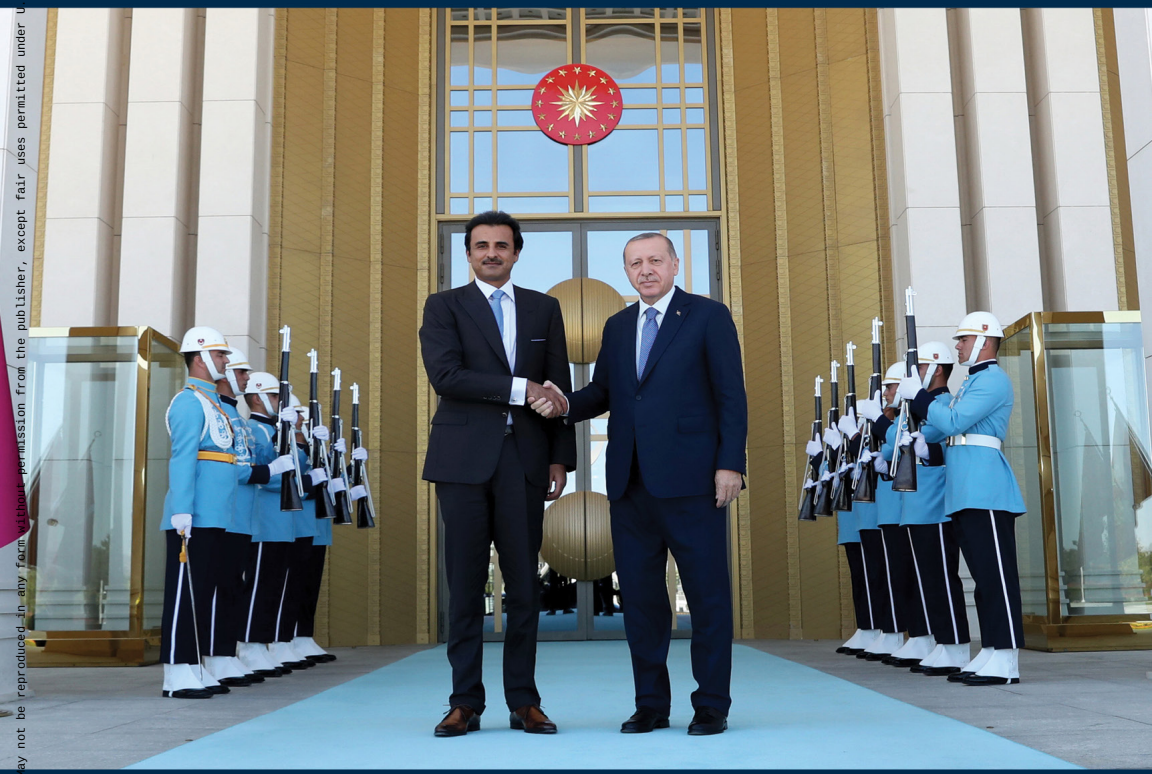
Turkish-Qatari Relations



From Past to Present in a Turbulent Geopolitical Landscape

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Introduction

Turkish-Qatari Relations from the Ottomans to the Present

At the height of its power in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire intervened in the Persian Gulf in order to expand its sovereignty and end the Portuguese domination in the region. The Gulf, and by extension Qatar, did not play a crucial role then in the *Pax Ottomana*. However, things were to change in the coming centuries. Given the geostrategic importance of Qatar as the only midway peninsula between the longstanding rival Iran on the one side and the ever-growing British Empire on the other, Qatar became increasingly relevant to the Sublime Porte's calculations. Despite their relative geographical distance, global and regional developments brought Turkish and Qatari people together in the late nineteenth century, 1871 to be more exact. In light of their political and economic interests, the Ottomans and the Qataris perceived the British Empire and its aspirations regarding the region as a threat that facilitated the cultivation of harmonious relations between the two actors.

With occasional ebbs and flows, from 1871 until World War I, this trajectory of relations continued. With the Great War causing the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, history was ushering in a new country, that is, the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Tired of wars and complicated Middle Eastern politics, the new political elite of the young Turkish Republic in Ankara was highly reluctant to be involved in Arab and Muslim affairs that generally continued until the late 1960s. Roughly from the 1913 Anglo-Ottoman Convention until the Turkish opening into the Middle East in the 1980s, Turks and Qataris generally focused on their own domestic and regional predicaments. With the turn of the millennium, history once again instigated Turkish and Qatari governments and people to weave closer relations. Almost about a century after the Ottomans had left Qatar, Turkey was now getting ready to return to the Gulf regional politics. This time again, relations between both actors were

both facilitated and hindered by their interests and geopolitical aspirations vis-à-vis that of their regional contenders.

To speak about the Turkish-Qatari relations in modern times, one must contextualize these relations within the larger Middle Eastern setting and understand the new dynamics that have driven Ankara's foreign policy toward the region. Turkey's relationship with the Gulf Arab countries[1] has mostly evolved parallel to its relations with the other Middle Eastern Arab countries which had considerable political, social, and cultural influence on the former. Additionally, foreign policy orientations of both Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries, the trajectory of Turkey's relations with Israel, economic considerations, and security concerns left their mark on relations. Relations picked up an unprecedented momentum with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party[2] in 2002 and reached an apogee in 2011 at the initial stages of the Arab Spring protests. The Turkish Parliament's position vis-à-vis the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the convergence of opinion on security issues regarding the sectarian frictions in Iraq prepared the ground for a climax in relations between Ankara and Gulf Arab capitals. The threat of radical terrorism, the increasing Iranian influence in the region, and Turkey's decisive pursuance of the European Union (EU) membership were other developments that boosted relations in this period.

The dynamics above were also instrumental in shaping Turkish-Qatari relations given the fact that Qatar is a Gulf Arab country and a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Having similar foreign policy visions and aspirations, and utilizing similar tools to realize their visions, Ankara and Doha experienced a wide array of political convergences on crucial Middle Eastern and Gulf Arab issues. These included the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Lebanese sectarian frictions, Iran's nuclear program, and the Arab Spring. More specifically, Turkey and Qatar enjoyed similar expectations from and positions on the increasing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) throughout the Arab Spring. This was instrumental in their close political coordination throughout the Egyptian, Syrian, and Libyan uprisings and the subsequent conflicts in these countries. In what we can call as the Post-Arab Spring period, Ankara and Doha continued to coordinate how they evaluated and responded to the rivalries and how they engaged in efforts of easing of tensions and rapprochement.

On the domestic level, an increasingly multidimensional and less security-oriented foreign policy of both actors paved the way for close relations between Ankara and Doha at the turn of the millennium. The unprecedented economic development both actors attained equipped both capitals with the financial means to pursue their ambitious policies. Moreover, the leadership and their similar outlook on identity politics, that is, their firm support for the rising power of MB elements, expedited relations. Finally, pursuing a

predominantly pragmatic rather than purely ideology-oriented foreign policy, both actors were motivated to work toward a wide range of political, strategic, and economic interests that transformed relations into a political alignment,[3] particularly throughout the Arab Spring.

This political alignment increased venues for cooperation between Turkey and Qatar. As a new geostrategic reality was taking root and the regional order was disintegrating, relations between Ankara and Doha reached remarkable levels and began to take a more security-based and military character. However, this came at the expense of neighborly relations with other regional actors. Although the democratically elected MB governments seemed to provide opportunities for Turkey and Qatar to expand their regional influence, the Saudi-Emirati bloc reversed the popular tide with counterrevolutions, as was the case in Egypt, partly in Libya, and to a limited extent in Tunisia. For the decision makers in the Saudi-Emirati bloc, the democratically elected MB governments, which could set an adverse example for their people, posed an ontological threat to their survival.

As the political alignment between Ankara and Doha deepened against this backdrop, their relations with neighboring countries, other regional powers, and even superpowers involved in the Arab Spring deteriorated. For example, Ankara has had increasingly more problematic relations with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army (LNA) controlled by General Haftar, Russia, and even the United States. Combined with domestic developments, this deterioration instigated an even more securitized Turkish foreign policy toward the region. Similarly, Doha's relations with her Gulf Arab neighbors, that is, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt under the Sisi government, saw unprecedented levels of decline. Naturally, this isolation of both actors, dubbed as *precious loneliness* by the Turkish foreign policy elite, pushed them toward each other even further.

With the Arab Spring protests and popular demands of regular masses in many Middle Eastern countries, a new geopolitical landscape began to take shape. In this new geopolitical reality, both Ankara and Doha were ahead of other contenders in terms of public diplomacy and soft-power capabilities in which they had been investing from early 2000s onward. As a middle power, Turkey wanted to close *century-old parenthesis*[4] with the Middle East and enhance its regional political and economic influence beyond its borders. Similarly, as an assertive small power, Qatar wanted to promote its own security and sovereignty and aspired to obtain handsome returns for its financial investments in the emergent geopolitical reality that initially showed a clear victory for positive change.

However, the more Ankara and Doha drew closer to each other and realized some of their objectives, other powers that were worried about the rising democratic transitions started to suffocate popular demands by throwing their support behind authoritarian status quo forces. They used their financial

capabilities and political influence to entice other smaller actors, such as Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, to follow suit. Additionally, they began to spend billions of dollars for lobbying purposes in Washington DC. To deal with the increasing political and sectarian complexities of the emergent geopolitics, Turkey and Qatar used a practical geopolitical reasoning that was intended to convince their domestic and international audience into siding with their arguments and interpret the unfolding developments from their perspective. To this end, they emphasized concepts such as political legitimacy, Islamic civilization, unity of Muslims, the concept of ummah, opposition to extremism, and promotion of basic human rights in the cases of Gaza, Syria, Egypt, and Libya.

In addition to regional and global contenders, the political and economic alignment between Ankara and Doha was also tested by other domestic and regional developments. For example, the abdication of Sheikh Hamad in favor of his son Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani in June 2013 created an expectation that Turkish-Qatari relations were going to cool off because it was seen as a *marriage of convenience* by some analysts. However, this expectation did not materialize; rather, relations continued to intensify under the new Qatari leadership. Additionally, the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 and the blockade on Qatar by other Gulf Arab countries motivated both actors to promote their relationship of political alignment onto a level of strategic partnership. Qatari leadership stood with Turkey's democratically elected government during the July 15 coup attempt and communicated that Doha was ready to provide any assistance needed.

The same attitude was visible at the popular level as well during both the military coup attempt in July 2016 and the financial meltdown Turkey experienced in 2018 where thousands of Qataris took to social media to express their support for Turkey. Many Qataris rushed to foreign exchange bureaus to shore up an extremely volatile Turkish Lira. Similarly, Turkey worked hard for the resolution on the Blockade on Qatar and not only provided diplomatic support but also sent hundreds of cargo planes of food to Doha. Concurrently, Turkey provided security and military assistance to Qatar during the blockade. When the blockading countries backtracked and agreed to lift the blockade on Doha, Ankara began to seek new venues to mend relations with the blockading countries in tandem with Qatari foreign policymakers as was evidenced in both capitals' outreach efforts to Riyadh and Cairo, and eventually to Abu Dhabi. Moreover, the seemingly coordinated Turkish and Qatari forays into the Horn of Africa and close Turkish-Qatari collaboration in the new geopolitical scene emerging in Afghanistan demonstrate that both actors are still keen on cooperating with each other and coordinating their initiatives. To this background, adverse domestic and regional developments seemed to motivate both capitals to transform their relationship into a strategic partnership.

The dynamics that motivated closer Turkey-Gulf relations demonstrate continuity. Security issues (Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sectarian conflict in Iraq, increasing Iranian influence, Iranian nuclear program) and economic concerns (need for new markets, need for FDI) have had a strong bearing on relations over the years. At some periods, security-oriented policies dominated the relations while during other periods economic motivations dominated. Additionally, ideational factors, such as the historical ties and sociocultural affinities between Turkey and its Gulf Arab counterparts, have sometimes facilitated the relations as well as caused confusion and suspicion on both sides as seen in the case of Arab countries' position on Turkey's approach to Israel or Ankara's support for the Western position on regional issues. Similarly, some Arab countries' exceptionally harmonious relations with the West and Israel, especially that of the UAE, while their relations with Ankara were deteriorating, fed suspicions about yet another *Arab treason*.[5]

In summation, the Turkish-Qatari relations from their evolution in the nineteenth century until the turn of the new millennium and finally to the present were shaped predominantly by geostrategic calculations, security concerns, foreign policy visions and aspirations, and economic and political interests. Additionally, ideational factors such as identity and the vision of decision makers in the higher echelons of the state apparatus on both sides facilitated the abovementioned political convergence that later transformed into a political alignment and eventually into a strategic partnership. The Turkish-Qatari relationship from the landing of the Ottomans in Doha in 1871 until their departure in 1915 and from Qatari independence in 1971 until the present demonstrated a considerable degree of exceptionalism and detachedness. This was evidenced by the Sublime Porte's relations with Qatar vis-à-vis other emirates/sheikhdoms as well as by the trajectory of Ankara's relations with Doha in the last decade vis-à-vis other Middle Eastern Arab capitals.

STUDIES ON DYNAMICS OF TURKISH-QATARI RELATIONS: FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Turkish-Qatari relations can be traced back to the sixteenth century when the Ottoman Sultan dispatched several expeditions to help the Gulf Arab and Eastern Asian Muslims against the Portuguese incursions and invasions. The Portuguese posed a serious threat to the Ottoman interests in the Gulf and in Eastern Asia where trade opportunities were blooming. However, the Ottoman interest in the region in this era was not specifically aimed at improving relations with Qatari or other Gulf Arab sheikhdoms. Rather, the Sublime Porte wanted to preserve its geostrategic and trade interests in face of the growing Portuguese influence and control over the region. The city of

Basra, the home base of the Ottomans in the Gulf, whose name was used to denote the Gulf by the Turks, was already overseen by an Ottoman governor since 1546. According to Veinstein (2007, 96), the main objective of the Ottoman interest in the Gulf was to keep open the traditional lucrative trade routes that were a lifeline for the Ottoman traders in the Mediterranean and beyond. According to Cunha (2009, 211), Basra in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries carried a tangential significance for the Sublime Porte because its energies were focused on expanding into Europe and/or containing lands conquered therein.

In his unpublished doctorate thesis on the Ottoman-Qatari relations, which is based on the Turkish, British, and Arab archival documents and primary sources, Soyyiğit (1990, 69–70) emphasizes the geostrategic importance of Qatar in the Gulf and states that the Ottoman intervention in opposition to the Portuguese stemmed from two reasons: First, the Ottomans, as the most powerful Muslim country of the time, felt the need to protect the locals from the Portuguese because the Caliphate mandated protection of Muslims. He argues that as the holders of the Caliphate, the Ottoman Sultans had the obligation to intervene to protect their Muslim subjects in different parts of the world, in this case to stop the Portuguese atrocities against Gulf Arab Muslims.

Second, the Portuguese threatened the Ottomans' trade volume from China and India to Europe. Soyyiğit (1990, 84) states that the reason why the Ottomans, represented by Midhat Pasha who was appointed as the governor of Baghdad in 1869, demonstrated a renewed interest in the Gulf was to reinstitute Ottoman influence in the region and thereby keep other major powers, most notably the British, as much out of the Gulf as possible. According to Soyyiğit (1990, 101) the loss of Bahrain to the British and the imminent British control of the Gulf pushed the Ottomans to focus more on Qatar. Soyyiğit's study lists quotes from many archival documents *in extenso* throughout the study; however, these documents and quotes generally tend to come from the Ottoman and Arab sources ignoring the British perspective and rich British sources. Additionally, the study is highly descriptive and lacks depth of analysis in terms of events, their causes, results, and their connections with each other.

Another major study that examines the history of Ottoman-Gulf Arab relations is Anscombe's thesis, which was published as a book. Anscombe (1997, 172–73) observes that the Ottoman control of Eastern Arabia in the nineteenth century wielded a considerable political influence on the formation of the states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar because the authority of the Sultan provided protection and empowered certain sheikhs vis-à-vis others and augmented their control over specific areas and people therein. This paved the way for boundaries of sheikhdoms to be more clearly pronounced,

which were transformed into modern states. For example, Qatar was not a centrally important and unified location; however, the arrival of the Ottoman expeditionary forces in Hasa in 1871 and their recognition of Sheikh Jassim bolstered the importance of Doha.

Anscombe (2009, 263) argues that "prior to the extension of Ottoman control from Basra down the coast to Doha in 1870–71, the sheikhs of settlements enjoyed influence but little of the power that Europeans expected any 'ruler' to have at that time." According to Anscombe (1997, 3), "the Ottoman conquest of the mainland started a process of territorial definition, in the course of which Arab sheikhly families used great power sponsorship to defend themselves against rivals." Although sheikhs could revoke their complex web of allegiances with regional or global powers if their needs or expectations were not met, and despite many problems and frictions along the way, the leadership in Qatar persisted in continuing their cooperation with the Sublime Porte. Anscombe's work is important because it helps break the generally pro-British perspective that has long been embraced by Gulf historiography which foregrounded negative aspects of the Ottomans and turned a blind eye to the role Ottomans played in the formation and consolidation of states in the region, especially to that of Qatar.

In his seminal work on Ottoman-Qatari relations, Kurşun (2002, 11) provides a detailed examination of the Ottoman archives on the issue and argues that the Sublime Porte wanted to return to the Persian Gulf to gain its past glory and relevance in the region because the Ottoman power and influence in other areas was fast collapsing. According to Kurşun, the Ottomans exercised an eventful impact on the formation of states in the region, particularly that of Qatar. The Sublime Porte insisted on demarcating boundaries of Qatar when dealing with the British, as evidenced by the clauses in the 1913 Anglo-Ottoman Convention; undertook administrative reforms and restructuring; and provided freedom of maneuvering and protection to the Qatari leadership vis-à-vis Bahraini and Abu Dhabian sheikhs and the Wahhabi movement in the mainland Arabia.

Through examining developments taking place in Iran, in the Arabian Peninsula, and in Britain, as well as important events such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Kurşun contextualizes how such developments necessitated closer relations and occasional frictions between Sheikh Jassim and the Ottomans. Kurşun argues that given its lack of material capabilities, economic difficulties, and the growing power of its adversary in the region, that is, the British, the Sublime Porte preferred diplomacy over aggression and occasionally had to ignore British provocations and interventions in areas under Ottoman control. Overall, Kurşun's study provides rich archival data on the Ottoman-Qatari relations especially following the Hasa expedition of 1871; however, like its Anglo-centric counterparts, it suffers from being

generally one-sided, which he in fact concedes pointing to the fact that his study mainly relies on the Ottoman archives and thus comes with an Ottoman perspective.

Another work on the formation of the state of Qatar, which partly deals with the role Ottomans played in the region, is authored by Rahman (2005). Rahman starts his examination of Qatar from the ancient to the medieval times, which makes the first part of the book highly shallow. Mostly reiterating the British archival position on the developments in the region and failing to examine other perspectives, most notably the Ottoman one, Rahman (2005, xv) seems to argue that Qatar was already a distinct region since the Portuguese attacks in the sixteenth century. Rahman's work calls the Ottoman presence in Qatar as *occupation*. He refers to Ottoman archival documents; however, this happens only when it is useful in corroborating his pro-British position.

On the positive side, Rahman gives a rich and detailed portrayal of internal and regional power politics between the sheikhs of Qatar, Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi as well as the growing authority in Najd, Central Arabia. Additionally, Rahman describes the uneasiness the Qatari leadership experienced when the Ottomans were leaving the country: the increasing radical ideologies in Central Arabia and their influence would not bode well for existing Qatari authorities who expanded their authority by virtue of the Ottoman control in Qatar. Rahman's work pays only superficial attention to the Hasa military campaign of the Sublime Porte and does not provide a satisfactory analysis of why the Ottomans were interested in the region nor how their administrative and proposed financial reforms affected the formation of Qatar. Finally, with his overreliance on the British perspective, Rahman seems to present a somewhat subjective account of the conflicts between the Sublime Porte and Qatari leadership.

As the Ottoman garrison and officials were leaving Doha in August 1915, the Sublime Porte was under a lot of military and socioeconomic stress due to World War I. A new chapter in the Turkish and Middle Eastern Arab relations was fast unfolding and the Ottomans were no longer a close party to developments in the Middle East. In 1916, Sheikh Abdullah of Qatar signed the final version of the 1913 Anglo-Ottoman Convention declaring Qatar as a "British protected state."[6] This agreement meant that the British recognized the Al-Thani as the most prominent family of Qatar, a continuation of the Ottoman position. Until September 3, 1971, when Doha declared its independence from London, official Turkish-Qatari relations were basically put on hold due to global, regional, and domestic political and economic developments shaping both countries and their societies. Although several lower-level officials paid mutual visits to each other, Ankara and Doha were still waiting history to push both actors to

re-establish once-close relations. This was valid for Turkey's relations with other Gulf Arab countries as well.

Although political relations between Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries started in the 1980s in their real sense, the most conducive domestic and international environment came at the turn of the millennium when both Turkey and the GCC countries found an optimal economic and political context for improving relations in the political, economic, and strategic domains (Aras 2005; Olson 2008; Baskan 2011). The real dynamic behind the drastic improvement of Turkish-Qatari relations is grounded in a combination of structural systemic changes and domestic factors (Baskan 2016). Another instrumental dynamic in the process was increased Turkish foreign policy activism and involvement in the region (Talbot 2013; Oktav 2013). This fresh foreign policy outlook, as formulated by Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, embraces a multidimensional foreign policy and zero problems with neighbors and downgrades security concerns while promoting economic integration and soft-power capabilities (Davutoğlu 2010).

In answering what dynamics drive the increased Turkey-GCC relationship, Aras (2005) identifies several important factors: the ongoing Iraqi crisis, Turkey's EU membership process, the threat of international terrorism, Turkey's active participation in the Greater Middle East Initiative headed by the United States, increasing business and trade relations between Turkey and the GCC, Turkey's increased profile in the OIC, and finally, Turkey's response to the issues concerning the wider Muslim world. Foley (2010) attributes the rapid development of Turkey-GCC relations to the convergence of opinion of both actors on four major issues, namely Turkish Parliament's refusal to allow the U.S. Army to use Turkish territory to invade Iraq in 2003; Ankara's foreign policy of encouraging rapid economic development and resolving regional political problems; the regional instability following the U.S. invasion of Iraq; and finally, the realization that old allies, the EU for Turkey and the United States for the GCC, may not be as valuable in an emergent geopolitical reality as before.

For Barkey (2011), several dynamics instigated dramatic improvement in the Turkey-GCC relations throughout the AKP governments: the structural change in Turkish economy, which became aggressively export-driven from the 1980s onward and which motivated Turkish foreign policymakers to search for new markets; the AKP leadership and their ambition to transform Turkey into a global actor; the declining influence of the military, which began to flex its strong grip on Turkish foreign policy at the turn of the millennium (Sözen 2010, 111), enabled the AKP governments to demote security concerns stemming from the Kurdish separatism and Islamist movements in Turkey. For Martin (2009, 79) the most important dynamics that prompted closer relations between Turkey and the GCC states are all security related: increasing Iranian

influence in Iraqi politics, Iran's increasing military power, radical Islamism, potential problems with excessive reliance on U.S. security provision, and ambivalent GCC relationship with Iran. Martin (2009, 87) further contends that Turkey's security concerns about Iranian nuclear program and radical Islamists overlapped with the GCC's security concerns at the time and that GCC alignment with Turkey emerged as a win-win opportunity for both actors. However, Martin fails to provide a convincing argument as to in what ways the Iranian nuclear program could pose security threats to Turkey, while the Turkish government under Erdoğan has been supportive of the Iranian arguments.

Olson (2008) argues that the invasion of Iraq and its ramifications for the ethno-political tensions in the Gulf motivated the GCC states to view Turkey as a counterbalance to increasing Iranian assertiveness in the region as well as Tehran's influence on Iraq's eventual reconfiguration. Such security concerns played an important part in North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) offer in 2004 (Legrenzi 2007). The ICI envisioned expanding its security umbrella over the GCC countries and institutionalizing its intention to bring the GCC under the fold of the NATO (Scheffer 2005). Although Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE responded positively to NATO's offer as of early 2006 and showed willingness to modernize their security systems accordingly, the ICI seems to have fallen short of going beyond the representational level and could not alleviate GCC's mounting security concerns (Legrenzi 2007). In brief, Turkey's strong economy, NATO membership, Sunni-majority population, and moderate policies were important considerations for the GCC states to view Turkey as a strategic partner.

Similar to the trajectory of relations between Turkey and the larger Middle East, economic motivations, especially for the Turkish side, were other prime drivers of the increasing Turkey-GCC relations. Both in early years of the 1980s and throughout the first decade of the millennium, economic and political legs of the relationship nurtured one another. According to Kardaş (2012) and Ataman and Uçgan (2009), once Turkey-GCC diplomatic relations were in progress, there was an increase in Gulf capital flows into the Turkish economy that was under serious strain due to crisis stemming from the global economic transformations at the time. The more high-level visits from state dignitaries took place, the more the economic interactions increased, especially toward Turkey that offered lucrative economic and financial opportunities. These visits were especially important for Turkish businesses because it is mostly hard to penetrate the GCC markets without direct governmental assistance. Pointing to the importance of high-level visits, Martin (2009), Hürsoy (2013), and Ekmekci and Yildirim (2013) state that these visits were instrumental for creating a favorable political environment necessary for expanding trade and investment figures as well as cordial political relations.

In addition, Schmid and Subervie (2014) and Hürsoy (2013) point to several dynamics that strengthened economic relations between Turkey and the Gulf. On the Turkish side, although the state was increasingly becoming an energy transit route, it is poor in terms of energy resources, and this made it an important customer for Gulf oil and gas. Second, Turkish economy became stronger with substantial macro-level structural reforms that promoted the state as an important destination for Gulf foreign direct investments (FDI). Third, successive AKP victories and Turkey's rediscovery of the Middle East gave impetus to its political and economic stability. In addition, according to Oxford Business Group's 2012 Turkey Report (Oxford Business Group 2012), poor investment returns in Western markets and high growth rates in Turkish and Gulf Arab markets are cited as important dynamics that increased appetite for mutual Turkish-Gulf Arab investments. On the Gulf side, budget surpluses, Turkey's geostrategic location and huge population, gradual institutionalization of Turkey-GCC relations through bilateral agreements, and Turkey's EU accession talks bolstered investor confidence and motivated Gulf businesses to invest in Turkey (Schmid and Subervie 2014, 19).

On the security front, the GCC states' concern about radical Islamist movements, Shia political activism, and international terrorism, as seen in the 2003 bombings in Istanbul and 2004 Khobar Attacks in Saudi Arabia, motivated Turkey and the GCC to sign several military cooperation agreements on regional security issues and counter-terrorism following the ICI in 2004 (Çetinoğlu 2009). Turkey-GCC relations took a strategic dimension when the council announced Ankara as a strategic partner in 2008, first time the GCC had extended such status to another country. Çetinoğlu (2009, 160) argues that although officials from both sides emphasized that this partnership does not target any other country, GCC's prime motivation was counterbalancing Iran. Turkey could play a significant role in providing security for the GCC because of the U.S. plans to withdraw its military presence from the Gulf, helping thaw relations between Iran and the GCC, and that Turkey's military capabilities were growing exponentially.

Similarly, Martin (2009) contends that Turkey's conventional military capabilities could enhance GCC security, as Turkish military power is the only regional option that can counter-balance Iran's military capabilities. However, Baskan (2011) points to the fact that Turkey is not self-sufficient militarily and cannot enhance Gulf security. He further argues that Turkey's military role cannot go beyond being a conduit between the GCC and the NATO, as expressed in the ICI in 2004. In answering whether or not Turkey and the GCC can cooperate on the Iranian nuclear issue, radical Islamism, and regional instability, Martin (2009) argued that Turkey and GCC would proceed cautiously in realizing their strategic relationship because, on the

one hand, Turkey needs Iranian energy for its growing economy and Iran's cooperation in its fight against Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistane or more commonly known as PKK),[7] while, on the other, some GCC members such as Oman and Qatar were wary of alienating Iran.

Another security dynamic that encouraged closer Turkey-GCC relations was the Iranian nuclear issue (Taspinar 2008; Çetinoğlu 2009). For the GCC countries, a successful Iranian nuclear program would grant Iran the nuclear capability that would destabilize the Gulf monarchies because Iran would be more emboldened to interfere with the Shia minorities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. In this sense, Çetinoğlu (2009) maintained that given Turkey's NATO membership and domestic dynamics, there was a tacit GCC expectation that Turkey would oppose Iran's nuclear program. Along these lines, Turkey announced that it was against Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities, while at the same time expressing support for Tehran's right to have peaceful nuclear technology. Although, Ankara and most GCC capitals had a similar position on Iranian nuclear issue initially, and this seemed to bring relations even much closer, Turkey's persistence, along with Brazil, to break the international isolation of Iran in 2010 and to find a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis caused some confusion and concern at the GCC level.

As the Arab Spring unfolded, the trust and convergence of opinion between Turkey and some of the GCC members, most notably Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on regional issues began to vanish. Oktav (2013, 76) argues that the Arab Spring disrupted Ankara's economy-based relations with the GCC states and prioritized the security dimension in relations. Once it was clear that the Islamists were the winning side in the fast unfolding Arab Spring and that some GCC members, particularly Saudi Arabia and UAE, perceived these events as a threat, the relations between Turkey and the GCC as well as intra-GCC relations began to deteriorate. Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have all emerged as assertive players that wanted to shape the Arab Spring dynamics to their benefit. This caused serious fractions not only among the GCC member states, but also between Turkey and the GCC. The political differences over the Arab Spring began to overshadow the close Turkey-GCC relations in the economic and strategic realms. The only exception was Qatar. Turkey and Qatar witnessed an unprecedented level of convergence of opinion and action in numerous regional issues.

Başkan's (2016) book, which is the latest and the only work dedicated specifically to Turkish-Qatari relations in the recent past, provides a structural evaluation of Turkish-Qatari relations set against the 9/11 background starting with the U.S. invasion of Iraq (7), continuing with regional geopolitical rivalry between Tehran and Riyadh (51), and ending with the Arab Spring (83). Başkan argues that the power vacuum created in the regional context

following 9/11 presented Ankara and Doha, both mostly pro-American actors, with a conducive environment for pursuing a more active foreign policy. According to Başkan, the new hyperactive foreign policy of these two ambitious actors received the American blessing thanks to their pro-American positioning. This created many venues for both actors to pursue a regional foreign policy that converged to a great extent from their approach to Hamas to MB.

Başkan suggests that with the Arab Spring there emerged a convenient political theater wherein Ankara and Doha wanted to expand their influence into different parts of the region, most prominent of which was MB-backed Morsi government in Cairo (2016, 85). Başkan asserts that when the Arab Spring revolutions were stalled with counterrevolutions, which were mainly supported by Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, Turkey and Qatar began to be isolated from the regional politics that drew both actors even closer to each other. Finally, Başkan predicts that Turkey's future position in the region will depend on its willingness to balance Iran in the region and that new challenges may make Turkey an indispensable security partner for Gulf Arab countries (2016, 139). On the negative side, this book ignores the evolution of the Turkish-Qatari relations prior to the pre-9/11 period, especially the 1980s when Turkey's relations with the Gulf Arab countries began to flourish. Additionally, although this book is the only recent book written on Turkish-Qatari relations, it does not address some major recent developments such as the military coup of July 15 in Turkey, the Blockade on Qatar by the anti-Qatar bloc, and the consequent decline of the GCC as well as the lifting of the blockade and the current rapprochement initiatives all of which have had a tremendous impact on the recent trajectory of relations.

In answering what motivated fast-developing Turkish-Qatari relations, Yesilyurt and Yetim (2020) examine the regional power structures and blocs in both the Middle East and the Gulf sub-region and argue that Ankara and Doha were both positioned between the *status quo bloc*, consisting of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, and Jordan, and the *revisionist bloc*, consisting of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas (132). The authors maintain that being squarely positioned within neither of the regional mainstream blocs, Ankara and Doha were both able to build equidistant relations with both state and non-state actors, which later enabled them to find a match in each other for healthier mutual relations (2020, 146). The authors examine both actors' reaction to the Arab Spring and its aftermath and conclude that unless the pressure on the MB is lifted throughout the region, Turkey and Qatar bloc may have limited political influence in the region and beyond.

Finally, in their report on the drivers of Turkish-Qatari cooperation from 2002 to 2020, Yüksel and Tekineş (2021, 16) argue that exceptionally cordial relations between the two actors can be explained by neither ideological nor

economic factors per se; rather, converging political interests and pragmatism provide a more convincing explanation. Focusing on different crises in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa, the authors assert that Turkish-Qatari relations developed around their soft-power accumulation strategies and tools from 2002 to 2011, continued with shifting geopolitical realities ushered in by the Arab Spring from 2011 to 2013, gained traction with both actors' isolation from the region from 2013 to 2017, and finally reached the status of a special relationship in 2017. Different from other studies, Yüksel and Tekineş (2021, 20) add the political instability in Somalia as another area of Turkish-Qatari cooperation. Overall, this study seems to reiterate what other studies have argued and predicts that close relations between Ankara and Doha are here to stay; however, given its publication date this study does not mention the lifting of the blockade, the currently unfolding easing of tensions between Ankara-Doha and Riyadh-Abu Dhabi blocs, and the impact of these developments on relations between Ankara and Doha as well as their relations with other GCC capitals.

WHY THIS BOOK

Ottomans first came to the Gulf region in the sixteenth century to ward off Portuguese attacks on Muslim nations and strengthen their authority over the region, which were important for safeguarding lucrative trade routes extending from Asia to Europe. Being one of the strongest powers of the time, the Ottomans continued to exert their influence over their Arab coreligionists in the region without a major obstacle. However, this was to change with Western powers becoming militarily and economically stronger in the coming centuries and defying Ottoman authority. With a fragile economy, weaker military might, and major territorial regressions elsewhere, as well as the growing pressure to provide protection to Muslim nations in face of increasing British territorial hegemony, the Sublime Porte showed a renewed interest in Eastern Arabia in general and Qatar in particular. The nineteenth century, dubbed as the most precarious century of the Empire, was a time when the Sublime Porte realized that it was falling behind major powers and had better be quick to sustain its power and prestige, at least what remained thereof. This started a bitter competition with London. The British and Ottoman archival documents shed ample light on why and how the Ottomans came to the region in the sixteenth century and extended their authority afterward and why they wanted to regain territorial control over the region in the nineteenth century and had to leave the region in the eve of World War I.

When the Republic of Turkey was declared in 1923, the Middle East region, including the Gulf Arab sub-region, was mostly under Western control. The

new foreign policy elite of the Turkish republic preferred to avoid regional politics and focused its energies on modernizing the country and improving relations with the West. Naturally, literature on this period generally focused on Turkey's relations with the larger Middle Eastern powers such as Egypt, Iran, Syria, and Iraq, which were the then centers of Arab economic, political, and cultural affairs. Albeit extremely limited, literature on Turkey-Gulf Arab relations appears more frequently in the 1980s given Turkey's willingness to open to the region and the fact that Middle Eastern Arab economic center began to include oil-rich Gulf countries. There is a much richer literature on the dynamics of Turkey-Gulf Arab relations from 2000s onward, parallel to the growing political, economic, strategic, and sociocultural relations. Studies that cover this period point to several domestic, regional, and international dynamics that played an important part in the evolution of the Turkey-Gulf Arab relations.

Turkey-Gulf Arab relations have not attracted sufficient interest from scholars until recently. Neither, Robin's (1991) book titled Turkey and the Middle East nor Robin's (2003) book titled Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War nor Bal's (2004) book titled Turkish Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Era nor the book titled The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy edited by Martin and Keridis (2004) nor Altunışık and Tür's (2004) book titled Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change nor Özcan's (2008) work titled Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East nor Hale's (2013) seminal book titled Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774 allocated any specific attention to the Turkey-Gulf Arab relations except en passant in the context of the Gulf Wars. The only work that has a few pages specifically dedicated to the Turkey-Gulf Arab relations is titled Turkish Foreign Policy: From Independence War to Present; Phenomena, Documents and Interpretations edited by Oran (2001).

Thus, there is still a lack of focused literature on the motivations and dynamics that shaped the more specific Turkish-Qatari relations from the 1871, when the Ottoman Turks and Qataris came into contact, to the present when relations between Ankara and Doha are at their apogee. No study to date has thoroughly studied the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations from their initiation mainly in the nineteenth century until present. The growing literature on Turkish-Qatari relations is generally descriptive, disparate, and scattered mostly in non-academic sources such as newspapers, magazine articles, think-tank reports, and governmental and non-governmental websites. This book addresses this gap by providing a focused examination of the dynamics of the evolving Turkish-Qatari relations from their commencement in 1871 to present and presents its findings within a holistic narrative.

QUESTIONS THIS BOOK TRIES TO ANSWER

There are several questions that this book tries to answer. First of all, this book tries to understand the Ottoman motivation to return to the Eastern Arabia in general and Qatar in particular in 1871. A second question that this book tries to answer is the ways in which the Ottoman presence in Qatar and the Sublime Porte's relationship with Qatari leadership affected the transformation of Qatar into an independent state. Third, this book looks into the domestic and regional dynamics that have shaped the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations from the declaration of the Turkish Republic until present. This book also tries to understand the effect of the Arab Spring on the trajectory of relations between the two actors in the last decade. Finally, this book examines the ways in which the Blockade on Qatar and the lifting of this blockade and the current rapprochement between conflicting actors affected relations between Ankara and Doha.

The survey of literature is the main technique used in this book. The survey of literature is conducted by examining a multitude of primary and secondary sources such as books, archival documents, refereed journal articles, online newspaper and magazine articles (including archival material from newspapers), think-tank reports, documents/notes posted on Turkish and Qatari government websites, and studies published by research centers on Turkish-Qatari relations from 1871 until present. The survey of literature as a technique aims to scan as much data on a topic as possible from a wide range of sources. Sources were primarily in English and Turkish, and to a limited extent in Arabic.

SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

This book focuses on the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations from the Ottoman military expedition to Hasa in Eastern Arabia in 1871 to the present. Obviously, the nature of relations between the two actors was much different in the nineteenth century than it is now. When the Ottomans arrived in Doha in 1871, despite on the decline, they were still one of the most influential powers in the region, and Qatar was just a young nation with limited economic and military capabilities. Fast forwarding to the present, Qatar is one of the richest nations in the world with a complex web of economic, financial, and political connections with many regional and global powers. Similarly, Turkey, currently one of the strongest middle powers in the world, has once again gained sufficient self-confidence as well as economic power, military muscle, and political clout required for charting out an assertively independent foreign policy vision.

This book tries to zoom in onto the dynamics of Turkish-Qatari relations from 1871, when the Ottoman soldiers reached Doha, until August 19, 1915, when the Ottoman military presence in Doha ended as part the Anglo-Ottoman Convention signed on July 29, 1913. Because Turkish-Qatari relations were put on the backburner from November 3, 1916, when the Anglo-Qatari Treaty turned Qatar into a British *protected state*, until 1971, when Qatar became a fully independent country. Throughout this period neither was the Turkish side willing nor did want to establish relations with Qatar nor could the Qatari side construct its own independent foreign policy on account of being a protected state that brought about an interlude in the relationship. Relations between Turkey and Qatar were reinitiated at ambassadorial level in 1973 after almost 60 years of interruption; however, these relations were nominal and inconsequential. Consequently, there is almost no information on how almost non-existent relations fared in this period.

Therefore, this period will focus mostly on Turkey-Middle East Arab relations that were important for how Turkey-Gulf Arab and Turkey-Qatar relations evolved in the coming decades. In other words, other important events taking place in the Middle East will be examined with a view to understanding and contextualizing the trajectory of Turkey's relations with the Middle East in general and the Gulf Arab region in particular. The book will then pick up nebulous relations between Ankara and Doha in the 1980s. Finally, a good portion of this book will examine political, economic, social, cultural, and military relations between the two actors that gained momentum at the turn of the millennium and reached unprecedented levels following events such as the Arab Spring, the military coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016, and the Blockade on Qatar that lasted from June 5, 2017 to January 5, 2021, and other emerging geopolitical developments, rivalries, and forms of cooperation and rapprochement in the aftermath of the lifting of the blockade.

Although this book examines relations between Turkey and Qatar within the given periods, it comes with an apparent Turkish perspective, foregrounding the policy decisions and actions of the Turkish side as well as reasons and justifications behind those decisions and actions. For example, an account of the Gulf Arab perception of Turkey in the 1923–1980 and 1980–2002 periods would help better contextualize the Middle East Arab countries' decisions about and actions toward Turkey. Similarly, a more detailed account of Gulf Arab and Qatari reactions to Turkish foreign policy decisions on major Middle Eastern issues, Ankara's pro-Western foreign policy, and NATO and EU membership adventures would comprise valuable information that could help contextualize current politics. However, despite these shortcomings, serious effort has been put into presenting an equally representative and comprehensive account of Turkish-Qatari relations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PRACTICAL GEOPOLITICAL REASONING

Practical geopolitical reasoning, built on the concept of practical reasoning in psychology, is a concept that can be used to explain policy decisions by the agents of states such as politicians, statespersons, military commanders, simply everyone practicing statecraft. Tuathail and Agnew (1992, 192–93) argue that practical geopolitical reasoning is a tool that political decision makers use to comprehend crises, explain them to their audiences, and come up with strategies to solve such crises by employing various capabilities they hold. This means, geopolitical reasoning is a tool that political actors capitalize in both domestic and international arenas in complicated and complimentary ways. In other words, geopolitical reasoning enables the political elite to devise a simplified worldview wherein several *dramas*, *subjects*, *histories*, and *dilemmas* (Tuathail and Agnew 1992, 194) are used to represent such views to their internal and external audiences.

To this end, particular spatial domains as well as assumptions and commonly held beliefs about and attitudes toward such domains are used to divide people and places into categories (Tuathail 1996, 178). These categories are then made more accessible and comprehensible to ordinary masses with narratives that feature metaphors, comparisons, schisms, and images. Political actors basically tame an otherwise complicated domestic and international reality by reducing it to simplified geographical constructs. While doing this, intersecting national and international political goals are loaded onto pragmatic themes as well as generalizations that are easily graspable by and adoptable to the public opinion.

If geopolitical reasoning is an important tool in explaining complicated political reality and rallying support from the domestic and international audiences, then what tool does the political elite use for such reasoning? Naturally, language. Thus, discourse analysis is perhaps the most convenient technique for this theory because political discourse of the elite features an important area whereby decisions and goals are announced, publicized, and legitimized in a bid to garner popular support. However, discourse analysis of the political elite is more useful in countries with relatively stronger democratic institutions and traditions because actors with few or no democratic processes feel less inclined to publicize and legitimize their political goals and policy decisions.

Political speeches of influential political actors appear as the most readily available means of reflecting how those who utter them see themselves and what they represent. According to Tuathail and Agnew (1992, 191), “They help us understand the social construction of worlds and the role of geographical knowledge in that social construction.” Discourse, an arena of the

process of making political decisions and formulating (geo)political imaginations and visions as well as appropriate actions, enables politicians to justify generally controversial decisions vis-à-vis their constituencies (Tuathail and Agnew 1992). To this end, threat-enemy and friend-and-foe constructions through political discourse are mobilized to win both domestic and external audiences (Aras and Falk 2015, 328).

Against this theoretical framework, practical geopolitical reasoning can be used to understand the Ottoman decision to march onto the Eastern Arabia, extend its authority to Qatar, and continue to exert influence on Qatari leaders and people for more than 43 years. Being forced out of Europe in face of superior military might and economic capabilities and being pressed by the domestic dynamics to compensate for this loss, the Sublime Porte turned its face to the already Muslim geography to thwart foreign expansion. Put in another way, the policymakers at the Sublime Porte were spatializing borders and physical geography and categorizing those borders and lands with a dichotomy of *us* versus *them* by filling in these places with socioculturally constructed and politically sustained assumptions, understandings, and interpretations. This reasoning paid maximum attention to winning the hearts and minds of Qatari leaders and people and positioned them in a friendly theater vis-à-vis the British, who were considered as the *other*, the outsider, whose physical domination of this Muslim geography would damage the unity of the Ummah.

Similarly, despite at different levels and intensity, Turkish foreign policy displayed use of such practical geopolitical reasoning throughout the early Republican period and the 1980s when relations began to grow with the Gulf Arab countries. For example, because the Kemalist tradition in Turkish foreign policy aspired to become a modern and Westernized country, its foreign policy tried to distance Ankara from the Middle East to which it belonged not just spatially but socioculturally. In contrast, when the Özal government came to power in the 1980s, the Middle East in general and the Gulf Arab countries in particular were seen in a different light, and Ankara's attitude toward these countries foregrounded historical, sociocultural affinities of which religion was an important instrument.

Finally, and most importantly, practical geopolitical reasoning proved to be a highly useful tool for Turkey and Qatar in their approach to Hamas, the Iranian nuclear issue, and ISIL,[8] and in their foreign policy decisions throughout the Arab Spring. This was evidenced in their ummah discourse in the case of Gaza, the Islamic civilizational discourse in the case of ISIS, and the pro-democracy and anti-oppression language in the case of their championship of the Islamists seeking democratic governments vis-à-vis the authoritarian regimes and their supporters, which will be explicated in the coming chapters of this book. In presenting and justifying their position on these regional

issues to the domestic and international audiences, the foreign policy elite in both Ankara and Doha relied on and mobilized friend-enemy dichotomies/narratives/binary distinctions reducing a complex web of political relations in an intricate geographical reality to controllable, easy-to-understand geopolitical abstractions.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 provides a historical background on the Ottoman expedition into the Hasa region in Eastern Arabia and attempts to examine the motives of both the Ottomans and the Qataris in forging a relationship with one another. It specifically analyzes the reasons why Qatar was important for the Sublime Porte and why the Qatari leadership picked the Ottomans, and not the British, as their protectors from 1871 until about 1914. This chapter also examines the inter-sheikdom frictions and power politics around the Qatari Peninsula and how the Ottoman and the British competition in the region affected the formation of Qatar as a distinct sheikhdom and its consolidation on the way to an independent state. Overall, this chapter argues that the Ottoman desire to revive the glorious days of the Empire, reinstate Ottoman authority in the Arab world, and protect lucrative trade routes stretching from Eastern Asia to Europe lay at the heart of the Ottoman-British rivalry in Eastern Arabia. It was this rivalry that augmented the importance of Al-Thani as the leaders of Qatar and brought about the formation, strengthening, and the eventual independence of the state of Qatar.

Chapter 2 investigates evolving Turkish foreign policy dynamics that left a significant mark on Ankara's relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries which in turn had a substantial bearing on Ankara's relations with the Gulf Arab countries in the coming decades. To this end, major security events that shook the entire Middle East will be explored and their impact on Turkey's relations with the region will be mapped out. This chapter will visit Turkey's approach to and position on some of the most significant events, such as the formation of Israel, the rise of Nasserism, the Algerian War of Independence, the Oil Embargo, the Egyptian-Israeli Peace, and the Iranian Revolution, and investigate how Ankara's approach to and position on these events facilitated or hindered relations with Arab countries of the Middle East. This chapter argues that relations in this period were initially weak because Ankara wanted to keep clear of rivalry with the Western powers in regional security issues and the new Turkish foreign policy elite was convinced that Turkey belonged in Europe rather than the Arab/Muslim world. However, Western and American disregard for Turkish concerns about political and security issues, economic exigencies, and Turkey's ambition to wield

more regional influence would later instigate closer relations with the once neglected Middle East.

Chapter 3 brings the discussion closer to the Gulf Arab sub-region and examines how and why Ankara took certain foreign policy decisions regarding tumultuous regional events such as the Iran-Iraq War, the formation of the GCC, the Gulf Crisis and the ensuing Gulf War I, and finally the September 11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing Gulf War II. Examining these events through a structural lens, this chapter argues that an increasingly securitized regional geopolitical landscape made it challenging for Ankara to forge healthy and stable relations with the Gulf Arab states, specifically with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that were the two most important Gulf Arab countries at the time. Many times, Ankara had to make hard choices that could be interpreted as friendly by the GCC countries while it was seen as the opposite by other countries such as Iran and/or Iraq. Relations improved particularly faster when both Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries were aligned along the security and economic interests of the neoliberal economic system propagated by the Western bloc with which both sides identified.

Chapter 4 first zooms in on domestic dynamics in Turkey and Qatar from 2002 until 2011 that served as one of the foundations of closer relations between Ankara and Doha. The chapter argues that domestic dynamics in this period, most important of which is leadership according to this book, presented a favorable arena for furthering Turkish-Qatari relations. Highlighting the importance of identity in improving relations, this chapter analyzes salient reasons why the leaderships in both countries were willing to cooperate on many regional issues, making specific references to the ideas and speeches of the political elite on both sides. Additionally, the chapter explores security and economic interests of both actors. The chapter maintains that although leadership and their identity were instrumental in taking similar positions, relations witnessed unprecedented improvement thanks to security concerns, which were more central for the Qatari side, and economic interests, which were more consequential for the Turkish side.

Chapter 5 investigates the regional dynamics of Turkish-Qatari relations from 2011 until 2016 that presented both actors with a favorable moment to experiment with their foreign policy approaches and tools. The chapter argues that the regional power dynamics paved the way for Ankara and Doha to pursue foreign policy objectives that became increasingly aligned with one another. Consequently, foreign policy goals, approaches, and the tools both actors utilized to realize their objectives brought both actors even closer. To this backdrop, the chapter examines Ankara's and Doha's approaches to Hamas, the Lebanese conflict, the Iranian nuclear program, MB's rise with the Arab Spring, and the Syrian Crisis. Then, it zeroes in on the tools Ankara and Doha used to respond to these events and provides an analysis of how the

converging goals, approaches, and tools paved the way for stronger relations. The chapter makes references to the theoretical framework laid out in the introduction section, that is, practical geopolitical reasoning, and highlights important speeches and written statements that demonstrate such reasoning.

Chapter 6 continues with the regional dynamics in the 2011–2016 period and highlights the fact that foreign policy objectives of both Turkey and Qatar became more pronounced as the Arab Spring protests expanded and began to shake the decades-old authoritarian regimes. Against the geopolitical landscape emerging with the Arab Spring, this chapter analyzes how Turkey's and Qatar's similar foreign policy approaches in the case of Gaza prepared the ground for and expedited and facilitated *converging geopolitical goals* in the case of Syria and Egypt. Finally, this chapter draws attention to the setbacks both actors experienced through the case of Egypt and argues that the exclusive relationship between Ankara and Doha transformed into a *political alignment* that was perceived as increasingly threatening by the assertive Emirati-Saudi bloc. This chapter is rich in examples of speeches that testify Turkish and Qatari leaders' use of practical geopolitical reasoning, whereby they simplified a complex geographical reality and presented and justified their decisions though a discourse of allies versus enemies.

Chapter 7 picks up from the intensifying political convergence between Ankara and Doha and the increasing degree of regional isolation they faced in the 2017–2021 period, and it argues that the blockade imposed on Qatar in June 2017 by its Gulf Arab neighbors further stimulated and augmented the Turkish-Qatari cooperation. The chapter narrates, along with international reactions, Ankara's position on the blockade and its assistance to Qatar throughout the crisis and argues that the blockade promoted the Turkish-Qatari relations to a level of *strategic partnership* and enabled Doha to realize and utilize its international influence and power. Additionally, the chapter maintains that the blockade engendered and fast-tracked a military and security cooperation between Ankara and Doha not only in Libya, where Ankara and Abu Dhabi engaged in a bitter rivalry through their proxies, but also in Tunisia, where democratic gains of the Arab Spring seemed to slowly erode due to external meddling of different power blocs, and in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia. This chapter also examines the impact of the blockade on Turkish-Qatari relationship, the reasons why the countries imposing the blockade decided to end it, and why a bitter rivalry was transformed into a gradual rapprochement almost after a decade. The chapter maintains that Qatar followed an effective policy in enduring the crisis and expanded its relations with Ankara and Tehran and that the crisis came to an end with minimal gains for the imposing countries and that the shifting geopolitical landscape opened new venues for reconciliation and even potential collaboration between rival blocs.

Finally, the conclusion section provides a summary of the chapters, starting with the Ottoman-Qatari relations from the late nineteenth century until early twentieth century. It also highlights the arguments regarding the foreign policy approach of the new Turkish Republic toward the Middle Eastern Arab countries as well as Ankara's Middle Eastern opening in the 1980s at a period when Turkey was undergoing unsettling economic and political times due to its decision to integrate with the international liberal economic and political order. Following that is a brief summary of how Turkey's increasing relations with the Gulf Arab countries and then with Qatar brought about the Turkish-Qatari *political alignment* throughout the Arab Spring that later transformed into a *strategic partnership* with the blockade on Qatar, especially in military, security, and defense areas. Finally, through three different scenarios, a future outlook of mutual relations is given vis-à-vis the changing domestic winds and shifting domestic dynamics and regional and global alliances in a fast-changing geopolitical reality.

NOTES

1. The phrase "Gulf Arab countries" in this book refers to Saudi Arabia, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain. Iraq, also a Gulf Arab country by definition, is not included in this phrase for two reasons. First, in most recent literature Gulf Arab countries is being used almost synonymously with the GCC countries. Second, Turkey's relations with Iraq are generally treated separately from the other Gulf Arab countries. Iran, a Gulf country but not an Arab country, is not included in this phrase, either.

2. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, also officially known as Ak Parti or AKP in Turkish. In this book, AKP will be preferred because it is more common than JDP or AK Parti in English sources.

3. *Political alignment*, a term frequently used in this book, refers to a convergence of political visions and positions accompanied by confluent policy decisions and actions of political actors, which instigate a host of areas of cooperation, coordination, and joint action. It does not connote a political alliance that is more formal and intense in degree and scope.

4. In the then foreign minister Davutoğlu's words, this *century-old-parenthesis* referred to Turkey's reunification with the Muslim nations and countries of the Middle East after a century-old separation, which started with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For Davutoğlu, it was high time for Ankara and the Middle Eastern countries to end such separation and mend broken ties. Davutoğlu suggested that "history was in protest of geographical borders" and Turkey was trying to rectify current problems and close the century-old-parentheses by respecting the borders. See the following interview for more insights into what century-old-parenthesis mean: "Yüzyıllık parantezi kapatacağız." (2013, March 1). Available at: https://www.yenisafak.com/yazidizileri/yuzyillik-parantezi-kapatacagiz-494795.

Additionally, for a more critical analysis of the idea of closing a century-old-parentheses, see Halil Karaveli and Svante Cornell, "Davutoğlu and the 'New Turkey': The Closing of a Hundred-Year-Old Parenthesis," Bipartisan Policy Center, August 26, 2014. Available at: https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/davutoglu-and-new-turkey/

5. The so-called *Arab treason* is a common theme that is generally repeated by ultra-nationalist circles in Turkey. By Arab treason, these people refer to Sharif Hussein's Revolt against the Ottoman Empire which started in June 1916 in Mecca. Especially, throughout the Turkish nation-building efforts after the declaration of the Republic, the Republican elites argued that this revolt was an all-out movement against the Turks by Arabs who stabbed the Turks in their backs, and they used this revolt to justify their pro-Western policies and practices as well as their disengagement from Arab politics.

6. In British law, there is a legal difference between a *protected state* and a *protectorate*. While the former refers to countries where there was a properly organized government already in place and where Britain controlled only the external affairs, the latter refers to territories where there was no properly organized government and where Britain was responsible for external affairs such as the protectorate's defense and foreign relations as well as for establishing a governmental administration.

7. PKK, founded in 1974 by Abdullah Ocalan, has been designated as a *foreign terrorist organization* by the U.S. State Department since 1997 and as a *terror organization* by the EU since 2002.

8. ISIL, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, or ISIS, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or DAESH, a transliteration of the Arabic acronym formed with the same words that comprise ISIS in English: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or al-dowla al-islaamiyya fii-il-iraaq wa-ash-shaam.

Most Arab and Turkish foreign policy elite tend to use the Arabic abbreviation DAESH in an apparent effort to dissociate Islam from terrorism.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of Ottoman-Qatari Relations

INTRODUCTION

The Persian Gulf, called as the Arab Gulf by the Arabs and Basra Gulf by the Ottoman Turks, has been one of the most strategically important areas in history. Especially with the geographical discoveries, which paved the way for colonization of different parts of the world by Western powers, the significance of this region increased exponentially because it was located on the route to cheap raw materials and commodities in the East. Thus, there has always been rivalry among great powers to control this region. The Ottoman Empire, as one of the greatest powers of the international system in the sixteenth century, stretching from Europe to Africa to Asia and controlling important trade routes to Europe such as the Silk Road, was not an exception. Concurrently, the Iranians, the Portuguese, and the British were also important political actors in and around the Gulf, some more important than others, vying for power.

Stoking the rivalries and enmity between the Ottoman Sultan and the Iranian Shah, the Portuguese were able to set foot on the Gulf waters following the defeat of Shah Ismail of Iran at the Battle of Chaldiran by the Ottoman army in 1514. The Portuguese took control of Socotra Island, the Strait of Hormuz, and Muscat in 1507 and extended their control all the way to Bahrain in 1521. Growing discontent with the Portuguese due to their reported atrocities in and around the Gulf as well as in India motivated the Ottoman Sultan to help his Muslim subjects end the Portuguese control and protect Sublime Porte's trade interests (Yıldırım 2001, 11). Concurrently, people living in the Gulf were willing to pledge allegiance to a Muslim government, that is, the Sublime Porte, rather than non-Muslim powers (Kurşun 2002, 31).

To this end, the Ottoman Turks began to squeeze the Portuguese control by first taking control of Egypt and the Red Sea trade routes in 1517 and pushed its conquests eastward. For example, the Ottomans took control of Baghdad in 1533, Aden in 1548, and Kateef in 1549. According to Kurşun (2002, 34), the Ottomans extended their administrative organization to Qatar, which was seen as part of Hasa, in 1559. This further blocked the Portuguese effort to dominate this region, an important trade route from the East to the West. This rivalry brought about an encounter between the two powers in 1552 whereby the Sublime Porte aimed to expel the Portuguese from the Gulf which did not happen. In 1559, the Ottomans wrest control of Bahrain and by the turn of the century, the whole western side of the Gulf was under Ottoman control.

Kurşun (2002, 36) argues that there was an unwritten agreement between the Ottomans and the Iranians that the Iranian side of the Gulf was under Iran's sovereignty while the western coast belonged to the Sublime Porte. As a consequence of flourishing relations between Shah Abbas of the Safavid Iran and the British as well as the Ottoman's growing power in the region, the Portuguese were finally expelled from the Gulf. This development not only consolidated the Ottoman control of the Arabian side of the Gulf but also opened new venues for increased British political and trade influence in the region (Zahlan 1998, 11). Despite not being of great importance, as evidenced in unclear boundaries almost until the end of nineteenth century and nominal central influence, the Sublime Porte has considered Bahrain and Qatar a part of the Empire since the sixteenth century (Kurşun 2002, 34). In the following decades, the Ottomans depended on local sheikhs to govern the region and they chose to exert only symbolic control (Bingöl 2019, 82). This provided much needed protection for the locals in face of stronger contenders such as Iran, Western powers, and other tribes in the area.

Like the fertile Hasa or the strategically located Bahrain, the Ottomans also flaunted control and influence over the Qatar Peninsula. For Ottomans, Qatar was under the authority of the Sublime Porte because it was an extension of the Arabian Peninsula on the western side of the Gulf that has been under Ottoman sovereignty for centuries. Similar to other localities in Arabia, affairs of Qatar were left to local sheikhs and the Sublime Porte was lenient with its dealings with the region's affairs as long as they were loyal to the Sultan and did not pose any threat to subjects of the empire or Sublime Porte's relations with other countries (Kurşun 2002, 35). However, all this lose control was to be challenged when the British began to penetrate the Gulf starting with the Iranian side of the Gulf coast.

Formal British relations with the Gulf date back to 1763 when the Persian ruler Karim Khan allowed the East India Company to open a residency in Bushehr. This formal encounter was promoted to a higher level in 1809 when Britain and the Iranian Shah signed the *Preliminary Treaty of Friendship and*

Alliance that remained the general framework of relations between the two actors for more than half a century. As the British technological and military power grew, Oman was the first place on the Arabian Peninsula that Britain wanted to dominate because the port of Muscat was in a strategic position to control entry into and out of the Gulf (Onley 2009, 4). London viewed the Gulf as a vital route on the way to its jewel in the crown, that is, India. To this end, the East India Company signed a treaty of commerce with rulers of Oman in 1839 and another treaty between Sultan Faysal of Oman and Britain's Political Resident Sir Edward Ross in 1891; especially the latter prohibited Omani rulers from ceding, selling, or giving for occupation any part of their possessions except to Britain (Onley 2009, 10).

Given its geostrategic position, closeness to the strategically important northernmost point of the Gulf, and historical relevance, Bahrain was the second Gulf Arab location after Oman to fall under the British control. Being an island, Bahrain had the potential to become a secure sea base from where port cities along both sides of the Gulf could be controlled. Given the tense political situation on and around the island, especially with Qatar, and continued threats from other Arab tribes in the mainland, Bahraini rulers agreed to a treaty relationship with London in 1820 that was followed by a protectorate agreement in 1861 (Onley 2009, 9). This agreement banned Bahraini rulers from establishing any governmental relationships with other countries without British consent and obliged the British side to protect the island from all external aggression. The agreement consolidated the position of Al Khalifa rulers in Bahrain as they were now recognized by a superpower.

Similarly, most of the sheikhdoms which currently make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE), namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Quwain, and Ras al-Khaimah, signed treaties with Britain: The General Maritime Treaty of 1820, the Perpetual Maritime Truce of 1853, Exclusivity Agreements in 1892. Different sheikhdoms had different opinions regarding the growing British influence over their economic, political, and security matters, and the British representatives took advantage of such differences of opinion and rivalries among sheikhs. With these series of agreements, London guaranteed to defend these sheikhdoms against external aggression in return for exclusive British rights and privileges. Moreover, with these agreements and local sheikhs' willingness to cooperate with the British for various reasons, London secured its trade between India and Britain as well as ensured an apparently peaceful expansion of the British influence. Overall, the British actions hereby laid the foundations of a rivalry between London and Constantinople that would characterize the following decades.

Kuwait was another important sheikdom in the Gulf with its strategic location at the tip of the Gulf. The Ottoman help to Sheikh Jaber Bin Al-Sabah in ending a revolt in 1829, Kuwait's relative proximity to the Ottoman

administrative city of Baghdad, and the Ottoman observance of local socio-political dynamics there brought about harmonious relations between the Sublime Porte and Kuwaiti rulers (Anscombe 1997, 94). However, declining Ottoman influence and increasing British pressure to sign treaties with London left Kuwaiti rulers in a difficult situation: They neither wanted to offend the Sublime Porte nor were they willing to face the British deterrence nor were they ready to miss the potential yields of an Anglo-Kuwaiti agreement. Eventually, they signed a secret agreement with the British in 1899 ending the nominal Ottoman influence and beginning the British control over foreign affairs of Kuwait for over six decades (Kurşun 2002, 109). Over the years, both sides of the Gulf gradually came under direct or indirect British influence.

Finally, Qatar constituted another important locality in the Gulf that was important not just for different tribes in the region but also for the Ottomans and the British especially in the nineteenth century. Qatar has been a scene of constant intertribal friction as well as raids from the increasingly aggressive Wahhabi movement in the nineteenth century (Althani 2012, 92). Due to such threats, Qatari rulers considered signing a treaty with the British similar to the other sheikhdoms; however, deep-rooted frictions with Abu Dhabi and Bahrain, growing Wahhabi influence in the mainland Arabia, internal divisions on the Qatari Peninsula, Qatari ruler's attitude toward foreign intervention in their internal affairs, and the Ottoman expedition into the area would chart a different course for Qatar (Rahman 2005, 81).

When Bahraini Al-Khalifah's forces destroyed Doha due to deep-seated historical frictions, Qatar came to be considered more seriously by the British in 1867. The Al-Khalifa, who came from Kuwait and settled in al-Zubara area of Qatar, considered al-Zubara as part of Bahrain. Worried about the impact of continuous violent intertribal attacks on its influence and trade interests, London forced an agreement between Sheikh Muhammed bin Thani of Qatar and the Bahraini chief in 1868, whereby the initial phase of national unification of Qatar was achieved under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammed bin Thani. Qatar's emergence as a fully independent state had to wait his son Sheikh Jassim's political brinkmanship.

For the Ottomans, although tacitly under nominal Ottoman authority since the sixteenth century, Qatar came once again to the attention of the Sublime Porte with Midhat Pasha's 1871 expedition to Eastern Arabia. With this campaign, the Sublime Porte wanted to consolidate its regional authority that was vital in face of looming dissolution of the Empire and the imminent replacement of Ottoman influence in the region by the growing British expansionism (Kurşun 2002, 11). The constant threat of the Ottomans on the Wahhabi movement and its destruction by the Ottoman forces left an undeniably formative influence on Qatar's emergence as an independent actor in the coming century.

Qatar was able to fly its own flag until 1871 because it was not a signatory to the British Peace Treaty. The Ottomans did not consider this small peninsula important or as a source of threat to their regional interests and thus left it to its own devices for centuries. However, this does not mean that the Ottomans did not lay claim to Qatar; on the contrary, Qatar was considered part of Hasa that obviously was under the Ottoman sovereignty. When the Ottomans landed in Doha in December 1871, Qatar became a bone of contention between two imperial powers: the Ottomans and the British. Despite, or perhaps thanks to, being trapped between two imperial giants, Qatar was able to chart its own path.

RETURN OF THE OTTOMANS TO THE GULF

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire was facing a rapid decline in all spheres, the Sublime Porte decided to return to the Gulf. The motivations behind this move could be explained neither with this region's barren and scarcely populated lands nor with its not-so-easy-to-rule populations that were plagued by intra- and intertribal conflicts. Rather, the Sublime Porte's main motivations were to compensate for the Empire's loses in Europe and demonstrate to the Europeans that it was not the *sick man of Europ*e. Additionally, by reinforcing Ottoman central authority in the Gulf, the Ottomans planned to turn this area into a bulwark against British expansionism that was becoming increasingly more obvious on all fronts from Europe to Asia to Africa. If the Sublime Porte did not stop the British here, their influence could travel quickly to the whole of the Middle East. Another motivation was to rally the locals in the Gulf behind the Ottoman Empire by taking advantage of religious sentiments vis-à-vis the British, a strategy whose effect was minimal to nothing as Biral maintains, "Nevertheless, these suppositions did not correspond with the realities of the region because people and leaders in the Gulf acted according to their interests rather than in support of Muslim fraternity" (2009, 71). For the Sublime Porte, with potential foreign intervention and temptation, these locals could defy the Ottoman authority.

With these in mind, the Sublime Porte decided to assign Midhat Pasha, an experienced Ottoman administrator with ample experience in the region, to advance its goals in this part of the empire. Several developments facilitated and presented an opportune moment for the Sublime Porte to initiate Midhat Pasha's 1871 expedition plan into Eastern Arabia. First, the growing expansionism of the new authority in Najd was considered as a menacing threat by many tribes in Kuwait, Bahrain, and other smaller emirates along the coast (Althani 2012, 52). For example, the Wahhabi forces attacked and destroyed

Kuwait several times in 1790s; attacked Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman in early 1800s; and they even went as far as different parts of Iraq and Syria attacking other parts of the Middle East (Conker 2018, 33). Also, the Wahhabis cut off Doha's water supply in 1871. These attacks and potentially more violent ones in the future meant that Bahrain, Qatar, or other emirates along the Arabian coast would not be safe. Especially for Qatar, the Ottomans could serve as a buffer zone between the destructive Central Arabian forces and Qataris.

Second, the Ottomans did not want to lose control of Hejaz that was the source of their religious authority over other Muslims worldwide, and thus they wanted to strengthen their position around this region. According to Anscombe (1997, 19), a base in Hasa could help control Wahhabi designs on Ottoman interests in Hejaz. Third, the British intervention in Bahrain's internal affairs, whereby Sheikh Muhammad of Bahrain was deposed in 1868 and Sheikh Ali came to power, disturbed the Sublime Porte. Fourth, dissention among Wahhabi rulers, that is, Abdullah bin Faisal and Saud bin Faisal, resulted in a war that presented the Ottomans with a great opportunity to intervene. Abdullah bin Faisal asked for help from the Sublime Porte through the Kuwaiti sheikh. Fifth, because Midhat Pasha assured the British that the expedition would be confined to Najd only, London did not view the expedition as a direct challenge to the British interests in the region that was centered around Oman and Bahrain (Anscombe 1997, 18). London believed that the Ottoman expedition would focus on the inner parts of Arabia rather than the Gulf littoral.

In addition to these developments, the intelligence collected by Midhat Pasha's survey of the region via inspectors demonstrated that the public perception toward the Ottomans in Hasa and Bahrain was more positive compared to the non-Muslim British (Anscombe 1997, 22). The developments above and the positive public perception as found in surveys funded by Midhat Pasha presented the Sublime Porte with an opportune moment to reassert Ottoman authority in the region. From a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, the Ottomans spatialized the region in such a way that they were fighting against the profanity of the religious zealotry and unorthodoxy as well as the British who were now considered as an open enemy of the Caliphate with their anti-Caliphate propaganda in India and elsewhere.

THE OTTOMANS IN QATAR AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SUBLIME PORTE AND SHEIKH JASSIM

Faced with an increasing British expansionism in the Gulf, Midhat Pasha, who had been serving as the Ottoman governor of Baghdad since 1869, believed that the central authority in the Arabian Peninsula had to be

tightened. By transforming the somewhat nominal Ottoman control into actual sovereignty in Baghdad, Basra, and Kuwait, Midhat Pasha was also intent on countering the British influence in Kuwait, Hasa, Kateef, and Qatar and to reinstate the Sublime Porte's absolute control of the region. With the opening of the Suez Canal, he believed that Constantinople could invest in and extend its maritime power into the Gulf much easier boosting its image and influence among tribal notables and sheikhs (Kurşun 2002, 50). Midhat Pasha also worked on a plan to introduce administrative and fiscal reforms in the region to reinforce and expedite the expected outcomes of the military expedition. Due to Midhat Pasha's concerns about possible British objections to the campaign, the Sublime Porte waited for an opportune moment. That moment came when the hostilities between fighting Saudi factions and their detrimental actions began to threaten peace and stability in a region that was under Ottoman sovereignty (Anscombe 1997, 32). The Ottoman army had to suppress the rebellion and bring peace and order to its own lands. In order not to provoke the British, the Ottoman officials communicated to London that the campaign would be limited to Hasa, Kateef, and the inner parts of the Arabian mainland.

When the Ottoman forces landed in Qatar in December 1871 as part of the Hasa campaign, the small peninsula was being pressed from all corners militarily, politically, and economically, and it desperately needed an outlet. On the north, the Bahraini rulers had always coveted Qatar and wanted to control the peninsula and its financial resources. In fact, northern part of Qatar, called Zubara, was already controlled by Bahraini rulers and they could use this port city to attack other parts of Qatar destroying any effort to form a unified political entity that could challenge them. To the west, the Wahhabi leaders and their allies looted Doha several times and hung like the sword of Damocles over Doha's existence and unity. To the south, Abu Dhabi stood as another potential enemy that could unite forces with other contenders and destroy the peninsula.

Against this context, it seemed that the Ottoman forces on the Hasa expedition could provide the security and stability that Sheikh Muhammed bin Thani needed. To this end, Muhammed bin Thani's oldest son Sheikh Jassim welcomed the Ottomans to the peninsula, accepted the Ottoman flags in December 1871, and hoisted those flags in different parts of Qatar (Rahman 2005, 94). In his report sent to the Sublime Porte, Midhat Pasha reported that the British had requested tax money from Muhammad bin Thani who then pointed to the Ottoman flag flying on his house and said, "We are under this flag and so long as it stands hoisted here, we shall recognise no other authority" (Kurşun 2002, 60). The Ottomans were in Qatar at the invitation of its strongest political and financial leader and not a single shot was fired. This was a severe blow to British prestige in the Gulf and a smart move by the

Qatari rulers to garner much needed recognition and protection by a formidable actor.

After Muhammad bin Thani passed away due to old age in 1878, almost seven years after the Ottomans arrived in Doha, Sheikh Jassim was recognized as the sole ruler of Qatar in 1879 by the Sublime Porte. As a religious man and a staunch supporter of the Islamic Caliphate, Sheikh Jassim had a positive attitude toward the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan ("Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani" nd.). This could be explained, in addition to his educational background, by the fact that he was held captive in Manama by Bahraini leaders to which the British turned a blind eye or even encouraged, as well as constant pressure on tribal leaders from the British political agents to submit to the British authority (Althani 2012, 106). Another instance where Sheikh Jassim's and Qatari people's loyalty to the Islamic Caliphate is evident was their financial contribution to the Ottoman army during the Balkan Wars. On March 10, 1913, Sheikh Jassim sent a brief cable to the Porte which reads, "Based on the request made by Mr. Taleb, principal of Military Subsidies Commission in Basra, we hereby donate one thousand and thirty-two Ottoman liras. Please advise the Islamic Caliphate on the same" ("The Founder and the Balkan Wars" n.d.).

Sheikh Jassim's religiosity and favorable view of Muslim rulers were no secret in his Nabati poetry at which he was highly proficient. For example, in the following lines, which seem to be about the British in the region at the time, he clearly takes a stand against non-Muslim intervention in Muslim Gulf Arab affairs. He says,

"Upon us now idolators, soldiers of disbelief,
come with all their scum and guns, misery and grief
Pagan worshippers, men who misguide,
who pray for statues to provide." (Althani 2012, 88)

Similarly, in the following lines, which are directed at Muhammed bin Khalifa and the like, according to Al-Thani, Sheikh Jassim decries embracing non-Muslim rule over Muslim authority. He writes,

"No judge objects, no scholars ponder,
as the kafir [disbeliever] flag's pulled high
Following with love and laughter,
their brothers pushed aside." (Althani 2012, 89)

Seen from a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, Sheikh Jassim was simplifying a complex problem with international contenders by using friend-enemy and enemy-threat discourse, whereby he was able to garner support not only from his followers but also from the Sublime Porte.

However, as Sheikh Jassim grew older and more seasoned at state affairs, his idealistic views changed. For example, when the Sublime Porte representatives were reluctant or slow in providing support during his conflicts with other tribes on the peninsula, Sheikh Jassim got impatient and relations grew sour. For the Ottomans, harnessing the Qatari ruler's ambitions that could affect other tribes or the areas under British influence was important for protecting the status quo and for avoiding conflict with the British. For example, when Sheikh Jassim wanted to occupy al-Khor in 1882, the Ottomans were reluctant to help him because the same area was also claimed by Abu Dhabi which was under British protection (Abdullah 1978, 160–68).

Similarly, the Sublime Porte seemed reluctant to provide the support Sheikh Jassim needed in face of his conflict with the Banyan merchants whom Jassim considered as missionaries working for British interests (Althani 2012, 116). However, when Sheikh Jassim was punished by the British and his property was confiscated in Bahrain in 1887, he once again turned to the Porte and asked for defense of his rights pointing to his allegiance to the Sublime Porte. His letter to the Governorate of Najd reads,

> God Almighty and the entire Moslem community can bear witness that your most loyal subject has always been amongst the obedient servants of the Ottoman State and far removed from all worldly grudges. The foreigners [The British] feel restless in the face of my loyalty and every now and then they display their animosity; just to give you an instance of this, the British recently extorted from me 8000 rupees. This money has not been returned yet. Now my property has been seized and 6000 rupees have been exacted. I have run up an additional loss of 5000 rupees due to the said attachment and for having had to wait [which caused the interruption of my business]. Such are the injustices to which I am subjected. All these are because I am an Ottoman citizen and protected by the Ottoman State, which seems to be against the British. These events are obviously contrary to the interests of the Ottoman State. (Kurşun 2002, 80)

In response, the governor of Basra forwarded Sheikh Jassim's letter to the Ministry of Interior and asked the Porte to end British pressure on and remedy injustices against Qatar. This time, the Ottomans took the issue seriously and stood behind the Qatar leader. The Porte protested to the British Ambassador in Constantinople and ordered an investigation into the matter. Praising Sheikh Jassim's loyalty and services to the Porte, Sultan Abdulhamid II awarded Sheikh Jassim with the *Kapucibashi* (Head of the Palace Gatekeepers) title on February 29, 1888.

In brief, the relationship was never too tense to be terminated by one party or the other due to complicated regional matters and interests of both parties. As can be seen in his above letter to the Governorate of Najd regarding

the punitive British actions that targeted him, Sheikh Jassim chose to make frequent references to the fact that both the Ottoman Empire and Qatar were Muslims, and that he was honored to be serving the Sultan who represented the Islamic Caliphate and the unity of Muslims.

Another point worth mentioning here is that Sheikh Jassim seems to have trusted the central government in Constantinople led by Sultan Abdulhamid II more than provincial representatives of the Porte. For example, in his conflict with Abu Dhabi in May 1888, Sheikh Jassim said, "The Government [Sublime Porte] is neglectful. . . . I do not know whether this neglect emanates from herself or that the high officials do not report these matters to the Government in the correct manner" (Althani 2012, 128).

A similar disagreement, in fact a major conflict, occurred between the Porte and Sheikh Jassim in 1893. Sheikh Jassim and his son-in-law Nasir bin Mubarak were planning to attack Bahrain from Zubara port and dethrone Sheikh Isa ibn Ali Al-Khalifa who was supported by Britain. Additionally, Sheikh Jassim was not happy about the reform plans that the Porte had long been considering in Qatar that could constrain and weaken Jassim's financial and political standing (Althani 2012, 134), and he thought that this was an opportune time to set things right. When the Sublime Porte heard of Jassim's plan to attack Bahrain, they wrangled with the British that Zubara, on which Bahrain had claims, belonged to the Ottoman Empire because it was part of the Qatar Peninsula.

Ottoman officials deliberated that it was the right time to realize the administrative reforms in Qatar that they had been contemplating for a long time. With the administrative reforms, the Porte would have a stricter control of Qatar as well as other neighboring tribes and stop the ongoing and potential intra- and intertribal conflicts that could damage the delicate status quo between London and Constantinople (Anscombe 1997, 75–78). Additionally, the British would not be able to use different pretexts to provoke locals against the Ottomans. When the news of reform reached Sheikh Jassim, he protested such plans, resigned from his post as kaim-maqam, and stopped paying the taxes due to the Porte (Althani 2012, 134). Sheikh Jassim might have thought that the proposed reforms could make Qatar a political entity totally dependent on Constantinople as well as economically weakened due to burdensome taxes.

In 1893, Governor Mehmet Hafiz Pasha went to Doha to restore order and make Sheikh Jassim pay his due taxes. Upon hearing the news that Mehmet Hafiz Pasha was marching onto Doha and that he would punish him, Sheikh Jassim withdrew into the desert and left all his duties to his brother Sheikh Ahmed. At one point during the conflict, Sheikh Ahmad asked the British to intervene by signing a treaty similar to other Trucial Coast sheikhdoms, which was ignored by the British for fear that it could upset the regional

status quo between London and Constantinople (Rahman 2005, 154–55). However, tensions grew deeper when Sheikh Jassim insisted on not yielding to the demands of the Ottoman governor that caused a major conflict between the two sides. The Ottoman sources tend to name this conflict as an incidence/event (Soyyiğit 1990, 185; Kurşun 2002, 97–99) while the pro-Qatari sources call it a battle (Rahman 2005, 107; Althani 2012, 134), that is, the Battle of Wajba.

Just like Sheikh Jassim left the British baffled with his acceptance of the Ottoman flags and refusal to pay taxes to London in 1871 pointing to the Ottoman flags, Sheikh Jassim was now earning the awe and admiration of the Sublime Porte that had thought that he stood no chance before the Ottoman battalion. Consequently, the conflict in 1893 strengthened Sheikh Jassim's social and political standing, not just before the neighboring tribes but also before London and Constantinople. Although the Sublime Porte considered conferring the title of kaim-maqam to Sheikh Ahmed in 1893–1894 and again in 1905, local dynamics pointed to Sheikh Jassim as the strongest and the most influential Qatari leader (Anscombe 1997, 89).

Overall, Sheikh Jassim was a smart leader who used every opportunity to reinforce his position vis-à-vis the Ottomans, and through tactics of balancing and playing off one major power against another, demonstrated to the Sublime Porte that he was indispensable. The conflict with Qatar weakened Ottoman credibility and deterrence in the region motivating other tribes in the Arabian mainland and elsewhere to become more defiant against the Ottoman control. In light of regional dynamics, the Ottoman government saw it beneficial to continue to side with Sheikh Jassim and even dismissed Ottoman officials from duty, as in the case of Mehmed Hafiz Pasha, the governor of Basra, who was discharged from duty even before the investigation into the Wajba incidence, where many souls were lost from both sides, was concluded (Althani 2012, 138). In other occasions when intertribal antagonisms in Qatar targeted Sheikh Jassim, the Sublime Porte stood behind him and disregarded such allegations as unfounded.

Similarly, although Ottoman investigations found out some sensitive information about Sheikh Ahmed's death and gun smuggling, the Sublime Porte did not follow up on these matters lest they should create further frictions with Qatari leadership (Kurşun 2002, 97). As a matter of fact, after the Wajba incidence, the Sublime Porte found out that Sheikh Jassim acquired new and superior-quality weapons through gun smuggling that played a major role in his victory against Mehmet Hafiz Pasha in 1893 (Biral 2009, 49). However, the investigation into the incidence did not convince the Porte that Sheikh Jassim was solely responsible for what had happened, and the Sublime Porte chose to forgive Sheikh Jassim. Overall, the Porte knew remarkably well that losing Sheikh Jassim could easily push him into British sphere of influence

and thus make it difficult for the Porte to control the Bedouin tribes loyal to him, which could potentially end Ottoman sovereignty in Qatar. However, the Ottomans were also aware that despite the freedom of maneuvering and autonomy the Sublime Porte granted on Sheikh Jassim, he was fully conversant about where to stop and announced his loyalty to the Sultan, as evidenced in his letter to Sultan Abdulhamid II.

OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN QATAR

The Sublime Porte considered that without major administrative and financial reforms in in the Gulf, the British influence would continue to grow. The decision makers in the Sublime Porte also knew that these reforms could meet some resistance from the locals, most of whom were used to Bedouin lifestyles in which attacks on people and property were the norm. Reforms were meant to reinforce central authority and end the ongoing and potential conflicts in the region that could mean political and financial losses for tribal leaders and their people. When Major Omer Bey arrived in Qatar in December 1871, he was already given directives from the Sublime Porte to introduce administrative reforms, which was mentioned in the newspaper report of his arrival in Qatar. In this report, Qatar was referred to as a *kaza* (subdistrict), under the *sanjak* (district) of Najd (Kurşun 2002, 61). Midhat Pasha combined the kazas of Qatar, Najd, Hasa, and Kateef into a single organizational structure and called it the Najd Mutasarrıflığı, or Governorate, and he began to introduce administrative reforms that he had long deliberated in coordination with the Sublime Porte. He noted, "As Qatar, which is one of the four kazas, has no revenue of its own, Jasim b. Thani, the ruling sheikh of Qatar, was appointed kaim-maqam without salary and the relevant order of appointment was duly sent" (Kurşun 2002, 62).

Although Sheikh Jassim's position was honorary initially and he was not paid a salary, as an Ottoman kaim-maqam, he was not only now in charge of taking care of all financial affairs in Qatar such as collecting taxes, deciding on expenditures to be made, and sending the remaining balance to the sanjak but also was positioned in a higher status than the Ottoman gendarmerie stationed on the peninsula. As Al-Thani (2012, 107) puts it, "Jassim reveled in having a protector who gave him such a free hand to rule." In brief, initial reforms in fact proved to be beneficial for Sheikh Jassim and created a lot of room for independent maneuvering.

Appointment of Sheikh Jassim as kaim-maqam followed the formation of an administrative council, stationing of troops in Doha, appointment of a postman, appointment of canonical judges, establishment of a customs house which comprised a customs officer in Doha, a customs official, a secretary,

and two guards in Wakrah, and a civil servant responsible for birth registry services, all of whom were on the Ottoman Empire payroll (Kurşun 2002, 148). The Sublime Porte also made plans to establish villages and ports in different parts of Qatar as a way to increase income for the Qataris and discourage the British from claiming rights on any part of the Qatar Peninsula.

Administrative reforms were much easier to implement while financial reforms involving taxation proved much more challenging as Qatar was solely dependent on pearl trade for economic prosperity. For example, it was almost impossible for the Ottomans to establish a harbor administration in Qatar because numerous people with high sociopolitical standing were involved in arms smuggling, which was a major source of income (Kurşun 2002, 155). Thus, such reforms could result in a major backlash. Overall, although most of these reforms seem quite rudimentary by today's standards, the Ottomans introduced such services and administrative organization to the peninsula back then paving the way for Qatari independence in the post-Ottoman period.

Additionally, because the Ottoman officials in higher echelons of the state, such as Midhat Pasha, believed that military muscle, along with reforms, was the most important factor that could strengthen the Ottoman foothold in Qatar, five sea vessels were dispatched to the region to provide constant surveillance of the ports stretching from Kuwait to Qatar. This move was seen especially necessary because the Ottomans believed that the British vessels in the region were used as effective tools for gun smuggling, provocation, monitoring of sea traffic, and British threats and deterrence. Moreover, the British vessels performed other functions such as saluting local sheikhs, hosting meetings between the British and the local notables/sheikhs as well as enabling the British to spread disinformation and penetrate the Gulf much effortlessly (Biral 2009, 53–54). Although dispatching vessels to the region enabled the Ottomans to monitor British behavior and plan better and control sea traffic in the Gulf on a larger scale than before, it was becoming increasingly more challenging for the Sublime Porte to meet these costs due to burgeoning financial and military exigencies.

THE OTTOMAN-BRITISH RIVALRY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE OF QATAR

The Ottoman-British rivalry had already been gaining speed in Qatar before the Ottoman garrison landed in Doha in December 1871. When the British were putting pressure on Muhammed bin Thani to sign the treaty in 1868, Midhat Pasha had already been working on a strategy to counter increasing

British supremacy in Gulf waters. The Ottoman expedition into Eastern Arabia, including Qatar, was the first sign of the rekindling of superpower rivalry in the Gulf that was already at its peak in different parts of the Middle East. In fact, London had already penetrated different sheikhdoms such as Bahrain, the Trucial Coast, and Oman, and tribal leaders in these areas agreed to the British authority over their affairs. Therefore, the Sublime Porte generally avoided confrontational policies and in fact was lenient toward events that clearly defied its authority and harmed its interests, be it perpetrated directly by the British or the locals or by both. Given intra- and intertribal frictions and conflicts, the Ottomans believed that it was more beneficial for the Sublime Porte to provide sufficient autonomy to the Qatari ruler so that he was kept away from seeking British protection (Kurşun 2002, 93).

The Gulf became increasingly more important for the British given their control of India and a desire to ensure the security and stability of the shortest route from London to Bombay (Kızılkaya 2013, 304). In other words, the Gulf region was also seen as a stronghold whereby London could continue to exert full sovereignty over India. For example, Indian viceroy Lord Curzon stated that "British supremacy in India is unquestionably bound with British supremacy in the Persian Gulf. If we lose control of the Gulf, we shall not rule long in India" (Ulrichsen 2011, 19). Further, the British foreign minister also stated,

> We should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port on the Persian Gulf by any other power as a very grave menace to British interests, and that we should certainly resist with all the means at our disposal. (Rahman 2005, 208)

In fact, for the British, the Gulf was the gateway to Iraq, Iran, and smaller emirates along the Western Gulf coasts, which were at the core of British interests in the region. By extension, Qatar would not be left to the free reign of the Ottomans.

Also, British foreign policymakers thought that losing all or leaving some control of the Gulf to any other power could bring back piracy, gun smuggling, and slave trade that could then damage British commercial interests. Therefore, the Ottoman presence in areas such as Hasa and Qatar could augment the Ottoman influence there that in turn could limit British freedom of action. The main concern of the British governments in London and Bombay was that if the Ottomans started maritime operations and used Gulf waters at their own will, this could encourage other countries, potentially Western powers too, to do the same, which could mean the end of British control over this region.

However, the British were still in favor of the unity of the Ottoman Empire because their European contenders would become eager to fill the vacuum if the Sublime Porte were to leave. Additionally, the British were making large sums of money from places such as Ottoman Iraq with the monopoly of the Lynch Company steamers on Euphrates and Tigris rivers (Althani 2012, 99), and this made London and Bombay to assess that a weak Ottoman authority over these places was much more advantageous than another stronger competitor. Therefore, the British monitored the Ottoman activities in the region cautiously and carefully trying neither to provoke their contender nor to disrupt the status quo.

Different from most of the Gulf locations that the British were already in control, Qatar Peninsula lacked lucrative natural resources besides pearl diving, extremely limited camel breeding, and date farming, and it was not a busy trade route as well. Thus, the British were more interested in Bahrain than in Qatar. In fact, they did not sign a treaty with Qatar, and Qatar continued to fly its own flag until the arrival of the Ottomans in 1871 (Rahman 2005, 31), which is almost half a century after Britain and Bahrain signed the General Maritime Treaty. Similar to the Ottoman strategy, the British did not want to press the realities on ground too hard and lose Qatar altogether. Thus, the autonomy of Qatari rulers did not pose a serious risk as long as they did not jeopardize the British protégés such as the rulers of Bahrain and Abu Dhabi.

However, once the Ottomans began to shore up their presence in Eastern Arabia and Qatar through military installments, maritime vessels, administrative reforms, and civil services, the British attention turned to the tiny peninsula (Biral 2009, 120 and 128). London strongly opposed any move by Constantinople that could weaken British supremacy. The de-facto British supremacy and sovereignty over the region were to be maintained without provoking Ottoman reaction and without harming the delicate peace and stability that were crucial to British interests. The best way to do this was to enter into treaties with different sheikhdoms and use any means necessary, from threatening to coercion to manipulation to disinformation to promises of protecting the *honor* of the Arabs, in order to discourage tribal leaders to follow Qatar's suit and accept Ottoman authority (Biral 2009, 45).

Additionally, the British enforced a policy of suppressing piracy and eliminating gun smuggling that was crucial for protecting British interests. Similarly, the Ottomans also were in favor of this policy as those familiar with the region and its social dynamics knew that gun smuggling and piracy were the two most important game spoilers, even for the superpowers. For example, according to Çetinsaya (2006, 139), Abdulhamid II had stated that "anywhere in the world, the giving of arms to this kind of people eventually creates undesirable states of affairs" and that he ordered an end to the arms smuggling by collecting arms from the tribesmen. However, once again,

realities on ground in Qatar created by superpower rivalry seemed to give Qatari leadership the leeway to play off one superpower against the other and continue to advance their own agenda.

The Ottoman-British rivalry that spilled into Eastern Arabia in general and Qatar in particular in the 1870s paved the way for and expedited the emergence of an independent state of Qatar. Thanks to his deep understanding of politics, visionary and audacious approach to internal and external affairs, and realist and pragmatist use of religious sentiments when/if necessary, Sheikh Jassim laid the foundations of a sovereign state, which had seemed remotely impossible less than half a century before. Sheikh Jassim was able to transform Qatar into one of the leading sheikhdoms in Gulf politics on the eve of World War I. Overall, the relentless struggle among Sheikh Jassim, on the one hand, and the Ottoman Empire and the British Empire, on the other, served as the main determinant of the emergence of Qatar.

As the Great War was approaching and the Sublime Porte was getting besieged from all corners of the Empire, the Ottoman foothold in Qatar was losing momentum. Even the forays into the increasing German military might and Berlin's plan to build a railway stretching from the middle of Europe to Istanbul to Basra fell short of preserving Ottoman interests in Qatar. By 1913, Qatar was already a de-facto independent sheikhdom, which became a de-jure reality with the Anglo-Ottoman Convention signed on July 29, 1913. The final step in the Qatar's actual independence came in 1915 when the last Ottoman soldiers left Doha after staying there for about 44 years. Although the Sublime Porte could not eventually realize any of its objectives and lost control of the region to the British, the presence of the Ottomans played a major role in the formation, consolidation, and independence of Qatar. From the landing of the Ottoman soldiers in Doha in 1871 until their departure in 1915, there were no negative public reactions against the Ottoman presence in Qatar. As Kurşun (2002, 152) observes, "There had indeed been times when the people and the military grew closer to each other and the people asked them to fire the gun at the fort during holidays," which demonstrated the level of relationship between the two actors.

CONCLUSION

Although the Ottoman Empire began to control Eastern Arabia and Qatar in the sixteenth century, the tacit understanding between the Sultan and the Iranian Shah was that the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf belonged to the former while Iranian coast of the Gulf was under the latter's sovereignty. Eastern Arabia, including Qatar and Bahrain, was not centrally important for the Sublime Porte until the nineteenth century; therefore, the Ottomans generally

left the government of these areas to tribal leaders and notables, exercising only nominal authority there. As an extension of the Arabian mainland, Qatar was by default considered a part of the Ottoman Empire. However, the intensifying British hegemony over the Gulf sheikhdoms and the bitter competition elsewhere between both powers were slowly laying the foundations of a rivalry in Eastern Arabia. This calculated and strategic struggle for more power and authority, combined with Sheikh Jassim's charismatic leadership skills, would eventually give birth to a unified, independent Qatar.

The Ottomans embarked on an expedition into Eastern Arabia, including Qatar, in 1871 to block British expansionism and restore Ottoman central authority in and around the Gulf. This Ottoman move would not only protect Qatari sheikhs from the wrath of raids from Central Arabia but also focus their energies on turning Qatar into a unified political entity. After the death of Muhammed bin Thani, Sheikh Jassim was assigned as the kaim-maqam of Qatar, and the processes of state formation, consolidation, and independence were to begin. Sheikh Jassim's relations and dealings with the Ottomans and the British and his strategy of playing off one actor against the other provided him with much space for exerting and consolidating his own authority over the national and international matters of Qatar. From a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, Sheikh Jassim, a devout Muslim and supporter of Muslim unity, made references to the unity of Islam and the importance of Caliphate and framed his policies accordingly. Similarly, the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, a reportedly devout Muslim who tried to revive Caliphate and unity among Muslims, made similar references when he was engulfed by domestic opposition and hostility. Both parties filled an otherwise simple geographical theater with narratives, identities, dilemmas, and certain histories to justify their positions and maneuvers.

Although the Ottomans gained control of Qatar at the invitation of its leadership and faced no notable objection, Ottoman persistence in maintaining the regional status quo, refraining from having conflicts with London even when the interests of Qatar were harmed, and the potential that Ottoman reforms could diminish Sheikh Jassim's authority caused several disputes between the Sublime Porte and the Sheikh of Qatar. The incidence, or the battle, of Wajba was recorded as the most consequential of these controversies as it reinforced the position of Sheikh Jassim not only in Qatar but also among the tribes in the region as well as before London and Constantinople. However, despite this incidence, neither the Sublime Porte nor Sheikh Jassim was willing to sacrifice their fluctuating relationship.

As the Ottomans were preparing to leave Doha, they were leaving behind a Sheikh Jassim who not only brought together different factions on the Peninsula of Qatar into a firm political unity but also a leader who masterfully took advantage of superpower rivalry to form and consolidate a de-facto

independent Qatar within a relatively short time. The Ottoman persistence that Qatar was part of the Empire vis-à-vis opposite British claims, and the fact that neither the Ottomans nor the British was willing to violate the status quo nurtured the emergence of Qatar as an independent state. With its expedition into the region, administrative reforms and protection extended to Doha, the Sublime Porte facilitated Qatar's transformation into a prominent sheikhdom.

Chapter 2

Evolving Dynamics of Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Arab Middle East (1923–1980)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A deeper understanding of the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations in the 2000s, which will be examined later in the book, comes with two prerequisites: a thorough analysis of the drivers of Turkish-Middle Eastern Arab relations from 1920s to 1980s and Turkish-Gulf Arab relations from 1980s onward. Such an analysis will not only contextualize the Turkish-Qatari relations within the larger Middle Eastern and Gulf Arab contexts, but it will also facilitate tracing political, economic, strategic, and sociocultural dynamics, and making informed observations about the relations. Additionally, such a comprehensive analysis becomes particularly valuable given the dearth of literature on the early stages of the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations.

To this end, the investigation of evolving Turkish foreign policy dynamics toward the Middle Eastern Arab countries is the main topic of this chapter. The dynamics and important events that shaped these relations also shaped Ankara-Gulf Arab relations to a substantial degree. To this backdrop, this chapter examines major security events that shook the entire Middle East and trace their impact on Turkey's relations with the region. By analyzing Turkey's approach to and position on the formation of Israel, the rise of Nasserism, the Algerian War of Independence, the Oil Embargo, the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, and the Iranian Revolution, this chapter evaluates how such an approach and a position facilitated, as well as aggravated, relations with Arab countries of the Middle East. The main argument of the current chapter is that relations in this period were weak despite occasional openings and policy changes implemented by different administrations with different worldviews. Initially, the new Turkish foreign policy elite was convinced that Turkey belonged in Europe rather than the Arab/Muslim world

and thus Ankara wanted to keep clear of a rivalry with the Western powers in regional security issues. However, Western indifference to Turkish concerns on several political and security issues, economic exigencies, and Turkey's ambition to wield more regional influence would later instigate closer relations with the once neglected Middle East.

When the Turkish Republic was announced in 1923, superpowers of the time such as the UK and France, as well as other smaller European powers, had almost complete control over most of the Middle Eastern countries. Thus, the young Turkish Republic found it more convenient not to get tangled in regional politics so as not to confront Western powers and distanced itself from regional politics. On the other side of the equation, due its historical baggage, abolishing Caliphate, embracing a secular ideology, and initiating a zealous Westernization process, Turkey became to be considered a Western stooge by the Arabs. *Benign neglect*,[1] *non-interference*, and, after the declaration of Israel in 1948, *maintaining a balance toward Arabs and Israelis* were the most important foreign policy principles of Ankara toward the Middle East. For decades, such principles precluded Turkish foreign policymakers from developing genuine relations with the region, and with the Gulf Arab countries by extension.

The intensification of the Cold War and the Menderes government's willingness to align its foreign policy with Washington instigated Ankara to approach its relationship with the region from security lenses. Turkish foreign policy elite ignored the growing nationalism among Arabs and their aspirations and the growing opposition to Western imperialism; consequently, although Turkey strove to pursue an active foreign policy toward the Middle East from late 1950s until 1960s, relations deteriorated let alone improved (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001b, 124–25). The perception of Turkey among Arab masses as a Western pawn was further consolidated. However, geography proved to be the destiny and Ankara had to modify its tone and approach to re-establish closer relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries since it shared a long border with two of them, that is, Syria and Iraq, in addition to a substantially long, shared history, numerous sociocultural affinities as well as binding international and regional security arrangements.

Relations with three important Arab countries characterized Turkey's relations with the Middle East in this period: Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. Ankara and Damascus had tense relations starting with the Hatay Crisis in the second half of the 1930s. Drawing parallels with the Palestinian issue, Damascus argued that the Hatay issue was an Arab issue, and that Turkey was occupying Arab lands. Although the conflict was shelved several times thanks to Ankara's warm messages and pro-Arab stance on the international arena, as evidenced in 1947 UN decision on partition of Palestine, after Turkey's acceptance into the Western bloc, Ankara felt disinclined to warm relations further. Growing

Cold War polarizations; Turkey's recognition of Israel and NATO membership, which were viewed as detrimental to regional unity; and security and stability by the pro-Soviet Syrian government brought Ankara and Damascus to the brink of war in 1957. Ankara continued to view growing Syrian-Soviet relations as national security threat, especially in the context of occasional Soviet threats against Ankara. Also, supporting ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia), which was responsible for killing Turkish officials abroad, and sheltering PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) leadership in Damascus starting in 1979 were non-neighborly initiatives taken by Damascus. And, Ankara's decision to build hydroelectric dams on Tigris and Euphrates aggravated relations even further in the 1980s.

Likewise, Turkey's relations with Baghdad ebbed and flowed depending on the shifting regional and political dynamics. Ankara had generally friendly and cooperative relations with Baghdad throughout much of the latter's monarchical rule from 1932 to 1958 as was evidenced by several military pacts such as the Saadabad Pact and Baghdad Pact as well as border security agreements between the two actors. Both countries concurred that the Soviets posed a threat to the region. In the ensuing Republican Period, which lasted from 1958 until the Baath revolution in 1968, domestic problems in Iraq stalled improving relations with Ankara. However, with the Baath revolution, relations initially began to improve, particularly in the economic sphere, and Ankara and Baghdad enjoyed extraordinarily strong relations as was evidenced in the 1973 agreement to open a petroleum pipeline that extended from the Iraqi city of Kirkuk to Yumurtalık, a Turkish town on the Mediterranean coast. Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, economic relations between both actors continued to expand.

Ankara's relations with Cairo did not demonstrate much difference. Although Egypt and Turkey enjoyed close historical ties, Ataturk announced his support for the complete Egyptian independence from British hegemony, and both countries established diplomatic relations in mid-1920s, relations did not reflect such closeness because of Turkish foreign policy elites' Westernization efforts such as abolishment of Caliphate, changing of the alphabet from the Arabic script to the Latin script and other modernization decisions and because regimes in both capitals had different political objectives (Aslan 2013, 43). Despite these, fast-changing geopolitical realities motivated Cairo and Ankara to improve relations after the British control over the country's foreign relations and economy was flexed in 1936.

Lukewarm relations generally continued until the end of World War II, and they began to take an obviously negative turn due to Turkey's acceptance of the Marshall Plan, recognition of Israel in 1949, Ankara's efforts to establish or revive military pacts perceived as security threats by Cairo, and intensifying Cold War rivalries. When Abdul Nasser turned into an Arab hero with his

anti-imperialist, anti-Israel, and pro-Soviet stance, relations took a nosedive. From the Egyptian perspective, Turkey was not only a country belonging to the Western camp but also it was the only potential contestant to Cairo's influence in the Muslim countries of the Middle East (Aslan 2013, 129). For Ankara, Cairo's potential alignment with the Soviets, which could lead to the Soviet having free access to the Suez Canal, could threaten Turkey's national security and squeeze it from both the North and the South.

MAIN DRIVERS OF TURKISH-MIDDLE EASTERN ARAB RELATIONS

Security Concerns

Economic and sociocultural dynamics played a role in shaping Turkey's relations toward the Middle Eastern Arab countries in this period. However, given the tumultuous independence period the region was undergoing and its repercussions, security appeared as the most consequential force, followed by economic concerns. Naturally, there are numerous regional, global, and domestic forces that shaped relations between Ankara and the Middle Eastern Arab capitals in this period. However, only those that left an obvious mark on relations will be examined here with a view to mapping out their potential impact on Turkey-Gulf Arab relations in chapter 3.

As was stated, Turkey-Middle Eastern Arab relations exerted a powerful influence on Turkey-Gulf Arab relations. The following major events that shook the Middle Eastern security landscape were particularly important turning points for the trajectory of Turkish-Arab relations in general and Turkish-Gulf Arab relations in particular. Without understanding the Turkish position on and reaction to these seismic events unfolding in the region, an analysis of current Turkish-Qatari relations would lack a meaningful context and perspective. In brief, understanding the Nakba in 1948, Gamal Abdel Nasser's (1954–1970) introduction of the social nationalism, Cairo's trial at independent foreign policy characterized by Arab Nationalism, the Algerian War and the Independence of Algeria (1954–1962), the Oil Embargo (1974), and finally the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Deal of 1979 are vitally important for understanding the ebbs and flows in Ankara's relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries.

The Nakba (1948)

The unfolding events in Palestine in the 1940s sent shock waves throughout the region. With open or tacit approval and assistance from the Western powers, the Jewish nation's efforts to carve up a national homeland in Palestine

came to fruition in 1948. This culmination of events was preceded by an unparalleled uprooting of the Palestinians from their homeland. Nakba, as the Palestinians call it, was a deathblow to the Arab aspirations of independence and unity and to the eradication of imperialism from the region. On the positive side, the foundation of Israel and its quick recognition around the world united the Arab world and gave a common cause to rally around: the Palestinian Issue. Although the Palestinian tragedy moved the masses and their governments, the Turkish government of the time did not feel obliged to follow a pro-Palestinian policy. Rather, Ankara recognized Israel on May 28, 1949, less than a year after it was declared an independent state.

The reasons why policymakers in Ankara opted for such a decision can be traced to Ankara's increased Western orientation under the Kemalist governments as well as other significant domestic political developments in this period, some of which had global reverberations. First, with the establishment of Turkey and the abolishment of the Caliphate on March 3, 1924 and other modernization policies introduced to westernize the society, Ankara turned its face to the West and scaled back its engagement with the Middle Eastern countries. The logic was simple: Ankara did not want to get tangled in the Middle Eastern politics, which was generally run by Western powers such as the UK and France, and which was characterized by frictions between neighboring countries. Most importantly, Ankara did not want the Middle Eastern countries to revive the Caliphate that was abolished by the Turkish Republic (Valansi 2018, 34), which was anathema to their secular vision of the young republic as well as the region.

Second, Ankara had to walk on a tightrope during World War II and the ensuing Cold War politics and did not want its relations with its partners in the West to grow sour (Valansi 2018, 139). Estranged from the Western bloc due to its ambiguous position throughout World War II and the anxiety that the West would not come to help in case of a Soviet attack, Ankara used the recognition of Israel to win Western and American military support. Additionally, perhaps most importantly, to realize her dreams of development and becoming a modern state, Ankara needed to consider its economic interests with the West on whom Turkish economy was heavily reliant, and later the United States, the new superpower. According to Guncavdi (2012, 286–87), throughout World War II, exports to Germany dropped from about 42% of Turkey's total exports to only 5% while total exports to the United Kingdom and the United States combined jumped from about 18% during the 1936–1939 period to 36% following World War II, and the United Kingdom and the United States transformed into the highest sources of financing for Turkey's ambitious industrialization objectives. Limited by such considerations, Turkish policymakers neither had much chance nor willingness to go against the tide. Overall, despite being a rational choice in retrospect given

the context, the recognition of the state of Israel further alienated Ankara from the region.

Nasserism (1954–1970)

If the Palestinian issue is the most determining factor in Turkish-Middle Eastern Arab relations in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the political changes in Egypt, ushered in by the Free Officers Movement led by Mohammed Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser, is probably the second most important event that had a long-lasting impact on how both sides viewed each other. The relations between Ankara and Cairo were not central to either of the capitals since Turkey's independence in 1923 and Egypt's partial independence in the 1922. Relations seemed to get closer in face of the threat of Mussolini in the Eastern Mediterranean in the late 1930s as was evidenced in the Treaty of Friendship signed in 1937.

Although relations continued to stay cautiously neutral throughout World War II, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), originally known as the Baghdad Pact or the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) that Ankara signed with Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and the UK in the same period irked Cairo (Aslan 2013, 129–30). Cairo after gaining full independence from the UK viewed any treaty that included London with suspicion. For Turkey, its position on the Israeli independence in late 1940s, its pro-Western attitude since independence, and its pro-NATO tendencies starting with Ankara's membership in the NATO in 1952 made political and diplomatic sense. However, these moves caused a great deal of concern and anger in Egypt. Being part of the Western security architecture, that is, NATO, Ankara saw a threat in Abdul Nasser's close relations with the Soviet government (Volk 2013, 29). Abdul Nasser believed that Turkey's political, economic, and security interests were identical with the Western interests with which he was highly displeased. Both actors knew notably well that there was not much room for them to forge a working relationship with one another when their interests seemed to clash.

On January 2, 1954, at a reception in Cairo, Abdel Nasser did not shake hands with the Turkish Ambassador Hulusi Fuad Tugay, whose wife, Princess Emine Tugay, is King Farook's cousin. The next day, the ambassador was declared persona non grata and ordered to leave the country within 24 hours, which caused a diplomatic crisis between the two countries (Aslan 2013, 86). This incident gave policymakers in Ankara, who were adamantly pro-Western, another reason to maintain their cautious neutralism with Egypt and the larger Middle East, which was increasingly under the spell of Nasser's charisma and ideology. Abdul Nasser thought that it was the Ottoman rule in Egypt which caused most of Egypt's problems as well as the lingering power of the imperialist countries, that is, the UK and France, in the region

(Aslan 2013, 166). Therefore, he always appeared to be reluctant to establish constructive relations with Ankara.

Nasser was also displeased with Ankara's efforts to convince Iraq to join the Western security system against the potential Soviet threat. When Turkey and Iraq signed the Baghdad Pact on February 24, 1955, Nasser was quick to send negative comments about the agreement and accused Ankara of trying to divide the Arab front vis-à-vis the West. Similarly, Nasser accused Iraq of betraying the cause of the Arab Unity, which he was trying to establish and lead. Striving to become the sole leader of the Arab world thanks to the nationalist wind taking over the Arab nations, Nasser was displeased with the joining of the UK into the Baghdad Pact because London was still resisting to remove its soldiers from Egyptian territory and holding onto its rights in the Suez Canal. By default, Cairo viewed Turkish efforts to involve the UK in any security arrangement as betrayal. Within this framework, Nasser's vice president Anwar Sadat accused Ankara of provoking the UK to attack Egypt and of having evil designs on the Syrian government ("Mısır Bizi Tehdit Ediyor" 1956). Although diplomatic relations followed such a course, both sides seemed willing to develop relations in the economic sphere as was evidenced in mutual visits from the Ministries of Trade, increasing of credit limits, and participation in fairs (Kasapsaraçoğlu 2015, 341).

Thaw in relations intensified in the 1960s thanks to the softening of Turkey's policies toward the region. After the Justice Party came to power in Turkey in 1965, both countries cozied up to each other and intensified their economic relations. Another significant factor in softening relations was that Turkey voted, together with the other Arab countries, against Israeli position in the UN in 1967, following the end of the Six-Day War. The more Turkey was able to break its Western fixation, relations between Turkey and the Middle Eastern Arab countries expanded. The problems between Turkey and Egypt seemed to be not about these two countries or their people or their cultures but rather the two clashing systems they subscribed to, that is, the Western system versus the Soviet system.

This sentiment was also obvious in Riyadh's approach to Abdul Nasser and his Arab nationalist, anti-monarchical stance, which was observed cautiously and anxiously in Gulf capitals (Özev 2016, 14). Saudi Arabia might have seen a stronger pro-Western Turkey as a bulwark against Arab nationalist ideology Nasser was spreading in the Middle East. Toward this end, Riyadh even proposed to Ankara and Tehran to form an *Islamic Alliance* for fighting communism and atheism in 1966 (Özev 2016, 17). After all, pro-Soviet secular Arab nationalism could become the biggest threat to Gulf monarchies, and to counter Nasser's Arab nationalism and its influence on Arab masses, they embraced an Islamist discourse as evidenced in their pro-Palestinian stance, leadership in establishing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Islamic Development Bank (Özev 2010, 120).

By the end of the Nasser Period in 1970, Turkey's disappointment with the Western countries regarding their pro-Greek position on the issue of Cyprus had been growing for some time. Changing domestic political and economic landscape motivated Turkey to approach more favorably to the Middle East as well as seek to attract more financial resources from the rich Arab countries. Therefore, relations with Arab nations began to improve once again. For example, although Ankara declared its neutrality during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, it still maintained a pro-Arab attitude. Similarly, to advance relations with the Middle Eastern Arab nations, Ankara allowed the Soviet aircrafts to use its bases to provide assistance to the Arab forces, while prohibiting the American forces from using its bases to provide assistance to Tel Aviv (Aslan 2013, 162). Finally, in order not to sacrifice her relations for inter-Arab conflicts and disagreements, Turkey maintained its relations with Cairo in contrast to other Arab countries which severed their relations with Egypt after President Sadat signed a peace deal with Israel in 1977.

The Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962)

Another significant event that left an indelible mark on the Turkish-Middle Eastern Arab relations, and Gulf Arab relations by extension, is the Algerian War of Independence which began in 1954 and brought freedom to Algeria in 1962 from France. When the Algerian armed struggle for gaining independence from France started in 1954, Adnan Menderes, the Turkish prime minister, was in power and it had been almost two years since Turkey had joined the NATO, the Western security architecture. Although the Menderes government took policy decisions that generally seemed to regard public opinion in domestic politics and that it was willing to form friendly relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries, this was not true for the Algerian case (Ersoy 2012, 691–92).

Literature suggests different justifications for this. First, Turkey was facing a powerful and potentially expansionist Soviet Union to its north and north-east and it needed the Western security umbrella. In other words, siding with the Algerian cause could endanger Western support to Turkey and could leave Ankara vulnerable to the Soviet threat. Second, the Menderes government had formed close economic relations with both the United States and Europe, and therefore a withdrawal of financial support from the Western system could bring about a huge economic cost that in turn could undermine Menderes's domestic support (Ersoy 2012, 693–94). Finally, the growing nationalist fervor in Cairo and its impact on how the news from Algeria was received, Cairo's centrality in Arab affairs as well as sour relations with Nasser forced Ankara to be extremely cautious about throwing immediate, unconditional support behind Algeria (Sönmez 2010, 292–93). Overall, the government's pro-French position was also reflected in the way

the pro-government media, which presented the Algerian struggle for independence as a domestic issue of France, even calling the Algerian fighters as extremists, terrorists, and looters (Sönmez 2010, 293).

What really affected the image of Turkey in the eyes of most Middle Eastern capitals and masses was its persistent pro-French votes in the UN on this issue. For example, in the Bandung Conference, the first large-scale Afro–Asian Conference held in Indonesia in 1955, Turkish deputy prime minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu argued in favor of NATO and presented Western colonialist arguments, which disgraced the image of Turkey in the eyes of the attending nations. To put it in Aydin's (2000, 13) words, "Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries, and Third World states in general, were literally an extension of its Western-dependent foreign policy." Similarly, Turkey either voted or abstained in favor of France and against Algeria in different UN sessions, which the Middle Eastern Arab nations found appalling.

When the war was at its peak and as the number of Algerian casualties mounted, a clear divergence between the official position in Ankara and the Turkish public opinion in general surfaced (Sönmez 2007, 186). No matter which ideological background Turks identified with, they grew sympathetic to the Algerian cause and thought that Algerians were mimicking Turkey's path in 1923 and that they needed immediate unconditional support from Ankara. The military junta that took office in Turkey in 1960 broke the previous positions of cautious neutrality and covert support for France and began to show support for the Algerian independence (Sönmez 2010, 315). They argued that it was natural for Turkey to support Algeria, a brotherly nation on the same path to independence as Turkey did in the 1920s. This pro-Middle Eastern shift became more noticeable with the coming of the Justice Party to power in 1965. With the developments in Cyprus, Ankara realized how costly it had been to be blindly pro-Western in its foreign policy orientation.

Naturally, this change in the tone of Turkish policy was not to be attributed solely to the new political elite in Ankara, who defined themselves as anti-imperialist. Rather, the first sign of the new position was signaled by the Democratic Party senator John F. Kennedy who would later become the 35th president of the United States. In July 1957 at the United Nations General Assembly, Kennedy said that the Algerian issue was not a domestic issue of France and that Paris had to resolve the problem by opening the way for some form of Algerian independence (John F. Kennedy on the Algerian Crisis, 2020). Although the French government had to submit to the fierce resistance demonstrated by the Algerians and mounting international pressure and accept the independence of Algeria in 1962, Ankara's decision to open an embassy in Algeria happened only in 1963. This could be explained by the concern of some Turkish political elite in the Foreign Ministry about

Turkey's potential exclusion from the European Common Market. Overall, Turkish position on the Algerian independence from France was a litmus test for Ankara to demonstrate its sincerity to the Middle Eastern nations, which further tarnished Turkey's image before the Middle Eastern Arab and other Muslim nations.

The Egyptian-Israeli Peace (1979)

Egypt has generally been one of the most important political, educational, cultural, and financial centers of the Arab world, and at times, it has spearheaded the Arab quest for a renaissance. Given Turkey's close military and economic relations with the Western bloc and the adamantly secular view of the foreign policy elite in early periods of the newly founded republic, Turkey was disinclined to establish close relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries for several political and economic justifications specified above. When the international political arena necessitated Turkey to pick a side, it was automatically the side of the Western countries. This Turkish attitude was not any different with regard to Egypt. For example, during the 1956 Suez Canal dispute between the UK and Egypt, Ankara sided with London, probably one of the first manifestations of Turkey's concern and displeasure about the course Egypt's Abdul Nasser was taking.

With the sudden death of Abdul Nasser on September 28, 1970, Vice President Anwar Sadat came to power. Unlike Nasser, who saw Turkey as a regional competitor and accused Ankara of being a stooge of Western imperialism, Sadat had a different view on Cairo's regional and international relations. Shortly after taking full control of the government, Sadat gradually departed from Nasserism and the ideal of Arab socialism that were fervently pursued by the previous administration. Sadat decided to minimize Egypt's relations with the Soviets, increase the economic power of Egypt, and, in the following years, decided to make peace with Israel. Although recognizing Israel and ending the state of war was regarded as betrayal by other Arab countries that believed in Arab unity and the Palestinian cause, Turkey was pleased with the peace deal because the regional political gap between Egypt and Turkey was finally on a course to narrow down.

The most opportune moment for Sadat to sever ties with Moscow came when he requested more economic and military aid in 1972, while Cairo was preparing for an offensive on Israel to take back its occupied territories in the Sinai. The negative reply from Moscow infuriated Sadat and he decided to expel 5,000 Soviet military advisors and 15,000 air force personnel in Egypt and close the Soviet bases (Aslan 2013, 153). This upturn of events in Cairo was very much in line with Turkish foreign policy goals: preventing any expansion of the Soviet Union in the region and thus precluding any potential Soviet designs on Turkish territorial integrity. Although not stated openly and

officially in order not to irk Moscow, Ankara has always wanted the Soviets to stay out of the region as much as possible. This wish became easier by virtue of Ankara's opening to its Middle Eastern Arab neighbors, Turkish position on and humanitarian and logistical assistance provided to the Arabs throughout the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and Egypt's increasingly colder relations with Moscow. To this background, when the Turkish foreign minister Bayülken visited Egypt in 1973, he received a remarkably positive reception ("Mısır'ın Barış Çabasını Destekliyoruz" 1973). Turkey was finally seeing eye to eye with its neighbors.

Turkish and Egyptian regional foreign policies became even much closer in the aftermath of the 1973 war. Turkey voted in favor of the Arab countries in the UN, condemned Zionism as racism in 1975, promised to open a Palestine Liberation Organization office in Turkey, and reiterated Ankara's position that Israel had to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders for a permanent peace deal. When Sadat started peace negotiations in 1978, there was an uproar from the Arab world; however, Egyptian peace with Tel Aviv helped ease the pressure on Ankara for being the only Muslim country recognizing Israel. Thus, regardless of what other Arab countries thought, Ankara supported the peace deal, and this helped close the gap between the foreign policy objectives of Ankara and Cairo, consolidating their place in the Western bloc. Relations continued to improve between the two important actors of the Middle East in the post-Camp David era and into the Hosni Mubarak period. This demonstrated that Ankara's opening to the Middle East was not just a populist rhetoric but rather a strategic choice.

The Iranian Revolution (1979)

Turkish and Iranian relations have generally followed a stable trend from the peace treaty of Qasr-e Shirin in 1639 until today. In fact, Turkish-Iranian border is perhaps the oldest demarcation in the region, which has stayed almost entirely intact since then. Relations with Iran followed this same pattern after the declaration of the new Turkish republic in 1923. For Reza Shah, who replaced the Qajar Dynasty, Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, was a great revolutionary to be emulated for Iran to take its rightful place among the powerful nations of the region and the world. Small border disputes and related problems were solved through a series of mutual meetings and agreements that took place in 1926, 1928, and 1932. In the tense period leading up to the Second World War, Turkey and Iran searched for ways to strengthen relations and remain united against potential security threats. This culminated in the signing of the Saadabat Pact between Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan in 1937. All four actors pledged to continue friendly relations, show solidarity against security threats, and respect sovereignty and border integrity of one another. This pact between Iran and Turkey remained in effect

until the Iranian Islamic Revolution that installed the Islamic regime in power in Tehran in 1979. Similarly, Ankara and Tehran were both signatories to the Baghdad Pact, which was renamed CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in 1960. In addition to CENTO, Tehran, Ankara, and Islamabad signed the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964, which was renamed as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985 following Iran's proposal. In line with their Western-oriented foreign policy, relations between the two actors ebbed and flowed with no major breaks or disputes until the Islamic regime took power.

When Reza Shah Pahlavi had to flee the country in 1979 in face of mounting mass protests, Khomeini seized power with the help of his discourse that initially appealed to both the Islamists and the left-leaning reformist factions in the country. However, Tehran's foreign policy changed radically in the post-revolution period, rejecting both the East and the West, and promoting only a revolutionary Islamic style of government which envisioned to export regime to its neighbors and other countries beyond. To this background, Turkey's generally friendly relations with Iran transformed into a relationship of caution, and occasional hostility in the years to follow (Geçener 2017, 26–27). However, Ankara was also wary about a potential chaos and lack of government in Iran, which could destabilize Turkey's eastern border and transfer further problems from Iran into Turkey.

The Iranian Islamic Revolution was an alarming development not only for the security of religiously conservative Gulf monarchies but also for the national security of secular, democratic Turkey. The Iranian Revolution and the looming threat of regime export meant the collapse of the American security arrangements in the Gulf, exposing the Gulf countries to numerous threats. For example, the Soviets capitalized on the American failure to evade the revolution in Iran and invaded Afghanistan shortly after. Alarmed at this development, the Gulf Arab countries and the United States sought to formulate policies that would maintain both oil security and the political status quo in the Gulf monarchies (Mercan 2008, 139). Turkey rejected being involved in the provision of security to the Gulf in early 1970s. However, given increasing economic and political engagement with the Gulf countries and the tacit American approval of a potential Turkish involvement in the region's security, Ankara was motivated to add *security* as a new dimension to its relations with the Gulf in the following years (Akdevelioğlu and Kürkçüoğlu 2001, 125–126).

The new regime in Iran based its foreign policy on an Islamic and anti-Western (*Westoxification*) discourse while Ankara based its foreign policy, more or less, on a secular and pro-Western discourse. This was perhaps the most important source of diplomatic friction that occasionally

disturbed relations from 1979 onward. Export of regime and radicalism were two important issues that Ankara pointed to in its dealings with Tehran. Despite lucrative economic relations, secular sentiments characterizing Turkish foreign policy would call attention to Iran and its Islamist discourse as the source of radical ideologies and domestic security issues in Turkey (Calabrese 1998, 85). If Iranian revolution were to fail and social unrest and foreign meddling increase, this would also mean an Eastern border with many potential problems for Turkey: refugees, increase in Kurdish separatist insurgency, loss of a significant economic partner in a time of already dire economic conditions, and most importantly a closer Soviet threat. Being part of the *Pax Americana* and against the potential threat of Soviet expansionism in the region, Turkey was anxious not only about Iran's territorial integrity vis-à-vis Moscow, but also about Iran's position vis-à-vis the NATO.

With Iran's change of foreign policy track, Ankara and Washington were able to see eye to eye again and mend tense relations caused by the Cyprus issue and the U.S. embargo imposed on Turkey in 1974. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at about the same time opened a new venue for U.S.-Turkish relations in the changing geopolitical landscape. Similarly, the revolution also drew Turkey and Gulf Arab countries closer together. The anxiety in the Gulf Arab monarchies about the new Islamist revolutionary agenda in Tehran was shared by the political elite in Ankara. Iran's increasingly hostile political discourse that targeted secular Turkey and monarchical Gulf countries was perceived to pose an existential threat to both sides. Overall, Ankara's pro-American foreign policy orientation and its reactions to the Iranian Revolution assured the Middle Eastern Arab and Gulf Arab countries, including Iraq, that Turkey would not support Tehran blindly. This position was important in promoting Turkish-Arab relations to higher levels in the years to come.

Economic Concerns

The Oil Embargo (1973)

Although generally shadowed by security issues and national and regional threats, economic dynamics was also important for the trajectory of Turkish-Middle Eastern Arab relations. The Oil Embargo, or the Oil Shock of 1973, was perhaps the most impactful of these. The Oil Embargo was initiated by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) to protest the Israeli aggression on Palestinian people and their rights. Countries involved in the embargo declared that they would continue to cut down on their production by 5% every month until Israel withdrew to the pre-1967

borders and Palestinian people's legal rights were guaranteed. With the embargo, the oil prices quadrupled and had a massive negative impact on economies of both the developed and developing nations. For example, Turkish foreign trade deficit, which was only around $360 million dollars at the beginning of the decade, jumped to $769 million in 1973, jumped to a staggering $2,246 billion in 1974, and hit an all-time high figure of almost $4 billion in 1979 (Tarhan 2014, 49). The embargo was an important milestone in relations between Turkey and the Middle Eastern Arab countries, especially the Gulf Arab states. The *cautious neutrality* in Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle Eastern politics, which characterized Turkish foreign policy from its establishment in 1923 until the military coup in 1960, began to change in line with the new international, regional, and domestic dynamics. Especially from 1965 onward, having realized the growing international isolation that was surrounding Ankara due to its pro-Western foreign policy vis-à-vis Algeria and Palestine, Turkey began to mend the broken or weakened ties with the Middle Eastern Arab countries as well as repair its image in the region (Dal 2012, 248).

Due to unfolding developments around the Cyprus issue, especially the U.S. president Johnson's letter to Ankara and the voting on Cyprus at the UN in 1964, Ankara felt betrayed by its Western allies and realized the importance of a multilateral foreign policy. Turkish support to the Arabs during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, in complete contrast to the war in 1956, was perhaps the most concrete manifestation of this shift. Turkey supported not only the Arab position on the UN platforms and the media, but it also told the United States that it would not allow the İncirlik Air Base to be used for providing logistical support to Israel (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001a, 790). In addition, Ankara allowed the Soviet planes to use its airspace to transfer military aid to the Arab countries fighting against Israel (Sırım 2018, 5757). On the humanitarian side, Ankara provided food, clothing items, and medical products to those affected by the war. Turkish decision to change track was facilitated by the overlapping position of the conservative right and the left that saw Israel as an aggressor and the Palestinians as freedom fighters (Bishku 2006, 185).

To this background, when the Oil Embargo of 1973 hit the international headlines, Ankara had already been busy nurturing close relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries, most of whom held unanimous opinion about Israel and the Palestinian issue. Highly pleased with the new Turkish stand vis-à-vis Arab and Muslim issues, the OAPEC members declared that Turkey would be exempted from the oil embargo.

Had this embargo happened prior to the 1960s its impact on the Turkish economy would have been minimal because the degree of industrialization and dependence on oil were still marginal. However, given Menderes

government's close relations with the Western countries and the United States, Turkey's new machinated agricultural initiatives and industrialization efforts increased the need for oil. Thus, oil began to occupy an important part of Turkey's import figures. However, as stated, Ankara was able to weather the oil shock relatively unharmed thanks to the embargo countries' willingness to help, both in the form of new trade opportunities in the Arab world as well as the economic and financial prospects they granted to Turkey (Sırım 2018, 5760-61).

Moreover, Iraq and Turkey agreed to open an oil pipeline from Northern Iraq to Turkey, which would transport Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean port of Adana. This enabled Turkey to buy cheaper oil from its Arab neighbor and to earn transportation rents from the transaction. Thanks to the foreign policy change that tilted toward the Arab position since the 1960s, Ankara was able to feel the damaging impact of the Oil Embargo as lightly as possible and make room to improve its economic relations with the Arab countries, whose coffers were filling up at an unprecedented speed. Another positive impact of cozy relations was that Libya's Gaddafi provided fuel oil and wheels for Turkish jet fighters during Turkey's 1974 Cyprus Operation when Washington chose to impose an economic and military embargo on Turkey (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001a, 795). In brief, Turkey's shifting position on regional issues and opening to the Middle Eastern Arab countries enabled Ankara to weather the Oil Embargo with as fewer losses as possible, which was crucial for Ankara to discover the financial potential and economic opportunities offered by the Arab countries.

Increasing economic relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries were also reflected in the trade shares. While Turkey's export to the Middle East Arab region was only $54 million in 1970, this reached to $3 billion in 1985, which equaled to 40.8% of total Turkish exports (Hale 1988, 166). In addition, between 1974 and 1990, Turkish companies won about $18.3 billion worth of contracts from the Middle Eastern Arab countries: with 22 Turkish contracting companies in 1978, 113 in 1981, and 242 in 1982 along with 250,000 Turkish emigrant workers (Robins 1991, 101). According to Demir (2009, 215), in 1973, Turkey's export to Arab countries comprised only 3.3% of the total export volume. This number jumped to 12.8% in1974. Similarly, while imports from Arab countries comprised only 6.1% of total Turkish imports, this figure jumped to 16.8% in 1974. While Turkey's export to European Economic Community comprised 64% of its total exports in 1979, this figure dropped to 49% in 1981; in contrast, exports to the Middle Eastern countries increased from 23% in 1979 to 44% in 1981 (Demir 2009, 219). All in all, economic and financial considerations and interests became both important consequences and drivers of Turkey's opening up to the Middle East.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Western orientation, of which Turkey's position toward Israel was an important driver, security concerns and economic calculations were important dynamics that shaped relations between Turkey and Middle Eastern Arab countries from the independence of Turkey in 1923 until 1980s. Within this period, Ankara's position vis-à-vis Nakba, that is, the displacement of Palestinians from their homeland, was seen as an important litmus test for Turkey in the eyes of the Middle Eastern Arab countries, for whom Ankara failed, at least initially, to live up to its duties as a Muslim country. However, Ankara's frictions with the West and its economic predicaments increasingly pushed Ankara to side with and act favorably toward the Palestinian cause. This won the hearts and minds and helped Ankara to realize its goal of achieving diplomatic and economic support.

Similarly, Ankara's stance toward Nasserism and the Algerian War of Independence caused ups and downs in her relations with Middle Eastern Arab countries. Generally, Arab countries and their people considered Ankara to be a pawn in the hands of Western countries. This perception began to change when Ankara's foreign policy demonstrated major divergences with that of the United States and the European countries in terms of regional issues, as was evidenced in the Cyprus Crisis and Turkey's tacit support for the Arab countries during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. By virtue of such divergences, which were strategic choices of Turkish foreign policy elite, Ankara weathered the Oil Embargo much more smoothly. With the Oil Embargo and the economic difficulties it instigated, Ankara further realized the importance of having friendly relations with its immediate neighbors. Finally, the Iranian Revolution and Turkey's position toward the new Islamic regime in Tehran opened another venue for Turkey and the Middle Eastern Arab countries for further cooperation in the security and economic arenas. In the years to come, Turkey's position on Iran encouraged Gulf Arab countries to see Turkey as a balancer against potential Iranian aggression.

NOTE

1. "Benign neglect" in International Affairs refers to non-interference in a political phenomenon or event with the expectation that non-interference would benefit a political actor more than continual attention to that phenomenon or event would.

Chapter 3

Evolving Dynamics of Turkish-Gulf Arab Relations (1980–2002)

INTRODUCTION

The Persian Gulf is a sub-region of the larger Middle East extending from the Strait of Hormuz on the Indian Ocean coast to Kuwait on the northernmost tip of the gulf. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE are the most important Arab countries on the Arab side of the Gulf, and these countries are directly and indirectly influenced by the developments in other parts of the Middle East. Being the center of Arab thought and pioneering sociocultural developments as well as a source of human capital, the Arab countries in the Levant and North Africa have wielded much influence on the Gulf Arab countries. Thus, it is no surprise that Turkey's relations with Arab countries in the Levant and North Africa have predicted the trajectory of relations between Ankara and the Gulf Arab capitals for decades. As a secular and democratic country Turkey has long aspired to become a member of the Western system, as evidenced in Turkey's NATO membership and European Union (EU) goals and policies. In contrast, the Gulf countries, led by Saudi Arabia, have been conservative monarchies that were, at least initially and at the societal level, suspicious of Westernization. Despite this, Ankara and Gulf capitals were able to forge mutually beneficial relations with one another around common interests and converging identities.

However, the extent of Turkish-Gulf Arab relations was still limited. This can be explained by several factors. First, relations with neighboring Arab countries in the Middle East, particularly Syria and Iraq, determined Turkey's relations with the Gulf Arab countries to a considerable extent (Altunışık and Tür 2004, 112–13) and vice versa, particularly in recent years. In a similar vein, the Gulf Arab countries viewed Turkey largely from the lenses of Syria and Iraq until the turn of the millennium and they mostly bought

the arguments of their Arab brethren vis-à-vis Turks. Second, the Gulf Arab countries, headed by Saudi Arabia, did not exert much political, cultural, or economic influence in the wider Middle East until the 1970s, which was to change radically with petrodollars pouring into the Gulf (Abdulla 2010, 15). As these newly emerging Gulf countries strengthened their regional and global position, the center of Arab political and economic weight gradually shifted from the Levant and North Africa to the Gulf Arab region. Moreover, late independence was also a factor that caused a paucity of mutual relations between Ankara and some of the Gulf Arab capitals, namely Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE. These younger Gulf Arab countries were not making as much petrodollars as their older and financially mightier neighbors such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that confined Turkish-Gulf Arab relations to the Saudis and Kuwaitis for a long time.

MAIN DRIVERS OF TURKISH-GULF ARAB RELATIONS

Although the shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East paved the way for increased political and economic interactions between Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries especially after the 1970s, relations from the 1980s to 2002 did not measure up to expectations. In fact, the political, social, military, and cultural legs of the relationship did not improve in tandem with the growing economic opportunities the Gulf Arab countries presented to Turkey and Turkey's increasing dependence on oil, Gulf Arab credits, and Foreign Direct Investments. Several major motivations were behind this.

First, political orientation of both sides was an important consideration in establishing diplomatic and political relations. Although Turkey was viewed as a Western country at times, it was viewed as a Muslim country at other times by the Arab countries. In this sense, religious and historical ties and sociocultural affinities between the two sides facilitated establishing and improving relations. However, when Ankara was viewed more like a Western actor, relations seemed to cool off. Similarly, Turkey's anti-Soviet sentiments, pro-American foreign policy to which major Gulf Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait subscribed to, motivated Riyadh and other Gulf capitals to cooperate with Ankara (Akdevelioğlu and Kürkçüoğlu 2001, 125–26).

Second, as explained in chapter 2, the general trajectory of Turkey's relations with the neighboring Arab countries has been an important determinant for the trajectory of Turkish-Gulf Arab relations. For example, relations with neighboring Syria and Iraq, and relations with Egypt, the biggest and the most influential Arab country at the time, have influenced Turkey's relations with the Gulf Arab countries, sometimes negatively and sometimes positively.

When relations cooled off with Abdul Nasser due to his pro-Soviet inclinations, for example, this had a positive impact on Turkish-Gulf Arab relations. Third, the nature and intensity of Turkish-Israeli relations have dramatically affected the Turkish-Gulf Arab relations. Despite Gulf Arab countries and Turkey identifying with the Western bloc, when Ankara warmed up to Israel, another pro-Western country, relations with Ankara's Arab neighbors, and by extension the Gulf Arab countries, seemed to grow tense and vice versa.

Fourth, mutual public and elite perceptions were another factor that would accurately predict success of a rapprochement or failure of an initiative to improve relations. Generally speaking, from the Turkish Independence in 1923 to the 1950s Turkish elite perception toward the Gulf Arabs was uninterested and aloof in the lightest sense of the word. Although this indifference returned and disappeared again concomitantly with shifting regional geopolitics, it nevertheless had been a determining factor. If specific economic or political exigencies did not press, Turkish elite would generally feel reluctant to form positive relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries. Naturally, we cannot argue that perceptions per se formed relations; however, they were an indicator at least, taking their place next to *realpolitik*.

Fifth, Turkey's economic interests would mostly predict the trajectory of the Turkey-Gulf Arab relations. At times when Turkey urgently needed to address its economic woes, as evidenced in the 1973 Oil Shock, relations grew much faster. Finally, in cases where the regional security arrangements were threatened, Turkey and the Gulf Arab states tended to enjoy converging political views, as was evident in their fear of Soviet expansionism and the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, when both actors aligned their security and economic policies with the Western bloc. These determinants can be examined under four major subtitles.

FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATIONS

There is a clear parallelism between the trajectory of Turkey-Gulf Arab relations and their foreign policy orientations. Ankara's foreign policy toward the Middle Eastern Arab countries was based on the concept of benign neglect from the announcement of the Republic of Turkey until well into the 1960s. The policy of benign neglect, which was in operation until the Cyprus Crisis in 1964, and the policy of non-intervention in intra-Arab affairs, which was in force until the Invasion of Kuwait in 1990, determined the quality and quantity of relations with the Gulf (Özel 1995, 164). Turkish foreign policymakers calculated that interference in Arab affairs would harm Ankara's interests, whereas avoiding such affairs would bring benefits. Within this framework, Ankara tried to avoid getting tangled in complicated

relations within the Arab world that in turn would spoil relations with the West. Consequently, Turkey's trade volume with European countries and the United States as well as American financial assistance to Turkey grew exponentially after World War II.

Until long after Kuwait entered the list of independent Gulf countries in 1961, Turkey-Gulf Arab relations were confined to the relations with Saudi Arabia per se. Gulf countries, more specifically Saudi Arabia, first assumed a role to counter Nasser's Egypt that was fast moving from the orbit of the Western bloc. Later, Saudi Arabia became the new champion of Islamic solidarity and Arabism after the defeat of Nasser's Egypt in late 1960s. Saudi Arabia viewed Turkey's position on Arab issues, such as the recognition of Israel in 1949 and the UN voting on Algerian independence in 1955 and 1958, as destructive to the unity of the Arab world and Islamic solidarity. Turkish foreign policy decisions regarding these two issues fed the perception of terrible Turk in the psyche of the Arab world creating mistrust and suspicion on both sides (Samaan 2013, 68). Despite this, Saudi Arabia also saw in Ankara a potential contender to Abdul Nasser's increasingly assertive Arab nationalist ideology that was seen as a national security threat by Saudi leadership. In addition, Saudi Arabia could fight against Marxist, socialist, and atheist ideologies in Muslim countries in collaboration with Turkey.

Relations with Israel

Ankara's pro-Israeli stance and diplomatic relations with Israel have been pivotal in the evolution of Turkey-Gulf Arab relations. Yesilbursa (2010, 87) observes that Turkey had an interest in the Gulf, that is, Saudi Arabia, in the 1950s after the Democrat Party assumed power. Similarly, for Saudi Arabia, the Democrat Party could implement policies antithetical to the secular Republican People's Party[1] and have a different opinion on Muslim issues, particularly the Palestinian issue. However, the Democrat Party's excessive reliance on the United States and its pro-Israeli stance disappointed Saudi Arabia, and later other smaller Gulf Arab countries as well (Yeşilbursa 2010, 95).

For example, Turkish foreign minister Zorlu visited Riyadh in 1957 to request support for the Baghdad Pact that was aimed at countering Soviet expansion and security threats (Yeşilbursa 2010, 87). Although Riyadh seemed to appreciate Turkey's concern that the Soviet infiltration into the region would endanger the entire regional security architecture, Saudi decision makers reiterated that Turkey had to reconsider its pro-Israeli position and diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv before promoting relations and cooperation between the two countries to higher levels.

The course of Turkish-Israeli relations assumed even more attention after King Faisal, a staunch supporter of Arab causes and Islamic unity and solidarity, assumed power in 1964. King Faisal's term coincided with Turkey's realization that the policy of supporting Israel unconditionally, which was to ensure U.S. security promises vis-à-vis the potential Soviet aggression, was not serving Turkish interests as was evident in the Cyprus Crisis in 1964. The first high-level visit from the Gulf Arab countries to Turkey was in this period. The Saudi King Faisal paid a short visit to Turkey in 1966 as part of his official tour for advocating the establishment of the Organization of the Islamic Conference that was founded in 1967 in response to the Israeli victory in the Arab-Israeli War. Closer relations with Saudi Arabia, and later with Kuwait, influenced Ankara's foreign policy priorities in favor of Arab and Muslim causes. For example, Turkey became a vocal supporter of the Arabs in international forums; strove to keep minimal relations with Israel in order not to disappoint its Gulf Arab counterparts; and embraced a multidimensional foreign policy outlook to improve its political, economic, commercial, and sociocultural relations with the Arab countries.

Increasing economic and political connections between Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries constituted an important factor in shaping Turkey's foreign policy toward Israel in this period. Occasionally, Gulf Arab countries threatened Turkey with halting financial assistance and political support unless Ankara totally severed ties with Israel. Turkey played a balancing game between such Arab demands and its relations with the West, which was, as mentioned, closely related to its relations with Israel. For example, at the OIC's Lahore Summit in 1974, Turkey was pressured to sever its diplomatic relations with Israel. Otherwise, Ankara would not be granted the funding from the Islamic Development Bank (Yavuz and Khan 1992, 81).

Mounting economic concerns and no-strings attached financial aid and credit lines motivated Turkey to grant permission to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to open an office in Ankara in 1976 and to support anti-Israeli decisions at the OIC. When Israel unilaterally announced Jerusalem as its *complete and united capital* in 1980, Saudi Arabia's pressure and release of a $250 million financial aid were instrumental in Ankara's decision to downgrade its diplomatic relations with Israel (Köni 2012, 109). This balancing game continued until after the Camp David Accords in 1978 that significantly reduced Arab pressure on Ankara.

Just as in the 1970s and 1980s, economic and political engagements with the Gulf countries affected Turkey's Israeli stance in the post-Cold War political context. However, unlike the 1970s and 1980s, when Turkish foreign policy priority was to expand economic opportunities with the Gulf Arab countries, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s prioritized national security vis-à-vis the Kurdish separatist activities. These national security concerns and the easing

of the Arab-Israeli tensions, at least the end of hot wars between them, paved the way for a military cooperation agreement between Turkey and Israel in 1996. This agreement infuriated the Muslim world in general and the Arab countries in particular leading to the passing of two harsh resolutions against Turkey at OIC's 8th summit in Tehran in 1997 and forcing President Demirel to leave the summit in protest. In fact, warm Turkish-Israeli relations built on security concerns poisoned Turkey's relations with the Arab world in general and the Gulf Arab states in particular throughout the 1990s.

With the coming of AKP to power in 2003, relations with all Middle Eastern actors began to demonstrate an unprecedented positive momentum. However, the pendulum of Turkish-Israeli relations would swing once more during AKP's second term in office, which will be examined in more detail in chapter 6, taking a nosedive and creating a conducive political environment for Turkey to mend its relations with the rest of the Middle Eastern Arab and Gulf Arab countries not just at the level of the political elite but also at the level of the popular Arab opinion.

ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Economic concerns have grown increasingly more important over the years for Turkish-Gulf Arab relations. With petrodollars pouring in the 1970s, market potential, financial aid capabilities, and investment resources of the Gulf Arab countries increased dramatically. Regional political developments weakened Arab nationalism and the center of Arab politics gradually shifted to the Gulf (Abdulla 2010, 30). Ankara's intervention in Cyprus in 1974 instigated an American embargo on Turkey. Consequently, the political elite in Ankara was facing a dire need for cheap oil and more foreign investments to continue the economic growth needed to keep the country economically stable. In addition, the growing Gulf markets were becoming lucrative destinations for Turkish exports.

Similar to the late 1970s, Turkish economic growth was facing some difficulties and Ankara wanted to tap into the potential of the Gulf Arab countries to overcome these challenges. Growing volume of export figures and tourist numbers (Karpat 2001, 193–94), expanding Turkish-Gulf Arab economic interaction, such as the increasing number of Turkish companies and Turkish immigrant workers in Saudi Arabia, and the growing Saudi financial aid and investments in Turkey, such as Faisal Finance and Al-Baraka Turk (Köni 2012, 104), were all significant milestones in the evolution of Turkey-Gulf Arab economic relations.

In addition, Saudi Arabia was becoming an integral economic and financial partner for Ankara. For example, the amount of Saudi loans to Turkey stood

at $85 million in 1981; from 1983 to 1987 Saudi Development Fund extended almost 750 million dollars' worth of financial aid to Ankara for buying oil; while in 1980 remittances from around 80,000 Turkish expatriates was $273 million, in 1982 this figure reached to $2 billion from about 173,000 Turkish expatriates working in Saudi Arabia (Özev 2016, 19); and finally mutual agreements were signed and new legislation was passed to accommodate more Gulf Arab investments. Moreover, most of the bilateral agreements with the Gulf Arab countries in this period were geared toward improving economic, financial, and commercial relations.

The agreements in economic, financial, and commercial areas, combined with Turkey's favorable approach to the Arab causes, paid off. Toward the end of 1980s, investments in different sectors by the Islamic Development Bank, the Abu Dhabi Fund, the Saudi Fund, and the Kuwaiti Fund reached about $1 billion (Soysal 2000, 260). According to Turkish Statistical Institute's (TUIK) international trade data, while Turkey's total trade volume with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain combined was about $129 million, it jumped to $403 million in 1980, $1 billion in 1985, almost $1.5 billion in 1990, $2.35 billion in 1995, and back to about $2 billion in 2000. When these numbers are further analyzed in terms of export and import figures, while Turkey was exporting only about 14 million dollars' worth of products to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain in 1975, this figure jumped to a staggering $1,214 billion in 2002. In contrast, Gulf Arab exports to Turkey demonstrated only a small increase: $114 million in 1975 and $277 million in 2002. In brief, Turkey obviously benefitted from closer relations with the Gulf Arab countries in the financial and economic spheres.

Economic relations between Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries attracted a refreshed attention in the 1980s with the cordial diplomatic exchanges between the military regime in Ankara (1980–1983) and the Gulf leaders. According to Akdevelioğlu and Kürkçüoğlu (2005, 126–27), the Gulf Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, were favorable to the military regime in Ankara because general Kenan Evren's political agenda nicely dovetailed with that of the American, and by extension the Gulf Arab interests (Bostancı 2017, 108). In this respect, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jabir Ahmed Al-Sabah visited Ankara in 1981 and President Kenan Evren paid a visit to Kuwait in 1982, both for the first time. This was followed by President Evren's historic visit to Saudi Arabia in 1984. The two sides agreed on establishing a Turkish-Saudi Joint Investment and Trading Company by private sector actors as well as easing trade regulations.

Additionally, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and its Saudi counterpart made major progress with regard to expanding trade volumes, establishing investment financing companies, and inviting Turkish construction sector to the Gulf market (Ataman

2009, 75). This facilitated Turkey's growing economic relations with these countries. However, although Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain were willing to work with the military regime in Ankara, cooperation with the Gulf Arab states was perceived negatively in secular circles because they believed that the increasing Gulf Arab capital in Turkish banks and the financial sector could slowly erode the secular tenets of the republic and the society (Köni 2012, 17).

Such cordial relations were continued by Prime Minister Özal (1983–1989) who laid special emphasis on economic relations with the Gulf in his active, multidimensional foreign policy approach. One of the first legislations the Özal government passed in the parliament was allowing foreigners to buy property in Turkey, which was aimed at attracting rich oil sheiks from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to invest in property in Turkey (Köni 2012, 19). This was followed by a government decree that allowed foreign private financing companies to operate in Turkey. Shortly after, Saudi-owned Faisal Financing Institution and Al-Baraka Turk Private Financing opened their Turkey branches and this was followed by Kuwait-Turk Islamic Banking in 1989 (Köni 2012, 19).

President Özal saw the Invasion of Kuwait by Saddam as an opportunity to expand Turkey's economic influence and win economic and political support from the Gulf Arab capitals (Yavuz and Khan 1992, 78). Özal's requests resonated well with the Gulf Arab capitals and they promised to compensate Turkey for its economic loss due to complying strictly with the UN-imposed embargo on Iraq and opening of the İncirllik Air Base to International Coalition's military flights. Gulf countries partly realized their promises and Saudi Arabia granted $1 billion worth of oil to Turkey and $1.5 billion worth of oil to the Turkish Defense Fund (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001b, 137).

However, due to the changing security landscape in the region, the Gulf Arab countries would fall short of meeting most of Turkey's initial expectations for expanding economic interests and reaping political support from Gulf monarchies for the foreign policy agenda Ankara was pursuing elsewhere. Overall, Gulf War I, examined below, not only did hurt the Turkish economy but also prepared the ground for a power vacuum in the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq, which precipitated separatist terrorism in Turkey's Iraqi borders, pushing security concerns to the top of Ankara's priorities (Altunışık and Tür 2004, 117).

SECURITY CONCERNS

The period from 1980 to the beginning of the 2000s saw at least four major security issues that had a significant impact on Turkey's relations with the

Gulf Arabs. For Turkey, this period, which extends from the military coup in September 1980 to the coming of AKP to power in 2002, was generally characterized by fast-changing regional and domestic security dynamics. The most important of the four was the Iran-Iraq War which lasted for about eight years and caused great human loss and economic devastation for both Baghdad and Tehran. Although Saddam initially found the conservative Gulf Arab leadership, especially that of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, favorable to his offensive on Iran, Riyadh and Kuwait knew that the end of the war would heighten their need for a security umbrella vis-à-vis the winner (Nonneman 2004, 168–69). They would face a stronger Islamist regime or a more radical, pretentious pan-Arab leader.

It can be said that it was this perception of threat brought about the formation of the GCC right after the war broke out. Additionally, this perception was instrumental in Gulf Arab capitals warming up to Ankara, as explained in chapter 2 under the Islamic Revolution of 1979, as well as their viewing Turkey as a potential balancer in the face of military threats. Being neighbors to both Iran and Iraq, as well as having countless cultural and religious affinities and historical ties, Turkey had to walk a tightrope striving to remain neutral, to maintain its friendly relations with the Gulf Arab countries, and to eventually help bring a peaceful end to the conflict.

Formation of the GCC was another milestone event that motivated the Gulf Arab countries to become and function as a more unified group and seek new alliances that could discourage threats on their security. Given the main driver of this formation, that is, perception of security threats, the GCC capitals were more willing to diversify the base of stakeholders in their security and attract other regional and global powers to their side. Being one of the strongest military actors in the region, the GCC capitals were happy to receive Turkish support for their newly formed council.

Overall, although with varying intensity at different times, foreign policy orientations, relations with Israel, economic calculations, and security concerns played an important role in shaping the Turkish-Middle Eastern and the Turkish-Gulf Arab relations that would enter a new phase at the turn of the century. The Invasion of Iraq by the American forces in 2003 and the removal of Saddam from power instigated groundbreaking political developments in the region drawing Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries closer once again. Security continued to be the main driver of flourishing relations between the Gulf Arab countries and Turkey in this period as was evidenced in the Gulf Crisis, the ensuing Gulf War I, 9/11 terrorist attacks, and Gulf War II. In a nutshell, foreign policies of both sides, that is, Gulf Arab countries and Turkey, ebbed and flowed with regional dynamics and the fast-changing domestic political landscape.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988)

Neutrality was the most important Turkish foreign policy throughout the Iran-Iraq War that broke out only days after the new military government took power in Turkey in 1980. Especially in the context of increasing economic problems in Turkey, what seemed to determine Ankara's stance throughout the war was economic concerns and the fact that Ankara did not want to offend either of its neighbors who were crucially important for both export of Turkish products and import of oil (Gözen 2005, 75–76). This meant that although Turkey was wary of the new regime in Tehran, Ankara chose to prioritize its economic concerns and not focus on ideological frictions and divergences. Security would become a priority if/when ideological differences posed a serious threat, or if/when Ankara considered them as useful tools for rallying support in domestic politics, the latter being generally the case.

From Iranian perspective, Tehran needed to keep Ankara as distanced as possible from Iraq and its Gulf Arab allies. Neutrality paid off and between 1981 and 1982 trade volume between Turkey and Iran increased almost tenfold (Çetinsaya 2004, 210). In fact, Deputy Prime Minister Turgut Özal visited Tehran in 1982 with a group of 1,000 businesspeople. The secular sections of Turkish society and an overwhelming majority of the ultra-secular Turkish army were alarmed at Iran's discourse about regime export; however, the economic liberalization program Ankara was trying to pursue necessitated Ankara not to get tangled in ideological fights as much as possible in order to succeed in its neoliberal economic program and reap economic benefits from the war (Geçener 2017, 94).

Despite having announced neutrality in official circles, Ankara, like the Gulf Arab countries that would form their own bloc shortly after the war broke out, did not trust the new regime established in the aftermath of the revolution and remained vigilant about any potential Iranian intervention in their domestic affairs, that is, regime export. Concurrently, Turkey's relations with Iraq, viewed as an important bulwark against Iranian expansionism and threat of regime export to the Gulf Arab countries, grew exponentially. This soured relations with the Iranian foreign policy elite who argued that Ankara was not keeping its neutrality. For Ankara, the prolonged war was becoming increasingly costly in a fast-changing political landscape in its eastern and southeastern borders. Concurrently, in such a context Iraq's Gulf Arab allies further warmed up to Turkey, arguably to constrain and check Iran from its western border. This was well-received by Ankara given its increasingly tighter economic constraints and its need to open to new markets to manage the growing Turkish export volumes.

As the Iran-Iraq War continued, it became to be considered as a threat not only to Turkey's oil security but also to the survival of the Gulf States. It

demonstrated that both Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries had legitimate security and stability concerns. This concern was materialized in agreements Ankara and Riyadh signed in 1984, whereby both sides decided to exchange personnel for military training, education, and cooperation as well as for assisting each other in establishing and modernizing military facilities (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001b, 126). For example, Ankara dispatched a military commission to Khamis Mushait airbase to train Saudi pilots to protect oil fields in the Eastern Province while Saudi officers came to Turkey for training. Similar agreements and exchanges took place between Turkey and Kuwait as well, but at a limited level. Gulf leaders were understanding of the fact that Turkey had to stay neutral or at least try to seem to be not taking sides in this conflict given its own hard security concerns at its own borders and energy security calculations. Ankara knew very well that being dependent on either only the Arab or only the Iranian energy sources would be a big mistake. A mix of both and potentially more sources could be a better solution for Turkey's growing needs.

During a visit to Qatar in 1986, President Kenan Evren stated that Ankara was worried about the Iran-Iraq War because other powers could also get tangled in the war that would bring a catastrophe for the whole region ("Sıcak Uğurlama, Dost Karşılama" 1986, 1). By other powers, President Evren could well be referring to the Soviets and potential intervention of Moscow in the region as was the case in Afghanistan. During his visit to Doha, Kenan Evren also reiterated Turkey's neutrality and wish for a peaceful solution. When the tanker wars broke out in the Gulf, some Gulf countries asked Ankara to help with security of the Gulf waters that was kindly declined by Ankara in order not to disrupt its policy of neutrality (Yıldırım 2005, 209).

As the war intensified and Turkey and Iran came head-to-head over issues such as Iran's regime export, Turkey's open arms policy for Iranian dissidents fleeing the country, Tehran's reluctance to help Ankara fight against PKK, and Tehran's hostile discourse against secular nature of the Turkish state (Gök 2019, 2). Additionally, Turkey was concerned about Iran's potential seizure of the Kirkuk region, where an oil pipeline was pumping oil to Turkey's Mediterranean shore (Uzgel 2000, 52). Although the war was relatively beneficial for Turkish economy and caused both Iraq and Iran to be weaker neighbors, which could be regarded as positive geostrategic gains in terms of international political dynamics, Ankara grew increasingly uncomfortable with weaker neighbors with highly rich oil reserves. The concern was that the Soviets would want to take advantage of the situation.

Remaining neutral and continuing the *active neutrality* policy became almost impossible for Ankara toward the end of the war, and in early 1987 Ankara switched to a policy of mediation between the two neighbors. By this time, ending the war through mediation was also something that the

Gulf Arab countries were considering. Although there were times when both Tehran and Baghdad viewed that Ankara was no longer a neutral neighbor, Ankara did everything in its power to portray itself as a neutral actor, never saying or doing anything official that would harm this position. Years of war between Baghdad and Tehran had already worn them out, and they both agreed to a cease-fire. The conclusion of the war in 1988 ended Turkey's concern about the potentially detrimental repercussions of the war; however, relations with Iran continued to remain volatile and even hostile at times.

Although Turkish-Iraqi relations witnessed ups and downs, for Iraq, Turkey was an important neighbor that could balance the perceived threat of regime export from Iran, or at least a neighbor that would not ally with the new mullah regime in Tehran (Lak 2015, 84). Given the size of the Iraqi Shiite population and the open declaration of support for the Iranian Islamic Revolution from Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, the then most eminent leader of the Shia in Iraq, worried Baghdad. Thus, Saddam ordered the killing of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. In addition, the situation of the Iraqi Kurds posed another security conundrum for Baghdad because this could become an arena for potential Iranian meddling and even military aggression. Iraq reached an agreement with Turkey on the Kurdish issue; however, Iran continued to play the Kurdish card to her own advantage when there need be (Gök 2019, 5).

Formation of the GCC in 1981

Shortly after the Iranian Revolution and the ensuing Iran-Iraq War, the security anxiety in the six Gulf Arab countries, that is, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain, reached a climax and they realized that none of them was secure in face of the growing aggressive foreign policy of their two neighbors: Iran and Iraq. The Iranian Revolution, with which came the mullah regime's anti-monarchical discourse and provocation of the Shiite minorities, especially in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait, catapulted Iran as an existential security threat to the top of Gulf Arab agenda (Al Hassan 2015).

Against a tense geopolitical reality, there was no treaty-based guarantee that the United States promised to protect the Gulf Arab countries from external threat. Although there were various unilateral statements from the American side, security agreements signed with individual Gulf Arab countries, and the fact that United States has a formidable military force in the region pointed to a tacit American security guarantee, Gulf rulers needed more tangible guarantees. In January 1980, upon the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Jimmy Carter stated that

> any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America

> and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force. (Hunter 2019)

Although this tacit security umbrella promised to protect the region in return for uninterrupted flow of oil from the region, Gulf monarchies needed to foster their security with a regional bloc. Additionally, given their relatively small populations and armies, and the growing perception of lack of regional security, the six countries declared the formation of the GCC. This move was also blessed by Washington, which was alarmed at the Soviet expansion and Iran's anti-American foreign policy (Sreedhar 1984, 912). To this backdrop, the security was probably the most important motivation behind the formation of the council; however, GCC was announced to be more of a social, cultural, and economic cooperation in order not to irk Tehran.

Seen from the international and regional security architectural lens, the formation of the GCC was in line with Turkey's pro-Western foreign policy and Ankara's anxiety with the growing Soviet threat. In fact, the GCC was an important chain in America's strategy to control potential Soviet *push to the south*. The higher echelons of the Turkish state, especially the foreign policy elite, were still reluctant to be associated with any form of security architecture that involved getting tangled in Arab affairs. However, the looming Soviet threat and potential social unrest due to ideological polarization due to the practices of the military regime under Kenan Evren in Turkey seemed to silence such reluctance.

From the GCC perspective, Turkey could become an even more important regional actor in terms of security and trade because Ankara long abandoned pursuing a complete and unconditional pro-Western foreign policy, especially as was evidenced in the case for Palestine and Arab-Israeli wars, which earned the admiration from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf Arab nations (Sırım 2018, 5757–58). Additionally, the unfolding of regional geopolitical landscape and domestic exigencies created a new reality where, with much encouragement from the United States, Ankara was trying to cozy up to the Arab and the Muslim world even further (Ataman 2012, 75), which started in the 1960s.

To such a background, Ankara was pleased with the formation of the GCC as both sides were on the Western bloc, shared security worries vis-à-vis the Soviets and some ideologies they were planting in the Muslim world such as atheism and Marxism as well as the economic and political opportunities these countries could present to Turkey as a more institutionalized union. Ankara continued to improve its bilateral relations with each of the six Gulf Arab countries in the economic, cultural, and even security spheres after the GCC was founded. For example, Ankara signed many individual agreements

in cultural, educational, military, governmental, and economic areas with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman.

Yet, it cannot be said that Turkey and the GCC countries had much relationship on the institutional level until the turn of the century when AKP came to power. Had these relations become institutionalized from the beginning of the GCC, relations could be much firmer and beneficial for both sides in the 2000s. Neither the reluctance of Turkey nor the hesitation of the GCC countries was responsible for weaker relations. The lack of enhanced interaction between Turkey and the GCC as an institution could perhaps be attributed to the institutional immaturity of the council at the time, which was not envisioned like a union similar to, for instance, the EU.

The Gulf Crisis and Gulf War I (1990–1991)

On August 2, 1990, Saddam invaded Kuwait and took control of the tiny Gulf emirate within hours, alarming not just the regional powers but also the global superpowers such as the United States. The Gulf Crisis and the following Gulf War in 1990–1991 sent shock waves throughout the Middle East. Saddam's invasion of Kuwait demonstrated that the small Gulf countries, even the bigger ones such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, were all extremely vulnerable vis-à-vis a relatively stronger country such as Iraq (Alnajjar 2000, 93). Turkey decided to follow a foreign policy that aligned with the *Pax Americana* due to the idea that siding with the international coalition could augment Turkey's strategic importance which was on fast decline in the aftermath of the Cold War, the ever-growing threat of separatist terrorism in Turkey, and Ankara's desire to be at the negotiating table during the post-war regional security arrangements. Unlike throughout the Iran-Iraq War, during which Ankara announced its neutrality from the beginning, Turkey declared Saddam's aggression on a neighboring country as unacceptable and abandoned its traditional policy of non-interference and impartiality toward intra-Arab issues. Unlike the Iran-Iraq War, Ankara and the Gulf Arab capitals were on the same side from the earlier stages of the crisis: allied against Saddam's aggression toward a peaceful, brotherly nation.

Having had to deal with an almost decade-long war and its repercussions, Ankara had challenging foreign policy decisions during this crisis and the ensuing war (Akgün 1991, 37). The 1990s were characterized as a time of extreme securitization in both Turkish domestic and foreign policies. Spreading into Iraq, Syria, and Iran, the Kurdish issue was at the heart of this securitization (Yiğit 2016, 75). Unwilling to face further security issues, Turkish prime minister Turgut Özal promoted an economic and diplomatic solution arguing that a war against Iraq could shatter an already fragile regional security architecture and expose Turkey and other nations to further

security threats (Yalçınkaya 2017, 36). However, as the chances of a peaceful solution looked bleaker and after Prime Minister Özal realized Washington's resolve to deter Saddam using hard power, Turkey quickly changed track and allied with the United States and the Gulf Arab countries (Gözen 2005, 76).

Despite joining the coalition, Ankara strongly stated that Iraq's territorial integrity should be preserved at all costs. Turkey was worried that disintegration of the central government in Iraq could easily pave the way for more chaos and give birth to a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Such developments could provoke Kurdish populations in this vicinity and motivate them to seek independence (Tank 2005, 70–71). Thus, it can be argued that the Kurdish issue in Northern Iraq determined Ankara's foreign policy toward Baghdad especially during the war and its aftermath.

Ankara had calculated that being excluded from the coalition against Saddam would incur a heavy price while working closely with the Coalition would bring many political and economic gains. However, the U.S. security and territorial integrity pledges as well as the Gulf economic and financial promises did not materialize in the aftermath of the Gulf War I. Neither the United States nor the Gulf Arab countries seemed to alleviate Ankara's economic and security burdens that continued to grow especially after the economic sanctions imposed on Baghdad (Müftüler-Bac 2006, 63) and the central government began to lose its control over Northern Iraq. Turkey turned out to be the one of the biggest losers of the war because its border with Iraq became a hotspot of separatist terrorism and it almost lost a lucrative market and an important trade partner (Çancı and Şen 2011, 61).

Although several openings were made to the Gulf Arab markets to compensate for the economic loss and strengthen security ties, Ankara could not achieve what it wanted. For example, Turkey strove to convince the Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to purchase Turkish F-16 fighter jets and armored vehicles. These efforts did not come to fruition as Kuwait and the UAE, and later Saudi Arabia, announced that they were not interested in the deal (Fırat and Kürkçüoğlu 2001b, 552). Overshadowed by militarily much stronger actors in the region such as the United States, Turkey was not viewed as a strong alternative to the Western military protection. Similarly, although the economic relations were stable, this sphere did not show much potential either. All of this was taken to be a clear sign that Turkey was not regarded as an important ally in Gulf Arab capitals.

Neither the short-lived Erbakan government nor the efforts of Turkish foreign minister Ismail Cem's strides into the Middle Eastern Arab countries, and by extension the GCC, to boost economic relations brought about tangible results (Magued 2016, 287). Although the war ended with the liberation of Kuwait and the security of the Gulf countries was enhanced, its political

repercussions would comprise serious national security challenges for Turkey in the next decade (Altunışık and Tür 2004, 85–86). These challenges made Turkey's opening to the region short-lived and pushed the state to direct its energy to domestic security problems and democratization efforts, rather than expanding its engagement with the Gulf states.

To this backdrop, Turkey sought ways to improve relations with Iraq without breaking UN sanctions. Turkey expressed willingness to establish a pact whereby Turkey, Iran, and Iraq could preclude the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Özal's *peace pipeline* proposal, first mentioned in 1986 for carrying the fresh waters of Turkish rivers to the Arab world, also fell short of materializing after a long process of feasibility studies and thus helping improve relations. Additionally, Turkey did not become a major partner of the United States in the aftermath of Gulf War I as was promised by Washington. Finally, two major problems continued to haunt Turkey's relations with Iraq and Syria: the conflict over the waters of Tigris and Euphrates rivers and Damascus's support for separatist terrorism (Altunışık 2013, 178).

Using its position in the Arab League, Syria was able to promote the water crisis onto a pan-Arab level and was able to push for an Arab League resolution in 1996, which called on Turkey to share its water with Syria and Iraq fairly. It is no secret that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries ignored the Turkish position on sharing water of these rivers or at least they did not care about it. Later, when Turkey started incursions into Northern Iraq in an effort to eliminate PKK bases there, Arab countries, headed by Syria and Iraq, accused Turkey of trying to divide a sovereign Arab country. Although Turkey and the central government in Iraq regarded an independent Kurdish state as a threat to their territorial integrity, most Arab countries, occasionally the Gulf Arab countries, continued to view Turkish incursions into Northern Iraq as foreign intervention.

Against this background, Turkey's involvement in the Gulf Crisis and the ensuing Gulf War I initially seemed to promise a return to its Cold War strategic importance and vast economic opportunities. However, once the war over and the coalition powers liberated Kuwait, Washington and the Gulf Arab capitals did not fulfill their promises and left behind a weaker Iraqi central authority making Northern Iraq a safe haven for PKK attacks on Turkish army and the civilians (Barkey 2000, 118). Given increasing terrorism in its southern and southeastern regions, growing socioeconomic discontent and disenchantment with the Arab world, Ankara drew closer to Israel in an effort to enhance its security as well as its status vis-à-vis the Western capitals. Capitalizing on its connections in the Arab world, Syria began to present Turkish-Israeli relations as a new threat to the Arab world. According to Bengio and Özcan (2000, 135), for

example, Syrian vice president Khaddam stated that the Israeli-Turkish alignment was the greatest threat facing the Arabs since 1948. An OIC resolution was passed in Tehran in 1997 with the efforts of Syria, Iran, and Egypt castigating Turkey for its close relations with the Jewish state as well as for its disrespect of Iraqi territorial integrity. A rapprochement between Turkey and the Middle Eastern Arab countries had to wait until a globally seismic event devastated the regional and international political arena and until a more conducive domestic political landscape took shape in the new millennium.

9/11 Terrorist Attacks and Gulf War II (2001–2003)

On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda launched a series of coordinated terrorist attacks against targets in the United States, killing almost 3,000 people. In the biggest attack, hijackers flew two planes into both the North and the South Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Terrorists flew the third plane into the western façade of the Pentagon while passengers in the fourth plane, which was probably destined for another major attack in Washington DC, subdued hijackers and the airplane crashed into a field in Stonycreek Township near Shanksville. Shortly after the terrorist attacks, Washington launched a military campaign known as the War on Terror and set foot on Afghanistan in pursuit of Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind of the attacks.

Washington's threatening rhetoric of *you are either with us or against us* as well as the involvement of many Arab citizens in the attacks, most of whom were from the Gulf, silenced any objection to the U.S. military campaign and forced most Muslim nations to become part of the War on Terror. Decided to engineer a new Greater Middle East with pro-Western moderate Islamic views, Washington would not stop in Afghanistan, where the military campaign started. Dictator Saddam Hussein, a vocal critic of the American policies in the region, was targeted next. On the pretext of weapons of mass destruction and fabricated evidence, Washington decided to eliminate Saddam who was severely weakened with years of economic and financial sanctions.

With Gulf War II in 2003, almost a decade after Gulf War I, Saddam was removed from power. Unlike the Gulf War I during which Turkey allied with the United States almost unconditionally, the Turkish Parliament was not enthusiastic about supporting Washington and experiencing yet another major disappointment. Some argued that Turkey needed to work closely with Washington this time again pointing to potential costs of being excluded from the negotiating table after Saddam's removal from power. However, in face of mounting domestic opposition from both the secular and conservative

circles as well as the mounting international opposition to war, the Turkish Parliament did not grant permission to the U.S. army to use Turkish soil to carry out an attack on its neighbor, Iraq.

This decision was embraced by domestic and regional public opinion as a bold opposition to a destructive U.S. scheme and promoted Turkey's image as a strong democracy that does not succumb to U.S. intimidation (Kesgin and Kaarbo 2010, 35). Turkey had legitimate security concerns about the repercussions of an American military intervention in Iraq and favored a diplomatic resolution. Ankara did not want to repeat the cycle of mounting terrorism and aggravating economic indicators of just a decade ago. Additionally, despite with many limitations, Iraq was continuing to be a lucrative market for Turkish exports. Similarly, the Gulf Arab capitals were concerned about Saddam's removal from power that could turn the country into an Iranian satellite or worse another weak Arab country on the verge of collapse. Gulf monarchies were also worried that large numbers of Shia in Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain could trigger major instability in their own countries. For the monarchies, removing Saddam could create a power vacuum, which could embolden Tehran to defy the regional status quo.

As anticipated, the immediate implications for Turkey of the War on Terror were that the Iraqi state was on the verge of collapse and social disintegration and sectarian violence ravaged the whole country. An additional implication was that the power vacuum in Iraq caused Tehran to become an important player in Iraqi politics given the sectarian make-up of the country. Also, Turkey could face an influx of refugees from Iraq if the Iraqi state apparatus totally collapsed. Finally, the image of the United States was severely damaged both in the eyes of the political elite and the masses in the Middle East and the wider Muslim world. These implications were also shared by the GCC capitals, which were especially alarmed at the increasing Iranian influence in Iraq and the entire region. In fact, Jordanian King Abdullah II referred to this as the Shia Crescent in 2004 and spoke of the concern many Arab leaders harbored about Tehran (Black 2007).

Due to the dented U.S. image in the region, Arab leaders did not trust Washington as much as they did before and even criticized the American decision to remove Saddam from power, which later proved to be extremely conducive for growing Iranian influence in Iraq. To such a background, Turkey, a Western-oriented, moderate Islamic country with a relatively dynamic economy and robust military power, was announced a reliable actor and a strategic partner by the GCC (Ekşi and Erol 2018, 25). Once again, just like in the aftermath of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, Ankara and the Gulf capitals were seeing eye to eye, this time without being directly pushed into cooperation by Washington. Besides, Turkish foreign policy elite

was preparing to initiate another opening to the Middle East and the wider Muslim world.

CONCLUSION

Economic concerns, as evidenced in Turkey's desire to find markets for its growing economy and industrial base, and security issues, as evidenced in seismic events that drastically altered regional geopolitical landscape, were the main drivers that determined the trajectory of Turkish-Gulf Arab, and by extension, the Turkish-Qatari, relations in this period. Despite their differing levels of importance for Ankara and Gulf Arab capitals, the economic concerns and the security challenges engendered by the major regional events mentioned in this section created sometimes a conducive and sometimes a counteractive impact on the maintenance of relations between both sides.

Ankara's care for staying neutral throughout the Iran-Iraq War, despite Turkey's historically stronger economic and energy relations with Tehran, was appreciated by Gulf capitals. Naturally, Gulf leadership would want Ankara to show unconditional support to Baghdad; however, they were aware of the difficulties such a position could impose on Turkey. Similarly, Ankara's support for the GCC, another Washington-blessed regional bloc, was important for the Gulf capitals because the GCC was motivated by a strong security concern vis-à-vis Tehran. Unlike the Iran-Iraq War, it was easy for Ankara to support the GCC because the latter was not officially announced as a security bulwark against the new Islamic regime in Tehran, rather as a sociocultural union.

Turkey stood up to the integrity and sovereignty of Kuwait when Saddam invaded it that contributed to closer Turkey-Gulf relations initially. However, unkept promises caused some disenchantment in Ankara with the Gulf Arab countries that instigated, combined with security threats emanating from PKK terrorism, closer relations with Tel Aviv. Finally, Ankara's reactions to Gulf War I in 1991 and Gulf War II in 2003 were generally parallel to the sentiments of the leadership in the Gulf despite in the latter case Ankara came head-to-head with Washington.

From a practical geopolitical perspective, Ankara opted to interpret and present the new regional security challenges as well as the economic hardships the Turkish public had to endure by making references to friend-enemy dichotomies. The physical geography that accompanied this categorization shifted, grew, or shrank in accordance with foreign policymakers' worldviews, Turkish economic and political interests, and domestic, regional, and global public opinion regarding unfolding issues. While Turkey justified its opening to the Middle Eastern Arab world and the Gulf Arab countries

with Islamic brotherhood and cooperation with coreligionists, centuries-old historical and sociocultural ties, and expansion of economic power, the same policymakers justified their military and political cooperation with Israel with Arab betrayal, pointing to historical narratives, and unkept promises in the aftermath of the Gulf War I, or unsympathetic and occasionally hostile messages from Western capitals regarding Turkey's fight against PKK.

NOTE

1. Republican People's Party, founded by Kemal Ataturk, remained in power from 1923 until 1950 as the single party. In Turkey's first genuine multiparty elections in 1950, the RPP's adversary, the Democrat Party, won a landslide victory. RPP's policies were accused of being anti-Islamic and its staunchly secularist outlook has since been harshly criticized by conservative and Islamist parties.

Chapter 4

Place of Identity and Interests in the Evolution of the Turkish-Qatari Relations (2002–2013)

INTRODUCTION

As stated in chapter 3, Turkey-Gulf Arab and later Turkey-GCC relations ebbed and flowed depending on regional security dynamics and Turkey's domestic necessities such as economic difficulties and search for export markets. Despite a lighter historical baggage with Ankara, the Gulf monarchies were still hesitant to cooperate with and rely on Turkey due to Ankara's problematic relations with other Middle Eastern Arab countries, which still wielded significant influence on the Gulf Arab capitals. However, this exact reason also opened new venues for Ankara, as evidenced in problematic relations with Abdul Nasser, to build closer relations with the Gulf. Turkish-Qatari relations were put on the backburner with the advent of the Great War and remained largely indolent until the 1980s. In fact, relations between the Republic of Turkey and the oil-rich Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which became independent states much earlier than Qatar, were also limited until the 1980s compared to Ankara's relations with Western countries, the reasons of which were explained earlier in this book. Ankara's relations with Gulf Arab capitals were nowhere close to its relations with the Western capitals in terms of both quality and quantity.

Relations with Qatar gradually increased from unofficial visits in the 1970s to official visits and agreements in the 1980s to more agreements and increasing political, economic and sociocultural interactions until the beginning of the 2000s. At the turn of the millennium, a combination of domestic factors and political and economic interests as well as regional geopolitical developments presented a conducive atmosphere for further promotion of relations. In other words, the current level of Turkish-Qatari relations would not be possible without a combination of factors such as a proactive leadership on

both sides, a certain dose of identity politics that colored their discourse and most importantly, compatible political and economic interests each actor pursued. Additionally, without favorable regional systemic factors that enabled, encouraged and facilitated efforts from ambitious actors such as Turkey and Qatar, it would be almost inconceivable for relations to attain such a magnitude in a relatively short time. After providing a brief account of the diplomatic and political relations from around the 1980s until 2002, the following pages examine the place of identity and interests in Turkish-Qatari relations.

FURTHER BACKGROUND: TURKEY-QATAR RELATIONS FROM 1970s TO 2000s

Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Qatar were established at the ambassadorial level in 1973, only a few years after the termination of Qatar's protected state relationship with Britain. This was followed by the opening of the Turkish embassy in Doha in 1980, which coincides with improving relations with other Gulf Arab countries. There was a temporary upward trend in relations with the opening of the Turkish embassy, which brought about an agreement in 1985 to "strengthen the friendly ties existing between the two countries" and "promoting and developing relations in the fields of culture, arts, science and technology" ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti İle Katar Devleti Hükümeti Arasında Ekonomik Ve Teknik İşbirliği Anlaşması" 1985). Within this framework, both countries showed their willingness to "develop and facilitate the cultural and intellectual exchange" by means of publications, films, radio/television programs and by exchange of professionals from different fields ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti İle Katar Devleti Hükümeti Arasında Kültürel İşbirliği Anlaşması" 1991). However, abovementioned agreements were not ratified until later in the 1990s, and therefore they were only nominally effective in consolidating relations between the two parties. These diplomatic developments and cooperation agreements were followed by the opening of the Qatari embassy in Ankara in 1992.

Prior to the official visits above, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, the Emir of Qatar until 1995, and his entourage visited Istanbul for a touristic visit in 1966 ("Katar Emiri ve Oğlu" 1966), which was followed by another special visit to Turkey in November 1977 (Milliyet 1977). In this visit, Sheikh Khalifa was met by Turkish foreign minister Ihsan Sabri Çağlayangil and several diplomatic and economic issues were discussed. To reciprocate, on the way back from an important visit to Saudi Arabia, Turkish officials from the Foreign Ministry visited Sheikh Khalifa in his palace in April 1980. Additionally, Sheikh Khalifa visited Ankara in March 1985 during which a plan for a natural gas pipeline was discussed, and several economic, cultural

and technical agreements were signed. The dates of these mutual visits coincided with major regional developments such as the Iranian Islamic Revolution, which brought a vehemently anti-monarchical regime into power in Tehran, and the Iran-Iraq War, both of which created much concern in Doha, similar to other Gulf Arab capitals.

When Turkey began to show more interest in the GCC countries due to their increasing international economic and political standing and pressing regional security issues, Ankara included Doha in a presidential visit that took place in January 1986. During the Özal governments in the 1980s, Turkey's newly developing political, economic and cultural relations with the GCC were mostly with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait due to their economic power, longer state tradition and larger populations. However, relations with smaller states such as Qatar came to be regarded as important in Ankara in the coming years. To this end, a milestone in mutual relations was reached when Qatar opened its embassy in Ankara in 1992. However, due to Turkey's internal security problems, disenchantment with the Gulf Arab countries following the Gulf War and Ankara's relative isolation from the Middle East as well as Qatar's lack of interest in Turkey at the time, relations continued to remain minimal. Although more Turkish immigrants and businesspeople were choosing Qatar as their destination, diplomatic relations did not demonstrate sufficient improvement given securitization of Turkish foreign policy and Qatar's inactive foreign policy, which was influenced and overshadowed by Riyadh.

The inertia in diplomatic and economic relations between Turkey and Qatar were to change with Sheikh Hamad's assumption of power in 1995. In line with his foreign policy approach of improving economic, diplomatic, cultural and political relations with all regional powers, an agreement to establish bilateral consultations among senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from both countries was signed in 1999. Turkish and Qatari governments emphasized their "desire to increase and further consolidate existing ties" and "develop friendship and cooperation" in areas of common interest in order to "contribute to international peace, security and economic development by means of creating mutual confidence, understanding and cooperation in international relations" ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı ve Katar Devleti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arasında İstişarelere İlişkin Protokol" 1999). These agreements show that both actors were still in the infancy stages of a growing relationship and that they were still building mutual trust.

The framework put forth in the bilateral consultations among senior officials gained practical meaning when relations began to improve with Sheikh Hamad's visit to Turkey in 2001. During this visit, both countries agreed to materialize the first stages of an economic and military cooperation by signing several important agreements for preventing double taxation,

for promoting and protecting reciprocal investments, and for cooperating in the military field. These agreements demonstrate Ankara's continued economic interests in the region as well as its desire to enhance military relationships with Doha. In addition to cooperation in the field of security, Sheikh Hamad's 2001 visit fast-tracked approval of other agreements, such as fighting against organized crime and cooperation in fighting against international terrorism, which spoke to the importance both parties attached to the regional security and stability ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ile Katar Devleti Hükümeti Arasında Güvenlik İşbirliği Anlaşması'nın Onaylanması Hakkında Karar" 2002).

While Turkey's standing was increasing in the Middle East with the new foreign policy of the AKP elite, regional security concerns of the Gulf Arab countries were mounting. Political instability in Iraq and Iran's increasing political influence and its contentious nuclear program, motivated Turkey and Qatar to sign another milestone agreement for cooperation in the military field in 2007. In addition to affirming the security cooperation agreement of 2001, this new agreement envisioned cooperation in military training and education, cooperation between Land, Naval, and Air Forces, exchanging military monitors for training purposes, and cooperation in the field of defense industry, military history, military archives, military publications and military museums ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ile Katar Devleti Hükümeti Arasında Askeri Alanda Eğitim, Teknik ve Bilimsel İş Birliği Anlaşması" 2008). Only after a year later, that is, in 2008, due to the increased need for Qatari diplomatic representation in Turkey, Qatar opened a consulate in Istanbul.

As the security and military agreement above demonstrates, changing regional political landscape motivated Qatar, a small state dependent on alliances for its security, to involve Turkey more in her security. Doha's choice was based on the fact that Turkey was a trustable country with a growing economy and strong military power. In line with intensification of the relations, many other agreements were signed between Ankara and Doha, especially after the 2010s. Most important of these was the July 2, 2012 agreement of deploying Turkish troops on Qatari soil ("Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti ile Katar Devleti Hükümeti Arasında Askeri Eğitim" 2015). Both actors were willing to ink such an agreement because shared threat perceptions drew them closer together. Especially after the hard-won Arab Spring acquisitions began to evaporate and a more hostile political environment was emerging, Doha saw it as a reasonable step to involve Turkey in its security in face of potential threats. This move was also in line with Ankara's opening to Africa and the larger Middle East.

According to the Official Gazette of Turkish Republic, a total of 25 different agreements were reached between Turkey and the State of Qatar from

1985 to the end of 2013, demonstrating a vigorous traffic especially after the turn of the millennium. While these agreements cover a wide range of fields from culture to education to environment, those with military and security implications and economic and financial significance attracted much attention. To this historical backdrop, below is an analysis of some of the salient factors that motivated closer Turkish-Qatari relations.

IDENTITY AND INTERESTS AS FOREIGN POLICY DYNAMICS

Identity and interests were crucial in transforming the reemerging relations between Ankara and Doha into a political alignment before Sheikh Hamad abdicated power in the summer of 2013. On the Turkish side, the most important catalyst of Turkey's return to the Middle East was initiated in the aftermath of the capture of Ocalan, the leader of PKK. With PKK losing its military and logistical capabilities to a great extent, Ankara began to follow a less security-oriented foreign policy that brought about a thaw in relations with Syria and later Iraq and Iran, both of whose cooperation was instrumental in abating the separatist terrorism on borders. Less securitization in Turkish foreign policy in terms of discourse, decisions and actions paved the way for more diplomatic, economic, and sociocultural interactions with neighbors and beyond.

While these changes were taking place, the Turkish Armed Forces, known for its rigid secularism and distance toward the Muslim issues, were gradually losing their influence on the Turkish political scene and foreign policy elite (Mohammed 2015, 47). This in turn paved the way for a stronger Turkish civil society sympathetic to Muslims and Muslim issues (Zihnioğlu 2018, 41) such as Turkey Youth Foundation (TÜGVA) and Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), while secular civil society organizations, such as Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD), were relegated to secondary importance, and eventually this ushered in a more sympathetic foreign policy toward the Muslim Middle Eastern nations.

On the Qatari side, with the inclusion of Qatar under the U.S. security umbrella—after the relocation of the U.S. Middle East Combat Air Operations Center from Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar—Doha moved its focus from domestic security issues to more regional and global security issues. In addition, similar to the Turkish *zero-problems-with-neighbors* policy, Doha resolved its border disputes with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia that was crucial for channelizing Doha's attention to the wider region. Similar to Turkey, pro-government (or government-controlled) Qatari civil society, such as Qatari Red Crescent and Qatar Charity, saw remarkable

expansion and began to work in conjunction with, or under the auspices of, the Qatari government and toward its objectives. Moreover, unprecedentedly positive figures in socioeconomic spheres created a content public opinion, which minimized for Qatari foreign policymakers the potential for domestic political distractors.

Besides abatement of securitization, the Turkish economy that plunged with 1999 and 2001 economic crises began to show dramatic increases from 2002 onward. For example, according to World Bank Development Indicators ("GDP Growth" 2014), while Turkish economy shrank 5.6% in 2001, it quickly picked up and registered a 6.1% growth in 2002 and a staggering 9.3% growth in 2004.[1] Major Turkish business associations rushed to the Middle East in general and the Gulf in particular to gain new markets for Turkish products and attract FDI for different sectors of the economy. Consequently, there was dramatic interest in the Middle East, both at the governmental and the civil society levels. On the Qatari side, the economy witnessed unprecedented growth rates. For example, according to World Bank ("GDP Growth" 2014), while Qatar grew only at 3.3% in 2001, this figure soared to 19.2% in 2004 and 26.1% in 2006, one of the highest in the world.

A less securitized domestic political scene and approaching the regional political landscape with a lens of cooperation as well as economic development were combined with politically ambitious leadership in office in both countries. This allowed Ankara and Doha to venture into audacious foreign policy initiatives to assert their regional and international presence, which in turn nurtured a conducive environment for both Turkey and Qatar to cooperate. Naturally, this book does not claim that shared identities and interests alone caused the political alignment between the actors. However, when most of these factors smoothly dovetail with each other, and when they are augmented by a proactive leadership on both sides, which have similar worldviews and ambitions, and when all of these factors are driven by strong economic, political and strategic interests, this creates a timely environment for exceptionally closer relations.

LEADERSHIP

Individual-level variables in foreign policymaking are as important as structural variables (which will be examined in the coming chapters of this book) because it mostly is the leadership of a country that gives meaning to external structural determinants (Hudson 2005, 11). This is especially valid for Turkey and, by extension, the Middle East where there exists a considerable number of constraints on democratic institutions and processes (Sayari 1996, 43). In this sense, the role of leadership has been an instrumental, if not the

most instrumental, catalyst in the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations. The leaderships in both Ankara and Doha have been remarkably powerful political figures throughout the entire process, both domestically and regionally, given their strong leadership capabilities and goal-directed ambitious foreign policy. Both the Turkish prime minister Erdoğan and the foreign minister Davutoğlu were simultaneously influential figures in Turkish foreign policymaking and execution. They shared with the Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa and the foreign minister Hamad bin Jassim a similar regional and international foreign policy vision.

Kenneth Katzman, a Gulf expert at the Congressional Research Service, contends, "the Emir and Hamad bin Jassim have a lot of confidence, and they take a lot of risks" (cited in Bollier 2013). According to Michael Stephens, an analyst at the Royal United Services Institute, the Emir and Hamad bin Jassim were together behind the foreign policy initiatives of Qatar and were the foreign policymakers who made Qatar *Qatar* (Bollier 2013). The Turkish Premier Erdoğan expressed similar views about Hamad bin Jassim:

> [is] a wise personality, a model leader and a man of broad vision, [who] has played an important role in the development of his country and the rise in his people's level of affluence. . . . His contributions toward the resolution of problems in the region . . . and his diplomatic efforts during the Arab Spring, are worthy of commendation. I am also pleased by the momentum gained in Turkish-Qatari relations and by the fact that my close friend and I share the same vision when it comes to international affairs. (Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani 2012)

Quite analogous to the Emir and Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu were characterized by strong brinkmanship which sometimes created contention with the West and other regional powers. However, their brinkmanship did not stem from an inherently anti-Western sentiment, rather the leadership on both sides excel at shrewd tactics that enhance their regional popularity as well as increase the influence of their respective countries. When conditions called for practicality, Turkish foreign policy could adapt to new realities. Quite similar to Qatar's, according to Özel (2009), Davutoğlu's ambitious Turkish foreign policy objectives do not confront the West, but rather they are complementary to the Western foreign policy goals in the Middle East.

Similar to the Emir and Hamad bin Jassim, who capitalized on the power vacuum in the Arab Middle East and in different places in Africa, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu wanted Turkey to fill in some of the regional power vacuum and expand Turkish influence and standing. One question here would be why Ankara and Doha did not see each

other as rivals when they had similar objectives regarding the region. If both powers were comparable to each other in terms of the nature of their foreign policy goals and their economic and military capabilities and if they were in immediate geographical proximity to each other, this could cause rivalry rather than cooperation. However, neither Doha nor Ankara saw one another as rivals as they were not comparable in the qualities mentioned, neither were they immediate neighbors.

Overall, leadership of both countries was an important dynamic that has augmented Turkish-Qatari relations. Prior to the Arab uprisings, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's way of proactive foreign policy and sensitiveness to regional problems were pretty much similar to AKP elite's understanding of foreign policy and approach to regional issues. This resonated with both sides, paving the way for being on the same page. The constant coordination between the Turkish and Qatari leadership as well as their keenness to develop policies in line with their broader foreign policy visions motivated a closer relationship between the two actors (Viala 2017). Were either one of the leadership not intent on realizing ambitious and proactive foreign policy, the gap between both actors could widen and end in frustration.

IDENTITY POLITICS

Social constructivists in international relations claim that social and intersubjective factors such as culture, ideas and identity influence the manner state actors define their interests and eventual political behavior and decisions (Wendt 2006, 113–14). Similar to the late 19th century when the Ottomans arrived in Doha, identity has played an important role in the re-emergence and evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations in the period under examination in this chapter, i.e., 2002-2013. In various events in this period, such as the Israeli attack on the Turkish flotilla, treatment of Syrian protestors by the Assad regime, barbarity of ISIS ideology, military coup in Egypt, belief in positive change vindicated the place of identity in how Turkey and Qatar approached and reacted to regional developments. Two important factors stand out that lend support to this position.

First, leaders on both sides have emphasized the role of sociocultural affinities and historical ties in explaining cordial relations. For example, according to both Ahmet Demirok, Turkey's ambassador to Doha between 2013 and 2017, and Salem Bin Mubarak Al Shafi, Qatar's ambassador to Ankara between 2013 and 2021, at the root of this close bilateral relationship lie the historical ties and cultural affinities, which facilitated adopting

convergent foreign policy principles and policies (Ünal 2014). Similar views were expressed by Prime Minister Erdoğan and Emir Sheikh Hamad, who repeatedly emphasized the deep-rooted common history stretching back centuries on various occasions.

The second factor that points to the significance of identity in the relations is the coordinated support both leaderships extended to the Palestinian cause and their position on the rise of Islamists and the wave of Islamic movements across the Middle East and North Africa, as in the MB elements throughout the Arab Spring, which will be examined in detail in chapter 6. In addition to his personal convictions and belief, the religious conservative constituency Erdoğan depends on was crucial for Ankara's decision to advocate the Palestinian cause and MB's political rights. Advocating the rights of the *oppressed* Palestinians and touching on duties of the *Ummah*, that is, the Islamic Nation, have frequently been issues in Erdoğan's political speeches. Whether such advocation and emphasis on ummah is done by personal convictions of Erdoğan himself or for pleasing his constituencies is probably beyond the scope of this book. The fact that both Erdoğan and Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa supported MB members and organizations in various Arab countries, despite incurring heavy material and political losses, indicates the importance of identity politics in both leaders' foreign policy toolbox.

Similar to Erdoğan, Sheikh Hamad evoked *Muslim unity* and the Palestinian suffering in his speeches both at home and at international occasions. The Palestinian cause, especially after the Israeli War on Gaza in 2009, has drawn Erdoğan and Sheikh Hamad much closer. Given their ummah-oriented foreign policy visions, Erdoğan and Sheikh Hamad sought to improve the lives of Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere. However, there is a fine line here that needs to be clarified. Although it is no secret that Sheikh Hamad had personal ties with important spiritual leaders of the MB, he cannot be considered purely Islamist. Despite being sympathetic to the Muslim issues such as the Palestinian tragedy, he had no problems with collaborating with the United States on many regional issues and with allowing Israel to open a trade office in Doha in 1996, which remained open until 2009. His main objective was to help millions of people and make a positive difference in their lives. Similar observations can be made about Erdoğan as well. Despite his opponents' claim that he is an Islamist, he can in fact be highly pragmatist in his foreign policy decisions.

In addition to his vision of unity among the Muslim countries, his pan-Arab views motivated Sheikh Hamad to support not only the Palestinians but also the MB. However, an important distinction needs to be made here: Ummah-oriented policies and pan-Arabism are antithetical to one another because

pan-Arabism does not make any references to Islam in explaining phenomena while Ummah-oriented policies generally derive from an Islamist outlook. This means that Sheikh Hamad was neither purely Islamist nor purely pan-Arabist but somewhere in between, sympathizing with Muslim and Arab issues and trying to help Muslims, mostly Arabs in this case, as much as possible. In brief, Sheikh Hamad is a leader who cannot be put into certain simple ideological boundaries.

Similar to the Qatari Emir, for Erdoğan, one of the most prominent motivations for supporting the Palestinian cause and the MB was to enhance Islamic solidarity and safeguard the Ummah's interests because Erdoğan saw Turkey as the defender of Islam (Battaloglu 2021, 109). It can be argued that these two elements are closely intertwined with personal beliefs of the leadership on both sides. For example, in an interview with the *New York Times*, Erdoğan stated:

> Before anything else, I'm a Muslim. As a Muslim, I try to comply with the requirements of my religion. I have a responsibility to God, who created me, and I try to fulfill that responsibility. But I try now very much to keep this away from my political life, to keep it private. (Sontag 2003)

Additionally, at a speech at Harvard University in January 2004, Erdoğan also stated, "I am not an Islamist politician. I am a conservative democrat. Personally, I am someone who strives to fulfill the requirements of religion. I cannot accept doing politics using religion. I see this as abuse of religion" ("Erdoğan Harvard'da konuştu" 2004).

Even though Erdoğan claims that he tries to keep his beliefs away from politics, Yavuz maintains that "From Erdoğan's perspective, a nation is a religious community and the people of Turkey constitute a nation by sharing Islam" (2009, 131). In contrast, based on charters and party programs and decisions taken, Coşkun and Yanar (2020, 267) argue that neither the National Outlook, where Erdoğan was a student of politics when he was young, nor the AKP, where Erdoğan freely practiced his political convictions and ideas, was Islamist; rather they were nationalist-conservative. An examination of Erdoğan's discourse within the ranks of the National Outlook Movement[2] and AKP demonstrates overlaps between his ideological stance that he nurtured since his time in the National Outlook Movement and his foreign policy vision as implemented under the AKP governments; however, we can say that he seems to switch back and forth on a continuum based on the situation and the domestic, regional, and international political landscape at a given time. What seems to be stable is his quest for maximization of legitimacy and interests.

Similarly, Sheikh Hamad gave clues to the most instrumental component of his identity in his abdication message where he emphasized his care for the Arab unity: "We believe that the Arab world is one human body, one coherent structure, which draws its strength from all its constituent parts" ("Emir of Qatar profile: Who is Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani" 2013). According to Telhami (2013), Sheikh Hamad read the popular dynamics in the region aptly and established his country's foreign policy in favor of the Islamic and Arab identity which is evidenced in his support for the Palestinians and the MB. To this end, Sheikh Hamad used Al Jazeera network to materialize his vision of representing the whole Islamic Ummah by becoming a *voice for the voiceless* (Abunajela 2015, 306).

Sheikh Hamad's political vision has both influenced and been influenced by the MB elements that migrated to the Gulf in the 1960s. One of the most notable of these figures is the Egyptian Islamic theologian Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, who is known for his passionate support for the MB governments in the Arab Spring protests. Giving shelter to such a religiously eminent leader and providing him with a platform such as Al Jazeera to express his views freely says much about Sheikh Hamad. Sheikh Hamad's pan-ummah stance on the Palestinian issue and Qatar's support for Hamas cannot be explained with mere pragmatism, as siding with the people's choice on such ideological issues has been much costlier than staying neutral. Doha could have easily changed its political track and reap handsome financial and diplomatic benefits from remaining neutral or not pursuing policies that were unwelcome by her neighbors. In other words, identity politics, not just pure pragmatism and politics focused on material gains, played an important role in Qatar's foreign policy.

In short, identity of foreign policymakers and the proactive leadership of both countries played a consequential role in bringing them together, as evidenced in some significant foreign policy decisions taken and in numerous instances of political speeches delivered. Seen from the angle of practical geopolitical reasoning, both leadership saw and interpreted geography and regular events taking place therein from a lens of friends and enemies. This way, they were able to present to their domestic and international audiences an intricate reality in a simple and convincing language. Although identity politics impacts policymakers' decisions, more so in some cases, international relations is an arena for rational, self-interested state actors who pursue policies to ascertain their survival in a chaotic political milieu. Thus, the effects of identity politics and the role of leadership *per se* fall short of providing a complete account of the drivers of the evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations. The next part examines the role maximization of interests played in this relationship from 2002 to 2013.

INTERESTS

Naturally, identity wields a significant level of influence on the formulation of interests, which in turn define, determine and constrain foreign policy. However, it is not easy to claim that foreign policy decisions are purely ideological, meaning strictly systematized around ideologies and always consistent. Turkish and Qatari foreign policies are more pragmatic and conciliatory than they seem or are claimed to be. In other words, neither the international system, nor the material capabilities of Ankara and Doha nor the foreign policy elites' worldviews and ideologies alone determine their foreign policy decisions and actions. Rather, it is a combination of all, some becoming more central than others at certain times and junctures, depending on the nature of the issue and those involved in and affected by it. According to Gulbrandsen (2010, 75–76), for instance, Qatari foreign policy is heavily influenced by the trade and investment opportunities. Similar views are expressed about Turkish foreign policy as well. For example, Kirişçi (2009) argues that economic factors, more than anything else, have become extraordinarily important in shaping Turkish foreign policy, which started in the 1980s and "made a conspicuous comeback" in the first decade of the millennium with AKP governments that came to power after 2002 and 2007 elections (2009, 52). Along similar lines, Turkish and Qatari support for the Palestinian cause and the MB could be related to Ankara's and Doha's pragmatic calculations rather than purely ideological concerns. In other words, material and ideational factors affect foreign policy in intricate ways.

According to this line of reasoning, Turkish and Qatari overtures to the Islamists seem to have two goals. First is winning the public opinion, which has generally been sympathetic to the Islamists. For example, even after years of vilification of the MB by the government on various channels following the 2013 military coup in Egypt, more than a third of Egyptians still have a positive opinion of the MB, and a similar figure is true for Hamas, the MB-affiliated ruling party in Gaza (Pollock 2018).

Although neither Ankara nor Doha seem to have accomplished much by extending their support to Hamas and the MB, their embrace and advocation of Muslim issues, political Islam, and public diplomacy efforts seem to have won them a great deal of public support. For example, in a 2011 public opinion survey about Turkey's image in the Arab world, 80–90% of respondents had a positive opinion about Turkey and that 66% believed that Turkey could be a model for the Arab countries (Salem 2011, 6). However, given the political structures in the Middle East and the fact that public opinion cannot necessarily be reflected in politics due to lack of democratic institutions, winning the public opinion has not brought about tangible outcomes for both actors, especially after the counterrevolutionary efforts of other regional powers gained momentum.

The second goal is that Ankara and Doha projected to expand their regional influence greatly when/if Islamists would be on the winning side. However, this also seemed increasingly more difficult given the political landscape of the Arab Spring countries and the complex web of internal and external forces and their counter-ideas and ideologies that clashed intensely with each other. Although they had potentially enormous political, strategic and economic interests with their regional and international contenders in the event of cooperation and reconciliation, Ankara and Doha opted for insisting on their positions and not appeasing their contenders. To this backdrop, ideational/ideological motivations seem to have been instrumental for Ankara and Doha to establish, enhance, and maintain cordial relations with each other. In other words, ideational factors such as norms, values, and identity played a considerable role in the convergence of Turkish and Qatari positions by defining and determining their foreign policy objectives.

Security interests

After relations with Qatar began to show exceptional improvement, the new foreign policy elite began to view Doha as a safe gateway to the Gulf, an increasingly important sub-region that has gradually become the center of Arab politics and economics. The changing domestic scene with the AKP electoral victories necessitated Ankara to find lucrative export markets and build stronger relations with the Middle East that was ignored for decades. For the Turkish side, opening up to the Middle East in general and the Gulf Arab region in particular was a choice of the foreign policy elite. Thanks to domestic dynamics, fast-changing regional realities and the expectations of and pressure from their constituencies, the AKP governments opted for a radically different approach compared to the dominant Turkish foreign policy that was pursued until the 1980s. The political power vacuum in the region and Qatar's successful execution of its active foreign policy rendered Doha a natural ally for Ankara, who needed partners in its hyper-active foreign policy in the region. Seen from this angle, Turkish-Qatari relationship was instigated and expedited by regional systemic dynamics, that is, a power vacuum that needed new actors, reluctance or lack of enthusiasm from other regional powers and a positively lenient U.S. approach to both actors.

Could the Turkish foreign policymakers partner with another GCC member other than Qatar for realizing their foreign policy goals? Potentially, they could. However, neither Kuwait, with its slow decision-making, nor Bahrain for its heavy economic and security reliance on Riyadh, nor Oman with its generally detached position on foreign policy issues, nor the UAE with its potentially contentious position on Islamists under every circumstance, nor Saudi Arabia with its perceived lenience on radical ideologies could

become a good fit for Turkish foreign policy goals. Additionally, some of these powers such Bahrain and Oman had limited international prominence and economic and political clout. Ankara not only anticipated to work more harmoniously with the pro-Western and forward-thinking leadership in Doha, but also wanted to benefit from its accumulation of political, financial and media influence in the region. Furthermore, Ankara realized that Doha had already established strong political connections across the region with both the governments and the opposition forces such as the MB. These were all important assets for Ankara, and these advantages brought more influence privileges, which in turn helped build a web of constructive security cooperation and political relations in the broader Middle East.

Parallel to Turkey's security objectives, Qatar also had security interests in developing cordial relations with Ankara. Doha needed regional allies to pursue its regional foreign policy goals. At this juncture, Turkey stood out as an ideal partner because it concurred on most regional issues with Doha and was a Sunni-majority country with a forward-thinking and pro-Western government. Qatar has been aspiring to break the Saudi desire to constrain, overshadow, or even monopolize Doha's regional proactive foreign policy (Khatib 2013, 419). The opening of Al-Udeid military base in Qatar in 2003, whose construction began on Qatari soil in 1996, officially acknowledged in 2002, and increasing hydrocarbon revenues meant tacit U.S. security guarantee of Qatar. These two important developments made Doha's foreign policy even more proactive, which seriously irritated Riyadh. These developments combined along with audacious and occasionally defiant Al Jazeera broadcasts annoyed Riyadh even further and relations with Doha came to a halt a few times (Khatib 2013, 427).

In addition, Turkey boasts one of the most powerful armies in the NATO while Qatar needs other countries for its security. Turkey, a NATO member with vast human resources, economic potential, and growing technical and military know-how, represented a strong counterbalance to the increasing Iranian influence in the region, both political and military. Qatar deems Iran as an important neighbor; however, Qatari foreign policy elite does not want to see Tehran enhance its regional political influence further as this could potentially push Iran to have irredentist views on Qatari territory and jeopardize the North Field, Qatar's economic lifeline (Rende 2017, 62). Although Tehran has not had any frictions with Qatar, Iran's past frictions with Bahrain, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are enough reasons for Doha to be cautious.

Due to security concerns stemming from Iran's bolstered regional influence and its alleged meddling in regional affairs, especially provocations of the Shiite population in the Gulf, some of the GCC members, most notably Bahrain and Kuwait (with their larger proportion of Shiite population and geographical proximity to Iran), wanted Turkey to play a role in extending the

NATO's security umbrella over the GCC. To this end, the GCC announced Turkey as a strategic ally in 2008. Doha wholeheartedly welcomed this historic development. In fact, on the occasion of the signing of the memorandum of understanding for accomplishing strategic partnership in all areas, Qatar's foreign minister Hamad Bin Jassim stated that this "is a step on the way to a strategic partnership with Turkey" ("GCC-Turkey Deal" 2008).

Third, in a Der Spiegel interview, the Emir of Qatar stated "China is coming, India is coming, and Russia is on its way, too . . . I don't know if America and Europe will still be leading" (Windfuhr and Zand 2009). Taken in the context of a potential decreased role for the Americans in the Gulf security in the future and the potential threats from neighboring countries, that is, Iran and Saudi Arabia, developing close relations with Turkey could be Emir's strategy to diversify political and military allies. Finally, according to Eckart Woertz, an expert on Middle East food security, one of the most pressing security issues for the Gulf Arab capitals is food security (2013, 32) that later proved to be extremely important for Doha during the blockade. In this regard, Turkey stands out as a reliable and geographically convenient partner for Qatar to secure food for its growing population in an increasingly fragile geography where all kinds of agriculture are becoming expensive and environmentally devastating.

Overall, both partners presented their cooperation with each other from a geopolitical security perspective focusing on the dichotomy of friend-enemy. Although Turkish-Qatari relations sometimes came at the expense of more beneficial relations with other partners in the region, policymakers chose to focus on non-material gains, ideologies, and the greater good of the peoples of the Middle East. Along these lines, they presented the emerging, shifting, and changing geopolitical landscape with lenses of ideology and common good of all peoples to their domestic and regional audiences.

Economic interests

Economy has probably been the strongest motivation for Turkey to maintain and enhance its relations with Qatar in this period. As the relationship has gained a political alignment dimension throughout the Arab Spring, and later evolved into a more strategic partnership, the economic leg of this relationship grew much stronger. For Ankara, while Doha initially represented a lucrative Gulf market, which could fuel the bustling Turkish economy, it later transformed into a source of financial assistance and stabilizer. Trade volumes, tourist numbers, FDI figures, and energy cooperation projects between Turkey and Qatar substantiate a gradually growing relationship. As table 4.1 shows, while the Turkish-Qatari trade volume was only around $20 million in 2000, it hit a record high in 2008 reaching a staggering $1,233 billion.

Table 4.1 Turkish-Qatari Trade Volumes from 2000 to 2013

	2000	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*
Turkish Exports to Qatar	10	8	16	16	35
Qatari Exports to Turkey	11	6	11	8	18
	2005	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*
Turkish Exports to Qatar	82	342	450	1,074	289
Qatari Exports to Turkey	51	66	30	159	86
	2010	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	
Turkish Exports to Qatar	163	188	257	244	
Qatari Exports to Turkey	177	670	466	374	

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020 (million USD, figures rounded up).

Although Turkish exports to Qatar dwindled due to the 2008 economic crisis and its aftershocks, Qatari exports to Turkey have witnessed a steady increase reaching to almost half a billion USD in 2012 and dropping to $374 million in 2013.

Tourism has emerged as another area where both actors could gain economic benefits. According to Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism ("Number of Tourists Visiting Turkey" n.d.), although only 108 Qatari people visited Turkey in 2000, this figure jumped to 1,210 in 2003, 1,955 people in 2005, 4,862 people in 2008, 7,661 people in 2011, 13,971 people in 2012, and almost 20,000 in 2013. Similarly, Turkish visitors to Qatar, both for tourism and business, followed a similar trajectory at the beginning of the century to the present day as evidenced in increasing frequency of flights to Doha from different destinations (Istanbul International Airport, Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen Airport, Ankara Esenboğa Airport) in Turkey by different airlines such as Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airlines, and Fly Pegasus.

In a similar trajectory, Qatari and Turkish FDI figures saw a surge. According to Turkey's Ministry of Economy, Turkish FDI stock in Qatar reached $14 million in 2012, construction being the leading sector. According to Turkish Ministry of Economy, 135 Qatari companies had investments in Turkey across a range of sectors in 2017. And, Qatari FDI in Turkey reached $274 million in 2012. In December 2013, 35 Turkish companies, such as TAV, Yüksel, TEKFEN, Nurol, Samko, STFA, and Yapı Merkezi, were involved in 108 projects in Qatar that exceeded $12.2 billion in total.

Until 2013, Turkish construction companies were involved in the building of the Hamad International Airport, the Education City, the Qatar National Convention Center, the North Road, the Salwa Road, Port developments in Mesaieed and Ras Laffan, numerous pipelines, and Gas to Liquids (GTL) and Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) terminals. Turkish companies continued to win such projects in the following periods.

Around this time, Qatar's military procurements from Turkey began to appear as another area of trade which would become a major driver of military and security relations. For example, Baykar, one of the pioneering Turkish defense industries specializing in the making of unmanned automated drone systems (small unmanned aerial vehicles), sold its first batch of mini drones, worth $2.5 million, to Qatar in 2012, pushing the Turkish defense sales to Qatar to a new record of $120 million for that year ("Turkey Sells Mini Drones to Qatar" 2012). This sale paved the way for other more lucrative military procurement relations between the two actors in the following years. For example, Turkey's largest defense firm Aselsan, along with Ares Tersanecilik, won the bid to equip 17 assault and patrol boats for the Qatari Coast Guard with Aselsan systems (Can and Eraz 2015).

Both Ankara and Doha view each other as valuable assets for cooperation in the energy sector as well. Turkey is an energy-hungry economy that imports billions of dollars' worth of natural gas while Qatar is one of the leading natural gas exporters. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration data, Turkey was on the list of countries with the highest energy demand increase in the past decade. For example, Turkey, which is reliant on natural gas for almost half of its electricity production, imported 748 bcf in 2000, increasing to 1.3 tcf in 2010, 1.6 tcf in 2012, and 1.7 tcf in 2018,[3] which puts it on the list of top natural gas consumers in Europe. In this sense, access to sufficient and predictable gas supplies is a considerably important economic security issue for Turkey.

Qatar started selling LNG in 1997 and only a few years later it started to develop its natural gas field, known as the North Field, and became the largest LNG exporter in 2006. This development was of massive importance for Turkish foreign policymakers and the two sides brought up the issue of transporting natural gas or liquified natural gas from Qatar to Turkey to Europe at the Joint Commission meetings held from May 18 to 22, 1991 in Doha and discussed it in detail ("Türkiye-Katar Ekonomik ve Teknik İşbirliği Karma Komisyonu Birinci Dönem Toplantı Tutanağı" 1991). Were Qatari natural gas transported to Turkey and then to the European markets via a pipeline, Turkey's desire to become a major energy hub could be realized. In this respect, in 2009, Qatar indicated interest in connecting to a projected pipeline that would run from Iran's South Pars Field to the Iranian mainland and onto Turkey. Such a pipeline would facilitate Turkey's goal to become an

energy hub, increase economic interdependence among neighbors, and open Qatari gas to the European markets. To this end, during his visit to Turkey in 2009, Sheikh Hamad and President Gül "had an exhaustive discussion on the pipelines, storage facilities, and refineries to be established. . . . We also talked about meeting [Turkish] demand for LNG from Qatar" ("Gül: Katar ile Enerji İşbirliğini Ele Aldık" 2009).

Mutual economic transactions were not confined to tourist numbers, FDI movements, and cooperation in energy sector. Turkey also pursued an active policy to introduce fairs and other organizations in order to increase the volume of Turkish exports to Qatar and augment Turkey's visibility in the Qatari market. For example, a "Made in Turkey Exhibition" was organized in 2009 whereby a wide selection of Turkish products and over 200 Turkish firms met the Qatari consumers. Organized by Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, the "Made in Turkey Exhibition" was the biggest Turkish products exhibition to have ever been organized abroad ("Turkey Aims to Boost Trade with Qatar" 2009).

For Qatar, Turkey has stood out as a potentially lucrative market not only for natural gas exports but also for investments in multiple areas. Investments in different sectors expedited after the Turkish-Qatari Business Council (TQBC), whose aim is to enhance trade volume between the two countries, was formed in 2006. In the TQBC meeting held in Istanbul in 2009, Hisarciklioglu, the chairperson for Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, stated, "There are many opportunities that will strengthen the cooperation between Turkey and Qatar. Turkey is a land of opportunities in terms of investments" ("Turkish-Qatari Business Council Meeting" 2009). Similarly, Mubarak Al Shafi, Qatari ambassador to Ankara at the time, stated "We see Turkey as a very efficient country in terms of investment. There are many opportunities for Qatari investors in the energy, transportation, tourism and real estate sectors" (Ünal 2014).

Within this framework, Al Wasaeel International Media Company, a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), bought 25% share of the Turkish Turkuvaz Medya in 2008. The Barwa Group, one of the Qatari real estate giants, partnered with the Turkish construction company Sinpaş in 2011 to build the Ottoman Suites seaside residences in Istanbul. In 2012, Barwa group announced a $500 million real estate investment project from which Turkey was to get a considerable amount. Barwa's CEO Abdullah Abdulaziz Al Subaie stated "Barwa Group plans to invest in residence and shopping mall projects in Turkey. Turkey's growing economy and promising real estate market is an investor magnet" ("Qatari Real Estate Developer to Expand in Turkey" 2013). Similarly, in 2011, Hassad Food, another subsidiary of the QIA, announced plans to buy farmland in Turkey to grow crops and raise livestock.

Close economic relations mentioned above were hailed by both governments, yet they were also regarded unsatisfactory given the level of political relations. For example, in a seminar held after the TQBC meeting held in Istanbul in 2013, Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim, the chairman of the Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA), stated that the QBA wants to enhance economic relations to the level of political relations ("Qatar, Turkey Explore Business Opportunities" 2013). To bring economic relations to the level of political relations, both the Qatari government, including the QBA, and the Turkish government advocated for Turkish companies to win as many contracts as possible as part of the 2022 FIFA World Cup investments. Overall, the 2002–2013 period witnessed an acceleration of economic relations between Turkey and Qatar in terms of export and import figures, tourist numbers, FDI movements, energy transactions, fair organizations, and massive investments in media, food security, and construction projects.

CONCLUSION

From unofficial visits in the 1970s to official visits and agreements in the 1980s to intensified interactions in all spheres at the turn of the millennium, Turkish-Qatari relations experienced a gradual growth. As the agreements and the nature of relations demonstrate, changing domestic dynamics and a shifting regional political landscape motivated Ankara and Doha to build a partnership to enhance their political, security, and economic interests. On the Turkish side, this evolution was made possible by virtue of an ambitious leadership, growing power and activism of religiously conservative trade unions and business platforms, growing influence of civil society that is sympathetic to the Middle Eastern and Muslim issues as well as a change of attitude in mainstream trade unions that traditionally approached the Middle Eastern Arab issues with some distance.

On the Qatari side, unprecedented satisfaction with the leadership and lack of any considerable opposition enabled the Qatari leadership to take bold decisions regarding its relationship with regional powers, including Turkey. Similar to the nineteenth century explained in the introduction section of this book, the re-emergence and evolution of Turkish-Qatari relations in this period owe much to non-material factors, as evidenced in Turkish and Qatari leaderships' attitudes toward, responses to, and policies regarding various recent events such as the Israeli attack on the Turkish flotilla, the treatment of Syrian protestors by the Assad regime, the barbarity of ISIS ideology, and the military coup in Egypt.

On the economic front, the 2002–2013 period witnessed an acceleration of export and import figures, tourist numbers, FDI movements, energy

cooperation, fair organizations, and massive investments in media, food security, and construction projects. For Ankara, Qatar was a lucrative market and a trustworthy partner for meeting its growing energy demand and ambition to become an energy hub in the region. The composition of ambitious leadership and similar outlooks on regional Muslim and regional issues as well both countries' security considerations and economic interests concurred to a great extent that eventually enabled them to formulate and maintain exceptionally amicable relations in this period. As it shall be explored in the coming chapters, thanks to the convergence of identities and interests in this initial phase, that is, the period in which the Arab Spring protests intensified, Ankara and Doha were drawn further closer to each other in face of emerging adverse regional dynamics.

NOTES

1. For more detailed data please refer to: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG

2. National Outlook Movement, led by Necmettin Erbakan, emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the social and economic ills that were thought to be caused by the strictly secular and westernized nature of the Turkish state. Promoting a program of cultural renewal, moral development, social justice, and industrialization, the National Outlook stressed religious education and participation in politics.

3. Energy data on Turkey can be reached at: https://www.eia.gov/international/data/country/TUR.

Chapter 5

Regional Dynamics of Turkey-Qatar Relations

Foreign Policy Approaches, Tools, and Convergences (2002–2011)

FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES AND TOOLS

A comprehensive understanding of the Turkish-Qatari *political alignment*,[1] especially throughout the Arab Spring, requires an examination of both actors' foreign policy approaches, the tools they utilized, and an examination of why and how their policies on numerous regional foreign policy issues converged extensively. This examination will shed light on why the evolution of the Turkish-Qatari relations demonstrated an exceptional pattern, compared with other GCC countries, throughout the Arab Spring.

The concurrence of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's and Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim's foreign policy visions on the one hand and the Turkish Premier Erdoğan's and Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu's foreign policy visions on the other helped augment the Turkish-Qatari relationship in all fields in this period. As the region was beginning to witness the winds of change with the Arab Spring, both parties enjoyed a similar vision of this change and the direction it should take. In a short time, this convergence of opinions and accompanying policies took Turkish-Qatari relations to a higher level, which can be referred to as a political alignment. At the root of this alignment, whereby Ankara and Doha strove to realize their objectives, lay the foreign policy approaches and the concomitant policy tools used by both actors.

A foreign policy approach is a general way of understanding how foreign policy should be formulated. A *foreign policy tool* refers to a more specific instrument that is utilized to achieve goals formulated under a more general approach. For example, a security-oriented foreign policy approach may utilize military instruments such as military intervention, military aid, or

logistical assistance in the case of a war while a diplomacy-oriented approach may use instruments such as foreign aid in the form of economic or financial support or public diplomacy. In other words, foreign policy approach is a strong indicator of how a country envisions to realize its national interests. This approach of a country determines the tools to be utilized to safeguard its position in the international scene and achieve those interests. Therefore, understanding what dynamics facilitated close relations between Ankara and Doha and how these relations eventually transformed into a political alignment requires a closer examination of foreign policy approaches and tools. Turkish and Qatari foreign policy visions, approaches, and the predominant instruments they utilized concurred significantly prior to and during this period. Initially, this presented plenty of encounters in the field and later provided valuable venues for both actors to cooperate in regional issues and facilitated establishing closer relations. Had either of the actors have an incompatible or completely opposite foreign policy vision, approach toward the region, frictions, or even direct or indirect conflict would become unavoidable along the way, just as in the case of Turkish-Saudi Arabia and UAE relations throughout the Arab Spring.

REGIONAL DYNAMICS OF TURKISH-QATARI RELATIONS

On the regional level, the first and most important issue was the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 that resulted in not only political instability but also greater Iranian influence in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, Lebanon, and even Palestine (Maloney 2008). With the failure of the American democratization discourse in Iraq in the post-Saddam era, an initiative of the Bush administration, the United States has grown increasingly more reluctant to be involved in regional problems during and especially toward the end of the Obama administration. Obama's reticence to become more tangled in Iraqi politics and his reservations about U.S. intervention in Syria were important cases in point. This historic juncture would later create an optimal opportunity for Turkey to advance its relations with the Middle Eastern Arab countries in general and the GCC countries in particular.

The American reluctance during Obama administration to engage with the pressing regional problems and the conflict among Iraqi actors as to who should govern Iraq after the withdrawal of American military presence resulted in a power vacuum that weakened the Sunni political actors while strengthening the position of the Shia political actors in Iraq. Given its considerable influence on the Shiite politicians, Iran easily filled in the power vacuum in Iraq, boosting its assertive political stance vis-à-vis the regional heavyweights

such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia. As the Jordanian King's argument of *Shiite Crescent* began to materialize, the traditional leaders of the Arab world, that is, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, retreated into oblivion. At this critical juncture, the tacit U.S. approval of the Turkish and Qatari foreign policy toward the region functioned as another facilitator of closer Turkish-Qatari relations. For the Americans, it was a pragmatic choice to support Turkey and Qatar, both pro-American countries that are well-integrated into the global economy.

It can be argued that U.S. promotion of democracy in the Middle East weakened authoritarian regimes such as Egypt's Mubarak, Libya's Gaddafi, and Syria's Assad. This in return created a willingness and optimism among Middle East populations that they could ask for their democratic rights. Turkey and Qatar, both Sunni-majority countries, emerged as new players eager to fill in the power vacuum (Başkan 2016, 56). What paved the way for Turkish and Qatari political positions and interests to draw closer to each other at this critical juncture had to do with a regional willingness for embracing democracy and the optimism that authoritarian regimes could no longer continue to repress their own people.

Meanwhile, Iran's growing authority was alarming for most of the political elite and the popular opinion because they were worried that Tehran could try to fill in the power vacuum created by the U.S. reticence. To this background, the GCC members grew more inclined to involve Ankara in the security architecture of the region, and in fact they decided to announce Turkey a strategic partner in 2008. Instead of seeing Tehran be in control of the emerging landscape in the region, they saw a counterbalancing potential in Turkey. Qatar was one of the first countries expressing interest in Turkey becoming a strategic partner. This strategic relationship between the GCC and Turkey paved the way for formulating common positions over regional political issues and furthering economic ties, at least for some time.

GCC announcement of Turkey as a strategic partner in 2008 made perfect sense for most GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia. For example, Oktav (2018, 108) argues,

> With the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime which resulted in the empowerment of the Shia majority of Iraq and rise of Iranian influence, Turkey's role as a counterbalance to rising Shiism became crucial in the eyes of the Gulf monarchies, principally Saudi Arabia, as Riyadh had a twofold aim.

Oktav states that one of these was to bring Sunni countries in an alliance to counter the *Shiite Crescent* that extended from Iran to Iraq, then to Syria, and ended in Lebanese Hezbollah. Oktav continues on the same page, "Second [objective of Riyadh] was to avoid the spillover effect of rising Shiism on its Shia minority concentrated in the oil rich eastern provinces."

Turkey's European Union (EU) membership efforts also had a profound effect on Ankara's growing relations with the GCC in general and Qatar in particular. Prior to AKP, the EU approved Turkey's membership bid to join the Union in the Helsinki Summit in 1999 that demoted Turkey's security-oriented approach to foreign policy (Sözen 2010, 111). Then, with the coming of AKP to power in 2002, Turkey focused on the EU reforms to become a full member. Persistence in pursuing the reforms and the EU membership improved micro- and macro-economic indicators (along with other factors). Consequently, the EU approved to begin accession talks in 2004 that increased Turkey's international and regional standing (Dalay and Friedman 2013, 130). Initially, when

> the EU decided to formally start accession talks with Turkey in 2005, people in the Middle East have started to seriously consider the idea that Turkey's potential entry into the EU could also help them develop/modernize and live in peace with the West. (Oğuzlu 2007, 89)

A secular country with a foreign policy goal of becoming a full member of the EU presented much trust in Turkey and its leadership. A Muslim-majority country with European ideals and a strong economy stood as enviable qualities. These enabled Ankara to pursue a more self-confident, ambitious, and multidimensional foreign policy compared with the past. This was Turkish foreign policy elite's dream.

The Middle Eastern political actors saw an EU member Turkey as an important political and economic model. Even the idea of this created an enthusiasm to cooperate with Ankara (Goff-Taylor 2017). According to Ibrahim Kalin, the presidential spokesperson, Ankara was able to augment its soft power thanks to reconciliation of Islam, democracy, and economic development. Kalin stated, "Turkey's stable democracy, growing economy, and proactive foreign policy have generated growing appreciation of the country's achievements, which has augmented its 'soft power' in the region" (Kalin 2011). However, when the EU seemed to postpone Ankara's full membership on grounds of several political and economic concerns, Turkey was disillusioned with a stalled EU accession process (Barkey 2011, 1–2). Disappointed with this development, the Turkish policymakers intensified their efforts to integrate Turkish economy with that of the Middle East. This could increase Turkey's strategic and economic value and could later motivate the EU to reconsider its decision to stall Ankara's full membership process.

In brief, these systemic factors and Turkish foreign policy elite's objectives motivated Ankara to demonstrate a sustained and coordinated interest in the region. Concurrently, Qatar created a web of regional economic and

political connections and established a reputation as an equidistant, benign peacemaker and conflict resolver. As a matter of fact, both capitals emerged as natural partners. Although the Turkish-Qatari relations revolved around mutual economic interests and maintenance of regional peace in their initial stages, the Arab Spring revolts gave a fresh dimension to the relations. Especially with the Arab Spring revolts in Egypt and Syria, relations between Ankara and Doha moved toward a political alignment.

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH AND TOOLS

In his *Strategic Depth* (2010), Ahmet Davutoğlu, the intellectual architect behind Turkey's new foreign policy in this period, refers to two important power parameters, namely *stable* (2010, 17) and *potential* (2010, 24). These parameters determine the extent of a country's power in the international political arena. Stable parameters comprise unchangeable factors such as history, geography, population, and culture. Potential power parameters are changeable variables such as economic, technological, and military capabilities. By examining the interaction among these parameters, Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey could maximize its influence within the regional and international political system by pursuing a dynamic foreign policy (Davutoğlu 2010, 27). For Davutoğlu, Turkey's historical depth (long shared history with the regions around it) and its geopolitical depth (strategic geographical position) give Turkey a unique capability to increase its influence, or soft power, in the region.

Turkey's strategic depth, a combination of its geostrategic, historical, and cultural ties to the larger Middle East region, brought with it responsibilities and opportunities that could be activated to increase Turkey's regional and international prominence (Walker 2007, 33–34). To that end, Turkey exempted Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian citizens from obtaining visas and led efforts to create a small-scale customs union between the four actors that Prime Minister Erdoğan called as the Shamgen.[2] As mentioned earlier, such an economic opening reverberated in the region and allowed Turkey to reach out to other markets in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, especially the Gulf Arab countries, through Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Turkish products, from agricultural produce to popular consumption materials, such as Turkish soap operas and films, started to become more visible in the Gulf Arab markets.

Davutoğlu's idea of a more ambitious, dynamic, and multidimensional foreign policy necessitated Ankara to utilize several tools to achieve its new foreign policy objectives. After embracing a zero-problems policy with neighbors and resolving some of its decades-long political and diplomatic problems, such as cleaning up the Syrian border mines, freezing frictions with

Greece over the Aegean Sea, and opening up to Armenia, Turkey turned its attention to the broader region to share its experience and expertise. The first foreign policy instrument that stood out in Turkey's toolbox was mediation. Ankara mediated between Israel and Palestine, Israel and Syria, Hamas and Fatah, and also between the Lebanese and Iraqi political/sectarian political parties/entities whose frictions occasionally turned into bloody conflicts (Altunışık 2008, 53).

Ankara's all-inclusive and equidistant mediation efforts to resolve regional problems and defuse political/sectarian tensions enhanced Turkey's soft-power capabilities in the Middle East (Aras 2009, 140). Using mediation and peace-making, Turkey came to be viewed as an impartial mediator and facilitator in regional disputes (Dalay and Friedman 2013, 131). Turkey was also seen as a capable actor that could establish multidimensional relations with multiple actors. Regional political developments, at least until the Arab Spring, validated the wisdom of having zero problems with neighbors. According to Telhami (November 21, 2011) Turkey seemed to be the "winner of the Arab Spring" in a public opinion poll that was conducted in several Arab countries. For the majority of the participants in this survey, Turkey was playing the most constructive role during the Arab Spring protests and Erdoğan was seen as the most admired global leader.

Foreign aid and humanitarian assistance was the second important foreign policy tool that AKP governments consistently utilized in this period. For example, according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report (2013), with over $1 billion in aid distributed in 2012, 0.13% of its national wealth, Turkey came right after rich Western donors like the United States ($3.8 billion), the EU ($1.9 billion), and the United Kingdom ($1.2 billion). With these figures, Turkey was the third most generous donor after Luxembourg and Sweden, and the first country in terms of the amount of increase in humanitarian assistance in 2012. The same institution's 2019 report placed Turkey at the top of the donors list with about $8.5 billion spent, mostly for the Syrian refugees. According to Çevik (2013), through becoming an important donor, Turkey expanded its sphere of influence and soft power by engaging with regular people in receiving countries. Using foreign aid as a foreign policy tool effectively is heavily dependent on economic situation of a country in a given period. Despite relative economic issues, Turkey successfully included foreign aid in its foreign policy toolbox in this period.

In addition to its humanitarian, state-building, and debt relief efforts in Africa, most notably in Somalia, Turkish foreign aid played an important political role as well in other countries during the Arab Spring. For example, when the MB government in Cairo needed instant cash to support its debt-stricken economy, Morsi turned to Ankara. The Turkish government agreed to deposit $2 billion in the Egyptian Central Bank for the purpose of funding

small and medium-sized enterprises, helping finance infrastructure projects, and boosting foreign currency reserves. According to Bradley (2012), Ankara was utilizing foreign aid as a foreign policy tool to win lucrative contracts for its growing manufacturing sector. A similar trend in Turkish foreign aid was also noticeable in Tunisia and Libya (at least prior to the ongoing civil war between the Tripoli and Tobruk-based governments) where newly elected governments had cordial relations with Ankara.

In conclusion, Turkey increased its soft power immensely through its equidistant and all-inclusive foreign policy approach and the utilization of mediation, humanitarian assistance, foreign aid, and state-building efforts, especially in Somalia, Libya, and Egypt. However, in light of the political instability the Arab Spring brought to these countries and continuing economic troubles Turkey has been undergoing for quite a while, the continuation of funding allies and the ultimate success of this tool has become highly volatile.

QATARI FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH AND TOOLS

After gaining independence in 1971, Qatar pursued an independent foreign policy; however, Riyadh exercised a significant level of influence on Doha especially in terms of basic security (Roberts 2012, 234). Qatari leadership believed that if Doha wanted to wield influence in the region, maintaining sovereignty and autonomy, vis-à-vis influential neighbors such as Saudi Arabia, was an essential foreign policy vision and security consideration (Wright 2011, 88). To this end, Qatar allocated massive amounts political and economic resources for nation branding to distinguish itself as a leading, moderate, pro-Western Muslim country in a sea of religious radicalism. According to Peterson (2006, 741) a small state like Qatar "should exploit a unique niche whereby it provides a service or commodity that benefits neighbors, the region, or the broader world." This service was mediation and conflict resolution endeavors whereby Qatari investments in nation branding could be presented to the outside world.

In light of its size and population as well as the regional instabilities, Qatari foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad's vision was predicated on strengthening international peace and sovereignty ("Constitution of the State of Qatar" 2004, 1–2). Presenting Doha as a responsible, peaceful actor enabled the state to indirectly maximize its security vis-à-vis potentially expansionist and interventionist policies of mightier regional actors. In this regard, an initially important Qatari foreign policy goal was countering theoretically destabilizing policies of neighboring countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. Why is this important? Qatar has some

percentage of a Shiite population, generally stated in ambiguous figures; yet it is known that a considerable number of people with Shiite denomination live in Qatar.[3]

Moreover, Qatar shares its lifeline gas reserves, the Northern Field, with Iran. Provoking Iran and having tensions over the North Field could paralyze the Qatari economy in the medium to long term because, according to the IMF figures, natural gas comprised 61.3% of Qatari exports in 2016 (IMF Country Report: Qatar 2019, 7). Hence, avoiding sectarian tensions in the region assumed an important consideration in the Qatari foreign policy behavior (Kamrava 2013, 93–94). Qatar would not want an uncontrollably emboldened Iran in the region; neither would it want to alienate Iran with hostile policies because the latter is an important outlet for Doha in case there are problems with other neighbors, that is, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain that generally pursue a similar foreign policy toward Doha. In fact, developments in recent years demonstrated that this consideration was extremely important.

Qatari foreign policy tools were more prominently charted out after the security concerns of Qatar were alleviated, or even perceived to be solved, with the U.S. Army relocating to the Al-Udeid Air Base in 2003. Since then, mediation and peace brokering has become the most important Qatari foreign policy tools (Khatib 2013, 425). For Qatar, mediation came to be synonymous with maintaining an active involvement in regional issues, enhancing and deepening its influence in the region and beyond. To this end, the Qatar assumed immense dynamism in the Gulf and the broader Middle East that was facilitated by the regional power vacuum following the Invasion of Iraq. In fact, "peaceful resolution of international disputes" entered the Qatari Constitution making Qatar one of few countries that have conflict resolution/mediation in their constitution: "The foreign policy of the State is based on the principle of strengthening international peace and security by means of encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes" ("Constitution of the State of Qatar" 2004 Article 7).

In line with this article, Qatari mediation efforts proved successful in reviving stalled negotiations for forming national unity government between Fatah and Hamas in 2006, which failed; bringing a brewing civil war in Lebanon to an end in 2008; in encouraging the government and the most influential rebel group to sign a cease-fire agreement and a peace framework to end the civil war in Darfur, Sudan, in 2010; and in bringing several cease-fires between the government and the Houthi rebels in Yemen in 2009, 2010, and 2011; and mediation between the Taliban and the Western officials in 2010 as a result of which Qatar offered to open an office for Taliban in Doha.

Clearly, the Qatari foreign policymakers were aware that increasing Qatar's visibility and soft power in the international political arena would bolster Doha's chances for success in mediation (Kamrava 2013, 65); therefore, a simultaneous campaign for state branding (Barakat 2012, 7) and reputation building (2012, 12) as a progressive Muslim country was taking place. The establishment of the Al Jazeera channel; hosting several sports events (1995 FIFA Under 20 World Cup, 2006 Doha Asian Games, 2011 Asian Football Cup, 2011 Pan Arab Games, and 2022 FIFA World Cup); research and think-tank centers (Brookings and RAND Corporation); distinguished international conferences (2012 UN Conference on Climate Change, 2012 UN Conference on Trade and Development); active involvement in regional and international organizations (GCC, OIC, and UNSC); and investments in education (Qatar Foundation, Education City), culture (Museum of Islamic Arts, Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, etc.), and aviation (Qatar Airways) increased Qatar's visibility and soft power. Qatar earned extensive *subtle power* from these endeavors, cashing in on it successfully to support its image as an honest, impartial mediator and peace-broker and using it extensively in its foreign policy (Kamrava 2013, 66).

Foreign aid emerged as another important foreign policy tool for Qatar, which was sometimes a part of Doha's effective *checkbook diplomacy*. In addition to sending millions of US$ worth of humanitarian aid to Africa and Asia, Qatar gave foreign aid to countries affected by the Arab Spring. Egypt has received the lion's share from Qatar given its centrality in the Arab world and Sheikh Hamad's position that the newly emergent democratic Islam would dominate the Middle Eastern Arab region, and it was in Doha's best interest to participate actively in this historic shift (Steinberg 2012, 4). Encouraged by large amounts of capital and the initial absence of other regional and international actors, ambitious Qatari foreign policymakers gave more than $7.5 billion to Egypt throughout Morsi's presidency in the form of direct financial aid, emergency loan, and liquefied natural gas ("Egypt Returns $2 Billion to Qatar" 2013).

ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES AND TOOLS

Turkey and Qatar are both pro-Western, moderate Muslim countries with high levels of integration into the global economy. Although Qatar was able to realize most of its foreign policy objectives with its foreign policy approaches and tools at least for some time, the Arab Spring revolutions and counterrevolutions brought about many challenges to the realization and

continuity of such foreign policy objectives. As the evolution of the Turkish and Qatari foreign policy in 2000s demonstrates, there was a confluence of favorable domestic and regional political, economic, and security factors that augmented both actors' international standings.

Domestically, both countries enjoyed a period of political stability and unprecedented economic development under strong leadership. For example, from an economic/financial perspective, Turkey registered a growth rate of about 7% on average from 2002 to the 2008 Financial Crisis, which picked up again and reached about 9% in both 2010 and 2011according to World Bank data. Politically, AKP won all of the elections in this period. Qatar was no different: According to World Bank data, from 2002 to the Financial Crisis of 2008, Qatar saw unprecedentedly high growth rates of about 14% on average. In fact, the 2008 Financial Crisis did not affect Qatar in terms of growth rates as the average annual growth rate stayed around 13% from 2008 to 2013, which was one of the highest in the world at the time. Politically, Qatar did not see any noteworthy political upheavals or discontent within this period except minor individual protests.

Regionally, there was a power vacuum in both the Middle Eastern Arab region and the Gulf Arab sub-region. Egypt was no longer able to lead the Arab world and Saudi Arabia did not seem to be willing to take that role. Against this backdrop, the more Ankara and Doha demoted their hard security concerns, the more confidence they gained in their active, impartial, all-inclusive, and multidimensional foreign policy, as described earlier. Mediation and conflict resolution stood out as crucial tools in this respect. The more Turkey and Qatar utilized such foreign policy tools, the more they enhanced their regional and international prestige and soft power as well as drew closer to one another in joint regional political endeavors. In this regard, the then Turkish president Gül's remarks were quite telling:

> We told him [Sheikh Hamad] in the meeting that Turkey appreciates Qatar for its effective role in the solution of several problems in the region. We expressed our gratitude once again to Qatar for its constructive and positive efforts with regard to the Middle East peace process, the settlement of the disputes between Israel and Palestine, the issues concerning Lebanon, Iraq, Darfur, and Yemen and in many other major problematic areas. ("Presidency of the Republic of Turkey" 2009)

In this regard, Prime Minister Erdoğan observed that "we [Turkey and Qatar] have identical views on regional and international issues and we are doing our best with the State of Qatar in order to transform our region into a peace zone" ("Turkey and Qatar Working for Regional Peace" 2013). The Qatari side also reiterated Erdoğan's position. For example, Salem Bin

Mubarak Al-Shafi, the ambassador of the State of Qatar to Ankara, stated that Ankara and Doha "shared a similar point of view and . . . pursued similar policies regarding international matters, particularly regarding the conflicts in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq and the Arab Spring" which "allowed further development in bilateral relations and stronger ties" which is "a positive force for the resolution of regional problems" (Ünal 2014). Overall, both actors pursued similar objectives: Turkey wanted to become a strong and influential middle power, on par with its historical, cultural, and strategic depth, and Qatar envisioned to become a proactive foreign policy actor that would not encounter major security challenges or encroachment to her sovereignty. While trying to realize these goals, both actors used almost identical foreign policy tools.

Examining their foreign policy approaches, objectives, and the dominant foreign policy tools, it is clear that both actors attached great importance to domestic and regional peace and stability. Ankara's zero problems with neighboring countries policy was considerably similar to Doha's willingness to solve the territorial disputes with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands and the border disputes with Saudi Arabia. For both Ankara and Doha, good relations with neighbors and a peaceful region meant more opportunities for economic interdependence and safer markets for exports. In fact, Ankara and Doha cooperated in their mediation endeavors that aimed to end the conflict among Lebanese parties in 2011.

More importantly, both Turkey and Qatar have capitalized on their capability to offer generous amounts of foreign aid for humanitarian and development purposes to countries where the Arab Spring brought MB governments into power. Öztürk (2011) argues that parallelism between both actors' foreign policy goals and the tools they utilized, such as mediation and conflict resolution, drew them gradually closer in a fast-changing regional political landscape. In need of partners to help realize their foreign policy goals mentioned above, both actors with similar experience and aspirations of their own were increasingly convinced that they could cooperate in reaching their goals and shape the region toward their vision and maximizing their gains.

CONVERGING POLITICAL POSITIONS

In light of the previous section on the similarities between the foreign policy objectives, approaches, and tools both actors utilized, Turkey and Qatar experienced a great level of convergence on many regional issues such as Iraqi political instability and sectarian tensions, devastating scenes of carnage in different parts of Iraq that were unfolding before the international community, deep-running differences in Lebanon among various factions, the

Iranian nuclear program as well as the potential solutions to these problems. Two distinct dynamics have driven this convergence. First, the leadership of both actors employed an *Islamic*, not *Islamist*,[4] discourse to justify/legitimize their foreign policies and practices before their constituents and the regional public opinion. For example, according to Roberts (2014, 91–92), the understanding of Islam among the Qatari foreign policymakers is more of a pragmatic worldview rather than a hardcore ideology. Therefore, unlike the Islamists, the objective of this worldview is not to impose radical change on society but to build popular consent on the way to achieving larger political and economic goals of the state. In this regard, both Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu have extensively relied on the concept of *Islamic civilization*,[5] being a voice for Muslims, refusing radicalism, and embracing tolerance and moderation[6] in this period. In fact, Prime Minister Erdoğan assumed the role of co-sponsor of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative in 2005.

In accordance with Turkish leadership, the Qatari leadership also has repetitively used a discourse that endorses the strengths of Islamic civilization, representing Muslims on the world arena and rejecting radical views.[7] To this end, Qatar Foundation has established the Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization for contributing to Islamic civilization and formed a committee for supporting alliance of civilizations, whereby the Qatar Foundation was able to present *Islamic civilization* appropriately, advised to avoid radicalism, and able to promote plurality. Additionally, Qatar played a key role in strengthening the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative. The then Qatari foreign minister Khalid bin Mohammad Al-Attiyah stated that

> our support to this institution is not an improvisational issue or a political issue, but rather a support based on a distinctive vision and a set Qatar's foreign policy principles. We are for the promotion of dialogue among cultures and civilizations. ("FM Pledges Qatar's Support for Alliance of Civilisations" 2014)

Such a discourse was important for both actors as it fed their soft power and made their views more appealing to the wider Muslim popular opinion that was well-received both at home and abroad.

The second underlying dynamic that paved the way for foreign policy convergences is more realistic and less-ideologically driven. Pursuing a rationalist line of politics, both Ankara and Doha have continued to cater for the security and stability of the region that are vital for the well-being of their economies and their integration into the global economy. If this was the case, one might ask: Why did they support regime change in some Arab Spring countries? Naturally, Turkey and Qatar could choose to reach their foreign policy goals with the existing regimes, for example, with the Assad regime in Syria. However, both actors wanted to take a larger share of the

economic potentials in the region and did not want to share these opportunities with potentially adverse powers such as Iran or any other power in the regional equation. Additionally, the soft power they could glean from determining important political developments in the region with the help of new favorable leaders in conflict-ridden countries could maximize the legitimacy of Ankara's and Doha's foreign policies. Thus, came their involvement in regime change activities. However, desire to maximize gains would turn out to pose real challenges in the years to come.

In other words, Turkey wanted to win as much of the Middle Eastern markets as possible in order to increase its exports and continue its economic growth. Similarly, Qatar needed to enhance its regional and international standing in order to connect its huge gas reserves with nearby markets and beyond. Both countries were aware that accomplishing regional stability and peace and cooperating with a leadership that they can easily work with, not the ones that they could be on a collision course, would maximize their political and economic gains and influence. These two dynamics, that is, economic interests and security considerations, promoted one another, and they together cultivated a better ground for foreign policy convergences on many regional issues such as Hamas/the case of Gaza, the Lebanese Conflict, and the Iranian nuclear program, which will be examined in this chapter. The biggest foreign policy convergence between Ankara and Doha was their cooperation throughout the Arab Spring, especially the Syrian and the Egyptian cases, which will be analyzed in chapter 6.

SUPPORT FOR HAMAS: BEGINNINGS OF A FOREIGN POLICY CONVERGENCE

Ankara and Doha maintained that inclusion of Hamas in mainstream Palestinian politics would promote democratization of Hamas and that they were worried the exclusion of Hamas from democratic processes would deepen the radicalization among Palestinians. Ankara argued that ostracizing a democratically elected Hamas would not only undermine efforts to draw it closer to mainstream politics but would expand Iranian influence over Hamas (Dalay and Friedman 2013, 130). Qatari foreign policy elite shared similar concerns. Doha extended diplomatic and financial support to Hamas arguing that branding a democratically elected government as terrorist would bolster the radical wing in Hamas (Haykel 2013, 2) that would be detrimental to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. More specifically, Qatar was able to broker a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah in Doha in 2012 that envisioned creating a unity government and including Hamas in mainstream Palestinian politics. In addition, Sheikh Hamad became the first Arab leader

to visit Hamas-controlled Gaza to break the Israeli blockade and declare to the international community that Hamas is a legitimate political entity. Similar to Ankara, Doha aimed at using its leverage in the international arena to include Hamas in the mainstream Palestinian politics that could help distance Hamas from the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis.

In line with their strong belief that consolidation of security in the Middle East is dependent on the success of the democratic process and democratic institutions, both Turkey and Qatar strove to end the international isolation of Hamas. To accomplish this goal, both actors hosted Hamas leaders and sought to mediate between Hamas and Fatah. Prior to the attack on *Mavi Marmara* ship, Khaled Mashael was invited to Ankara by Erdoğan's and Gül's blessings. Because the secular circles approached Hamas with dismay, he was hosted in AKP offices, and not in governmental places. The Israeli War on Lebanon in 2006, the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2009, Prime Minister Erdoğan's harsh criticism of the Israeli president Peres at the Davos Summit in January 2009, and finally the killing of nine Turkish citizens on *Mavi Marmara*[8] in 2010 by Israeli forces brought about a nosedive in Turkish-Israeli relations.

According to Cagaptay (2020, 102), such developments were in fact considered an opportunity for launching Davutoğlu's vision of *Strategic Depth* by the AKP administration whereby Ankara wanted to distance itself from Tel Aviv and build more amiable relations with the Muslim Middle East. Overall, both Turkish and Qatari leadership had genuine interest in bringing an end to the Palestinian suffering that substantiated their discourse on being a voice for Muslims refusing radicalism and embracing democracy, tolerance and moderation, and Islamic civilization. Although this was perceived as an ideological position by some countries, most notably the United States and Israel (Kanat 2010, 213), and Turkey was accused of changing its decades-old foreign policy orientation, it brought about pragmatic benefits to Ankara and Doha in the form of augmented regional visibility and soft power.

It is clear that Turkey and Qatar knew the importance of the Palestinian cause on the way to winning hearts and minds, both at home and in the region. While other regional powers shied away from the Palestinian issue because either they were financially dependent on the Western financial aid, as in the case of Cairo, or they did not want to deal with yet another issue whereby they could be labeled as sponsors of terrorism, as in the case of Riyadh, Ankara and Doha were able to stand up to the Palestinian rights. This was important for both actors because the most important foreign policy tools they used, that is, conflict resolution and public diplomacy, required having a closer connection with the popular opinion in the Arab street. An image of protectors of the oppressed people helped boost the public image of Turkey and Qatar at least at the level of general public. Although these

initiatives were not directly aimed at Middle Eastern governments and that both actors could be said to speak to the masses, the leaders of some Middle Eastern countries had to deal with the issues Ankara and Doha had raised previously.

GAZA: PUTTING FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES INTO PRACTICE

Both Turkey and Qatar had emphasized that Hamas was a legitimate political actor elected in 2006 by the Palestinian people through a fair and transparent election process long before the Arab Spring protests erupted. This similar view on the Palestinian issue could be interpreted as the first major regional development that drew Ankara and Doha closer. Both actors viewed that inclusion of Hamas, claimed to be a radical group by Tel Aviv and some Western capitals, in the political process could promote democratization of the movement. In contrast, branding a popular movement as a terrorist organization could radicalize the mainstream Palestinian politics pushing them toward Tehran's growing sphere of influence (Dalay and Friedman 2013, 130). Along these lines, both at home and at international arenas, Prime Minister Erdoğan voiced Ankara's concern. For example, at the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, he said:

> But if we consider Palestine as a State, and I think that there is also a question there, perhaps some question marks in peoples' minds, this issue of the division within Palestine, and how to breach the differences between Fatah and Hamas. If we are trying to bridge that gap, then we have to consider all the parties. And I said this to Mr. Olmert too, because if it's only Fatah who is present on the Palestinian side, that is not going to be sufficient to project the results to all of the Palestinian people, Hamas has to be taken into consideration as well because they are a part of that society, they have won an election, so they too must be included in this equation. If it's the UN who is going to take the lead, that's the way it should be, I hope that the UN puts it weight behind these efforts and/or the United States under the Obama administration can take an important role.[9]

Qatari political elite was no exception to this line of political thinking, decision-making, and representing it in discourse. Doha maintained that calling a democratically elected party terrorist and preventing them from exercising their legitimate and democratic rights would only serve to marginalize pro-democracy forces in Palestinian politics that in return could damage irreversibly the belief in democracy and people's willingness to embrace democracy and democratic institutions.

Naturally, in their geopolitical reasoning, political elite in Doha knew that their pro-people and pro-democratic stance needs to be materialized and communicated to both the Arab street and the international community. To this end, Sheikh Hamad's visit to Hamas-controlled Gaza was as an unprecedented political move to draw attention to the Israeli blockade and reject allegations that Hamas was an illegitimate entity. With much foresight, Sheikh Hamad asked the international community for upholding democratic values in the case of Palestinian people for their choice:

> This important Arab experience should be supported and encouraged rather than putting pressure on it or interfering with the right of the people to choose their leaders to threaten to withhold aid to them . . . the results of these elections reflect a commitment to what is decided by the collective will and the acceptance of the citizens' free choices. ("Democracy, Development and Free Trade" 2006)

This line of thinking continued even after the Arab Spring protests rocked the Arab street and even well into the 2020s when Doha and Ankara worked tirelessly for brokering a reconciliation between different factions in Palestinian politics. For example, a reconciliation agreement was reached in Doha in 2012 between Hamas and Fatah and another large-scale agreement was announced in October 2020 ("Filistin: Hamas ve El Fetih'in Türkiye'de bir Araya Gelerek Uzlaşması" 2020). Turkish and Qatari political elite viewed that such agreements between the Palestinian factions could pave the way for a unity government that then could boost regional security and stability and eventually enhance Turkish and Qatari political standing.

Similar to the Qatari support, foreign policymakers in Ankara extended support to Hamas at AKP's 5th Annual Congress in December 2014 by inviting Khaled Meshaal, the Hamas leader. Seen from the geopolitical reasoning lenses, this symbolical move from the Turkish political elite communicated at least two clear messages. First, from a domestic viewpoint, this invitation was a tool to satisfy AKP's core constituency known for a decades-long sympathy toward the Palestinian cause. The political elite behind this maneuver reasoned that images of oppression of the innocent Palestinian people and Turkey as the unwavering voice of the oppressed were two strong images to consolidate AKP's voter base at home. Moreover, these two images would garner further sympathy toward Ankara and more soft power region-wide. Second, from the perspective of external audiences, Ankara was making openings into the regional political landscape to demonstrate its commitment to democracy and to serve as a trustable mediator in regional affairs. This was in fact evident in Hamas leader's speech at the same event where he likened Turkish democracy to a "renaissance, progress, and stability" which "empowers all Muslims" (Dabbagh and al-Fadilat 2014).

Turkish and Qatari insistence that the international community needed to respect the democratic processes that brought Hamas into power in Gaza was a notable development. The leadership in both countries knew notably well that the Muslim societies in the Middle East as well as worldwide, irrespective of their sectarian or political divisions, were disturbed by Israeli violations of basic human rights in Palestine in general and Gaza in particular. By taking an active position for human rights and democratic processes and their emphasis on taming radicalism through inclusion and responding to popular demands, Ankara and Doha were able to put their discourse into action. Although this meant confrontation with the international community in some cases, both states were viewed as genuine actors trying to solve Muslim issues in the eye of regular Muslims at home and abroad.

The message from both capitals on international pressure on Hamas, a democratically elected government, was clear: consolidation of regional security and stability could be possible only when higher ideals of democracy are welcomed for every country and every citizen in the region. This unequivocal message enhanced Turkish and Qatari soft-power capabilities and their international and regional recognition and won them the hearts and minds of regular people on the Arab street. Eventually, Turkish and Qatari efforts to convince the international community into accepting Hamas as a legitimate entity were recognized as evidenced in the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's request from "countries that have leverage over the leaders of Hamas" (Goodenough 2014) to help end the Israeli-Hamas conflict in June 2014.

LEBANON: MEDIATING THROUGH A SECTARIAN CONFLICT

Lebanon, a country with notorious sectarian politics, divisions, and frequent crises, has been an important site for Turkey and Qatar to show that the foreign policy principles of maintaining and enhancing regional security are not only in words. Thus, both Turkey and Qatar have undertaken several initiatives to resolve conflicts among Lebanese factions. To this end, Turkey deployed troops to Lebanon as part of the UN peacekeeping mission in 2006. Similarly, Qatar worked tirelessly until an agreement was reached to resolve months of Lebanese political crisis in 2008 and saved the country from the brink of a potential civil war (Barakat 2012, 18). Turkey's willingness to send troops to Lebanon to help prevent Beirut from sinking into deeper conflict with Israel and Qatar's success in preventing a brewing Lebanese civil war in 2008 drew both actors to initiate joint mediation efforts to resolve yet another political crisis.

Lebanon's already fragile political structure suffered yet another blow in 2011 when Hezbollah withdrew 11 of its ministers from the cabinet that culminated in the Lebanese government's collapse. As the situation was escalating in 2011, Turkish and Qatari foreign ministers have called on all Lebanese sides to compromise. However, the joint endeavor fell short of resonating with the Lebanese parties and the initiative failed to accomplish its goal. Retrospectively, this was perhaps an important sign that the growing Turkish-Qatari mediation efforts were reaching their limits. One reason for the Turkish-Qatari initiative not to attain a successful resolution could be the sectarian nature of the crisis that would further distance Turkey and Lebanon in the following years.

Three motivations appear to have driven Turkish and Qatari active involvement in the Lebanese crisis. First, as stated in their foreign policies, both actors strive to achieve peace and stability throughout the region and Lebanon was a fertile ground to prove their discourse and put their words into action. In a region rife with sectarian strife and social and political instability, resolution of such a deep-seated problem could augment both actors' soft power and visibility. Second, both sides were aware that Lebanon has a key importance in maintaining regional peace, given its complicated religious and political composition. If peace and stability in Lebanon was endangered, it would upset other regional dynamics. For example, if any political decision is made without obtaining the consent of the Shia in Lebanon, this runs the risk of pushing the country into abyss because neither the Lebanese Shia nor their coreligionists in Tehran would accept such a situation as evidenced by many stand-offs between these factions in the past. Third, genuine efforts to resolve conflicts in Lebanon would reverberate among different populations because Lebanon was like a small microcosm of the region. Such efforts would bring further prestige and serve as public diplomacy for Turkey and Qatar. Additionally, these initiatives would facilitate their relations with countries such as Iran, which enjoys a strong hold in Lebanon, and with Saudi Arabia, which generally acts as the protector of the Lebanese Sunni factions, as well as with France, which regards highly the remaining French influence in Beirut.

THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Iran has increasingly become a central political actor in the Middle East after the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent fall of Saddam regime. Traditionally, most Sunni states in the Middle East, especially some GCC states such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, have always been mistrustful toward Iranian foreign policy and accused Iran of taking advantage of sectarianism

and activating proxies within these countries in order to create social and political instability in the region. Concerns about an increasingly assertive Iran with region-wide influence and with potential to acquire nuclear weapons intensified especially following the Western allegations that Iran is pursuing a nuclear program that eventually aims to produce nuclear weapons.

Alarmed at such a possibility, most of Iran's neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Kuwait, expressed their dismay of Iranian intentions and have even suggested assisting a potential U.S. operation on nuclear sites (McLean and Shane 2011). However, given their important political, economic, and strategic interests, both Turkey and Qatar have pursued a different foreign policy from the West, Israel, and the Gulf Arab countries, with Oman clearly an outlier. Although both Ankara and Doha are pro-Western countries, they are also pragmatist and rationalist actors and both viewed that cooperating with the West against Iran could harm their economic and diplomatic interests in the region. According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute in this period, Turkish export to Iran was about $4.5 billion while the export figures to the United States stood somewhere around $6 billion while it was around $2 billion to Israel.

Additionally, from the Turkish perspective, siding with the West would jeopardize Ankara's energy security because Tehran has been an important source of Turkish energy imports. With about 70% of its energy needs dependent on imports in 2011, Iran was the second largest source of Turkey's natural gas imports that comprised almost one-fifths of the total natural gas imports according to Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Authority (Doğalgaz Piyasası Sektör Raporu 2013, 23). Additionally, Turkey and Iran signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) which would extend the Turkish-Iranian energy partnership from 2003 to 2010 and transport vast reserves of Iranian natural gas from the South Pars field to Europe that bound both countries in a major energy partnership (Ekici 2010, 183). Emphasizing Iran's vital importance for Turkey's energy security, perhaps Turkey's dependence on Iran, and aspiration to become a regional energy hub, Davutoğlu stated that "Iran is the only land corridor for Turkey to reach Asia and the second biggest source of energy for Turkey" (Traub 2011). In addition, Iran is an influential partner who could play, if she chooses to, influence countries such as Lebanon and Syria where Turkey had vital interests in this period.

For Qatar, Iran is an extremely important neighbor with whom Doha shares the world's largest natural gas field, that is, the South Pars as well as a potential gateway to the Turkish and European natural gas markets and the only air and sea outlet in case there is a problem with other neighbors. In fact, as unfolding events demonstrated throughout the Qatari Blockade, Tehran proved to be a vital sea and air opening for Doha that was under a total land and air blockade imposed by its immediate Gulf Arab neighbors.

Collaborating with the Christian West against Iran, a Muslim country, could produce counter-effects, as was evidenced in Iraq where Saddam's removal from power with the help of the United States engendered political instability and extremely violent sectarian conflict. Additionally, pursuing a principled approach in the case of Hamas and exercising double standards against Iran could tarnish the image of both countries. Consequently, a combination of interests in the economic and energy security fields and political calculations led the Turkish and Qatari foreign policies toward Iran's nuclear program witnessed an extensive convergence.

For example, Qatar voted against 2006 UNSC resolution number 1696, which demanded Iran to suspend uranium enrichment, arguing that the region was already in flames and therefore Iran should be granted channels of diplomacy and more time to guarantee the achievement of a peaceful solution ("Security Council Demands Iran Suspend" 2006). At the UNSC meeting, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the Qatari representative, stated that proceeding with the draft resolution would intensify the regional conflagration and harm the Council's unity. Despite understanding the concerns of regional and Western actors regarding the nuclear issue, Ankara and Doha resisted bandwagoning with the anti-Iran camp (Çetinoğlu 2009, 163–64). Turkey and Qatar emphasized that every country had a right to peaceful nuclear technology. Based on this condition, it appears that Ankara and Doha were convinced that Tehran was after nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. At the UNSC meeting regarding resolution number 1696, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the Qatari representative, stated that proceeding with the draft resolution would intensify the regional conflagration and harm the Council's unity.

Similar to Doha, Ankara voted against a 2010 UNSC Resolution that imposed further sanctions on Iran in order to stop its nuclear program. Turkey, along with Brazil, argued that "the adoption of sanctions would negatively affect the momentum created by the Tehran Declaration and the overall diplomatic process" initiated by Turkey and Brazil ("Security Council Imposes Additional Sanctions" 2010). At the same meeting, Ankara also maintained that "the resolution's adoption should not be seen as an end to diplomacy" and "efforts towards finding a peaceful solution must be continued even more resolutely." Additionally, similar to Ankara, Doha expressly declared that they were against any military solution to the issue and that they would not allow their territory to be used for a military operation against Iran (Koçgündüz 2011, 77).

CONCLUSION

In summary, Ankara's and Doha's foreign policy objectives and the foreign policy tools they utilized created several platforms to enhance their regional cooperation. This cooperation was also tested by several events before their domestic constituencies and regional audiences and proved successful. Position on Hamas and foreign policy decisions and actions in the case of Gaza, mediation and peace-keeping efforts throughout the crisis originating from sectarian politics in Lebanon, and reactions to the Iranian nuclear issue presented plenty of venues for Turkish and Qatari foreign policy positions to concur. For presenting these growing convergences on regional issues, both actors depended on pragmatic instrumentalization of geography as well as spatialization, that is, simplifying and dramatizing political differences they had with their contenders as well as their foreign policy decisions and actions in spatial terms, and presented these to the domestic and international audiences through their own perspectives.

Rather than dividing physical geographies into friend-enemy categorizations at this initial stage, Turkey and Qatar utilized a discourse that was equidistant to all sides involved in regional conflicts or disagreements and focused on concepts like *Islamic civilization*. Inherent in this seemingly equidistant discourse was in fact a diatribe against the Western countries which were accused of having double standards when it came to democracy in the Muslim Middle East as evidenced in the case of Hamas. In fact, Turkey and Qatar worked effectively as diffusers of tensions and were generally successful in presenting themselves as such. From a geopolitical reasoning perspective, this was necessary for garnering domestic, regional, and global support.

Although foreign policy approaches and the instruments Turkey and Qatar employed to accomplish differing foreign policy objectives facilitated a high number of convergences regarding pressing regional issues, these dynamics alone fail to present a complete picture of the evolving nature of Turkish-Qatari relations. In order to present a more comprehensive account of these dynamics, chapter 6 continues its analysis of the regional dynamics of Turkish-Qatari political alignment throughout the Arab Spring as well as how this alignment was framed, presented, and communicated on national and international arenas.

NOTES

1. Please refer to the Introduction section of this book for a definition of the term.
2. *Shamgen* is an allusion to the European Schengen visa. Damascus is "Sham" in both Arabic and Turkish.
3. According to a research conducted by the American-based Pew Research Center titled "Mapping the Global Muslim Population" more than 100,000 Shia people lived

in Qatar in 2009, which was around 10% of the population. The study can be reached at http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population

A more recent report published by the United States Department of State titled "2011 Report on International Religious Freedom—Qatar" puts the percentage of Shia population in Qatar around 5–15%. The study can be located at http://www.refworld.org/docid/50210591c.html.

4. "Islamic" is simply a politically neutral adjective while "Islamist" is usually used as a politically charged concept in many contexts. Islamists are claimed to maintain that Islam should be the sole guiding force in one's social and personal life and that politics is a tool to change society in this direction.

5. See Ahmet Davutoglu (1994): "Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World" for theorization and practice of the civilizational discourse in contemporary politics.

6. See Burhan Duran's (2013) article for a detailed discussion on discourse of Islamic civilization: "Understanding the AK Party's Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations."

7. See Sheikh Hamad's UN speech at: http://www.unesco.org/dialogue/en/kahlifa.htm

8. *Mavi Marmara* is one of the ships in the flotilla that set out from Istanbul to Gaza for providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. The flotilla organizers expected to attract international attention to the suffering of Gazans under Israeli blockade. However, Israeli naval forces attacked the flotilla in international waters before reaching to Gaza and killed ten Turkish citizens.

9. See Erdogan's speech at Davos Economic Forum on January 29, 2009: http://www.eutopic.lautre.net/coordination/spip.php?article3976.

Chapter 6

Regional Dynamics Continued

Arab Spring, Changing Regional Dynamics, Geopolitical Aspirations, and the Turkish-Qatari Political Alignment (2011–2016)

TURKEY AND QATAR IN A NEW GEOPOLITICAL REALITY

Arab Spring protests hit the headlines when Turkey and Qatar were at the peak of their economic performance, international prestige, and ratings by their domestic constituencies ("Ortadoğu'nun Kralı" 2011). For some observers, these protests would soon prove to be nothing more than short-lived eruptions of public anger that would be immediately assuaged or subdued by entrenched autocracies that would strike back if the status quo were to be endangered (Held and Ulrichsen 2014). The masses were displeased with their economic prospects, the meager opportunities of meaningful political participation, and widespread inequalities and corruption. And, it was no surprise that the masses were chanting for freedom, dignity, and social justice. In contrast to the leadership of countries where protests erupted, leaderships in Ankara and Doha were convinced that state-society relations in the Middle Eastern countries needed a major overhaul. Along similar lines, Bayat (2013, 590) observed that changes in the ideological orientation of Arab masses pushed autocratic regimes to change the way they have handled matters for decades.

For example, Turkish foreign policymakers at the time, led by Davutoğlu, believed that the Middle East region was stifled because of lack of political reform and dictatorships that dealt with their own people heavy-handedly. Erdoğan also pointed to this in his famous Davos speech and asked the Western countries to respect democracy and democratic processes in the Middle East.[1] Similarly, Sheikh Hamad, the Emir of Qatar, who reiterated that the Arab people deserved a decent government and basic human rights

on different occasions, proposed the Qatari initiative for political reforms in the Arab world on March 28, 2004 (Nagi 2008, 14).

Revolutions, counter revolutions and ensuing civil wars have rocked Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and to lesser extent Bahrain, after a decade into the first Arab Spring protests. In the later stages of the revolutions, domestic dynamics were relegated to secondary importance while intervention by other powers generally determined what shape and speed popular protests took. In other words, most of these countries turned into battlegrounds where different proxies strove to attain results more favorable to themselves or the governments they supported. For example, similar to Bahrain where the Peninsula Shield Force was used to prop up the government vis-à-vis the protest movement in 2011, the Saudi-Emirati bloc suppressed by military means any potential success of domestic forces in Yemen that sought to bring a more democratic style of government. In Syria and Libya, both the superpowers Russia and the United States and opposing regional powers such as Turkey, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia intervened in different ways trying to achieve different results.

As the Arab Spring gained traction and the polarization among regional powers increased, there was a clear sign that incompatible foreign policy goals of regional powers were on a collision course. In fact, the two main power blocs in the region, that is, the Sunni bloc generally represented by Saudi Arabia and the Shia bloc led by Iran, began to break into further divisions. Similar to their reception of the rise of the *Shia Crescent* ("Jordan's Abdullah Concerned" 2004), some monarchies of the Sunni bloc such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain approached the mounting popular demand for political change and social and economic equality with profound mistrust. On the one extreme was the Shia bloc that was blamed for flaring religious extremism and propagating that the Gulf Arab monarchies were blind allies of the West rather than the Muslims (Aras and Yorulmazlar 2014, 116). On the other extreme was the Saudi-Emirati bloc which saw an existential threat in regular people's empowerment. Therefore, it was not difficult for both blocks to brand the other side as illegitimate and portray the other side as a source of regional instability (Matthiesen 2013, 110).

Situated in the middle was another bloc that was gaining influence and visibility, thanks to a growing power vacuum exacerbated by Cairo's and Riyadh's lack of willingness to lead the region. This *axis between the two axes*, as popularly known in the Arab world, was led by Ankara and Doha ("The Ambiguity of the Turkish and Qatari Case" 2018). In the ensuing days of the protests, the MB governments in Egypt and Tunisia and Hamas in Gaza cooperated with this new bloc. The traditional Sunni bloc countries were alarmed at this emerging geopolitical reality. For example, King Abdullah of Jordan called this new block as the Muslim Brotherhood Crescent (Goldberg

2013), hinting at his dismay and mistrust of the political goals of this new bloc and the repercussions of the realization of these goals in his country and the wider region.

When the Arab Spring protests hit the Arab streets, Turkish soft-power capability was at its apogee. For practically a decade, Ankara had been pursuing an impartial foreign policy and establishing a reputation as a trustable regional actor who was asked to mediate between various regional powers in different political and religious tensions. Turkish foreign policy of *zero problems with neighbors* was at the heart of this perception. Not only did it give Turkey's neighbors and regional allies the trust that Ankara could work toward the good of the whole region, but it also provided the self-confidence Turkish foreign policymakers needed for cashing in on the historical, cultural, and geographical proximity Turkey enjoyed with other regional actors (Goldberg 2013).

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, Turkish economy was at full steam with a robust economy that was registering unprecedentedly higher figures from trade volumes to FDI to employment rates. For Bakeer (2021), Turkey accumulated a good amount of soft power thanks to its "democratization experience and reforms, substantial and sustained economic growth of a rising trade state and finally visionary, engaging, and proactive foreign policy." At this historical conjunction, Turkish foreign policymakers believed that Turkey as a strong middle power had to assume the role of a regional hegemon and that relations with the Middle Eastern countries, including GCC actors, were central to realizing this objective (Pala and Aras 2015, 298).

To this economic and political background as well as region-wide positive perceptions toward Turkey on the levels of both the general public and political elite, the Arab Spring protests presented a conducive atmosphere for Ankara to become a central country that could set the regional agenda. Turkish foreign policy elite calculated that this was the right time to fully demonstrate Turkey's strategic depth and lead the newly emerging political reality. Becoming the voice of the public and taking advantage of the increasing popular democratic demands could solve deep-rooted political problems in the region, opening new venues and creating new opportunities for Ankara.

According to Pala and Aras (2015, 289), championing democratic demands of the Arab street could strengthen Turkey's position as a natural leader of Muslim Middle East and give a strong message to the Western world that Ankara could help with the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes. This was a two-pronged strategy of solving political, social, and economic problems of the Middle East through consolidating Western ideals of democracy and liberal economy. Based on this, the Western capitals were willing to support a Turkish role in such a transition and the masses on the Arab street genuinely trusted Turkey's efforts (Kirişçi 2013). The Turkish

political elite highlighted this intention in different arenas. For example, in his election victory speech in 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan said,

> Today, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans have won as much as Turkey. . . . We will become much more active in regional and global affairs. . . . We will take on a more effective role. . . . We will call for rights in our region, for justice, for the rule of law, for freedom and democracy. (Güsten 2011)

Another country in the region with almost an identical political stance and similar economic record was slowly moving to the center of the regional politics. This country was Qatar. The transformation of the Gulf countries into the center of Arab economic and political life was starkly visible in the case of Qatar. Qatar is a small country with long-standing insecurities and very limited strategic depth, however, this did not stop the political elite from adopting ambitious power projections in the region (Kamrava 2013, 78–79). To this end, decision makers in Doha saw establishing trustable relationships with other friendly regional and international actors as the safest way of alleviating such insecurities (Kümek 2020, 248) as well as making up for the country's lack of strategic depth. On the way to realize this goal, Qatar undertook a series of steps such as creating a friendly economic atmosphere for international investments primarily in its energy sector and behaving strategically in its distribution of investment portfolios.

Additionally, Qatari leadership realized an ambitious campaign for nation branding as evidenced in opening new museums, attracting international universities, and passing certain laws and regulations, and holding elections that strengthened democratic institutions in the country. For example, in a surprising move Qatar held the Central Municipal Elections on March 8, 1999, whereby "the leadership decided to initiate national elections and allow women to participate in them to generate international attention for 'democratic' and 'modern' reforms that seem uncharacteristic in the Arab Gulf" (Lambert 2011, 90). As was explained before, foreign policy tools such as mediation, conflict resolution, and debt relief were also used to attain international visibility and positive public perceptions. On the economic front, Qatari economy witnessed high economic growth, preventing any potential internal opposition. Politically, although highly unpopular with her Arab neighbors, Doha was able to nurture deep relations with many political and non-political regional actors across the region (Gause III 2014, 17).

To this backdrop, although both Turkey and Qatar were caught by surprise when the Arab Spring protests attracted much support from the masses and grew into a regional dynamic in a short time, Ankara and Doha chose to support these masses and the democratic demands that defined these movements. In both Turkish and Qatari projections of the region, the protests

demonstrated how deeply the Arab masses were frustrated with authoritarian regimes and that the sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes were imminent. Likewise, both actors judged that Islamists, namely the MB elements, were the strongest and the most organized candidate for replacing the existing authoritarian regimes. Ankara and Doha anticipated that such change would be easy and quick given the legitimacy of what people demanded, how urgently such change was desired, and the near-absence of counterrevolutionary forces. In accordance with such assessments, both capitals began to provide diplomatic, financial, logistical, and media support to a nebulous revolution (Ulrichsen 2014).

Given their differing human resources, history, military, and economic capabilities, Turkey and Qatar had different geopolitical calculations; however, both actors used an increasingly more convergent geopolitical reasoning. Although Turkey, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia enjoyed cordial relations until the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the emerging geopolitical landscape began to push these powers toward two different extremes: Ankara and Doha were pro-change and pro-democracy while Abu Dhabi and Riyadh saw in Arab protests an existential threat to their political stability. Naturally, the UAE and later Saudi Arabia were quick to feel threatened in face of growing Turkish-Qatari political alignment that could foreshadow or hinder their own goals and promote political Islam which is the nemesis of Abu Dhabi and Riyadh (Erdemir and Koduvayur 2019, 7–8). Additionally, such alignment could further drift Doha out of the GCC fold and into the orbit of Riyadh.

Rivalry based on such clashing geopolitical goals and ideological divisions was perhaps the most eventful factor that slowly reversed the regional dynamic in favor of counterrevolutions and further repression of the Arab street. Partly due to this rivalry, the Arab Spring protests failed and the conflict between the emergent Turkish-Qatari axis and Emirati-Saudi axis deepened beyond a quick resolution (Young 2013, 21). Surrounded by these increasingly intricate geopolitical rivalries, Ankara and Doha deepened their partnership as evidenced in their political discourse and actions in the Palestinian, Syrian, and Egyptian cases, and in Tunisia and Libya. According to Pala and Aras (2015, 289–90), both actors began to justify their foreign policy decisions and actions through a prism of geopolitical concepts and arguments.

In other words, a practical geopolitical reasoning, explained in the introduction of this book, served as a prominent framework for both capitals in making meaning of the emerging geopolitical reality and explaining it to domestic and international audiences. The Turkish and Qatari political elite used a practical geopolitical reasoning to communicate their arguments and justifications predominantly in their speeches addressed to domestic and

international audiences, instances of which will be extensively analyzed in this chapter. Through such reasoning, both actors envisioned to enhance their legitimacy and invalidate the arguments of the opposing actors as "illegitimate," "unjust," and "undemocratic."

ARAB SPRING: CHANGING REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND THE TURKISH-QATARI POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

The initial euphoric predictions and overly positive expectations about the outcomes of the Arab Spring started to fade away quickly. Instead, internal frictions, foreign meddling, sectarian divides, and a full-fledged civil war began to appear as more realistic outcomes of the Arab Spring in some countries (Salem 2021). Barring the initial ecstatic expectations, developments the Arab Spring has ushered in proved to be important game-changers. These developments have left their mark not only on Turkey-GCC relations but also on Turkish-Qatari relations. Like most capitals, Ankara was caught with surprise when demonstrations in Tunisia grew into mass protests calling for the fall of the Ben Ali regime. The quick and peaceful success of the Tunisian people in changing their decades-old corrupt and authoritarian regime was greeted with joy by many sections of the Arab societies in North Africa, the Levant, and the Gulf who demanded immediate political change and better economic conditions.

When street protests began in Egypt, the Turkish government was quick to call Mubarak to leave power peacefully and listen to the popular demands. For Ankara, Mubarak generally proved to be a difficult partner throughout his term in office. For example, according to Magued (2016, 298), from the early 1980s to mid-1990s Mubarak vented his exasperation at the "Syrian–Turkish conflict over Tigris and Euphrates' water repartition, the Turkish military raids against Iraq, and Turkey's alliance with Israel," claiming that Ankara was after annexing Mosul, an Iraqi territory, and that Turkish-Israeli cooperation was aimed at threatening Arab states. Later in 1997, when Turkish prime minister Erbakan met with the MB leaders in Cairo during an official visit, Mubarak was quick to show his annoyance with Erbakan ("Hoca'ya 'Müslüman Kardeşler' Şoku" 1997).

Although relations began to improve between Ankara and Mubarak with the Turkish-Syrian reconciliation in 1998, Mubarak regime tended to be difficult to deal with in the coming years (Akgün and Gündoğar 2014, 4). Qatar was not any different in terms of its relations with Mubarak. Doha had tense relations with the Mubarak regime for over a decade while Qatari leaders were able to establish good relations with the opposition in Egypt, namely the MB. Thus, similar to Turkey, Qatar rushed to champion the democratic rights

of the Egyptian people through Al Jazeera. Both Ankara and Doha envisioned to realize their foreign policy goals and increase their clout in Egypt if the MB were to assume power (Tocci 2011). Therefore, they found each other as natural allies.

Syrian uprisings proved to be another important phase in the Turkish-Qatari political alignment. Initially, both Ankara and Doha tried to convince Damascus to introduce political reforms, even nominally, to weather the uprisings. However, by the summer of 2011 when the violence between the Assad regime and the opposition intensified, both Turkey and Qatar ended their relations with Assad and parted their ways with the Assad regime. They accused Assad of categorically refusing to address any of the plans for dialogue and reform. For Ankara and Doha, now that the Assad regime was not responsive to friendly calls for dialogue with the opposition, they had no choice but to side with the democratic demands of the masses. Judging from the emerging political landscape in Tunisia and Egypt, Syria could become another country in the region where the MB elements would enhance their power vis-à-vis the Assad regime.

Had the Assad regime responded positively to Ankara's and Doha's pleas, both actors would have probably continued their friendly relations with Damascus and pushed for a slower democratization process whereby the majority of Syrian people would have had more chances of participation in the political realm of their country. However, this proved to be just a wishful thought and the gap between the Assad regime and Ankara-Doha bloc continued to widen. Having economic and political stakes in the Syrian situation as well as trying to act consistently with what they have been preaching and practicing, Turkey and Qatar began to provide political, financial, and logistical support for the Syrian opposition. Given their converging foreign policy objectives, Turkey and Qatar began to forge an unprecedented political alignment with each other as Syria turned into an ideological and sectarian battleground for different parties: the Syrian government, the Syrian opposition, Russia, Iran, and the United States.

By the time Tunisia and Egypt were well under the MB governments and there was high probability that others, such as Libya, could follow suit, differences between the Turkey-Qatar-Egypt axis on the one hand and the Saudi-UAE axis on the other began to surface. Although Riyadh continued to be on the same page as Ankara and Doha in the Syrian case until then, this began to change especially with growing discontent with the MB in Abu Dhabi. For the latter bloc, democratically elected MB elements posed an existential threat to their survival. Status quo monarchies could lose some of their legitimacy if democratically elected governments ran important Arab countries. In other words, these monarchies were worried that citizens in the Gulf could look up to potentially democratic Arab Spring countries and push

for a similar change. Such a scenario could ruin decades-old monarchies in the Gulf, the Levant (Jordan), and North Africa (Morocco). At the root of this perception of insecurity and vulnerability lay, in addition to lack of democracy and high levels of repression, socioeconomic inequalities in these countries (Davidson 2012).

More than a year after the Tahrir Square protests and the ensuing toppling of the Mubarak regime, the June 2012 elections put in power Muhammad Morsi, MB's presidential candidate. Turkey was one of the first countries to congratulate Morsi's Freedom and Justice Party. Due to Egypt's central role in Arab politics, its huge population, and colossal potential as an important regional ally, Ankara and Doha extended political, financial, and logistical support to the Morsi government. As evidenced by the Egyptian and Syrian cases, the Arab Spring proved to be an arena whereby the Turkish and Qatari foreign policy visions toward the Arab Middle East converged to a great extent (Yüksel and Tekineş 2021, 6). Toward the end of Sheikh Hamad's reign, which ended in June 2013, Turkey and Qatar enjoyed a full-fledged *political alignment* (Pala 2014, 74) at the expense of worsening diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

In the previous chapters of this book, *political alignment* was defined as a convergence of political visions and positions accompanied by confluent policy decisions and actions of political actors, which instigate a host of areas of cooperation, coordination, and joint action. In this framework, a few crucial questions arise: Who initiated this political alignment and why? What did it mean in practice? In other words, how did it work? What distinguished it from what came before it? These questions can best be answered with reference to the definition of *political alignment* provided earlier in this book.

Turkish and the Qatari political elite were willing to cooperate and collaborate within the newly emerging geopolitical landscape on account of the regional power vacuum that attracted new actors with new political goals. Additionally, these actors enjoyed conducive domestic dynamics in terms of public support, economic and financial performance, and ambitious foreign policymakers with converging political visions. In the initial stages of Turkish overtures to Qatar, the most conspicuous dynamic in relations was a desire to benefit from the economic and financial opportunities the Qatari market offered. Along similar lines, for Qatar, Turkey could become another market for its rich natural gas resources, a potential link that could connect its hydrocarbon resources to the energy-hungry Western markets, and another major middle power to diversify its partners in a volatile region. Moreover, Qatar found in Turkey, a country that was long defined as a model for the Arab world, a reliable partner to diversify its friends and minimize the influence Riyadh wanted to exert on Qatari foreign policy. Similarly, Qatar, a

small progressive Arab Muslim country, could enhance legitimacy of Turkish geopolitical goals and power projections in the region.

What did such political alignment mean in practice and how did work? This political alignment was closely related to the fast-emerging political landscape, Turkish and Qatari foreign policy ambitions, and their soft-power and hard-power capabilities, and it found meaning in a convergence of regional policy visions and actions of both actors as was evidenced in their attitudes and actions in the cases of Gaza, Lebanon, the Iranian Nuclear Deal, covered in chapter 5, and the Syrian and Egyptian cases, which are covered in this chapter. Naturally, converging visions and actions per se could not have resulted in a political alignment had they not been propelled and intensified by contra-initiatives and contra-measures taken by other contending actors. The more Turkish-Qatari alliance was perceived as a threat by other competing countries and the more these adverse powers cooperated to halt Turkish-Qatari collaboration, the more the political alignment between Ankara and Doha gained momentum. In other words, fear of isolation and the danger of exclusion from regional politics drove Turkey and Qatar even closer to each other. Thus, not only the conducive domestic and regional factors but also adverse regional factors paved the way for a more advanced relationship.

Finally, what distinguished this political alignment from what came before it? As mentioned, prior to the political alignment that grew more conspicuous as the Arab Spring developments unfolded, relations between Ankara and Doha were directed more at individual benefits, mostly economic as well as socioeconomic steps, with fewer or almost no focus on mutually win-win initiatives in other areas such as foreign policy, military, security, and energy. However, as the regional geopolitical landscape evolved and both actors saw in each other a potentially more beneficial partner in areas other than the economy, they recalibrated relations and decided to augment cooperation in geopolitics, military, finance, and energy. Based on the definition of political alignment above, if extension of relations to many areas was the beginning of this alignment, its intensification and deepening marked the beginning of a strategic partnership, which will be covered in chapter 7.

Several dynamics throughout the Arab Spring motivated the Turkish-Qatari political alignment. First, Islamist elements in AKP's constituency (AKP is not supported by Islamists *per se*, perhaps they are a small portion of AKP's powerbase) approved of the potential success of Islamism in the region and supported, or was at least sympathetic to, the AKP government's initiatives in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria as evidenced by pro-MB demonstrations ("İstanbul'da Mursi'ye Destek" 2013), humanitarian assistance activities organized by several conservative civil societies such as the IHH's (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri) *Mavi Marmara* Flotilla, and numerous publications by pro-government or semi-governmental think-tanks/centers to mold

public opinion. In fact, AKP leadership was of the same opinion as most of their constituency because these initiatives were neither discouraged nor prohibited. Similarly, the Qatari leadership, who had cordial personal connections with and favorable views toward the MB elements in most Arab countries, saw in the Arab Spring a potential region-wide dominance of the Islamist movements which were generally accepting of democratic values.

Second, both Ankara and Doha hoped that if Arab uprisings resulted in Islamist governments, they would enjoy more regional political influence and better economic opportunities. Also, if these Islamist governments respected democratic values and institutions, transformative leadership of the Turkish model could put Turkey at the center of regional politics. Although the MB members had criticized the parting of Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, and Bülent Arınç from Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party, which was closer to the MB as an organization, and continued to mistrust Erdoğan's AKP, this position was reversed with the Egyptian Revolution in 2011–2012, gained momentum afterward, and the MB-affiliated Justice and Freedom Party began to portray Turkey's AKP as an important model (Ayyash 2020). This was a clear indication for Ankara that there was much room to cooperate with MB-led governments in the region.

Third, both Ankara and Doha supported the popular uprisings as the most principled approach because they had long been arguing that they were in favor of people's choice and promotion of democratic rights and freedoms. Turkish foreign policymakers were also aware that the Egyptian case could become a strong case for blending Islamic concerns and values with democracy and promotion of universal values, further strengthening the Turkish model. While the conflict in Syria was aggravating and the counterrevolution in Egypt was gaining ground, Ankara's and Doha's active involvement in the Arab Spring began to assume a more sectarian character that dented their reputation as trustable actors. It was this sectarian discourse and actions that ruined Turkey's cordial relations with Syria, Iran, Russia, and Iraq as well as other political actors in the region and beyond. Similar to Turkey, Qatar's relations with her neighbors and other regional actors were to deteriorate. According to Beaumont (2012), the Arab Spring, the Libyan uprisings to be exact, "marked the "qualitative change" in Qatar's foreign policy from an "activist" but militarily "unthreatening" stance to active intervention," which created serious fractures in its relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

SYRIA: SETTING THE STAGE

Syria was a significant scene where growing Turkish-Qatari foreign policy convergences became increasingly more visible. In the period prior to the

Arab Spring, both Ankara and Doha were busy establishing strong relations with Damascus. In fact, Syria could be regarded as a laboratory where Turkey's new foreign policy approach and opening to the Middle East were tested. The results were encouraging for Ankara. For example, exports from Turkey to Syria and the total trade volume between the two countries demonstrated that the relations were on the right track. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute, exports from Turkey to Syria jumped from less than $185 million in 2000 to more than $1.8 billion in 2011, an increase of more than 10 times, and the total trade volume jumped from about $730 million to about $2.3 billion in the same period. According to the same source, the tourist movements from Turkey to Syria followed a parallel trajectory, which grew from 122,417 people in 2000 to 974,054 people in 2011, an increase of almost 8 times.

Simultaneously, Doha was building closer economic and political relations with Damascus. According to Gulbrandsen (2010, 51–52), by the time the Doha Agreement between the Lebanese factions was signed in 2008, Qatar was already one of the biggest investors in Syria. For example, the Qatari Diar invested $350 million in Ibn Hani Resort in Latakia, and they established a $5 billion Qatari-Syrian Holding Company to invest in different real estate, tourism, and industrial projects. Gulbrandsen also points out that at the time, the Qatar National Bank (QNB) owned 49% of the Damascus-based Qatar National Bank Syria (QNBS), and that the Syria International Islamic Bank, Syria International Insurance Company, and Syrian-Qatari Takaful Insurance were all operating under the Qatar International Islamic Bank (QIIB). Additionally, thanks to Qatari leadership's foreign policy approach, an extensive network of Qatari diplomats and businesspeople were concurrently making overtures to Syria on many different fronts. Given Iranian influence in Damascus, Doha might have also envisioned that Syria could emerge as another scene where Iran and Doha could cooperate on issues of mutual benefit.

In addition to economy, political/diplomatic relations were also pointing to the strength of Turkey's new foreign policy. In December 2006, during Erdoğan's visit to Damascus, Assad stated, "'Turkey and Syria have common views on regional issues and [Syria] appreciates Turkey's efforts for restoration of peace in the Middle East" (Aras and Karakaya 2008, 510). Additionally, relations gained a new momentum when the French and Syrian presidents and the Qatari Emir and Turkish prime minister met in Damascus in 2008 with a view to improving relations between Beirut and Damascus and enhancing stability and security in the Levant ("Türkiye'ye Minnettar Fransa" 2008). Relations between Turkey, Syria, and Qatar grew so much so that the three countries even held a trilateral meeting in Istanbul in which political leadership from all three countries concurred on almost all of the

regional issues such as ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, finding ways to achieve reconciliation among fighting Palestinian factions, dedication to maintaining political stability and integrity of Iraq, and Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear technology ("Assad, Erdoğan and Sheikh Hamad Meet in Istanbul" 2010).

Having built extensive diplomatic and economic investments as well as personal connections with Bashar Al-Assad, both the Turkish and the Qatari leadership tried to use such influence to expedite democratic reforms and help Syria weather the instability that the Arab Spring would instigate. In an effort to save their mutually beneficial relations with Damascus and trusting their partnership with Assad, both Ankara and Doha urged rapid democratic reforms to satisfy popular demands. However, Damascus chose to ignore the Turkish and Qatari advice. Thus, both Turkish prime minister Erdoğan and Qatari Emir stated their personal disappointment with the Assad regime (Beaumont 2012). Assad obviously had a different view of the uprising and the protestors. He said,

> There can be no let-up for terrorism—it must be hit with an iron fist. The battle with terrorism is a battle for everyone, a national battle, not only the government's battle. . . . This is not a revolution. . . . Is it possible that he is a revolutionary and a traitor at the same time? This is impossible. If there were true revolutionaries, we would be walking together." (Shadid 2012)

Unlike other Arab Spring countries where Ankara did not have much at stake, Syria proved to be the most problematic case. Geopolitically, Turkey's longest land border is with Syria that made it particularly convenient for Ankara to diffuse its economic superiority and political influence into the Middle East through Syria. However, when the protests in Syria got out of control and the Assad regime's response turned more brutal, this long border proved to be largely porous and vulnerable becoming a hotspot for illegal and radical entities to enter Turkey. Decision makers in Ankara knew that Syria was a vital door to the lucrative economic opportunities lying in the Levant and beyond; however, they also did not want to upset the Arab street and turn a blind eye to their legitimate demands for dignity, democracy, and basic human rights. Siding with Assad would mean the destruction of hard-won soft power and disappointment of those who saw Turkey as a democratic alternative for the region's authoritarian regimes. To this backdrop, both Ankara and Doha pursued a substantially proactive position toward the Syrian uprisings and realized their foreign policy decisions and actions in concert with each other by coordinating their political, financial, and logistical support to the Syrian opposition (Öztürk 2011).

SYRIAN QUAGMIRE: CONVERGING GEOPOLITICAL GOALS

With graphic images and stories hitting the mainstream media outlets across the region and the world, Turkish and Qatari leadership evaluated the situation and decided to sever relations with Damascus in March 2012. In the Turkish and Qatari political elites' geopolitical reasoning, turning a blind eye to disproportionate violence and human rights abuses on ordinary protestors was equal to being complicit in Assad regime's crimes against humanity. Both actors severed their diplomatic relations, recognized the opposition, and began to cooperate with the latter to devise strategies to bring down Assad (Beaumont 2012). With the formation of a more unified opposition, Turkish and Qatari practical geopolitical reasoning gave up the idea of convincing Damascus into *political reform* and embraced the objective of *regime change* (Öniş 2012, 50).

As the crisis exacerbated, Ankara and Doha continued to pursue a much proactive and harmonized foreign policy, heightening their diplomatic, logistical, military, and financial cooperation. Diplomatically, both actors assumed an active role in advocating for the Syrian opposition. To this end, Ankara led the efforts to form the Syrian National Council in Istanbul on August 23, 2011 and recognized it as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Meanwhile, Doha championed the Syrian opposition at the Arab League and strove hard to convince the Arab countries into condemning the Assad regime's crimes and pushed for suspending the membership of Damascus in the League. Doha was successful in persuading the member states into such an action in 2011, when a peace proposal was adopted urging Damascus to allow international monitors into the country and introduce basic political reforms. On the international level, Ankara and Doha highlighted the predicament of regular Syrian people who demanded a freer and inclusive political atmosphere. To this end, they showed their support and appreciation of the 2012 Kofi Annan Peace Plan and appealed to the international community to recognize the Syrian National Coalition that was established in Doha on November 10, 2012 (Kadıoğlu 2020, 27).

In November of the same year, in a meeting held in Doha Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu and his Qatari counterpart foreign minister Khalid Al-Attiyah encouraged a diverse group of people constituting the Syrian opposition to work toward unifying their positions and strength and cooperation. The objective of this meeting was to motivate a democratic process within the Syrian opposition by electing a representative board of members that in return would boost the Syrian National Council's international legitimacy and standing as well as morale of its elements fighting in the field. It is noteworthy to state that the Obama administration as well as some

components in the Syrian opposition did not provide sufficient support to this joint effort of Ankara and Doha, arguing that there were too many internal differences and that this would take the opposition nowhere.

Faced with such lack of enthusiasm and lack of proactive action from their allies in the West and in the region, Ankara and Doha worked toward forming the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, also known as the Syrian National Coalition, and recognized it at a meeting in Doha on November 11, 2012. When Turkish foreign minister was asked about the Syrian National Coalition, which was formed to replace the Syrian National Council, he underlined the importance of the democratic processes and the willingness of the Syrian opposition to reconcile their difference through dialogue (Sevil 2012). To the international and regional actors keeping a close eye on the developments in Syria, Ankara's message was clear: what mattered for Turkey was the greater good of the millions of regular Syrians rather than military, diplomatic, or material gain. However, as later developments showed, this message was not interpreted as such by outside audiences.

On the military level, both actors realized everything in their capacity, from providing logistical support to weapons to financial assistance, to facilitate the formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) that worked as the military wing of the SNC. For example, a CIA report dated March 2013 claimed that starting from early 2012, Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia provided 160 cargo flights of military assistance to the Syria rebel groups (Chivers and Schmitt 2013). The same source also stated that Iran and Russia continued to provide larger-scale armaments to the Assad regime. As the Syrian crisis deepened, it assumed an acutely sectarian dimension with multiple proxies vying for power through military involvement. Turkish-Qatari line was closer to the MB elements in the Syrian National Council while the Saudi position was criticized for trying to exclude the MB elements and integrating more Salafists in the Syrian opposition (Oweis 2013). Such differences strengthened the Turkish-Qatari political alignment because both Ankara and Doha were wary of the jihadist elements and more favorable to the Syrian MB that was more tolerant of the diversity of Syria and sympathetic to democratic processes.

Against this context, the Syrian case served as the most crucial dynamic that motivated the Turkish and Qatari foreign policy alignment throughout the Arab Spring. From a geopolitical perspective, the initial resiliency of the Assad regime was made largely possible by Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah that together gave rise to the idea of the Shia Crescent which stretched from Iran into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. Both Ankara and Doha, as well as Saudi Arabia that had traditionally viewed Tehran with suspicion, deliberated that ousting Assad would curtail Iranian regional influence to a

great extent. In fact, this tacit agreement was one of the important reasons why Saudi Arabia was initially working side by side with Turkey and Qatar in Syria.

Turkey and Qatar faced serious challenges in Syria due to various miscalculations. First, despite their economic hardships, intense Russian military involvement in the crisis and Iran's economic, military, and logistical support proved much pivotal than was anticipated. Assad's resilience was in fact possible thanks to the intervention of these regional and international actors. Second, disagreements and even conflicts appeared among the Sunni actors seemingly allied against the Iranian threat in the later stages of the crisis. By the time the Arab Spring was in full steam in North Africa, Turkey and Qatar began to experience disagreements with Saudi Arabia regarding the situation in Syria.

Third, fledgling democratic forces in Syria, both their military wing and regular people on the street, were disappointed with the inactivity and reluctance of the United States and other Western countries in holding the Assad regime accountable for its violence. Eventually, the opposition forces became increasingly more disenchanted with potential Western assistance and acceptance. Fourth, the previous factor paved the ground for radical ideologies to gain momentum and radicalize a considerable majority of the Syrian opposition. Finally, the increasingly harmonious Ankara-Doha axis began to be viewed as a threat by the emerging Riyadh-Abu Dhabi axis (Ulrichsen 2014). This nebulous friction would later grow into a determining factor for the emergent geopolitical reality.

SEARCH FOR A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION AND GEOPOLITICAL REASONING

As the crisis in Syria began to appear on international headlines on a daily basis from 2013 onward, it was getting even more complicated with superpower involvement, inter- and even intra-sectarian complexities, proxy wars, and humanitarian disasters, Turkey and Qatar employed several tools from their practical geopolitical reasoning toolbox. First, the foreign policy elites in both capitals began to challenge the legitimacy of the Assad regime and discredit its capacity to represent and work for the benefit of all Syrians. They argued that Assad was indifferent to the suffering and murder of millions of Syrians and thus any anti-regime formations or efforts were justified. For Ankara and Doha, their initiative taken in this direction would not only help create a more conducive environment for democracy to take hold in Syria, but it would also end the bloodshed. Additionally, raising questions about regime legitimacy was giving morale to the opposition and motivating

regular Syrians opposed to the regime toward positive change rather than inaction.

This position was successful in winning some support from the American administration. For example, at the House Foreign Affairs Committee on December 10, 2013, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that "there is no way, no way possible, that a man who has led a brutal response to his own people can regain legitimacy to govern" ("Syria Peace Talks Open with Angry Exchanges" 2014). This was taken by some to suggest that the American administration was considering the ouster of Assad as the only solution to the crisis. However, despite this the American inaction continued, and the conflict intensified even further leaving no room for a potential diplomatic solution.

Foreign policymakers in both Ankara and Doha continued to speak for the regular Syrian people who had to endure full-scale regime suppression in the form of imprisonment, torture, and death at the hands of Assad regime. Especially the chemical attack on Ghouta, a district near Damascus, on August 21, 2013, demonstrated to the international community the direction things would take if civilians were left to the mercy of the regime. The Turkish government's welcoming attitude toward the refugees and the open-door policy were clear messages to the region and the West that Ankara was prepared to pay a price to save civilians from the inaction of the international community. This was not a meaningless discourse. According to UN data, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey was 148,441 in January 2013, 565,423 in January in 2014, and 2,834,658 in January 2017 ("Registered Syrian Refugees" 2020). According to the same institution, this number stood at around 3,566,000 at the end of 2019. Although Doha did not have to deal with any refugee-related problems thanks to its geographical distance, the Qatari leadership used all means available to host major Syrian opposition figures and urged them to establish a transitional government that could end the plight of the Syrian people.

From a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, by emphasizing the suffering of regular people both at home and on the international arena, Turkish and Qatari leadership presented the complicated conflict in Syria through the prism of the plight of the Syrian people who demanded basic democratic rights and suffering of a people at the hands of a dictator. In fact, these concerns were all mentioned in the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria, also known as Geneva I Conference, which stated that participating countries

> strongly condemn the continued and escalating killing, destruction and human rights abuses. They are deeply concerned at the failure to protect civilians, the intensification of the violence, the potential for even deeper conflict in the

> country and the regional dimensions of the problem. ("Final Communiquéé of the Action Group for Syria" 2012)

Turkish and Qatari positions were not limited to working with the Syrian opposition to oust the Assad regime completely to achieve lasting peace and order in Syria. Prior to these, both countries also worked hard for attaining peace through dialogue and other constructive diplomatic initiatives. For example, Ankara and Doha encouraged the Syrian opposition to attend the Geneva II Conference as a strong and unified political body or else their demands would be completely ignored, and the conflict could intensify (Berber 2013). In order to increase hope for the long-term resolution, both Turkish and Qatari foreign policy elites used all diplomatic channels prior to and during the conference. As a sign of goodwill and constructive diplomacy, Turkey declared that all countries, including Iran, were welcome to participate and find a peaceful resolution to the crisis ("Turkey PM: We expect a result at Geneva II" 2014). Additionally, Turkey put pressure on its Western allies to push for an immediate solution. For example, at a press conference held in Brussels with the Head of the European Parliament in January 2014, Turkish prime minister Erdoğan said:

> We are expecting a result from Geneva II peace talks in which Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu will attend. I think the result will be a vital one. If a result does not appear at the conference, then the participants will also have a responsibility. (Turkey PM: We Expect a Result at Geneva II 2014)

AGGRAVATION OF THE CONFLICT AND DEPICTION OF ASSAD REGIME AS THE ENEMY

As the military and morale superiority were switching from the opposition to the regime forces due to the intervention of Hezbollah fighters and the Iranian logistical assistance in the field, policymakers in Ankara began to shift their practical geopolitical reasoning from the suffering and plight of the ordinary people and civilians to depictions of allies and enemies as well as binary oppositions. Sectarian discourse started to color speeches of policymakers in Ankara as well as their interpretation of the conflict. This was basically a criticism of external support for a (*Alawite*) regime that killed its own (*Sunni*) people. For example, the attitude of the Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, generally regarded as the most important religious and political figure in the higher echelons of the Shiite Iran, toward the human cost of the Syrian civil war was strongly denounced by President Erdoğan: "Why did not you object to the killing of 250,000 people in Syria . . . 250,000 people are

killed, and you are still sending weapons and money to them. Can there be a religious leader like this?" ("Erdoğan'dan Hamaney'e Tepki" 2014).

A similar line of geopolitical reasoning was at work when Erdoğan increased his criticism of Tehran after the Houthis took control of the capital of Yemen. Erdoğan was portraying the crisis through the lenses of enemy-threat perceptions and us-versus-the others categories. Well-aware of the Saudi feelings of apprehension toward Iran's and Tehran's sectarian agenda, Erdoğan was trying to build new bridges with Riyadh by highlighting the similarities between Ankara and Riyadh and that they should cooperate in face of a common threat. Ostracizing Iran's role in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq, Erdoğan said in an interview with France 24,

> Iran's attitude towards the matter is not sincere because they have a sectarian agenda. So, they will want to fill the void that will be created by Daesh (Islamic State) themselves. . . . So, what is their objective? To increase the power of Shi'ite in Iraq. That's what they want. (Pamuk 2015)

Us-versus-them divisions began to dominate the discourse of both the Turkish and Qatari foreign policymakers as the war escalated and the dynamics on the ground turned increasingly more negative for the opposition forces and the Syrian people affected by the war. The rise of DEASH, also known as ISIL or ISIS, from the ashes of al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a local branch of al Qaeda in 2004, and its destructive, barbaric actions especially in Syria and Iraq unsettled the international community. AQI went into oblivion in 2007 after the U.S. troops took control of the region, but it re-emerged in 2011 due to the instability in Iraq and Syria. In other words, the conflict created a safe haven for radical terrorism that later caused Western countries to grow wary of several elements of the Syrian opposition.

In 2014, DAESH announced a caliphate stretching from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala in Iraq and renamed itself as the Islamic State. Naturally, concerns about a potential post-Assad period and the protection of Western interests in the region, most notably the security of Tel Aviv, began to color the international discourse. This came at the expense of the regular Syrian people and the millions of refuges who had to endure torture, mass murder, and displacement at the hands of Assad and DAESH. Finally, frictions among increasingly divided opposition groups in the Syrian arena and their vulnerability to regional and international meddling grew increasingly detrimental to Ankara and Doha's push for positive political change. The rise of DAESH and its barbaric actions deepened rift between the Ankara-Doha axis and the Riyadh-Abu Dhabi axis, and entrenched the involvement of Russia, Iran, and the United States in the quagmire.

The sudden rise of DAESH and Western criticism of the allegedly radical elements in the Syrian opposition pushed both Turkey and Qatar to direct

their criticism toward the Western countries. The most important aspect in their discourse was that the inaction or lack of determination of Western countries in pushing for democracy and democratic institutions in the region paved the way for the brutalities of DAESH. For example, in an interview with CNN's Amanpour, Davutoğlu said:

> We said chemical weapons are the red line. He used chemical weapons. What happened to him? . . . We [international community] didn't do anything . . . everybody was silent. . . . And now, because of these crimes, there was no reaction, these radical organizations—I mean ISIS—misused this atmosphere and told these people the international community doesn't defend you. Nobody defends you. Only I can defend you by my own means. This was the source of ISIS. (Krever 2015)

Turkish foreign policy message was clear in Davutoğlu's speech: Turkey did everything in her capacity to prevent radicalization in the region that was imminent given the incessant terror of the Assad regime on civilians. From a practical geopolitical reasoning standpoint, Turkey was trying to portray to the domestic and international audiences that the Western reluctance was an important reason why the conflict got out of control and the civil war was protracted.

Qatari foreign policy on this issue followed a similar pattern complaining about the Western reluctance to demonstrate determination for helping Syrians to push for their democratic demands. For example, in an interview with CNN in September 2014, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad said:

> The main cause of all this is the regime in Syria, and this regime should be punished. We've been saying that from day one, that if we don't stop the bloodshed in Syria and we don't stop Bashar committing genocide on his own people, this is where we're going to reach. . . . If we think that we're going to get rid of the terrorist movements and leave those regimes doing what—this regime especially, doing what he is doing—then terrorist movements will come back again. (Krever 2014)

From a practical geopolitical reasoning standpoint, Doha justified its foreign policy actions and stated that if the Western countries had showed a more resolute position, the humanitarian and political disaster unfolding in Syria could have been prevented. The Emir stated that DAESH came into being because of repressive regimes such as Assad's and not due to any inherent violence in the religion of Islam. Similarly, in a meeting with President Erdoğan in December 2014, Sheikh Tamim stated "We—Turkey and Qatar—criticized Syrian regime's attitude together. We had already warned that the

violence of the regime in Syria would lead to the rise of more violent organizations" ("Turkey, Qatar Share Concerns in Syria, Iraq" 2014).

Evaluation of the language used throughout the crisis, their prior geopolitical goals, foreign policy decisions, and the actions they took, several motivations appear to explain Turkish and Qatari cooperation on the Syrian crisis. First, both Turkey and Qatar had a genuine interest in helping the regular people in the region in realizing their democratic demands. Democratization of the region would not only yield potentially lucrative economic and financial opportunities but would also bring into power governments that could cooperate with Ankara and Doha much easily on many regional and international issues. That is why both actors based their involvement in the crisis on legitimacy. Assad regime lost its legitimacy to govern and therefore a new government with better democratic credentials needed to take office. Given Turkey's democratic traditions and Qatar's benign state-society relations, this legitimacy justification found significant support domestically.

Second, both Turkey and Qatar were wary of increasing Iranian influence in Syria and thought that Tehran could later challenge the realization of their economic and political goals in Syria. Thus, they wanted to preempt potentially high levels of Iranian influence through cooperating with the majority Sunni opposition that had only nominal representation, if not any, in the higher echelons of decision-making in the Syrian government. However, this did not mean that all Sunnis threw their support behind the opposition or that the Assad regime wanted to exterminate all Sunnis in the country that comprised about three quarters of the total population at the onset of the conflict. Turkish and Qatari decision makers materialized their practical geopolitical reasoning by using sectarian differences and *spatialized* the region through friend-enemy divisions and cooperation-threat categories. Through such simplification of a complex reality on the ground, both actors gathered much needed domestic and, though limited to certain circles, international support. Apart from this, Ankara and Doha also presented themselves as principled actors with a humanistic foreign policy unlike their opponents in the conflict. Overall, although such geopolitical reasoning resonated with domestic audiences and some portions of the Arab street, it fell short of helping Turkey and Qatar attain any tangible results at the international arena.

EGYPT: TURKISH-QATARI MOTIVATION TO COOPERATE WITH MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The most important political convergence Ankara and Doha witnessed was probably their support for the rising influence of non-state actors, that is, Muslim Brotherhood (MB), to the dismay of their neighbors as well as some

members of the international community. This support manifested itself in different forms from stating a willingness to work with MB elements to providing media coverage for their political visions to giving financial assistance to advocating them on international platforms. What started as similar foreign policy outlooks in the early 2000s, transformed swiftly into a *political alignment* after it became clear that the Arab Spring revolutions could be a moment for the Islamist movements, that is, MB.

Although why Turkey and Qatar sided with the MB—a non-state actor, and then the state itself in some of the Arab Spring countries—is still open to debate, there seems to be three possible explanations. First, Ankara and Doha sided with the Islamists because they believed that if given the opportunity, the Islamic movements would embrace democracy and democratic processes. Even Qatar, a monarchy itself, believed that democracy in these countries could serve its own economic and political goals. This was an ideological choice, which could help Ankara and Doha realize their identity-based goals in the region, that is, helping create moderate pro-Islamic democratic governments ("Qatar-Turkey Relations: Political and Economic Rapprochement" 2014). They believed that moderate Islamic governments could improve the lives of millions of people in the region, putting into practice Ak Parti's *transformative power* and *demonstration effect* (Bekaroğlu 2016). In the Turkish and Qatari political reasoning, the fact that the MB as an organization was sympathetic toward and accepting of democratic values singled them out as the strongest candidate for power. Moreover, Ankara and Doha believed that a democratic opposition as opposed to authoritarian regimes would be more desirable in the Western world.

From an altruistic perspective, which is generally not possible in interest-based international relations, helping people live in a better world may make sense. However, this explanation fails to account for different attitudes that Turkey and Qatar adopted for different countries affected by the Arab Spring protests. Why was Turkey initially reluctant to topple the Gadhafi government and why did Turkey and Qatar choose to ignore the uprisings in Bahrain? One explanation might be that if fair elections took place in Bahrain, it was certain that the Shia majority could take control of the government. Neither Doha nor Ankara was willing to irk Riyadh by supporting the uprising in Bahrain, which, if came to fruition, could considerably change the balance of power in the Gulf. Similarly, although it would make sense for Qatar to support pro-Islamic governments, the reason why Qatar was willing to support movements or governments that aimed at bringing democracy remains still wanting a convincing answer.

Second explanation for why Turkey and Qatar supported Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood is that both actors are pragmatic, rather than ideological, in terms of political and economic opportunities; and

thus, they wanted to ride the MB wave to realize their long-term geopolitical and security goals. This seems to be a more cogent explanation than the rest. Having invested in enhancing their soft power through branding and public diplomacy efforts on the ground, both Ankara and Doha wanted to cash in on such assets as quickly as possible. This rush was motivated by the regional power vacuum and lack of potential regional or international competitors, at least at the very outset of the Arab uprisings. In fact, at the initial stages of the Arab Spring, neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt nor Iran seemed to be prepared for or willing to shape the changes. It was mostly Doha, and later Ankara, that seemed more enthusiastic and prepared to influence the newly emerging regional order. Similarly, the United States assumed a favorable position, though sometimes ambivalent, toward the choice of the majority, that is, the MB, which facilitated the position of Ankara and Doha. Although both actors, especially Turkey, were already in a win-win relationship with most Arab Spring countries, they thought that the power vacuum and lack of potential contenders would engender a much better win-win relationship. Moreover, both Ankara and Doha could become central players in the region, because the newly emerging MB governments would be in their economic and financial orbit (Sabry 2013).

Third, Turkish and Qatari foreign policy approaches believed in change and people's choice. Believing in change in accordance with people's choice, both Turkey and Qatar have consistently emphasized that political reforms and economic development were interrelated and that these two concepts together would bring change toward more democracy and socioeconomic development in the region. In this respect, in his 2006 Doha Forum opening speech, Sheikh Hamad stated: "The controversy over reform that has started in the Middle East is 'necessary' and 'must' continue until citizens get their due share of political and economic freedom . . . Establishing the regional security could not be completed unless democratic practice makes progress" ("Sheikh Hamad's Inauguration Speech at the Sixth Doha Forum" 2006).

Another question that arises here is that if both Turkey and Qatar were in favor of change, then why did they choose to side with the Islamists in Arab Spring countries and not with the other more secular factions? The MB elements comprised the largest and the most well-prepared social groups that were pushing for change while the secular groups were generally related to the *ancien régime* in many ways and their support base was minimal. In other words, these other movements did not represent what the majority in these countries wanted. They were generally considered to be in favor of the status quo and wary of change. On the other hand, the MB groups were more vocal about demanding democratic rights, better economic conditions, and basic human rights. In line with their larger foreign policy visions and domestic dynamics, Ankara and Doha put their support behind these groups.

For example, Ankara's pro-secular advice in Cairo in the early days of the MB government and the Turkish government's initial willingness to work with Bashar al-Assad on condition that he realized some political reforms vindicate such a principled approach.

Similarly, the Qatari foreign policy elite had first-hand knowledge about the region either through Qataris living, working, or investing in Arab Spring countries or through the citizens of these countries living, working, or investing in Qatar. This equipped Doha with leverage over prominent individuals from almost all of the Arab Spring countries as well as institutional influence wielded through these people (Ulrichsen 2016, 120–21). Based on this affinity and interaction, Doha knew that Islamist parties had studied issues of unemployment, education, democracy, and other issues that plagued these countries, and that the MB had a plan to solve such deep-rooted socioeconomic ills. To put it in other words, Qatar supported Islamists as they had a plan for tackling social issues and strengthening democracy that could in return help Doha maximize its security and political/diplomatic and economic gains.

On a more personal and social level, Qatari leadership and society were more sympathetic to the MB because of the long history of their connections with al-Qaradawi, an influential, pro-MB cleric based in Doha since the early 1960s. In this regard, Warren (2017) observes,

> While the Brotherhood's emphasis on democratic governance and pursuit of political power may not have taken root among ordinary Qataris, the broader effort to revive Islam and render Islamic law relevant and meaningful to believers' everyday lives has garnered broader support.

In other words, among Qataris there has always been some type of grassroots support for and sympathy to those working to assert the authority of Islam. Against this backdrop, Egypt became another scene for Turkish-Qatari political alignment that was met with fierce overt resistance from the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc as well as Western indifference which Ankara squarely labeled as cooperation with and assistance to the Sisi regime.

EGYPT: A MAJOR SETBACK

As stated earlier, support for non-state actors in the region, namely the MB, emerged as the most eventful political convergence between Turkey and Qatar. Comparable to the Palestinian/Hamas and Syrian cases, Turkey-Qatar bloc advocated for Egyptian people's demand for basic democratic rights from a decades-old authoritarian regime. In fact, democracy was

perhaps the strongest unifier of all the factors that inspired and maintained the protests in Egypt. Thus, revolutionaries on the Tahrir Square were much more diverse than the MB. Similar to other cases, the Islamists were one of the most organized groups in these demonstrations be it on the Tahrir Square or in other parts of Egypt. This was no surprise in light of the fact that Egypt was the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology and its founder Hassan al-Banna was an Egyptian who sought to bring change to the Egyptian society.

Although in decline for a few decades, Egypt, given its vast human resources and relative cultural dominance, played a centrally important role in the Arab world. Geographically, Egypt connects the Arab countries in Levant and both North Africa and Eastern Africa with the Arabian Gulf and enjoys vast strategic importance with its control over the Suez Canal and its proximity to Israel and Saudi Arabia. In light of these, both Turkey and Qatar knew that Cairo was an indispensable partner for regional security and stability as well as for uninterrupted flow of material and ideational interactions among the Muslim nations of the Middle East. Additionally, Ankara and Doha had been advocating *positive change*, *respecting democratic demands* and *socioeconomic development* for quite some time. For example, during his visit to the United States in 2004, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized commitment to democracy, economic development, and peace and stability in the Middle East. He stated:

> Turkey is ready to do its part to promote democratization and facilitate this historical transformation. Turkey can make valuable contributions to this process. . . . My first is to the Muslim world and the Middle Eastern countries. Democracy is not a particular government where only a certain group of a society benefits from. Democracy is universal and it is a requirement of contemporary life. . . . Instead of blaming others for difficulties in their countries, the countries belonging to the Muslim world should take necessary steps. ("Erdoğan Harvard'da Konuştu" 2004)

Developments in Egypt in fact tested the sincerity and validity of both actors' previous claims. Were both actors going to side with an authoritarian, pro-status quo regime or were they going to endorse their own words on different occasions and support popular democratic demands and socioeconomic development that is a must for real democracies to take root? All indicators pointed to the second option.

Having realized the grassroots support for the Muslim Brotherhood from the beginning, Turkish leadership made an immediate and unambiguous call to Hosni Mubarak to respect legitimate political demands of peaceful demonstrators. Emphasizing protestors' legitimate demands and evoking Islamic

sentiments, Prime Minister Erdoğan urged Mubarak to step down in early February 2011:

> We are all mortals. What is immortal is the legacy we leave behind; what is important is to be remembered with respect; it is to be remembered with benediction. We exist for the people. We fulfil our duties for our people. . . . You should listen to the people and their rightful demands. . . . You should take the necessary steps to satisfy the Egyptian people's demands first. . . . Demands for freedom cannot be postponed and cannot be neglected. (Keating 2011)

Democratic elections and the ensuing MB government in Egypt presented Turkey and Qatar with an opportune moment to work together with a cooperative partner in Cairo. This was an important development for Ankara and Doha as the new Egyptian government shared with them almost identical ideational goals with regard to both the region and their home countries. The constituency and leadership of AKP government in Turkey and the first democratically elected Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt came from similar backgrounds and were eager to collaborate on mutual regional issues such as Palestine and the Syrian conflict. For example, at a major AKP congress in Ankara, Morsi said:

> Our common goal is to support other people who are standing up against their administrations or regimes, to support Palestine and the Syrians in their efforts. . . . We call on Russia, China as well as Iran: please review your stance. History will not forgive those who stand together with cruel regimes. ("Seeking to Boost Alliance" 2012)

The message Morsi communicated was similar to what Turkey has long been trying to convey to the regional and international communities. Prime Minister Erdoğan corroborated Morsi's message by stating that Israel applied state terrorism on Palestinians and praised Morsi for his support to Palestinians. He said, "Through Morsi's leadership, our Palestinian brothers in Gaza and in all other Palestinian cities are able to breathe easily" (Seeking to Boost Alliance" 2012). Consensus on regional matters with the largest Arab country meant further indirect political influence and prestige and even potential economic opportunities for Ankara. Additionally, the connections that President Morsi and his administration were developing with other MB members in other Arab countries could open new venues of cooperation. Turkey could rely on Egyptian assistance in reaching and influencing even a larger part of the Arab people across the Middle East, North Africa, and East Africa.

The coming to power of the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt meant political influence and financial potentials for another actor: Qatar. As Egypt

moved further into the sphere of Turkish-Qatari alignment, Doha became more self-confident. This confidence was not solely based on Cairo. Qatari flag was waved by jubilant crowds from Libya to Tunisia to Egypt to Gaza. However, some GCC members, most notably the UAE and KSA, began to feel threatened by political and economic advances Doha was making into the region. Qatari foreign policy moves were perceived as support for Islamists in the region while Doha saw these maneuvers as win-win sovereign decisions and that no other country needed to feel threatened by.

Even before the Egyptian elections were held, when it was becoming obvious that the MB would be an integral component of a democratic government, Ankara began to invest in future relations with Cairo. For example, during Erdoğan's historic visit to Cairo in September 2011, 27 different bilateral agreements in the areas of trade and transport were signed (Aydın-Düzgit 2014). Such relations gained momentum when MB candidate Morsi was declared the winner of the June 2012 elections and continued without losing momentum until President Morsi was ousted in July 2013. For instance, when Cairo was in need of financial assistance, Ankara extended about $2 billion, $1 billion of which was in the form of direct loans and the rest was given as credit for infrastructure projects undertaken by Turkish companies ("İşte Türkiye'nin Mısır'a Yaptığı Yardım" 2013). Mirroring the growing Turkish-Egyptian cooperation, during his visit to Turkey in October 2012, Morsi stated,

> Turkey is my second home country. We have similar views [with Turkey]. Our goal is to ensure that tomorrow is better than today. We want stability, brotherhood to prevail. Competition is not a matter between us. We do not want war or unrest. ("Mursi: Türkiye İkinci Vatanım" 2012)

Similar to Turkey, Qatar gave more than $7.5 billion to Egypt throughout Morsi's presidency in the form of direct financial aid, emergency loan, and liquefied natural gas to shore up the fragile Egyptian economy that had been suffering due to political and structural instabilities (Saleh 2013). According to Law (2013), Qatar gave about $10 billion to the Morsi government to stabilize and revive a collapsing economy and to prevent the collapse of a friendly government. However, neither the Turkish nor the Qatari financial and logistical support was enough for the Morsi-led MB government as the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc harbored zealous anti-MB sentiments and the Western countries were not willing to extend financial or political backing to Morsi as they had concerns about how democratic the Morsi government was.

The Turkish-Qatari alignment experienced its first major setback in Cairo in the summer of 2013 when the Morsi government was ousted by a military coup. Ankara saw the military coup as a detrimental development for the

popular revolutions happening in the Arab world, did not recognize the army takeover, and pressed for reinstallment of Egypt's first democratically elected president. For example, pointing to the issue of legitimacy and causes of radicalization, Turkish foreign minister Davutoğlu said,

> There are two ways to legalize the political system: internal and external legitimacy. The source of internal legitimacy is the people and the sovereignty of the nation. A country should obtain its power from the people if it wants to be stable. If this [taking power from people] ends, the debate over legitimacy starts. This is the main problem in Egypt now. . . . It is not clear where the tendency of radicalization will stop. Therefore, once the Muslim Brotherhood or any other political groups are barred from politics, the results will increase the spiral of violence in the region. ("Turkey Warns of Egypt" 2013)

Although the leaders of the Egyptian military junta argued that they intervened to strengthen democracy and represent every section of the Egyptian society, for the Turkish leadership, they were obviously undemocratic in their approach and insincere in their intentions. For example, in a CNN interview in July 2014, a year after the ouster of Morsi, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that "Sisi is not a democrat . . . he is right now a tyrant" and that "Egypt at this moment does not have a sincere approach to the Palestine issue" ("Turkish PM Erdoğan Sits Down with CNN" 2014). Similarly, Erdoğan expressed his dismay at legitimation of a military coup by the members of the UN in his speech at the General Assembly on September 24, 2014. He said,

> The elected President in Egypt was overthrown by a coup. Thousands of people wanted to defend their electoral choice and were killed. Yet, the United Nations and democratic countries have done nothing but stand by while those events unfolded and the person who conducted the coup was legitimized. ("Turkey, General Debate, 69th Session" 2014)

On several occasions, Prime Minister Erdoğan maintained that a democratically elected government cannot be forced to concede power except defeat in fair elections and that any other domestic or external intervention is illegitimate, and therefore, unacceptable. To this end, Ankara accused the Western countries of having double standards with regard to democracy in Muslim countries ("Batı Kahire'de Sessiz, Kiev'de Atak" 2014). Ankara urged the Western capitals to reject to recognize the military regime and pressurize the military junta to reinstate Morsi. Turkish officials emphasized that Ankara stood by democratic principles and human rights rather than staying neutral and watching the mass murder of thousands of people and elimination of their democratic rights. This depiction of *us* (Turkey and her allies who

defend democracy under all conditions) versus *them* (the Western countries that do not stand up to democracy, cherry-picking sides in relation to interests) became an important theme and tool in Turkey's geopolitical reasoning. For example, Erdoğan said:

> I believe that people who believed in martyrdom will obtain the results of their democratic rights in Egypt sooner or later. The West needs to understand this. If the West wants to pass the democracy test, they need to understand this. However, if they have already decided to fail this test, or if they have decided to question democracy, that is another issue. If Western countries are not sincere about this issue [democracy] and if they don't act sincerely, I believe that democracy will be questioned around the world. And we [Turkey] are included in this. ("Batının Mısır Tavrı" 2013)

Erdoğan also criticized the Gulf financers of the military intervention in Egypt, evidently accusing the Saudi King Abdullah of "collaborating with the military intervention," "behaving hypocritically," and "condoning terrorism" (Ergin 2013). Similarly, on a TV program in August 2013, Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ was also critical of the status quo monarchies for their immediate political and economic assistance to the military regime. He pointed to the fact that the pro-status quo monarchies in the Gulf were afraid of similar popular demands being made in their own countries. He said,

> All the kings (viz. pro-status quo Gulf monarchies) are behind the coup leader Sisi and his friends . . . if democracy, human rights, freedoms, equality and justice can prevail in Egypt; if governments can change upon the will of the people, the monarchies think, their people could also ask for this one day and oust them from power. ("Turkish Government Furious" 2013)

Doha's reaction to the military coup and gradual usurpation of the hard-won democratic rights of regular Egyptian people were not as pronounced and loud as was Ankara's given the fact that there was still confusion about a potential foreign policy change in Doha because Sheikh Hamad abdicated in favor of his son Sheikh Tamim just days before the military coup in Egypt. Additionally, urgent developments with her neighbors were pressurizing Doha to restrain her response. Due to mounting pressure and threats from her neighbors, whose leaderships asserted that Doha's help to Islamists in Arab Spring countries was undermining security and stability in the other Gulf Arab countries (Aras 2014), Sheikh Hamad left office in favor of his son, first time in Arab politics. Shortly after Sheikh Hamad's abdication, the Egyptian army took President Morsi and other notable government officials under custody. To this background, the increasingly aggressive Abu

Dhabi-Riyadh bloc expected a major shift in Qatari foreign policy on issues of mutual concern.

Expectations of the status quo monarchies were not met other than some palliative moves by the Qatari leadership, such as agreeing to expel some MB activists based in Qatar, suspending Sheikh Qaradawi's program titled *Shariah and Life* that aired on Al Jazeera, and toning down the criticism of the military regime in Cairo. Thus, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Manama withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in early March 2014. Faced with such a maneuver, Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the former Qatari ambassador to the UN and United States, said:

> It is unfortunate that some of them [GCC countries] are trying to force Qatar to take certain policies which have nothing to do with the Gulf. . . . The whole issue is really about Sisi. . . . These countries, they are supporting a coup d'état where thousands of Egyptians are being killed in front of the whole world. And they want Qatar to support such a policy. . . . But we will never support any regime which kills its own people. ("Saudi, UAE, Bahrain Withdraw Qatar Envoys" 2014)

Although Qatari officials did not alter their position on the illegitimacy of the military takeover in Egypt, they still issued a perfunctory congratulation for the new President Al-Sisi after he was sworn into office in June 2014. Such a dispassionate congratulation was possibly due to the fact that the elections that brought Sisi to power were reported to be highly rigged according to international observers (Kirkpatrick 2014b). When ambassadors of the status quo monarchies returned to Doha in November 2014, Doha was able to restore some of its previous approach to the military regime in Cairo. For example, Doha kept its doors open to MB members who fled their country fearing persecution by the military regime. Qatari officials were in an extremely difficult situation: on the one hand, they had to satisfy the demands of their neighbors, and on the other, they had to stick to their words on democratic rights and being a shelter for those facing unfair trials, abuse, and even torture.

While commenting on the turmoil in the Middle East during a joint press conference held with Qatar in December 2014, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that "together with Qatar, we always side with oppressed people around the world" ("Erdoğan: We Side with Qatar" 2014). It may be speculated that both countries found something of great value in each other and wanted to capitalize on it in their quest to transform the region and its people to the better, which was a motivation both for the Erdoğan-Davutoğlu and the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa-Hamad bin Jassim duos. Thus, Doha was uneasy about leaving Ankara alone on the international arena in speaking

against brutal persecution of the MB. Such difficulties in the fast-changing political landscape in the Middle East motivated some to argue that this was the end of the Turkish-Qatari political alignment ("Katar-Türkiye İttifakı Bitti" 2014). However, claims of this kind were shown to be too early to be made with more tumultuous future developments that continued to push Ankara and Doha even closer in political, economic, and military arenas.

The status quo monarchies thought that genuine democracy could spell the end of their grip on power, causing insecurity and instability in their countries. This was in stark contrast to Qatar, also a monarchy. However, Qatari leadership was not concerned about such repercussions for two reasons. First, Doha had a sustainable, at least for a foreseeable future, revenue from its vast natural gas resources (Kamrava 2013, 8). Second, the monarchy enjoyed high levels of domestic and international legitimacy (Cafiero 2012) and there has never been an important political opposition in the country, neither from Islamists nor from any home-grown movements (Tok et al. 2016, 17 & 377). According to Ulrichsen (2016, 121), "What set Qatar apart in 2011 was the near-total absence of any sort of political demands, whether organized or informal, emanating from Qatari nationals." Finally, the Qatari leadership has been sympathetic to the Islamists, and also they never had any personal dislike of Islamist movements (Warren 2017), unlike, for example, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) of Abu Dhabi.

The status quo monarchies justified their actions with the allegation that Islamists were radicals who would breed terrorism and instability and that their embrace of democracy was just a mask. To this end, they intervened in Egypt in several ways: from instigating anti-MB sentiment on social media to organizing street protests against the democratically elected government to supplying logistical, economic support to generous and swift financial assistance to the military regime (Kirkpatrick 2015). To counter Abu Dhabi's and Riyadh's narratives and lines of geopolitical reasoning, Ankara and Doha built their own narrative on the theme of legitimacy and explained their support along the lines of popular democratic rights earned through fair and internationally endorsed elections as opposed to a military dictatorship that came to power through anti-democratic means.

On the domestic level, Turkish leadership and pro-government media drew parallels between Turkish experience with past military coups and the human rights abuses and persecutions those military coups caused. To make such analogies stronger and more comprehensible, Turkish officials began to use the *Rabia Sign* that later became a symbol for pro-Morsi demonstrators. Anti-military coup demonstrators used this sign to show their support for democratic rights and protest against the military junta in Cairo. Inspired by a massacre of peaceful anti-coup demonstrators in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square in Nasr City by the military junta, this sign was used by Erdoğan and other

Turkish politicians. Anti-military coup demonstrators in Egypt and across the world, too, used this sign to show their support for democratic rights and to protest the military junta in Cairo. In the following days, Turkish and Qatari people began to display this sign on their social media profiles to commemorate the sacrifices peaceful demonstrators had made. On the international arena, both Al Jazeera and Turkish media, both state-owned and conservative media conglomerates, continued to draw attention to the tribulations that ordinary Egyptians identifying with the MB had to undergo. From a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, through the Rabia Sign, Turkish and Qatari officials were able to simplify a complex reality and the ensuing conflict in simple, memorable terms and images and communicate their messages easily and effectively through adopting this sign, at least at the level of their domestic audiences.

TUNISIA AND LIBYA: VARYING DEGREES OF TURKISH-QATARI COOPERATION

Although the bulk of Turkish and Qatari involvement in the Arab Spring and the resulting accumulation of a wealth of political and diplomatic experience took place predominantly in the Syrian and Egyptian cases, Tunisia and Libya were also important arenas where both actors continued to expand their cooperation. In Tunisia, the Turkish leadership must have watched Ben Ali flee the country with much content because the Ennahda leadership, the country's main Islamist party, had stated its willingness to embrace the Turkish model on several occasions. For example, upon returning from a two-decade exile, Ghannouchi, the co-founder and intellectual leader of the Ennahda Party said, "Why do people want to compare me to Bin Laden or Khomeini, when I am closer to Erdoğan?" ("Islamist Leader Ghannouchi Returns" 2011). Turkish leadership had similar favorable views on Tunisian Islamists and Tunisia's democratic transition. For instance, during his visit to Tunisia almost nine months after the fall of Ben Ali, Erdoğan stated, "The most important thing of all and Tunisia will prove this, Islam and democracy can exist side by side. . . . Turkey, as a country which is 99 percent Muslim, does this comfortably, we do not have any difficulty" ("Turkey's Erdoğan Makes Case for Islam" 2011).

Qatar also enjoyed good relations with Ennahda leaders who were thankful for Al Jazeera's stance on the transition to democracy and overwhelmingly supportive coverage of the events unfolding throughout the revolution (Ayaad 2014, 44). Financially, Qatar has been a major donor to Tunisia since the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime. For instance, Doha pledged up to $1.25 billion during the *Tunisia 2020 Conference* in November 2016 that was a

significantly higher figure than the contributions of the members of the anti-Qatari bloc ("Qatar Emir Pledges" 2016). Although Ankara did not enjoy vast financial capabilities that Doha held at the time, the Turkish government showed its willingness to support Tunisia both during the revolution and in the post-revolution periods because for Turkey Tunisia was "a source of inspiration as a perceived success story in terms of its democratic, economic, and social reform experience" and had "strong historical, cultural, and social ties" with the former (Algan 2014, 75).

Another Arab Spring country that turned into a major scene of Turkish-Qatari political alignment and a hotbed for unfolding inter-axes rivalry was Libya. Qatar has been actively involved in the Libyan revolution from the very beginning of the crisis. Through Al Jazeera, Doha advocated the rights and freedom of those who rose up against Gaddafi's autocratic rule. Moreover, being the first Arab country to officially recognize the National Transitional Council (NTC), Qatar demonstrated vehement support for the UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which urged the creation of no-fly zones for protecting the civilians. In fact, Ulrichsen (2016, 123) argues that Qatari political and military activism in favor of the anti-Gaddafi forces was instrumental in NATO's intermittent intervention that spanned a period of about six months. In all of this activism, Doha relied on a discourse of human rights and democratic expression that increased its visibility in the international arena as a responsible actor and which brought Doha closer to the international community that was involved in the crisis. Additionally, Doha's deep pockets played a significant role in the passing of the resolution on the creation of no-fly zones in Libya.

The saga of the Libyan uprising and the ensuing civil war was viewed as an important instigator of Doha's initial divergence from the rest of the status quo countries, especially Abu Dhabi (Cafiero and Wagner 2015). According to El-Gamaty (2017), while Doha generally opted for providing political and financial support to UN-backed elements, the UAE chose to assert its position mostly by military means because for Abu Dhabi the priority was to demote and postpone democracy in Libya and elsewhere in the Arab Spring countries as much as possible. In fact, according to Kümek (2020, 257), Libya has become a scene of proxy wars between two small states, that is, Qatar and the UAE, because they wanted to steer the regional developments to their own benefit even if this required using military means. For example, in an interview with Reuters in 2011, Abdulla Shamia, the person in charge of the economy of the revolutionaries, said: "Qatar, it's time to convey our gratitude to them. They really helped us a lot. It's a channel for transportation, for help, for everything" (Zhdannikov et al. 2011).

According to the same source, even before NATO and other international actors decided to overthrow Gaddafi, Qatar had swiftly moved onto help

the rebels by providing them with the much-needed fuel, food, medical, and telecommunications equipment. In May 2011, Doha pledged to provide $400–$500 million in cash to the rebels, the highest amount given by any other country. However, as the civil war intensified, discontent with ambitious Qatari role was harshly criticized by important figures such as Ali Tarhouni, the acting oil and finance minister and deputy chief of the NTC's executive committee and Mustapha Abdel-Jalil, the chairman of the NTC that together brought the end of disproportional Qatari influence on Libyan politics (Ulrichsen 2016, 127).

Initially, Ankara was hesitant to support any position against Gaddafi given Turkey's economic interests in Libya as well as thousands of Turkish citizens in there. By the time the Libyan revolution was in full swing, Turkish construction, energy, and engineering investments had already reached a staggering amount of $20 billion in the country (Erdogan 2016, 32). Additionally, there were thousands of Turkish citizens working in these landmark projects. Therefore, economic and humanitarian constraints made it difficult for Turkish foreign policy elite to show a swift reaction. In the coming days, Turkey quickly became supportive of the revolutionaries who wanted to force Gaddafi to leave office and began to contribute to the NATO initiative. However, similar to the inception of the Libyan protests after the NATO operations against Gaddafi and the subsequent fall of the regime in October 2011, Ankara once more was less involved in the Libyan scene until 2014. However, on account of several domestic and pressing regional geopolitical dynamics and calculations, Ankara once again decided to enhance its activism therein.

Essentially both Doha and Ankara provided support in varying nature and degrees to the revolutionaries in Tunisia and Libya. Similar to the Syrian and Egyptian cases, both actors expressed their desire to see positive change and democratic institutions take root in these strategically important North African countries (Öniş 2014, 205). Ankara and Doha were certain that Islamists were the strongest candidates for power and that democratic Tunisian and Libyan governments would enhance Turkish-Qatari soft-power capabilities as well as present them with a wealth of economic, political, and diplomatic opportunities. In later stages of the conflict, especially as the crisis evolved into a civil war, the main Turkish motivator in Libya was Turkey's geostrategic calculations in East Mediterranean, which will be analyzed in chapter 7. This was evidenced in Turkey's sudden change of opinion and willingness to help the Tripoli government after it agreed to buy Turkish drones and weaponry, and after the Libyan Bank agreed to sign a cooperation agreement with Turkey (Harchaoui 2020, 5–6). In later stages of the conflict, the main Turkish motivator in Libya was strategic calculations in East Mediterranean, which will be analyzed in chapter 7. However, ideational

factors, that is, the support for the MB ideology, continued to serve as a geopolitical tool for Ankara.

Eventually, neither Turkey nor Qatar was able to realize its short-term objectives in neither country. Tunisia had a strong opposition and the Ghannouchi's MB government had to give compromises to secular parties on many issues, relations with perceivably Islamist Turkey and Qatar not being an exception. In Libya, discontent about growing Qatari influence and lack of a powerfully institutionalized Islamist politics, which was a consequence of decades of strict political surveillance of Gaddafi regime, precluded Qatar from wielding further influence. As for Turkey, Ankara's intensified involvement in Libyan civil war and political events had to wait until 2019 and 2020 when other geopolitical developments started to pressurize Turkish foreign policymakers.

From a practical geopolitical reasoning perspective, Turkey and Qatar presented both Tunisia and Libya as part of the geography where rights and freedoms of individuals were withheld by authoritarian regimes. Legitimacy, democracy, and respecting basic human rights were the most common themes Turkish and Qatari foreign policymakers used when justifying their involvement and intervention in these places. For Qatar, both peoples were Arab brethren while for Turkey both peoples were part of the Ottoman Empire, and for both actors Tunisia and Libya were Muslim countries whose citizens needed help and protection. Although there was domestic opposition to the involvement of Turkey and Qatar in these places as to overstretching of already declining financial resources, especially in the case of Turkey, such opposition was challenged with references to religion and nationalism. For promoting their position on the international arena, Turkey and Qatar focused on human rights, democracy, and democratic processes. However, developments in Libya and the nature, pace, and type of Turkish and Qatari involvement therein, whether solo actions or coordinated interventions, did not seem to concur with both countries' discourse on supporting democracy and helping to bring positive change to the region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Turkey, a robust middle power with an extensive web of regional and international political objectives, and Qatar, a small state with strong economic power but potential insecurities, aspired to realize their geopolitical goals by drawing much closer to each other throughout the Arab Spring. The new geopolitical reality that was unfolding with the protests, elections, and counterrevolutions diversified opportunities whereby Ankara and Doha cooperated. These developments also tested the growing

political, economic, and military connections both actors were forging along the way.

The first major Arab Spring theater for Ankara and Doha was Syria where geopolitical aspirations, material interests, and a discourse on democracy and basic human rights motivated both countries to side with the protestors and provide them with political, economic, and logistical support as well as opportunities for international recognition. Syria gradually turned into a quagmire for Ankara, damaging its hard-won soft-power capabilities, its sincerity regarding zero problems with neighbors, and confidence in its earnestness about fighting against international terrorism. Once a highly acclaimed policy, zero problems with neighbors was in tatters because Ankara chose to swiftly securitize its regional foreign policy to the dislike and detriment of its neighbors. Retrospectively, the Syrian quagmire, given its increasingly sectarian nature, nullified Turkey's claims to be an equidistant, trustable regional actor and paved the way for frictions with Iran and Iraq at varying degrees.

Another major scene was Egypt where forces of counterrevolution invalidated Turkish-Qatari gains, pushing Cairo into the opposing political camp. Therefore, Egypt was a colossal setback for both Ankara and Doha. In addition, for many secular and liberal Arabs, Turkey's position on the Egyptian crisis and its apparently unconditional support for the MB undermined its potential as a successful role model that could engage differing layers of society, from ultra-seculars to Islamists, into a peaceful democracy.

Although on a smaller scale, Tunisia and Libya were the other Arab Spring countries where Turkish-Qatari cooperation unfolded. In Tunisia, for example, Ankara emerged as a source of inspiration for the Ennahda leadership while Doha supplied generous financial contributions and media support. In Libya, Qatar emerged as an important actor long before Turkey appeared; however, in later stages Ankara became a more central actor while Doha's influence diminished vis-à-vis its other security priorities that Qatar had to deal with. Libya turned out to be the first signal flare of the upcoming frictions and hostilities between major Sunni countries along ideological lines. In other words, the fracture between Qatar and some of the other GCC member states, that is, the UAE and KSA, began to be more visible in the Libyan case due to their increasingly more assertive foreign policy and use of military means via their regional proxies.

The same was true for Turkey. Libya would become an arena of Abu Dhabi-Ankara rivalry and military showdown in the coming years. For Abu Dhabi, this rivalry was more of an ideological rift whereas it was more of nationalist, economic, and geopolitical concern for Turkey in light of Ankara's objectives in the Mediterranean. For Turkey, support for Islamist MB elements in Libya was more tactical rather than being the primary motive. Although no major frictions with pro-status quo monarchies

in Tunisia took place, there was an ongoing rivalry between the Ankara-Doha bloc and Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc for drawing Tunisian politicians to their camp and weakening the opposite side.

Overall, the unfolding events throughout the Arab Spring became a theater for the Turkish-Qatari relations to evolve into a *political alignment*. The initial stages of this alignment did not experience any setbacks and progressed rather quickly and intensely. This was clearly visible in the earlier stages of the Libyan case, the Syrian landscape that turned swiftly against the Assad regime, and the relatively quick election of the Egyptian MB government. However, this was to change with Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia propping up the Assad regime, the military coup in Egypt ousting the Morsi government, and the involvement of General Khalifa Haftar in the Libyan civil war that were clearly the most significant obstacles hindering Turkish and Qatari geopolitical goals mentioned in this chapter.

In order to maintain domestic support for their policies in a tumultuous region as well as for championing democracy and human rights more effectively, both capitals employed a particular practical geopolitical reasoning in their foreign policy. This reasoning included ideals such as championing democracy and human rights, having and preserving legitimacy in governing a people, active involvement in crises for the benefit of masses, and more interventionist tools such as using force to expedite establishment of democratic institutions. To this end, both actors used diplomatic, economic, and logistical support as well as media influence to simplify, present, justify, and legitimize their foreign policy choices. In general, developments such as the political and economic difficulties Ankara and Doha encountered, security challenges such as the rise of DAESH, and growing differences between the Ankara-Doha bloc and Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc began to harm Turkish and Qatari acquisitions. More specifically, the growing insecurity of Turkey in face of resurgent separatist terrorism due to the power vacuum in Northern Syria, growing power of pro-Haftar forces and their attacks on the UN-recognized GNA of Libya, and the mounting security pressure on Doha from its neighbors caused unexpected setbacks and failures in this period.

NOTE

1. See Erdogan's Davos speech at: http://www.eutopic.lautre.net/coordination/spip.php?article3976.

Chapter 7

Qatari Blockade

From Political Alignment to Strategic Partners (2017–2022)

INTRODUCTION

The Turkey-Qatar bloc suffered several setbacks due to counterrevolutions incited/encouraged and/or funded by the Emirati-Saudi bloc. Although, Ankara and Doha have nominal or almost no influence over developments in the Syrian, Egyptian, or Tunisian cases anymore, they continued to cooperate in Libya, especially in the military field in this period (Ozer 2020). Anxious about the fast-changing regional geopolitical landscape, the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh duo collaborated with the remnants of the old authoritarian regimes as well as other international actors to push for their own political aspirations in the Arab Spring countries sending generally optimistic protest movements into oblivion.

Planting more authoritarian regimes, such as Sisi in Egypt, helping Assad to hold onto power, bringing into office an avowed anti-Islamist, that is, General Haftar in Tobruk as the head of the Libyan National Army in 2019, and funding mercenarie's from different countries, such as the Russian Wagner Group, were some of the consequences of Emirati-Saudi efforts to reverse the winds of positive change that started with the Arab Spring protests. The ideological lines that deepened Ankara's and Doha's divergent foreign policies vis-à-vis their regional adversaries served to engender a political alignment between Turkey and Qatar. This alignment was soon to be tested by other major economic, diplomatic, political, military, and security developments that would transform it into a *strategic partnership*.[1]

Counterrevolutions and anti-democratic elements supported and funded by Abu Dhabi and Riyadh throughout the Arab Spring meant weakening of the Turkish-Qatari gains and further isolation of both capitals on the regional political arena. Both Turkey's laudable *zero problems with neighbors* and

Qatar's prominent *equidistant foreign policy* that were successful in mediation and conflict resolution were in tatters. Considering the Islamist movements and their supporters as existential threats to their dynastic rule, the Saudi-Emirati bloc wanted to nip the MB ideology in bud wherever they emerged before it posed any threat to them on their own soil.

Consequently, Turkey and Qatar have become the target of the Saudi-Emirati duo that tried to harm their economies, torpedo their diplomatic relations, and reverse their economic initiatives and gains as well as disrupt their geopolitical interests in Arab Spring countries and the Horn of Africa. The Blockade on Qatar was a striking case whereby the duo targeted the Turkish-Qatari alignment and their geopolitical objectives in the Middle East. However, after years of wrangling and the eventual reconciliation that followed, Turkish-Qatari relations and the strategic partnership they have forged over the years seems stronger than before. At the root of this special partnership are expedience, growing economic interactions, similar ideological stances, converging geopolitical goals, and powerful chemistry between the Turkish president and the Qatari Emir.

ORIGINS OF A CRISIS

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain, the members of the GCC, have experienced various diplomatic and organizational hurdles as well as border disputes since the establishment of the GCC on May 25, 1981. Such intra-GCC diplomatic disagreements have become the new normal especially throughout the onset and advancement of the Arab Spring because the pro-democracy protests sent alarming shock waves to pro-status quo states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. However, none of these previous frictions or fractures could have paralleled a tumultuous political decision taken by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt on June 5, 2017 whereby diplomatic ties with Doha were severed, and an air, maritime, and land blockade was placed on the State of Qatar. These four countries, who named themselves as the Anti-Terror Quartet, more commonly known as the Anti-Qatar bloc, also started an economic and diplomatic boycott of Doha.

The justification of the blockade was that Doha was supporting terrorism in the GCC region as well as the Arab world by providing financial, military, and media assistance to outlawed organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood which was branded as a terrorist group in Egypt in December 2013 and in the UAE in November 2014. The anti-Qatar bloc argued that Doha's irresponsible support of terrorism caused regional instability and that if it is not checked, the whole region could be in flames (Milton-Edwards 2020, 38). The anti-Qatar bloc wanted Doha to unconditionally abide by a list of demands. The list

included cutting relations with Iran, closing Al Jazeera TV station, removing Turkish troops from Qatari soil, severing all ties with the MB, and complying with monthly external checks. Doha contemplated that accepting these demands would be equal to the relinquishment of its sovereignty as an independent state, and thus refused to abide by the stipulations in the document.

Although those unfamiliar with the regional dynamics may assume that the Gulf crisis emerged due to Doha's hyperactive foreign policy prior to and throughout the Arab Spring protests, the planting of the seeds of dispute that would culminate in the current crisis can be traced back to the early 1990s (Al-Ansari et al. 2021, 25). This is when the father of the current Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, came to power with a bloodless palace coup in June 1995. Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia was not enthusiastic to accept Sheikh Hamad's term because, unlike his father, he was a brave ruler who advocated an independent Qatari foreign policy that diverged from other GCC states in terms of Doha's relations with Iran, Iraq, and Israel ("Emir of Qatar Deposed" 1995).

In light of these tense relations with Doha from the beginning, there were at least one foiled coup attempt to oust Sheikh Hamad from power that Doha claimed to be orchestrated and facilitated by Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Manama. The foiled coup attempt was dubbed *Operation Abu Ali* and took place in February 1996 about a year after Sheikh Hamad assumed office. According to Paul Barril, a former French Army commander in charge of the attempted military coup, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain backed this coup plot ("Qatar 1996 Coup Plot" 2018). Cairo was also included in the coup plot in that the military weapons were transferred through Egypt. Patrick N. Theros, the then U.S. ambassador to Qatar, stated that the countries behind the putsch were trying to oust Sheikh Hamad because they were worried that Doha's quest for an independent foreign policy would pose a serious challenge to their rule ("Al Jazeera Documents" 2018).

Another milestone event that prepared the ground for the current Gulf crisis occurred in 2002 when Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Qatar complaining that Al Jazeera broadcasts were critical of Riyadh and its founders and that the channel was becoming a tool for promoting interest inimical to the Arabs. In addition, Riyadh accused Doha of following an independent foreign policy pointing to the latter's willingness to establish ties with Israel and to offer military facilities to Washington ("Saudi Ambassador Returns to Qatar" 2008). This row between the two countries emerged due to a June 25 live debate on Al Jazeera where Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's Middle East Peace Initiative was accused of betraying the Palestinian cause ("Saudi Arabia Recalls Ambassador" 2002). The Saudi ambassador returned to Doha after five years when Al Jazeera seemed to have toned down its coverage of Saudi affairs (Kirkpatrick 2014a).

Similarly, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014 claiming that Qatar's non-conformist foreign policy orientation was seeking to strengthen Islamist groups in the region (Hellyer 2014) that was weakening the anti-Qatar bloc's domestic security ("Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain End Rift" 2014). In other words, what Al-Saud, Al-Nahyan, and Al-Khalifa dynasties saw as an existential threat was in fact considered as accumulation of friends and sympathizers for Al-Thani's maverick foreign policy maneuvers. As the ambassadors of three of Qatar's GCC partners were not in Doha for about eight months and crisis was brewing, Doha gave some minor concessions and pledged to respond to the Saudi and Emirati request to reconsider its foreign policy approach regarding the MB.

The relations between Qatar and its GCC neighbors, especially with that of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, did not improve even after the return of ambassadors in late 2014. The Saudis and Emiratis continued to accuse Qatar of funding terrorist organizations. Changing U.S. position on the MB was not easy because it was neither in the terror list of the United States nor any other Western country. Therefore, the anti-Qatar bloc had to find something else. This time they began to exaggerate the news that Qatari officials paid a hefty amount of ransom, approximately $1 billion, in April 2017, to some groups and individuals in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, who/which are labeled as terrorists by the United States, in order to release 28 royal family members who were kidnapped in Iraq during a hunting party in December 2015 (Wood 2018). The anti-Qatar bloc might have seen this issue as a strong case that would further tilt the American administration as well as the public opinion to their advantage because it involved organizations that were listed as terrorists by Washington.

Immediately after such accusations, another shock hit Qatar's relationship with the Saudi-Emirati duo. In the early hours of May 24, 2017, Qatar's official news agency, Qatar News Agency (QNA), reported that Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani was quoted to praise the Islamist groups Hamas, Hezbollah, and the MB as well as Iran that Riyadh sees as its archenemy (Pinnell 2018). The news disappeared from the website immediately after being posted and the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied such a speech ever taking place. Doha also stated that the QNA was hacked and that it was under a cyber-attack. However, in the Saudi and Emirati media, most notably Al-Arabiya and Sky News Arabia, the quotes were attributed to Sheikh Tamim and they accused Qatar of destabilizing regional security by funding extremist ideologies and advancing Iranian agenda ("Qatar State News Agency's Hacking" 2018).

According to the Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatar was targeted by an orchestrated smearing campaign prior to the advent of the crisis. He argued that 13 anti-Qatar articles were published in several Western newspapers and media outlets in

the weeks prior to the hacking operation ("Qatar's Foreign Minister: A campaign in America" 2017). With Saudi troops stationed right at the other side of the Qatari border and a fully orchestrated media attack both on the regional and the international arena through allegedly paid media mercenaries and bot armies, the Saudi-led bloc seemed resolved to impose a total surrender of Qatari authorities.

Although several investigations into the hacking both by Qatar and the United States pointed to Saudi Arabia and the UAE as culprits, they both categorically denied the accusations. Yet another incident in the cyberwar that further aggravated the relationship between Qatar and her Arab neighbors happened in the same month: the email account of Yousef Al-Otaiba, Emirati ambassador to the United States, was hacked. The leaked emails alleged that Al-Otaiba insulted the Saudi leaders with profane language; urged decision makers in Abu Dhabi to influence and benefit from the potential change of leadership in Riyadh (Ahmed 2017); and that Al-Otaiba had intricate dark relationships that he used to influence policymakers and lobbyists in Washington (Grim 2017). The Saudi-Emirati bloc considered leaked email of Al-Otaiba as a provocation orchestrated by Qatar ("UAE Envoy's Hacked Emails" 2017).

Against such course of events since the second half of the 1990s, the blockade on Qatar was not unexpected. What was different this time was that the anti-Qatar bloc clearly demanded an end to Qatar's cooperation with Turkey. The list of demands handed over to Doha by the blockading countries as an ultimatum was interpreted to be a serious warning to Doha's divergent foreign policy (Berni 2021, 98). At least five of these 13 demands aimed at, either directly or indirectly, harnessing Qatari foreign policy and controlling its sovereignty while others were targeting to render Doha insecure, both militarily and economically.

As a matter of fact, with such demands, Qatari leadership was asked to relinquish all rights of being an independent and sovereign country. Ulrichsen (2018, 13) argues, "Some of the demands were so sweeping that they would effectively have turned Qatar into a vassal state stripped of any meaningful sovereignty." Along these lines, at an advisory Shura Council meeting, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim said, "We succeeded . . . in maintaining the independence of our political decisions and facing attempts to turn us into a vassal state" ("Qatar, Turkey to Scale up Cooperation" 2019). The anti-Qatar bloc dictated Doha to sever ties with Iran and organizations like the MB and close Al Jazeera TV station. More importantly, Doha was commanded to "immediately shut down the Turkish military base" and "halt military cooperation with Turkey inside of Qatar" ("Arab States Issue 13 Demands" 2017). According to the same source above, the list of demands boils down to a counterrevolution, an "attack on the Arab Spring and what's left of it."

From the perspective of the international law, according to Falk (2018), blockade was not a *crisis*, which is a neutral term, but more like a *geopolitical crime* wherein Qatar was the victim while the opposite side was the perpetrator. Viewing the list of demands as an outright attack on its sovereignty, Doha refused to surrender. Qatari officials stated that the demands—including closing the broadcast channel Al Jazeera and ejecting Turkish troops based in Qatar—were so draconian that they appeared written to be rejected (Wintour 2017a).

Qatar accused Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt of "clear aggression" and stated that the accusations directed at Doha "were clearly designed to create anti-Qatar sentiment in the West" (Aboulenein and Strohecker 2017). Unequivocally emphasizing openness to constructive dialogue and the international law, Qatari government rejected allegations against Doha. For instance, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim stated, "We are open to dialogue to find solutions to lingering problems within the framework of respect for the sovereignty and will of each state as mutual undertakings and joint commitments binding all" ("Qatar Emir Ready" 2017). Similarly, Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani stated, "We believe that the world is not governed by ultimatums, we believe that the world is governed by the international law, it is governed by an order that does not allow large countries to bully small countries" ("Qatar FM: The List of Demands" 2017).

Once the initial shock and confusion cleared away, Qatari authorities strove to keep the higher moral ground as the victim and capitalize on a discourse of injustice they were facing. Qatari Foreign Ministry stated, "Qatar has a strong belief in the fairness of its position in this crisis and its adherence to dialogue based on mutual respect, on the basis of its principles and values," and in contrast to the anti-Qatari bloc's approach, Doha asked its citizens, residents, and the media to avoid any action or discourse that could be interpreted as abuse of Gulf symbols ("Qatar Highly Appreciates" 2017). According to Berni (2021, 98–99), "Qatar responded by highlighting the significance of the societal factors at the discourse level and stressing upon the injustice, inequality of demands, and lack of efforts for a diplomatic dialogue."

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE GULF CRISIS

Most countries that have close relations with the Gulf showed a clear reaction to the crisis. Initially, the U.S. foreign policy seemed to lack coordination because it appeared that President Trump blessed the anti-Qatari bloc's decision. Just one day after the blockade started Trump tweeted that Qatar needed to stop funding extremist ideology, a statement that sung the same tune as Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. He further added "The nation of Qatar, unfortunately, has historically been a funder of terrorism at a very high level" (Holland

and Torbati 2017). In contrast, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson strove to ease the heightening tensions and stated that the blockade was hurting ordinary people, impairing business dealings, and harming the battle against ISIS. Later in the same month, probably pointing to the exaggerated nature of demands by the anti-Qatar bloc, Tillerson urged that a list of "clearly articulated" and "reasonable and actionable" demands would help resolve the crisis ("After Pointed Criticism, Tillerson Urges Gulf" 2017).

Almost a week after the crisis started, the UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson called on Qatar to alleviate her rivals' concerns by stopping funding of extremist ideologies while at the same time urging the anti-Qatar bloc to ease its blockade and resolve the issue through mediation and dialogue (Wintour 2017). The UK tried to approach the situation equidistantly from both sides of the crisis given her stakes in the region and the huge investments of Gulf countries in the UK. During an official visit to the Gulf capitals a month after the blockade started, German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel stated that Berlin was trying to identify the core of the problem without taking any sides and advocated a solution-oriented approach to the crisis. To this end, Foreign Minister Gabriel praised mediation efforts by Kuwait and the United States (Al-Masri et al. 2017).

Similarly, on a four-day mediation mission to the Gulf, the French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian expressed Paris' intention to become a mediation facilitator for resolving the crisis. He stated, "France is talking to all these countries to help in the search for a solution" and advised "dialog and calm" to Gulf capitals ("France Wants Mediator Role" 2017). Given Beijing's *Comprehensive Strategic Partnership* with Riyadh and *Strategic Partnership* with Doha, China, too, took a low-profile, equidistant stance on the crisis, as was evident in Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Hua Chunying's answer to a question on the crisis: "China hopes that the countries involved can resolve their differences through negotiation, remain united and together promote stability in the region" (Wood 2017).

On the opposite side of the Gulf waters, Tehran acted cautiously in both interpreting and handling the Gulf crisis. The Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said, "siege of Qatar is unacceptable" ("Iran's Rouhani Backs Qatar" 2017), while Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif stated "The situation in the Gulf region is very unpredictable. We don't need any more turmoil" (Von Hein 2017), urging both sides to settle their problems through dialogue. Some ultraconservative elements within the Iranian government may have contemplated, given Iran's heightened tensions with the United States and the Saudi-Emirati bloc, that the blockade presented a great opportunity for bringing Doha closer to the orbit of Tehran (Cafiero and Karasik 2017b) and for breaking the already fragile GCC unity. Considering its mostly warm relations with Doha over the years, Tehran stepped in to provide fresh food

supplies that Doha urgently needed and also allowed Qatari planes to use its airspace. Doha, in return, and perhaps in utter defiance against her neighbor's efforts to curb its independent foreign policy, restored full diplomatic relations with Tehran and both actors pledged to develop bilateral relations and enhance cooperation over a number of issues of common concern ("Qatar Restores Diplomatic Ties" 2017).

Generally being an outlier in GCC politics, Muscat was not willing to immerse herself yet in another crisis with her immediate neighbors leaving Kuwait as the only potential mediator between the conflicting GCC sides (Shaibany and Khan 2017). Muscat has generally had warm relations with Tehran, as evidenced in her mediation efforts that culminated in the Iranian Nuclear Deal with the West. Additionally, Omani leadership has had profound political differences and experienced frictions with both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi over the years (Bayoumy and Stewart 2016). Therefore, Muscat remained largely supportive of Kuwait's mediation efforts and strove not to pick sides in the conflict (Cafiero and Karasik 2017a).

Kuwait emerged as a respected mediator from the beginning of the blockade for most of the international political actors with stakes in the crisis (Azzam and Harb 2018). In fact, for Fraihat (2020, 80), Kuwait enjoyed vast amounts of legitimacy in mediating in this crisis given the fact that "Kuwait is a founding member of the GCC, and its Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is highly respected by all GCC heads of states, which gives him the moral power to apply pressure when needed." Kuwaiti Emir urged both sides to refrain from taking any steps that might aggravate the crisis that was officially welcomed by the Qatari side. Although Kuwait has done much shuttle diplomacy between the two sides, her efforts fell short of bringing an immediate end to the current stalemate because the crisis involved too many conflicting sides with significant interests and that the young leadership of Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Doha had a much different style than their predecessors (Lucas 2017, 31–32). Kuwait's was actively involved in mediation efforts because, in addition to the legitimacy justification mentioned above, the strongest and the most organized MB elements happen to be in Kuwaiti politics and thus Kuwait was worried that it would become the next target of the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh duo had Qatar succumbed to their pressure. With helping to achieve an effective solution to the crisis, Kuwait could preempt such a scenario from taking place.

TURKISH REACTION TO THE BLOCKADE

As the anti-Qatari bloc announced its diplomatic, political, and economic blockade on Qatar, Turkey did not rush to take sides and instead called for

dialogue. Such reaction was expected given both actors' relations examined in previous chapters. Also, Turkish policymakers were reluctant to further sour relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Aslan 2017). President Erdoğan consulted with Qatari, Russian, Kuwaiti, and Saudi Arabian leadership regarding the blockade and expressed Turkey's support for regional peace and stability and urged an immediate de-escalation of tensions ("Erdoğan'dan Katar Trafiği" 2017). Similarly, Turkish foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated, "Dialogue should continue under all circumstances so that existing problems might be solved in a peaceful way" ("Inter-Arab Gulf Crisis" 2017). In the same speech, Turkish deputy prime minister Numan Kurtulmuş said, "The Middle East is not at a point where it can endure a new crisis." He further stated that Ankara's effort to resolve the crisis was important in overcoming the mounting tensions.

Ankara was fully aware that taking swift action was crucial in such crises. To this end, evaluating the seriousness of the situation, Ankara quit the initial equidistant discourse adopted not to alienate any of the actors and made an obvious pro-Qatari turn. First, President Erdoğan referred to the isolation of Qatar as *inhumane* and *anti-Islamic* and compared it to a *death sentence* ("Turkey's Erdoğan Decries" 2017). On another occasion, President Erdoğan ostracized those who criticized Ankara's support to Doha. In the same speech, President Erdoğan declared that Turkey does not believe in the allegations against Qatar: "There are those who are uncomfortable with us standing by our Qatari brothers, providing them with food. . . . Until now I have not seen Qatar give support to terror." Giving hints to Turkey's long-term approach to the crisis, he also added, "I'm sorry, we will continue to give Qatar every kind of support" (Butler 2017).

Turkish support for Doha was not just on the rhetorical level. Immediately after the crisis, the Turkish Parliament ratified two treaties, originally signed on April 28, 2016, to send troops to Qatar and train Qatari forces ("Katar Tezkeresi" 2017). In fact, the Turkish military base in Qatar had become operational approximately one year before the blockade started ("Seeing Shared Threats" 2016). However, the abrupt nature of the crisis motivated both capitals to speed up the actual ratification and implementation of the military agreements and protocols. Later developments and maneuvers from Abu Dhabi and Riyadh demonstrated the significance of fast-tracking the whole process. For example, according to Filkins from *The New Yorker* (2018), right after Riyadh and Abu Dhabi decided to place a blockade on Doha, they were making plans to invade Qatar, an allegation attributed to officials from the U.S. intelligence community and the State Department, which was intercepted by Tillerson.

Moreover, according to Filkins (2018), such an invasion plan had to be shelved due to Ankara's quick military maneuvers and sending of a new

detachment of soldiers to Qatar. In other words, Turkey's timely reaction preempted Riyadh's threat of a military invasion forcing Riyadh to back down. Such potential military action, which was dropped due to several considerations, is also hinted at by Ulrichsen (2018, 13) who says, "In Qatar, the President's [Trump's] tweets were seen to give a 'green light' for whatever follow-up—including military action—the 'Quartet' may have been planning, and Qatar went on a state of high alert and defense readiness in response." Ankara's refusal to allow a larger nation to coerce a smaller one into submission, more than anything else, seems to have reinforced the ties between the former and Qatar in this critical juncture in history.

Apart from the historical and geopolitical significance it has for Turkey, Turkish foreign policy elite justified the objective of sending troops to Qatar as strengthening regional peace, security, and stability through military cooperation (Paksoy 2018). This cooperation would include training, conducting joint exercises, and expanding military trade. Ankara kept a low-profile language and did not want to cause any provocation against other GCC countries. However, the Saudi-Emirati bloc continued to accuse Ankara of sending troops to Qatar in total defiance against Qatar's immediate neighbors. In the following days, President Erdoğan had to state,

> We did not sign this defense industry agreement with Qatar today. This has been a process of 2 to 3 years. It is only that we could get to realize the ratification in our parliament today. . . . We will continue to stand for the oppressed. ("Katarlı Kardeşlerimizi Yalnız Bırakmayacağız" 2017)

According to Baskan and Pala (2020, 4), through this speech, Turkey made it clear that Ankara would not leave Qatar to its own fate and will do whatever necessary to assist its friendly neighbor in times of hardship. In addition to Turkey's geopolitical goals and calculations, what Erdoğan was perhaps doing with these words was standing by a brotherly country and its leadership that showed unreserved support for and solidarity with the legitimate Turkish government in face of the failed July 15 military coup attempt perpetrated by FETÖ (Fethullahist Terrorist Organization). According to several sources, Qatar's Emir sent a 150-strong elite unit of Qatari special forces to Turkey for close protection of President Erdoğan on the night of the coup attempt (Girit 2017). Additionally, Sheikh Tamim was the first foreign leader to telephone Erdoğan and offer him Qatar's full support in face of the coup attempt. Qatar's reaction to the incident deepened the personal rapport between the two leaders and the higher echelons of the state apparatus paving the way for significant improvement in relations.

FROM POLITICAL ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

As Erdoğan suggested, the slowly but steadily growing Turkish-Qatari military alignment was not a new development. Since Qatar's acceptance of NATO's Istanbul Initiative after NATO's 2004 Istanbul Summit and the GCC's announcement of Turkey as a non-member Strategic Dialogue Partner in 2008, Ankara devised novel ways to enhance mutual military relations and Qatar reciprocated in kind. One noteworthy action of solidarity from the Qatari side was its unequivocal support to Ankara in its fight against PKK. When the Arab League wanted to declare its condemnation of Turkish military operations into Northern Iraq, adding an annotation to the declaration, Qatar stated, "Qatar is in solidarity with Turkey in her initiatives taken to protect its borders" (Göksedef 2020). Similarly, Turkish support to Qatar was duly reciprocated throughout the Olive Branch operation by the Qatari Defense Minister Al-Attiyah who on several occasions stated that Doha was always by Turkey's side in its fight against terrorism in Northern Syria ("Katar'dan Zeytin Dalı Harekatı'na Destek" 2018).

Another arena of growing relations was in defense industry and security procurement contracts signed with Doha especially after 2016. For example, in order to train about 1,000 Qatari military pilots annually, Havelsan, a Turkish military software company, built and sent a full-flight simulator (AgustaWestland AW139 FMS) to the Al-Udeid military base toward the end of 2016 (Bekdil 2017). In December 2017, Qatar inked another deal with Nurol Makina, a well-known Turkish company specializing in defense vehicle production, for 400 Ejder Yalcin 4X4 armored combat vehicles and 100 NMS 4X4 vehicles built for carrying weapons systems and reconnaissance missions (Yildirim 2017). Additionally, Qatar's Armed Forces Industry ordered 85 wheeled armored vehicles from another Turkish defense company, BMC, a manufacturer of armored vehicles ("BMC'ye Katarlı Ortak" 2014) as well as 50 KIRPI 4x4 MRAPs and 35 Amazon 4x4 multipurpose armored vehicles (Yildirim 2018).

Moreover, Baykar, one of the pioneering Turkish defense industries specializing in the making of unmanned drone systems, inked an agreement to sell six Bayraktar TB2 drones to Qatar during the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) 2018. The delivery of these drones along with three land control systems and the training of 55 Qatari military personnel were completed in 2019, and by April 2020 the drones entered the Qatari military inventory and began to be used operationally (Alemdar 2020). In February 2019, Turkish Defense Ministry also revealed that Ankara reached an agreement to sell about 25 T-155 Fırtına Howitzers to Doha ("Türkiye Katar'a 'Fırtına Obüsü' Satacak" 2019). In

March 2019, Doha expressed interest in purchasing approximately 100 Altay third-generation battle tanks that are manufactured by top Turkish defense industries such as Roketsan, Aselsan, Havelsan, and the Machinery and Chemical Industry Institute ("Qatar Signs Deal" 2019).

Privatization of the tank palette factory in Sakarya, a province close to Istanbul, in December 2018 stands out as another major instance of strengthening Turkish-Qatari military relations. According to government sources, the factory was *leased* to BMC, 49% of which belongs to Qatar, for a period of 25 years. Announcing the benefits this transaction was going to bring, President Erdoğan said, "We expect this facility to provide an added value of US$5 billion annually to our country. Apart from our own needs, we plan to export about US$1 billion to different countries, especially Qatar" (Bakeer 2019). Such intensifying military collaboration and alignment brought in economic benefits for Turkey stimulating the overall Turkish defense export figures. In fact, defense industry exports to Qatar witnessed an unprecedented increase of 225% in 2019 compared to 2018, the highest increase in a single sector in 2019 (Yildirim 2019).

Being encircled by adverse powers in its immediate region and faced with an all-out blockade, Doha interpreted Turkey's show of solidarity with great appreciation. This was evident on two planes: the popular and the governmental. On the popular level the blockade left an almost irreparable damage on the psyche of Qataris and their perception toward the Brotherhood with GCC countries and the Gulf [Khaleeji] identity (Mitchell 2021, 935). On the governmental level, Doha's willingness to further bilateral ties especially in the military sphere demonstrated Qatari officials' recognition of Turkey's show of solidarity. For instance, right after the ratification of the military treaties, initially, three Turkish Armed forces personnel set foot in Qatar ("İkinci Türk Askeri Grubu Katar'da" 2017). This was followed by the arrival of 5 armored vehicles and 23 Turkish Army personnel at the Tariq bin Ziyad military base in Doha on June 22, 2017 ("TSK: 23 Türk Askeri" 2017).

According to the terms of the abovementioned agreement that was ratified, about 3,000 Turkish troops, air and naval units and special forces, could be hosted on the base that could even be used for protecting Qatar from external threats because, allegedly, there is a *casus foederis* (case for the alliance) clause in the agreement (Cochrane 2016). Although the current number of troops is not revealed, the Turkish military base has been growing steadily and this number could expand to 5,000, which is the maximum number the base could accommodate. Given such swift and intense developments in the military sphere in a brief time, it was not a surprise for Ankara and Doha that the anti-Qatar bloc openly requested the closure of the Tariq bin Ziyad military base.

Besides the defense industry procurements and military agreements, top Turkish and Qatari military officials met many times to advance their military collaboration. One result of these meetings was military exercises and drills. For example, in August 2017, Turkish and Qatari forces conducted a joint *rapid response* maritime exercise ("Qatar and Turkey Conclude Naval Exercise" 2017). Concurrently, the Emiri Land Forces, one of Qatar's highly skilled forces, and the Turkish forces conducted the *Iron Shield* military drill ("Iron Shield Military Exercise Ends" 2017), and the Qatari Naval Forces paid a visit to the Turkish battleship TCG *Gökova* which was visiting Qatar at the time for joint maritime exercises ("Turkey, Qatar to Conduct Joint Naval Exercise" 2017). This was followed by the Qatar-Turkish Combined Joint Force Command organized the Al-Udeid 2019 Live-Fire Field Exercise. In an effort to give this bilateral relation some depth, Turkish and Qatari land and naval forces participated in a military drill with U.S. forces that lasted from April 27 to April 30, 2019 ("Turkish, US, Qatari Forces" 2019).

Visits, agreements, and signing of protocols between both actors continued in full speed following the start of the blockade. For example, in November 2017, Turkish-built Agusta Helicopter Simulation Flight Training Center opened in Qatar with the objective of training Qatar Emiri Air Force personnel ("QEAF opens Agusta" 2017). In the same month, President Erdoğan reiterated Turkey's commitment to Qatar's security saying, "To be with our brothers and friends at difficult times is one of the greatest inheritances that our ancestors have left us. . . . Moreover, throughout history we have not hesitated to give this support whatever the cost is" ("President Erdoğan Visits" 2017). In October 2018, at a Qatar University conference on the impact of the blockade, Al-Attiyah, Qatari Minister of State for Defense Affairs, stated, "Two factors, one domestic and one external played a role in the failure of the blockade on Qatar. Domestically, Qatari people stood united by their Emir. The external factor was that brotherly country Turkey sided with Qatar" ("Türkiye'nin Desteği" 2018).

At about the same time, Muhsin Dere, the Turkish deputy national defense minister, who participated in the MILIPOL Qatar 2018, a high-profile security exhibition held in Doha, stated, "We are enhancing [bilateral] cooperation in the field of defense manufacturing and working on forging partnerships between Qatari and Turkish defense manufacturing companies" (Yusuf 2018). Another high-level visit from the Turkish side by Hulusi Akar, the minister of National Defense, took place on December 18, 2018, the National Day of Qatar where Turkish-made military equipment and vehicles were showcased in the parades ("Milli Savunma Bakanı Akar" 2018).

Finally, military cooperation between Turkey and Qatar reached a higher level on March 2, 2021, when Ankara and Doha signed a Technical Regulation on the Deployment of Qatar Military Aircraft Personnel in Turkey. This

five-year agreement, approved by the Turkish Parliament on June 15, 2021, is part of the military cooperation agreement with Qatar that was originally signed on May 23, 2007. With this agreement, Qatar gained authorization to deploy some 36 warplanes, transporters, and 250 military personnel on Turkish soil and enjoy permanent diplomatic clearance in Turkish airspace as well. More specifically, it is projected that "some 12 Qatari Rafale fighters and 10 Mirage 2000 warplanes, along with C-130J Super Hercules and C-17 transporters, will be deployed in Turkey under the agreement" (Kahwaji 2021). Both actors are projected to benefit from the agreement. For Qatar, a tiny country with an extremely limited airspace, basing its warplanes in a friendly and geographically close country and being able to train its personnel are of great significance. For Turkey, this agreement with an oil- and gas-rich country with massive financial resources is projected to increase its geostrategic significance. Overall, Qatari willingness to deploy many aircraft and to train its personnel in Turkey are a clear sign that the strategic partnership between the two actors, especially in the area of military, will deepen even further.

Overall, Turkish-Qatari strategic partnership in the military field was augmented and fast-tracked not just by the GCC crisis, that is, the blockade of Qatar, but also by gradual securitization of Ankara's foreign policy, both regionally and domestically. While securitization of foreign and domestic policy requires creating new alliances and/or strengthening already existing ones on the one hand, it necessitates creating some enemies and adversaries on the other. Qatar was willing to fill the gap where Turkey was becoming further isolated from the regional politics. According to Bakeer (2021), the new presidential system in Turkey, which sped up decision-making, the growing Turkish defense industry, and the professionalism that the Turkish Armed Forces gained through several missions it was involved in in different locations were other important factors in this emergent strategic partnership.

EXPANDING FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The unpredictable atmosphere ushered by the blockade on Qatar opened further opportunities for enhancing economic and financial relations between Ankara and Doha. For example, as can be seen in the figures in table 7.1, Turkish-Qatari trade volume increased by about 352% from 2017 to 2020 reaching approximately $1.4 billion. While Turkish exports to several neighboring and other major markets were decreasing due to political/diplomatic frictions, exports to Qatar showed stable increase.

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs figures demonstrate that the worth of contracts that Turkish companies operating in Qatar signed reached $18

Table 7.1 Turkish-Qatari Trade Volumes from 2017 to 2020

	2017	*2018*	*2019*	*2020*
Turkish Exports to Qatar	790	1,244	1,293	1,037
Qatari Exports to Turkey	294	391	311	302
Total Trade Volume	1,084	1,635	1,604	1,339

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021 (million USD, figures rounded up).

billion in this period ("Turkey-Qatar Economic and Trade Relations" nd.). Similarly, following the blockade, Qatar imported three times more Turkish products compared to earlier months, mainly in the form of foodstuffs such as dairy, poultry, and fruit that were sent by cargo planes and ships ("Turkish Exports to Qatar Triple" 2017). Due to the increasing popularity of consumer goods made in Turkey, "Expo Turkey by Qatar" was held in Doha in early 2020 with the participation of more than 150 Turkish companies. In brief, Turkey's response to and diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis was received warmly by the Qatari government and people.

Such increase was also reflected in the official agreements and protocols signed, as evidenced in the meetings of the Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee that was founded in 2014 with the aim of improving relations in all areas, enhancing solidarity and cooperation based on mutual interests, and working together to strengthen regional peace and stability. For example, at the end of the 3rd Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee summit in Doha in November 2017, 10 agreements were signed in the industries of banking, security, communications, military, defense, cyber security, and so on which shows that the bilateral relations reached the level of a comprehensive strategic cooperation ("Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee" 2019).

In fact, on November 28, 2017, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim tweeted his contentment about Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee in the following words: "We're proud of the successes of the Qatar-Turkey partnership, which have accumulated since its establishment in 2014. With the signing of new agreements, further horizons for collaboration and fraternity between the countries are opening up" ("Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee" 2019). The committee met in Ankara in 2018 for its 4th summit, in Doha in 2019 for its 5th summit, and in Istanbul in 2020 for its 6th summit, and the total of bilateral agreements signed reached 62 and joint communiques reached 6 (Tosun 2020).

After the last summit, on November 26, 2020, President Erdoğan, tweeted

> Today, with my dear brother Tamim Bin Hamad, the Emir of Qatar, and his committee, we had some highly fruitful meetings and signed an array of agreements. We will continue our solidarity in every field with the Qatari people,

whom we are connected to with strong bonds of love and with whom we are an inseparable whole.

Similar warm exchanges were also made during the 7th meeting of the Turkey-Qatar High Strategic Committee in Doha on December 7, 2021 and a total of 15 agreements in different areas were signed, which show the point the relations had reached. Brotherhood, fraternity, solidarity, bonds of love, and indivisible unity between the two countries were concepts used frequently by both leaderships to highlight what lied beneath such cordial relations.

Qatar was not just on the receiving end of this relationship. Doha became a lifeline to stabilizing Turkish financial markets throughout the currency crisis that put extra pressure on the former's government. On August 15, 2018, the Qatari Emir visited Ankara and announced an injection of $15 billion aid to Turkish economy in the form of investments, deposits, and economic projects (Parasie 2018). This visit was also carrying symbolic significance in that it was the first foreign government leadership visiting Ankara following the stand-off between Turkey and the then American president Trump that had sent shock waves across the Turkish financial markets. This time, it was President Erdoğan who extended the heartfelt appreciation of the Turkish people to the Qatari leadership and Qataris (Dudley 2018).

As the downturn in Turkish economy continued, the Turkish and Qatari central banks announced a currency swap agreement to the tune of $3 billion in order to provide liquidity and promote financial stability in Turkish markets ("Turkey Says Central Bank Swap Deal" 2018). As the Turkish financial markets were still haunted by the financial aftershocks, this swap amount was increased to $5 billion on November 25, 2019 and to $15 billion on May 20, 2020 (Dilek 2020). With these extensive financial pledges first made in August 2018 and increased at least two times until 2020, Qatar became the second largest investor in Turkey. According to Qatari sources, Qatar invested about $20 billion in Turkey ("Turkey and Qatar" 2018) though this figure does not match with official Turkish numbers in certain respects ("İşte Katar'ın Türkiye Yatırımları" 2017).

These economic and financial interactions also meant growing figures of Qatari FDI in Turkey. For example, according to figures in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's *World Investment Report 2020*, despite an overall decline of 19% compared to 2019, with its investment of $200 million in Istanbul Stock Exchange, Qatar became the second largest source of FDI in Turkey in 2020 (Tuncer 2021). Additionally, Qatari interest in purchasing property in Turkey increased. For example, while only 277 real estate units were sold to Qataris in 2015, this figure reached 305 in 2017 and 764 in 2018 (Habibi 2019, 11). Economic and financial cooperation in different areas mentioned above was naturally reflected in the increasing

number of flights between Turkey and Qatar ("Turkey Sees Significant Rise" 2019) as well as the number of tourists. For example, according to Turkish Statistical Institute's tourism figures, Qatari tourists to Turkey continuously increased from 48,784 in 2017 to 96,327 in 2018 to 108,496 in 2019.

The expanding economic and financial cooperation was also visible in the energy sector. Ankara has persistently tried to lower its heavy dependence on the Russian and Iranian natural gas. Expanding geopolitical rivalries with Russia and Iran on the one hand and closer relations with natural gas-rich Qatar on the other facilitated this. While Qatar was not even in Turkey's energy portfolio less than a decade ago, LNG imports from Qatar comprised 28.72% of the total gas imports to Turkey in 2020 ("Turkey's Purchase of Russian Gas Drops" 2020). According to the same source, Qatar has in fact become the second largest gas exporter to Turkey, only second to Azerbaijan, meeting about 30% of Turkish natural gas needs in the second half of 2020. Friendly relations with Qatar and geopolitical calculations with Azerbaijan diminished Russian and Iranian share in Turkish natural gas consumption.

These economic activities and the increasing visibility of Qatar in Turkey attracted an increasingly bigger number of Turkish people to Qatar, from small business owners to skilled workers to students to academics. This cooperation continued with language centers for promoting both actors' languages ("Qatar University and Turcology Cooperation Protocol" 2015), with academics visiting different institutions in both countries, and with other investments such as the Turkish Hospital in Qatar (Saleem 2017). Such interactions brought about plans to open a Turkish School as well as a Turkish Language Center in Doha. In fact, a state-run Turkish school opened in Doha in December 2016 that was a strong demonstration of the fact that the increasing relations were not just on the level of governments but also on the level of regular people. On January 20, 2021, Turkish and Qatari higher education institutions signed agreements to enhance academic cooperation ("QU Signs MoU with Istanbul Technical University" 2021) as well as increase scholarship opportunities for Turkish students in Doha (Youssef 2021). Moreover, as per an agreement signed on March 2, 2021 between Turkish and Qatari governments, which came into effect after it was published in the Official Gazette on June 25, 2021, Qatari military students were granted the right to study medicine at Turkish universities. Finally, Turkish Maarif Foundation and Qatar University reached an agreement in July 2021 to give full scholarship to 150 Turkish students to study at Qatar University over a period of 5 years.

Overall, the Turkish-Qatari strategic partnership continued in full speed despite setbacks and several bumps on the way, as evidenced in growing cooperation in the sectors of economy and finance. Not just during the military coup attempt in Turkey but also throughout the financial and economic turmoil the former was undergoing, Qatar pitched in and showed solidarity as

a trustable partner. The Turkish-Qatari political alignment that evolved into strategic cooperation in this period also paved the way for a more comprehensive and strategic penetration of Qatari investment in Turkey, from defense industry to banking to finance. Concurrently, Turkey's political and economic relations with the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc continued its nosedive rendering Turkey and Qatar increasingly more vulnerable in face of these two actors' regional and global maneuvers.

THE BLOCKADE AND THE TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS

Turkish-Saudi relations were already on a collision course when the blockade on Qatar was announced on June 5, 2017. However, despite Turkey's somewhat restrained language in the first days of the crisis, the relations took another nosedive when Turkey's position on Doha's dispute with her neighbors became increasingly more pro-Qatari in the following days (Başkan 2019, 97). Quite expectedly given Ankara's security sensitivities, Riyadh responded by throwing support behind the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat or PYD), an offshoot of PKK, which are both considered as terrorist organizations by Turkey. According to Bilgen (2017), Saudi intelligence arranged a meeting between PYD, PKK, and the United States on June 10, 2017, in which the American, Saudi, and Egyptian representatives praised PYD's efforts against DAESH and promised that a certain amount of the oil money coming from Northern Syria would go to the PYD. While Saudi Arabia and other representatives claimed that this meeting and the financial help were about PYD's fight against ISIS, Turkey evaluated this move as an outright hostility against her regional interests.

Another shock came few months later, in October 2017, when Saudi Arabian and American officials visited Northern Syria where PYD was active against ISIS and stated that they would reconstruct the city after the civil war ("Saudi Minister Visits North Syria" 2017). Clearly, the Saudis were after sending an unwelcome message to Ankara. As the ongoing conflict in Northern Syria intensified, Riyadh tried to attract other regional actors into PYD-controlled areas to increase pressure on Turkey to force Ankara to quit its adamantly pro-change and pro-Qatari position. To this end, along with officials from the UAE, Jordan, and the United States, Saudi representatives met with PYD officials in Northern Syria on May 30, 2018 and Riyadh promised a financial aid worth of $100 million to PYD allegedly for stabilization projects in PYD-controlled areas (Wilgenburg 2018). This 100 million dollars' worth of financial promise was delivered approximately

a month after the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul.

The tense political atmosphere between the two actors fed the mistrust and hostility further throughout the blockade. While Riyadh was trying to take advantage of Turkey's security vulnerabilities and sensitivities regarding the potentially re-emerging terrorist activities in its south, Turkey ventured into capitalizing on the cold-blooded murder of Jamal Khashoggi in its own territory, which was diplomatically against international conventions and treaties. Turkey opted for piecemeal approach to revealing the truth about the assassination, probably to corner Riyadh, and use the available information about the murder to prevent potentially hostile Saudi moves.

In an opinion piece President Erdoğan wrote for the *Washington Post*, he put the spotlight on Saudi officials and their failure to ensure justice. He said,

> The near-complete lack of transparency surrounding the trial [in Saudi Arabia], the lack of public access to hearings and the allegation that some of Khashoggi's murderers enjoy de facto freedom all fail to meet the international community's expectations and tarnish the image of Saudi Arabia—something that Turkey, as its friend and ally, does not desire. (Erdoğan 2019)

On July 3, 2020, Turkey also put 20 Saudi nationals on trial in absentia for being involved in the murder of Khashoggi. Seeing the Western intolerance toward such an act, Ankara reminded of this incident several times before the international audience thereby embarrassing and pressurizing Saudi Crown Prince Muhammed bin Salman (MbS) and Saudi officials.

Riyadh responded with enhancing support to the fiercely anti-Turkish General Haftar in Libya to cripple Turkish influence and geopolitical objectives there. Similarly, Riyadh also began a semi-official boycott of Turkish products with a view to hurting Ankara economically and ruining its already fragile economy. In October 2020, the head of Saudi Arabia's non-governmental chamber of commerce urged Saudis to boycott Turkish products because the former felt that the Turkish government was hostile to Saudi leadership, the country, and the people (Soylu 2020). Although limited in their impact, such punitive Saudi measures hurt the already fragile Turkish economy that was dependent on exports and FDI. Ankara's assertive foreign policy in alignment with Doha and the growing Turkish-Qatari strategic partnership particularly in security and military fields worried Riyadh because such cooperation, in addition to Arab Spring–related Saudi geopolitical objectives, could distance Doha even further from the fold of the GCC. Additionally, an effective Turkish-Qatari partnership could embolden other smaller GCC members to establish similar alliances that could weaken Saudi authority within the GCC.

Overall, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia knew that neither of them could achieve their foreign policy objectives without the cooperation from the other side. However, the geopolitical winds of Arab Spring and contesting objectives of both actors were in favor of the competition side of the international relations pendulum rather than the cooperation side. However, things could take a rather different direction in the days ahead. In fact, changing winds and shifting sands in a geopolitically volatile region and increasing domestic pressures have recently been pushing both sides, particularly Turkey, to normalize relations. Therefore, Turkey took positive initiatives in that direction trying to cozy up to Riyadh. Moreover, although relations with the UAE continued to be highly tense until the summer of 2021, there appears to be a visible improvement there as well evidenced in both actors' initiatives for a rapprochement. Perhaps cozying up to Riyadh can prove to be just a strategy to distance Saudi Arabia from the perceived influence of the UAE's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) and find an opening to mend relations. Although it is difficult to predict how developments will unfold in the future in the Middle East where even mere days can change things dramatically, it is evident that currently competition is slowly but surely giving way to cooperation.

THE BLOCKADE AND THE TURKISH-EMIRATI RELATIONS: INTENSIFYING RIVALRY

It is no secret that the Emirati leadership, particularly the comparatively more secular-minded MbZ, has approached the Turkish government led by Erdoğan with suspicion. MbZ was worried that the unfolding events in the region was strengthening both Sunni and Shiite Islamists gradually planting more repressive regimes and leaving no room for countries like his own to thrive. According to Worth (2020), MbZ was deeply antagonistic to the mentality that paved the way for an event like the 9/11 terrorist attacks and was worried about the repercussions of such an event taking place in his own country or the region.

Likewise, the Turkish foreign policy elite believed that the anti-Islamist mentality in Abu Dhabi and its excessive influence on MbS were at the root of minor regional frictions turning into deep-running, tectonic fractures and stifling of enthusiasm for positive change. This mutual mistrust deepened as Ankara threw its support behind MB elements in the Arab Spring countries and as Abu Dhabi became to be perceived by Turkish officials and religious-conservative public opinion as anti-Islamist, pro-authoritarian, and an accomplice to allegedly destructive Western designs on the region. Such depictions of Abu Dhabi appeared more and more on mouthpiece media outlets of the

Turkish government. Such mutually negative perceptions fed one another and fault lines between both actors began to widen pushing Abu Dhabi and Riyadh to one side and Ankara and Doha to the other side of the regional continuum.

For example, Ankara claimed on several occasions that the UAE was involved in funding the July 15, 2016 aborted military coup and that Abu Dhabi was lobbying for anti-Turkish sentiment, smearing Turkey on the UAE-owned media such as Sky News and Al Arabiya and funding organizations branded as terrorist by Turkey. For example, referring to the purported Emirati involvement in the military coup of 2016, Erdoğan stated,

> We know very well who in the Gulf rejoiced when there was a coup attempt in Turkey. . . . We know very well who spent that night and how. What happened in Turkey? What is happening? Is it over? Is he [Erdoğan] being ousted? Has the coup reached a conclusion or is it about to reach? We know very well those who followed such news. We know very well how much money was spent [funding the coup]. ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Körfez Ülkelerine Seslendi" 2017; Sharma 2017)

To this backdrop, President Erdoğan seemed to exclude Abu Dhabi from his tour of the Gulf in February 2017 when he visited Riyadh, Manama, and Doha. Similarly, Turkey's involvement in the blockade and deployment of Turkish troops to Qatar right after the crisis started infuriated Abu Dhabi even further. Therefore, the Emirati foreign policymakers brought tensions to the Turkish border and began to provide diplomatic and financial support to the PYD in Northern Syria, in coordination with the Saudis. Abu Dhabi was stepping up its anti-Turkish campaign in Northern Syria by stoking Ankara's security sensitives in an effort to counter the latter in its backyard and distract its attention from other vital areas for the UAE such as Libya and Eastern Africa. Emphasizing the rhetoric on the prominent role the Kurdish People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel or YPG) forces, considered as terrorist by Ankara, played in defeating ISIS in Syria, the Emirati leadership expressed solidarity and provided financial and diplomatic backing to them.

In January 2018, Emirati officials ostracized Turkey for Operation Olive Branch and accused Ankara of destabilizing the Arab countries through military interventions. This was followed by several meetings the Emirati officials, along with Saudis and Egyptians, held with anti-Turkish groups as well as generous financial assistance handed to them by these countries. For Ankara, Abu Dhabi's pro-YPG activism and overtures to the Assad regime were moves to constrain Turkish maneuvers and undermine its border security. In fact, on August 29, 2017, the Emirati foreign minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan asked Turkey and Iran to exit Syria and quit

their colonial activities otherwise face confrontation with the UAE, not just in Syria but in other places as well (Browning 2017).

In another diplomatic spat in December 2017, connecting a historical accusation with Turkey's current involvement in the Arab affairs, Emirati foreign minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan shared a tweet from an Iraqi user who said that Fahreddin Pasha, an Ottoman general charged with defending the Holy city of Medina during World War I, stole valuable Arab heritage and took them to Istanbul. As a matter of fact, this accusation was an indirect way of denouncing Ankara's assertive foreign policy regarding Arab matters that clashed with that of Abu Dhabi's. President Erdoğan replied with a similar tone and accused Emirati foreign minister's ancestors of being a Western stooge. Additionally, he implicitly accused the Emirati government of working together with foreign powers plotting against the Muslims. He said,

> You, pathetic man, who is slandering us, where were your ancestors then? The things Fahreddin Pasha, who defended Medina for 2 years and 7 months, did and his resistance is laudable. We know what those, who attack this distinguished personality of our history and his glorious resistance he showed in Medina, are doing today and what they are up to, with whom and where. ("Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan" 2017)

The bitter rivalry and occasional hostility between Turkey and the UAE played out in Africa and Palestine as well. For example, in Sudan, Ankara-Doha duo was vying for expansion of their military security and defense capabilities vis-à-vis Abu Dhabi-Cairo-Riyadh trio, which had geopolitical aspirations in this centrally important African Arab country. When Turkey and Sudan inked an agreement in December 2017 "to build a dock to maintain civilian and military vessels" on the island of Suakin, a strategically important Red Sea port, the trio was alarmed, for they were suspicious of an ensuing military cooperation between the two countries in the following years (Kucukgocmen and Abdelaziz 2017). For the trio, this could be a grave blow to Arab security and could enhance the Turkish-Qatari footprint in their next door. Concurrently, the conflict had already been spilling into Eastern Africa with the opening of a Turkish military base in Somalia in September 2017 which is the largest overseas military base that has been built by Turkey ("Turkey Opens Biggest Overseas Military Base" 2017), which occurred about two years after the first batch of Turkish soldiers were deployed to the Tariq bin Ziyad military base in Qatar (Yüksel and Tekineş 2021, 18).

Equally important was the diplomatic struggle taking place regarding Palestinian factions. In an effort to break the monopoly of influence Ankara

and Doha wielded on Hamas as well as reclaim their image of defenders of the Palestinian cause, which is perhaps the most important Arab issue with much regional and international backing from Muslim masses, Abu Dhabi and Cairo tried to bring Fatah and Hamas to the negotiation table. For Ankara, this was an obvious plot to make Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan, an adamantly pro-Emirati and anti-MB personality, the main political leader in Palestinian politics. According to Turkey's Anadolu Agency, Dahlan is considered a terrorist by Ankara and he was accused of collaborating with the July 15 military coup plotters trying to overthrow the UN-recognized Libyan government and participating in plots to kill Hamas leaders ("Dahlan: UAE Agent" 2019).

LIBYA: ANOTHER SCENE OF FIERCE COMPETITION

If the ousting of Morsi in Egypt was the first major confrontation between Turkey and the UAE, then the protraction of civil war in Libya turned out to be the most heated theater of score settling between these ambitious actors who were trying to project power and demonstrate military muscle wherever they could. Ankara's calculations in Libya have become more intricate over the years making Turkey gradually more involved in the crisis. The first sign of more involvement came in the second half of 2014 when General Haftar's intervention began to threaten the Libyan factions that Turkey was loosely supporting. The second sign came when the Turkish foreign policy-makers and secular-nationalist circles in the Turkish army grew concerned that Egypt, General Haftar, Cyprus, Israel, and Greece were trying to leave out Turkey in their negotiations to share naval sovereignty areas in the Mediterranean. This was considered as a grave threat to Turkey's interests in Eastern Mediterranean that is estimated to hold extensive hydrocarbon resources (Gürcan 2019).

Thus, Ankara concluded that a friendly political entity in Libya was the only way for the former to prevent Greece from laying naval sovereignty claims over areas Ankara argues do not belong to Athens. For Turkey, Greek naval sovereignty claims aimed to confine Turkey to a Lilliputian naval area in the Mediterranean, and thus not share potential hydrocarbon resources in the remaining vast areas. To prevent this, Ankara courted the officials of the internationally recognized Tobruk-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and was able to ink a highly important maritime agreement on November 27, 2019 after which Turkish military involvement intensified in Libya (Güney and Korkmaz 2021, 68). Additionally, Turkey did not want to see the Emirati-Egyptian duo to curtail Turkish geopolitical ambitions in Libya. For Turkish foreign policy elite, Libya was part of the

Ottoman geography and Turkey needed to help pro-Turkish elements therein (Altunişik 2014, 336).

To this backdrop, Turkey provided extensive logistical and military support to GNA as opposed to the Eastern Libyan–based rebel commander General Haftar's armed coalition which was supported by the Abu Dhabi-Cairo-Riyadh trio. For instance, in May 2019, Turkey sent to Tripoli several unmanned TB2 Bayraktar drones, 40 BMC armored vehicles, several war planes, drone control platforms, and military personnel to operate this equipment (Tastekin 2019). Similarly, in May 2020, GNA used Turkish drones to destroy three Russian Pantsir-S1 systems (Bryen 2020). In June 2020, largely by virtue of Turkish support, the GNA was successful in ousting pro-Haftar forces from Tripoli as well as capturing the town of Tarhouna, a Libyan National Army (LNA) stronghold, which tilted the ongoing civil war toward GNA's favor (Wintour 2020).

Meanwhile, the UAE and Russian mercenaries were busy with countering Turkish drones and other military equipment in an effort to stop the advance of Turkish-backed GNA forces that gained an obvious advantage vis-à-vis Haftar's forces. Moreover, the announcement of the Memorandum of Understanding between Turkey and GNA on delimitation of the maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean, signed on November 27, 2019, surprised and outraged other actors involved in the Libyan conflict and those that could be potentially affected by the agreement. The treaty was immediately ratified by Turkey with a strong backing from the Turkish Parliament on December 5, 2019, deepening the rift between Ankara and the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh duo.

In such an intense atmosphere, Turkey's Defense Minister Hulusi Akar criticized Haftar's forces and his backers (i.e., the Emiratis), sending a clear message of retaliation in case of an assault on Turkish personnel or military equipment in Libya. Emphasizing the Turkish goal in Libya as contributing to regional peace and stability and stating that Turkey did not have any irredentist sentiments, Akar warned, "There will be a very heavy price for hostile attitudes or attacks, we will retaliate in the most effective and strong way" (Shay 2019). More specifically, warning of retribution, Akar also claimed that "the UAE supports terrorist organisations hostile to Turkey with the intention of harming us" (Aydıntaşbaş and Bianco 2021, 10).

With mobilization of such logistical and military assistance, Turkey established a strong foothold in both the Watiyya Air Base in May 2020 and the Misarata Port in August 2020 that is projected to be used as a Turkish naval base. However, Turkish installations at the Watiyya Air Base were attacked on July 5, 2020 that according to Turkish sources was perpetrated by the Emiratis (Canlı 2020). Turkey was infuriated. Turkish Defense Minister Akar stated,

> This war criminal, murderer [Haftar] and his supporters [targeting mainly the UAE] should know that any attempt to attack Turkish elements [in Libya], Hafter will become a legitimate target. They can find no place to hide. Everyone must come their senses. ("Libya'da Hafter'e Sert Uyarı" 2020)

In response, the UAE foreign minister criticized Ankara claiming that Turkey was preventing a peaceful solution in Libya and that Turkish military involvement was destabilizing the entire region ("UAE Foreign Minister" 2020). To surround Turkey from all corners, the Emirati foreign policymakers began to seek deeper relations with their Greek, Armenian, and Syrian counterparts. More specifically, Abu Dhabi led the effort to form EastMed Gas Forum that had three strategic objectives for the Emiratis: (1) disqualifying Turkey as a natural energy hub connecting the Middle East and the Mediterranean with Europe, (2) breaking Qatar's potential natural gas monopoly over European energy markets, and (3) forging strategic alliances with European countries against the Ankara-Doha axis (Aydıntaşbaş and Bianco 2021, 11).

Additionally, the Abu Dhabi-Cairo-Riyadh trio added the Horn of Africa and Eastern Africa to their list of locations to counter the increasing Turkish-Qatari military posture. Although the initial Turkish-Emirati antagonism revolved around ideological differences verbalized in dichotomies of Islamic extremism as opposed to moderation, Abu Dhabi gradually began to portray this feud with more secular terms such as Arab unity and Arab security, perhaps to garner from Arab masses a more grassroots support for its offensive on Ankara. Overall, similar to the Saudi case, souring relations between Turkey and Abu Dhabi boosted Turkish-Qatari strategic partnership and urged them to build a closer cooperation in other countries in order to forestall Emirati counter-moves, either directly or through proxies.

COUP OR NOT COUP: REVERSING OF DEMOCRATIC GAINS IN TUNISIA?

Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab Spring, has been touted as the only success story of the popular Arab Spring protests that demanded better economic conditions and more democratic processes and rights. However, this view witnessed a major challenge with developments in Tunisian politics in July 2021. President Kais Saied, an independent politician without a political party behind him, sacked the prime minister, suspended the parliament, and later dismissed the ministers of defense and justice from their posts. Invoking an article in the Tunisian Constitution, Saied was accused of leading a political and judicial coup against the fledgling democracy of the country (Yerkes

2021). While supporters of Saied argued that his move was within legal boundaries and that his aim was to ensure healthy functioning of the state apparatus, opponents maintained that Saied's move was an obvious assault on democracy and that the main aim was to remove Ennahda, the leading Islamist party, from the government.

Some observers saw Saied's suspension of the parliament as a local development. However, it was being closely watched by other actors such as Turkey and the UAE, staunch adversaries in Tunisia's next-door neighbor Libya (Chulov 2021). Both Ankara and Abu Dhabi have invested heavily in Libya and Tunisia continues to be an important place to consolidate their positions and relative gains in Libya. For Abu Dhabi, Tunisia is too important to be left to the Turkish-Qatari influence because not only it is the birthplace of the Arab Spring and thus a beacon of hope for other revolutionaries but also it is strategically important to restrain Turkey's movements in Libya. Turkey has extended unswerving support to the Tunisian government led by Ennahda and wants to see Ghannouchi's democratic vision to succeed, which could have positive ripple effects on other Arab Spring countries. Additionally, Ankara knows that holding onto its gains in Libya can become more plausible with a leadership in Tunisia that is sympathetic to Turkish geopolitical goals in North Africa. Similarly, Qatar has provided media and financial support to the Tunisian revolutionaries in an effort to maximize its political and financial clout there. Additionally, Qatar envisioned to stop its regional adversaries, most notably the UAE, from shaping Tunisian politics that could prove detrimental to what was left of Qatari gains in other Arab Spring countries.

To this backdrop, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "We are deeply concerned about the suspension of the parliament that represent the will of the Tunisian people. . . . We hope that democratic legitimacy will be restored within the Tunisian Constitution" (Yüzbaşıoğlu 2021). In a similar vein, Presidential Spokesperson İbrahim Kalın stated, "We reject the suspension of democratic process and disregarding people's democratic will in friendly and brotherly Tunisia. We condemn initiatives that are devoid of public support and constitutional legitimacy" ("Tunus'taki Darbe Girişimi" 2021). In the lower ranks of the Turkish government, Saied's move was described as a coup, and it was emphasized that the Turkish government and people were against any kind of coups. Compared to its position in the Egyptian case, the Turkish government was much more calculated in its evaluation of and response to the developments in Tunisia. In other words, Ankara refrained from pointing fingers at and blaming one party or another for the disagreement.

Similarly, Qatar's reaction was moderate in its tone: "Qatar hopes that Tunisian parties will adopt the path of dialogue to overcome the crisis"

("World Reacts to Tunisia" 2021). Such restrained messages from Ankara and Doha suggested that neither actor was willing to be involved in yet another spat with its adversaries. Alternatively, such toned-down messages indicated a strong belief in Islamists' position in Tunisian politics which could not be reversed as easily as in Egypt. Moreover, by the time such developments were taking place in Tunisia, Ankara and Doha were already in secret talks with their adversaries to reconcile their conflicting positions.

Different from Ankara and Doha which issued messages of support, emphasis on legitimacy and dialogue, Abu Dhabi announced its support for Tunisian president Saied more than a week after the event. Anwar Gargash, diplomatic advisor to the UAE president Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed, said, "We support the Tunisian state and president in this positive agenda" (UAE Says It Supports Tunisian President 2021). Similarly, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan affirmed the Saudi support for the security and stability of Tunisia ("Prince Faisal Reiterates Saudi Support" 2021). Influential figures from Abu Dhabi, Cairo, and Riyadh expressed their support for Saied's suspension of the parliament and sacking of several ministers, including the prime minister, emphasizing that these were necessary for upholding democracy, restraining political Islam, and ensuring security and stability of Tunisia (Parker 2021).

Drawing parallels between the developments prior to and after the Tunisian president's decisions and the developments that preceded the coup in Egypt, some news sources even suggested that Abu Dhabi was involved in this auto-golpe, or "self-coup," by wielding influence on Tunisian politics and social media and that Abu Dhabi's main goal was to eliminate political Islam in Tunisia (Spencer 2021) and distance it from the Ankara-Doha bloc. In this regard, on August 20, 2021, the announcement made by Nabil Arfaoui, the director of Cooperation with Europe at the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Tunisia appeared to the Turkish side that Abu Dhabi was involved in the developments in Tunisian politics. The Tunisian official asked for an urgent review or cancellation of the Turkish-Tunisian Trade Agreement because Tunisia registered its third largest trade deficit against Turkey due this agreement ("Tunus'tan Türkiye Açıklaması" 2021). However, the pro-government Turkish media, which generally would not miss such a chance to denounce Abu Dhabi, refrained from pointing fingers at Abu Dhabi, probably in line with President Erdoğan's meeting with the Emirati National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan on August 19, 2021.

Similar to other instances of confrontation, the differences in the positions of the Ankara-Doha bloc and the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh-Cairo bloc in Tunisia can be explained with their political visions for the region and their geopolitical goals. Turkey and Qatar defended their position arguing that consolidation of democratic processes and institutions in the region is the only way for

positive change and improving the lives of millions of people. Additionally, especially Turkey emphasized political legitimacy as opposed to any form of power grab, be it military, judiciary or otherwise. On the opposing side, Abu Dhabi-Cairo-Riyadh bloc was fundamentally opposed to any form of democratic opening or pluralistic system in the region in general and Tunisia in particular, for they maintained that such openings will bring political Islam to power or keep it therein. According to Jacobs (2020), Abu Dhabi believed that "Ennahda is seeking to proliferate political Islam across the region through alliances with Emirati rivals, Qatar and Turkey. Consequently, Abu Dhabi views Islamist electoral legitimacy as a threat to regional stability as well as to its own regime at home."

Therefore, conflict between these blocs was unavoidable and potential opportunities for cooperation were suffocated before they could even emerge. However, given the fast-shifting geopolitical objectives, changing domestic and global political landscapes as well as their economic and financial situations, the actors of the two blocs who have been involved in a decade-long rivalry were ready for reconciliation and recalibration of their interests after a decade has passed over the euphoric initial days of the Arab Spring. The possibility of such reconciliation grew especially stronger in the summer of 2021 with Ankara and Doha showing genuine interest for settlement of their differences.

THE HORN OF AFRICA: ANOTHER FRONT?

Dominating fault lines between the Turkish-Qatari bloc and the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc in the Levant and North Africa were also reflected to the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia. Similar to other cases, the competition in the Horn of Africa helped deepen the strategic partnership between Ankara and Doha, while it intensified the proxy-wrangling with their adversaries, particularly with that of Abu Dhabi. Both Ankara and Doha had established close relations with several countries in the Horn of Africa, Somalia being the most prominent one, well before the blockade on Qatar. As a matter of fact, these relations with countries in the region were quite ahead of their contenders. Initial interactions between the AKP government and Somalia consisted primarily of humanitarian, state-building, and peacemaking efforts that started with the reopening of the Turkish Embassy in Mogadishu in 2011. With the blockade announced in June 2017, competing Gulf blocs began to carry their row to the Horn of Africa with issues of the role of Islam in politics, security, and economic competition relegating the initial humanitarian initiatives to lower positions (Vertin 2019).

As a benevolent middle power aspiring to project power in mainly Muslim countries in Africa, Turkey augmented its activism in Somalia with Erdoğan's

Mogadishu visit in 2011 after the capital was freed from the control of Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab militants (Hussein and Coskun 2017). This visit was historic because Erdoğan was the first non-African leader in years to land in this extremely fragile country with a failing state. Ankara invested heavily in humanitarian efforts through its state-funded and civil-funded organizations, starting development projects, building roads, opening schools and hospitals, and giving scholarships to Somalian students at Turkish universities. For example, in 2017, around 1,000 Somalian students were studying in Turkish universities according to Somalia's minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Housing Sadiq Abdullahi Abdi, who is a graduate of one of the top Turkish universities in Ankara (Alam 2017). Additionally, Ankara helped a failing state recover and work toward bringing economic stability and security to the country through training Somalian army and police and providing logistical support. Being involved in state building in a war-torn Muslim country that was afflicted by Al-Qaeda terrorism, where no other country was willing to be involved, boosted Ankara's soft power and international standing. Turkish approach to Somalia was based on President Erdoğan's call for Islamic solidarity and helping those in need.

In light of this humanitarian and infrastructure building efforts, Ankara has accumulated much political influence and popular support in Somalia. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that Somalia had already become the crown jewel of Turkey's policy of *Opening to Africa* when the news of blockade on Qatar hit the headlines. For example, by then the operators of Mogadishu's air and seaports were managed by Turkish companies while markets in Somalia were filled with goods imported from Turkey (Vertin 2019). Additionally, Turkish Airlines was the first major international carrier to announce direct flights to this politically and economically instable country in 2012.

Most importantly, Turkey opened its largest overseas military base in Mogadishu in September 2017 only a few months after the blockade on Qatar started. Finally, based on a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of energy and mining signed by Turkey and Somalia in 2016, leadership in both countries have been working on finalizing legal framework for the state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation and Somali Petroleum Authority to cooperate in exploring oil (Kopar 2020). Thanks to growing cooperation in the military, security, and energy sectors, Turkish government and companies have become more visible in Somalia over the years. Ankara's initially humanitarian opening to Somalia gradually gained an economic and later a geostrategic depth.

Turkish foreign policy activism in Somalia that started in 2010s proved advantageous later especially when the Turkish-Qatari partnership was tested by counterrevolutions and eventually by the blockade on Qatar. Located on a

strategic route controlling the opening to the Red Sea as well as its strategic proximity to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Somalia turned into another advantageous scene for Turkey and Qatar to counter their Gulf rivals. Somalian president Mohamed Abdullahi, who established close links with both Turkey and Qatar and who received financial assistance from both countries, approached the Turkish-Qatari bloc more favorably than the Emirati-Saudi bloc (Cadde 2021). For the Somalian president, Ankara and Doha worked toward helping maintain the unity of Somaliland and empowering the federal government vis-à-vis the secessionist semi-autonomous region of Puntland and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland that were supported by Abu Dhabi and Riyadh with an aim to weaken the federal government (Ahmed 2021).

To this backdrop, Turkey and Qatar have worked together to shore up their support for the federal government based in Mogadishu, located in the south of the country on the Indian Ocean. Both Ankara and Doha know that politically weak or hostile actors in Mogadishu could nullify their years of investments and hard-won influence in the country in favor of their rivals, particularly Abu Dhabi. Considering Somalia as a country vital for their national security, both Abu Dhabi and Riyadh closely monitored Turkish and Qatari overtures into the Somalian politics and their influence over the country. Therefore, they increasingly placed their support behind Puntland and Somaliland, the two regions which do not currently recognize the federal government in federal capital Mogadishu (Mahmood 2017). The federal government led by President Mohamed Abdullahi believed that Abu Dhabi was engaged in undermining Somalian central authority and destabilizing the country by investing in political standoff and violent protest in breakaway areas, bypassing the central government's consent (Kahiye 2021).

Overall, the geopolitical rivalry between the Ankara-Doha bloc and its adversaries spilled into Somalia. Both blocs wanted to receive the lion's share in lucrative investment and trade opportunities as well as geostrategic advantages Somalia offered and build political patronage as much as possible in this institutionally weaker country. Reportedly, such geopolitical and security concerns pushed both sides to step up their military and paramilitary involvement in the country through different proxies that runs the risk of transforming into a low-intensity proxy war as in Libya and a perhaps even a full-fledged proxy war as in Syria. Overall, with its geostrategic importance for both blocs, with its potential to become a vital port to serve millions of people in neighboring countries, with its potentially untapped energy resources, Somalia will continue to be a scene of rivalry between both blocs. The degree and intensity of this rivalry and whether or not it will instigate violence will depend on how much and how soon a genuine reconciliation can take place between the opposing countries. In this regard, the ongoing efforts of reconciliation are good news for Somalia's future.

END OF A BLOCKADE: FROM HOSTILITY TO RAPPROCHEMENT?

Although the blockading countries announced several times that there would be no end to the blockade on Qatar unless their demands were met, unexpected news hit the headlines in early 2021. On January 5, 2021, at the 41st GCC Summit held in the heritage site of Al-Ula, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the GCC members, including the UAE and Bahrain, as well as Egypt, signed a declaration for normalizing relations with Qatar by lifting the embargo thereby easing the tensions, and restoring political and economic interactions in the region. Al-Ula declaration stipulated that the civilian Qatari planes would be able to use the Saudi airspace again and the information war conducted by all sides would end in return for Doha withdrawing its lawsuits against the blockading countries at the World Trade Organization and the International Civil Aviation Authority.

The Al-Ula declaration does not mean the end of deep-seated problems and tensions that have occasionally been affecting relations for decades; rather, it made sense for the collective security of the GCC and each member state had its own geopolitical and economic calculations. For Kuwait, ending the embargo was a mediation success because the Kuwaitis were involved in reconciliation since the beginning of the crisis. In light of historical and contemporary disputes, Manama would not welcome a reconciliation easily that was evident in Manama's foot dragging and reluctance to start normalization talks as well as to re-establish trade and travel links with Qatar. In fact, Qatari-Bahraini relations were negatively affected once again in March 2021 due to an Al Jazeera program that Manama accused of containing inaccurate information and campaigning against Bahrain. As of November 2021, Manama has not yet restored travel and trade links with Qatar.

Some countries view the lifting of the Qatari blockade as a partial détente because there are still many lingering issues which need to be resolved gradually ("Saudi Arabia Ending Its Role" 2021). The UAE is a case in point. Given their geopolitical rivalry, Abu Dhabi was the least willing actor to agree to a rapprochement with Doha because the Emirati officials saw the declaration as the initial stages of a dialogue rather than a definitive resolution. For example, although the Emirati foreign minister Gargash conceded that reaching a collective agreement toward external security threats is important, he sounded cautious about quick-fixes and favored being "realistic about the need to restore confidence and cohesion" (Radwan 2021). Despite official Emirati visits to Doha and Qatari official visits to Abu Dhabi following the end of the blockade, as of November 2021, Abu Dhabi has not yet appointed an ambassador to Doha. Despite being reluctant about the reconciliation with Doha, foreign policymakers in Abu Dhabi might have also calculated

that improving relations with Israel while ramping up tensions with a Gulf Arab neighbor would be received negatively both at home and among other Muslim nations.

Saudi Arabia seemed to be more enthusiastic than Abu Dhabi and Manama to push for the normalization. Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud stated that "There is political will and good faith" to reconcile ("Ankara Welcomes Outcome of GCC Summit" 2021). Regardless of the amount of time it will take, Riyadh seems to be motivated to mend relations as quickly and thoroughly as possible for various reasons. First, the tarnished reputation and the image of a troublemaking political figure gave enough headache for MbS, particularly in Washington DC; thus, he pre-emptively advocated for opening a new page with President Biden who spoke against the Saudi military operations on Yemen, criticized the killing of the *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and showed dismay at a fragmented GCC.

Second, Riyadh might have felt increasingly uncomfortable with what Cafiero and Fuchs (2021) call an increasing alignment of Manama's foreign policy approach with that of Abu Dhabi as was evidenced in Bahraini official position on a variety of issues ranging from Syria to Israel to the Qatari crisis. This could lead to Manama falling out of the orbit of Saudi influence in the long term and could give Abu Dhabi excessive influence in a strategic location. Third, Saudi officials are worried that if the Biden administration, similar to the Obama era, decided to pivot to other regions and relegate the security of Gulf to a lower position in their agenda, this would leave the GCC vulnerable vis-à-vis Iran. This concern was evident in MbS's speech at the Al-Ula Summit where he urged the international community to do something tangible about Tehran's "nuclear and ballistic missile programs and its *subversive and destructive* plans" ("Saudi Arabia and Allies" 2021).

Moreover, Riyadh envisioned that mending relations with Doha could create novel opportunities to ease tensions with Turkish officials who had already made several overtures to Riyadh about a potential rapprochement. In fact, President Erdoğan called the Saudi King in November 2020 and both leadership "agreed on keeping channels of dialogue open in order for the bilateral relations to be enhanced and for issues to be settled" ("President Erdoğan, King Salman bin Abdulaziz" 2021). Finally, Riyadh came to the conclusion that dictating a certain policy on Doha may backfire and push the GCC member closer to Tehran. Also, Saudi officials realized that Doha has become too confident to submit to any imposition that violated its sovereignty and foreign policy objectives.

For Qatar, the partial end of the blockade was an important win because Doha was able to withstand its powerful neighbors and not bow to their demands which were interpreted as an explicit attack on its sovereignty ("The

Winners and the Losers" 2021). Based on the amount of information revealed to the public, the blockading countries seemed to realize the futility of their attempts to control Doha. Others argued that the Trump administration was trying to fix some of the problems it had created in the first place, and the idea to end the blockade was one of the initiatives to that end. Given the Trump administration's desire to leave a legacy by pushing for the Deal of the Century, others argued that, taking advantage of the blockade, Washington and Abu Dhabi might have wanted to pressurize Doha into normalizing relations with Tel Aviv (Sofuoğlu 2020). Regardless of the speculations made throughout the embargo, it is safe to argue that the Qatari government has become stronger and the Qatari people grew more unified as a nation and rallied around their leadership vis-à-vis security threats of different nature from their brethren in the GCC (Gengler 2020, 246).

The UAE appeared to be the biggest loser with this development because not only did Abu Dhabi fail in pressuring Doha to accept the 13 demands but also the potential rapprochement between Riyadh and Doha could create new cracks in the already fragile partnership between MbS and MbZ that partly started with developments and difference of opinion regarding Yemen. Abu Dhabi's aggressive and interventionist foreign policy in different regions at the same time was making it increasingly difficult for Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to find common interests in these countries (Worth 2020). Additionally, although not squarely against the normalization with Israel, Riyadh feels, as the custodian of the two most holy Muslim cites Mecca and Medina, that it needs to cautiously manage her moves toward normalizing relations with Israel. Strategic mistakes in normalizing relations with Tel Aviv and recognizing Israel could tarnish Saudi image in most Muslim countries beyond repair given the popular support for Palestinian rights.

Turkey is another winner of the rapprochement between Qatar and her neighbors because not only did Ankara's economic, political, and security relations with Doha intensify throughout the blockade as was analyzed in detail throughout this book but also none of the demands from the blockading countries that targeted Ankara was accepted or realized. According to Cafiero (2021), "with Saudi-Qatari relations moving in a positive direction, Turkey can build a stronger relationship with Riyadh without undermining the Turkish-Qatari alliance." In other words, improvement of relations between Doha and Riyadh could not be confined to these actors per se. Doha's closest ally, Turkey, would also benefit from the opportunities of reconciliation. In addition, Cafiero argued that Turkey's image as an influential regional leader would be boosted because Ankara stood by Doha despite economic and political challenges of taking sides in a crisis.

Most importantly, the blockade expedited deployment of Turkish soldiers on Qatari soil that could potentially have taken years were it not

for the exigencies created by the blockade. As a matter of fact, Turkish projection of hard power and political influence in regions relatively far from Turkey gained momentum with the blockade as was evidenced in the opening of Turkish military bases in Somalia and Libya as well as plans to open more bases in Africa. With the confidence gained throughout the blockade against the Abu Dhabi-Cairo-Riyadh trio, Ankara was able to take more audacious steps in the Eastern Mediterranean dispute and the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict.

Finally, as was evidenced in Taliban's surprisingly swift takeover of almost entire Afghanistan in August 2021, both Ankara and Doha found yet another arena to improve their relations with major players in the newly emerging geopolitical landscape. For example, Ankara proposed to the NATO, as a member state which was involved in a mission in Afghanistan for many years, to guard and operate Kabul's airport. Although this proposal had to be shelved due to head-spinning changes in Kabul, Turkey sought to mend ties with Washington and other NATO allies through such initiatives as well as seek ways to limit potential Afghan refugee flow into Turkey, which created domestic outrage. Similarly, on account of hosting talks between the Afghan government and Taliban for years, Doha emerged as an important partner for those seeking diplomatic relations with the Taliban officials. Additionally, Doha played a crucial role in the safe transit of U.S. citizens and at-risk Afghans from the country following the Taliban takeover. This was followed by another strategically humanitarian move by Qatar, whereby students at the American University of Afghanistan could continue their education in the Education City in Doha, one of the beacons of Qatari state branding.

CONCLUSION

Turkish-Qatari political alignment that developed throughout the Arab Spring transformed into a special relationship with the blockade on Qatar by its Gulf neighbors and Egypt. Due to the embargo on Qatar, Ankara and Doha fast-tracked their military cooperation as was evidenced in the opening of the first Turkish military base on the Arabian Peninsula after a century the Ottomans left Doha during World War I. This was one of the most important political and military gains for Ankara, which opened the way for other military bases in African countries. The blockade also presented new venues for Doha to increase its financial and economic penetration into the Turkish markets as evidenced in Doha's willingness to help shore up volatile Turkish economy in difficult times. Overall, the diplomatic crisis in the Gulf instigated a much closer strategic partnership between Turkey and Qatar.

While the special relationship between Turkey and Qatar was growing, their relations with competing actors, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, took a nosedive throughout the blockade. Alarmed with Turkey's increasingly more assertive foreign policy in Arab Spring countries, Riyadh began to provide financial and political backing to Turkey's nemesis, i.e. Kurdish separatist terrorism in Northern Syria. The murder of Khashoggi and Ankara's demand for justice and semi-official calls for banning Turkish products from the Saudi markets further soured relations. However, due to fast-changing geopolitical calculations, Ankara began to seek ways to mend fences with Riyadh prior to and throughout the blockade. Similarly, Riyadh seemed willing to reconcile differences given its growing discontent with the Emirati assertive foreign policy goals in the region and beyond.

Similarly, Turkey's relations with the UAE have witnessed unprecedentedly low levels as evidenced in Abu Dhabi's support for separatist terrorism in Turkish-Syrian border and the fierce military confrontation between both actors via their proxies in the Libyan civil war. By stoking historical sensitivities and blaming Turkey for instability in the Arab world, the UAE also spearheaded an anti-Turkish alliance in the Mediterranean in a bid to restrain Turkish military involvement in Libya. Another arena for rivalry emerged in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia, throughout the blockade. Having invested in Somalia with different political, economic, and military calculations for quite a long time, both actors wanted to undo the other's efforts. Despite such profound differences between Turkey and the UAE, relations began to witness a thaw with Turkish overtures to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh and prominent Emirati officials' visit to Turkey. This potential rapprochement was tested in Tunisia in July 2021 when President Kais Saied froze the parliament and dismissed the prime minister, and the defense minister, and justice minister from their posts. Although Turkey rejected Saied's move and called it a coup, the UAE, and later the KSA, voiced their support for Saied's decision. However, unlike previous confrontations, both sides and their media did not intentionally heighten tensions.

As the blockade was announced to end in early 2021, both Qatar and Turkey emerged as apparent winners of the three-and-a-half-year-long diplomatic crisis that pushed Qatar to face its vulnerabilities and work toward fixing them via collaboration with different regional and international actors. With the rapprochement, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi lost much of their diplomatic deterrence while Doha reinforced its stance on sovereignty and independent foreign policy as well as witnessed unprecedently positive state-society relations. Additionally, Doha tested the importance of Tehran and Ankara in her regional political balancing. The end of the blockade showed that neither Riyadh nor Abu Dhabi nor a combination of other actors could force another GCC member state into adopting a certain

foreign policy. Most important of all, after undergoing such a tough test, both the Qatar elite and the regular Qataris grew disillusioned with previous perceptions of a unified Gulf identity. In this sense, if the invasion of Kuwait was a serious blow to a unified Arab identity, the blockade was a similar blow to the concept of a unified Gulf identity. Citizens separated from their loved ones and the vulgar attacks on national symbols and personalities attested the magnitude of societal harm inflicted on Gulf identity throughout the crisis.

Turkey and Qatar relied heavily on principles of practical geopolitical reasoning in explaining the blockade to their domestic, regional, and international audiences. By labeling the political decisions and actions of the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh-Cairo-Manama quartet as unlawful, non-Islamic, inhumane, non-brotherly, and unjust, the Ankara-Doha bloc based their arguments on being victims of contentious schemes by their enemies. Via the national and international media outlets, both actors drew attention to how their peaceful humanitarian activities in brotherly nations were nullified by nefarious schemes of *the friends of the State of Israel*, that is, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. In fact, both blocs tried to justify their political decisions and activities by appealing to their constructive efforts for the Palestinian cause. In a similar vein, each bloc blamed one another for cooperating with Israel and betraying the Muslim cause of Palestine. Overall, both Turkish and Qatari foreign policy actors sought to simplify and present a complex geopolitical reality in straightforward friend-enemy terms to their domestic constituencies and regional and international sympathizers. Once the dust settles and a genuine reconciliation takes place, political analysts will probably make healthier analyses about whether the geopolitical reasoning employed by both sides were successful or not.

NOTE

1. *Strategic partnership* refers to a formal, clear, transparent and close cooperation between two, or potentially more, countries working jointly toward realizing their long-term strategic priorities, rather than randomly assembled situational or conjectural objectives. Strategic priorities may include maintaining national security, enhancing economic and financial well-being or political stability or improving technological, educational or cultural areas. Strategic partnerships that are propelled by merely leadership or by shallow strategic interests, or partnerships between two or more nations that are distinctly different from each other in terms of their worldviews may not last long.

Objectives that participants in such partnerships try to realize can ideally stretch to several areas, such as military, economy, foreign policy, etc. or can focus on only one area, such as the military field. Some participants in such partnerships

can be better in one or more areas than other participants. In such cases, geostrategic location or human capital, among other factors, can make up for those weaker areas.

As in *political alignment*, similar policy visions and objectives are indispensable for building a strategic partnership. The US-UK and US-Israel strategic partnership are generally given as ideal examples.

Conclusion

RELATIONS IN LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Until the nineteenth century, Eastern Arabia, including Qatar and Bahrain, was only peripherally important for the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the Sublime Porte generally exercised only nominal authority there, leaving governmental administration to tribal leaders and notables. Because Qatar was a natural peninsula extending from the Arabian mainland into the Gulf, it was by default considered under the Ottoman suzerainty. With increasing British political, economic, and military activity in the region, Eastern Arabia, and particularly Qatar, became a theater of bitter competition between the Sublime Porte and London. To block British expansionism and restore Ottoman central authority in and around the Gulf, the Ottomans organized a military expedition into Eastern Arabia, including Qatar, in 1871, which was later followed by administrative reforms.

Growing Ottoman-British rivalry in and around Qatar instigated the Sublime Porte to focus its energies on Qatar. First, with the Ottoman attention on Qatar, the Qatari leadership was indirectly protected from the wrath of the raids originating from mainland Arabia. Second, the assignment of Sheikh Jassim as the kaim-maqam of Qatar and Ottoman efforts to keep the Qatari leadership aligned with the Sublime Porte provided Sheikh Jassim with considerable freedom of maneuvering. Additionally, the Anglo-Ottoman reluctance to disturb the status quo, combined with Qatari leadership's ability to play off one actor against the other, expedited the processes of state formation, consolidation, and eventual independence of Qatar.

The Ottomans entered Doha at the invitation of Qatari leadership and thus encountered almost no objection from regular Qataris. However, both sides had to resolve several misunderstandings, frictions, and even military disputes

in their fluctuating relationship, the Incidence, or the War, of Wajba being the most consequential of these conflicts. Effectively managing a superpower rivalry and uniting Qatari tribes into a strong political entity, Sheikh Jassim slowly but surely built a unified Qatar when the Ottomans were leaving the region on the eve of World War I. The Ottoman Empire was officially dissolved in 1923 with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish-Qatari relations had to wait until the turn of the twentieth century to reach their past eminence once again.

Seen from the lenses of practical geopolitical reasoning, the unity of Muslims and the status of Caliphate were important considerations for Sheikh Jassim, who framed his policies in accordance with these sensitivities, as evidenced in his approach toward the Caliphate in Constantinople and his generous contributions to charities that aimed to enhance the unity of the Muslims. Likewise, the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II was reported to be a devout Muslim who struggled to restore the status of the Caliphate and establish strong solidarity among Muslim countries. To this end, the Sultan made frequent references to Islam, Caliphate, and Muslim solidarity when domestic opposition and hostility toward him were at their peak. Both the Ottoman and Qatari leadership utilized various narratives, touched upon identities, and pointed to certain dilemmas and particular histories while trying to present to their constituencies their policies and maneuvers and justify them.

FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST

From the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 until 1980s, relations between Turkey and the Middle Eastern countries were mostly influenced by Ankara's generally unswerving Western orientation and its attitude toward and relations with Israel as well as security concerns and economic interests. Throughout much of this era, most Middle Eastern Arab countries viewed Ankara as a pawn of the Western countries and their imperialistic activities in the region. The Palestinian cause was, perhaps, the most important predictor and indicator of Ankara's relations with the Middle East. In other words, by and large, warm relations with Tel Aviv meant growing distance between Ankara and Middle Eastern Arab countries and vice versa. Moreover, disagreements with the West over several issues, such as the Turkish-Greek frictions in Cyprus, and Ankara's shifting interests and growing economic predicaments paved the way for more instances of Turkish-Middle Eastern Arab alignment on regional and Muslim issues, such as the rights and freedoms of the Palestinian people.

Additionally, Turkish position on Nasserism and pro-French stance of Ankara on the Algerian War of Independence caused fluctuations in relations and reinforced the perception that Ankara was a trojan horse of the West. This perception was to change when Turkish and Western foreign policy toward the region began to diverge as seen in the Cyprus Crisis and Ankara's tacit pro-Palestinian stance during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. This change in foreign policy was crucial for Ankara to weather the economic hardships brought about by the Oil Embargo. Finally, Turkish position on the Iranian Revolution created further arenas for Turkey and the Middle Eastern Arab countries to strengthen their security and economic cooperation, whereby Gulf Arab countries increasingly began to view Turkey as a potential balancer against Iranian influence.

From the 1980s until 2002, several seismic developments occurred in the region and while some of these developments facilitated cooperation between Ankara and her Middle Eastern Arab counterparts, others presented challenges and created areas of disagreement and friction. For instance, the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf Wars I and II, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing War on Terror, which altered the Middle Eastern, and by extension the Gulf Arab geopolitical landscape, brought together Turkey and the Gulf Arab countries. Similarly, Turkey's transitioning to the liberal economy and desire to find markets for its growing industrial base increased the importance of the oil- and capital-rich Gulf Arab countries.

However, Ankara's emergent security vulnerabilities in face of growing separatist terrorism at its borders with Iraq and Syria hindered cooperative relations with the Middle East Arab countries, by extension the Gulf Arab countries, pushing Ankara closer to Tel Aviv in a quest to augment its military deterrence. Overall, Ankara's neutral stance throughout the Iran-Iraq War, its support for foundation of the GCC, and its advocation of Kuwait's integrity and sovereignty, in tandem with the GCC, engendered unprecedented improvement in Turkey-GCC relations. However, unkept Gulf Arab economic and financial promises regarding Gulf War I and security threats originating from PKK created discontent and relative disillusionment with Gulf Arab monarchies in Ankara.

To convince domestic, regional, and international audiences, Ankara resorted to practical geopolitical reasoning when faced with the highly security-oriented geopolitical landscape from 1980s to the turn of the century. Surrounded by generally politically unstable neighbors in the Middle East and a region of highly securitized domestic and regional foreign policy, Ankara spatialized security challenges and vulnerabilities as well as economic hardships via friend-enemy dichotomies. In close examination, these dichotomies consisted of concepts of brotherhood, religion, democracy, religious radicalism, and secularism. As the distance between Ankara and the Western capitals increased and relations with Middle Eastern Arab countries thawed, religious brotherhood, shared history,

and culture occupied speeches of Turkish politicians. Similarly, when relations grew colder, religious radicalism, lack of real democracy in Arab countries, and differences between Turks and Arabs dominated Turkish foreign policy elite's discourse. The physical geography that came with such dichotomies altered, grew or shrank in accordance with foreign policymakers' worldviews, changing winds and shifting sands of intricate Middle Eastern politics.

The period from 2002 until 2011 witnessed tremendous improvement in Turkish-GCC and Turkish-Qatari relations. In fact, Turkey's relations with Qatar skyrocketed, catapulting harmonious relations between Ankara and Doha to the attention of the region and beyond. Foreign policy objectives and tools that Ankara and Doha used throughout this period generated a plethora of venues allowing both actors to realize their potential to collaborate with one another and coordinate their political influence. Such cooperation manifested itself in both actors' stance on Hamas in the case of Gaza, peace-keeping and mediation activities in Lebanon, and their pro-Iranian attitude toward the Iranian nuclear issue. Foreign policy approaches and instruments used by both actors to accomplish differing foreign policy objectives enabled numerous convergences on many regional developments paving the way for stronger and deeper Turkish-Qatari relations in the following years.

For presenting these growing convergences on regional issues and justifying such concurrence, both actors depended on an equidistant language that struggled to diffuse regional tensions and conflicts. To advance their political goals, concepts such as *Islamic civilization*, a relatively neutral notion at least among Muslim countries, dominated Ankara's and Doha's political discourse. This was important for accumulating soft-power capabilities and winning the hearts and minds of regular people in the region, which proved to be vitally significant throughout the Arab Spring.

FORGING CLOSER RELATIONS: ARAB SPRING AND TURKISH-QATARI POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

If the 2002–2011 period was the formative years of Turkish-Qatari relationship, the period from 2011 to 2016 proved to be an era of consolidation of this increasingly special relationship that evolved into a political alignment. As a strong middle power with relatively stable economic and military might, Turkey was seeking to realize a host of regional geopolitical objectives in this period. In a similar vein, Qatar, a small but ambitious state with a solid economy and sociopolitical stability, aspired to expand its economic strength and soft-power capabilities as well as increase the number of stakeholders in its long-term security. The relative power vacuum created by American reluctance and the absence of traditional Middle Eastern powers, such as Egypt and

Saudi Arabia, drew Ankara and Doha increasingly closer together to shape the developments in the region to their advantage. The fast unfolding geopolitical landscape presented a diverse range of opportunities whereby Ankara and Doha could cooperate and unite their power to steer the developments on the ground and assist regular Middle Eastern people obtain their democratic rights and freedoms. However, not only this quest for positive change but also the growing Turkish-Qatari political, economic, and military cooperation for guiding such change were tested along the way.

Syria emerged as the first major Arab Spring scene where Turkey and Qatar worked closely given their geopolitical aspirations and economic interests. Placing emphasis on their discourse on advocation of human rights, democratic processes, and positive change, Ankara and Doha sided with various factions in the Syrian opposition and gave them diplomatic, economic, and logistical support, a move that was blessed by Washington at the time. However, seen in retrospect, due to increasing sectarian sensitivities, the rise of ISIS, and involvement of international actors, Syria transformed into a dismal quagmire, shattering perceptions of Turkey and Qatar being equidistant and trustable regional actors.

Egypt was another arena in which Turkey and Qatar championed positive change, sociopolitical development, and other popular demands voiced by millions of peaceful protestors. At the initial stages, Ankara and Doha were successful in managing this pursuit of positive change by encouraging political actors in Cairo, that is, MB, to build an inclusive democratic process and providing financial and political support to this end. However, winds of counterrevolution blowing from Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, which were also advocated by remnants of ancient régime, nullified Turkish-Qatari gains and shoved Cairo into the opposing political bloc. Losing Egypt, the most populous and relatively the most important Arab country, to the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc was a massive regression for Ankara and Doha. Similar to the Syrian case, continued Turkish-Qatari support for the MB, even long after the military coup, caused various political and economic losses.

Although less significant, Tunisia and Libya were two other Arab Spring countries where protests against and the eventual collapse of decades-old authoritarian regimes presented Turkey and Qatar with a novel arena for promoting their foreign policy objectives. Although the Tunisian scene was already filled with strong domestic actors, and thus outside actors' room for maneuver was limited, both Turkey and Qatar provided financial, diplomatic, and media support to the MB elements that dominated the new Tunisian politics. To this end, despite not being a theater for a political or military showdown between pro-status quo monarchies and pro-change bloc, a fierce competition was taking place between the two conflicting sides for attracting the Tunisian politicians to their side and undermining the opposite side via financial means

or media attacks. As the birthplace of the Arab Spring protests, Tunisia carried vast symbolic value and both blocs wanted to influence Tunisian actors to their side. To this backdrop, political developments that took place in Tunisia on July 25, 2021 emerged as another opportunity for both blocs to pick a side and reiterate their opposing positions and arguments. However, reconciliation initiatives that were occurring at about the same time motivated both blocs to tone down their fierce competition.

Libya, a geopolitically important country located between Tunisia and Egypt, witnessed a more profound penetration of outside powers. In fact, Libya emerged as a theater of ideological rivalry and hostilities between two major Sunni-blocs, Ankara-Doha and Riyadh-Abu Dhabi. Put differently, the nebulous Arab Spring ideological rupture between both blocks, particularly between Qataris on the one hand and Emiratis and Saudis on the other, began to appear in this North African country. Both sides wanted to shape the post-Gaddafi Libya to their advantage through assertive foreign policy and use of regional proxies that frequently resorted to violence.

Ideological differences created profound discord in Libya between Turkey and the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc, too. As Qatar gradually lowered its engagement in Libya, Ankara increased its stakes in the Libyan civil war, which later culminated in a military showdown between Ankara and Abu Dhabi. Turkey's involvement in Libya could be explained along geopolitical, military, economic, and nationalist concerns and strategic energy interests in the Mediterranean. In other words, support for Libyan MB elements was only tangentially important for Turkey, whereas for Abu Dhabi, rivalry with Ankara was more about ideological differences over MB.

With the Arab Spring mass protests spreading in North Africa, and the Levant and newly elected governments replacing authoritarian regimes, the forces of counterrevolutions were gaining momentum. As these critical developments were taking place, the relationship between Turkey and Qatar evolved into a *political alignment*, underpinned by a range of convergences in foreign policy visions and positions. The relative power vacuum at the outset of the Arab Spring was quickly filled by Ankara and Doha. Despite relative success and initial realization of Turkish and Qatari objectives in different countries, shifting geopolitical landscape in Syria, Egypt, and later Libya emerged as major setbacks for the Ankara-Doha bloc. Challenges stemming from national and international politics and domestic economic indicators as well as security challenges such as the rise of DAESH, potential separatist terrorism from Northern Syria targeting Turkey, and increasing security threats targeting Doha instigated these unexpected setbacks. Overall, viewing Turkish-Qatari geopolitical aspirations antithetical to their own, the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh bloc intervened to subvert the popular demand for positive change in the region. This conflict left Ankara and Doha increasingly more isolated and with fewer friends in a turbulent region.

While such fierce rivalry was taking place, Ankara and Doha resorted to a practical geopolitical reasoning for maintaining domestic support for their foreign policy in an increasingly more turbulent region. In doing this, they made frequent references to sectarian sentiments, religious brotherhood, dignity of human beings, and opposition to oppression of authoritarian regimes. Additionally, Ankara and Doha put emphasis on democracy, human rights, political legitimacy, military involvement to assist oppressed people to transition to democracy/normalcy, and opposition to extremist/radical ideologies to garner international recognition and support for their efforts. To this end, both actors provided diplomatic, economic, and logistical support, including military equipment, to revolutionaries. Through media, they simplified, presented, justified, and legitimized both their position and their foreign policy choices and actions.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP: TURKISH-QATARI STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The *political alignment* between Turkey and Qatar that started at the turn of the century with the coming of AKP to power and reached maturity throughout the Arab Spring transformed into a *strategic partnership* following the blockade imposed on Qatar by the self-named Anti-Terror Quartet, composed of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt. The embargo on Qatar motivated Ankara and Doha to fast-track their military agreements and take their cooperation to higher levels in various strategic fields such as investments in and procurement of military equipment and technology. Opening a military base on Qatari soil and returning to the Gulf after approximately a century boosted both Turkish hard-power and soft-power capabilities. For the Qatari side, involving a robust military actor, that is, Turkey, in maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity meant enhanced security against potential threats.

In almost complete contrast to Turkish-Qatari relations, both Turkish-Saudi and Turkish-Emirati relations saw historically low levels. Unprecedented low levels of diplomatic and economic relations hit their nadir with the blockade. Assertive foreign policy pursued by both the Turkish-Qatari bloc and the Emirati-Saudi bloc aggravated existing mistrust and hostilities. For example, both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi targeted Turkey with their financial and political backing of separatist terrorism in Northern Syria. Turkey's unwavering quest for justice in the Khashoggi murder and Riyadh's semi-official ban on Turkish products further soured relations. Similarly, Emirati officials tried to undermine Turkish interests by engaging in a series of military confrontation with Ankara in Libya, blaming Ankara for the instabilities in the Arab world, and by encouraging an anti-Turkish alliance with several Mediterranean countries. The Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, emerged as another military and economic front of rivalry

between the two blocs. Once again, shifting geopolitical realities as well as domestic and global developments prompted a slow and seemingly dispassionate process of rapprochement between Ankara and Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

The three-and-a-half-year-long embargo on Qatar ended in early 2021 allowing Qatar to realize its security vulnerabilities and work toward reducing them via partnering with other actors. With the end of the blockade, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi declared, despite indirectly, that they gave up all or most of the 13-demands imposed on Qatar. While Qatar reinforced her sovereignty and gave almost no concessions regarding her independent foreign policy, Saudi Arabia and Riyadh suffered a serious blow to their power of deterrence. On account of the blockade, Qatar was able to test the importance of Turkey and Iran in her regional political balancing and demonstrate to the Anti-Terror Quartet that Doha would not yield to foreign pressure or intimidation and that it would continue to pursue a foreign policy which best serves Qatar's national interests.

As in the Arab Spring developments, Ankara and Doha utilized tenets of practical geopolitical reasoning in explaining their position throughout the blockade as well as justifying their concomitant policy decisions and actions. In several speeches and press releases, Turkish foreign policymakers called the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh-Cairo-Manama quartet's decisions and actions as *unlawful*, *unjust*, *non-Islamic*, *non-brotherly*, and *inhumane*, and in fact juxtaposed the victimhood of Doha with the international law and conventions as well as the holy month of Ramadan when the blockade started. Doha invoked the concepts of brotherhood and unity of the GCC and explained to its citizens and international audiences that the embargo was merely a malignant scheme on her sovereignty and independence. Via their respective media outlets and social media, Ankara and Doha emphasized their humanitarian activities in brotherly nations and how Abu Dhabi and Riyadh strove to nullify these efforts through their cooperation with counterrevolutionary forces, such as General Haftar, and non-Muslim actors, such as Israel. Using uncomplicated friend-enemy categorizations and evoking Muslim sensitivities, Ankara and Doha simplified an intricate geopolitical reality and presented it to their domestic, regional, and international audience and sought to justify the legitimacy of their claims.

FUTURE OUTLOOK OF TURKISH-QATARI RELATIONS: POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER GROWTH AND DRAWBACKS

The dynamics that shaped Turkey-GCC relations on the one hand and those that shaped Turkish-Qatari relations on the other were quite similar, in fact almost identical, until the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring laid bare the deep-seated concerns Saudi Arabia and the UAE had been harboring regarding the position of political Islam in regional politics and its potential impact on monarchies. For Riyadh

and Abu Dhabi, moderate Islamic movements that want to reconcile Islam and democracy, of which the MB was regarded an epitome at the outset of the protests, present an existential threat to the survival of their regimes. Thus, they attempted to preclude the region from falling into the hands of the MB, and by extension Turkey and Qatar, which were the champions of blending Islam and democracy. In contrast to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Ankara and Doha emerged as vocal advocates of positive change from authoritarianism to democracy and argued that participation of regular people in political decision-making is a panacea for most Middle Eastern socioeconomic ills. Against this backdrop, the political alignment Turkey and Qatar forged throughout the Arab Spring quickly transformed into a strategic partnership during the blockade on Qatar and have continued to intensify in the post-blockade period, which slowly evolved into a Post-Arab Spring era.

How sustainable are the current exceptionally strong Turkish-Qatari relations? Whether or not the current trajectory of relations is sustainable over the coming years is contingent upon a multitude of domestic, regional, and international dynamics. Will President Erdoğan and AKP continue to dominate Turkish politics? How will a potential leadership change, potentially a coalition government with differing priorities, affect relations? What direction will current financial and economic problems in Turkey take? How will another potentially massive exodus of Syrian refugees affect Turkish politics and Ankara's relations with the European Union (EU) and the neighboring Greece? Will Turkish pivot to the Middle East continue or will joining the EU become the primary policy again? How much will the current democratization initiatives in Qatar succeed? Where is Syria headed given Turkish concerns over separatist terrorism and superpower involvement in the Syrian quagmire? Where are U.S.-Iran and GCC-Iran relations headed? Will the old-seated disputes between Qatar and her Gulf neighbors re-emerge? How genuine are the current efforts to normalize relations between the Abu Dhabi-Riyadh and Ankara-Doha blocs? What course will the Gulf Arab-Israeli rapprochement take and how will it affect regional security arrangements? Where is Sino-American economic and military competition on the global arena, particularly on the Middle Eastern arena, headed?

No matter how these questions are answered and whatever domestic and regional developments take place, given Ankara's and Doha's strategic political, economic, and security objectives examined in this book as well as their need for regional allies and strategic partners to realize these goals in a turbulent Middle East, it looks increasingly more apt to claim that the Turkish-Qatari relations will continue to further deepen and grow in all areas. Even if a leadership or system change occurs in Turkish politics in the scheduled 2023 elections, or earlier through snap elections, Ankara will continue to value its partnership with Doha by virtue of the decade-old legacy of bureaucrats involved in the opening to the Middle East, Turkish geopolitical goals, Turkish military gains in Qatar in the form of airbases and lucrative weapons sales, and Ankara's economic exigencies.

Growth in relations will be further propelled by the currently unfolding geopolitical reality, that is, the Post-Arab Spring geopolitics. As discussed in several places in this book, Egypt is arguably the most important social and cultural center in the Middle East with its huge human capital and long history of leading the Arab world. After almost a decade of opposing the military coup that brought Sisi to power, Ankara and Doha were willing to reconcile with the Sisi government and took several steps to normalize relations and recognize his legitimacy. This is a groundbreaking development, debatably which announces the end of the Arab Spring in Egypt for Ankara and Doha, ushering in the Post-Arab Spring politics. However, this new period does not point to a full-scale Turkish-Qatari relinquishment of their geopolitical objectives. Rather, it heralds mutually beneficial opportunities with other actors, such as Cairo.

In fact, this emergent Post-Arab Spring reality can be seen in both capitals' overtures to Cairo in the form of direct bilateral talks following the January 2021 Al-Ula Summit. For example, a cordial meeting between Turkish and Egyptian intelligence chiefs and foreign ministers took place in April 2021. This was followed by another visit for exploratory talks in May 2021 by a Turkish delegation to Cairo led by Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Önal. In a TV program on June 1, 2021, Erdoğan stated Ankara's desire take advantage of the current opportunities and maximize cooperation with Cairo on a win-win basis, which then could have ripple effects on Turkey's relations with the Gulf countries. These meetings and statements from both sides point to a turning point in the Turkish position. Additionally, Cairo's decision to resist Emirati temptations to attack Turkish forces in Libya in the summer of 2020 could be interpreted as part of a desire for reconciliation. Similarly, Doha was rapidly mending relations with Cairo following the Al-Ula. For example, on May 25, 2021, Qatari foreign minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met with the Egyptian president Sisi in Cairo who then appointed an ambassador to Qatar on June 23, 2021, which was followed by the appointment of a Qatari ambassador to Egypt on July 29, 2021. These diplomatic moves showed that both sides were willing to improve relations.

In addition, Doha has already hosted an Arab League emergency meeting over the tensions regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Despite the tensions experienced during the Arab Spring, Qatar continued its large investments in different sectors in Egypt without interruption. In addition, Qatar has large investments in Ethiopia. Considering Qatar's investments in both countries, Cairo does not aim to gain economic and financial gains per se from its rapprochement with Doha. Since the dam built by Addis Ababa will put Egypt at a disadvantage in terms of sharing the waters of the Nile, Cairo, wanting to turn the construction of the dam in its favor, hopes to gain diplomatic and political returns capitalizing on Doha's investments in Ethiopia.

Along similar lines, as evidenced in Gaza after Israel's summer 2021 operations, both Ankara and Doha encouraged Cairo to take a more prominent role in Palestine, arguably as part of an emergent grand bargain between the three

actors. Through such strategy, Ankara and Doha made important strides in breaking the isolation that accompanied their Arab Spring policies and in returning to the Middle Eastern politics, while Egypt attempted to reclaim its once-central place in Middle Eastern politics and assuage its growing economic woes with more Qatari investments and potential financial packages.

For the Turkish side, the most significant potential drawback of the Turkish-Qatari relationship could be that the more Ankara and Doha deepen their relationship, the more Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, the two biggest economies of the Arab world, may drift further apart from Ankara. The economic disadvantage this situation creates for Ankara is undeniable. However, given the signs of a grand bargain mentioned above, Riyadh may soon join Cairo in easing tensions with the Ankara-Doha bloc. Growing differences between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, and the former's increasingly cordial relations with Tel Aviv, may indeed aggravate those differences and present more propitious opportunities for Riyadh to cooperate with Ankara and Doha. Finally, Biden administration's pledge to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, may augment Riyadh's security fears vis-à-vis Iran and may once again prompt Saudi leadership to view Sunni-majority Turkey as a balancer.

For the Qatari side, the most important downside in relations with Turkey is in fact similar: the more Doha intensifies its strategic partnership with Ankara, the more Abu Dhabi and Riyadh are going to grow reluctant to show genuine effort to mend their ties with Doha. A fully independent and assertive foreign policy of the Qatari side is not something Doha's neighbors wish for. However, as in the Turkish case, the nebulous geopolitical rapprochement with Cairo, which may soon be endorsed by Riyadh, may in fact turn this drawback into a significant advantage. In other words, if the Saudi leadership realizes and endorses the benefits Doha's ambitious foreign policy can bring to Riyadh, it can coordinate more closely with the latter.

Additionally, breeding of a negative perception of Qatar in Turkey, propagated by some anti-Gulf, anti-Arab circles, as a foreign actor gulping up strategically important and lucrative property and investment opportunities seems to emerge as an increasingly more urgent drawback. Addressing this handicap grows increasingly more difficult given the financial and economic hurdles Turkish people are currently experiencing. Against the context of relations examined in this book, three potential scenarios arise regarding what path Turkish-Qatari partnership can take, which are not mutually exclusive. In other words, one or a combination of more than one of these scenarios might occur concurrently.

RISING STARS AGAIN

Although significantly constrained by many domestic, regional, and international factors, both Turkey and Qatar might reverse some of their domestic and

regional policies and become equidistant political actors with stable economies again. For example, Turkey, under either Erdoğan or another leader, either under the Presidential or the Parliamentary system,[1] might decide to engage in dialogue and fix relations with her neighbors by reining some of its controversial decisions and policies in Syria, Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea. President Erdoğan's reception of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed, the National Security Adviser of the UAE, in the Presidential Palace in Ankara on August 18, 2021, can be seen as a step in this direction. Both parties voiced their hope for improving bilateral relations, and Erdoğan stated that the UAE was considering serious investments in Turkey.

Just about a week later, Erdoğan had a "friendly and positive" phone call with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince MbZ in order to "build bridges, maximize commonalities and work together with friends and brothers to ensure future decades of regional stability and prosperity for all peoples and countries of the region," in Emirati foreign minister Gargash's words ("UAE Hails 'Positive' Phone Call" 2021). Almost simultaneously, Sheikh Tahnoun met with Qatari Emir, discussing issues of stronger economic cooperation and trade relations, which was followed by Qatari Emir's visit to the UAE. The intensification of the Turkish and Emirati efforts to normalize relations since the al-Ula Summit finally seems to have paid off. During President Erdoğan's official visit to the UAE on 14 February 2022, both countries vowed to bolster political and economic relations and signed an array of important agreements, a move which was even described as a step toward building strategic relations by some Turkish and Emirati political pundits.

Moreover, Turkey might solve some of the domestic problems such as ensuring economic stability, by far the most consequential issue. Turkey's rapprochement with Abu Dhabi is fast unfolding and the emphasis on economic aspect of this reconciliation is a step in this direction. Abu Dhabi's strong economic outlook and its mammoth sovereign wealth fund, which stood at about $700 billion dollars in 2022 according to Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, can prove to be vitally important for Turkey to regain its past economic growth and development figures registered in recent years. Additionally, Turkey might show a renewed and convincing determination to pursue its historic goal of full EU membership, which decelerated and almost came to a complete halt in 2016. This rejuvenated interest can help pave the way for Ankara and Brussels to reach a more comprehensive and mutually beneficial plan on Syrian refugees being hosted in Turkey. Such policies would be well-received not just in neighboring capitals, the EU, the GCC but also in Washington DC. More importantly, a genuine effort to embrace EU principles and policies would reignite a positive trend in Turkey's political and diplomatic relations with other actors as well as in its economic and sociocultural indicators.

Similarly, Qatar might decide to fast-track and expand its initiative to enhance democratic processes as well as prioritize mutually beneficial and harmonious relations with neighbors over ambitious foreign policy goals. Overstretch of

capabilities generally produces adverse results for countries, probably more so for small states. Additionally, Ankara and Doha could choose to enhance their cooperation and coordination with Washington, as they have done in the case of Taliban. In such a scenario, not only the EU countries and the United States but also the masses in the turbulent Middle East would see Ankara and Doha as rising stars of the region once again, politically, economically, and culturally. Given the fact that the region is in a worse shape currently than the pre-Arab Spring era, a reverse of policies, that is, Post-Arab Spring policies, could diffuse tensions and re-introduce hope for positive change and democracy, two of the most important objectives Turkey and Qatar have pursued throughout their political alignment and strategic partnership.

There are already signs that the Rising Stars Again scenario is taking shape as evidenced in the developments taking place after the surprising Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. For example, Turkey expressed its willingness to collaborate with NATO, and Qatar provided mediation between the Western capitals, as well as China and Russia, and the Taliban and helped evacuate many at-risk people from the country. In a similar vein, on 31 January 2022, President Biden vowed to designate Qatar a major non-NATO ally, making Doha the third GCC capital with the status, which will enable Qatar to benefit from the special privileges in defense, trade, and security cooperation with the United States. Finally, in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, on the one hand, Turkey followed a policy close to Western countries by emphasizing the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and on the other hand Turkey made attempts to resolve the crisis before it could turn into a war by offering mediation between NATO and Russia. As can be understood from these examples, Ankara and Doha stand out as important partners and allies for Western capitals and other major countries in critical regional and global events, which provides serious clues about the possibility of this scenario coming true.

PRECIOUS LONELINESS AND ISOLATION CONTINUED

Ankara and Doha attach great importance to realizing their geopolitical goals and have faced fierce opposition from Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Damascus, and Cairo among others. This pushed them to draw closer to each other at the expense of being further isolated regionally and internationally. Both actors continue their assertive foreign policy and maintain, despite not as fervently and audaciously as before, their support for pro-democracy MB elements. This clashes not only with status quo monarchies of the Gulf but also with some EU members, most notably France, as well as Russia, Israel, and Iran, which have important military, economic, and energy interests in the countries affected by the Arab Spring.

The nature and trajectory of relations Turkey and Qatar individually have with other regional and global actors can occasionally exert excessive influence on the other partner's relations with third-party actors. For example, Doha's historically

unsettled problems with and grievances against Abu Dhabi and Manama can impose certain prejudices and pre-conceptions on Ankara's relations with the UAE and Bahrain. Similarly, Ankara's potential problems with Moscow or Cairo may prejudice Doha against a cordial relationship with Russia or Egypt. In other words, when/if Ankara's relations with Cairo sour, for example, this may have adverse an effect on Doha-Cairo relations, or when/if Doha wants to enhance relations with Moscow, due to potentially fraught relations between Moscow and Ankara, Doha's initiative may be received negatively by Turkish foreign policy elite. In brief, loneliness and isolation that originate from clashing with other regional and global actors can make Ankara and Doha more timid in their relations and may leave them further isolated from the region.

For instance, had Doha not partnered with Ankara and enjoyed cordial relations with Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, could Qatari foreign policymakers resist the temptation to normalize relations with Tel Aviv? Arguably, the influence of Ankara is decisively preventing consideration of such an option, at the least for the time being. Along similar lines, had Ankara not entered into a close strategic partnership with Doha, would Turkish foreign policymakers sacrifice their economic interests with Abu Dhabi and Riyadh so easily for the sake of Doha? In brief, current loneliness and isolation can feed further loneliness and isolation; in contrast, breaking this isolation can enhance each actor's, that is, Ankara's and Doha's, foreign policy maneuverability, independent of each other.

To this backdrop, it is no surprise that Turkey and Qatar have become increasingly more isolated from their neighbors, and by extension, the region. The scenario of *precious loneliness* and *isolation* suggests that both capitals will continue their assertive foreign policy, reject any form of reconciliation, and thus continue to remain isolated. Some might argue that as long as Ankara and Doha and their contenders do not engage in any nefarious schemes against each other, this situation can be managed, as has been evidenced in a plethora of conflicts since the beginning of the Arab Spring protests. However, neither Turkey nor Qatar can afford to remain in constant hostility with other regional actors, because new domestic, regional, and international developments require new alignments and partnerships in a fast-changing geopolitical landscape. In addition, neither the economic and financial situations nor the domestic support base Ankara and Doha used to enjoy in early 2010s are the same.

Lacking sufficient *strategic depth* and being a small state with limited hard-power capabilities, it will be increasingly costly for Qatar to continue such loneliness and isolation. In addition, the scenario of isolation and loneliness means unexpected economic and social catastrophes for Doha, as evidenced during the blockade. Similarly, although enjoying much strategic depth compared to her partner, Turkey needs other regional and international actors to pursue a wider range of geopolitical goals and to preclude risky security developments at her borders and beyond. Also, Turkish economy is largely dependent on Western

countries and her neighbors, which suggests that this scenario is not sustainable. Ankara does not possess sufficiently vast resources that could be used to back up its coffers in times of regional and international crises. Additionally, should circumstances so oblige Ankara and Doha to prolong a situation of loneliness and isolation, this could push them, particularly Turkey, toward the Russian and Chinese sphere of influence that would be regarded as an undesirable scenario by both the EU and the United States.

END OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Another scenario, probably the least plausible one among the three, is the collapse of the strategic partnership between Turkey and Qatar. Domestic and regional developments might instigate either one of the actors to end the partnership. For example, if more (Gulf) Arab countries would join the Abraham Accords that were announced in August 2020 and normalize their relations with Israel, this could push Qatar to adopt a normalization agreement with Tel Aviv in return for a more pronounced security commitment from the United States and/or Israel in face of a military aggression, which was an imminent threat right at the beginning of the embargo. Such a threat could come from Iran or even from the bigger Gulf Arab countries. Moreover, although highly implausible, Qatar could be squeezed and forced to pick a side in case of a potential attack on Iran by an alliance of United States, Israel, and other Gulf Arab countries in order to secure her lifeline natural fields shared with Tehran. If such a situation were to occur, and Ankara opts for siding with Tehran due to fears of an unprecedented refugee influx [Iran's influence on developments in Syria is undeniably great] and a massive energy crisis that could cripple the whole Turkish economy, can Turkey continue her strategic partnership with Doha?

Despite highly improbable, such a scenario would be devastating for Turkey because it could nullify Turkish military gains in Qatar as well as reduce them in other places such as Somalia and Libya. Turkey cannot afford such adverse consequences given her years of diplomatic, political, and military investments in these places. Additionally, the economic and financial burden this could place on Turkey would be considerably high. Thus, it can be safely argued that Ankara would not welcome such a scenario. Similarly, Qatar needs other allies and partnerships and would be in a hard situation if her relations with Turkey were to be harmed. Also, as explained in the earlier chapters, Qatar has a handsome amount of money invested in various sectors in Turkey. Consequently, Doha would not risk such a scenario or would closely coordinate it with Turkey should such a possibility emerge.

Overall, not any one of these scenarios seems possible on their own given an array of constraints and high stakes for both Ankara and Doha. The most

plausible scenario could be something in between or a combination of the first and the second scenarios because neither Ankara nor Doha appears to be willing to relinquish their geopolitical aspirations and determination to champion positive change, nor to abandon their long-term geopolitical goals and determinations, nor to renounce and reverse their hard-earned economic and military gains. Similarly, both actors are reluctant to quit their cooperation and partnership because they derive substantial political, military, and economic gains from this relationship. Thus, a combination of the first and the second scenarios would not only help both actors recover some of their past prestige and standing in regional and international arenas but also ensure realization of some, or even most, of their initial geopolitical and economic objectives. Easing tensions with their rivals with some form of concessions, as evidenced in reconciliation with Cairo, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi, Ankara and Doha might have a better chance to realize their geopolitical and economic goals.

In conclusion, Turkey and Qatar have consistently maintained a harmonious relationship since the turn of the millennium and transformed it into a strategic partnership in a relatively short time. In all likelihood, this special relationship will only continue to grow for the foreseeable future, with mutual geopolitical, economic, military, and security gains for both sides. While some may argue that this arrangement was established by chance and convenience, it has since become clear that Turkey and Qatar are guided by a shared sense of values and interests as well as a genuine desire to seek better cooperation with one another and with other actors for long-term benefits. Given Qatar's growing economic strength, especially the growing Qatari Investment Authority portfolio, and Turkey's military power, particularly with her recent achievements in the field of highly innovative drone technology and its game-changing applications in the battlefield, there is much room for more mutually beneficial growth. If Turkey and Qatar continue to work sincerely toward and realize the conditions explained in the Rising Stars scenario, there is no obstacle before expanding this partnership and attracting other regional heavyweights to it..

NOTE

1. The main Turkish opposition parties, i.e. the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Good Party (IYI Party) stated that a return to the parliamentary system is one of the most urgent items on their agenda. İYİ Parti leader Meral Akşener even stated that she wanted to become a Prime Minister, not a President.

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