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GCC Union: Realistic Project or Distant Dream

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person or institution, except where reference is made in the text of the thesis. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree in any university or other institution.

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Abstract

This thesis aims at shedding light on the withdrawal of the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain from Doha from 5 march 2014 till 16 November, reportedly as a sign of protest against Qatar, and its dynamic foreign policy in favor of political Islam notably following the coming to power of President Mohammad Morsi in Egypt, and the fall of some Arab leaders such as Zine Al Abidine of Tunisia, and Colonel Muammar Al Gaddafi of Libya as part of the Arab Spring Revolutions, which started by the beginning of 2011.

The thesis attempts to examine the impact of the ambassadors' withdrawal from Doha on the Gulf Cooperation Council, and its prospects for a greater unification to crown the integration project initiated in 1981 with the creation of the GCC.

The thesis is made up of six chapters which trace the genesis of the crisis, provide a historical and conceptual background of the GCC to better understand this regional organization, and try to gauge the damage caused by this incident on the GCC, and to determine the aspects affected by this move as well.

The thesis has used a qualitative method based on personal interviews to get in-depth explanations for this dispute which has apparently jolted this young integration project, and has aroused much doubt about the cohesion and solidity of the organization, and its ability in coping with new developments and events.

The paper ends up with a conclusion which provides an answer to the main question

raised by the thesis namely the impact of the ambassadors' withdrawal on the GCC on the basis of the results stemming from the interviews, and gives hints about the future prospects of this regional integration project following a period which lasted only eight months, but it was very hard for the GCC which had to strive to settle the dispute.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father who passed away few months before my examination. May Allah have mercy on him.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The record of regional integration projects is full of successful and painful experiences which could not resist the problems they met on their way (Abdul Khaliq Abdulla).These difficulties affected some organizations which could not surpass these circumstances, and gave up in the mid-way, while others had the ability to overcome all types of obstacles, and achieved the objectives they had set at their inception including the European Union which stands as a telling evidence of cohesion and solidity.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, founded in 1981 in Abu Dhabi, has witnessed troubled circumstances throughout its 33 years of existence, and has managed to cope with most of them including the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the US invasion of Iraq, and a host of border disputes among member states. However, the withdrawal of the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain seems to be the most serious problem for the GCC which has been settled after long mediation efforts made by Kuwait and Oman to end the row (Gulf news.com).

Problem statement

This thesis examines the spillover effects of the withdrawal of ambassadors from Doha since the outbreak of the crisis on 5 March 2014, and the damage it has caused to the GCC during eight months of crisis including the functioning of the organization, and the different aspects affected by this unprecedented incident in the history of this regional grouping. The effects of this move, which are multi-dimensional, have been tangibly felt notably in the political

and economic fields which did not function well (Abdul Khaliq Abdulla), and the rift was expected to widen if the crisis was not contained by the parties at loggerheads (Goldfischer).

Purpose statement

The aim of this thesis is to explore the reasons which led to the outbreak of this dispute, but mainly to examine to what extent was the impact of this crisis on the GCC integration prospects, and the different aspects affected by this friction within the organization above all the political leg. It will shed more light on this particular period in the history of the Gulf organization which remains shadowy due to the lack of academic and specialized studies as the case is new, and has kept developing till mid-November with multiple leaders' meetings and statements meant to find a final resolution to the crisis.

Therefore, the study lays just the foundation stone for other academic studies to dig more into the crisis to unearth more evidence, and to provide further clarification.

Research question

Since the beginning of the GCC row, a heated debate arose among experts and scholars about the effects of the incident on this regional integration project. The controversy gave birth to two major trends; the first tendency believes that the drift did not have an effect on the GCC simply because this organization does not exist actually, it remains loose and imagined with no tangible effectiveness following the decrease of Iran's threat (Krieg). While the second trend claims that the row caused a friction within the organization, and hampered its integration

process which had already borne fruitful results in several fields, and had improved the living standard of the Gulf peoples (AbdulKhaliq).

Therefore, the main research question of this thesis is to examine to what extent the ambassadors' withdrawal affected the GCC integration prospects?.

The method

The method used is a qualitative approach based on interviews with scholars and analysts, who attended a meeting held last summer by the Gulf Research Center in Cambridge. The choice of this seminar was not accidental, it was basically meant to get different views and ideas from scholars coming from all over the GCC states and outside the organization for more in-depth answers and analyses. The interviews will be supported by other views included in the literature review based on newspapers ,and other media news which kept covering the development of the incident over the past eight months, in addition to statements made by GCC leaders in their meetings and reconciliation efforts to end the crisis. It is worth noting, however, that specialized studies related to this issue are very scarce since the row has been going on till 16 November, few days before the thesis submission which required a review of the chapters already written.

The genesis of the crisis

The dispute broke out officially on March 5th 2014 when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain announced the withdrawal of their ambassadors from Doha "to protect security and stability" as they said in a joint statement in which they justified the move of pulling out their

ambassadors by Qatar's failure to put into effect a security agreement in a given time frame, which had been previously signed by all six GCC members on November 23, 2013 in Riyadh. The pact included:

> a security agreement and a commitment to the principles that ensure non-interference in the internal affairs of any of the GCC countries, either directly or indirectly, and not to support any activity that would threaten the security and stability of any of the GCC countries from organizations or individuals, including support for hostile media (CNN.com).

This move did not come from a vacuum, it was “just the straw that broke the camel's back" as stated by David Roberts in an interview with the author. The seeds of this rift go back to earlier incidents between Qatar and the other three GCC states for several reasons related to Qatar's will to get rid of the Saudi political orbit by forging its own independent foreign policy according to the same interlocutor .

In fact, a similar event, but a bilateral one, happened between Qatar and Saudi Arabia which withdrew its ambassador from Doha between 2002-2008, and the reason thought for that was the anti-Saudi coverage of Aljazeera (BBC.com). The role of Aljazeera has always been causing annoyance to these three countries, it was behind the rift between Qatar and Bahrain during the Manama protests in early 2011 where the Channel was accused of "trying to foment unrest and undo the benefits of Bahrain's national dialogue"(Guardian.com).

Aljazeera appeared, once again, as a source of discord within the GCC states during the war on Gaza in 2014 when the Abu Dhabi government was accused by the Qatari media channel of sponsoring Israel (Gulf news.com). Bilateral relations, already strained, became worse and the UAE called for apology from Doha as indicated by the same newspaper.

However, Aljazeera was not the sole reason for this unprecedented move in the GCC history, the ever mounting support of Qatar to political Islam in the region and elsewhere in the Arab world as part of the Arab Spring further fuelled the rift according to Goldfischer who stated that “the deepest immediate issue is the support of Qatar for the Muslim Brotherhood”. This opinion is shared by several scholars including David Roberts, Gerd Nonneman, Abdul khaliq Abdulla and many others, though they label it differently.

The Qatari support for Muslim Brotherhood, which is banned in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, seems to have displeased the two countries which were against any change in the region, and "perceived political Islam as a direct threat to their survival"(Goldfischer).This fear for political Islam or "paranoia" as termed by Andreas Krieg reached its climax when the wind of change blew in a strategic country in the region namely Egypt which remains, despite its problems "an important umbrella for the region"(Al Sumait). The two states had to react to keep the status quo in the region and the current system in the area (Al Saqri).

In fact, this trend is backed by many scholars including Jamal Abdulla who believes that "as certain regimes watched these events, they feared political change would soon reach their shores ,and thus implemented preventative measures to immunize themselves from similar calls

for freedom" (3). Once, the military regime returned to power in Egypt, these regimes notably in Saudi Arabia breathed a sigh of relief "because it meant Saudi's interests and alliances were once again in friendly hands"(3).

In the meantime, the situation took a turn for the worse when Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, a Doha-based Egyptian cleric, harshly criticized, in one of his Friday's speeches, the Emirati support for Egypt's military government. This move irritated the Abu Dhabi government which summoned Qatar's ambassador to deliver "an official protest memorandum" over remarks made by Al Qaradawi (Reuters.com).

These incidents, added to others, have allowed the simmering crisis to erupt causing a considerable friction within the GCC organization.

Qatar reaction

The Qatari reaction which followed the incident was immediate in the form of an official communiqué released by the cabinet which expressed "regret and surprise "for this move, and indicated that it would not take tit-for-tat measures, and pull out its envoys affirming its commitment to "the security and stability" of the GCC (QNA.org).

The Qatari response was, by and large, hailed for its calm and wise wording which did not fuel the situation, and left the ball in the three countries' court. It reiterated Qatar's attachment to the principles of the GCC, and the Emir "did very well by responding to this threat by not responding to the threat, continuing the policy as normal, not reacting to any of the demands that were completely irrational" (Krieg).

As a matter of fact, a glance at the following developments gives more validity and credit to this opinion since Qatar stuck to its previous positions, and did not implement, at least in the early months, any of the demands required by the three countries as Aljazeera continued to work normally with the same editorial line, and did not refrain "from granting a voice and platform to all parties in the conflict, including the Muslim Brotherhood, something which is seen as incommensurate with the leanings of some of the Arab regimes in the region"(Abdulla 4).

David Roberts asserts that this move proved Qatar's maturity as against the UAE's vociferousness which damaged further the two countries' relations. Moreover, the Qatari reaction showed a great deal of diplomacy, they chose "to keep quiet, and wait the time passes so to solve the issue"(Rickli). The aim of this intelligent move was "to mitigate the damage, not to enflame the situation, to try to maintain calm, and not necessarily irritate the other members by repeating what was said, and it is the practice to do politically and culturally"(Sherwood).

This wise and pragmatic attitude can be motivated according to Said Al Saqri by the strategic position of the neighboring countries notably Saudi Arabia which represents for Qatar "a gateway to the rest of Arabian peninsula, it is a big neighbour that can easily bully Qatar which had to play its card very calmly".

All in all, Qatar dealt with the crisis very tactically, it reacted quietly and avoided escalation with its traditional allies, and won time to look for potential solutions that could emerge either from consultations or mediation attempts initiated mainly by some GCC states as the research paper is going to examine shortly after.

Mediation and reconciliation attempts

After the outbreak of the incident, there were some attempts, notably within the GCC states, to contain the crisis and to repair the damage caused by this friction. Thanks to a Kuwaiti initiative led by Emir Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the GCC countries reached on April17 in Riyadh an accord in which the GCC countries pledged to honour the Riyadh Agreement, and a committee made up of representatives from the six member countries was set up to follow up on its implementation(Gulfnews.com).The work of the committee remained mostly secret, but finally the Qatari officials refused to endorse the report by the committee, even though the other countries signed it. This refusal denotes Qatar's will to stick to the principles of its foreign policy which opted to keep quiet, and let time passes to solve the issue. Many hopes were held on the Arab league Summit hosted by Kuwait, in March2014, to reverse the situation and see the ambassadors back to Doha, but the deadlock remained despite some reported attempts held on the sidelines of the summit to narrow the gap between the parties at issue especially by host country and Oman(Gulfnews.com).

The Jeddah meeting held in August by the GGC foreign ministers was seen as a last ditch attempt to redress the situation, but it did bear the expected results, despite Kuwait's statement that the return of withdrawn Gulf ambassadors to Doha "could happen anytime" (Monitor.com). Other Gulf diplomatic sources, speaking to news media on condition of anonymity, said the return of Saudi, Bahraini and Emirati ambassadors to Doha in the near future was unlikely, an indication that the rift between the four GCC members that led to the recall of the ambassadors

in March remained unresolved(Asharq Al-Awsat.net).

The failure of the meeting was due to Qatar's refusal to endorse the report of the committee supervising Doha's compliance with the Riyadh Agreement, and its demand for time to implement all articles of the agreement according to the London-based newspaper.

The meeting was, for sure, not fully successful, yet it was positive according to some analysts who highlighted the success of the summit in de-escalating tension:

> it moved the GCC integration away from a further deterioration, it took away some of the tension, and de-escalated the bad feelings around. The GCC was heading towards a clash of a sort, towards more deterioration, and the meeting in Jeddah just pulled everybody back away from the edge (Abul Khaliq).

In fact, opening channels of frank negotiations and direct dialogue is a good indication of success. The foreign ministers agreed on new criteria and standards to ensure the end of the differences amid reports that the three countries wanted more concrete steps by Doha, and Qatar asked for more time to implement the Riyadh Agreement signed on April 17.

The mediation efforts, however, continued notably by Oman and Kuwait to end the dispute and bring back relations to normal, and Qatar along with the trio managed ultimately to hammer out their differences during an extraordinary meeting held by the GCC leaders on16 November, 2014 in Riyadh, and decided the return of the ambassadors. The announcement made by the

GCC described what had been achieved in the Saudi capital as "an understanding meant to turn a new page in relations between the six members of the Gulf Organization".

The final statement did not give further details, but "diplomats in Doha said that amongst other things, Qatar had promised the UAE that the Brotherhood would not be allowed to operate from the country. There was no immediate confirmation of this" (Arabianbusiness.com).

The agreement, reached in a last chance, came in due time to rescue the group's meeting scheduled in Doha, which avoided missing the rotating presidency of the GCC following the summit of December 9-10, and escaped more pressure from the GCC countries which were steadfastly determined to put more pressure on Qatar to review its policy as a prerequisite for any potential accord.

Summary

The dispute is now solved despite the deep differences between Qatar and the parties at issue notably over the perception of political Islam, and the quite different vision of their foreign policies particularly at the regional level. The GCC integration is to function now as it should be since Qatar has apparently agreed to honor its engagements with the three countries during the Riyadh agreement.

The next chapter will provide a conceptual and theoretical analysis of the GCC in line with regional integration theories to better understand this organization which has ensured its survival despite the tremendous challenges. It will also relate it to the different types of regional integration projects existing elsewhere in the world notably the European Union. This analysis

will try to put the GCC in its real conceptual context to help understand the essence of the organization's integration.

Chapter Two

Regional integration as a concept

Introduction

This chapter will provide a conceptual and theoretical analysis of the main integration theories with the aim to show which one fits better with the GCC. Defining integration and reviewing its different types will be also highlighted to see what makes this regional integration different from the other organizations notably, the European Union through a detailed comparison that takes in account the most essential features, similarities and differences between the two organizations.

This analysis will certainly allow us to understand why the EU has achieved a string degree of integration amongst member states, while the GCC is still merely striving to survive and overcome its internal problems and crises.

Definition of Regional Integration

It is crucially important to define the notion of regional integration which is extensively used in modern and contemporary political literature to better understand the eagerly sought merger of the GCC which stands as a necessity after 33 years of existence in a turbulent and dynamic world where "the regional institutions are becoming important actors in the world politics"(Legrenzi and Harders1). However, a good understanding of this notion requires the definition of ‘region’ in accordance with international relations theories to easily grasp later on the regional or sub-regional integration with which the GCC is much more concerned.

Joseph Nye defined a region as “a number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence”(qtd. in Webber259). In line with this definition, regionalism can simply mean the formation of interstate groupings on the basis of a region. The term ‘region’ may denote no more than a geographical reality, usually a cluster of states sharing a common space on the globe. This kind of region may be a large continent or a small group of contiguous states (Fawcett 432). ‘Regioness’ has always been with us, it goes back many centuries, but it keeps changing, it is like identity which is "not given once and for all, it is built up and changes"(Maalouf 23). It includes and excludes for different reasons; Iran was excluded from the GCC on account of its Persian nature, and Eastern European countries were included in the EU once they gave up with the Communist ideology. In fact, integration which is the outcome of this feeling of regioness or regionalism is meant to ensure security and prosperity to a certain extent.

Integrations have long been maintained between states in order to achieve certain goals such as enhancing the general welfare of societies, maintaining national security, and promoting integration among states in all fields (Al-Makhawi).Integrations are expected to mushroom in the future since according to Kristian Ulrichsen who purports that no state can stand wholly alone in the twenty first century, and because today, more than ever before, threats are interrelated, and a threat to one is a threat to all(UN.org 14).

More recently, there has been much discussion in the literature about the definition of the concept of integration; it was, for instance, discussed whether integration refers to a process or an end product in the words of Laursen who claims that the two can be combined (qtd. in

Padmakumara1). Karl Deutsch, for his part, defined integration as:

> the attainment, within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a 'long' time, dependable expectations of 'peaceful change' among its population (qtd. in Russel et al 319).

When a group of people or states have been integrated this way, they constitute a "security community". 'Amalgamation', on the other hand, was used by Deutsch and his collaborators to refer to "the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government" (qtd. in Russel et al 319).

Therefore, the concept of regional integration can be defined as a voluntary process by which two or more regional states engage into an agreement to promote cooperation through common institutions and rules. The aims of this agreement range from economic to political, though it has often taken the form of a political economy initiative where commercial interests are the focus for achieving broader socio-political and security objectives.

Regional integration which has always been organized through supranational institutions, and an intergovernmental decision-making process, or a combination of both, has different forms including Free Trade Area, Custom Union, Common Market and Economic Union. These types of integration are to be developed in detail in the next chapter.

Historical background of Integrations

Regional cooperation or regional integration has always been praised by a plenty of scholars, it proved to be beneficial; some tasks are well performed by states or multilateral institutions rather than by a single state (Fawcett 431). For example, the plague of terrorism which got momentum in modern times, cannot be defeated by a single state even if it is strong and powerful like the United States which was victimized by the September 11th attacks, and called for international cooperation to combat this transnational scourge.

Regional integration is not a new phenomenon, examples of leagues, confederacies, councils and their like, representing integration, are spread throughout history."Some of them were established for defensive purposes, but not all of them were based on voluntary assent"(Mattli 1).

The first serious and voluntary attempt to regional integration took place in1828 when Prussia established a Customs Union with Hesse-Darmstadt which was followed by other initiatives, and culminated in the creation of a Swiss Market and Political Union in1848.The fever of integration struck other European countries including Italy, Austria-Hungary, Holland and France which forged numerous of integration projects in quest of more welfare and profit.

Several European politicians such as the foreign minister of Austria-Hungary Count Goluchowski, who was a staunch defender of the European integration, advocated for a United Europe in their public speeches. However, all these attempts were doomed to failure for different reasons including lack of sufficient awareness among the then European leaders who

were engaged in bilateral and multilateral conflicts which were behind the outbreak of two devastating world wars.

The idea of the European integration resurged again by the end of the World War II which reduced the continent's economies into ashes, and Europe was in desperate need of cooperation to reconstruct its fragile countries via a series of integration projects starting with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. The Europeans stepped up their efforts to consolidate their integration by establishing the European Community in 1973 which covered more aspects including trade, monetary system and the political system which allowed this regional organization to change its name to the European Union by November 1993 to mark the deep level of integration achieved (Mattli 2).

As a matter of fact, integration is not a phenomenon which is unique to Europe, it was witnessed elsewhere in the world notably in Latin America where many serious initiatives were launched including the Latin American Free Trade Association and the Central American Common Market. The launching of integration projects in this region was deemed as “counter-unions” to inter-European cooperation according to Uruguay's president who made it clear:

> The formation of a European common market constitutes a state of near-war against Latin American exports. Therefore, we must reply to one integration with another one, to one increase of acquisitive power by internal enrichment by another, to inter- European cooperation by inter-Latin American cooperation (qtd. in the Observer.com).

In the early 60s, integration markets proliferated in this region with the creation of the Mercado Comun del Sur (MERCOSUR) which comprised Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. In neighboring North America, a Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Canada was signed in 1989.The agreement turned into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) when Mexico joined in 1994.

The Asian continent did not remain aloof from this world tide of integration, and formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. In 1992, its members, who were eager to consolidate their integration, reached an important agreement to establish gradually an ASEAN Free Trade Area. Another important and rapid expanding Asian grouping is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) which was created in 1989 by Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Canada, the United States and the ASEAN countries.

Africa was not indifferent to this regional integration attempts, and adhered in the early 60s, following the independence of many countries, to several projects above all the Organization of African Unity in 1963 to promote solidarity and cooperation among the African countries, and to face up to the numerous challenges faced by these poor and young states after the departure of the European colonial powers. Other regional integration projects emerged in the African continent such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was established in 1975, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). These African integration attempts, however, proved to be unsuccessful due to the lack of financial sources, domestic

problems marked by corruption and military coups, and the poor implementation of the concluded accords and agreements.

The Arab world witnessed several attempts of integration including the creation of the Arab League in 1945, the 1964 agreement between Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria to establish an Arab common market, the 1981 agreement to facilitate and promote intra-Arab trade signed by eighteen member states of the Arab League, the short-lived Arab Cooperation Council, made up of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen, and the Maghreb Arab Union, composed of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia (Galal and Hoekman 3).

However, these attempts were not successful, and the Arab economic performance is still lagging behind, for example, Egypt's per capita income, which was in 1950's similar to that of Korea today is less than one-fifth of Korea's. Morocco's per capita GDP, which was close to that of Malaysia, today is only one-third of Malaysia's (Galal and Hoekman 2).

The failure of these attempts can be justified by the Arab divisions notably the big friction which took place among Arabs in 1979, when Egypt was suspended from the Arab League following its peace accord with Israel (Federalist Debate.org). The Arab rivalries between many countries speeded up also the demise of the Arab League, and paved the way for more regional groupings such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Maghreb Arab Union. Both regional organizations remain below the Arab peoples' expectations though the GCC has managed to achieve some of the goals announced by its inception.

The multitude of such integrations throughout the world especially in the post-World War

II era leads us to raise an interesting question: why do states integrate?. This chapter will try to find out the answer by reviewing the most established international relations theories which relate to regional integration.

Theories of regional integration

The proliferation of regional integration in Europe by the end of the Second World War, and in Africa in the early 60s after the independence of most African countries was accompanied with mushrooming theoretical studies in a bid to better understand the rise of this worldwide phenomenon.

David Mitrany, one of the Functionalism proponents, argues in his essay "*a Working Peace System*" published in 1943 that “the problem of our time is not how to keep nations Peacefully apart, but how to keep them actively together” (qtd. in Mattli 21). To meet this challenge, he suggested to introduce a solution that he called “the pragmatic functional approach” which breaks away from the traditional link between the authority and a particular territory by ascribing authority to activities based in areas of agreements. He firmly believes that "peace is likely to grow through doing things together in workshops and market places than by signing pacts in chancelleries”(qtd. in Mattli 21).

The functional method centers its theory on a gradual process towards peace and welfare where each function paves the way for others in a gradual way. Mitrany further explains that through gradual functional developments and through the provision of common services, the system may in time even build up solid foundations for closer political association. For him,

working together removes political differences, diffuses tensions, consolidates peace and integrates nations within a stable and a peaceful international system.

Of course Functionalism is not perfect; it speaks about what should be done to achieve peaceful coexistence, but it does not fully specify the conditions under which such scheme is feasible (Mattli). Furthermore, peace is not always the main cause for integration, the adherence of several European countries including the United Kingdom to the EU is not for peace, but for other gains and interests.

Integration was the focus of other theories such as Neo-Functionalism which was at the centre of debates about European integration from the very beginning in the 1950's until the early 1990's, and its exponent Ernst Haas who theorized the European experience in his study" *the Uniting of Europe* "published in 1958. Haas believes that “nation-states voluntarily mingle, merge and mix with neighbors so as to lose the factual attributes of sovereignty while acquiring new techniques for resolving conflicts between themselves”(qtd. in Jorgensen et al 562).

Thereby, the political actors shift their loyalties and political activities to new and larger centres (regional organizations) which get more authority and close ties with the help of interest groups and supranational regional institutions, and solve the emerging problems of citizens as part of their logic based on the "spillover" effect which means that economic integration would gradually build solidarity among the member states.

This theory, however, proved to be unsuccessful; it neglected too much the notion of *nationalism* which was behind the rise of many crises within the process of the EU formation

hindered by some political leaders who deemed that some integration aspects were against the interests of their nations. The 1965 European Community crisis initiated by French president de Gaulle who stuck to his country's interests, and instructed his ministers not to take part in the EEC meetings, is a good illustration for the importance of nationalism in foreign relations, and the failure of the Neo-Functionalist theory. Even Haas himself, was surprised by the rebirth of nationalism and functional-high politics.

The neglect of converging national interests, and the exaggeration of the supranational institutions' role paved the way of other integration theories notably Liberal Intergovernmentalism led by Andrew Moravcsik, who introduced a new framework based on three phases: national preference formation, interstate bargaining and institutional choice.

Moravcsik purports that "those who intensively desire the benefits of cooperation will concede more to get them" (qtd .in Laursen 7), and the credible threat of exclusion is likely to generate an even more powerful pressure on recalcitrant states than does the threat of non-agreement. In respect to linkage strategies, Moravcsik observes that the major constraint lies in their domestic distributional implications claiming that concessions often create domestic losers, and this will limit the use of package deals (qtd .in Laursen 7). Moravcsik further argues that states delegate and pool sovereignty to get more credible commitments, to encourage future cooperation and to improve future implementation of agreements .

Critics, however, believe that Moravcsik has belittled the role of the 'community institutions' which is considered very important when it comes to the implementation of the

‘grand bargains’.

The theoretical analysis of the GCC creation

From the very beginning one should recognize that it is too difficult to theorize all the political moves around the world within a single approach which cannot capture all the complexity of the cotemporary world politics according to S.M .Walt, who argues that "we better off with a diverse array of competing ideas rather than a single theoretical orthodoxy” (qtd. in Richard Little and Michael Smith 387).

Indeed, the Gulf Cooperation Council is a peculiar organization as it aims at furthering integration in both the security and economic realms (Legrenzi41). The ambiguity witnessed at the level of aims stated in the founding Charter created confusion among analysts who found it difficult to put the GCC within a particular international relations theory .Even its achievements create controversy among scholars :

> Some scholars have emphasized the lofty but unfulfilled promises made by the GCC leaders in the security sphere, while others have tried to derive some satisfaction from the slightly more encouraging results achieved in the sphere of economic coordination and integration (Legrenzi 41).

The peculiarity of the GCC lies in the hybrid nature of its creation which resists all theoretical explanations, we do not know whether this regional organization is an economic institution or a military alliance. A quick glance at the GCC Charter will surprise us with a

multitude of aims. It speaks about a lot of objectives at the same time such as economic cooperation, coordination and ultimately union as mentioned in the preamble.

The variety of objectives makes the achievement of these goals too hard because it is the combination of everything, the case which has never existed in the charters of similar regional grouping including the European Union which was mainly based on economic integration, or the NATO which set from the very beginning military alliance as its core target. The clear vision of these two major regional bodies defined their activity within a particular road map, and speeded up their success which is now quite visible.

Even the decision-making process within the organization is quite different from any other regional grouping on account of its top-down character, and the absence of checks and balances which make it easy to take decisions over some issues when they reach the level of the Supreme Council due to the close personal relationship linking the six leaders described by the former GCC secretary general Abdullah Bishara as “a club of elderly gentlemen" (Legrenzi 43). Their contacts are constant throughout the year and not confined to the official and formal meetings.

Legrenzi (42) purports that the Neorealist approach, which claims that most states tend to behave in the same way when facing an identical situation, is fundamental in understanding the GCC states which rushed to establish the grouping in 1981 to face up to the turbulent circumstances witnessed by the region during this period marked by the Iran-Iraq war and the Iranian Revolution. This approach is well grounded as external threats for the survival of the local regimes were serious and quite visible during the group creation.

This reasoning was equally advocated by many Neorealist proponents such as Kenneth Waltz, who saw that regional integration as the response of weak states to potential hegemonic powers. In the case of GCC, Iraq and Iran were the two big states which posed serious external threat and even internal threat by manipulating their followers in the six small countries namely the Baathist intellectuals or Shias who were heavily present, and very influential in some GCC states. Yet, security fears were not the unique driving force for the GCC establishment; the Kuwaitis, for example, called for an economic organization similar to the European Union, and The Saudis advocated political coordination to face up to the Iranian and Iraqi mounting influence in the region.

Neo-Realism was challenged by Neoliberal theoreticians who inspired their assumptions from the liberal thinking mostly forged in a Western context. The Liberals believe that common values and interests can induce states to work together. This theory may help to explain the GCC formation as well, since the organization constituents shared more or less the same values which mainly included common history, same language and same religion.

The Neo-liberal approach had some support from the British Functionalist School of thought which argued that if states are to perform specific functions, they tend to cooperate to solve common specific problems or challenges, thus mutual understanding and harmony between these states emerge with time and through a difficult bottom-up process (Legrenzi 45). This theory can help to better understand the establishment of the GCC which came basically for a particular function namely to avert the then external threats. Yet, the bottom-up process for

reaching harmony between states does not appear in the Gulf monarchies where the final decision is always reserved to rulers and not bureaucrats or institutions.

Constructivism which was so popular by the beginning of the twentieth century, and stresses belonging and identity as a major factor for regional integration can be used in the GCC case to analyze the essence of this organization. For the constructivists, the notion of identity can play a considerable role in alliance formation. In this context, Arabism and Islam, as common identical components of the region, are very crucial in the GCC establishment; the six leaders were strongly determined to exclude Iran from their grouping on account of its Persian origin, and resisted the adherence of Iraq which was ideatically different from the six states with the coming to power of the Baathist party which was deemed as a revisionist state that threatened their status quo organization.

However, this approach lacks all justification when the timing of GCC formation is taken into consideration. In fact, the identical values between the member states existed before 1981, but the organization was not formed. Another reason for the non-standing of this theoretical approach is the neglect of two neighboring countries namely Yemen and Jordan though they share more or less the same values.

Finally, one has to make the difference between Federal and Confederal systems which have been associated with integration projects. Federal union refers to "a *federated* sovereign state formed by establishment of a closely-knit, or tightly-knit, union of two or more smaller political communities, which, after formation of the union, are no longer sovereign(completely

independent) but do retain a significant degree of autonomy"(Way).This system is featuring the The United States of America. In the Confederal system, the union is a loosely-held together league or association of virtually sovereign states that's to say a loose union or alliance of almost completely independent states (Ibid). The European Union stands as a good example of a contemporary confederation.

In line with this definition, we can easily notice that the GCC does not belong to neither of them; the organization is not federal since its members are completely independent, and can even adopt opposite decisions like what happened with the Egyptian revolution, and it is not also confederal since it differs in its functions from the European Union which incarnates the contemporary way of confederation, and lacks the tools of a confederal system notably a central boby which provides support for all members.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that no single theoretical approach can account alone for the genesis of the GCC which is a bit of all international relations theories due to the unique and hybrid nature of this organization; Constructivism which stresses identity and belonging as a major factor for regional integration could serve to explain the GCC creation, ditto for the Neorealist approach which can fit with the organization's creation since it claims that states tend to behave in the same way when facing an identical situation, and that was the case for GCC when the Iranian threat emerged.

Therefore, all integration theories can relate to the establishment of the GCC but with different levels. Even the ruling system existing in the area marked by a top-bottom decision-

making process dominated by local rulers, and the constant changes taking place in the sub-region including the rise of a Khaleeji identity which contributed to the demise of Pan-Arabism rendered the theorization of the GCC formation within a particular analytical approach a very complex and difficult task.

The following chapter will dig into areas of regional cooperation witnessed by the GCC over the past 33 years to assess its achievements and to review the challenges met by the council, and how it affected its running and progress.

Chapter Three

The GCC as a Regional Organization

Introduction

This chapter will review the different types of economic integration witnessed by the GCC since its inception in 1981 to assess what has been achieved so far, and what has been unfulfilled, or sustained delay due some challenges encountered by the organization while attempting to complete its integration process. The focus will be on the economic integration in line with the classical classification of Bela Balassa who divided, in his book "*The Theory of Economic Integration*" written in1961, economic integration into five pillars namely free trade area, customs union, common market, economic union and ultimately political union(qtd. in Hosny134).

Regionalism and Regionalization

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was launched in May 1981 against the backdrop of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Iraq-Iran war in addition to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Therefore, the primary aim was to avert any potential threat. The creation of the GCC was a rapid and easy process; rapid because it took only about three months to finalize the project due to the huge external threats challenging the area at that time, and it was easy because the six founding countries shared, more or less, similar political systems, and a common tribal, social and cultural background.

They are absolute monarchies with a limited political participation except for Kuwait

where "'the constitution and the parliament exercise some real constraints on the ruling Emir, although most political power still lies with the ruler and his family"(Kinninmont 2).The six constituent states are collectively very rich, they possess almost half of the world's oil reserves.

However, the GCC creation was not only intended to face up to this turbulent situation, it was also to boost economic cooperation between "the political leaderships of six neighboring states which seek to cooperate or collaborate in areas of common interest" (Partrick 2). This aim is clearly mentioned in the founding charter of the GCC which stresses particularly in article 4, the most important of all, coordination, integration and interdependence (*tanseeq, takamal wa tarabit*) between them in all fields to strengthen relations between the constituent members, and to promote cooperation among the countries' citizens in order to achieve "unity between them" (GCC Charter, article 4).

The striking feature in this charter, however, is the drop of security though it was believed to be the raison d'être of its creation. The only identified areas in which cooperation should occur are economic and financial affairs; commerce, customs and communications; and education and culture. In these areas the charter states that there should be 'similar regulations' (article 3).

In order to understand the GCC as a Regional Organization, one must make a clear distinction between two concepts well spread out in the international relations literature namely *Regionalism* and *Regionalization.*

Regionalism is the expression of a common sense of identity and

> destiny combined with the creation of institutions that express that identity and shape collective action, whereas, Regionalization is the expression of increased commercial and human transactions in a defined geographical space (Evans 196).

In line with this definition, the regionalization process preceded regionalism in the area since civic and professional organizations managed to hold regularly meetings on a gulf basis even before the GCC creation with the Development Forum in 1979 within which bureaucrats, professionals and academics have been meeting once a year to discuss ways and means of enhancing development in the region. In this context, the GCC as a regionalization project is more successful than regionalism since the professional organizations are older, and hold regular meetings on a Gulf basis, as against the slow and almost ineffective integrating policies adopted by the GCC official institutions which progressed with a pace that has always been below the expectations of the region's citizens, and recorded the lowest degree of regional economic cooperation on account of the mentality of the Arab states which tend to compete rather than to cooperate (Aarts 921).

To assess the progress witnessed by the GCC states over the past 33 years, we have to scrutinize five types of regional economic formations proposed by Bela Balassa which are: free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, economic unions and fully integrated economies usually called by some scholars "political union".

The Free Trade Area

A Free Trade Area is usually defined as "a preferential trade arrangement in which member countries do not impose any trade barriers (zero tariffs) on goods produced within the union. However, each country keeps its own tariff barriers to trade with non-members. It is usually referred to as trade integration"(Hosny134).

Free trade areas allow the signatory nations to concentrate on their comparative advantages and to produce the goods they are comparatively more efficient at making, thus increasing the efficiency and profitability of each country. The European Free Trade Area (EFTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are the most famous and successful free trade areas, the former was established in 1960, and the latter was created in 1994 by Canada, the United States and Mexico to promote trade between these North American countries.

Just after the establishment of the GCC, an economic agreement was concluded in November 1981. This agreement contained the main provisions of the GCC Free Trade Area which came into effect in March 1983, and was mainly featured by exempting the GCC industrial, agricultural and natural resources products from customs duties and other similar duties. The GCC Free Trade Area continued for almost twenty years until the end of 2002. During the FTA period between 1983 and 2002, the volume of Intra-GCC trade witnessed a considerable increase that went from less than US$ 6 billion in 1983 to some US$ 20 billion in 2002. However, this rise remained very slow and almost insignificant when compared to the European achievement, and the "economic integration was largely declaratory, and did not show

a major progress for a decade"(Copper).

This belief is shared also by Lawson who argues that the GCC economic integration did not witness a significant increase until the early 2000's. He further classifies the GCC as an FTA/ collective security pact that offers initiatives designed to increase interdependence, with supranational authority over several main issue-areas, operating under a veto system centered on Saudi Arabia (11).

The Gulf FTA was not really a telling success due to numerous reasons including the hegemony of Saudi Arabia which decided, for example, by early 1988 "to raise customs duties from 7% to 12% ad valorem on most imports, while increasing tariffs from 10% to 20% on re-exports coming into the kingdom port Rashid in the UAE" (Lawson 8). This move urged Bahrain to adopt new regulations authorizing state agencies to discriminate in favor of domestic products, so long as the price differential between locally-produced items and equivalent imports remained less than 10%.

Nechi justifies the failure of GCC integration mainly by the control of national governments over hydrocarbon production, the weak supranational institutions, the national competition in industries, and weak infrastructure as the main hindrances to integration(107). For his part, Copper believes that the GCC monarchs, who have the whole political power in their hands, are jealous of their national sovereignty, and are not quick to relinquish control over economic matters which is a big major hindrance to integration he argues .

Furthermore, the GCC states did not have a common position vis-à-vis numerous

economic issues especially during difficult times following the fall of oil prices; each government responded to the crisis in a different fashion. Moreover, some members of the organization acted in a unilateral way, and rushed to conclude free trade agreements with the United States including Bahrain and Oman in 2004 without the slightest consultation with the other members. This move outraged Saudi Arabia which considered this behaviour as a violation to the GCC economic accords and decisions. But, the growing interest in such treaties by the remaining GCC countries led the finance ministers of the organization to allow the constituent members in 2005 to set up free trade areas with outside countries to diffuse tension, and to cope with the developing situation.

Customs Union

Customs union has been defined by the GAAT Agreement as: a single customs territory substituting for two or more customs territories, so that duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce are eliminated between the constituent territories of the union or at least with respect to substantially all the trade in products originating in such territories, and the same duties and other regulations of commerce are applied by each of the members of the union to the trade of territories not included in the union (article 24).

The introduction of customs union promotes trade among members, makes exporting easier, renders the cost of goods more competitive with domestic products, and protects local industries of members when conducting business in protected trade area from non-members.

Being aware of these numerous advantages of a single customs union, the GCC leaders

rushed to establish their customs union, and launched this process two years only after the creation of this regional grouping .However, the project which kicked off in 1983, witnessed a series of delays on account of disagreements over a formula on how to divide revenues; the member states could not determine the best way to distribute revenues due to the economic weight of each country.

The partial application of the customs union, nevertheless, contributed effectively to increase sharply the volume of inter-GCC trade which went up from $32 billion in 2005 to $100 billion in 2012 (Gulf News.com). The full application of customs union would certainly lead to a significant increase as it would remove all obstacles that obstruct the smooth flow of goods and service .To this effect, the GCC finance ministers agreed on, during a regular meeting held in the Kuwaiti capital, in May 2014, to fully implement the customs union as from January 2015. The GCC officials agreed, in June 2012, to set up a customs union authority to complete the revenue-sharing debate with a set of options to resolve this disagreement including the division of revenues according to the level of imports, population or the share of gross domestic product of individual countries (Dokoupil).

Despite the similarities existing between the exportable goods of the GCC countries, which may constitute an obstacle to trade between the GCC states, the full implementation of customs union will, for sure, increase trade among Gulf nations by facilitating the smooth movement of goods and investments, allowing more joint ventures, and contributing to commodity diversification. Therefore, a customs union remains very vital for all GCC countries

as they look forward to diversifying their sources of income and reducing reliance on oil revenues, both to fund budgets or to develop projects (Al Asoomi).

Common Market

In January 2008, the Supreme Council formally inaugurated the GCC common market, which promised to allow the unrestricted movement of goods, capital, and labor across the borders of the six member-states. This new regionalist initiative was set also to pave the way for a monetary union and single currency in 2010. The introduction of a common market allows citizens of any GCC member state to enjoy full citizenship rights in all other GCC countries, and endows them with equal treatment in respect of all economic activities, particularly, movement and residence. GCC citizens are also allowed to work in private and public sectors in each member state, and benefit from the same rights in areas such as healthcare, education, social security and residence, as well as in economic activities like trading in stock markets, setting up companies, and buying and selling properties.

Nevertheless, the inauguration of the common market accompanied a slow but steady rise in regional economic and occupational mobility among GCC citizens according to Lawson who stated that by 2010, some 21,000 nationals had taken up permanent employment in a GCC state other than their country of origin(14). For the most part, GCC expatriates were attracted to professional and commercial opportunities in Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE, and were drawn away from Bahrain and Oman, whose economies have been characterized by much tighter job markets for white collar workers (Lawson 14).

The GCC common market was not that successful for different reasons mainly the ill implementation of the customs union, which is regarded as a prerequisite for the creation of a common market, in addition to other constraints and obstacles such as discrimination in the treatment and non-realization of the principle of full citizenship .The absence of unified and binding GCC laws, different accounting systems for companies, legislation gaps and lack of uniformity in implementation further contributed to the non- achievement of this important stage in the process of regional integration.

Economic Union

After over three decades of existence, the GCC has achieved a host of economic goals; The GCC joint policy has allowed the member countries' citizens to enjoy a plenty of rights in terms of travel and work; the region's people can move from one place to another within the Gulf freely without a passport, but only with an ID. The Gulf people are allowed to work in the six countries without restrictions.

The council promotes also a healthy feeling of cooperation between nations in all aspects, be they sports like the Gulf cup they hold every 2 years, or economic like the banning of tariffs between nations, etc. A common GCC electricity grid has been developed by the GCC Interconnection Authority, it is based in the Saudi city of Khobar, and it is shared by all six member states. Since 2009 it has linked four GCC states namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar in a common grid. In April 2011 the UAE was connected to the grid too.

Yet, these lofty achievements are not enough since numerous projects are still lagging

behind such as the rail way project, the common market, and above all the single currency which was launched in mid-December 1991, when the governors of the six central banks announced that they intended to issue a single currency by1999. The project was given a remarkable impetus when Kuwait decided to peg the value of the Kuwaiti dinar to that of the US Dollar alike the other GCC countries. Single currency and monetary union were deemed very important to speed up integration, as they would encourage a fresh wave of trade and investment around the region. However, the single currency dream suffered a serious blow in 2009, when the UAE withdrew from the project following a disagreement with Saudi Arabia which insisted on hosting the joint central bank instead of Abu Dhabi. The Saudi intransigence weakened the whole process already fragilized by Oman's drop in 2006,saying it was not ready.

Nevertheless, the project is not totally abandoned as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain set up, in March 2010, a forerunner to the Gulf central bank, a "monetary council", but the institution has kept a low profile since then. The absence of the UAE is seen as a serious obstacle to the achievement of this goal according to Abdul khaliq Abdulla who was quoted as saying that "The monetary union minus UAE is not a monetary union, it's not feasible, the smaller states would rather wait and slow down until the UAE is ready to join in" (Dokoupil).

Despite this major setback, and the ill-functioning of the GCC which remains below the peoples' expectations when compared with the European Union, the organization has made a lot of progress over the past years, and the multiple attempts to join the GCC either by the adjacent countries including Jordan and Yemen is a telling evidence of its success.

In fact, the openness of the GCC leaders to the outside world is a healthy sign of the organization which started considering future expansion with potential members notably Jordan, Yemen and Iraq and even Morocco which was invited in 2011 by the council to join the Union (New York Times.com). A five year economic program was granted to this Maghrebian country which engaged discussions over its accession to the Union though the Moroccan chances are really minor because this African monarchy has the geopolitical perspective, but lacks the geographic proximity which is very important in such alliances (Braizat).

Political Integration

The GCC is made of three main bodies the highest of which is The Supreme Council which comprises the heads of states, it holds two meetings annually. It provides policy directions and nominates the secretary general of the GCC Secretariat. It passes resolutions related to the substantial matters with unanimous votes.

The second important structure of the GCC is the Ministerial Council of the foreign ministers which proposes policies and prepares recommendations. The Council is composed of a number of committees in charge of finance, education, health and labour which are in charge of preparing studies and submitting recommendations to the Supreme Council.

The GCC Secretariat is the administrative and executive body; it is entrusted with preparing the Supreme and Ministerial Councils meetings, carrying out studies and reports, and monitoring the implementation of past decisions. It is regarded as an independent body, and it is run with a budget shared equally among member states.

The three components of the GCC are doing their utmost to meet the increasing aspirations of the region's peoples in terms of integration, but their achievements remain below popular expectations; there are many latent issues the most important are the territorial disputes which fuelled much tension between many countries including the Huwar Islands which worsened for a long time the Qatari-Bahraini relations before its settlement outside the GCC framework in 2001 as it will be examined in a detailed way in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

Another point that explains the unsatisfactory political performance of the GCC is its way of treating key issues; rulers are the sole decision-makers who deal directly with big issues instead of experts and professionals within their relevant panels, as it is the case within the European Union where panels and commissions have more prerogatives since they are composed of experts and knowledgeable figures, while in the GCC, rulers are the main if not the sole decision-makers.

The GCC is sometimes referred to as an "all talk and no act" organization because it does not go ahead with all its plans and projects among them the single currency and the common market or even the common curriculum. The GCC leaders held several past meetings, they discussed a set of issues, but no concrete decisions emanated from these meetings. Some scholars believe that Saudi hegemony is one of the major reasons behind the lackluster political performance of the GCC. Usually, Saudi Arabia is referred to as "big sister", it has the last say in major issues due to its greater power in the region, this domination aroused a bad feeling among the remaining members who had to hide their discontent over some issues to avert the Saudi

anger.

In fact, the lack of consensus among the GCC countries on a host of issues, is seen by Jamie Chandler, a professor of political science at Hunter College in New York City, as one of the major obstacles hindering fruitful cooperation as they have not treated the new threats with "a comprehensive, diplomatically driven strategy, but each member has responded individually. It will be hard to break this pattern" (International Business Times.com).

Summary

This chapter has provided evidence that cooperation between the GCC member Countries has borne some fruitful results in some aspects, but it is still lagging behind, and economic integration and political union seem to be far-off objectives since the Gulf region remains a patchwork of regulations and regimes. The need for integration does not look to be pressing since these wealthy states are always awash with oil revenues, and their leaders are so jealous for national sovereignty, and not ready to delegate power to supranational institutions notably the Secretariat General which seems to be powerless, and reports only what has been agreed by the supreme leaders.

Sensitivity between GGC members motivated by old rivalries on account of border disputes, and fears felt by small countries of the Saudi hegemony are further reasons for the slowdown of integration between the GCC states which have a lot of factors in common, and share more or less the same destiny with manifold threats and security challenges which the next chapter will develop in details along with the GCC foreign policy to see how they constitute a

barrier to the integration of the Organization.

Chapter Four

Foreign and Security Policy: A Barrier to Integration

Introduction

This chapter aims at exploring the forces or drivers that modeled the foreign and security policies of the GCC states which became very important internationally due to numerous events which happened there, and attracted the whole world attention such as the Gulf war and the invasion of Iraq. Their role as strategic energy exporters "has allowed them to assume and cultivate power on the international level" (Wright 72). Being key members at the OPEC, has strengthened their position on the international scene, and stamped their foreign policy with particular features.

In fact, understanding the foreign policy of the GCC states is not an easy task due to the hybrid nature of these countries which are different and alike at the same time; their regional history is similar with strong tribal ties, but domestically different. Islam represents a unifying force between them, but bears also the seeds of hostility with obvious divergences, and even conflicts between Arab Sunnis and Shiites notably in Bahrain where Shiites outnumber Sunnis.

Therefore, understanding the foreign policy of the GCC states is a complex process that requires a multilevel analysis due to a variety of multilayered factors which yielded this unique situation, and marked the GCC foreign policy with distinctive features imposed by some forces or drivers that the current chapter will highlight to see how they impeded the GCC integration

process.

Security

Security which was the main factor behind the GCC creation, had always been a major concern for the region's countries. It was, in the words of Steven Wright the primary driver of GCC foreign relations. Being aware of their important geostrategic position, and their vulnerability, the GCC states looked for the British protection since1793, when Britain established business in the region with the opening of an East India agency in Basra .The security of the Gulf region against any foreign attack was then the duty of the British who protected these small states from 1820 till 1971with the signature of a series of security agreements starting from a General Treaty in 1820, and a Maritime Truce in 1835. These treaties culminated in the conclusion of the Trucial States in 1835, Bahrain in 1861, Kuwait in 1899 and again in 1914, and Qatar in 1916. The British presence provided insurance to the local rulers, it was a guarantee for them especially with a bad Kuwaiti experience when the freshly independent state in 1961 was claimed to be incorporated into Iraq by the then ruler Abdul Karim Qasim, and the royal forces had to come back to free the country.

The British departure from the area in 1971 created a power vacuum with two major players namely Iraq and Iran, and aroused fears among the Sheikhs who were ready to pay the British to maintain their security. The GCC countries with their small native population and the vulnerability of their oil installations felt unsecured, and found themselves compelled to search for another external protector to restore order and redress the situation or the imbalance. The

search for a foreign protector seems to be an intrinsic feature of the Gulf countries according to some scholars who argued :

> historically, the six states which now comprise the GCC have relied on an external security guarantor both to safeguard the rulers' internal position and to protect them against external threats from the larger regional powers (Ulrichsen 3).

This attitude is quite visible in the domestic history of each single GCC country including Kuwait which relied on the United States to free the country from the Iraqi invaders, Oman which asked for foreign help to oust Sultan Said Bin Taimur (1932-1970), or even Saudi Arabia which was helped by France to end a domestic trouble namely the Mecca Rebellion staged during the Pilgrimage season of 1979 by Juhayman Al Otaybi and his followers to overthrow the Al Saud dynasty.

The new guarantor was the United States which had to fill the vacuum left by the British withdrawal, and to protect its interests even militarily according to President Jimmy Carter who stated, in his 1980 Doctrine, that the United States would use military force if necessary to defend its national interests in the Persian Gulf region (Bennett 3). The US-Arabian ties were consolidated by a series of separate defence cooperation agreements with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, an access to facilities agreement with Oman, and the wide range of military agreements which have underpinned Saudi Arabian security since the 1940s (Ulrichsen 4).

Despite this overreliance on foreign protection, the GCC region remained volatile and vulnerable, it was the scene of three interstate devastating wars namely the Iran- Iraq war (1980-88), the first Gulf war (1991), and the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.These wars obstructed the GCC integration project which had to repair the damage after each armed conflict, to rebuild trust between members, and to pay a heavy bill for casualties or for sponsorship. For instance, Kuwait paid huge amounts either cash or in the form of direct investment projects for those countries which took part in the liberation of the Emirate.

The concept of Gulf security, according to Ulrichsen (1), is evolving in response to new challenges which link internal security to external stability and international events in the region, that's to say that the 80's threats mainly posed by Iran and Iraq are no longer similar to those of the beginning of the 21st century marked by a troubled Levant, a rising Turkey and a chaotic situation in Egypt, a key strategic player in the region, in the wake of a series of Arab Spring Revolutions that jolted some countries of the Arab World .the feeling of constant insecurity is a real hindrance to GCC integration since the member states are always busy with finding external protectors, very often with a heavy cost, and remain very vigilant to diffuse tensions created by regional powers to ensure their hegemony and to export their ideas and regimes.

Personalization

Due to the flagrant absence of institutions, or their limited role as it is the case of the Kuwait parliament, the GCC policy tends to be more personalized usually dominated by a small number of elite, or within the ruling family or the idiosyncrasy of the leader despite the presence

of a heavy staff of foreign ministry according to Steven Wright who highlighted this point "GCC international relations often closely mirror the idiosyncrasies of the leader in power"(79). For example, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia was described as a conservative person with less support to USA, this attitude is thought to have created problems with late King Fahd who was pro-American and his position vis-a-vis the Iraq-Iran war was a clear evidence of this trend.

Very often the GCC institutions were surprised by unilateral or personal decisions taken by the rulers or monarchs without referring to competent bodies either foreign ministries or parliaments (consultative bodies).This feature does not exist elsewhere in the world; all important state decisions have to be debated and approved by parliaments or other competent institutions before being implemented.

This individual attitude cast its shadow even on the functioning of the GCC itself where personal decisions taken by the rulers without consulting the relevant staff have always shaped their summits and meetings. Some personalized decisions have caused a considerable damage to the Organization. For instance, the unilateral decisions taken by Oman and Bahrain, of course by their rulers, to sign bilateral FTAs with the United States outraged the Saudi Kingdom, caused a drift among members, and weakened their position with the European Union when negotiations were underway to launch a Free Trade Agreement. Matteo Legrenzi argues that despite the existence of the organization for more than thirty years "institutionalization played a very small role in the life of GCC"(87). He further asserts that "it (GCC) has proved its worth as forum for policy coordination, but individual states have rarely sacrificed their foreign policy priorities on

the altar of reaching a common stance"(Legrenzi 87).

This striking feature did not allow GCC to act as a common block when negotiating with foreign actors due to the absence of supranational institutions which give more strength to regional bodies such the EU, and render their decisions more credible and very swift without being delayed by a heavy bureaucratic machinery.

Sectarianism

Sectarianism is very influential in GCC foreign relations, Bahrain with a Shiite majority outnumbering the Sunnis has always been subject to Iran's interventions. The same problem was felt by Saudi Arabia whose Shiite population are concentrated in the AL Hassa region which witnessed unrest by the outbreak of the Iranian revolution in 1979. The sectarian phenomenon has a heavy bearing on the international relations of these two countries.

However, this feature has a lesser scope in the four remaining GCC countries according to Majidyar who believes that these states managed to integrate successfully their Shiite population into their sophisticated socio-political and economic spheres adding that the" Shiites strongly identify themselves as citizens of their respective countries, and remain loyal to their ruling regimes" (1). These states knew how to manage the Shiites cleverly. In Oman, for instance, where the number of non-Sunnis (Ibadis) is very limited, the government attached them a great importance; they were appointed in high ranking positions as ambassadors, cabinet ministers and members of the Diwan of the Royal Court. In UAE, they enjoy more freedom, the Emirati government allows them to congregate, and to worship in their own mosques. Furthermore, some

Sunni government members attend their religious celebrations to promote harmony among citizens independently from their religious and sectarian belongings. However, with the spillover effects of the Arab Spring Revolutions, the Emirati federal government has become more vigilant with the Shiite population, and the Emirates have become less hospitable for the Iranian business community (Majidyar 4). Shiite minority in Qatar is well integrated, they practice freely their religious rituals, and they enjoy good relations with the ruling family, their number is limited in this country, and they remain loyal to their state above all other foreign Shiite influence (Majidyar 5).

The Shiite demands notably after the Arab Spring were not to overthrow the local monarchs, they were mainly social; people asked for better living conditions, more job opportunities and greater political participation via the introduction of new reforms. Therefore, their protests, though they were a little bit violent in Bahrain and to a lesser degree in Oman, were contained by the local governments which assigned, with the help of some GCC countries especially Saudi Arabia, huge financial packages to ease tension and to diffuse the crisis.

The rulers' fears were motivated by a possible Iranian exploitation of the events by manipulating its nationals living in the GCC countries to disturb the already existing sectarian balance. As a result, the Gulf states initiated a series of restrictions such as the limitation of visas to Iranians, and the expulsion of some Shiites seen as dangerous to curb with their activities, and reduce their impact in fuelling the situation.

Sectarianism is therefore, a driving force in the GCC regional foreign relations especially

with neighboring Iran and Iraq or even Syria and Lebanon, the GCC states tune their regional relations with these countries according to the prevailing situation there. However, the best solution to contain sectarianism in the GCC countries is to include all Sunnis and Shiites, and to offer equal rights and opportunities between them with equal religious freedom to make them melt in one pot, and to close the door for any Iranian manipulation.

Other drivers

There are other forces that influence the GCC foreign relations, one of them is the social make-up of the GCC countries marked by a heavy presence of expatriates. This phenomenon has a role in determining the foreign policy of the Gulf monarchies especially in terms of bilateral relations. For example, the escalation which happened between the UAE and Pakistan in 1992 following the huge demonstrations staged in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah by expelled illegal Indian and Pakistani workers forced the Emirati president to visit Pakistan to resolve the situation. The GCC countries have to tune their foreign policy with this internal reality. The same principle is dittoed with Iranians living in these states which have to pay more attention not anger this large faction or outrage Teheran.

Foreign aid is another tool of the GCC foreign relations, it has been successfully used to reach difficult agreements with countries in need, for instance, Qatar managed to broker agreements in Lebanon and Sudan thanks to its tremendous financial capacities. This means is usually used by the wealthy monarchies through their Sovereignty Funds to promote solidarity with Muslim and Arab countries, to sway other countries for getting direct investment projects,

or simply to show off and gain prestige.

In fact, the GCC foreign policy is not an easy task to be defined, its requires a comprehensive process that takes into account several elements including the historical and social background, sectarianism, the decision-making operation, and all the domestic and external realities of each single country as they contribute directly or indirectly in shaping foreign relations which are very close to the GCC security policy that is going to be highlighted shortly after.

The GCC Security Policy

The creation of the GCC took place amid a series of events that threatened the security of the six small monarchies notably the Iranian Revolution and its leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who loathed monarchies, and did not hide the desire to export his revolution across the Gulf (Kechichian). The Iranian Revolution which was the second in the region after the Iraq 1958 Revolution which destroyed monarchy, seemed more threatening according Ramazani who argues that" the balance of forces seemed to be against the monarchical regimes in the region as both revolutions replaced monarchies with republics"(6).

The local rulers' fears reached their climax when a failed coup took place in Bahrain in 1981, and Iran was accused of manipulating its nationals there along with some Bahraini sympathizers to overthrow the first monarchy in the Gulf. There were some troubles also in Saudi Arabia including the Mecca siege in 1979 by Juhayman al Utaybi and his followers, and a series of clashes in the eastern province by early 1980.

These turbulent events, among others, urged Gulf leaders to look for security coordination since there was a perception of common threats looming over the monarchies ,and they had to react to ensure their survival by initiating the founding steps to create a common regional organization likely to protect them from manifold threats though the GCC charter did not mention coordination of security and foreign policy (Young 7).The GCC security policy included two types of coordination namely internal and external coordination.

External security

The record of the GCC countries in terms of external security is very meager, this task has always been assigned to a foreign protector .Since 1793 Britain, which had a flourishing business with India, ensured their security. When the British decided to leave in 1971, the Gulf states had to handle this new development, their reliance on a foreign guarantor pushed them to look for another partner, and the alternative was the United States which had been already on the spot with the discovery of an ocean of oil in the region through its giant oil companies above all the Standard Oil of California (Socal) which started exploring oil in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia by early 1930's.

The British departure was filled gradually by the United Sates which concluded a series of security bilateral agreements with the GCC monarchies to use their facilities ,establish military bases ,and to ensure their defence against the neighboring powers Iran, Iraq, and the former Soviet Union following its invasion of Afghanistan.

The GCC countries tried to secure themselves by themselves, and established the

Peninsula Shield in 1986 in Riyadh following a meeting of the GCC chiefs of staff, it was based in Saudi Arabia near the Kuwait border; it was composed of 5,000 men. The role of this Shield was below expectations since it could not avert the Iraqi troops when they invaded Kuwait, and failed to defend the Gulf territories. Its creation was controversial; it was disbanded in 2006 when contingents were sent back to their respective states. It existed for a symbolic role.

Collaboration in the realm of external defence has not moved beyond symbolism in Legrenzi's words. The GCC states did not care about external security since the protector was always there represented by the British then the US who may rely on their allies when the threat is tremendous such as the invasion of Iraq when this country claimed the possession of mass destruction and chemical weapons. The same scenario may happen if a war is launched on Iran which purports developing a nuclear program.

Internal security

GCC collaboration in terms of internal cooperation is much more better, the reason behind this relative success is their share of a common objective namely the protection of their monarchial regimes to ensure their survival, so the Gulf countries collaborated very closely concerning this point which predates even the inception of the organization. Cooperation is usually carried out in an informal and bilateral way. Many bilateral agreements were signed to extract criminals, to exchange intelligence information, and to enhance border cooperation. The Gulf states are doing well in this field, but mistrust between member countries, and the opposition voiced by the liberal and Islamist Kuwaiti parliamentarians against the criminals'

extradition clause, under the pretext of violating the national constitution, forced internal coordination to lag behind.

In fact, the performance of GCC states either in internal or external security affairs is considerable during difficult circumstances, when they feel threatened by internal or external forces they are well united, but when “there is no perception of common threat, GCC states revert to competing among themselves”(Legrenzi11).This is well noticeable with the multiple Saudi attempts to impose its hegemony on the GCC members as the "big sister" in the region, the small Gulf often refused this tendency without being able to voice it overtly in the past for fear of a violent Saudi reaction.

However, this Saudi leadership as the international face of the GCC is waning (Young 5), and new small players namely Qatar and UAE are exploring their own leadership possibilities. Qatar has emerged as a dynamic force in the region, and has managed to play a key role on the international scene by sponsoring Arab Spring Revolutions, and mediating many struggles.

The Qatari dynamism gave birth to an open confrontation with the neighboring states which were not at ease with the new Qatari role, and attempted to curb with this remarkable activity by adopting a series of measures to isolate the Doha regime in order to reduce its activity and involvement under the pretext of non-interference in domestic affairs which culminated in the withdrawal of the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Summary

This chapter explored the main driving forces which have been marking the foreign and

security policies of the GCC states which had to tune them according to both internal and external realities. These realities pertained mainly to a hostile neighboring environment dominated in the past by Iraq and Iran, and a menacing internal landscape shaped by sectarian conflicts, and a complex social make-up marked by a heavy presence of expatriates. These factors among others forced the GCC states to model their foreign and security policies in line with them. This behaviour ensured their survival, but hampered their integration as it increased mistrust among member states, fuelled competition between them, and paved the way for a simmering division which broke out when Qatar showed its independent foreign policy, and the immediate consequence was a tripartite withdrawal of ambassadors from Doha to force Qatar to give up with its policy in favour of change rather than status quo.

The withdrawal of the ambassadors will be the case study of the next chapter to examine in depth its reasons and implications in addition to the effects it has left on this young regional integration project through a series of interviews held with a host of experts and scholars specialized in the Gulf region.

Chapter Five

Case Study

Introduction

This chapter is the most important segment in this research project, it focuses on the latest GCC rift to examine the organization integration by bringing the case of the ambassadors' withdrawal to a host of specialists and experts in the Gulf region during a meeting organized by the Gulf Research Center at Cambridge University to look in depth for the reasons behind this pullout, but mainly to assess the impact of this unprecedented development in the history of this regional organization. The rationale behind the choice of this meeting to carry out this case study lies in the diversity of views expected from different analysts and scholars coming from all the GCC countries and outside the bloc.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the impact caused by this rift on the political and economic aspects, and to assess the functioning of the organization in general since the outbreak of this incident on March 5th2014. However, it would be more appropriate first to dig into the deep reasons of this spat before analyzing the effects it had (if it had) on the GCC functioning as well as on the different aspects of this young regional grouping.

The Reasons of Withdrawal

The GCC is not unique to witness such moments of doubt, and to face setbacks and failures. In fact, all regional integration projects experienced throughout history problems and difficulties (Abdulkhaliq).These problems delayed the integration process, or even buried it at an early or advanced stage. To this effect, the European Union which is thought to be the most successful integration experience, was subject to many difficulties between member countries related to numerous issues such as sovereignty and national interests which can be illustrated, for

instance, by the French move in 1965 when the then French president de Gaulle stuck to his country's interests, and instructed his ministers not to take part in the EEC meetings, and caused a sort of friction among the member states as part of the famous *empty chair crisis* (Europa.eu).

The GCC was not aloof from such experiences, and witnessed numerous divergences and difficulties which hindered its march including the failure of launching a common currency following a disagreement over the headquarters of the central bank, and more recently Oman's threat to withdraw from the organization in December 2013 (Al Rasheed). However, the withdrawal of the three GCC ambassadors from Doha in April 2014 ,was the most serious setback sustained by the organization due to its unprecedented scope, and the heated debate it aroused over the cohesion and immunity of this regional alliance once being subject to such turbulent and unexpected circumstances. The solidity and cohesion of the GCC were seriously questionable for the first time with an utmost interest to determine the prior circumstances which paved the way for this internal split, and to assess the consequences it had on the organization.

The outbreak of the incident reflected the deep divergences already existing, notably between Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, over a number of issues at the top of them the security perception regarding political Islam. This point was "just the tip of an iceberg which hided previous disagreements especially between Saudi Arabia" and Qatar"(Krieg).Former border disputes between member countries notably between Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain were among these disagreements which fuelled tensions, and delayed the integration process.

This idea was evoked equally by David Roberts who stressed the Qatari attempt since the late 80's to escape the Saudi political orbit by forging its own independent foreign policy without paying attention to the annoyance it was causing to the neighboring kingdom.

The dynamism of political Islam sparked by the Arab Spring and endorsed by Qatar, was seen by analysts, though they tended to label it differently, as the main reason of this crisis. In fact, political Islam caused a big friction among GCC countries, it was seen as a major threat by the Saudi and Emirati regimes which banned it, and curbed with its activities notably following the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which led the Saudi Kingdom to blacklist the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization (Ajbaili), while Qatar showed more sympathy with this political trend by offering shelter to some of its key figures such Al Qaradawi and Khaled Mashaal, or by helping Islamic movements elsewhere in the Arab World notably in Tunisia and Egypt.

Therefore, the GCC countries cooperated with regard to the Arab Spring by offering moral and financial support to the Arab peoples who went against their regimes, and even intervened militarily notably Qatar which sent its troops to Libya to speed up the fall of the former regime led by colonel Al Gaddafi. The GCC countries' cooperation with the Arab Spring movements was very noticeable, though it occurred with different levels ranging from moral support to military intervention, however, their attitude vis-a-vis political Islam was quite different due to their perception of this notion which reached a contradiction level; the Saudi and Emirati regimes deemed this political trend as a threat to the survival of their monarchial systems, and did not hesitate to ban it, while Qatar had a different vision with regard to political Islam, and showed more sympathy and help to this trend. This tolerant attitude with political Islam angered the

officialdom of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi who decided to adopt a common harsh stand with Qatar which did not share the same perception, and displeased them by breaking the status quo rule commonly respected by the GCC monarchies.

The following table sums up the different views and opinions related to the genesis of the diplomatic spat between Qatar and the three GCC countries.

Scholar	Institution	Context	Reason of withdrawal
Saud Al Tamamy	King Saud University	GRC 2014	Qatar strengthening of Muslim Brotherhood
Andreas Krieg	King's College London	GRC 2014	it is an ideological move against the Muslim Brotherhood
David Roberts	King's College London	GRC 2014	they are taking extremely hard line on the ikhwan
Abdul khaliq Abdulla	UAE University	On phone	Qatar failed to fulfill promises
Fahd Al Sumait	Kuwait University	GRC 2014	Unsuccessful attempt to exert some control on Qatar
David Goldfischer	Korbel School of International Studies	GRC2014	The deepest immediate issue is the support of Qatar for the Muslim brotherhood
GerdNonneman	Georgetown University	GRC 2014	the Qatari foreign policy particularly over the different perceptions of what the Muslim Brother hood
Leah Sherwood	Khalifa University .UAE	GRC 2014	The prominent reason probably relates to

			the activist foreign policy of Qatar
Jassim Hussain	Ex-University of Bahrain	GRC 2014	There are differences in foreign policies objectives
Jean Marc Rickli	King's College London	GRC 2014	Different vision of political Islam between Qatar and the 3 countries
Said al Saqri	Advisor to Oman's government	GRC 2014	power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Qatar

The table above which recapitulates the different views as regards the motives of this move, indicates that the reason behind the outbreak of this rift lies in the activist foreign policy of Qatar which displeased Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states tagging along namely Bahrain and the UAE which "had always been in favour of status quo, and against any change that would jeopardize the survival of their own regimes"(Al Saqri). In fact, these fears can be justified with a brief look at the history of this region which witnessed two major changes, and both of them undermined the established status quo namely the Iraqi revolution of 1958, and the Iranian revolution which ended up with the fall of monarchies and the establishment of republics.

Despite the terminological differences between interviewees, the cause of this unprecedented row is the same namely Qatar's active foreign policy; it is labeled differently, it is referred to as *political Islam*, the *Ikhwan* or *Muslim Brotherhood*, *power struggle* and so on, but it remains the common denominator for this political friction within the GCC. Far from the lexical difference, Qatar's support for the new political trend which swept the Arab World turned

dramatically the course in many Arab countries which had to look for other alternatives to maintain the situation.

In fact, Qatar has become in the recent years very dynamic in terms of foreign policy, it has involved itself heavily on the international scene especially with the inception of the Arab Spring Revolutions during which it was the major player, it backed the Jasmine Revolution which kicked out president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, and helped the Islamist Al Nahdha movement to maintain its grip on this North African country. The Qatari support for the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was undeniable either materially or morally via Aljazeera Channel which boosted the morale of the Egyptian protestors, and offered them the opportunity to air their views and ideas. The same move was adopted with Libya where the Qatari special forces were seen in the front lines in the final assault on Al Gaddafi 's Bab al Aziziya compound on August 24 (Roberts).

This remarkable Qatari dynamism in support of change represented by emerging Islamist regimes mainly in Tunisia and Egypt in addition to Turkey displeased Saudi Arabia and the UAE which "perceived political Islam as a direct threat to their survival"(Goldfischer). The two states along with Bahrain tried to force Qatar, led by a freshly installed young Emir, to give up its policy of supporting the change movement, but they dramatically failed with the king father Hamad Bin Khalifa. Saudi Arabia and its allies, asked Qatar, via the GCC in a meeting held on November 23rd 2013 in Riyadh, to review its foreign policy by signing a security agreement to be implemented within a given timetable, and when Doha did not put into effect this agreement, the

three states announced in a joint statement the withdrawal of their ambassadors from Doha to put more pressure on Qatar to comply with the Riyadh Pact which mainly called for non-interference in domestic affairs of each single GCC state as well as the preservation of regional security.

This move is thought to have an impact on the GCC integration that we are going to examine hereafter in details mainly in terms of the organization functioning, the political leg, and other aspects related to the economic and social fields.

The Functioning of the GCC

The GCC functions via many institutions starting from the supreme council till the small technical agencies which run and regulate daily the different tasks entrusted with. Shortly before the end of the crisis, and the comeback of the withdrawn ambassadors to Doha, the debate was still going on whether the organization functioned normally, or it was affected by the incident.

In fact, there are two major tendencies regarding the GCC functioning after the pullout of the ambassadors from Doha; the first trend indicates that the GCC was not affected by this rift, not because of the solidity and soundness of the organization or its strong institutions which could take out the GCC from troubled waters to safe shores, but due to the fact that it is just an imagined community which does not actually exist according to Andreas Krieg who claims that " the reason behind the rise of this loose organization has ceased to exist", it emerged to face up to the Iranian threat which he believes that it does not represent any threat now to the organization. He further argues that GCC is jeopardized now by internal conflicts which the organization has not been able to work out common strategies to face up or tackle.

However, the developments taking place in the region after the Iranian revolution contradict Krieg's analysis, because Iran still represents a serious threat for the GCC regimes which keep stressing this menace in each communiqué culminating their regular or extraordinary summits, and call Teheran to stop its attempts of interfering in the GCC affairs directly or via manipulating its nationals living in the GCC states.

More or less, the same idea is endorsed by David Roberts who claims that "the GCC which had rarely been a cohesive organization, had never functioned that well". Therefore, the functioning of the GCC was not affected because it had always been a dysfunctional unit (Al Sumait).

In fact, this approach gets its strength and validity from the record of the organization which had never been a unified front politically, economically, and certainly militarily (Sherwood). The organization could not ward off the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, or acted as a one block when negotiating with the EU to conclude an FTA. Furthermore, its foreign policy has not been common, it lacked cohesion and coordination, and could not behave as a common interlocutor when dealing with key issues at the international level, their position vis-à-vis the Egyptian change of power is a good illustrative example of a fragmented foreign policy with Qatar supporting ousted President Morsi, while the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia backing the new military regime led by President Al Sisi.

The supporters of this trend conclude that "the spat could not break something already broken" (Sherwood). They argue that the GCC coordinates better "when there is an external

threat such as the Iranian Revolution which united the GCC states, and urged them to found the organization in 1981"(Krieg). The remake of this union and harmony have become possible nowadays because another external menace which began to loom over the region namely the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant also known by the Arabic acronym *Da'esh* according always to Andrias Krieg .

In fact, this argument seems to be very valid since Saudi Arabia is building up its forces to fight this jihadist group which threatens the security and stability of the region. In this connection, the GCC states notably Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait have taken the necessary measures to secure their borders, and to ward off potential attacks by *Da'esh* which has become, therefore, a unifying factor, and has improved the performance of the GCC at least in the security field.

As a matter of fact, the arguments evoked by these scholars are very pertinent since the GCC did not achieve considerable results in terms of economic integration, and its political cooperation is still very loose despite the numerous assets it has as being a strategic sub-region in the Middle East, and its huge energy and financial capacities which could have allowed the organization to take the lead on the international scene as a key decision-maker with more coordination and less jealousy for national sovereignty. However, the GCC has not fallen apart, it still does exist, and it is expected to have learnt from this lesson, and to be more cautious in its future decisions to avoid such unnecessary troubles which have nearly blown up the whole integration project.

The second trend believes that the organization has been affected at the higher level that's

to say the political level (Abdulkhaliq),while the lower technical cooperation continued to work almost in a normal way as the small agencies have kept holding their meetings (Nonneman).

In fact, the political leg is highly important in the functioning of an organization like the GCC which is a hybrid organization (Legrenzi 42). The decision-making within the GCC is a top down process, it stems from the rulers who are the main players if not the unique, they can approve or disapprove decisions individually without involving the other political or social partners unlike the other integration organizations where the margin left to technocrats and experts is considerably important.

The lack of institutional mechanisms to protect the running of the organization "put it at the mercy of the leadership in each country, they can soar any relationship if they feel ill at ease" (Al Saqri), and this what happened exactly with the rulers of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain when they felt that their own regimes are in threat. Therefore, this unprecedented storm had to leave an impact on the political aspect of the GCC organization which had already been fragile, and became more fragile (Krieg).

In fact, this incident allowed the simmering problems between member states, only known before by followers of the GCC politics, to erupt and to be noticeable to ordinary people according to Goldfischer who argued that it would have caused a deep division within the GCC if one of the parties at loggerheads did not change its position.

The split among the GCC caused by the ambassadors' withdrawal showed the organization " weaker than its leaders sometimes try to portrait themselves"(Nonneman). Their hidden

divisions in the past became very apparent, and this fact had an impact on their foreign relations. To highlight the impact of incident, Nonneman states the example of USA which tries to make the GCC into a more cohesive defence partner which takes its share in regional security responsibility, he views the achievement of this mission as very difficult following the effects of this move :

> if they want to supply them with a missile defence system and so on, they want it to be done in a way that, it is not just six little individual states without coordination , it needs a regional based missile defence structure, with this rift happening, that kind of projects becomes more difficult. In fact, it becomes virtually impossible, in that sense, what happened, further stepped back the GCC unity.

This incident further deepened the lack of trust between member states (Al Tamamy), and deteriorated more bilateral relations between GCC states especially between Qatar and the UAE which were the worst affected due to a vociferous reaction adopted by Abu Dhabi during the crisis according to David Roberts who believes that the UAE's demands were irrational and motivated by a security paranoia over political Islam. In fact, the Qatari-Emirati relationship had begun to strain before mainly following the critical remarks made by Yusuf Al Qaradawi, a Doha based Egyptian cleric, who condemned in one of his Friday's speeches the Emirati support for the military regime in Egypt, in addition to complaints about Aljazeera dealing with news related to the federal government of Abu Dhabi the latest of them the Channel's coverage of

Gaza war where Aljazeera accused the UAE of financing Israel (Gulfnews.com).

Moreover, the incident showed also the GCC a fragmented union, and downsized Qatar according to Saud Al Tamamy who stressed the consequences of the incident mainly on Qatar:

> it gave the world, and the Arab world in particular, a strong signal that Qatar's foreign policy is not backed by its neighbors, and therefore, it may not be sustainable, so Qatar is an unsustainable player, a player that may not continue the same pace, it reduces the confidence in Qatar's long term commitments to its allies outside the GCC, so I think all Qatar's allies outside have realized that what Qatar is doing may not be forever, and there will be a time where Qatar has to adjust or make a U turn .

However, this view does not sound solid since Qatar remained active in the international arena, and managed to release a US hostage from the captivity of a Al Qaeda-linked group in Syria. Qatar was even consulted, according to Fox news, for several times in an effort to secure a lasting cease-fire in Gaza taking profit of its excellent relationship with Hamas.

The most important of all, according Said Al Saqri who indicated, in an interview held with him before the return of the ambassadors, that Qatar did not respond to the three countries' demands as Aljazeera continued to function with the same editorial line which depicted unfavorably the Egyptian regime, which meant that Qatar was asserting its independence from Saudi Arabia thanks to its financial power which allowed it to play that game (Al Saqri).

Of course, the financial soundness is very important in shaping the state's position, but it is

not the unique factor in foreign relations as many countries are very rich, but their role in the international arena is very limited which denotes that Qatar's dynamism is not linked only to its financial power.

The Economic Impact

The political aspect was, according to Nonneman and Abdulkhaliq, the most affected by this diplomatic row since the other technical agencies continued to work almost in a normal way, and held regularly their meetings without being banned or bullied by the high ranking institutions, for instance, days after the failure of the Jeddah meeting to bring back the ambassadors to Doha, the GCC Labour ministers and other stakeholders met on September 13th in Oman to evaluate available data in the GCC countries, and to strengthen the technical capacity of the staff of national statistical agencies(Times of oman.com).

However, the top down making-decision process, could, by no means, avert the GCC economic aspect from the aftermath of this diplomatic incident. Figures published hours after the withdrawal, showed that the market indexes in Qatar and the three other countries went down with different rates. (Al Arabiya.net).

Qatar market index	-3%
Kuwait market index	- 0,7%
Dubai market index	-0,5%
Saudi Arabia market index	-0,2%

This table shows the immediate impact of the ambassadors' withdrawal on the GCC economies. These numbers indicate that Qatar's index was down by 3 percent at around 9.30 GMT, while Other Gulf stock markets dropped by much smaller margins: Kuwait's benchmark fell by 0.7 percent; Dubai's index slipped 0.5 percent, and Saudi Arabia's was down 0.2 percent at the same time. Qatar was, therefore, the biggest loser despite its huge financial soundness with a budget surplus amounting to 40 billion Riyal ($10.7 billion). The strong financial position of Qatar made the impact much lesser. However, if the situation continued for a longer time, Qatar's private businesses would bear heavy losses at many levels. This comes when Qatar is carrying out projects worth $42 billion in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and could lead to a rise in its foreign debt up to 86 per cent of GDP, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which means that this dispute is untimely for Qatar (Al Asoomi).

There were fears of a possible closure of the Saudi-Qatari border if the dispute continued. This move is thought to be very harmful for Qatar's economy which relies heavily on this route for trade, as the CNN reported figures emanating from the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics in Qatar that around 80% of dairy imports, 30% of stone and cement imports and 92% of aluminum imports come across the land border.

Another consequence could have appeared if the situation was not redressed; if Oman was convinced by the trio to join their alliance, and Qatar resorted to stopping its gas supplies to the GCC countries, Oman would be the worst affected because it depends on this for some industries (Al Asoomi). In fact, this idea does not seem well grounded since Oman was not part of the

dispute, and it is not easily influenced by the GCC countries, it has its own foreign policy based on excellent relations with the United States and Iran with which it is bound with geography and common interests (Saeed).

These few examples show that the economic aspect was relatively affected by the dispute, however, it was expected to witness further consequences if the situation was not contained by Qatar and the other three GCC countries.

Other Consequences

The withdrawal did not only cause tensions between states, it sparked also a harsh campaign between GCC citizens through social media mainly Facebook and Twitter which went beyond its role of connecting people to becoming a political platform through which people exchanged provocative remarks, and they used even foul language (Peninsula.com).

The campaign witnessed even the participation of non-GCC citizens who stressed the weakness of the organization, and expressed the hope for the return of the ambassadors. The move escalated when officials involved themselves including Dahi Khalfan, vice chair of Dubai police, who made provocative remarks against Qatar on his Twitter account by calling it "the eighth emirate of the UAE". This remark outraged, according to the Peninsula newspaper, some Qataris who filed a complaint against Dahi Khalfan. The reason behind this cyber war according to the Qatari writer and social media activist Faisal Al Marzooki, who was quoted by the above-mentioned newspaper, is the lack of diplomatic solutions that led to more involvement of citizens in this social media campaign which further deteriorated relations between GCC

peoples.

The pullout led also some Saudi and Emirati journalists and writers to end their relationship with some Qatari media outlets such as Saudi columnist Samar Al Mogren who announced on her Twitter account that the Saudi ministry of culture had decided to end collaboration of Saudi writers with Qatari newspapers (Thomas). Other famous Emirati sports commentators are said to have quit *beIN SPORTS* and *Al Kass* Channels following this spat.

In fact, these are minor consequences, and can be considered as isolated events since a considerable number of GCC journalists remained hired by Qatari media outlets based in Doha, or collaborated from their native countries without seeing their accreditations cancelled or confiscated by the respective information ministries which means that relations in this field were not so strained.

summary

The crisis is finally over, and its impact remained limited so far, it affected some aspects of the organization, most importantly the political leg which is undeniable as we have seen in the discussion, and how it impacted the running of the organization. However, the consequences of the incident were expected to be more serious if the situation was not solved, and the two sides stuck to their positions without making concessions, and its spillover effects would become greater to include other aspects that could step back this regional integration project after only 33 years of existence mainly because of the ambassadors' pullout from Doha.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

As we have seen in the discussion, the withdrawal of the ambassadors from Qatar has had an impact on the GCC integration, it has affected some of its aspects at different levels notably the political leg which was the most impacted due to the nature of the organization and its decision-taking process. The damage is recognized even by GCC politicians including a Kuwaiti official who required anonymity “This is by far the biggest crisis we've encountered as a council’’(Aljazeera.com).

The settlement of the crisis seemed to be very complicated over the past few months due to Qatar's commitment not to change its foreign policy as it was clearly indicated by the foreign minister Khalid al-Attiyah during his visit to France last August “The independence of Qatar's foreign policy is simply non-negotiable’’(Aljazeera.com). For their part, the three countries were very determined that Qatar should fully comply with the Riyadh agreement before sending back their ambassadors back to Doha.

The deadlock, which has already hampered the good and smooth running of the GCC, is now over, the three countries decided to send back their ambassadors to Doha after an extraordinary meeting held by the GCC leaders in Riyadh in mid-November 2014, signaling an end to an eight-month rift over Doha's support for Islamist groups (Reuters.com). The final statement issued by the GCC said that the Riyadh meeting reached what it described as “an

understanding meant to turn a new page in relations between the six members of the Gulf organization".

The statement did give not give further details about the brokered deal, or the concessions made by Qatar, however, diplomats in Doha said that amongst other things, Qatar had promised the UAE that the Brotherhood would not be allowed to operate from the country (Reuters.com).

The meeting was seen as a last ditch attempt to contain the situation, and to secure the holding of the group's summit planned in Doha in December because a month earlier a GCC foreign ministers meeting scheduled in the Qatari capital was postponed highlighting the continued discord according to the Emirati newspaper *the National* which revealed that tensions had grown to the point that some speculated that the Doha summit might be held in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait instead of Qatar (The national.ae).

The meeting was described as a success by the Emirati foreign minister who tweeted that "Gulf leaders had “succeeded in taking responsibility, and had made the stability and prosperity of the region, and the interests of its people the priority" (qtd in. the national.ae).

As a matter of fact, Qatar has certainly honored some of the Riyadh engagements, though not confirmed, but the current situation in the region marked by the advance of Da'esh , has also helped the GCC leaders to look for this option as it is hinted in the Riyadh statement “a new page that will present a strong base, especially in light of the sensitive circumstances the region is undergoing”.

The reinstatement of the ambassadors put an end to a gloomy period in the GCC history,

which led to a considerable deterioration in relations between Doha and the other three capitals as Saudi Arabia and its allies kept trying to isolate Qatar according to AbdulKhaliq who believes that the Emirati-Qatari relations were the most affected by the crisis. However, the union has not fallen apart, and what has been going must not transcend a “family matter” asserts Tariq Al Maeena since “the union is still tightly bonded by a common people with family ties with each other, and that family spat would eventually be sorted out to address the concerns of all its members” (Gulfnews.com).This argument is taken up by other scholars such as Jamal Abdulla who confirms that the demonization of Qatar's role is poor “given the Gulf States’ Geographic proximity and the family cohesion of their peoples which forms somewhat of a safeguard against this demonization”(6.7).This analysis seems to be logical and realistic, the settlement of the dispute has provided more evidence about the GCC ability to diffuse its internal tensions as it was the case with past border disputes .

This "new page" as termed by the Riyadh communiqué has avoided the GCC from falling apart, but the withdrawal had some negative consequences “it will delay the proposed union by a decade or two" according to Joseph Kechichian (Aljazeera.com). At the economic level, the crisis could have had serious consequences especially on Doha if the deadlock continued due to the overreliance of Qatar on Saudi Arabia which represents, as we have seen in the discussion, an important gateway for Qatar (Al Saqri). In fact, Qatar's massive dependence on foodstuffs coming from Saudi Arabia and the UAE could have left it vulnerable (Kholaif). Official figures released by the Qatari institutions, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, confirm this reality .

All in all, the GCC row, though it is over now, made the organization more fragile, and stepped back the group unity (Nonneman), there is now a tremendous problem of trust among member states following Qatar's failure to honour the engagements it announced during the Riyadh meeting in 2013.

To conclude, the withdrawal had an impact on the GCC integration process which remained limited, but it could have widened to include further aspects that would threaten the expected union if the parties at issue camped to their positions, and would, therefore, miss a good opportunity of a solid regional integration.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this research paper is a mere humble attempt to examine a new phenomenon in the history of GCC, which deserves more academic studies and analyses by fully fledged researchers who can provide more evidence on this incident which risked to blow up this integration experience in the Arabia. The thesis has provided evidence that the GCC dispute has indeed affected the integration of the organization, and has determined the different aspects impacted by the withdrawal crisis. It could serve as a springboard for further researches since the road map is already outlined, and the damage is highlighted.

On the basis of this thesis, future researchers may profit from the different views evoked by experts throughout the study to concentrate on particular points and aspects which need more spotlight following the comeback of the ambassadors to Doha who may give further indications about their move, and may assess in concrete figures the damage felt by the GCC after eight months of dispute.

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Interview questions

1 Why the withdrawal happened?

2 What are the reasons for this withdrawal?

3 How do explain it?

4 What do you think of the Qatari reaction?

5 Did the withdrawal affect the functioning of the GCC bodies?

6 Did the withdrawal affect the GCC integration process?

7 Was there any foreign pressure?

8 What impact can this move have on the GCC?

9 How do you see the future of this regional organization?

10 Would this move force the GCC countries to be more cautious in their future decisions?

Interviewees' information

Scholar	Institution	Context
Saud Al Tamamy	King Saud University	GRC 2014
Andreas Krieg	King's College London	GRC 2014
David Roberts	King's College London	GRC 2014
Abdukhaleq Abdulla	UAE University	Telephone interview
Fahd Al Sumait	Kuwait University	GRC 2014
David Goldfischer	Korbel School of International Studies	GRC 2014
Gerd Nonneman	George town University	GRC 2014
Leah Sherwood	Khalifa University .UAE	GRC 2014
Jassim Hussain	Ex-University of Bahrain	GRC 2014
Jean Marc Rickli	King's College London	GRC 2014
Said al Saqri	Advisor to Oman's government	GRC 2014

Interview answers

1- Saud al tamamy

Why withdrawal happened?

Some GCC countries have discovered that Qatar is conducting a foreign policy that runs against the interests of these three specific countries, it is very clear that the two remaining countries Kuwait and Oman are endorsing what three countries have done through their silent approval. They did not object this, and I think that Qatar conducted a foreign policy that aims at strengthening Muslim Brotherhood in a way which runs against the threat perception by some other GCC countries which believe that Qatar has some unnecessary contacts with some groups within these countries. There is also some complaints from Bahrain in particular about nationalization. The biggest problem, on the top of that there is a grooming lack of trust between these countries and Qatar because as far as I know Qatar vowed to do A, and B and C, but suddenly they do not honor what they agreed to do. So there is a structural problem of trust, in addition to that there are specific issues of meddling within these countries and harming their interests in the wider Middle East

Has Egypt a bearing in this move?

I think Egypt has not played a role in blackmailing Qatar. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE do need Egypt to tell them what to do, however, I am sure there some intelligence reports from Egypt about some interference, but you did not need that. You need just to watch Qatari

sponsored media to know there some sort of provocation coming from Qatar about some settings in Egypt and other countries

Did this affect the GCC functioning?

When the GCC was founded, no one believed that GCC will trouble free organization. everybody as a group of six countries believed in the six countries believed there would differences, differences in calculation, in threat perceptions, in domestic politics, in international relations and so on, this recent problem is unprecedented in terms of its scale however, it is still a milestone that GCC has passed many milestones before. In a way it is a problem within the GCC, and it shows that there is some sort of institutional failures within the GCC, but at the same time, as any problem has happened before, the GCC will pass it with some arrangement, and with commitment offered by all GCC countries to continue the march towards further integration

Did this affect the GCC inter-state relations and their foreign relations as well?

As prince Saud Al Faycal said, he is not happy about what happened between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, it affected international relations within the GCC. It downsize Qatar, it gave the world and the Arab World in particular a strong signal that Qatar's foreign policy is not backed by its neighbours, and therefore, it may not be sustainable, so Qatar unsustainable player, a player that may not continue the same pace, it reduces the confidence Qatar's long term commitments to its allies outside the GCC, so I think all Qatar's allies outside have realized that what Qatar is doing may not be forever , and there will be a time where Qatar has to adjust or make a U turn as

some suggest .so in either way Qatar will not stay as it is for the shorter.

Dou you think the GCC countries will be cautious in their future decisions to avoid such drifts?

There will more calculated moves, they will need more coordinated foreign policy, we today Saudi and UAE consul, which a good step in Saudi and UAE foreign policy at least for the short run. Also see GCC is trying to move towards a greater integration or union.

What do you of Qatar's reaction?

I think Qatar tries to separate Saudi Arabia from the UAE; they try to appease Saudi Arabia, of course Saudi Arabia helped a lot Qatar in terms they did not launch a media campaign, which is a wise decision. Qatar responded positively to that development, but what could be seen as a negative development was the mutual media campaign between Qatar and the UAE, which is painful in my point of view. The Qatari complaints to attempts that they have agreed to is very slow in my point of view; Aljazeera is still advocating instability in Egypt, it has become softer towards Saudi Arabia, but this is not the biggest achievement, Qatar has refrained from nationalizing Bahrainis, but the big things like allegations of supporting extremism in Syria or Iraq is still there, what happened in Gaza, Qatar is still resisting the Egyptian initiative. Qatar tries to appease, in a way, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain but did not do a lot with UAE, they did not change their strategies in the whole region yet, we did not see that.

How do you see the future of the GCC?

I expect that the GCC has to decide whether it will create a coordinated foreign policy or

whether it will try to move on two speeds or two wheels. That some countries will be coordinating their policies with each other including Saudi Arabia , Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, possibly Oman at some point, and in which Qatar could be the odd man in the GCC. Something I do not want to see. So think now the ball is in the Qatar side, and the Qataris have to decide by themselves whether to be part of a bigger regional bloc with a coordinated foreign policy, or be allied to far away countries that might not come to help them when which is unnatural by any foreign policy standard

You want to add something?

We should focus on the competition between the five GCC countries minus Saudi Arabia. Many literature focuses on the so called Saudi hegemony on the GCC countries while actually it is not that, the other five GCC countries compete with each other , there is a shadowed competition between the other GCC countries, some of them voted for hosting the central bank by Riyadh, others voted for Abu Dhabi, it was a Saudi decision.

2 - Andreas Krieg

Why the withdrawal happened?

It is a message of disagreement of foreign policy of the GCC about the Arab Spring, it is mostly about the GCC countries under the Saudi leadership particularly the UAE and Bahrain. All three of them are convinced that the sovereignty of its member states is the most important aspect of the GCC, that we should respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their states, for them, it is an ideological move against the Muslim Brotherhood I think, they are paranoid and

irrational about how to deal with political Islam especially the UAE which has a paranoia when it comes to political Islam , and they want to show Qatar that Qatar's foreign policy of supporting political Islam across the Arab world after the Arab Spring has been counter-productive to regime security, their own regime security, so the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain see political Islam as a threat to their own regime security, Qatar is one that supports political Islam in countries such Egypt Libya and Syria, they want to send a strong message that they disagree with that foreign policy stand of Qatar by saying if you support political Islam you against les raisons d'état of each single state which are Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain.

Why this particular time?

This is just the tip of the iceberg, this a gradual process which erupted in February this year, I think the internal discussions and disagreements have been going really for a long time within the GCC, also I think it has something to do with the fact Sheikh Tamim who has took over last summer 2013, I think they tried to intimidate the young Emir, to show him we can put pressure on you, and we want you to change your foreign policy which is something that was easy under Sheikh Hamad. I think Sheikh Tamim did very well by responding to this threat by not responding to the threat, continuing the policy as normal , not reacting to any of the demands that were completely irrational I think, I think Qatar and Tamim came out of the crisis relatively well. Most people in the international community particularly in the west would say the UAE and Saudi Arabia were irrational with the demands, Qatar has not responded, and now has been resolved, and Saudi Arabia and UAE have not achieved what they demanded.

Do you think this policy will force the young emir to change his policy?

like I said before, the demands were to stop Aljazeera from functioning close, this did not happen, this is the sovereignty of Qatar, and they do not want it to be dictated from outside, Sheikh Tamim said that Qatar is not meddling in domestic policies of its neighboring countries. The Qatari government has been very good, Sheikh Tamim has not reacted to which was the right thing to do, I think he is not going to react, the demands are very irrational, when they talk about not meddling in internal affairs, it's a very vague ambiguous statement, and nobody knows what they mean by this, they have not given any fact. On top of this, as we know now with the intervention in Libya by the UAE, it's quite clear that the UAE do not stick to this particular maxim of their foreign policy, there is a double standard, on the one hand people are saying you are not allowed to intervene, yet we are allowed to intervene. There is good intervention which supports the idea of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE which intervention against Islamism, but when Qatar intervenes to support people that deem to be representative of the people as soon as this happen, people say this a bad intervention. Intervention on behalf of political Islam is bad, against political Islam is good. I think this is a very irrational way from UAE and Saudi Arabia to deal with Qatar.

What is the impact on GCC functioning?

GCC is an imagined community, it is less than imagined community, it does not actually exist, it is a loose community of states that have positioned itself vis-a-vis the perceived threat of Iran, this threat diminished at the moment, the current threats that these countries are facing

probably are more domestic threats, and they define and approach these domestic threats in different ways, so the common denominator that united these countries has ceased to exist, so we have on a one hand Oman which has independent relations with Iran, had in the past relations with Israel, and we have Qatar who is trying to have relations with Iran or any country or any country in the region, it is a very pragmatic approach, Kuwait which takes a different stance to UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain when it comes to domestic and security. So we have a rift in the GCC. The unity that was always fragile has become more fragile. So can we go forward with this? They are trying to integrate the military command, this s a great initiative, whether will actually happen we do not know this is a little initiative to save the GCC, but I think the most fundamental problem is a massive rift in foreign policy, which I think they cannot overcome especially with the UAE which is the one to blame it has been completely irrational and guided by a security paranoia

How do you see the future?

It depends if there someone who can take the lead and bring them altogether, they have to make a compromise, UAE will never take the lead, it has been irrational, may be Saudi Arabia to some extent has relatively to the UAE a better relationship with, and also culturally closer to the Qataris. I think the Saudis have to play a role in reuniting the GCC. A common threat could unite the GCC, and brings them together, a common policy and a common stance could be against Daesh. If the GCC can take a common stance in fighting Daesh, the GCC might be safe because the GCC need a factor against which to negatively integrate, and this negative

integration factor may be Daesh

3- David Roberts

why the withdrawal ?

It shows that they are talking extremely hard line on the ikhwan when it does seem to reflect the reality of the situation, they have the information that we do not have, it is difficult to see or understand the gravity of the situation as they see it. GCC is a very troubled organization. This group of states has so much in common, but they disagree, this is the latest issue that highlights their problem.

Was there any pressure from Egypt?

it is not about Ikhawan, of course is very important strategic problem between the two, but is also about how does its business which is to say how Qatar arranges the release of hostages in Syria, or what Qatar does in Yemen, or how Qatar naturalizes other GCC citizens, it is about a lot of things, but of course the Muslim Brotherhood political issue is first and foremost of all, the Aljazeera Arabic still refers unfavorably to the new government in Egypt and that kinds of things, this is may be that was the straw that broke the camel's back, may be king Abdullah Salah, it is about a range of issues.

did this affect GCC functioning?

No, GCC is not functioning that well, it has never functioned that well, it is good in getting that boring technical requirement about inter regional postage or small things like that, the GCC has rarely been cohesive organization, during time, it has been cohesive is when there is a real

serious external pressure especially Iran of course, and we have the US led rapprochement, you need a huge amount of political maturity or concern threat to overcome the small differences, narcissism of small differences.

what do you think of the Qatari reaction and the other GCC countries?

Qatar was quite mature statement like in its reaction, within the Diwan they were concerned and eager to get consult, but they did the right thing by not over reacting, Emirate people were astonished by the vociferousness of Abu Dhabi led reaction.

Would GCC be more cautious?

Yes and no, Qatar would look for ways to, looks for ways not to make worse, de- escalate the situation, but at the same time, Qatar has a foreign policy, a certain orientation for the twenty years or in some the 50 years, so it is not going to change, the most important cannot be bullied into changing its fundamental foreign policy, the new Emir, 34 old now, cannot be bullied into making a huge change in his foreign policy, it cannot be done the public will not stand it.

4 - Abdukhaleq Abdullah

Why the withdrawal?

The central reason has promised few things and signed a document that it will fulfill promises and when it failed to do so the three countries decided to recall their ambassadors, it is a bunch of promises that Qatar was supposed to deliver, and failed to deliver that caused the withdrawal of the ambassadors.

Did this affect the functioning of GCC?

Of course, it did, it would be silly to say it did not, it affected the political leg of the GCC more than the other aspects of the GCC. The GCC has many legs, the economic, the social, the cultural, the security, most of them have functioned well during the crisis or the rift, but the political leg of the GCC was badly affected for sure.

How about the GCC inter-relations?

Relationship was not smooth during all of this period between Qatar and 3 states that recalled their ambassadors, and as a result, Qatar' s relationship with UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia deteriorated, and Qatar was more and more in a position of isolation, it was isolated from many functions, from many meetings, and hence, I think the GCC was in general affected, but Qatar relationship with the three states that recalled their ambassadors was also affected, the two states relations that were affected were the UAE and Qatar, more than others.

How do assess the Jeddah meeting?

It is a positive move, it moved the GCC integration away from a further deterioration, and it took away some of the tension, and de- escalated the bad feelings around, I think the GCC was heading towards a clash of a sort, towards more deterioration, and the meeting in Jeddah just two or three days ago pulled everybody back away from the edge, and that's why whatever happened there, it is positive.

How do you see the future?

You know all integration experiences, and all integration processes throughout history go through difficulties, and I think the GCC has definitely gone through one of these bad

experiences and through one of these difficult times , but I think the 33 years old Gulf cooperation and integration, coordination is still solid enough, I think it will continue, and I am sure probably a year from now will be able to go back to normal truck.

GCC countries will be cautious?

There was a lesson for everybody, and the lesson was the bigger concern that being together is more important than going it alone, and sometimes you have to moderate your position, and sometimes you have to give up on your position, I think there is lesson learnt, and the lesson is that we are better off being of sticking together, we are better of thinking together, and are better of acting together, I think this lesson has been learnt and may be everybody will try go back to where they were prior to their call of the ambassadors.

5 - Fahd Al Sumait

Why the withdrawal?

This an attempt to exert some control on Qatar, unsuccessfully I may add, a very strong form of diplomacy, it is a strong message, in the end, one is left wondering whether it will actually have the major effect, with the Muslim brotherhood now, gone out of the Egyptian political system, we do not know how Egypt relationship will be Qatar.

Do you think Egypt was behind this decision?

Yes, I will not be surprised, you know Egypt with its problems there is still an umbrella, it is a very important country for the region, I am sure Sissi was not happy with Qatar, it had something to do with encouraging the move, I think Saudi Arabia was the primary genesis for

that decision.

What about The functioning of the GCC?

Let's say the GCC has been dysfunctional already, so I think it did not affect the functioning of this dysfunctional unit, a lot of the policies they work on is done by the technocrats, and not by the ambassadors for example , so in think in terms of functioning not that much, in terms of GCC interstate relations, I think it was a very strong message, I think Saudi Arabia was working to insert some kind of strong statement and control over Qatar. In terms of international relations, it will make Qatar more cautious about some of the international relations decisions that makes especially when it relate to the Muslim brother hood or the support of incoming governments where had been revolutions.

How do you see future?

I see the future of the GCC organization as the same as it is, something that will continue to maintain, it will serve mainly the interests of the rulers and no the people, and I do not think that this will change in the future as well.

Do you want to add something?

I hope my prediction will be wrong; I would love to see the GCC starts implementing some policies for which the GCC should stand , they may not be able to go with an integrated economy, but certainly a better flow of people especially skilled labor, a better transfer of technology and innovation, integration of the transportation systems, integrated health system, there is a lot of potential, unified environment policies and

the list goes on and on.

6 - David Goldfischer

What is the reason of withdrawal?

The deepest immediate issue is the support of Qatar for the Muslim brotherhood that the UAE and Saudi Arabia believe that Muslim Brotherhood represents a direct threat to their own regimes.

Did affect the GCC functioning?

Unfortunately, I think at this moment in the region in the wake of the Arab uprisings and the aftermath, there is a very fundamental division here of whether political Islam should be the future of the region or whether political Islam represents a danger, and this is a very deep division that unless one of the parties changes, I think it represents a deep rupture in the GCC.

What are the effects on relations?

In light of the news, in Libya, the UAE has dropped bombs on an Islamist group that has been funded by the Qataris, it is almost like a proxy war, so I think at this moments and things are changing rapidly in the region, so it is very difficult to make predictions, so I think to talk about a common foreign policy of the GCC is simply not realistic.

Did it create tensions?

Tensions have existed, the diplomatic rupture was .the tensions that have been simmering for a long time, and noticed only by people paying attention to the politics of the GCC became visible.

Did it reduce Qatar diplomacy?

Considering the size of the country, and their tremendous exposure in an area of deep conflicts in the region, I assume that there some voices advising the Qataris to take a step back to begin to reappraise their strong engagement at the regional level.

What do you think of the Qatari reaction?

The Qataris have been remarkable in terms of considering the size of their country, their profile and their ability to conduct conflict resolution negotiations recently involving Israel and Hamas, but I long recognize they have able to perform on regional and world stage and in an apparently effective way, the big question, however, concerns this particular division over the Muslim Brotherhood.

How do you see future of the GCC?

I think the reality of meaning cooperation certainly security cooperation has been overshadowed by the security fundamental split over political Islam and its future role in the region, so things are moving very quickly obviously the emergence of the Islamic states. I think the GCC cannot function as its supporters have hoped.

7- Gerd Nonneman

Why the withdrawal?

It was a reaction based on anger, annoyance or whatever irritation on part of some in the policy establishments in Riyadh and in Abu Dhabi with Bahrain tagging along, it over the Qatari foreign policy particularly over the different perceptions of what the Muslim brother represents

with Qatar, this is not a threat, a non-violent organization with a lot of support around the Arab world, and even if they made huge mistakes in Egypt and lost credibility, this does not mean that they suddenly became a terrorist threat, Qatar had been supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, not for ideologically reasons, but as one of major players in the Arab spring, and as one of the likely winners, and that they won't suddenly to turn, to make a U turn, whereas in part of the Saudi policy making and in Abu Dhabi there was a complete turnaround in the perceptions of the Muslim brotherhood as a domestic and regional threat, it's because, back in decades, people at least with sympathizers of Muslim Brotherhood as an organization, as a body of thought were a very prominent threat in education and so on, they were welcomed , and worked with the state administration, but because of changing regional , some of the Saudi and Abu Dhabi establishment began to see them as a potential alternative for people, a potential alternative model for people as opposed to the models the Al Saud or Al Nahyan want to make people look to, it was an alternative model. Therefore, it represented a threat, plus they do not want this movement to become a pole of attraction by being in control of Egypt ,that ultimately what underlies the split , and Qatar was not seen sufficiently sensitive to that, in addition they have Yusuf Al Qardawi, and Aljazeera where a lot of people who have, lets to say sympathy with the Muslim Brotherhood or at least with the Egyptian opposition, so all of that led some people in Saudi Arabia and some in Abu Dhabi were concerned to show that Qatar was against Saudi and UAE interests, and there we are.

Did it affect interstate relations and their foreign relations?

It showed GCC weaker than they sometimes try to portrait themselves, there are clearly divisions which there were before, and now they are very apparent. in terms of foreign relations, of course it had an impact, because one of the things GCC is supposedly has been trying is to together as a coherent security actor and defend in terms of security of regional defense, it has not gone very far, we were getting to a point where the Americans were getting increasingly concerned with trying to make the GCC into more cohesive defense partner, taking their share in regional

security responsibility them, if they want to supply them with a missile defense system and so on, they want it to be done in a way that ,it was not just six little individual states without coordination, it need a regional based missile defense structure, with this rift happening, that kind of projects becomes more difficult in fact it becomes virtually impossible, in that sense, what happened, further stepped back the GCC unity, I won't have to say it.

Did it affect the functioning of the GCC?

Of course at a high political level in terms of defense coordination and so on, but the interesting thing is that at a lower more technical cooperation level, a number of agencies whether it is about standards or customs discussions, a whole range of other things in the GCC continued all along.

Do you think GCC countries will be more cautious?

There has never been, nor there is, nor ever be a common position for the whole GCC states on what the GCC should be, Oman thinks differently of what the GCC should become, Kuwait

thinks differently, Saudi Arabia thinks differently and Qatar thinks differently. I think all of them think it is worth maintaining something called GCC, and to develop different areas to get a better coordination especially when it comes to external defense for instance, and certainly when it comes to domestic economic integration, so I think that will continue in one way or another , I cannot think for a moment that Qatar will be suspended from the GCC, because there is no support for that among all the GCC states, but in the meantime, it caused friction, it complicated coordination, but I expect that in the five years hence there still be a CCG, and aspects of its activities will be developing further, I don't expect anything like a gulf union, what happened last year made a true gulf union power less likely.

8 - Leah Sherwood

What is the reason behind the withdrawal?

One of the most prominent reasons probably relates to the activist foreign policy that Qatar has had, and Riyadh and the perception from the other gulf countries in terms of what is the motivation of Qatar, it seems to be deviating from the GCC's collective stance. Although they have independent foreign policies, there was a perception that Qatar was acting against the interests of the GCC alliance particularly upsetting the hegemone Saudi Arabia and its interests.

What about Qatar reaction?

I think, it is always done that way, the GCC and Arabs in general, they conduct business quietly, they do not publicize, and make general statements, you do not know what happened in these meetings except for the media statement at the end , I think what they did was just perhaps

to mitigate the damage, not to enflame the situation, to try to maintain calm, and not necessarily irritate the other members by repeating what was said, and it is the practice to do politically and culturally.

How about the functioning of the GCC?

I think it is a contributing factor to some of the functions; however the GCC has never a unified front politically, economically, certainly militarily so this does not break something that already broken or perhaps was never made in the first place, but in terms of the integration projects and the hopes of what the GCC could become this is not a positive development , and I think with some diplomacy and some care, I think they can overcome this, and perhaps the UAE will consider resending their ambassador may be in the new year.

9 - Hussain Jassim

Why the withdrawal happened?

There are differences in foreign policies objectives; I believe the case will be resolved in a one way or another, this cannot go on, it is very bad for the GCC as a whole, the GCC image, for the idea of having a GCC union, I expect this is going to be addressed.

Was there any foreign factor, Egypt for instance?

Foreign policy is the broad; the details are Egypt, Syria and Libya. Generally, different views related to foreign relations objectives.

How do you see the future of the organization?

The GCC will remain, it is a very important part of the world, very rich in terms of money,

in terms of oil and gas .They have to find a way, there is a need for compromise, all sides have to sit together and find a way out.

Last word?

They have to find a solution, there is no need for having this kind of problem, the GCC has very important things, there are a lot of issues, very important ones, challenges, regional, international, so there is no point going into something relatively minor.

10 - J.Marc Rickli

There is a very different vision in the gulf about political Islam between Qatar and a group of three countries Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia, I think these three countries believe that political Islam is a direct threat to the survival of the regime. Qatar has welcomed these people since the 70's, and is much open to integrate them, and therefore, does see them as a threat to for such, so I think it's an issue of survival, regime survival.

Do you the change of regime in Egypt has a link with the incident?

Definitely, we are talking about the same people it is about Muslim brotherhood, the fact that Morsi was in power with also Qatar, it was for the three other countries that signaled the spread of political Islam ideology which, if reaches the gulf will destabilize.

Did the move affect the GCC functioning?

Yes because the GCC is the alliance of six countries, and they are spending more time in dealing with internal issues instead of external issues.

What about Qatar reaction and mediation?

Kuwait and Oman especially Kuwait realized the GCC risks dissolution that's why they had to do something, the position of Qatar they chose to keep quiet and wait the time passes so to solve the issue. The group of three states is aggressive against one, for the political opinion, it is never that good, it is very difficult to assess.

What about inter-state and foreign relations?

Qatar has become less active in terms of foreign policy, the foreign policy has been reduced.

Will GCC countries be more cautious?

Probably yes, though I do not think that they will change its foreign policy orientation dramatically, they may less vocal, but I think the shadow diplomacy may continue support a some kind of orientation.

11 - Said al Saqri

Why the withdrawal?

It is a power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Qatar wants to have some sort of self identity, it wants to reassert itself as an independent strong power with a will to be on its own, and at the same time Saudi Arabia is a big country, does want to be bullied by a small country like Qatar, and it just happened that the UAE and Saudi Arabia happened to have an interest together in actually fighting the Islamic Brotherhood, they went into the conflict and resulting in pulling the ambassadors from Qatar.

Was Egypt a cause of this rift?

I think the fear for Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries is that there is an increasing Shia

power in the region, and it will be coming in all sorts of form through many different countries, it was in their interest to ally themselves with an opposing power, it happened also that the Islamic Brotherhood as power is increasing, and they no longer see them as a balancing power against the Shia or the Iranian hegemony. In fact, they feel threatened by them Saudi Arabia and the UAE that's why they have been against the Islamic brotherhood and against Qatar, if Brotherhood arrives to power, this is a threat against the status quo and the current system in the area.

What about Qatar reaction and mediation?

Qatar has to be very careful, besides the historical and other interests that it has with countries like Saudi Arabia, it is its gateway to the rest of the Arabian peninsula, so it has to be very careful, and it is a big neighbor as well, Saudi Arabia can easily bully Qatar, it is huge, and Qatar has very small population, so it has to play its card very calmly

Did it affect the GCC functioning?

The rift must have affected the interests of the GCC, there is no institutional mechanism in place to protect that cooperation, it is in the mercy of how the leadership in each country feels , and if it feels it does not want to extend their relationship any more, if there are any issues or difference between them, they can soar the relationship ,and that's what really happened.

Has Qatar remained dynamic?

Internationally, I think Qatar is still dynamic, I watch Aljazeera, and I see it very critical of Egypt, it is very much behind the earlier regime, the Islamic Brotherhood, Qatar is asserting its

independence from Saudi Arabia, and as long as it has the financial power, I think it will try to play that game , I think Saudi Arabia in the long run has its own problems, so I think they are basically looking at the long term, and ultimately Saudi Arabia will be able to bully them forever.

How do you see the future of GCC?

I think it will be there, but we are not going to see united GCC countries, we are not to see further consolidation into becoming really an economic power and a political power in the region.

You want to add something?

If you look at the relationship between the different GCC countries, the way they have developed, you have got Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the one hand ,you have got Oman and Kuwait that try to play some sort to be in the middle, and you have got Qatar on the other hand. Basically, the role of Oman and Kuwait are going to play, is the only reason for the GCC will function and will hold for some time, but I don't think it is an effective group of countries, I don't see it playing a greater role in terms of becoming a real super power in the region , becoming a real economic unity, becoming a real political unity certainly.