations within the GCC, dramatically affected trade relations and by extension, impacted international relations with other players who have interests within the region.

An important starting point to note is that the Qatar crisis is not the first, nor the last among these players, having a history of sporadic conflicts as well as periods of significant cooperation and agreement. However, the Qatar crisis stands out for how dramatically it unfolded, sustained itself and ended. It also strikes because of the nature of the measures imposed by the blockading quartet, as well as the length of time the dispute lasted before resolution. The very nature of the Gulf region and the wider Middle East region is characterized as highly polarized and segmented, and regarded as only requiring a minor spark to descend into chaos. Yet, this region has for the last sixty years remained at the heart of international relations by way of its vast hydrocarbon resources power in world economies. Any instability and volatility in the region could thus immediately reverberate throughout the world, with significant impacts on both world economy and peace.

There are a number of active conflicts already ongoing around the Gulf, including an unstable government in Iraq, political and armed conflict in Yemen, political and armed conflict in Syria as well as significant levels of instability in Lebanon. For considerable periods, the region has remained mired in significant internal struggles and infighting, while some other countries compete for regional dominance and supremacy, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. The GCC was for long considered as the epitome of peace and tranquillity, but recent happenings have significantly challenged this notion and created new risks of conflict and fall out (Buigut and Kapar 2019).

It follows then that the nature and severity of the Qatar crisis has created new and added on existing security challenges within the Gulf region. This is especially because the GCC bloc had in the past played a monumental role in mediating and settling some of the conflicts and disputes around the region, and as such new struggles within the bloc pose a challenge to this bloc playing the role with the same efficiency and effectiveness going forward. It also raises the risks of external players having to mediate on disputes within the bloc itself, creating even more instability. This will not only affect ongoing operations but also jeopardize new ones, apart from straining cooperation among them (Asisian, 2018).

Security risks of the Qatar crisis are also significant when taken in the context of the Arab Spring, which saw long simmering tensions and grievances leading to the toppling of several regimes in the region. The effects of the Arab Spring continue to be felt across the region, and potentially this will continue shaping the Gulf and Middle East politics, security relations and bilateral relations for the foreseeable future. It is also noteworthy that the Arab Spring occurred on the very doorstep of the GCC, with some of the members of the GCC taking part in the events that followed, on different sides or camps.

Emerging security risks and concerns have thus been approached and managed in the context of the Arab Spring, with any incidences likely to inflame the masses being specifically combated robustly, although at times this has formed the basis for violent crackdowns on persons with contrary political opinion. It is also instructive that the Qatari crisis also had its roots in the events of the Arab Spring. It is therefore instructive that the Qatar crisis is a consequential period in the history, relations and security landscape of the GCC and the entire Middle East region.

The Qatar crisis no doubt significantly affected the economy of Qatar, and from a critical perspective was designed to impact its economy negatively. The GCC member states are quite strongly connected and integrated and connected to each other's economies, and as such a boycott or embargo of any measures would undoubtedly have negative ramifications.

Qatar imports 40% of its food needs through its land border with Saudi Arabia, and the majority of the rest through the Emirate ports of Fujairah and Dubai. Equally important is Qatar to United Arab Emirates, which receives 25% of its gas needs from Qatar. According to the author, trade figures between Qatar and its Gulf neighbours totaled \$500 million with Bahrain, \$2 billion with the KSA and \$7 billion with the UAE. Clearly, these countries were important trading partners, and the closure of borders and restriction of movement of products and services

was highly negative for the economy. Moreover, cross country investments in each other's economies within the GCC are also significant, running into tens of billions of dollars (Kabbani, 2017).

The Saudi Banking industry is estimated to have an exposure to Qatar that amounts to at least \$30 billion, with a similar amount for the Emirate banking industry. Even more, a good number of multinational companies operate within the GCC region, often spread across borders with workers residing in one state and working in another. This was demonstrated by more than 70 daily flights between Qatar and the trio of GCC countries before the blockade. This is also demonstrated by the significant number of nationals from GCC countries that work in Qatar.

The Qatari crisis had the ultimate effect of breaking supply chains, stopping the flow of goods and services, as well as wreaking havoc for companies that operated across international borders in the region, as Kabbani (2017) noted. This also had the impact of denting corporate confidence in the economy of Qatar, since private companies were convinced that any further escalation of the crisis would see a targeting of the private sector by the warring parties. This crisis also heavily and disproportionately affected companies which relied on cross border development and tourism.

The embargo caused anxiety in the Qatari economy and market, as locals hurried to stock up on food and other essential goods, fearful of shortages as a result of the blockade, with transit trucks lingering on the Saudi border with supplies for days, resulting in the shortages of certain basic necessities. However, within a few days, Qatar's leadership had negotiated new supply channels via Turkey and Iran. The two nations sent supplies through a mix of ships and airplanes, with both saying that they would maintain the commercial ties until the embargo was lifted. Additionally, new maritime routes were established through the Omani ports of Salalah and Sohar, which were obvious options given their closeness and efficiency during the closure of the other ports.

Moreover, the state of Qatar entered into arrangements with Iran to allow it use its airspace, where the Qatari planes would now adjust their routes to access the outside world. As a result, Qatar paid \$100 million to Iran annually for the use of its airspace, providing a lifeline to Qatar in accessing the external world and provided Iran with a valuable source of foreign currency (Fox, 2021). While the additional costs to access the Iran airspace, as well as costs in fuel because of longer routes, were a significant cost addition, it allowed Qatar to continue having unfettered access to the outside world.

The boycott had both direct and indirect economic effects on both Qatar and the wider GCC.

The author notes that a combination of oil prices and the blockade took a toll on Qatar's Economy, which saw investments suffer heavily, and the economy recorded a sluggish growth as the investors panicked and withdrew some of their investments in Qatar, given that most of them perceived Qatar as the weaker side in the dispute. As a consequence, Qatar's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell from 3.1% growth rate in 2016 to -1.5% in 2017. It recovered to 1.2 in 2018 and to 1.8 in 2019 before it was hit by the Corona Virus pandemic. Moreover, Fox (2021) notes that the imposition of the blockade forced Qatar to scramble for measures to find alternative routes within the shortest time possible, with additional costs to the economy.

Food security impacts were some of the most adverse, and were among the quickest to settle in after the imposition of the Qatar blockade. Amery (2019) starts by observing that Qatar is a net importer of food, given the harsh climatic conditions and the geography within its borders. He further notes that even with this, Qatar's food imports must pass through the ports of other GCC states, which further complicates the food security situation in the event of disagreements and closure of borders and blockades on its boundaries. Qatar's food imports must pass through the narrow straits of Hormuz as well as Bab Al Mandab. The possibility of these straits being closed especially with tensions between it and some of the GCC and non GCC players, compounded with the threat of Somali Pirates, and the ongoing war in Yemen, places Qatar's food security in a precarious situation. The author also observes that the start of the Syria war had already significantly impacted food security not just of Qatar, but of the entire GCC countries, which were dependent on supplies from Syria for fresh vegetables and fruits.

The decision by the blockading quartet to impose an embargo on Qatar severely dented its food security. Given that Qatar imported roughly 40% of its food needs through its Salwa land border with Saudi Arabia, the closure of their border crossing effectively turned Qatar into a landlocked country, cutting off 40% of the country's food supplies. Moreover, Qatar imported the majority of the remaining share of its food through the United Arab Emirates ports of Dubai and Fujairah, and the closure of these route strangled Qatar's food routes and imports. This created a sense of panic among the more than 2.7 million Qatari citizens, who started stockpiling food and other basic supplies in the fear of acute shortages.

The Ministry of Economy responded to these fears by fixing the prices of a number of consumer goods. The panic was also moderated by the fact that the country had, since the 2014 diplomatic spat

with its neighbours, started to stockpile strategic food reserves that would be able to cover up to twelve months of supplies in case of emergencies and shortages. Amery (2019) observes that within 48 hours of the blockade taking effect, Turkey responded by shipping foods and dairy and chicken that were directly placed on the shelves of Qatari supermarkets. Iran followed by employing planes and ships to ship about 440 tons of food and other supplies, and committed that such shipments would continue being made throughout the period until the blockade was lifted and Qatar's food security assured. In addition to the quickly arranged alternative sources and routes for the state of Qatar, the government announced massive and diverse efforts aimed at enhancing the food production capacity within the national borders of Qatar, which was aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in relation to food needs.

The access to products such as dairy, poultry and meat are important indicators of food security, and as a result the leadership of Qatar strongly intended to ensure that it was well covered in terms of this metric. While Qatar had imported the majority of these products from the trio of GCC countries that had now imposed the blockade, its main dairy firm, Baladna farm, imported more than 3400 Holstein cows from various European countries by way of state-owned cargo transport airplanes. The farm now managed to have in excess of 14000 cows, along with over 40,000 sheep and 5,000 goats. These moves have enabled Qatar to achieve a self-sufficiency of 84% from 28%, in terms of dairy products, from 2016 to 2018 (Amery, 2019). Amery (2019) observes that the blockade served as a severe stress test of the food security situation in Qatar, and in one way came as a blessing in disguise as it has enabled Qatar to not just explore new and alternative sources and routes for its food needs, but also bolstered food sufficiency.

Moreover, within the GCC the blockade enabled Qatar to shift and explore new routes, with Oman's sea ports emerging as an important alternative source of food and importation of other goods. At the same time, Qatar signed multiple agreements with other countries that include Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India, all of them now playing a significant role in ensuring continued supplies to Qatar, while at the same time boosting trade and bilateral relations. The blockade has also compelled food security to become a priority for the political leadership of Qatar in which the emir has stated that the country will pursue diversification programs that will guarantee food security and further improve its already impressive energy sector (Wellesley, 2019).

While Qatar has performed considerably well in regards to improving food security and self-sufficiency as a response to the impacts of the

blockade, the same has come at a considerable cost. This includes the high-water exploitation levels in Qatar, given that Qatar is one of the world's most water stressed states. Moreover, the fact that the state of Qatar faces harsh climatic conditions that include extremely high temperature and humidity, the majority of the dairy cows imported have to be kept indoors where weather conditions are strictly controlled, which is significantly energy intensive (Hussein & Lambert, 2020). In the absence of truly innovative technologies that will allow higher efficiency and exploitation of natural conditions, food security may still prove a challenge to Qatar in the future.

Qatar Crisis and GCC situation

A broad analysis of the impact of the Qatar crisis on the political nature and structure of the GCC is provided by Kinnimont (2019). She starts by declaring that the Qatar crisis, by its dramatic and severe measures coupled with the length of time that the boycott remained in place prior to its resolution, has significantly affected the political landscape in the GCC and will continue to have ramifications long into the foreseeable future. One of the effects noted by the author is the seedlings of mistrust and suspicions that have now been planted, watered and manured by the crisis, in that even with the resolution of this crisis such suspicions and mistrust won't dissipate soon. This will only complicate political decisions and cooperation in a region and bloc already torn apart by competing political interests.

Secondly, the political and economic relevance of the GCC is effectively waning. The author reckons that instead of seeing the GCC as the ordinary vehicle and platform for the region, its leadership and member countries need to communicate and shape their political ambitions because it has now been relegated to a secondary option, one whose continued membership is optional and convenient. He observes that different countries and their political leadership have now resorted to pursuing other regional alliances that better align with their political interests and ideologies, as is visible with Qatar seeking Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India, besides Oman and Kuwait in the GCC. However, he cautions that even such alliances will not be permanent, but rather convenient coalitions designed to serve the needs of the time. The demise of the GCC is also aided by the fact that the Qatar crisis has epitomized the inability of the GCC institutions and its political leadership to solve internal issues and enable members to coexist harmoniously.

While the GCC was once regarded as the unrivalled and most advanced Arab bloc to date, there were always doubt about its capacity to solve

bitter and highly sensitive issues if they indeed came to the fore. However, this view has strongly been discredited by the recent crisis and its severity. It has exposed rifts among state leaders of the member countries and its institutions. Thirdly, the dispute has only further exposed and amplified the internal securities of the member states of the GCC. The dispute, from the demands listed by the blockading countries, arose from what the blockading states regarded as a foreign policy pursued by Qatar, that does not align with the interests of the other members. But instead of vanquishing these threats, pinpointing specific countries and groups which the quartet do not want Qatar to get closer to has only worsened things. Political and economic cooperation between Qatar and Turkey has only increased, which political Islam has noted that some of the leadership in GCC blockading countries do not want to see at all, which may only make them even more hard-line.

Other issues related to the politicization of the media and the masses were exposed. The Qatari crisis invited the warring parties to engage in highly clandestine operations aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the domestic population as well as international players. This has seen media outlets mandated to only air views that align with government policy and also malign the other competing camps. It has also seen the holding of a political opinion in some of these countries criminalized, resulting in highly controlled political opinion that may only add to tensions and political instability over time.

The crisis has laid bare the political fragmentation of the GCC states as per Asisian (2018). He notes that it has become obvious and public knowledge that the Qatari crisis stands as one of the most dramatic decisions by the political leadership of some of the GCC member states, and has been deemed as not only belligerent, but also a direct engagement in brinkmanship (Kinnimont, 2019). The author establishes that the wherewithal of the last political leadership has been lacking to engage in such activities, and this has kept the GCC together as a closely knit unit. However, with the Qatar crisis and the new leadership that is both unpredictable and willing to push boundaries, risks of miscalculations now abound.

Powers Allies in the GCC

The Middle East, wedged between Europe, North Africa, and Central Asia, is unquestionably one of the most volatile areas in international geopolitics. Whether it's about energy, religion, terrorism or wars. The Middle East is constantly in the spotlight. KSA and the UAE on one side, and Qatar and Turkey on the other represent two large groups in the region. Two blocs that are so aggressive to one another that we can almost express a hidden conflict. Turkey and

Qatar now formed a counterweight to KSA and the UAE, and the USA was caught between its NATO ally and long-standing regional partners. (Ulrichsen, 2020)

The USA evacuated its bases in Qatar in July 2021, as part of President Biden's strategy to reduce the USA's presence in the Middle East and the Gulf. There may be a pressing desire to reduce the American military presence in order to reduce tensions with Iran and reach a nuclear agreement, this means America lost its prestige power and forces its allies to rely on themselves for security purposes. On various levels, I think the blockade of Qatar failed to produce regime change in Qatar. Doha did not submit to the blockading states' demands. KSA and UAE failed to gain anything other than some initial regional, but little international, support. When the Saudis and Emiratis initiated the blockade, they did not anticipate such a result. This all indicates that the Saudis and Emiratis are losing control of the Gulf.

This study found that from the interviews conducted during data collection, the interviewees believe that the conflict between Qatar and the blockading countries (KSA, UAE, and Bahrain) has nothing to do with the US or Israel destabilizing regional security, others believe that the Qatari crisis has had a negative impact on all GCC societies, economies, politics, and security, particularly in the blockading countries (UAE, KSA and Bahrain). Furthermore, the UAE and Bahrain do not require a regional crisis to normalize relations with the state of Israel, a strategic ally of the USA and Arab Gulf States, including the GCC. Others see a strong relationship with the United States and Israel as a threat to the region's security.

Preoccupying the region with conflicts and working to inflame and sustain those conflicts so that there is no permanent stability is obvious. The blockade of the State of Qatar is clear evidence of the West's and America's continued use of that approach. Unless the region's countries pay attention to such a scheme, the conflict between the brothers will continue, and the Gulf countries will face political instability for years to come. Israel has a strong interest in weakening the Arabs in order to ensure its continuity, survival, and control over Arab decision-making, as well as penetration of its government and security, military, political, and economic systems.

Since its establishment in 1981, the GCC has suffered a significant division and loss of trust among its political leaders. The crisis exposed the fact that the GCC lacks critical mechanisms for preventing, managing, and resolving inter-state conflicts. Moreover, the Qatari crisis has harmed the GCC's ability to function as an effective regional alliance capable of addressing the socioeconomic,

political, and economic security challenges posed by fluctuating oil prices, the COVID-19 Pandemic, normalized relations with Israel, the ongoing war in neighbouring Yemen and Syria, and the presence of Iran as a geopolitical and geostrategic rival to the Arab Gulf States, including the GCC.

The study found that that the Qatar blockade impacted the GCC's security by contributing to the dispersal of collective efforts between countries and turned into individual actions between each country, and the lack of coordination is a form and will constitute sensitivity in issues of concern to the countries of the region regarding sensitive security files and the inability to coordinate security and military collectively and effectively. It will make the territories of the GCC countries more fragile in the event of security and military breaches.

There are many extreme security outcomes of the Qatar-Gulf crisis which can be mentioned in these points regarding the interviewees point of views:

1. The GCC's inability, if not paralysis, to play an active or influential role.
2. The creation of a deep schism among Arab Gulf states, resulting in a lack of regional coordination on sensitive security and military files.
3. Strengthening ties between Qatar, Turkey, and Iran. The latter state is a key player in the battle for regional dominance.
4. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Qatari crisis has resulted in an increase in Qatari arms purchases and the start of an arms race among GCC member states. Furthermore, the increase in arms purchases applies to the KSA and Kuwait particularly. This also implies an increase in defense and security spending at the expense of addressing each GCC member state's internal challenges. Among these challenges are youth unemployment, water insecurity, and the negative socioeconomic and political consequences of a refugee influx from neighbouring and war-torn Yemen.

CONCLUSION

Qatar, as previously seen, is a small state in terms of territory and population, located in an unstable region surrounded by larger and more powerful neighbours. The three countries, namely the KSA, the UAE, and Bahrain, announced the blockade of Qatar in June 2017, just a few days after President Trump's visit to KSA. The crisis began at a time when the Arab region was suffering, and continues to experience, many of the crises that have contributed to the spread of confusion and military conflicts in the region, most notably in Yemen, Libya, Syria and Iraq.

The focal objectives of this thesis are to investigate the root causes of the crisis, identify its consequences, and investigate the weaknesses in the Cooperation Council countries' relationships and the extent to which this impacts their future stability and internal security. Developing recommendations for decision-makers on how they might work in the future to avoid a similar crisis. To obtain these objectives, this study uses a mixture of methods; a qualitative approach whereby a semi-structured questionnaire was used to conduct elite interviews, followed by purposive sampling techniques and thematic analysis. In the qualitative approach, the data was analysed using a descriptive analysis. The finding showed that the reasons of the Qatari crisis are complex and intertwined, and include political and historical factors such as history, regime change, international and regional players, Qatari foreign policy, the Arab Spring, security, and political Islam. There are also economic factors such as economic growth in Qatar and economic competition, as well as personal factors between the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states who are young. According to the study's findings, the crisis had major social, political, security, and even economic consequences. Given that the GCC's social fabric is interconnected and social proximity between families exists across GCC country borders, the crisis has left a negative impression on GCC nationals. This crisis has had an impact on security, and regardless of the fact that a peace deal was achieved in early 2020, it is not expected that security will be restored as quickly as before in the aftermath of the crisis because of the mutual distrust between Qatari political leaders and their Saudi and Emirati counterparts. The formation of new regional alliances, such as the Qatari-Iranian-Turkish alliance and the Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian alliance. The GCC's abject failure to find a timely and equitable solution to the Qatari crisis.

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