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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEFENSE STRATEGY OF QATAR 2013–2020

BY

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## ABSTRACT

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Instability in some parts of the world impacts governments in many aspects, particularly in defense, foreign policy, and economic strategies. Governments should identify threats and challenges to the state in tandem with its natural resources and regional security variables. This requires continuous evaluation of security and economic indicators. This thesis focuses on Qatar's defense strategy between 2013 and 2020. Qatar has undergone several stages in implementing its defense strategies since its independence in the 1970s. In general, the defense strategies of a small state adopt alliances in response to threats (bandwagoning), strategic hedging, neutrality, and alliance shelter strategies. Being located in a sensitive area, surrounded by large and powerful countries in an unstable region, Qatar -as a small state- has entered into several defense agreements with different countries to enhance its security. In addition, the decline of major power brokers in MENA has enabled small states to emerge and play more significant roles in various sectors.

In the 1990s, the regional and international systems witnessed significant shifts in the wake of critical events in the region, such as the Gulf War in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the very same year. Such a collapse marked the end of a bipolar international system, where the world shifted towards a unipolar system under the leadership of the United States. This was followed by the U.S. military victories in the Gulf, including the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, and intensive U.S. military presence in that region. Accordingly, the Qatari defense strategy moved

towards relying on the U.S. military existence in Qatar as a source of security. In response to regional security changes, Qatar's defense strategy has changed; the blockade of Qatar in 2017 led to a shift in the strategy due to neighbor countries' threats. The Qatari government was able to survive the crisis; the blockade ended with the signing of the Al-Ula Declaration in Saudi Arabia in 2021 without any waivers from Qatar. As a small state, Qatar has been able to preserve its sovereignty and security. The Qatari government seeks to improve its defense and security policies and strategies in response to security variables in the Gulf region. In addition, the Qatari government has focused on promoting its relations with international organizations, which was reflected in international cooperation.

The main argument of this thesis is that the 2017 blockade enabled the Qatari government to discover weaknesses in its defense strategy. Qatar's defense strategy is changed based on the source of security threats, which means that Qatar did not have a certain/ one defense strategy as it has changed based on the source of perception of security threats. As a rich country, Qatar was able to improve its defense strategy rapidly during the crises and Foreign policy had the ability to enhance Qatari defense strategy, drawing on international relations and organization. In this thesis, I examine how diversification in foreign policy and defense and military strategies is vital for small states, particularly when a state has an active foreign policy in an unstable region. Moreover, I explain the motivation of the State of Qatar for engaging in new alliances, for instance, with Turkey and Iran, and how these political and military alliances helped Qatar secure its territory from the blockading countries. Finally, I address the role of soft power and diplomacy in promoting security.

## DEDICATION

*This humble work is dedicated to my beloved family, my father, my mother, my husband, and my sisters, who gave me encouragement and support all the time, and to all my relatives and friends for their motivation to make this endeavor a reality.*

*“Work hard in silence. Let your success be your noise.”*

*Frank Ocean*

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1. Literature Review

Defense strategy is one of the state's instruments for preserving the security of its population as well as its existence. Neill explains that the guiding references for defense planning are defense policies and strategies that determine how defense resources are applied in building and preserving capabilities responsive to the specified and implied objectives. Therefore, defense policies and strategies guide decisions to redistribute available resources to better respond in the future (Neill, 2017). Defense strategy is the synthesis of insight that results in the organizational vision and direction through which the defense establishment achieves its policy objectives (Neill, 2017). In this regard, Edström defines defense strategy as “interconnected ideas on how politically defined strategic ends should be achieved through a combination of alignment strategies and suitable strategic ways of developing and employing military means” (Edström et al., 2020). Therefore, Edström asserts that alignment strategies assign various methods of interacting on a political level with other states and organizations to enhance the state's interest in relation to security and influence (Edström et al., 2020).

Scipanov states that strategy at the political-military level covers different areas in terms of security, defense, military, and maritime (Scipanov, 2020). He emphasizes that strategy is a combination of science and art. Science addresses the strategy of war, in which plans are outlined, and there is a general view that regulates the course of military actions (Scipanov, 2020). Strategy is an art connecting preparation for war with planning operations to accomplish the goals put forth in the war for the military forces (Scipanov, 2020). In addition, Professor Colin Gray explains strategy as the combination of political aims and military means (Gray, 2013). Therefore, there are different levels of strategy: political and military. Political strategy, also called grand strategy,

includes all the power tools of the country, while military strategy addresses how to apply military instruments in times of crisis, war, and peace (Scipanov, 2020).

Edström describes three concepts used by states in determining and implementing their military strategies: ends, means, and ways. The word “ends” refers to the fact that each state emphasizes its own international importance and strategic weight (Edström et al., 2020). “Means” refers to states’ military strategies: Some focus on national defense, some on expeditionary warfare, and some on a balanced approach (Edström et al., 2020). “Ways” refers to the outcomes of military strategy: Some states prefer a multilateral approach, some a unilateral approach, and some prefer an approach balanced between multi- and unilateral (Edström et al., 2020).

Most defense strategies in the literature focus on the importance of defining threats in adopting defense policy. Saily sees the focus of defense policy in recognition of external threats and emphasizes military strategy and the ability to confront threats; he asserts that the economy can affect the defense policy strategy, whether weak or strong (Saily, 2020). Saily explains the defense policy of Qatar through four pillars: small state, border security, the impact of regional and international variables and threats, and joint defense in the Gulf region (Saily, 2020).

Undoubtedly, the effects of the blockade on Qatari defense strategy included promoting the strength of Qatar’s army, building strong military alliances, and investing in the military education sector (Saily, 2020). In addition, cyber security became important in military strategy. Qatar addressed the National Cyber Security Strategy in 2015 (Ministry of Transport and Communication, z.d.). Before the Qatar News Agency (QNA) hacking incident, Qatar had not given cyber security due attention. It was at the beginning of the blockade when some fabricated statements were attributed to the Amir of Qatar, and these were exploited when the blockade

against Qatar was announced. The director of the Government Communications Office claimed that the QNA website had “been hacked by an unknown entity” and that “a false statement attributed to His Highness the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani ha[d] been published. The statement published has no basis whatsoever, and the competent authorities in Qatar will hold all those [involved] accountable.” Qatar gave due care to cyber security after that to avoid being entrapped by other plotters trying to defame its reputation, not only among the GCC countries but throughout the world.

Qatar has been keen to adopt different types of security strategies to maintain its stability and security in a region replete with turmoil and clashes, resulting in gaining an impressive degree of influence, not only in the region but worldwide. Bandwagoning is a strategy by which small states attempt to subordinate themselves to dominant states; this can be achieved by either aligning with the threatening powers or joining alliances to sustain balance and stability against superpowers. Balancing can be bilateral or multilateral and include both small states and superpowers. According to Lake, obtaining more protection and order is the aim of small states in making alliances of both types, which provide them with advantages in sustaining security and regional integrity, defining property rights both at home and abroad by minimizing the risks of disputes, and setting standards of international behavior (Lake, 2009). Related to the alliance theories of bandwagoning and balancing, Qatar became a paradigm of both types by making alliances with weaker powers to maintain a balance against aggressors and also making alliances with the threatening powers. Qatar defeated the blockading countries by applying both types of alliances. In the same vein, hedging occurs when a country adopts multilateral policies intended to have mutual reactive effects (Lee, 2017).

So, there is a consensus on the security strategies used by Qatar. Saïdy argues that Qatar, as a small state, cannot assure its security by itself. He asserts that the defense policy of Qatar relies on the geopolitical situation in the Middle East and is affected by unstable relations with neighboring countries such as KSA (Saïdy, 2018). Therefore, he focuses on self-defense capabilities, military shelter, bandwagoning, and the blockade as variables affecting Qatar's defense policy, leading to a reevaluation of threats for Qatar (Saïdy, 2018). Ulrichsen explores how the Qatari government planned to improve its defense policy before the blockade in preparation for World Cup 2022 (Ulrichsen, 2020). He focuses on the political and security response to the blockade, which resulted in the enhancement and diversification of international bilateral relations and the enhancement of the strategic military capabilities of Qatar (Ulrichsen, 2020). For example, the establishment of Barzan Holding worked on empowering the military capabilities of the Qatari Armed Forces in 2018, creating international strategic partnerships and concluding defensive military agreements with the United States, the UK, Turkey, and France. There was doubt about the U.S. position regarding the blockade, particularly when President Trump published tweets accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism (Ulrichsen, 2020). However, the United States is a trusted strategic partner in defense of Qatar, particularly since the two countries signed a defense agreement after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

### *Security Threats and Challenges for Qatar*

Previous studies have focused on the security of Qatar as part of the security of the GCC countries (Bianco, 2018; Pollack, 2003), while few studies have given attention to the security strategies of Qatar itself. When Qatar's security is connected to GCC countries, it mainly revolves around threats and security variables in the Gulf region and the Arab world, such as the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the Arab Spring of 2011. It is essential to understand the security challenges of the GCC countries in order to understand Qatar's security challenges. Threats for the GCC countries can be classified as internal and external. Under the risks to Gulf security, Pollack (2003) included Iraq's security dilemma, Iran's nuclear weapons, and internal unrest in the GCC countries. After the Iranian-Iraqi war of 1980–1988, fears grew regarding Iraq's power, which was strong enough to overrun Kuwait and KSA, a concern that happened in 1991 (Pollack, 2003).

Moreover, if Iran were to possess nuclear weapons, the GCC countries' security and American interests would be directly threatened. Bianco differentiated between external and internal threats to the GCC, with external threats represented by Iran and Iraq and internal threats represented by ideological threats such as Iraq's pan-Arabism and Iran's Khomeini ideology (Bianco, 2018). In addition, internal threats are represented by instability, terrorism, and social and economic issues (Bianco, 2018). Bianco identifies the differences between threat and risk; he defines "threat" as any danger threatening state sovereignty, institutions, structure, or regime survival. On the other hand, he defines "risk" as challenges confronting the state, such as vulnerabilities and false perceptions of decision-makers (Bianco, 2018).

It is essential to highlight that the Gulf region's security came under American protection after the British withdrawal in the 1970s. The American security strategy passed through several stages: It relied on the twin pillars of Iran and KSA during the 1970s; in the 1980s, it tilted toward Iraq, and in the 1990s, following the dual containment of Iraq and Iran (Wehrey & Sokolsky, 2015), the American goal became securing the flow of oil from the Gulf region. The Gulf is located in a strategic area where America has interests, so when this strategy failed, the Americans began to intervene when necessary. For example, during Desert Storm, they intervened in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 to liberate Kuwait (Wehrey & Sokolsky, 2015). The Gulf countries established the GCC to address the Iranian security threat to the other Gulf countries. The Iraqi invasions of Kuwait proved that the threat could be from other Arab countries, not just Iran. So, most of the literature focuses on the relation between the United States, the GCC countries, and other international player alliances to secure the existence of small countries.

Rory Miller argues that the failure of Gulf states to build independent regional security capacity or develop broad security relations with third parties is due to their reliance on the United States for their security and defense (Miller, 2019). In contrast, Wählisch argues that dialogue efforts in the Gulf region need to demonstrate the structural impediments to peace. He mentions the new alliances that have emerged in the region, such as the Red Sea Alliance, Anti-Terror Quartet, and the alliance between Qatar, Turkey, and Iran. The Red Sea Alliance was formed in response to the Qatar/Turkey/Iran alliance. It aimed at reducing those countries' influence while emphasizing peace and security in the Red Sea region (Wählisch, 2019).

In addition, Kamrava argues that the GCC countries continue to cooperate technically. However, politically they are divided, so he sets out the threat perception and focuses on the

importance of natural resources in shaping domestic and foreign policy in the Gulf, arguing that these need to be addressed (Kamrava, 2018). Meanwhile, Miller emphasizes that the Gulf states have neglected defense and security strategies to varying degrees. Therefore, the inability of the GCC countries to build defense capacity and lack of strategic depth led to reliance on the U.S. umbrella of security in the region, particularly in confronting security threats from Iran (Miller, 2019). Of greater concern for the GCC countries is that the U.S. administration rejected interference in Bahrain and called for government reforms during the Arab Spring of 2011. Adding to this, the U.S. officials disappointed the Egyptian government by asking its traditional ally to leave the government, represented by the previous Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (Miller, 2019). This attitude has affected GCC strategies in recent years, leading to KSA establishing other alliances to preserve the region's security, for example, the Arab Alliance for Yemen and the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (Miller, 2019). These examples demonstrate the U.S. position toward sensitive issues related to the security of its partners that led to uncertainty and distrust regarding defense relations, resulting in a diversification of bilateral relations to promote security such as that carried out by Qatar during the blockade.

It is clear that the GCC countries relied on U.S. protection to preserve their security and confront threats in the region. As a result, such a reliance led to weakness in military capabilities and an inability to respond to new threats internally and externally by anticipating risks and threats. Previous studies focused on external threats to the GCC countries, such as those from Iran. However, there is a lack of literature focusing on the threat of GCC countries to one another, for example, the threat from KSA to other small GCC countries like Qatar. Therefore, the following section focuses on Qatar's security as a small state among the GCC countries.



The security dilemma has been evident in the Gulf region since Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait would not have been liberated without the American military's intervention. As a result, each state in the Gulf signed a defense agreement with the United States. In addition, the Qatari government understood that the decline of KSA's role in the region and the invasion of Kuwait constituted a test for Qatar. It was clear that the GCC, as an organization, failed to defend one of its member's territories and that KSA, the largest state in the Gulf, sought to secure its own borders and defend Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion. This situation encouraged the Qatar government to rethink its position in the region in terms of security, politics, and economics.

The blockade of Qatar introduced a new security risk to the GCC by threatening one of its members. This Gulf crisis demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the GCC in protecting its members as well as the need for individual members to diversify their defense and security strategies. This is reflected in the principle of self-interest, one of the pillars of establishing the GCC in 1981 (Ulrichsen, 2019). However, this principle disappeared due to factors such as mistrust between the GCC countries, particularly over defense and security issues and rivalries over influence in the region. Furthermore, the idea of mutual interest between the GCC members disappeared in response to the security variables in the region. The blockade was an indicator of this absence of mutual interest between the GCC members; the division and differences in their positions toward the blockade provide clear evidence. Their response to the Arab Spring of 2011 provides another example of the absence of mutual interest. In this way, the Arab Spring and the blockade were variables, but these conflicts and differences originated in the Iraq-Iran war; Oman then was neutral, yet KSA and Kuwait supported Iraq. Such actions constitute a piece of evidence that there

was trouble between the Gulf countries before the Arab Spring, but this event demonstrated these troubles more clearly.

Mistrust between the GCC countries influenced their attitudes regarding security issues and agreements related to security and defense. The security obsession among the GCC members resulted from instability in the region and KSA's expanding ambitions toward GCC countries. Therefore, the trust crisis between the GCC members began with border disputes. Most of these disputes are related to countries with lengthy borders with KSA; for example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a border dispute with KSA, which has not been settled, even after the treaty of Jeddah in 1974. In addition, KSA has interfered in the internal and domestic affairs of members of the UAE, which affected the unity of the federation (Al Mazrouei, 2017). Ulrichsen states that it is not clear what the GCC is; it is neither a political union nor a military alliance, and the members have been reluctant to grant supranational powers to the General Secretariat based in Riyadh (Ulrichsen, 2019).

In the following section, I analyze the defense strategy of Qatar chronologically according to security data.

#### *Qatar Defense Strategy: 1972–1995*

After Qatar gained independence in 1971, the government focused on building the state rather than defense, particularly as oil and gas fields had just been discovered. During the rule of Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani from 1972 until 1995, the Qatari government sought to guarantee national safety by sheltering under the umbrella of Saudi security, known as bandwagoning (Kamrava, 2017). The absence of a strategic vision in the Qatari government affected state security, the economy, and foreign policy.

After the British withdrew from the Gulf region in the 1970s, each Gulf state gained independence. KSA, the largest country, considered itself the leader of the Gulf states, particularly the religious leader. In response, Qatar followed KSA's foreign policy of bandwagoning under the umbrella of the GCC. At that time, Qatar did not act independently from KSA because Qatar had no political weight in the region. In 1992, the United States and Qatar signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA) that included a U.S. troop presence in Qatar, U.S. arms sales to Qatar, U.S. training, and other defense cooperation (U.S. Department of State, 2021). This formed the core of the U.S.-Qatari defense partnership.

It is noted that the focus during this period of building the state was on areas such as health and education rather than on defense until the invasion of Kuwait. In the following section, I explore the resulting changes in the defense perspective of the Qatari government.

#### *Qatar Defense Strategy: 1996–2013*

This period represents a transformation in Qatari government strategy both internally and internationally, reflected in all state sectors. Indeed, defense and security became a crucial concern for the Qatari government after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990; this was a sign for the Qatari government to focus on its defense and security policies and strategy. Therefore, the Qatari government adopted a strategy relying on the main pillars of ending the border dispute between Qatar and KSA and a balanced relationship between Qatar and KSA regarding Iran and financial independence (Kablan, 2020). The Qatari government decided to be fully independent in all fields rather than to be an extension of KSA (bandwagoning).

At this juncture, Qatar instituted a defense policy characterized by a strong focus on self-defense capabilities. It is important to emphasize that the defense policy of Qatar is first defined

in terms of self-interest; this means that state power needs investments to build and maintain a strong army capable of defensive and offensive action. Therefore, Qatar allocates enormous resources to acquire the equipment and services necessary to fulfill this goal.

Qatar's defense policy is driven by the need for self-defense and the strategy of sheltering, but this does not include neutrality. Being a key component of Qatari defense strategy, the alliance strengthened its strategic alliance with the United States and hosted a U.S. military base in Al Udeid (Kamrava, 2013). Accordingly, Qatar has sought to establish relations with regional rivals since 1995 and has preserved strategic relationships with the United States, the GCC states, and Iran. Moreover, Qatar has adopted an independent foreign policy to confront the security dilemma in the Gulf.

The Qatari government has used soft power as a tool to highlight its position in the region and focus on an independent foreign policy. The strong personality of Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani when he came to power in 1995 helped establish a new path for Qatar as a strong, independent state with its own foreign policy and develop soft-power tools such as Aljazeera, international investment, and diversification of international relations (Abu Sulaib, 2017). In addition, Abu Sulaib introduced two crucial factors that helped the Qatari government overcome its limited size: an American airbase at Al Udeid and mediation in regional disputes ("survival strategy"; Abu Sulaib, 2017). Moreover, Abu Sulaib emphasizes the importance of social stability for a solid and independent foreign policy, noting that Qatari society does not experience social issues like inequality or ethnic minorities ("Shia"; Abu Sulaib, 2017).

In addition, Qatar presented itself as a challenger to KSA through the Aljazeera platform. Aljazeera's use in promoting Qatar's image was on a par with KSA's influence and importance.

Moreover, through Al Jazeera, Qataris sought to bring Iraq back into the equation in an attempt to balance Saudi power. Additionally, a campaign was launched by Al Jazeera to weaken the international and regional siege against Iraq, and Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim announced an initiative calling for the removal of the international economic sanctions on Iraq and the normalization of its relations with Kuwait (Haykel, 2013). Indeed, the absence of Iraq from the Gulf equation promoted the potential for Saudi hegemony over its small neighbors. Nonetheless, the transformation in the international system as well as the military security provided by the United States- after 1991- inspired Qatar to pursue its own foreign policy. According to Kamrava, “The military security guaranteed by the United States enabled Qatar to focus its attention on nonmilitary issues and achieve its objectives through diplomatic strategies and the strengthening of its economy at home and abroad” (Kamrava, 2013). The DCA has been renewed twice, each time for 10 years, in 2002 and 2013.

The Saudi-Qatari struggle over independence passed through many stages, right up to the blockade of Qatar. KSA has attempted to control the political decisions of Qatar. However, the equation has changed, and Qatar, as a small country, has proven that it has a robust foreign policy accompanied by strong economic and social institutions that enable its survival and promote its role in international affairs. Further, Qatar maintains partnerships with countries such as Turkey and the United States to promote its security.

#### *Qatar Defense Strategy: 2013–2020*

Awareness of the need to improve defense strategy and security resulted in a positive transformation of this sector by the Qatari government. The diplomatic crisis of 2014 and the Gulf crisis of 2017 resulted in Qatar focusing on enhancing its defense strategy by diversifying its

strategic alliances. Two factors affected the defense strategy of Qatar and contributed to its reshaping: In 2014, KSA, Bahrain, and UAE withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar (Kablan, 2020). This was aimed at limiting the role of Qatari foreign policy during the Arab Spring and redirecting Qatari foreign policy's attitude and direction. This crisis ended after eight months when an agreement was signed between the parties in Riyadh. Then, in 2017, those countries (K.S.A, Egypt, Bahrain, U.A.E) imposed a blockade on Qatar. The blockade was a turning point in Qatar's history regarding defense, food security, economy, foreign policy, and society. As Krieg says, it was much more than a diplomatic crisis; it became an international conflict entering the political, social, economic, and information areas (Krieg, 2021). These crises had implications for Qatari defense strategy and policy in different areas. The following section focuses on the defense strategy the Qatar government has depended on to survive.

Qatar has been involved in various bilateral and multilateral military partnerships. Moreover, the Qatari government has preserved its defense strategy and policy throughout various crises using procedures such as partnership, defense preparedness, presence of foreign military bases, defense procurement, and mandatory military service. The Qatari government promotes its partnerships and focuses on diversifying them since the partnership is a vital element in the success of its defense strategy. Qatar maintains traditional defense partnerships with the United States, France, and the UK and nontraditional partnerships with Russia, Turkey, and China. Ulrichsen explains that the Qatari government decided to build up and improve its defense strategy and security policy leading up to World Cup 2022. These policies acquired importance after the blockade, particularly the traditional and nontraditional defense partners listed above (Ulrichsen, 2020). It is essential to highlight that the blockade crisis led to an exploration of the importance of

diversifying Qatar's military partnerships, particularly after American President Donald Trump's negative reaction to the blockade, in which he accused the Qatari government of seeking to destabilize the region (Ulrichsen, 2020). Trump's statements created uncertainty in Qatari-U.S. defense relations.

In the following section, the thesis examines Qatar's most important defense and military partnerships and explores the defense agreements between Qatar and its partners.

### *Partnership*

Qatar has focused on prioritizing the U.S.-Qatari partnership in fields such as defense, military, security, economy, and diplomacy. This massive bilateral relationship is reflected in all aspects of the Qatari government. Historically, the United States has been considered Qatar's main partner in defense and armaments (Ulrichsen, 2020). This US-Qatar defense relationship was established during the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war. Since 1992, the United States and Qatar have maintained a formal DCA that includes a U.S. troop presence in Qatar, U.S. arms sales to Qatar, U.S. training, and other areas of defense cooperation (U.S. Department of State, 2021). In addition, Al Udeid Airbase hosts up to 11,000 U.S. troops and coalition forces and is the regional headquarters for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM; U.S. Department of State, 2021). However, the American administration reacted negatively at the beginning of the blockade, represented by then President Donald Trump's statements in the media supporting the blockading countries. Qatar's bilateral relations have been deeply connected to U.S. institutions. In 2017, the Qatari government bought F-15 fighter jets for \$12 billion and signed a broad memorandum of understanding with the United States to cooperate against international terrorism; this represented a joint effort to disapprove the claim that Qatar supports terrorist groups. A strategic dialogue was

launched in 2018 between Qatar and the United States. In 2019, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to expand Al Udeid Air Base to improve and expand accommodations for U.S. military personnel at the cost of around \$197 million (Ulrichsen, 2020).

The above demonstrates that the Qatari government preserved its historical bilateral relation with the United States and promoted this relation during the blockade by signing defense and military agreements and cooperating in different ways despite the negative reaction of the United States at the beginning of the blockade. The Qatari government chose to preserve its relation with a traditional ally (the United States) and simultaneously augmented its defense and military strategies with other alliances.

The United Kingdom is one of the countries that has maintained a defense and military relationship with Qatar. In response to the blockade, Qatar and the UK signed a £6 billion contract to supply Qatar with 24 Typhoon aircraft (Ulrichsen, 2020). In addition, the two countries signed an agreement to build a joint operational squadron that included an electronic warfare system to provide continuous cooperation between Qatar and the UK. Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said, “It is a great pleasure to sign our biggest export deal for the Typhoon in a decade” (Ulrichsen, 2020).

France was Qatar’s main arms provider in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2019, Qatar and France promoted their defense cooperation during a visit by French Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe, during which he signed five agreements with Qatar’s Ministers of Defense and Interior. These agreements covered defense information exchange and cooperation to combat cybercrime (Krieg, 2019). In addition, Qatar bought 24 fighter jets from France in 2015, followed by another agreement to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets, estimated at \$1.3 billion (Ulrichsen, 2020).



The Qatar-Turkey defense partnership flourished in 2014, resulting in Turkey opening a military base (Al-Rayan base) in Qatar; this was Turkey's first military base in the Gulf region since the withdrawal of the Ottomans. Turkey opened a second military base in Qatar in September 2019. Turkey and Qatar share a similar perception of regional threats, particularly since the failed coup in Turkey in 2016 (Başkan & Pala, 2020). In response to the blockade, Turkey played a significant role in promoting Qatar's security, mainly when the blockading countries planned to invade Qatar.

Qatar has maintained a defense relation with Russia since 2016, and Russia reacted to the blockade by announcing that the crisis must be ended. Therefore, Qatar signed a military cooperation agreement and memorandum of understanding on air defense and military supplies with Russia in 2017. In addition, a deal was made for Qatar to buy S-400 air defense systems from Russia (Ulrichsen, 2020).

Recently, China has improved its military and defense cooperation with Qatar by expanding its participation in the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) in 2018 and 2014 and by selling Qatar an estimated \$24 billion in weapons (Ulrichsen, 2020). In addition, Qatar and China signed an agreement to enhance security cooperation in 2017. This agreement covers the fight against terrorism and extremism in all forms (Ulrichsen, 2020). In addition, China sold the SY-400 system with a range of 400 kilometers to Doha, the capital of Qatar. Moreover, Qatar and China held the first round of strategic dialogue in 2018, which emphasized strengthening their bilateral relations in all fields.

It is important to mention that Qatar has developed relations with NATO under the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. In addition, the Qatari government and NATO signed a security agreement

in 2018 providing a framework for exchanging classified information. Cooperation between Qatar and NATO is vital for Qatar because NATO is an international organization, and, as Qatar's defense minister said, his country's long-term strategic ambition is to join NATO (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

### *Defense Preparedness*

The Qatari government has focused on preparedness as an important part of its defense strategy. Defense preparedness refers to programs of joint military exercises aimed at achieving interoperability and promoting the effectiveness of the Qatari army (Katzman, 2021). Therefore, defense strategies are aimed at developing armies' ability to conduct joint operations. These strategy programs of training, education, and joint exercises have had positive effects on the Qatari army; US-Qatar military training is one example. Qatar's deputy prime minister and minister of state for defense affairs said, "Qatar's defense forces will be comprised of 80% American-made equipment and American training" (Katzman, 2021).

### *Presence of Foreign Military Bases*

The Qatari government has used foreign military bases as sources of defense and power. This became clear when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991, resulting in Qatar granting U.S. forces substantial military access by opening Al Udeid Air Base, the United States's largest air base in the Middle East, thus promoting the Qatari-U.S. partnership and granting Qatar priorities in military cooperation in terms of selling advanced military weapons. Adding to this was Turkey's military base (Al-Rayan) in Qatar, which contributed to deterring aggression, particularly during the blockade, through military training between Qatar and Turkey's armies.

### *Defense Procurement*

Defense procurement is one of the major strategies the Qatari government uses to enhance the defense capabilities of the Qatari army; it is considered the main source for arming, developing, and training the armed forces. Military expenditures are connected to the government's ability to spend, which is determined by the economy and natural resources. Therefore, Qatar has expended enormous budgets to acquire the necessary equipment (military items such as weapons systems and nonmilitary items) and services to allow the armed forces to fulfill their missions. As Krieg states, the military expenditures of the Qatari government were more than \$50 billion due to the signing of various military agreements, including protection, training, and weapons, from 2014 to 2018 (Krieg, 2021). Moreover, Qatar raised its military spending by about 245% during the blockade, becoming eighth on the list of countries importing military equipment (Saidy, 2020). Moreover, Qatar established Barzan Holding in 2018 to promote the military capabilities of the Qatari armed forces through manufacturing weapons and to enhance Qatar's relations with other weapons companies, such as Collins Aerospace and DynCorp International, to achieve self-sufficiency. In addition, the Qatar Barzan Company has signed agreements with the following companies: the Italian company Beretta for pistols and rifles for the military; the Turkish company BMC, which specializes in military vehicles; the Norwegian company Kongsberg, which addresses the fields of management systems, military communications, and navigation systems; the Turkish company Sur-International, which specializes in the manufacture of military uniforms; and the German company Rheinmetall AG to develop an ammunition manufacturing base in Qatar (Saidy, 2020).

In addition, the Qatari army has strengthened its capabilities in the field of satellite technology, represented by Suhail-1 and Suhail-2, launched in 2013 and 2018, respectively. Qatari

engineers played a major role in designing and manufacturing these highly sensitive systems. Mainly, these two satellites assist in controlling, supporting, planning, and deploying military resources (Saidy, 2020). Moreover, the Qatari government has focused on creating military and defense schools and academies to spread awareness of the importance of the military and defense. In addition, increasing military expertise is part of Qatar's vision for 2030.

### *Mandatory Military Service*

Qatar introduced mandatory military service in 2014 in response to the ambassador withdrawal crisis. This procedure reflected two things: first, the need to increase the number of soldiers in the military and train more people to use them during crises, and second, the unstable situation in the Gulf region and the low population of Qatar. Krieg points out that the Qatari government has heavily invested in recruitment and improving the image of the armed forces (Krieg, 2021). These were the most effective defense and military strategies adopted by the Qatari government to preserve the nation's security. These varying security challenges and threats affected the Qatari government's choices in terms of policies. The cyberattack on QNA and the military escalation during the blockade were new challenges for Qatar. Krieg states that the intervention of the Amir of Kuwait and the GCC was critical in halting military escalation during the blockade (Krieg, 2021). Therefore, it is important to identify the threats and challenges faced by Qatar, particularly regarding traditional challenges such as instability in the region and its geographical location between two large countries. In contrast, nontraditional threats are represented by military escalation and cyberattacks. Therefore, it is essential to focus on promoting military capabilities in all fields.

### *Examples of Other Small States' Defense Strategies*

Defense strategy is a crucial subject for small governments. Thus, it is important to shed light on other small states' strategies to understand how they manage their security and defense. The following section shows examples of small states inside and outside the Gulf region.

Taking the UAE as an example, it has commonalities with Qatar, such as culture, religion, language, geographical size, location, and natural resources (oil). In addition, both countries share the same security threats and challenges. Regarding defense policy and strategy, since gaining independence in the 1970s, the UAE government has focused on building the state by promoting the economic field and modernizing the state as opposed to focusing on military and defense (Hashim, 2020). Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, the UAE began to give more attention to military and security matters due to instability in the Gulf region (the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq). The UAE government began focusing on weapons deals and signed a defense agreement with the United States. This was followed by massive improvements in the military and defense sector through the UAE's partnership with international powers such as the UK and France. Therefore, the UAE has demonstrated a balanced force structure that encourages the expansion of its military projects beyond its borders into areas such as Yemen, the Arabian Sea, and the Horn of Africa (Hashim, 2020). In addition, the UAE has sought to promote its foreign policy by improving its bilateral relations with major powers, which serves its defense interests until diplomatic relations with Israel are normalized. The UAE government sees its security threatened (like Israel's) by Iran and the Islamic movement, so the UAE ignores all facets of the Arab conflict. Moreover, the UAE has achieved military self-sufficiency by building up its military capacity, while Qatar has focused on soft power and state branding (Krieg, 2021).

Singapore is another example of a small state. It is similar to Qatar as it has a small geographical area between two large countries (Malaysia and Indonesia). Like Qatar, Singapore has a British colonial history and a strong security relation with the United States (Hashim, 2020). Hashim emphasizes that defense and security are priorities for the Singapore government, so it has improved the country's military capabilities with the ability to project power beyond its borders. In cooperation with the United States, Singapore developed much of this capability and built Southeast Asia's most high-tech, best equipped, and best-trained military (Hashim, 2020). In addition, Hashim asserts that Singapore recognizes diplomacy as an essential aspect of its national security (Hashim, 2020).

Moreover, Singapore is achieving a high degree of self-sufficiency in sophisticated armaments due to strategies and policies adopted by Singapore beginning with its independence in the 1960s, for example, using diplomacy and military deterrence as twin pillars in overcoming its security dilemma. Moreover, Singapore diversified its bilateral relations with many countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, to promote military and defense cooperation (Bitzinger, 2021). In this regard, Singapore determined the vulnerabilities and threats to the small state. The result is that although Singapore is a poor country without natural resources, it now has the strongest economy in Asia due to its emphasis on economic development, education, and diversified international relations (Singh, 2021).

Overall, the referenced literature considers Qatar's defense strategy, security, and foreign policy as a fleshing out of the major pillars of defense strategy with a focus on how different factors define Qatar's active foreign policy and defense strategy. The earliest studies on the subject suffer from the following shortcomings:

First, these studies are not specific enough as they collectively deal with defense strategies of small states in general. Thus, they fail to analyze Qatar's defense strategy, particularly during the blockade of 2017.

Second, previous studies are primarily concerned with the security of Qatar as one of the GCC countries, mainly focusing on external threats like Iran. However, threats to Qatar from other GCC countries are not addressed in reference to Qatar's defense strategy.

Third, the literature related to the defense strategy of Qatar is generally scant, and the available studies are outdated. It is inadvisable to rely on them as they no longer reflect the efforts of the Qatari government in promoting defense and security sectors, particularly its massive investments in military education and security.

Finally, these studies are general as they collectively deal with Qatari foreign affairs as those of a small state in an unstable region. Thus, they fail to analyze how a small state's active foreign policy can promote security as it did during the blockade of Qatar in 2017.

## 2. Research Problem

Despite being a small state, Qatar is considered a significant player in regional and international politics. A small state in foreign policy is supposed to be different, either behaving neutrally or not interfering in regional issues; however, Qatar interacts with a number of regional issues and influences them by adopting various tools. Doing this, Qatar faces new political, economic, social, and security challenges. Regarding the political aspect, Qatar's hyperactive foreign policy is not accepted by other large states in the region; Qatar took their role even though these nations have more capacity and capability than Qatar. Accordingly, several opponents are

prompted to downsize Qatar's role in the region. For example, such states attacked Qatar in international forums and in the media. Qatar's security has been affected by such attacks and the ostracizing of Qatar. For example, KSA, as a large country, did not accept the role of Qatar in the region. The two countries had a history of bilateral relations until KSA, along with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, imposed a blockade on Qatar in 2017. This situation led to Qatar examining the effectiveness of its foreign policy regarding resilience and resistance to preserve its security. Qatar is one of several small states seeking to promote its independence and autonomy in political issues. This is particularly true considering that Qatar has been known as a peacemaker in the region. Additionally, the role of Qatar in the Arab Spring of 2011 was different from that of other states in the region. All of this resulted in a number of problems for Qatar because it exceeded what was expected from a country of its size.

Regarding the economic aspect, diversifying rather than relying on a rentier economy has been the most crucial challenge that Qatar has addressed. The Qatari government's goal was to overcome its limitations by building a massive economy with different investments in different countries. As a result, Qatar gained more influence in the political and economic spheres, so some countries sought to reduce this influence by distorting Qatar's reputation by publishing false news and attempting to foil Qatar's commercial deals.

Regarding the social aspect, Qatar has been challenged by international organizations that put pressure on the Qatari government in terms of human rights issues and foreign workers. This issue has been used to reduce the influence of Qatar in the international community. Human rights constitute a sensitive issue that could affect the reputation of Qatar internationally, so Qatar adopted several policies consistent with United Nations directives.



Hyperactive foreign policy enabled Qatar to compete for other big state roles. This political competition led to several sovereignty, autonomy, security, and defense issues. Qatar was able to reduce its risks by following specific foreign policy and defense strategies, particularly during the blockade. These policies confronted the challenges of the small state internationally and internally. On an international level, Qatar used an active foreign policy to introduce Qatar as a trusted partner in different matters and issues. Internally, it enhanced the security of Qatar by using a different defense policy. Therefore, Qatar became a model of a small state that is able to preserve its security by using soft power and diplomacy. In contrast, other large states, such as KSA, still suffer from insecurity at their borders.

As discussed above, it is clear that the significant role taken on by the small state of Qatar was not accepted. As a result, Qatar has faced challenges, particularly in terms of security and defense. The main issue is that Qatar focused on soft power, branding the state, and foreign policy rather than developing defense strategies. Since the blockade crisis, Qatar has focused more on security and defense strategy. However, it cannot ignore the role that its foreign policy played during the blockade, which resulted in the signing of several bilateral agreements between Qatar and other states as well as international visits for Qatari officials. This thesis focuses on Qatar's defense strategy, particularly during the blockade.

### 3. Situating the Study in the Field

Triangulation is used in this thesis because it helps facilitate the validation of data from more than two sources and permits the adoption of multiple sources. This technique applies and combines different research processes to study the same phenomenon. Triangulation allows for exploring, describing, and analyzing social phenomena (Mathison, 1988). Furthermore, it ensures

the research findings through different tools and increases opportunities to address the topic from all aspects. I use both the neorealism theory of structural realism and the nation-branding approach because the tools and concepts of these two theories are immediately related to the power of Qatar. For example, in understanding Qatari defense strategy, which is complex due to the many affecting factors, I do not use the small state theory because it does not explain Qatar's position in the region in terms of its foreign policy and defense strategy. For example, Qatar played a significant role in mediating between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Before that, Qatar mediated between the Taliban and the United States to end the 20-year-old war. Such mediation is not consistent with the theory that urges the small state to be either neutral or dependent (bandwagoning); the case of Qatar challenges the general theory of the small state. These theories' terminologies can help understand Qatar's strategy and measure the extent of the defense policy adopted by the Qatari government.

#### *Neorealism's Structural Realism Theory*

Neorealism's structural realism theory emerged as an improvement on classical realism theory. Therefore, it is important to highlight the origins of realism theory in some of humankind's earliest historical writings, particularly in Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War in 431 and 404 BCE. Realism theory focuses on security, the power of politics, the drive for power, human nature, conflict, and war. Based on realism theory, the state of relations between countries implies a world in which armed states compete against rivals and often go to war (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999). In addition, Pashakhanlou identifies realism as being "concerned with the world as it actually is rather than how it ought to be" (Pashakhanlou, 2009). Realists view power as the currency of international politics and believe that international politics is based on power (Dunne et al., 2010).

Philosophers of the realist school include Thomas Hobbes, Thucydides, Hans Morgenthau, Niccolò Machiavelli, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Max Weber. Hobbes' theory is called Hobbesian (realist tradition or realism). It describes international relations as constituting a state of war of all against all and an arena of struggle in which states fight against each other. The activity most typical of the international political system is war.

Realists define peace as a period of recuperation and relaxation from the previous war and preparation for the next war. The state is free to pursue its goals in relation to other states without moral or legal restrictions, so states have the right to do anything, such as cheating, killing, or stealing, to achieve their goals. Moreover, ideas of morality and law are valid only in the context of a society based on law. The international world is beyond law or morality (Bell, 2017). The only elements that may limit actions are prudence, expediency, or fear of consequences, and agreements between states will maintain these if it is advantageous for the states. As long as an agreement is not broken, there are no obligations. Adherents of political realism believe that politics, like society, is governed by objective laws which have their roots in "unchangeable" human nature that only changes when there is a risk. Understanding this law requires reason and experience; for realism, we know the truth from experience and give meaning through reason. Political realists understand international relations through concepts of interest defined in terms of power. Power has different meanings, but they are all relevant as long as they are used to achieve a state's interests; therefore, in this situation, when one understands the interest of the leader, one can predict their actions (Dunne et al., 2010).

Hans Morgenthau views men and women as political animals born to pursue power and dominate other people; this leads to the theory of *animus dominandi* (the animal dominates). He

believes there is no comparison between private and public morality in the international system. Moreover, he focuses on six principles of political realism. The first principle likens politics to human nature as unchangeable in terms of self-interest and selfishness. According to the second principle, politics must involve independent action. Third, Morgenthau describes international politics as a place for seeking one's interests, which leads to conflict depending on changing interests and situations in a state. He thinks that the ethics of international relations are different from personal morality. Finally, he elaborates on political realism, averring that most states use strategies as cover to achieve benefits such as human rights, and he states that politics is unsparingly connected with mankind's disadvantages and cannot be changed (Dunne et al., 2010).

Realists believe in the significance of state power as the only tool that can protect it from other states due to the lack of a world government to prevent these threats. In addition, realists believe that states invest as much as possible in developing their armed forces. They claim that states do this and join military alliances to strengthen their national security. Realists emphasize security as one of the most important responsibilities of states in protecting their citizens and maintaining their health and happiness (Jackson & Sørensen, 1999). Security is the state's aim, but at the same time, it causes insecurities for other states in the region; this paradox is called the security dilemma. Weapons provide security but also cause insecurity for others (Bell, 2017). For example, North Korea has developed its military to secure its citizens; at the same time, this has caused fear in South Korea. North Korea claims that it is developing nuclear weapons to protect its national interests, thus providing security for its people but causing insecurity for South Korea. This constitutes the main criticism of realism theory.

Neorealism theory is an outgrowth and response to the classical realism theory of international relations. It focuses on the concepts of anarchy, structure, capability, power, polarity, and national interest. The adherents of this theory believe that the international system constitutes structured anarchy, which refers to the absence of a world government. In international relations, the states have centralized legitimate authority (central power) that they can use to achieve their goals. Moreover, neorealists believe in the importance of the capabilities of states to ensure their survival; they identify the capabilities of the states as their economic, military, and technological capacities. Moreover, power is focused on the material capability of states, and maintaining a balance of power is the essential function of the states' armed forces. The state has other kinds of power in the economic and social areas that assist in building military power (Dunne et al., 2010). This power depends on natural resources and population.

Kenneth Waltz, a famous scholar of neorealism, focuses on differentiating between economic and political regionalism and developing systemic and scientific realism in his 1979 book, *Theory of International Politics* (Pashakhanlou, 2009). Waltz defines power based on population and territory size, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence (Waltz, 1979). In addition, Waltz criticizes Morgenthau's approach regarding the three aspects of human nature. First, Morgenthau assumes human nature is hypothetical since we cannot empirically confirm the true nature of humans; this makes it impossible to determine the validity of his thesis (Waltz, 1959). Second, Morgenthau's essentialist understanding of human nature is questionable, since a constant cannot clarify a difference, while Waltz argues that if human nature was the cause for war in 1914, it was by the same reasoning the cause for peace in 1919 (Waltz, 1959). Third, Waltz accuses Morgenthau of reductionism since he

seeks to describe the whole by the sum of its parts. Reductionism fails to account for the manner in which international politics always reoccur while the actors are in stable change (Waltz, 1979). According to Pashakhanlou, the variation between his theories and Morgenthau's lies in the fact that Morgenthau's bottom-up approach takes human nature as the beginning point and shifts up in the levels of interpretation. In contrast, Waltz's top-down approach starts at the third image and slowly shifts down to the unit level without ever reaching the individual level (Pashakhanlou, 2009).

There is a division in the concept of state power between the scholars of neorealism's structural realism. This is represented in the emergence of the conceptual dimensions of two neorealism scholars: Kenneth Waltz, who represents the defensive realist, and John Mearsheimer, who represents the offensive realist (Dunne et al., 2010). This, in turn, is reflected in responses to the question of how much power is considered enough for the state. The defensive realist responds that it is not wise for states to increase their power to the maximum because the international system will punish this. On the other hand, the offensive realist avers that the state should seek the maximum amount of power in order to gain domination and ensure its survival. In addition, the defensive realist argues that structural factors determine the amount of power for a state, which reduces the negative impact of security competition (Dunne et al., 2010). However, the offensive realist argues that the structural order encourages states to maximize their power to achieve hegemony. Therefore, it increases security competition (Dunne et al., 2010).

The differences between realism and neorealism can be highlighted in beliefs in human nature and an anarchic world system. These differences become evident in answering the question of why a state wants power. The answer for classical realists is that humans are born with the will

to power, while for neorealists, the structure of the international system forces states to seek power (Dunne, 2010). Both scholars, Morgenthau and Waltz, share some similarities in their views on international relations: both believe that there is no morality in politics and that it is legitimate for states to use power to achieve their goals. Essentially, power is the most important thing for them. They claim that the absence of a world government or authority forms the pretext for this situation. In addition, although both theories refer to changes to describe international relations, realism focuses more on human nature (Pashakhanlou, 2009).

I chose the neorealism theory because it explains the Qatari government's attitude and behavior regarding its defense strategy. In other words, the offensive realist- in neorealism- determines the amount of power according to the region's variables. In the case of Qatar, the adopted defense strategy interacts in accordance with stability and instability in the region, particularly the Gulf; for instance, Qatar signed various military and defense agreements during the blockade of 2017. More details regarding this point are addressed below in another section.

#### *Nation Branding and Soft Power Theory*

The notion of public diplomacy emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Later, during the Cold War, the modernization of the concept was connected to the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012). Therefore, superpowers adopted public diplomacy as a powerful policy tool and an alternative to propaganda (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012). Public diplomacy was promoted in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, the then dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, "to designate America's communication activities in cultural exchange and diplomacy" (Rasmussen & Merkelsen, 2012). The discourse on diplomacy constituted the public relations (PR) of states. Thus, political relations theorists consider an

amalgamation of public relations with aims. Grunig argues that “the field of diplomacy consists essentially in the application of PR to strategic relationships of organizations with international publics” (Grunig, 1993). In addition, Signitzer and Coombs aver that because of the extension of communications technology, political relations act in foreign policy “in a natural process of convergence” (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992).

Despite the success of public diplomacy as U.S. policy at the end of the Cold War, there was a shortage of government funding. Parallel to this institutional failure, the new notion of nation branding became the preferred practice of governments; however, in the wake of 9/11, public diplomacy has been revived as a policy tool and academic notion under the heading of new public diplomacy (Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2021). National branding is considered a natural extension of the latest neoliberal trend in international relations and its celebration of compound—and possibly mostly economic—interdependencies at the expense of traditional power (Rasmussen & Merckelsen, 2021). It is important to point out that Nye’s neoliberal theory of soft power holds that national reputation is required to conduct foreign policy. A positive reputation promotes soft power, such as culture, policies, institutions, and values. It can also assist in legitimizing the use of traditional hard power, such as economic sanctions and military interventions (Nye, 2004a, 2008).

In this regard, the brand is considered a customer's concept of a product; state branding includes international concepts about a particular country. Branding for political entities is a new concept and might be viewed as an expansion of cultural branding. A good example of state branding is when states are well-known for certain characteristics. For example, Hawaii and Florida are famous for their tropical fruits and beaches, and France is known for its culture and



cuisine (Peterson, 2006). However, state branding is as mercurial as consumer branding. Thus, successful state branding needs to be dogmatic and even brash. Globalization and the rise of the international media progressively help use image and reputation to redefine the state (Peterson, 2006). Another example of branding is when Tony Blair's government presented the brand of New Labour and forged an advertising campaign based on the slogan "Cool Britannia." Branding has been shown to be a state asset to assist in traditional considerations of power and geopolitics (Peterson, 2006). A negative effect of competitive branding can be a loss of uniqueness. The ever-rising aspirations of Dubai have resulted in that city-state becoming unique but still similar to every other place (Peterson, 2006).

It is important to illustrate that Nye used the term soft power in reference to public diplomacy and international relations in 1990 to describe co-optive power in contrast to hard power such as the military. Further, it is used to explain a country's ability to influence other countries' behavior or "to shape what others want" without utilizing hard power, which is "the ability to change what others do" (Nye, 2004a). Soft power is significant in the context of a struggle for objectives where persuasion and attraction can be employed to influence behavior (Fan, 2008).

Nation branding is considered a new aspect of interest in marketing that deals with a state's communications with people in other states. Therefore, both notions- branding and soft power- refer to a state's influence on the international stage and its reputation in the minds of international stakeholders (Fan, 2008). In essence, the concept of the soft power of attraction is based on the assumption of a connection between attractiveness and the ability to influence others in international relations (Fan, 2008).

Despite the fact that Nye coined the term soft power in 1990, the concept's origin goes back to the works of Hans J. Morgenthau, Klaus Knorr, and Ray Cline. Morgenthau determines nine factors of national power, including national character, the quality of diplomacy, national morale, and the quality of government. These factors are closely connected with intangible sources of power: soft power. Likewise, Carr states that power through opinion is no less fundamental for political objectives than military or economic power, and it has been closely linked with them (Fan, 2008). In contrast, the management and psychology literature has long promoted the advantage of utilizing referent (soft) power over forcible (hard) power (Cristo, 2005). Furthermore, Raven and French aver that there are five bases of power: referent, reward, legitimate, coercive, and expert. Soft power is a sort of referent power established through attraction and identification, and it yields the greatest influence in relation to the other powers. In this context, the notion of soft power can be traced back to more than two 2,000 years (Raven & French, 1959).

In some cases, negative soft power is a response to the failure of hard power. Coercion is the most negative power as it creates fear while lessening attraction, so it is a referent power. In contrast, soft power enables the use of hard power redundantly (Cristo, 2005). Hoagland criticized Nye by explaining what exactly soft power is, as the notion has become too distorted to mean nearly anything, thus nearly nothing (Hoagland, 2004). Hoagland also states that the examples used by Nye impact (effect) resources and sources (causes) are mixed up. Therefore, there is a need to note that sources and resources are not power per se, but they can function as power. The proprietor of these resources must transform them into power. Regarding this, three key elements should be considered in power conversion: social capital, social structure capital, and political structure (Treverton & Jones, 2005).

I chose the nation-branding and soft power theories because both explain the Qatari government's influence globally and regionally. In other words, nation-branding and soft power introduced Qatar as a global player in international relations, particularly in terms of its hyperactive foreign policy. In addition, Qatar has joined trends in sports and media; for instance, Qatar will host FIFA World Cup 2022. Thus, the Qatari government has used soft power to overcome its limited size.

In this regard, the neorealism and soft power theories can explain Qatar's active foreign policy and defense strategy. Each of them analyzes different aspects in terms of active foreign policy and defense strategy, particularly Qatar's ability to survive during the blockade. Other sections of this thesis further explain this.

#### 4. Research Objectives

This thesis contributes to the literature by addressing the relationship between foreign policy and defense and security strategies of the small state of Qatar. It sheds light on the role of foreign policy in promoting the security of the small state. It also addresses literature on the security of small states and the mutual relationship between security and foreign policy. In addition, it illustrates the importance of defense strategy for Qatar.

Foreign policy in a small state is reflected in the ability to integrate and interact with its external surroundings in terms of participating in regional issues, promoting peace, advancing national interests, and promoting bilateral relations with other states. This thesis examines the significance of political and economic clout and changes in defense strategies and policies for the small state. More specifically, the small state has certain concerns about security in terms of

preserving its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence. Political and economic clout impacts the state's security through enhanced political and economic relations with other states. Therefore, it reflects the level of cooperation between small and large states or organizations in the international realm. Continuous security threats to small states create security obsessions for their governments, which try to overcome such threats by following different strategies. Small states have used several security strategies to achieve stability and security and gain more influence in relations with other actors. In this way, small states can protect themselves against potential threats, engage with great powers, develop hedging strategies, or remain neutral (Vaicekauskaitė, 2017).

The security dilemma for the small state is exemplified by the limited resources that it possesses, particularly military capacity, geographical location, physical size, and natural resources. Therefore, the small state of Qatar can be studied in light of focusing on its active foreign policy in promoting security. In particular, this thesis contributes to broadening knowledge regarding the relationship between Qatari foreign policy and security and defense strategies. Most importantly, the security dilemma of the small state of Qatar is studied as a Gulf issue. Focusing on Qatari security and foreign policy apart from the Gulf states emphasizes the understanding of the political and military situation in Qatar. In addition, this analysis helps understand the challenges confronting Qatar in terms of overcoming its limited geographical size by describing new aspects of the small state in the realm of international relations, in which small states are seen as inactive countries that need to be protected from large states.

## 5. Research Questions

In light of the above-discussed shortcomings, this study contributes to the existing literature by investigating how Qatar's foreign policy strategies serve its security and defense strategy. In the thesis, I examine how diversification in foreign policy, defense, and military strategies is vital for a small state, particularly when the state has an active foreign policy in an unstable region. Moreover, I explain the motivation of Qatar for entering new alliances with Turkey and Iran and how these political and military alliances helped Qatar secure its territories from other GCC countries and Egypt during the blockade. Finally, I take into consideration the role of soft power and diplomacy in promoting security.

To this end, I ask three main questions:

- What are the variables that affect the defense and security strategy of Qatar?
- To what extent did the blockade on Qatar change the country's defense strategies?
- How Qatar's foreign policy, after the blockade, is consistent with its defense strategy?

## 6. Research Methods

This thesis follows qualitative research methods. It is essential to highlight that there are six often-used approaches to achieving qualitative research: basic grounded theory, phenomenology, qualitative research, ethnography, qualitative case study, and narrative analysis. This thesis chose a qualitative method for this research for two reasons. First, this study aims to analyze Qatar's defense strategy by focusing on the blockade as a variable affecting defense

strategy and the impact of an active foreign policy in promoting Qatar's security. This thesis focuses on the single case study of Qatar, which is part of the qualitative approach in which the analyst explores different sources, including primary and secondary sources, audiovisual material, documents, and reports. In addition, this method is recognizable by social scientists because of its acceptance in various disciplines (case analysis of a problem). The case study addresses explanations and analyses that guide me to answer the research questions in depth using interpretation and explanation methods. Accordingly, this method is more alluring than the quantitative method, which seeks to illustrate and foretell (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The primary characteristic of the case study approach is choosing the study object: the case. As Stake suggests, "Much qualitative research aims at understanding one thing well: one playground, one band, one Weight Watchers group. Moreover, the case study is not just a methodological choice, "but a choice of what is to be studied" (Stake, 2005). The case could be an individual that represents an example of an episode, program, group, firm, community, or particular policy. Bogdan defines a qualitative case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system"; this is congruent with other definitions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Creswell, 2013). Consequently, the qualitative approach is considered a case study research in which the researcher studies a case or cases through time using detailed data collection, including different sources of information such as audiovisual material, interviews, audiovisual material, observations, reports, and documents (Creswell, 2013).

## 7. Data Collection and Analysis

While preparing this thesis, data is collected using a document analysis approach, and two kinds of data are gathered: primary and secondary. The primary sources consisted of the official

Qatari government website, while the primary data was taken from official ministry reports and international organizations that referenced Qatari defense strategy and security. Furthermore, the interviews are held with 12 subject-matter experts, including officers from the Qatari ministry of defense and English-speaking academics. In addition, the interviews are done based on the IRB approval of Qatar University, which was approved on February 14, 2022. All interviews were conducted through Webex in March-May 2022.

The second kind of data was secondary sources such as media materials and social studies books and reports (literature). These sources come from researchers, libraries, and nongovernmental organizations and centers in Qatar.

There are two levels of data analysis: first, researchers “search for patterns that appear in the data, inter-relate them and link them to a context” (Rothe, 1993). Next, researchers perform what Rothe calls deep structure analysis, discovering how various schools of thought in different disciplines and orientations can reveal implicit structures in the data. Furthermore, Rothe states, “with respect to theory-related or pure research, a theory or a conceptual framework within the discipline in which we are operating can serve as the vehicle for data analysis” (Rothe, 1993).

## 8. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

In producing this thesis, I consider ethical issues quite seriously and seek neutrality and objectivity while analyzing official statements and documents. In addition, this thesis pursues to maintain credibility and accuracy in all the findings (numbers and facts) before generalizing them.

This research uses qualitative research methods, and all the limitations ingrained in this method exist in this research. I could not find a defense strategy for Qatar in the studies that address

defense, security, military, and foreign policy. Therefore, this research is limited. Moreover, there are some official reports that I could not use in my research because it is difficult to find them.



## CHAPTER TWO: SECURITY VARIABLES AND DEFENSE STRATEGY

### Introduction

Security is considered a sensitive subject for all states, as they seek to preserve security by focusing on defense strategies and security policies. States attach importance to focusing on internal and external threats to national security. So the defense strategy is changed based on the threats to the state. Thus, state security is reflected in internal and external stability. Internal stability refers to society, including economic stability. On the other hand, external stability signifies security stability in the region, for example, the Gulf region. Therefore, the dynamics of security are connected to external and internal threats. It is vital for governments to understand the indicators of these threats. Understanding the indicators can help governments predict risks and provide solutions. In other words, state readiness helps governments control threats. Therefore, Qatar has adopted different strategies in line with its security vulnerability; its defense strategies are affected by regional and international security variables. Adopting different strategies is negatively and positively illustrated in defense strategy and policy changes. Therefore, there is a need to analyze the variables affecting Qatar's defense strategy. This can be achieved by exploring historical events that contributed to such changes in the strategy. To this end, it is essential to explain and gain insights into historical events that led to instability in the Gulf region, along with considering the relation between political and security events and changes in Qatar's defense strategy.

The Qatari government has been able to preserve its security under unstable circumstances in the Gulf, a vital region due to its strategic location and role in supplying the world market with oil. Therefore, stability of security in the Gulf has been important for great powers, such as the

United States. Historically, the Gulf wars (the Iranian-Iraqi war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) affected Qatar's security stability. This chapter introduces the historical events that brought about changes in the Qatari defense strategy and how stability has affected it.

### Research Context

Security threats and challenges are considered serious by the Qatari government. In the 1970s, the British withdrawal from the Gulf region created a political and security vacuum. This vacuum, in turn, had impacts on governments in the Gulf; moreover, it coincided with the emergence of oil as a state's significant financial enabler in the region. These two critical historical moments had the potential to impact the Qatari government in terms of reconsidering its politics, security, and economy. The government was keen to establish a firm base for itself by focusing on building up ministries: foreign affairs, defense, health, and education. The Qatari government also focused on establishing balanced political relationships with other countries in the region, particularly its neighbors, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran. In addition, Qatar joined the United Nations in 1971. Indeed, it is clear that the Qatari government sought to organize its internal and external positions to control the situation in the Gulf after the British withdrawal (Zahlan, 2017).

Being a small state surrounded by two large states (Saudi Arabia and Iran), Qatar faces a security dilemma that requires more attention to drawing up a security policy reflected in adopting appropriate security plans and defense strategies. Threats and challenges to Qatar's security have changed continuously over time, in keeping with security variables in the region. Hence, security policy and defense strategy have always come as a response to these changes. For example, Qatar signed a defense agreement with the United States after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991

(Crystal, 2014). Further, it is essential to clarify that the British withdrawal created a political power gap that led to competition for control in the Gulf region. In addition, in the 1970s, political events and changes impacted security in the Gulf; 1979, in particular, was a significant year full of political events. The Iranian Revolution and its leaders' obsession with exporting their revolution had a bearing on the political stability of the regimes in the Gulf. Moreover, Al-Masjid al-Haram (the Grand Mosque of Mecca) was under siege, as a group of extremist insurgents was occupying it. Besides that, in 1979, Saddam Husain came to power in Iraq. In the same year, a war broke out between the North and the South of Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, respectively.

All of this limited the security choices for the Qatari government, as it was newly established in 1971, with no experience in addressing such political events. Therefore, the Qatari government chose to line up with other Gulf states in dealing with these political changes. For instance, after the Iranian Revolution, a sectarian threat arose as the Iranian regime sought to export the revolution to neighboring Sunni countries, urged the Shia minority in such countries to oppose the monarchies, and called for Bahrain to join Iran. Accordingly, the Gulf states united under the umbrella of KSA to confront Iran's ambitions for expansion in the region. However, KSA itself faced internal and regional security challenges; internally, there were the occupation of Al-Masjid al-Haram and the revolution of the Shia minority in Al-Qatif city.

On the regional side, external challenges are posed by the Iranian Revolution, the signing of the Camp David Accords, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On the one hand, KSA suffered from losing its allies like Egypt. After signing the Camp David Accord with Israel, Egypt became isolated. On the other hand, Iran became hostile towards KSA. In addition, there were

uncertainty and suspicion regarding the trustworthiness of the United States, which had been unable to protect its ally, the Shah of Iran, during the Iranian revolution in 1971 (Kamrava, 2011). Moreover, the Soviet Union was trying to gain access to Gulf oil. To respond to these threats and challenges, KSA sought to establish the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to unify the Gulf states. The competition between the Soviet Union and the United States to control the Gulf region contributed to increasing the struggle among Gulf countries supporting the two superpowers: KSA and Iran, in 1981. The Iranian- Iraqi war from 1980-1988 changed the security balance in the Gulf. The Gulf countries supported Iraq to limit the Iranian attempts to export the revolution. After that, Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1991. Therefore, this new stance shifted the security threats sources, making Iraq an enemy to the GCC, rather than an ally.

Significant shifts in the regional and international systems took place during the 1990s due to key factors having implications in the region, such as the Gulf War of 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the same year. This collapse shifted the world towards a unipolar system and allowed military victories in the Gulf by the United States, such as in the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as the subsequent intensive U.S. military presence in the Gulf region (Kamrava, 2011). The Qatari government took cues from the threats facing KSA, the failure of the GCC, as a regional body, to liberate Kuwait, and the failure of KSA, as a regional leader, to secure its borders during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Hence, the security dilemma in the Gulf region required certain steps from GCC governments to secure their existence. In response, the Qatari government signed a security agreement with the United States immediately after the Gulf war (1990-1991). Furthermore, Qatar adopted an independent foreign policy to confront the security dilemma in the Gulf region, which was clearly noticeable in the 1990s.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, followed by the US-led war against Iraq, changed the balance of power in the Gulf by weakening Iraq in favor of KSA (Cordesman et al., 2016). As a result, Iraq became isolated from most of the GCC states during 1991–2003. Consequently, Qatar’s fears increased regarding Saudi hegemony over the Gulf small states. Bernard Haykel argues that “the Saudis have never accepted that Qatar should be fully independent rather than, like Bahrain, a client state in need of Saudi protection and aid to remain viable” (Haykel, 2013). KSA aimed to be the leader of the small states in the Gulf in terms of politics and economy; however, this was not acceptable to Qatar.

The above discussion shows a comprehensive understanding by the Qatari government of the threat from KSA towards the sovereignty and security of Qatar starting in the 1990s. This situation led to a transformation in Qatari foreign policy and defense strategy, which was the core point of contention in the Qatari-Saudi tensions over regional and international issues, leading to later conflicts in the GCC region. KSA wanted to gain hegemony over Qatar, particularly when Sheikh Hamad came to power. KSA planned a coup in 1996 with its allies, the UAE and Bahrain, to remove Sheikh Hamad from power, but it failed. Afterward, KSA withdrew its ambassador from Qatar between 2002 and 2006 in a protest against what Aljazeera channel was broadcasting, a negative political report against the Saudi government (Ajaoud, & Elmasry, 2020).

When Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad came to power in 2013, three GCC countries (KSA, UAE, and Bahrain) withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar in response to Qatari perspectives and situations regarding the Arab Spring, which differed from theirs. Additionally, KSA, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt imposed a blockade on Qatar in 2017, and they announced that Qatar had to respond to 13 demands related to its independence and sovereignty. For example, they demanded

Qatar shut down the Al-Jazeera channel and cut its political relations with Iran (Abu Sulaib, 2017). They claimed that Qatar supported terrorism. These countries assumed that Qatar would not be able to withstand the blockade, but Qatar survived and even became stronger in different fields, such as defense and food security. For example, Qatar improved its defense industries by establishing Barzan Holdings. In addition, Qatar used to import fresh milk from Saudi companies, yet KSA prevented such exports to Qatar in order to put pressure on the Qatari government. However, Qatar was able to survive and improve its companies to replace the segments of Saudi companies in the market. As a result, the Qatari dairy company of Baldna and other domestic companies have flourished, replacing Saudi companies. Qatar succeeded in achieving self-sufficiency and began to export its products (Kablan, 2017). This clearly shows how Qatar was able to survive politically and economically despite the restrictions of the blockade. Furthermore, this crisis was an extension of a previous one that took place in 2013, as the regional and international situations in place were not favorable to KSA. This was particularly true because the Obama administration granted Qatar credit as a key regional player with good relations with Iran and Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood (Abu Sulaib, 2017). Qatar emerged with political and economic ambitions and achievements, seeking to compete with KSA's role in the region and the international community. However, political stability was crucial in achieving Qatar's security and sovereignty.

### Stability

Stability is essential in achieving security for both a region and a state. It is considered the base from which a government adopts its security policy and defense strategy. There is always an inverse relation between stability and defense strategy. The state gives more attention to improving

its defense strategy during regional crises such as wars and regional tensions. The state can identify threats to its national security based on its geographical location, size, and natural resources. Consequently, this results in improving state policy in terms of the available choices; for instance, a state that is a geographically large country with limited natural resources will adopt different strategies in security and defense as opposed to a state of a small geographical size located in a politically tense region. Thus, it is vital to identify vulnerability and threat points for each state as well as the strength points and then address them relying on the available natural resources.

Qatar, as a small state in the Gulf, is affected by stability in the region. This is evident during the Gulf crises and wars: the Qatari government reacted in accordance with the expected impact on its national security. The Qatari government's reactions and behaviors regarding regional security stability and political events must be understood as to whether they led to stability or instability. Hence, it is important to divide the periods of regional security events chronologically, focusing on the relation between these security events and the Qatari defense strategy. Therefore, security events in the Gulf region are divided into two stages. The first is 1971–1990, during which the British withdrew, and the state of Qatar was established. The second stage is 1991–2000, during which uncertainty and trust crises took place. This analysis discusses defense strategy responses to the political and stability changes in the Gulf region. Additionally, it points out the impacts of stability or instability on improving defense strategy.

#### British Withdrawal and the Establishment of the State of Qatar: 1971–1990

Historically, the decision of the British government to withdraw from East of Suez in 1968 created a political vacuum in the Gulf region. This vacuum affected the political choices of the small state of Qatar, which gained its independence in 1971 by ending the treaty of 1916 and

signing a friendship treaty between Qatar and Britain (Hunter, 1995). This period is considered a transformation in the history of the state of Qatar, occurring mainly in the political and economic realms due to the new state of oil extraction and political and defense independence from Britain.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, the ruler of Qatar, sought to build up state institutions, including ministries of health, education, and foreign policy. The concept of defense strategy was new to Qatar as it had formerly enjoyed British protection. Thus, the Qatari government focused on the modernization of the state in all aspects. This was reflected in the building up of the economy through signing agreements with oil companies to extract oil; in that way, oil revenue increased the state's income, thus contributing to the flourishing economy (Hunter, 1995).

At that time, the focus was on building the infrastructure of the state. Sheikh Khalifa enacted laws to organize the authorities in the state and established Shura Council (Consultative Assembly) that contributed to enacting laws. He also laid the foundations for approving the state budget (State of Qatar, n.d.). At the international level, Qatar joined the League of Arab States and the United Nations in 1971, thereby establishing bilateral relations with other countries. At that juncture, the defense aspect was new to Qatar; the first defense ministry was established in 1973.

The first defense minister was Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, appointed in 1977 (Amiri Diwan, n.d.). In 1981, responding to security challenges in the region, such as the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the six Gulf monarchies (KSA, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar) established the GCC. The goals of this council included coordinating the political, economic, social, and security decisions of these states to address the security challenges in the region (Yetim, 2020).



As mentioned above, the State of Qatar was established in 1971, and at the time, the government focused more on aspects related to the building of the state than defense. In fact, it lacked experience in dealing with security threats and challenges because it had been under British protection before gaining independence. Because oil and gas were the only natural resources possessed by Qatar, the government focused on improving the hydrocarbon sector and using hydrocarbon revenues as a major source of income and for developing other sectors. Security concerns were not a priority for Qatar's government until the Iranian-Iraqi war in 1980, which sparked the need to address security challenges in the Gulf. Concurrently, the transformation in the region's balance of power affected the Gulf states' security concerns. Thus, the Qatari government relied on the GCC to enhance its security through collective actions by signing security agreements with other countries.

Despite the lack of experience throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Qatari government attempted to address the security of the state by relying on its own capabilities as well as cooperation with other states in the region. Qatar's security concerns remained in line with those of the region. Qatar joined multiple alliances to develop and maintain its security capabilities. For example, it played a role in founding the GCC in 1981 and signed the Damascus declaration in 1991, which formed a coalition between the GCC countries, Syria and Egypt. This declaration aimed to coordinate political, security, and economic areas among the signatory countries to face the fears engendered by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (Al-Misfir, 2018). In addition, the Qatari government agreed to participate in the proposed Arab arms industry to be based in Egypt by providing \$400 million (Axon & Hewitt, 2020).

Deteriorating relations between the superpowers (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the US) contributed to the unstable situation in the Gulf region, the revolution in Iran, the 1980 war between Iran and Iraq, and the Soviet war in Afghanistan. In addition, the Arab world suffered from Israeli aggression against Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq because of the failure to resolve the Palestinian issue. Therefore, the Qatari government feared that the country would be drawn into a struggle beyond its control (Axon & Hewitt, 2020). However, the Qatari government determined to retain the country's independence and sovereignty (Axon & Hewitt, 2020). Moreover, to enhance its military capacity, the Qatari government bought 14 Mirage F1 fighters from France in 1981 (Axon & Hewitt, 2020). As tensions and conflicts in the Gulf and struggles in Lebanon continued, there was increased pressure on the Gulf countries to reinforce their own defense and internal security.

The main concern for Qatar was that the instability could be exploited by the superpowers to increase their presence in the Gulf, so Qatar backed efforts by other GCC countries to increase their defense capabilities (Axon & Hewitt, 2020). However, disputes regarding the role of the United States' reluctant action drove Kuwait to suggest establishing a Gulf-wide rapid deployment force that the GCC countries themselves would control. There were varying perspectives among the GCC countries; for instance, Oman and KSA were in favor of a greater U.S. presence in the region, while Kuwait and the UAE feared that the increase of U.S. presence could encourage the Soviets to interfere. In general, Qatar supported KSA in preserving neutrality in the Gulf (Axon & Hewitt, 2020).

The Qatari government had been spending around 20 percent of its budget on defense. However, this percentage had been reduced by the end of the Iranian-Iraqi war due to falling oil

revenues. As a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, it was expected that the defense expenditures of Qatar would be renewed. Qatar was vulnerable to air attacks due to its shortage of fighters: the country was estimated to have 14 fighters and even fewer pilots in the early 1990s. Qatar would have to rely on multilateral forces for its defense if there were to be a conflict in the region, as the Qatari army numbered only 5,000 men, 70% of whom were not native Qataris (Axon & Hewitt, 2020). This explains the weakness of Qatar's defense policy and capacity during that time.

To summarize, the Qatari government tried to avoid relying on superpowers like the United States for its security, but this position changed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The failure of self-defense and cooperation with other Gulf countries to maintain security led to the need to diversify the sources of security and enter into defense agreements with large countries to guarantee the security of the small state of Qatar.

#### Uncertainty 1991–2000: Trust Crises

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, both of security and defense were an obsession for Qatar. The failure of GCC countries to secure one of its member states- Kuwait- resulted in mistrust among the GCC countries. Later, this mistrust became deeper and more comprehensive. At this stage, the Qatari government reorganized its defense tools and security; it focused on defense and security policy, particularly after the Battle of Alkhfose in 1992. This short-term battle resulted in KSA controlling Alkhfose, a city located near the borders between KSA and Qatar. This battle represented the Saudi ambition to expand into Qatar (Al Jazeera, 2014), thus creating new security concerns for Qatar because the threats came from a neighboring country and ally. As a result, the Qatari government sought to take advantage of available security choices represented through its military cooperation with the United States.

The main results of this cooperation were the opening of the Al-Udeid Airbase and the signing of defense agreements. Another important factor that affected Qatar's security and defense plan was Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa coming to power in Qatar in 1995. This led to a transformation in the Qatari government's perspective and ambitions, particularly resulting from political and economic crises brought about by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and border disputes between GCC countries, such as those between KSA and Qatar and between Kuwait and KSA. All this led to Qatar's need for a new perspective and development plan internally and externally (Al-Misfir, 2021). Thus, the Qatari government focused on changing Qatar's role internationally by adopting independent politics as well as new concepts and critical positions in international forums based on sovereignty to achieve the state's interests and preserve its security and peace (Al-Misfir, 2021).

This transformation in Qatar resulted in becoming more politically and economically independent from KSA and other GCC countries. This was made clear when Qatar renewed its political relations with Iraq in the 1990s, sparking widespread criticism of Qatar from other GCC countries. In addition, Qatar successfully solved disputes between Sudan and Eritrea in 1998 (Al-Misfir, 2021). As an example of the threats and challenges to Qatar, the Saudi government planned a coup in 1996 in Qatar during the reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. This provided evidence of the Saudi ambition to expand into Qatar.

This clear sign led the Qatari government to realize that KSA posed risks and challenges that were inconsistent with those of a peaceful ally and neighbor. In the mid-1990s, Qatar and KSA solved their border issue through negotiations, and a company was assigned to draw the borders between the two countries (Al-Misfir, 2018). Moreover, Qatar would now rely on external stability and foreign alliances to reduce threats and, in a worst-case scenario, help in their defense if needed

(Gray, 2013). In addition, the Qatari government diversified its defense alliances with different states to preserve its sovereignty, for example, through military cooperation with the UK and France.

## Conclusion

Qatar's stability and security have been connected to the security and stability of the Gulf region. Nevertheless, the region went through several wars and political crises after the British withdrawal from the region in the late 1960s, creating a political vacuum in the Gulf region and the newly established governments. The lack of political and defense experience affected the decision and choices of the Qatari government. In the 1970s, the Qatari government focused on building government institutions, rather than defense and security strategy, particularly with the extraction of oil and gas, which were considered the main natural resources for the state of Qatar. The political and security events in the 1980s created challenges for the Qatari government, such as the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iranian-Iraqi war in 1980-1988, followed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Therefore, the Gulf region's instability has affected Qatar's defense strategy in terms of defense or security choices. For instance, after Iraq had invaded Kuwait, Qatar preferred to sign a defense agreement with the United States, rather than resorting to collective security under the umbrella of the GCC.

Connecting the historical and security events to the defense strategy of Qatar is vital to understand the process of improving its defense strategy. Therefore, historical security events are divided into two stages. The first is between 1971-1990, during which the British withdrew, and the state of Qatar was established. The second stage is between 1991-2000, which is considered the period of uncertainty and mistrust for Qatar security. The security threats and challenges for

the Qatari government had transformed from external threats to Qatar, as a GCC member, to threats from GCC members to Qatar. External threats are considered threats outside the GCC countries, like those from Iran and Iraq, while the other threats are those from GCC countries like KSA. Such threats will be deeply discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: IMPACTS OF THE BLOCKADE

### Introduction

The blockade introduced the Qatari government to a new era represented by transforming its preparedness throughout the state. This transformation extended to different political, social, and defense sectors. The blockade was a new challenge for the Qatari government's ability to protect the country's sovereignty and the citizens' safety and to ensure the availability of goods and food in the market. Moreover, the blockade was both an international and a domestic challenge. Internationally, the Qatari government had to contend with allegations that it supported terrorism. Thus, it activated its international relations by mobilizing its foreign policy. Internally, the Qatari government had to address security threats to food security, the security and safety of citizens, and sovereignty. In response, it imported goods and food from different countries by air. In addition, the Qatari government ensured the security of citizens and its sovereignty through a defense and security strategy.

The blockade has tested the Qatari government's effectiveness in addressing the crisis and unexpected challenges. This contributed to discovering weaknesses and strengths in the strategies adopted by the governments in order to confront the crises. Accordingly, improvements are made to the government's food security, defense, and foreign policy strategies. For Qatar, an active foreign policy was considered a pillar of survival during the blockade. The diversification of bilateral relations between Qatar and different countries and the country's active role in the international community and organizations helped the small Gulf state to defend itself internationally on the basis of international laws. This contributed to reducing risks associated with the blockade. Moreover, the blockade led Qatar to improve its defense strategy; in particular, the

Qatari government relied on a more powerful ally, the United States, for defense.

The blockade was a significant challenge for the Qatari government, leading to positive and negative outcomes. On the one hand, the efficacy of the government's strategy in all fields was recognized, and the government gained experience in addressing future crises. In addition, Qatar gained a good international reputation. On the other hand, the government had to navigate new restrictions imposed by the blockade, such as closed land and sea borders; however, it was ultimately able to overcome these restrictions. Therefore, it is essential to understand Qatar's foreign policy and defense strategy. This chapter focuses on the pillars of Qatar's foreign policy, the blockade's ramifications for Qatar's defense and foreign policies, and improvements in defense strategy.

### The Pillars of Qatar's Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is considered a link between the state and other states in the international community. As a small state, Qatar has actively used foreign policy to enhance its regional and international role. Foreign policy enabled Qatar to play a significant role in sensitive issues, such as mediating between the United States and the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. According to Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017), this shows the significance of having a strong foreign policy, that it can, in turn, identify the state's role, whether it is a big or small state. In international relations, the traditional idea of the small state is that it does not have a role in the international community due to its vulnerability. In this regard, small states are usually marked by the widespread belief that they cannot influence the international system as they consider themselves incapable of having any impact, unlike the middle and great powers known for their impact on the international system. However, this is not true with the small state of Qatar because of its



involvement in international affairs (Thorhallsson & Steinsson, 2017).

However, Qatar represents a new model and an exception for the small state. As it is known in international relations, a small state does not have an influence or power, as it has a limited capacity and capability of influence. Kabalan (2019) assures the international relations theory assumes that the international system is a system of great powers. So, the small states' existence and foreign policies are not important because they totally depend on great powers. Furthermore, Szalai (2017) explains that the small state theory introduces the small state with a small foreign policy, meaning that it does not influence the foreign policy. Therefore, the small state theory does not explain the behavior of Qatar in foreign policy. Thus, there is a need to analyze the tools and pillars of Qatari foreign policy. In addition, the Qatari government's public diplomacy has played a vital role in Qatari foreign policy, particularly during the blockade. Public diplomacy refers to the communication and dissemination of messages aimed at a foreign public to create public dialogue about a matter of concern; thus, a government seeks to either influence or inform a foreign audience (Al-Muftah, 2019). Public diplomacy is considered a soft power tool and includes political engagement, sports and science diplomacy, digital diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, and citizen diplomacy. Most officials and diplomats use public diplomacy as a tool to engage with nongovernmental actors, such as private individuals, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), journalists, civil society, and corporate think tanks (Al-Muftah, 2019).

The Qatari government has actively used public diplomacy in response to the blockade. For example, an article by Foreign Policy reported that Qatar invested in a highly effective political engagement campaign (Al-Muftah, 2019). Indeed, the Qatari government used public diplomacy

to successfully counter Saudi Arabia's and the Emirates' securitization attempts to portray Qatar as a threat to regional security. Public diplomacy also allowed the Qatari government to respond to a digital information war that the four blockading countries initiated and begin a proactive public communication campaign to portray Qatar positively. Moreover, the desecuritization of the blockade crisis was expedited by active diplomatic efforts to counter the anti-Qatar narratives disseminated by the blockading countries (Al-Muftah, 2019).

Furthermore, Heibach (2021) assures that Qatar has used public diplomacy to respond to the blockade; notably, Qatar's diplomatic campaign defeated Saudi Arabia and became closer to Iran and Turkey. Qatar's campaign has cost around \$1.5 billion in Washington and was able to renew its strategic partnership with the United States, in contrast with the failure of the Saudi campaign to approve the blockade (Heibach, 2021). Participant Five introduced the importance of using public diplomacy as a response to strengthen Qatar's position against false accusations during the blockade. In addition, awareness of the importance of public diplomacy has increased after the blockade; thus, Qatar's government opened Katara Center for Public Diplomacy in 2021. Qatar also took over the presidency of the International Public Diplomacy Network in 2019 (Participant Five, 2022).

There were two turning points in Qatari foreign policy: Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's rise to power in 1995 and the blockade in 2017. Qatar became a crucial political actor on the international level by playing a significant role in regional issues, disproportionate to its stature as a "small state." In fact, the diplomatic approach followed by Qatar since the late 1990s challenges international relations theories that assume that small states are restricted by their material circumstances, capabilities, and inability to overcome their reliance on international

economic relations (Mohammadzadeh, 2017).

It is important to understand why and how Qatari foreign policy practices are considered over Qatar's weight. First, the Qatari government has used foreign policy as a tool to overcome the country's small size. In other words, the Qatari government has played a significant role in regional and international issues and created an image of Qatar as a trusted global player in international relations to establish a favorable position for itself. When Qatar became an important player in the Gulf region's strategic stability and the Gulf in line with the interest of the major power in the region (the United States), other states grew concerned about Qatar's security and stability. Taking the blockade as an example, the international community has sought to resolve the crisis by trying to calm things down and bring the views closer between the parties. Within two weeks of the blockade, the blockade countries had little regional support and no international support (Ulrichsen, 2020). In addition, Rex Tillerson, the foreign secretary of the United States, visited Qatar and other Gulf states to alleviate the crisis in 2017 (Ulrichsen, 2020).

The Qatari government successfully played an active regional and international role in foreign policy by exploiting natural resources, such as oil and gas, to serve its national interests. More specifically, the Qatari government used revenues from natural resources to invest in different countries. For instance, Qatar invested more than £40 billion in the United Kingdom (Shoeb, 2021). In addition, it has invested in growing its international role by contributing to international initiatives for refugees and other initiatives overseen by the United Nations. For example, the Qatari government announced that it would cover the costs of evacuating African migrants in Libya, which amounted to approximately \$20 million (Amiri Diwan, 2019). Moreover, the Qatari government contributed approximately \$16 million to the UN High Commissioner for

Refugees (Qatar Fund for Development, 2018). In addition, Qatar announced its support and financing of United Nations organizations with \$500 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

The first turning point in Qatari foreign policy was in 1995. A transformation in Qatar's attitudes and agenda for regional issues was significant for two reasons: Qatar's location between two large countries (Saudi Arabia and Iran) and the GCC's failure to defend Kuwait in the Gulf War in 1991. This led the Qatari government to reconsider its regional and international position and different methods to overcome risks and challenges related to security and defense. Therefore, the Qatari government used the foreign policy as a tool to minimize risks and create an important position for Qatar in the region. This transformation was connected to Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's rule and the efforts of his foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani. This was considered a starting point for the Qatari government to make more independent political decisions on border disputes between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Thus, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa and Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim led the internationalization of Qatari policymaking and accelerated the development of Qatar's liquid natural gas (LNG) resources (Ulrichsen, 2020). Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's vision went against the status quo. His vision was highlighted by Qatar's media, foreign policy, and economy, which were going toward maximizing the benefit of the country's capabilities and natural resources (Kabalan, 2021). Therefore, Qatari foreign policy came to reflect Qatar's national interests, its leader's ambitions for the region, and the country's security needs.

In 2017, the Saudi and Emirati media created the notion of the regime of "Hamadayn" (i.e. the two Hamads) in order to justify the blockade of Qatar (Ulrichsen, 2020). However, the distinct "Qatari approach" to regional and foreign affairs came to be associated with the 18-year rule of Sheikh Hamad between 1995 and 2013. When Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani assumed power

in 2013, he decided to forge his own path in handling regional and foreign affairs rather than continue along the path of his father, Sheikh Hamad (Ulrichsen, 2020). It is important to note that Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa adopted different offensive and defensive strategies to integrate Qatar into the global economic system and position the country as a center of Liquefied Natural Gas production for the world. His approach included the creation of balances of power, building alliances, using soft power, mediation, media, sports, culture, thoughts, financial aid, charitable and humanitarian works, and public diplomacy, and establishing international companies and investments. In addition, he developed relations with besieged forces and entities or international pariahs. Therefore, Qatar's important and active political and economic role and media are the main important tools to preserve its autonomy. Using these tools, Qatar follows a non-traditional strategy that aims to emphasize the state's brand to preserve its security by making the regional and international conflicting power interests preserve Qatar's security and autonomy (Kabalan, 2021).

As a result of the active foreign policy, Qatar's government has suffered from two crises. The first crisis was in 2014, which is called "Ambassadors' withdrawal," and the other was the Blockade crisis in 2017. Qatar's government played an active role in the Arab Spring in 2011, which was not accepted by its neighbors (KSA, UAE, Bahrain). This stems from disagreement in political viewpoints, as Qatar supported the freedom rights of Arab peoples and the Muslim Brotherhood. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Bahrain looked at the Muslim Brotherhood as an enemy that affected the security of the Gulf (Participant One). Therefore, these three countries tried to reduce Qatar's role in the region and limit its political role to be under the GCC umbrella, but they failed. Consequently, they imposed an unsuccessful blockade. In contrast,

Qatar became stronger than before and more effective regionally and internationally in politics, economy, and defense (Participant Three).

Berni (2020) has illustrated that the foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have evolved differently according to Qatar's foreign policy imperatives based on each side's perception of threats. To support this argument, he gives an example of dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Yemeni and Syrian civil wars, which fundamentally split Qatar's regional security understanding from the blockading states (Berni, 2020).

Qatar's foreign policy behavior was developed after 2017 on the basis of articulated security perceptions toward its neighbors (Berni, 2020). Furthermore, Berni (2020) argues that the blockade has strengthened the state apparatus and even consolidated its bonds with society, although the blockade came as a perceptual shock to the Qatari decision-makers at the beginning. Therefore, the need to analyze the pillars of Qatar's foreign policy arises. I will discuss these pillars in the following paragraphs.

### Global Energy Markets

The energy sector is essential for the Qatari government because natural resources (i.e., oil and gas) are significant for Qatar's status as a small state on the international and regional stage. Its political environment and geographical location between two large countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran, restrict the Qatari government's political and security choices. Thus, the Qatari government chose to exploit natural resources to minimize security and political risks and enhance the country's position in the global energy market, aiding its stability and independence. Notably, Qatar is the only country in the GCC with liquid natural gas. Thus, Qatar has been able to maintain

its position as the second-largest LNG exporter in the world (77 million metric tons in 2021) and is heavily invested in keeping its position as the world's most controlling player (Al-Haidous et al., 2022). It plans to increase LNG production by 64% by 2027 to produce 126 million metric tons annually (Al-Haidous et al., 2022).

In addition, the Qatari government developed the economy by focusing on the energy sector, representing Qatar's wealth when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa came to power in 1995 (Khatib, 2013). In 2006, Qatar became the largest exporter of LNG in the world. The improvements in gas fields contributed to the growth of the Qatari economy. In turn, there was growth in other sectors, such as health, education, politics, and defense. Therefore, Qatar has established a position for itself in the global energy market, which grants it a certain amount of power as a small state.

There is a link between Qatar's financial and political independence that is very important to understand. If a state is wealthy and plays a role in energy markets, this creates opportunities in other sectors, enabling Qatar to become a major player in international and regional relations. There is demand in the international energy market for Qatar's LNG; the government signed several long-term LNG export contracts with other countries, including Japan, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and China (Al-Haidous et al., 2022). As a result, these countries' cooperation and political relations with Qatar have improved. Financial independence granted Qatar influence in energy markets. Moreover, the Qatari government has been able to use oil and gas revenues to develop the state and increase Qatar's international involvement, such as providing international aid to refugees and the Gaza Strip in support of the Palestinian cause.

However, its largest neighbor Saudi Arabia, viewed Qatar's financial independence as a

threat, as it would grant Qatar full financial and political independence from other GCC countries (Kabalan, 2021). The north dome gas field, discovered in 1971, is the largest gas field in the world. However, the Qatari government could not exploit it because Saudi Arabia did not allow it to build a gas pipeline through its territory (Kabalan, 2021). Nevertheless, many specialists consider Qatar's power in specific areas, such as the hydrocarbon sector, to be greater than expected for a small state.

### Soft Power

Branding is a pillar of Qatar's foreign policy. According to van Ham (2001), a customer's ideas and attitudes towards a certain product comprise its brand. Consequently, he added that a "brand state" refers to world attitudes, ideas, and perceptions of a state. In this context, Roberts (2012) stated that the ruling elite of Qatar has always sought to construct an ideal image of Qatar in business, human rights, diplomacy, and modernization. In addition, they recently acknowledged that oil and gas are nonrenewable energy sources. Therefore, Qatar cannot indefinitely depend on them as a business branding source. Therefore, the Qatari government followed a diversification policy in the oil and gas industry to maintain the country's stability.

To brand itself in various fields, Qatar adopted a policy that would benefit it at the local, regional, and international levels. According to Peterson (2006), several initiatives and efforts were established to aid Qatar's branding. From a political perspective, Qatar adopted an outstanding stance within the GCC and many other regional organizations, such as the Arab League (Peterson, 2006). Qatar's branding has been useful for generating and fostering a healthy business atmosphere, increasing the state's international image and prestige, and confirming its internal and external legitimacy. All these elements strengthen Qatar's survival as an independent country.



As for foreign policy and soft power, Qatar is classified as a small state that plays a significant role in politics and international relations (Abu Sulaib, 2017; Al-Horr et al., 2019; Kamrava, 2017; Miller, 2021). Miller (2021) attributes Qatar's outsized role to its energy sector, the source of its power. Similarly, he referred to the methods and strategies used by the government of Qatar to maintain growth in the energy sector along with its foreign policy (Miller, 2021). On the other hand, Al-Horr et al. (2019) argue that Qatar's power is derived from its status as a small state with a small population and its relations with global superpowers due to its participation in resolving disputes in many parts of the world. In addition, Qatar has provided aid to areas such as Palestine, Syria, and Myanmar. Consequently, Qatar has various types of power for achieving its international and regional goals, known as soft power (Al-Horr et al., 2019). Hence, Al-Horr et al. (2019) explore the different types of power used by Qatar to achieve its goals during the blockade in 2017 and highlight differences between hard, soft, and nested power. He defines nested power as the utilization of different tools and means to take advantage of them for the multi-dimensional purposes of branding, attracting, hedging, and positioning. It allows small states to protect their sovereignty and resources and become international players (Al-Horr et al., 2019).

Kamrava (2017) argues that Qatar has used multiple types of power that reflect its international position, which he calls "subtle power". The concept of subtle power is relevant for small states that do not have extensive military power or export cultural values, as it explores how small states use positioning and branding and tools such as marketing and diplomacy to gain influence. Kamrava bases the term "subtle power" on Qatar's behavior in international politics and its approach to exercising influence. He argues that Qatar's accumulation of power cannot be simply interpreted through hard or soft powers; instead, other elements should be taken into

consideration, such as “agility, dynamism, influence, financial resources, and the ability to capitalize on emerging opportunities” (Kamrava, 2017, p.66).

In addition, Abu Sulaib (2017) analyzes Qatar’s active foreign policy by focusing on many of the state’s features, such as Qatar’s stature as a small, wealthy state with a small population; the Qatari government’s strong decision-making power; the state’s use of soft power tools; and its political and social stability. More specifically, Abu Sulaib (2017) examines Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani’s strong personality when he came to power in 1995 and how he established a new path for Qatar as a strong independent state, a distinct foreign policy, soft power tools such as Al Jazeera, international investments, and diversified international relations. In addition, he identifies two important factors that helped the Qatari government overcome the state’s small size: American presence at Al-Udeid Air Base and mediation in regional disputes “survivals strategy” (Abu Sulaib, 2017). Moreover, Abu Sulaib (2017) explains the importance of social stability for a strong independent foreign policy, noting that Qatari society does not have social issues such as inequality or ethnic minorities, “Shia,” for example.

Antwi-Boateng (2013) emphasizes that concentrating on Qatar “demonstrates how a small country can punch above its weight by exerting soft power influence and shaping the course of history in the Middle East”. He identifies soft power in Qatar’s different policies, such as its redistribution of wealth to citizens, military alliance with the United States, media influence, higher education system, sports policy, foreign aid, and “carrot diplomacy”. Thus, he asserts that soft power is “the most delicate analytical tool to expound Qatar’s foreign policy” (Antwi-Boateng, 2013, p.39).

Therefore, the Qatari government used soft power in several areas to maintain its position

in the international community and create state branding through sports, the media, mediation, and donations. For example, the Qatari government has hosted more than 450 international sports tournaments since 1993, including the 2006 Asian Games, the UCI Road Cycling World Championships in 2016, the World Athletics Championship in 2019, and the 2022 FIFA World Cup (James, 2021). The researcher believes that Qatar hosted these sports events against the wishes of larger regional powers, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE. By hosting these events, Qatar deprived these countries of their leadership role in the region. Therefore, it is one of the many reasons they may have imposed a blockade on Qatar. In addition, they launched numerous mass media campaigns immediately after the blockade, claiming that Qatar would be unable to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 due to its inability to finish constructing sports facilities on time (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015).

In 1996, the Qatari government established the Al Jazeera media network, which plays a vital role in raising the country's regional and international profile. In addition, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) was established in 2005 to increase Qatar's international investments and projects (Peterson, 2006). Within the Arab world, Al Jazeera has become very popular because of its critical broadcasting, which was relatively novel in the region (Roberts, 2012). The researcher believes that Al Jazeera was a persistent thorn for Qatar's neighbors, as Qatar could contribute to demonstrating any regime's reality through this network. This happened in the case of Egypt, for example. Thus, neighboring countries felt that Al Jazeera threatened their thrones and sought to shut down the network. If this occurred, Qatar would lose its dominant role in media in the region and throughout the world. The researcher believes that Al Jazeera's role in uncovering secrets and defaming regimes in the region partially explains the blockade imposed on Qatar. In

addition, Qatar Investment Authority (n.d.) invests in all major international markets, sector asset classes, and geographies and is ranked 11th out of the 15 most significant sovereign funds in the world, with total assets of nearly \$300 billion. Nuruzzaman (2015) argues that the Qatari government expertly wielded QIA and Al Jazeera as soft power tools in international affairs.

### Balancing Power

Balancing power was crucial in establishing Qatar's role in international and regional affairs. In particular, Qatar is a small state located between two large countries and has strong relations with the United States. In the wake of the 1990s, the Qatari government started to balance bilateral relations with its two large neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Iran. These conditions necessitated a change in Qatar's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia, which was bangwagning and stepping out of the Saudi orbit. In addition, it enacted a rapprochement with Iran until it reached the balanced point (Kabalan, 2021).

Moreover, Qatar began to resolve a major point of contention that had created tensions and anxiety in the bilateral relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia: the border dispute (Al-Misfir, 2018). Khawr Al Udeid border area had come under Saudi control after a settlement between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In the mid-1990s, the Qatari and Saudi governments officially resolved the border issue after a series of negotiations, and a company was assigned to draw border lines between the two countries (Al-Misfir, 2018).

Regarding international relations, Qatar chose an independent path for its foreign policy that involved no coordination with Saudi Arabia, unlike the situation before 1995 (Al-Misfir, 2018). Qatar adopted political positions that diverged from those of Saudi Arabia, such as the

normalization of political relations with Iraq, which had been interrupted after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. In addition, Qatar established a commercial relation with Israel and opened a trade office for Israel. In addition, Qatar sought international arbitration to resolve the border dispute with Bahrain over Hawar Island, a move that Riyadh did not welcome. Furthermore, Qatar resolved the maritime border dispute with Iran and signed security agreements in 2010 (Kabalan, 2021).

Most importantly, the Qatari government sought to strengthen bilateral relations with the United States, particularly after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Qatar aimed to acquire security and defense tools rather than rely on organizations such as the GCC or large countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia. Thus, Qatar developed relations with the United States by signing a security agreement in 1992 and establishing Al Udeid Air Base in 2003 (Kabalan, 2021). As a result, the Qatari government was able to pursue an independent foreign policy, strengthening its position by resolving border issues with large neighbors and relying on a more powerful ally to secure its entity and position.

### International Cooperation

International cooperation is considered the most important pillar of Qatar's foreign policy. Thus, Qatar's strategy for international cooperation takes part in achieving the three pillars of sustainable development at the national, regional, and international levels. Economic, social, and environmental developments align with the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030.

Qatar became an active member of the international organizations of the UN. The Qatari government prioritized the respect of international laws, norms, and charters, as well as the promotion of cooperation and opportunities for dialogue between countries. These priorities were

reflected in Qatar National Vision 2030, which aimed to ensure that Qatar is a responsible and active member of the international community. In addition, the Qatari government participated in international security and peace initiatives by using political, humanitarian initiatives, development, and economic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Historically, the Qatari government has given major attention to international cooperation since Qatar achieved independence in 1971. The Qatari government has improved bilateral relations with other countries, with 108 diplomatic missions in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia. Furthermore, Qatar expanded multilateral cooperation and became a member of 328 Arab, regional, and international organizations and bodies in the social, political, cultural, scientific, and economic domains (Bashir & Abdullahi Abdelsalam, 2021). Moreover, Qatar has provided human and developmental aid to more than 100 countries and territories, including Niger, Haiti, Comoros, Japan, Afghanistan, and Gaza. Recipients include developing and low-income countries and those parts of the world that suffer conflict and natural disasters. Qatar's aid is characterized by diversity, from supporting sustainable development and urgent relief in times of emergency to reconstruction programs. Moreover, the Qatari government financed projects valued at over \$530 million through the Qatar Fund for Development in 2020. In addition, Qatar donated approximately \$577 million in aid to 58 countries in 2019 (Qatar News Agency, 2021).

It is important to note that the rule of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani led to the foundation, evolution, and development of Qatar's Foreign Aid Policy (QFAP) as part of the country's inclusive progress and development (Roberts, 2016). This policy was significant for two reasons. First, it departed from Qatar's traditional alignment with the GCC and Saudi Arabia.

Second, the expansion of Qatari aid geographically was joined by a substantial increase in its volumes (Bashir & Abdullahi Abdelsalam, 2021). In addition, the Qatari government used aid as a key tool for solidifying and exercising its increasing international leverage and having regional and regional soft power elements (Bashir & Abdullahi Abdelsalam, 2021).

### Human Rights

The Qatari government has sought to enhance its role in human rights through cooperation with international partners. It established the Office of Human Rights in 2003 and adopted considerable legislation related to the strengthening and protection of human rights, such as Law No. 12, which granted the national committee of human rights autonomy and immunity and legal warranty to its members. In addition, the Qatari government highlighted the importance of protecting human rights as a strategic option and a fundamental factor in Qatar's cultural, environmental, economic, and social transformation. This belief is reflected in Qatar National Vision 2030, which focuses on human rights in healthcare, education, labor rights, the rights of children, and women's empowerment. Furthermore, Qatar is a member of the Human Rights Council and seeks to play an active role in initiatives in cooperation with international parties.

Moreover, the Qatari government has committed to enhancing and implementing laws related to the rights of migrant workers in Qatar. In addition, the Qatari government has signed various human rights agreements, such as the Convention on Abolition of Forced Labor in 2007 and the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1976. An example of the state's competent authorities on human rights is the Qatari Foundation for Child and Woman Protection and Social Development Center (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

## Preventive Diplomacy: Mediation and Countering Terrorism

The Qatari government has used political initiatives and mediation to establish its regional position. Qatar has mediated in about 10 regional and international disputes in less than eight years (2008–2016). Qatar has made political and diplomatic efforts to mediate between entities, factions, and states while considering the demands of all concerned parties and without interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries to achieve convergence of views and identify sustainable solutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). For example, Qatar mediation in Darfur and Lebanon. More recently, Qatar hosted a peace dialogue between the United States and the Taliban, resulting in a peace agreement in Doha in 2019. Thus, the Qatari government has ended the 20-year war (2001-2020) between the United States and the Taliban in Afghanistan. This successful mediation provided political weight to Qatar at the regional and international levels. It proved that Qatar could be a trusted international peace broker, particularly that Qatar did not stop at reconciliation and convergence of views. However, it also contributed to evacuating foreign nationals in Kabul and the operation of Kabul airport (Alqashouti,2021). Thus, Qatar could play an international and regional role by using soft power to shape its position. This transformation in strategy enabled Qatar to shift its role in the region along with its foreign policy.

Qatar has mediated in intrastate and interstate conflicts since Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power in 1995 (Khatib, 2013). Mediation remains a cornerstone of Qatari foreign policy at regional and international levels. Although mediation in conflicts is not typical for a small state, Qatar's achievements are notable since mediation in the Gulf region has traditionally been limited to larger powers such as the United States and Saudi Arabia (Barakat, 2014). Qatar's active mediation role also partly explains why the blockade was imposed on the small state, as Saudi



Arabia felt it had begun to take its place as a regional leader.

### Countering Terrorism

Terrorism is a concern for many countries seeking to maintain security and stability. It is a complex socio-political phenomenon that must be addressed through long-term economic, security-related, educational, and social strategies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Like other regional and international countries, Qatar explicitly condemns and rejects all forms of terrorism. It seeks to preserve its security and combat terrorism. In addition, it initiated actions and procedures to fight terrorism and violent extremism through bilateral, regional, and multilateral collaboration. Moreover, the Qatari government is committed to addressing the root causes of terrorism and joins efforts to eliminate terrorism and violence.

At the domestic level, Qatar aimed to combat terrorism by enacting counterterrorism laws. At the international level, the Qatari government has cooperated with the United States by maintaining an inter-agency national counterterrorism committee within the Ministry of the Interior. In addition, Qatar was instrumental in the adoption of the Doha Declaration at the 13th UN Crime Congress. The Doha Declaration is a framework that focuses on education to counter criminality and extremism. In addition, Qatar provided \$250,000 to support the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre, started an education initiative for youth displaced by conflicts in the Middle East, and signed a four-year \$49 million funding agreement with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In addition, Qatar is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and hosted its seventh coordination meeting in 2015. Also, it is a board member of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund and provided \$5 million to support its initiatives (Truby, 2016).

Qatar has increased its participation in international and regional efforts to counter terrorism after the blockade in 2017, especially after being accused of supporting terrorism. For example, Qatar hosts the office of the UN Counter-Terrorism Program on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism, which was opened in 2021 in Doha, and the Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue, which represents cooperation in different fields with the United States and includes counter-terrorism fields (Government Communications Office, n.d.).

### Principles

The principles of Qatari foreign policy are informed by Qatar's Constitution, which asserts Qatar's independence and sovereignty; the identity of Arab and Islamic countries; respect for international agreements, security, and peace; and private and public freedoms in human rights. For example, Article 7 of the constitution states, “The foreign policy of Qatar is based on the principle of enhancing international peace and security through encouraging the resolution of international conflicts by peaceful means, supporting the right of the peoples to self-determination, abstaining from interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and cooperating with all nations that seek peace” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Furthermore, Qatar’s foreign policy aimed to promote regional and international sustainable development. This is reflected in Qatar National Vision 2030, which was launched to serve as a clear roadmap for Qatar’s future, where sustainable development is the central concept of this vision (Participant One, 2022). Moreover, reducing discrimination against women and religious minorities has an important weight in Qatar’s foreign policy. This is evident in Qatar's commitment to implement the Convention on Racial Discrimination against Women and through the participation of the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar in the United Nations in different sections.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DEFENSE AND POLITICAL COORDINATION

### Introduction

The 2017 Gulf crisis, namely the blockade of Qatar, has introduced new ideas about stability and instability in the Gulf region. This new concept of instability and stability belongs to GCC members. The blockade highlighted how the GCC members view each other as threats. Qatar has been threatened by its neighbor countries, which are also GCC members (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain), by imposing the blockade in 2017. While the GCC was established to confront the security threat in the Gulf region, the trust and sustainability of bilateral relations among GCC members have become more complicated. Keating and Abbott (2021) define trust as a desire to place the fate of substantial interests in another actor's hands, based on several beliefs that the other will not use this discretion to damage the one who trusts. However, the relation among GCC members has been characterized by “mistrust and suspicion” between the leadership (Keating & Abbott, 2021, p. 1097). Furthermore, the GCC was not founded as a trust-forging organization (Barnett & Gause, 1998). Therefore, mistrust and suspicion have affected Qatar's bilateral relations with other GCC members, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Distrust is ingrained in the relations between Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Barnett & Gause, 1998). As a result of such a relation, the blockade of Qatar was imposed after Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad had participated in the 2017 Riyadh summit in Saudi Arabia. The Riyadh summit took place when President Donald Trump visited Saudi Arabia. There were three summits at the time: bilateral meetings (between KSA and the United States) and multilateral meetings between GCC members, the United States, and Arab and Muslim countries. The blockade evidenced the mistrust and suspicion between GCC members. In addition, it underlined the importance of preserving the sovereignty and independence of Qatar

and its need to focus on improving defense and foreign affairs strategies.

Qatar had to honestly examine its defense strategy during the blockade, as it was considered a real risk that aimed to challenge the security, sovereignty, and independence of the state of Qatar. The blockade has had a significant impact on the Qatari government. It has led to improving government strategies in different sectors, such as defense, food security, and foreign affairs. Thus, it is important to examine the improvement in the foreign affairs strategy discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter starts by focusing on Qatar's defense strategy and how it has improved after the blockade. Then, it sheds light on the ramifications of the blockade on defense and foreign policy. Then, it explores the relations between the defense and security policy and foreign policy and new perspectives for Qatar's defense and foreign policy strategy.

### Qatar's Defense Strategy

A state's defense strategy is its safety valve, as it is connected to its security, sovereignty, and independence. The strategy is developed to reach a specific goal or interest, and each field seeks to reach a specific strategy, including the defense strategy. Furthermore, Freedman defines strategy as “the art of creating power”. So, he emphasizes that strategy is bigger than a plan, and excellent strategy considers the possibility of the impact of unforeseen factors. In addition, it considers the role of others who might disturb one’s strategy due to opposing interests (Freedman, 2015).

The defense strategy, particularly for small states, is to forge connections with a bigger state that can protect them and ensure that they can have an effective foreign policy. Thus, a defense strategy is important to ensure that states know how to defend their territory (Participant Three, 2022). Participants disagree on whether it is better to use the concept of defense policy or

defense strategy for Qatar. Participant two argues that using the notion of “defense policy” for Qatar is better than using “defense strategy”, as Qatar does not have a clear strategy, including a clear written defense strategy. Hence, it is more appropriate to discuss a defense policy (Participant Two, 2022). Instead, participant four explains that the defense strategy is essential in achieving the state's national security during war and peace. It is considered the main way to preserve the security and stability of the state from political, economic, and social perspectives. He adds that the defense strategy must address all sorts of threats and internal and external challenges, and any regional and international security changes (Participant Four, 2022). Defense strategy is the core element of any state, and it is the government's responsibility. In general, all states have defense strategies as a defense strategy is needed to ensure that the government maintains the security and stability of the state (Participant Five, 2022). While participant eight emphasizes that military power is just one instrument of many potential instruments of power that a state can use. Hence, in these terms, the defense strategy is not an end per se. It is a plan to use the military to protect national priorities and provide opportunities to achieve other goals and objectives (Participant Eight, 2022).

It is essential for all states in the world, particularly small ones, to have a defense strategy. As participant five explains, it is very important for small states to have a defense strategy because they are exposed to geopolitical pressures from other states. Thus, small states must have a clear defense strategy to account for the risks posed by their geopolitical neighbors. While some small states, such as Switzerland, have used neutrality as a defense strategy, this approach does not outline a clear strategy to achieve internal security (Participant Five, 2022). Furthermore, participant four argues that since small states seek to ensure their national security, they need

defense strategies more than bigger states. He adds that a defense strategy outlines the state's challenges and threats and helps the state develop a suitable solution to confront such risks (Participant Five, 2022). Besides, small states are keen to keep up in the field of military strategy and invest as much as possible in it as they are trying to compensate for their lack of human resources and small armies by depending on advanced technology. For example, the state of Qatar is very different from China; the latter has a population of 2 billion people and an army of 2 million people. Thus, there is a relationship between defense policy, demographic growth, and military recruitment. This is because small countries always have small armies, and a small army does not serve the state, especially in a conflict area with an external threat (Participant Two, 2022).

In addition, participant eight explains that a defense strategy is necessary for all countries of all sizes. However, size and geography (notably the intentions of neighbors) and other factors like ideology and national and regional resources will all determine the nature of the defense strategy. For a small state, defense strategy options are either autonomy or alignment. Traditionally, the tendency was to either go for alignment and gain a security guarantee (either informal or formal) in return for certain sacrifices in terms of obligations, cost, and even sovereignty or to adhere to a strict form of neutrality. More recently, it is harder to divide such a strategy into two clear paths – some states are neutral on some issues and aligned on others, such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis (Participant Eight, 2022).

Participant one argues that the state's defense strategy relies on the state's geographical environment and strength, which in turn is determined by three factors: the biosphere or *Lebensraum*, population, and resources. Qatar's biosphere or *Lebensraum* is small and narrow. Qatar's landscape is a flat desert with no mountainous or forested areas. Furthermore, it has a small

population. Qatar has natural resources, primarily oil and gas. Oil and gas are a commodity, not capital, which is not viable (Participant One, 2022).

Participant two argues that the importance of the defense strategy is that it is a policy that focuses on the military dimension of the state and its national security elements. A defense policy is thus essential as it aims to preserve the sovereignty and independence of the state and provides the necessary conditions for arming and training the state's armed forces. Every sovereign country is keen to have a national army and provides it with all the funding for its equipment and to arm and train its personnel, especially since the army is considered a symbol of national sovereignty.

Furthermore, he emphasizes that there is no significant difference between the importance of defense policies for small and large states. If the strategies are different, they are equally important because of the importance of preserving the state's security and sovereignty. In addition, one of the characteristics of great and medium states is that they have military power. However, small states are keen to invest more in the field of national defense, rely on themselves, and try to cover the shortage of military power by building military alliances (Participant Two, 2022). In addition, some small countries do not have national armies, but their security is linked to NATO, such as Iceland, which is also an advanced base for the United States of America. It is a small state in area and population (Participant Two, 2022).

The defense strategies of small states have various restrictions, namely their geographical location and area, population, wealth, and security environment. Participant Four mentions that small states rely on alliances to achieve national security. He argues that small states should understand their military and financial capital capacity for themselves and their alliance (Participant Four, 2022). The availability of financial resources can help the small state positively

by supporting their ally financially and buying advanced military and technology. However, a shortage in financial resources will negatively affect the small state through bearing on relations with its ally. It will restrict the defense or the protection agreement and affect the military cooperation between them, particularly if there are no common interests between the two states. Furthermore, the defense strategy should suitably address the threats in the region and from neighboring states. For example, one of Qatar's neighbors is the UAE, which has advanced cyber warfare capacity. Thus, Qatar's defense policy should consider this cyber threat and not to focus only on its armed forces (Participant Five, 2022). Thus, Qatar is a small state with a small population and significant natural resources (Oil and Gas), which are considered determinants of Qatar's defense strategy.

Ramifications of the lack of a written defense strategy for Qatar could impact the defense strategy's effectiveness. Saidi (2020) argues that Qatar does not have a clear written defense strategy to the extent that it is only some pieces of information about its defense policy are published by the ministry of defense. The published information shows that Qatar's defense strategy considers the following factors: its small size, the need for border security, the influence of regional and international regimes and the degree of threats with the aim of neutralizing or minimizing them, and joint defense in the Gulf region (Saidi, 2020). Participant one discusses the importance of strengthening and improving Qatar's navy, land, and air forces. The significant obstacle to achieving this improvement is the small number of its population. He argues that the Qatari government should use advanced technology to overcome this obstacle (Participant One, 2022). Participant two emphasizes that the determinants of the defense policy of small states are their geographical size. He argues that smaller countries have a smaller space where its army can



conduct military training, which will also influence the arms they buy. For example, if they rely on heavy aircraft, within a short time, such aircraft will be outside their air zone. A small state, he thinks, should arm itself according to its geographical size, and it should choose weapons that can help achieve its sovereignty in the air and the sea (Participant Two, 2022). The second determinant is demographic growth. Small states cannot recruit the entire population to join the army; if they do so, they will turn into militarization, where the military would rule society. Small states cannot rely on the national army to achieve sovereignty; for example, Qatar cannot rely entirely on its national army to ensure sovereignty and thus enter into military alliances (Participant Two, 2022). That is because Qatar's national army is not large and lacks advanced military equipment.

A state's national security strategy is more comprehensive than its defense strategy. It includes different aspects of the security of the state. Qatar's defense strategy is considered a part of its national security strategy because defense on its own cannot address all of Qatar's security issues, such as food security (Participation Six, 2022). Qatar has defined its national security strategy as going beyond simply using military forces; instead, it wants to use four domains of power: diplomatic, economic, financial, and energy. These different power leverages are more important than defense.

Participant six argues that Qatar can achieve its security objective using these power levers and not necessarily defense (Participant Six, 2022). He explains that even Qatar's expenditure on defense is not a part of Qatar's defense strategy. For example, Qatar has been buying three different kinds of air force equipment that are not necessarily needed: Rafale from France, Typhoon from the United Kingdom, and F/A-18 from the US. Qatar buys these three types of equipment to serve its defense diplomacy, but not out of defense needs: buying this equipment is a way of ensuring

that it has a positive influence on these three exporting countries (Participant Six, 2022).

Relying on this type of influence as a source of power in a globalized world is better than relying on advanced hard power to achieve the state's security and defense objectives. Participant six argues that Qatar, as a small state, must rely on all governmental approaches to ensuring security, using energy, economic, financial, and information powers to achieve its security objectives. In terms of defense and hard power, Qatar has been relying on its alliance with the United States. Taking the blockade as an example, Qatar has been able to avoid military operation, using its diplomacy and “network connections” (Participant Six, 2022). Participant three argues that the core of Qatar's defense strategy is continuing Qatari-U.S. strategic relations and joint military exercises with other partners such as Turkey, France, and the UK. Furthermore, one part of its defense strategy is the continuance of buying advanced technology from these countries and sending missions to them to gain experience in advanced military technology and strategy. In addition, Qatar needs to have a strong army to defend itself in a world of changing systems; one time, it becomes unipolar, and another time it becomes multipolar. It witnesses superpowers collapse; hence, defense agreements would be affected. Thus, there is a need to ensure a robust Qatari army (Participant Three, 2022).

### Improving Qatar's Defense Strategy

Qatar's defense strategy has been improving in line with various changing variables in the Gulf region's security environment. For example, the blockade has positively transformed Qatar's defense strategy. The blockade forced Qatar to examine its defense strategy, which ensured it could identify its weaknesses and strengths. Such examination helped the Qatari government solidify its strengths and work on its weaknesses. In addition, the blockade made the government assess and

consider the evolution of Qatar's defense strategy. Remarkably, all interview participants agree that the strongest aspect of Qatar's defense strategy is its alliance policy, particularly its alliance with the United States and Turkey. As one participant mentions that it is important to have regional and international alliances; in Qatar's case, its relation with Turkey ensures a strong regional alliance, and its relation with the United States ensures a strong international alliance.

Moreover, it is important for Qatar to work towards neutrality with the biggest state in the Gulf region, Saudi Arabia. For example, Qatar's government succeeded in keeping Saudi Arabia neutral in Qatar and the UAE's bilateral relations after the blockade (Participant One, 2022). Participant one argues that the neutrality of the big state in the region could be used as a tool in Qatar's defense strategy to minimize any risks and challenges.

The alliance policy that Qatar's government has used is important to ensure it diversifies its sources of armament. Diversified armament sources are considered a source of strength in the defense strategy. This is because Qatar, as a small state, needs to cooperate with different countries to preserve its security and sovereignty. Relying on one ally would restrict the state's freedom of choice. Qatar is in an unstable region, surrounded by wars and terrorist attacks, such as the 2015 war in Yemen and the attacks of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Participant two argues that the strengths of Qatar's defense strategy are that it has good international foreign relations, and its alliances and investments in the field of diplomacy somewhat compensate for the deficiency in defense capabilities. This is seen in the relations between Qatar, the United States, and Turkey because its diplomatic successes can ensure that it maintains its sovereignty and national independence and strengthens its army's capabilities (Participant Two, 2022). Furthermore, participant one explains that the Qatari government has

relied on external powers to defend its territory, exemplified by the American presence in Qatar (participant one, 2022). Since the start of the U.S. presence in Qatar, Qatar's government has changed and become more independent and powerful. Furthermore, the foreign presence in Qatar granted the Qatari government a kind of power that enabled it to be more active and politically influential.

Participant one argues that the Qatari government has used its soft power to confront the changing security circumstances in the region. Its soft power tools are the media, alliances, mediation, and financial contributions to international organizations (Participant One, 2022). The alliance with the United States was the main factor that helped Qatar minimize the blockade risks, particularly when the blockading countries threatened Qatar with escalation. The continuity of the alliance partnership, in both military and commercial matters, was a core component of its success, enabling it to reach its goals. It is important for small states to have different alliances, but more important is that they have continued cooperation to ensure that they can reap benefits from such alliances. Taking the Qatari-U.S. partnership as an example, the bilateral relation has improved in all sectors, and the United States officially appointed Qatar as a major non-NATO ally in 2022 (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Most importantly, Qatar has financial resources that enable it to invest more in the defense sector. Qatar's financial resources mainly come from its liquid natural gas and oil. These resources have helped Qatar solidify its role in the international gas market and improve its bilateral relations with different states. The improved bilateral relations have benefitted Qatar as they have helped serve its national interests, such as defense, security, foreign affairs, and food security. According to participant three, there is power in having financial resources for the defense strategy, enabling

the state to improve its military capability and capacity through buying advanced military equipment that corresponds to its military training (Participant Three, 2022). Furthermore, Qatar has spent approximately \$220 billion buying different kinds of military equipment, such as tanks and fighters, after the blockade in 2017 (Participant Three, 2022). Moreover, Qatar has recently had one of the most ambitious armament programs in the Middle East due to security challenges that have threatened Qatar's sovereignty and autonomy. Qatar's armed forces have been growing rapidly in response to these challenges. For example, its air force increased from 12 to 96 fighter jets (Gatopoulos, 2021).

Mutual goals and interests between small and big states have traces in defense strategies. In this regard, Qatar's significant financial resources have helped it establish an attractive strategy that allows it to be regionally and internationally noticed. This strategy focuses more on soft power tools, which essentially rely on financial revenues. Thus, the significance of financial resources is to ensure an international and regional influence that is bigger than its geographical size. Participant three explains that Qatar has pursued the strategy of becoming an influential power in the regional system since 1995; to do so, it participated in solving regional issues and adopted a mediator approach, ensuring it had an important role in the international order. This politically active role needed to be accompanied by a strong defense strategy that would secure the state's borders and ensure Qatar could be comfortable in its active foreign policy role (Participant Three, 2022). Small states' wealth and soft power can ensure the success of this strategy and the big states' agreement to protect small states. This ensures that the interests and goals of the big state are met, and they will sign several agreements with small states, such as defense agreements (Participant Three, 2022). For example, Qatar, a small state, has succeeded in cooperating with the United

States in several fields, such as defense and signing a defense agreement. This cooperation has taken place due to the common interests between Qatar and the United States, which benefited from Al Udeid Air Base. Furthermore, Qatar has helped the United States stop its war in Afghanistan, the longest-running U.S. war that has lasted for the past twenty years. It did so through signing agreements between the Taliban and the United States and participating in evacuation operations for the Afghan population (Participant Three, 2022). This shows the significance of having financial resources to cover the high costs of these types of operations and mediation. Without financial resources, Qatar would not have been able to establish strategic relations with the United States.

There is a link between Qatar's defense strategy improvement and the Gulf crises and instability. Qatar opened its first military college, Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College, in 1996, following the coup attempt against Sheikh Hamad that same year. Furthermore, Qatar opened Al Zaeem Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Attiya Air Academy in 2014 after the crisis of the withdrawal of ambassadors between Qatar and some of the GCC members (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain).

Participant three explained that Qatar's government has focused more on its defense strategy and increasing the opportunities in the defensive sector because of the instability and crises in the Gulf region and Middle East. For example, Qatar focused on improving its defense strategy by establishing and opening new military schools and universities, such as Mohammed bin Ghanem Naval College in 2019 and the military high school in 2018, after the 2017 blockade (Participant Three, 2022). This shows that Qatar's government has understood the need for military training and education to encourage the young population to join the military sector. Moreover,

this is considered a strong point in Qatar's defense strategy because its government can educate and train its naval, air, and land forces.

The blockade has made the Qatari government more aware of the importance of improving its defense strategy. The response of Qatar's defense strategy toward the blockade has been considered a measure of the effectiveness of this strategy. Since Qatar's defense strategy was neither written nor clear to experts and citizens, the response to the blockade has introduced a kind of evaluation and understanding of the defense strategy. Participant three explained that the response of the defense strategy to the blockade was unsuccessful because the Qatari government was not ready for such a crisis; however, Qatar managed to survive and even successfully ended the crisis without signing the thirteen demands put forth by the blockading states. It also managed to improve different sectors, such as food security and military forces (Participant Three, 2022).

Participant four explains that Qatar was able to make use of the blockade crisis by improving its defense strategy. This is clear in how Qatar focused on building the capability of the armed forces and creating new security alliances, such as its military cooperation with China. Furthermore, it also established Barzan Holding in 2018 to achieve self-sufficiency in advanced military equipment and arms (Participant Four, 2022). Furthermore, participant seven explains that the defense strategy has worked correctly, as it avoided military escalation during the blockade and ultimately ensured the end of the blockade, as long as there was no threat to Qatar's interest a few months after the blockade (Participant Seven, 2022). Moreover, participant five argues that Qatar's defense strategy response to the blockade was effective as it could minimize threats and secure Qatar's position in the regional stage (Participant Five, 2022). Furthermore, participant one notes that Qatar has used its soft power as a tool to confront the blockade (Participant One, 2022).

## The Weak Points of Qatar's Defense Strategy

The weaknesses of Qatar's defense strategy are a small population, small army, unwillingness of the young population to join the military sector, lack of researchers and intelligence officers, and the need to focus on the military doctrine. These points will be discussed in the following section:

The small population is one of the weak points of Qatar's defense strategy. Qatar's defense strategy suffers from a shortage of human capacity. This affected its military capacity and limited the number of armed forces that could serve different sectors, such as naval and air forces. According to participants one and six, Qatar recruits people born in Qatar and residents to work in the defense ministry to cover the deficiency in human capacity and capability. Qatar's government needed to attract people to work in the military sector; hence, it opened up the defense sector to non-nationals born in Qatar (Participant Six, 2022). Furthermore, it worked to attract residents to the military sector as a tool to overcome the small population (Participant One, 2022).

Further, participant eight explains that there are structural limits in terms of the population's size and the territory's small size. That said, in an increasingly hybrid theater of conflict, Qatar constantly considers improving its capabilities in the cyber sphere, with both defensive and possibly offensive cyber capabilities. It also reflects upon reducing its vulnerabilities in the maritime domain and in terms of withstanding air superiority or dominance of any attacker to be (Participant Eight, 2022).

Qatar is a small state with a small army and invests in advanced military technology that can help overcome this kind of challenge. Participant two explains that if Qatar wants to develop



its national defense policy, it must invest in modern technology and have an army equipped with and trained to use modern weapons. Also, it has to invest in cyber and space combat, and exploit technology in order to address the shortage of population, ensuring that the army, though small in size, is confident in its ability to use modern weapons because wars are increasingly becoming remote by depending on the technology (Participant Two, 2022).

Another weakness of Qatar's defense strategy is that the young population is unwilling to join the military sector. Most Qatari youths prefer to join other civil governmental sectors as they seek comfortable service. Participant three thinks that Qatari youth are hesitant to join the military service. He explains that it is evident from comparing graduation rates in Qatar that there are fewer graduates from the military academies than in any other sector in Qatar; for example, 150 students graduated from Ahmed bin Mohammed college, while more than 300 graduated from different universities in Qatar (Participant Three, 2022). Thus, the government needs to launch a program to encourage the youth to join the military by providing financial incentives (Participant Three, 2022).

Moreover, while there are many Qatari officers, there are fewer Qatari soldiers. The ministry of defense has considered this a significant challenge (Participant Three, 2022). This, in turn, would reflect in the structure of the ministry of defense and the performance of the military forces, particularly in terms of military exercise. In addition, participant one explains that the ministry of defense must balance the numbers of Qatari officers against Qatari soldiers in order to reach better results from the military exercises, because if there are not enough soldiers, the military exercises and advanced military technology would be useless (Participant One, 2022). Therefore, it is important for the state to raise awareness about the significance of the military

sector and how it is important to preserve the security and sovereignty of the state.

Researchers and intelligence officers are important in helping Qatar understand the threats to the state and the changing security landscape of the Gulf region. Furthermore, they can help the government predict risks before their occurrence. Therefore, the lack of researchers and intelligence officers informing Qatar's defense strategy is considered a weak point. Participant five argues that it is important for Qatar to have a collective intelligent capacity that can inform its defense strategy by predicting and warning the state about what is happening (Participant Five, 2022). Further, there is a need to increase the number of the defense strategic study centers in Qatar, because it is important to spread the awareness about the significance of the defense and military sector for the state, to increase the knowledge about the advanced military technology, defense strategies and defense policy and published different studies about the security changing in the world (Participant One, 2022). For example, the Strategic Studies Center belongs to Qatar's armed forces was established in 2004. In 2021, the strategic studies center organized the first "Doha international forum for security and defense strategy – Middle East 2030" (Participant One, 2022). Such forums are useful for the government to improve its ability and experience in the defense sector.

Military doctrine is a fundamental concept that inculcates the concepts of power, defense, and faith in defense as principles and goals of the military sector. Inculcating these ideas will reflect positively in the work of military organizations and increase the army's fighting spirit 'morale'. It is important to introduce a military doctrine in the army that enhances the faith in the army's role in security and defense (Participant Three, 2022). Correia (2019) illustrates the important role of military doctrine in military organization and dealing with uncertainty.

Uncertainty can primarily occur due to a lack of practice, the nature of conflict, and the international political environment (Correia, 2019). Further, participant eight emphasizes the importance of developing a defense doctrine in Qatar's defense strategy (Participant Eight, 2022).

### The Coordination Between the Defense and Security Policy and Foreign Policy

Qatar's defense strategy must be connected to its foreign policy to achieve its objectives. If the state has a strong defense strategy without a clear foreign policy, the effectiveness and success of its defense strategy will be reduced. Participant two explains that a state uses its foreign policy and defense policy to maintain its sovereignty, national security, and economic development. The relation between defense policy and foreign policy is considered reciprocal because foreign policy serves defense policy objectives. This is evident in the case of Afghanistan; Qatar's foreign policy has been able to achieve the signing of agreements between the United States and the Taliban in Doha. In this regard, the tool used by Qatar to implement its goals through Qatar armament forces in the fields of humanitarian support in Afghanistan (Participant Two, 2022). Furthermore, participant five argues that foreign policy is a tool that enables a state to achieve its defense and national security policy (Participant Five, 2022). Participant one also highlights the importance of ensuring compatibility between the state's defense and foreign policies (Participant One, 2022).

The state uses a defense strategy to secure its borders and preserve its sovereignty and autonomy. Therefore, it is important to have a strong defense strategy to ensure an active foreign policy since the state cannot have an active foreign policy. At the same time, its borders are not secured or are under dispute. Active foreign policy is represented in mediation, solving regional and international issues, so it needs a strong and clear defense strategy. Participant three sees that the defense strategy and foreign policy complement each other. He argues that the characteristic

of a successful foreign policy is to have a strong defense strategy. Therefore, there is an overlap between the defense strategy and foreign policy. For example, the foreign policy between Qatar and France is influenced by investment amounts, student exchanges, interests, and the agreement of perspectives on regional and international issues. This relation, in turn, is reflected in the positive relation between Qatar's and France's leaders. It is also tied to the state's defense strategy, as Qatar needed advanced military technology and training from France. Therefore, the defense strategy stems from foreign policy and ensures that the foreign policy is influential (Participant Three, 2022). Participant three also underlines the importance of continuity in Qatar's foreign policy to ensure its defense strategy's continuity; Qatar has a balanced policy with everyone (Participant Three, 2022).

However, participant five discusses Qatar's defense diplomacy, which serves the defense strategy objectives (Participant Five, 2022). Furthermore, participant seven emphasizes the significance of having a defense strategy in creating a foreign policy plan as he considers defense strategy support for foreign policy and foreign policy can achieve the defense strategy objectives. Thus, it is important to identify the link between the two strategies and how they fit together (Participant Seven, 2022). While participant eight assures that foreign policy is important because it allows for agile policies that can result in alignment that provides security and can also- if done correctly- defuse crises before they are militarized. It is not that foreign policy is much more important for a small state than defense capabilities. Many small states– Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland– have developed major defensive military capabilities. It is that they are usually viewed as secondary to diplomacy and other forms of non-coercive foreign policy action; this is certainly the case for Qatar (Participant Eight, 2022). Therefore, Qatar's government must focus

more on having strong coordination between defense and foreign policy sectors to achieve the government objectives regarding security and prosperity.

Qatar's government has been focusing more on the perspective of diversifying its bilateral relations with different countries in the world for its foreign policy and defense strategy. Realizing the significance of having different bilateral relations and cooperation in different sectors, such as economy and politics, enables Qatar's government to improve its foreign policy by increasing its political role regionally and internationally.

The Qatari government enhances its international relations and global vision of diplomacy and defense by holding international events. For example, the global security forum was held in Doha in 2021, and Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference "DIMDEX 2022" was held in March 2022, followed by Doha Forum 2022, which was about transforming for a new era. These forums have emphasized the goals of Qatar's government in this regard. Moreover, Qatar's government has been seeking to diversify its diplomacy and political role as a peace broker in Asia and Africa. Recently, Qatar's government has been hosting talks between Chad authorities and the armed movement in Doha. In the long term, these diplomatic efforts will promote Qatar's role regionally and internationally.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

Qatar has recently emerged, in the first two decades of the 21st century, as a key player in international relations. Playing an active role in international relations along with adopting an active foreign policy has, on the one hand, affected Qatar's security policy and, on the other hand, helped Qatar secure its borders. Qatar has enhanced international cooperation and partnership with different countries around the world. This, in turn, resulted in security and military cooperation, such as security cooperation with Turkey that constituted the basis for the presence of the Turkish military base in Qatar. In addition, the diversity of international cooperation and partnerships has positively impacted the state, as the state gains more significance in the international community. Consequently, this would add further weight and gravity to the state's security in the international community. This proved to be true during the blockade, as the international community expressed concern about Qatar's security and how far it is so important. This was underlined by the statements of big countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which sought to end the blockade.

As a small state in the Gulf region, Qatar has adopted a comprehensive foreign policy that is not accepted by bigger states in the region. Lacking such acceptance has threatened Qatar's sovereignty and security in various aspects, which came to the surface during several security crises that Qatar has gone through. For example, the blockade was a security threat that affected all the state's political, economic, social and other sectors. The quartet (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt) imposed the blockade that accused Qatar of supporting terrorism. The quartet asked Qatar to accept its thirteen demands should it want to end the blockade. The 13 demands were directly related to the sovereignty and autonomy of Qatar, including shutting down the Al-

Jazeera channel and curbing diplomatic ties with Iran. Qatar viewed these requests as imposing guardianship and interfering in sovereign affairs; therefore, Qatar decided to end the blockade by using an appropriate defense strategy. The Qatari government has successfully avoided military escalation and preserved its security and sovereignty. Furthermore, the government's responses to the blockade have strengthened its political and defense sectors.

This thesis focuses on Qatar's defense strategy from 2013 to 2020. The main argument of this thesis is that the 2017 blockade enabled the Qatari government to discover weaknesses in its defense strategy. Qatar's defense strategy is changed based on the source of the security threat, which means that Qatar did not have a certain/ one defense strategy as it has changed based on the source of perception of the security threat. As a rich country, Qatar was able to improve its defense strategy rapidly during the crises. Also, foreign policy had the ability to enhance Qatari defense strategy, drawing on international relations and organizations. The blockade has highlighted the importance of the government understanding its defense strategy and the link between defense strategy and foreign policy. Qatar's defense strategy in addressing the blockade was not expected by its neighbors. The strategy shows how Qatar, as a small state, could use different power leverages to preserve the security of its borders and citizens.

A defense strategy is the main instrument that a state can use to preserve its sovereignty and autonomy, particularly in an unstable world. Defense strategy's significance stems from addressing threats and challenges that a state may face. Thus, states should focus on establishing a solid defense strategy based on their capabilities and capacities. Defense strategies differ from one country to another due to differences in their situations, including geographical location, population size, natural resources, and wealth. Qatar is a small state surrounded by two big states

(Saudi Arabia and Iran). Therefore, there is a need for a robust defense strategy that is consistent with security threats and regional and international challenges.

The changing security situation in the Gulf region has affected Qatar's defense strategy. The sudden change in the security environment has required increased responsiveness to preserve the state's security and autonomy. Thus, Qatar's defense strategy has been changing according to the Gulf region's security threats and other variables. For example, after the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the Qatar government signed a defense agreement with the United States. To have a solid defense strategy, Qatar must understand any limitations to its strategy. The geographical location of Qatar poses an issue because it is between two big states (Saudi Arabia and Iran). Furthermore, it has a small-size population, which means that there is a shortage of human capital to cover all military sectors. However, natural resources are considered a strength for the defense strategy because they allow the government to spend more on the defense sector.

These limitations determine Qatar's defense strategy as they limit the government's strategic choices. The small state should understand its weaknesses and strengths, in terms of financial resources and population size, to ensure that it fully understands what it has and needs. For example, the small population size needs to have an alternative solution to overcome the shortage in the armed forces.

Since Qatar is a small state, it must have a specific defense strategy that accounts for this. Appropriate defense strategies include alliances as responses to threats (known as "bandwagoning"), strategic hedging, a policy of neutrality, and an alliance shelter strategy. Qatar has relied on alliances with different states as part of its defense strategy. This has helped Qatar's government diversify its political and military cooperation with different international and regional



partners. For example, the blockade evidenced the prominent role of Qatar's partners in international disputes. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait, mediated with the blockading countries to ensure there would be no escalation against Qatar. Qatar also has a defense agreement with Turkey. Such an agreement was activated during the blockade as Turkey supported Qatar with troops, military equipment, and food. Furthermore, the United States also played a key role: the U.S. institutions supported the Qatari government, and the U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson employed two U.S. special envoys, including the retired General Anthony Zinni, to mediate in the Gulf crisis (Milton-Edwards, 2020).

The purported reasons upon which Qatar's neighbors decided to begin the blockade do not stand up to scrutiny. The accusations against Qatar were false and aimed to control Qatar's political decision-making. For example, neighbors claimed that Qatar supported terrorism and asked Qatar to curb its bilateral relations with Iran. In addition, they asked Qatar to shut down Al-Jazeera. Thus, it is clear that the blockade aimed to minimize Qatar's role in the region, particularly its political role and influence. The political role and foreign policy of Qatar provoked the blockade. However, Qatar used its political role as a tool and leverage to end the blockade. Furthermore, the blockade affected different government sectors, such as defense, economy, and security. Therefore, this thesis has identified three main aspects of Qatar's defense strategy. It has aimed to explore Qatar's defense strategy, asking the following question: What are the variables that affect the defense and security strategy of Qatar? To what extent did the blockade on Qatar change the country's defense strategies? How is Qatar's foreign policy consistent with its defense strategy after the blockade?

This thesis has examined how diversification in foreign policy, defense, and military

strategies is important for small states, especially when they have an active foreign policy in an unstable region. Furthermore, it explains Qatar's goals, such as engaging in new alliances with Turkey and Iran, and how these political and military alliances helped Qatar secure its territory against threats from some GCC countries and Egypt during the blockade. Finally, this thesis considers the role of soft power and diplomacy in promoting security.

Small states have a limited role in international relations because of their limited influence, capabilities, and abilities. However, this does not apply to Qatar, which has positioned itself as having an active role in international relations. Therefore, Qatar's behavior is not explained in light of the small state theory in international relations; Qatar's behavior challenges this theory. Therefore, to discuss the case of Qatar, this thesis adopts both a neo-realist structural realism theory and a nation branding approach, as the tools and concepts of these two approaches are immediately related to understanding Qatar's power. For example, Qatar played a weighty role in mediating between the Taliban and the Afghan government. It even made it successful between the Taliban and the United States to end the 20-year war. Usually, big states play such roles, but Qatar has challenged usual patterns and conceptions of international relations. Terminologies of the theories mentioned above have helped guide this thesis in understanding the strategy of the small state of Qatar and measuring the extent to which the government had adopted a defense policy.

Understanding Qatar's defense strategy should be understood against the country's historical and security backgrounds. This paper has divided historical security events into two stages: the first stage spans from 1971 to 1990, including the British withdrawal from the state and the establishment of the state of Qatar. The second stage spans from 1991 and 2000, which is considered a period of uncertainty and mistrust in Qatar's security policy. Qatar's challenges and

security threats have changed from predominantly external threats to internal ones. The external threats originate from outside the GCC countries, such as Iran and Iraq, while other security threats come from some GCC countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. This has increased Qatar's awareness of the significance of focusing on improving its defense strategy and security policy in line with security changes in the region. Moreover, it has increased its awareness of the importance of having an active foreign policy to increase its influence in the international community and have bilateral relations with different countries worldwide, aiming to diversify its strategic partnerships and cooperation. This, in turn, would help it develop its position as an international player, which would affect its defense strategy as it would allow it to employ foreign policy to serve the objectives of its defense strategy and defense diplomacy.

Analyzing the pillars of Qatar's foreign policy has contributed to understanding Qatar's source of power and influence in international relations. To establish its influence, Qatar has used the global energy market, soft power, balancing power, international cooperation, preventive diplomacy (mediation and countering terrorism), and human rights (see chapter three). Furthermore, Qatar's government has focused on using soft power and mediation to serve and achieve its foreign policy objectives. Moreover, small states consider foreign policy a way to ensure that international players or superpowers are aware of the importance of such states. In other words, small states can ensure they remain important internationally through effective foreign policy. Remaining important, in turn, positively affect the state's stability and security.

Qatar has considered security and stability the main objectives of its defense strategy. Analyzing Qatar's defense strategy has contributed to understanding its defense policy and the policy's weaknesses and strengths. This, in turn, has highlighted the importance of having a strong

defense strategy for the small state of Qatar. Furthermore, this thesis has examined the blockade in terms of the efficiency of the defense strategy and how it has improved this strategy by highlighting the needs and requirements of defense needs according to the changing security situation in the region. After the blockade, Qatar's government increased its focus on its defense strategy and the tools it needed to employ in order to improve its strategies, such as the establishment of Barzan Holding in 2018 and the organizing of the first Doha International Forum for Security and Defense Strategy - Middle East 2030, which was held in March 2022. These actions demonstrate that Qatar's government has started to improve its defense strategy.

The main findings of this thesis are as follows:

- Qatar's defense strategy has changed and improved in conjunction with changing security conditions in the Gulf region since the 1990s.
- There is a link between having an active foreign policy and a strong defense strategy. Thus, Qatar should have a strong defense strategy to play an active role in foreign affairs.
- Qatar considers foreign policy a tool to serve its defense strategy objectives.
- It is important to improve the coordination between the defense policy and foreign policy of Qatar.
- The strongest aspects of Qatar's defense strategy are the availability of financial resources, the use of alliances, and the presence of military bases in Qatar. Moreover, it is important for the state to improve and preserve the continuity of its current relations with its allies.

- It is important to use financial resources to serve the defense strategy objectives, so the state must be aware of its military defense procurement.
- It is important to diversify allies and defense resources, such as advanced military equipment.
- The weakness of Qatar's defense strategy, namely its small army, could be overcome by using advanced technology and focusing on cyber security technology. Furthermore, Qatar lacks strategic study centers which are specialized in security policy and defense strategy. Such strategic study centers can help the decision-maker better understand threats and challenges.
- Challenges of alliance strategy are confidentiality of security agreements and changing allies. The confidentiality of the agreements is a challenge for the state.
- In addition, allies may change according to their interests. Thus, it is essential for the state to diversify its alliances and sources of defense.
- Qatar should enhance its military doctrine to develop a defensive spirit in the Qatari army.
- The state should also focus on achieving self-sufficiency in advanced military equipment in the future.

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