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**REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER - ANALYZING CAUSES
BEHIND QATAR`S DIPLOMATIC CRISIS**

Bachelor's Thesis

International Relations

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading. The document length is 8633 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	4
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
1. BACKGROUND	8
1.1. Thirteen Demands	8
2. CRITICISM LAID ON QATAR	10
2.1. Arab Spring	10
2.1.1. The Case Syria	11
2.1.2. Al Jazeera	12
2.2. Terrorism	15
2.2.1. Muslim Brotherhood	15
2.3. Security	17
2.3.1. Iran	17
2.3.2. Turkey	19
3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	21
3.1. Small States Theory	21
3.2. Small State Qatar and Big State Saudi Arabia	22
CONCLUSION	26
LIST OF REFERENCES	28

ABSTRACT

The current embargo laid against Qatar by its neighboring Persian Gulf countries; Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, and their ally Egypt has been going on longer than expected. The embargo took place on June 5th 2017 after alleged cyber-attack against Qatar`s News Agency. In order to lift sanctions against it, Qatar had 10 days to fulfill 13 demands laid by embargo imposing countries. Qatar was unwilling to bend and give up its legitimate sovereignty, thus the embargo still stands. The aim of this thesis is to analyze past instances that led Qatar to confront the current diplomatic crisis. The 13 demands given to Qatar by embargo imposing countries are serving as a framework for this research. Comparative research analyzing current and past relations between Qatar and embargo imposing countries is conducted, and further analyzing is made by using neorealist balance of power theory from the perspective of Stephen Walt.

Keywords: embargo, balance of power, neorealism, diplomatic crisis, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, cyber-attack, Persian Gulf

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GNP – Gross National Product

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IR – International Relations

LNG – Liquefied Natural Gas

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UN – United Nations

US – United States

INTRODUCTION

Unlike predicted, the embargo laid against Qatar on June 5th 2017 still stands without any signs of mutual agreements between the parties involved to overcome the embargo. The ongoing diplomatic crisis is not one of its kind for Qatar, there has been previous confrontations with parties involved. The most recent ones took place in 2002 when Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Doha, and was followed in 2014 when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE suspended ties with Qatar. The chilling relationship at the time was due the criticism laid on Saudi king during Al-Jazeera broadcasting, and later on because of the Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, labeled as terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE. The current embargo was followed by 13 demands in order Qatar to fulfill to get embargo lifted against it. The list included demands to shut down Qatar's broadcasting network Al-Jazeera, cut ties with Iran, hand over wanted persons and stop funding terrorist groups such as Muslim Brotherhood (Falk 2018). Many of those things pointed out in the list given to Qatar were concentrating on Qatar's behavior and policies it implemented during the Arab Spring when it changed its posture from mediator to interventionist. "Qatar's political stability, economic wealth, ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and international reputation as a mediator gave it the confidence to take an interventionist role during the Arab Spring." (Ulrichsen 2014). The reputation Qatar gained during the uprising was yet to follow him years after.

I chose my thesis topic regarding current Qatar diplomatic crisis in order to analyze the crisis by using neorealist balance of power theory, which would enlighten the causal connection of Qatar's past behavior. The crisis bears a threat for the geopolitical interests of countries such as the US that would benefit from quick settlements between the parties. Neorealism was chosen among other theories because of its nature to explain states differences in distribution of capabilities and how these factors are shaping the possible outcomes (McKeown 2014), and specifically Stephen Walt's version from the theory of alliance formation because it concentrates on small state behavior (Walt 1985). In order to proceed with my research I needed to find out which instances between Qatar and embargo imposing countries were behind the crisis, how did Qatar ended up to this situation? Rather few research were already using IR theories to analyze the current crisis and the most important for my research was Asisian's (The Qatar Crisis, its Regional Implications and the US National Interest) published in Small Wars Journal 2018 which analyzed the crisis by using different IR theories. This was still minor part of his research. My chosen literature was mostly

from secondary sources, including articles, political projects and books. I also chose some primary sources to study from IMF, UN and governmental documents from the US and Saudi Arabia. The literature was carefully selected by using academic tools such as ResearchGate, JStor and Taylor & Francis. It was notable that there are few researchers that dominates the research, such as Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (Qatar`s foreign policies overall) and David Roberts (Muslim Brotherhood and Qatar relations). Gause 3rd is well known from the research related to Saudi Arabia and historical events. Material was widely available, excluding books.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze past instances that led Qatar to confront the current diplomatic crisis. And to find more clear reasoning which factors led Saudi Arabia among UAE, Bahrain and Egypt to impose an embargo against Qatar in 2017. And also analyze Qatar`s behavior from the neorealist perspective of alliance formation. The 13 demands given to Qatar by embargo imposing countries are serving as a framework in order comparing demands and Qatar`s previous actions. The research uses analytical, theoretical and comparative approaches.

Thesis consists of three main chapters. The first chapter describes main points from the current crisis and 13 demands that were laid upon. The second chapter is analyzing and comparing demands and past events that have taken place during the Arab Spring. The second chapter is also analyzing accusations Qatar faces regarding regional safety from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt. The third and final chapter focuses on the theoretical perspective from small states and neorealist balance of power theory. And finally analyzes those instances that were pointed out in the second chapter using Walt`s existing theory of alliance formation.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Thirteen Demands

On June fifth 2017 a small and wealthy Persian Gulf country was facing an extreme diplomatic crisis, when Saudi Arabia together with its allies Bahrain, UAE and Egypt imposed an embargo against Qatar, whereas Yemen, Libya and Maldives followed the lead, but later on withdrew themselves from the embargo. The embargo was meant to isolate Qatar from its neighbors by imposing total restrictions to use their land, sea and airspace, and restricting access to and from Qatar by closing Saudi borders. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE gave Qatari citizens visiting or living these countries, two weeks' time to leave the country. They also asked their citizens and diplomats to leave Qatar immediately, and further traveling to Qatar was made illegal. The embargo came into force following alleged cyber-attack against Qatar and its News agency (Jones 2017). Embargo imposing countries also claimed Qatar of funding terrorism and therefore being a security threat for the region (Ulrichsen 2017a). Embargo as a trade policy has been lucrative instrument among foreign policies for centuries. It is specifically used to attract behavioral changes in a country, without using any armed forces (United Nations Security Council 2019).

Two weeks after the embargo started, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt handed over thirteen demands for Qatar to fulfil in order of lifting the sanctions against Qatar. These thirteen demands were (Falk 2018):

- “1. To restrain diplomatic ties with Iran, and close its diplomatic missions there. Expel members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards and cut off any joint military cooperation with Iran. Only trade and commerce with Iran that complies with US and international sanctions will be permitted.
2. Sever all ties to “terrorist organizations”, specifically the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State, al-Qaida and Lebanon’s Hezbollah. Formally declare those entities as terrorist groups.
3. Shut down Al-Jazeera and its affiliate stations.
4. Shut down news outlets that Qatar funds, directly and indirectly, including Arabi21, Rassd, Al Araby Al-Jadeed and Middle East Eye.
5. Immediately terminate the Turkish military presence currently in Qatar and end any joint military cooperation with Turkey inside of Qatar.

6. Stop all means of funding for individuals, groups or organizations that have been designated as terrorists by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, the United States and other countries.
7. Hand over "terrorist figures" and wanted individuals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain to their countries of origin. Freeze their assets, and provide any desired information about their residency, movements and finances.
8. End interference in sovereign countries' internal affairs. Stop granting citizenship to wanted nationals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Revoke Qatari citizenship for existing nationals where such citizenship violates those countries' laws.
9. Stop all contacts with the political opposition in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain. Hand over all files detailing Qatar's prior contacts with and support for those opposition groups.
10. Pay reparations and compensation for loss of life and other, financial losses caused by Qatar's policies in recent years. The sum will be determined in coordination with Qatar.
11. Align itself with the other Persian Gulf and Arab countries militarily, politically, socially and economically, as well as on economic matters, in line with an agreement reached with Saudi Arabia in 2014.
12. Agree to all the demands within 10 days of it being submitted to Qatar, or the list becomes invalid. The document doesn't specify what the countries will do if Qatar refuses to comply.
13. Consent to monthly audits for the first year after agreeing to the demands, then once per quarter during the second year. For the following 10 years, Qatar would be monitored annually for compliance.”

Qatar`s response to these demands was clear, they were unwilling to bend and undermine their sovereignty. The international audience was urged to confront the crisis and provide diplomatic tools to reconcile between the involving parties. Academic disciplines were foreseeing quick settlements, and the demands were seen as an act against international law and sovereignty (Falk 2018). Unlike predicted, almost two years after the embargo was imposed the crisis still stands today without any signs of mutual agreement.

2. CRITICISM LAID ON QATAR

2.1. Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was an uprising originating from Tunisia. The uprising broke out during December 2010, and not shortly after protests rapidly swept through the whole Arab World year after. During that time many monarchies in the region were facing reform requisites from their citizens, and this led to the overthrow of authoritarian rulers in Tunis, Libya and Egypt. People in the Arab world were demanding political reformations, including democracy and more freedom, as many of the states were led by authoritarians, where citizens are living under tight government control without the ability to vote, influence politics, or are lacking the freedom of speech related to politics, and despotic rulers. Also unemployment among the youth and high food prices increased the dissatisfaction in many countries, and were playing a huge role behind the Arab Spring and the causes (QadirMushtaq & Afzal 2017).

During that time Qatar was one of the least affected states in the region (Bank, Richter & Sunik 2014). Reasons behind this calmness was laid mainly based on Qatar's domestic politics and the lack of large groups of opponents. The amount of Qatari nationals in the country compared to foreign workers is low, those holding Qatar citizenship is estimated to be 15% of the country's population in total. As being the wealthiest country (measuring GDP) and holding the third largest gas reserve in the world, Qatar has had the ability to grant generous benefits to its citizens including free education, guaranteed job provided by the government, free healthcare, water, electricity and other utilities (Bank, Richter & Sunik 2014). To be noted that foreign workers and non-citizens are not benefitting from such incentives, those are specifically indicated to Qatari citizens only. In 2008 the GDP per capita per citizen was estimated to be 448 246\$ (Ulrichsen 2012). The wealth of the nation, and generous spending for the benefit of citizens has kept the population mainly steady and without the need to protest against the government. While neighboring countries insisted democracy, according to statistics only 33% of the Qatari youth were in favor of democracy during 2010, when the same number in UAE was more than 70 percent (Ulrichsen 2012). Also high amount of Qatari citizens are included to the ruling family of Al Thani, where strong laws and regulations are protecting the ruling elite.

2.1.1. The Case Syria

The international audience was used to see Qatar as a mediator in international field but the uprising changed its foreign policy completely and the country reformed itself as an interventionist. While many other Persian Gulf monarchies were forced to concentrate on their domestic issues and politics because of the uprising, Qatar did take the advantage of its political stability, and used it to widen its international involvement during the Arab Spring. It used its position as wealthy and creditable Persian Gulf country, and started to support opponents widely across the Middle East, including in Egypt, Libya and Syria, while supporting Islamist groups and Muslim Brotherhood. It also positioned itself as western ally to confront humanitarian crisis in Libya, and helped Tunis and Egypt financially to recover from the uprising (Ulrichsen 2014).

Qatar cautiously was in favor of the uprising and overthrow of authoritarian leaders (excluding Bahrain), even though many of its neighbors such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates were struggling with dissatisfaction of their citizens. As being aware of the Saudi influence regarding its closest neighbors, Qatar did not take such big role to influence Yemen or Bahrain outcomes from the Arab Spring, but rather stood by the side of Saudi Arabia and other GCC monarchies. Qatar's foreign policy during the Arab Spring and before the Syrian crisis can be seen unilateral, but policies affecting to its neighboring monarchies and regional issues were still mainly solved following Saudi officials and their lead in GCC (Ulrichsen 2014). But during the uprising in Syria, Qatar took opposite direction, and without mutual agreement made its own approach of the conflict and found itself in rivalry with Saudi Arabia (Hokayem 2014).

The uprising reached Syria 2011, where opponents of Assad's regime demanded the downfall of the regime. This got Sunni Qatar and Saudi Arabia to go against Shia regime and Bashar Al-Assad, where they took the side of rebel opponents and extremist groups. The Syrian conflict is seen mainly as a domestic battle between the Sunnis and the Shiites, but as well to be regional because of the strong GCC and Iranian involvement (Khatib 2017). The strong GCC involvement to the crisis can be best described of the fear of Iranian influence in Syria, and its spreading to other neighboring countries, and on the other hand as a fear of instability in the region due Islamist groups such as Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS (Khatib 2017). These factors led GCC countries to support opponents by providing military and financial assets. The Syrian conflict has also fueled internal restless inside the GCC, mainly between the Saudi Arabia (supported by the UAE) and Qatar, that were fighting their own proxy wars in Syria.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar were both against Assad's regime, but they chose their own allies from the opponents and rebels groups, and also regional companions (Hokayem 2014). "Saudi Arabia's broad range of contacts in Syria comprised liberals, bureaucrats, businessmen and tribal chiefs with traditional ties in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as Muslim clerics of various persuasions, including Salafists" (Hokayem 2014). From the regional allies, Saudi Arabia was able to induce UAE, and Jordan to join the side of Saudi Arabia. "Qatar's list of contacts was shorter, comprising secularists, businessmen and, most importantly, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and its associates" (Hokayem 2014). Turkey came to join Qatar, convinced by Qatar's current role in the region and its changed foreign policy. Qatar took advantage of its growing regional reputation, and became to be the leading arms supplier to the rebels in northern Syria, and its total contributions as aid to these group is estimated to be as high as 1 billion dollars (Khatib 2017). Saudi Arabia and Qatar had growing tensions because of the rivalry over the leadership of Free Syrian Army, and fueling other opponent groups (Hokayem, 2014). Many of these aided rebels were seen as a threat in Saudi Arabia and UAE, especially the Muslim Brotherhood that opposes these monarchies and is trying to undermine the authority of rulers. In 2013 at Arab League Summit Qatar did something that other GCC countries were concerned about, they gave Syria's seat to the political opposition, which were allowed to open an embassy to Doha later on (Hokayem 2014).

Some scholars argue that the effect of continuing rivalry between the Saudi and Qatar led coalitions was the formation of stronger extremist groups such as ISIS (Hokayem 2014, Khatib 2017). The concern about ISIS and its spillover effects around the world overpowered the main rivalry between Assad's regime and the opponents, and took the leading role in Syria, which engaged the West even further to the conflict. The rivalry seen between Qatar and Saudi Arabia also made the relationship between these two countries more troubled. The coalition made between Turkey and Qatar, was to increase Qatar's power, and for return weaken Saudi influence in the region.

2.1.2. Al Jazeera

New media was playing huge role during the Arab Spring, these platforms gave people place to discuss and share ideas related to politics, and compare living conditions with neighboring countries. In many Middle Eastern countries governments have been banning foreign television channels and websites to decrease political restlessness and opposition formations. But this time Facebook, Twitter, text messages and Al Jazeera gave the opportunity for people to participate

widely through different media outlets. One of those outlets was Al Jazeera, a broadcasting network originating from Qatar. Al Jazeera and its affiliates (Al Jazeera Arabic, Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera Mubasher, Al Jazeera Balkans, and Al Jazeera Documentary) were known before the Arab Spring for being the most liberal television channels in the region showing real news while focusing on the politics of the Middle East. Al Jazeera has been judged because of its pro-US stance it has taken, indeed Al Jazeera English is more “liberal” than Al Jazeera Arabic because the network reaches westerners that are used to the freedom of press. In the 20th century Al Jazeera was seen as a hope of liberalization of the politics in the Persian Gulf region, but the real outcome was quite opposite as monarchies around the region harshened their media control and were launching more laws of limiting the access to media outside state control (Tétreault 2011). Between the years first published 1996 and 2012, it came obvious that Al Jazeera started to resemble more of a pro-islamist channel than it did before while being embraced by its golden free press times (Maziad 2018).

During the uprising Al Jazeera showed broadcastings from demonstrations in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and Libya, but got critics from the public about not showing demonstrations from Bahrain, where the regime was destroying Shia villages and mosques. Instead Al Jazeera was showing broadcasts from Manama (capital of Bahrain) where streets were calm since it was not the center of action itself but the country side was. This was due the regional policies yet Qatar knew that intervening to regional problems would not be good for the channel, nor the country (Tétreault 2011). For example 2002 Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador from Doha because of the Al Jazeera`s criticism towards the king, this freezed countries diplomatic relations for years. In the 13 points list laid on 2017 Saudi Arabia among UAE, Bahrain and Egypt insisted that Al Jazeera network needs to be shut down immediately. Especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE felt threatened by the negative publicity towards Saudi ruling family and criticism laid on Abu Dhabi. Also Egypt has not been pleased for Al Jazeera`s views on Egyptian affairs, and the wide distribution of pro-Muslim Brotherhood stance.

Public diplomacy is defined as “efforts by the government of one nation to influence public or elite opinion in a second nation, for the purpose of turning the foreign policy of the target nation to its advantage” (Maziad 2018). According to Samuel-Azran “international and regional broadcasting has long been a means through which governments implement their public diplomacy strategies” (Samuel-Azran 2013). As being state owned and sponsored, Al Jazeera has had enormous role as a tool for public diplomacy in Qatar. Al Jazeera has formed its own hybrid form of public diplomacy, combining state sponsored propaganda and having the credibility of private owned

networks (Samuel-Azran 2013). During the uprising it was seen how well Qatar took advantage of Al Jazeera and its role as a diplomacy tool, public opinion was influenced by showing live broadcasting from the protests, especially in Egypt. Al Jazeera also played a huge role encouraging Muslim Brotherhood, and going against Mubarak's administration. The favoritism towards Morsi and the new government was visible throughout Qatar's foreign policy and in Al Jazeera in the time of uprising.

Al Jazeera opened a new branch during the uprising in Egypt 2011; Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr (Live from Egypt), but was forced to shut down the channel 2014 by Egyptian government, because of the pro-Muslim Brotherhood stance it had took (Maziad 2018). This was right after Sisi took over the presidency from Muslim Brotherhood member Morsi. During and after the Arab Spring many newcomers that came to work for Al Jazeera were non-Qataris, and many of those Muslim Brotherhood members that fled from Egypt and was welcomed by Qatar government. This increased the pro-Brotherhood stance, and made many former journalists to resign (Maziad 2018). As being a guardian of Muslim Brotherhood Qatar government showed its own political agenda through Al Jazeera which might also be called as propaganda, but the channel also had Muslim Brotherhood members working. The presence of Muslim Brotherhood members complicated the situation, was the channel under the influence of Qatar government or individuals?

The role of a mediator that took a form of interventionist in Qatar's foreign policy during and after the Arab Spring resembles well with the policies of Al Jazeera, this was especially the case concerning Egypt and Syria. As Muslim Brotherhood imposes a strategic threat against Sisi and its administration Egypt wants the Al Jazeera to be shut down completely. As backing up Sisi's administration Saudi Arabia and the UAE have had their share from Al Jazeera and the critics towards their monarchies. The uprising showed that in the future Qatar might use Al Jazeera against these regimes again. The usefulness to use Al Jazeera as a public diplomacy has encounter problems for Qatar government after the uprising as it has been accused of using it as a propaganda tool more than being privately owned network.

2.2. Terrorism

2.2.1. Muslim Brotherhood

During the Syria uprising 2014, Saudi Arabia together with the UAE announced Muslim Brotherhood to be officially a terrorist group (Khatib 2017). Many of those demands that were laid on June 2017, had something to do with Qatar and their pro-stance towards the Muslim Brotherhood; such as severing all the ties connected to terrorist groups (especially Muslim Brotherhood), shut down Al Jazeera (used by Muslim Brotherhood for spreading propaganda), stop funding terrorist groups and individuals that are announced terrorists by UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain and hand over terrorist figures wanted in their origin countries (many Muslim Brotherhood figures have been residing in Qatar since 1960s).

The Muslim Brotherhood and the fear of its power regarding UAE and Saudi Arabia is one of the reasons Qatar is now facing diplomatic crisis with its neighboring monarchies, and with Egypt (Freer 2018). Qatar has not declared Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist organization like wanted by the embargo imposing countries. Especially Saudi Arabia is concerned of the Muslim Brotherhood influence in the region. This concern is illustrated from the member of Saudi elite saying that “The Saudi royal family looks at the Muslim Brotherhood as hands down the most serious threat to its existence. Its Shia minority doesn’t come even close.” (Khatib 2017). Also Egypt has something to worry about, since during the Arab Spring Muslim Brotherhood member Mohamed Morsi was elected as president, and historically this was the first president in Egypt elected democratically. Saudi Arabia and UAE were providing financial support to the Egypt while Morsi was overthrown by Sisi (Ulrichsen 2014). This is also not the first time Qatar is in the middle of sanctions laid by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain because of the Muslim Brotherhood links it has, since it happened already back in 2014 when these GCC monarchies withdrew their ambassadors from Doha (Roberts 2014b). While Saudi Arabia announced Muslim Brotherhood to be a terrorist organization 2014, it also expressed the consequences to those countries and individuals that are going to support Muslim Brotherhood in the future. The dispute was settled months later while parties involved were stating that “the GCC rift had been resolved internally and that Qatar would

deport up to fifteen Gulf nationals allegedly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood” (Ulrichsen 2014).

Muslim Brotherhood is said to be the oldest and most successful Islamist group in the world, seeking to establish Islamist society, while being the head of legislative power itself (Rubin 2010). The group was formed 1928 by a school teacher name Hassan al-Banna in Egypt, where it slowly grew reaching half million members by the 1940s. At this point it had already gained advocacy in the neighboring countries, and spread out to Jordan, Syria and to Palestine. From the beginning of its creation Muslim Brotherhood's main principle was to educate its members to live according to the Islamic Law and reform the western influenced society (Boulby 2011). During the 1950s the group took more aggressive stance, and tried to assassinate the president of Egypt that refused to implement Sharia law, which rather saw Egypt as a secular, and socialist country. This led to many executions and imprisonment of the members, and created more revolutionary form of an organization concentrating on overthrowing authoritarian Muslim leaders, and introducing the Sharia law (Boulby 2011).

Today Muslim Brotherhood is an organization formed of different branches in the Arab world the oldest one in Egypt, and others being in Jordan, Syria, and Hamas in Palestine (only branch holding political position currently). These branches are working in solitary, and especially in a country they represent. The groups are anti-western and anti-Israel, but their main enemies are found from the Arab governments, including the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and UAE. Their main agenda is to reform Arab countries and their political systems, and for the embargo imposing countries this is “major political threat to their governments” (Freer 2018).

Historically speaking Qatar and Saudi Arabia have both funded and fueled Muslim Brotherhood, as both of these countries have hosted their members for decades. During the 50s and 60s Muslim Brotherhood members were fleeing from Egypt to Qatar and Saudi Arabia right after 1952 revolution which took place in Egypt. Qatar welcomed sophisticated Egyptians for teaching purposes. At the time Qatar was still poor, and its people were uneducated. Also in Saudi Arabia Brotherhood members started to gain foothold in administration due the shortage of educated people (Beranek 2009). Abdul-Badi Saqr was the first one to arrive in Qatar 1954, and he took the charge of leading the National library of Doha, and was nominated to be the director of education (Roberts 2014a). Later on this increased the presence of Muslim Brotherhood members in Qatar while “allowing Qatar to develop an educational system that did not rely on Saudi Arabia and

allowed Qatar's elite to play politics, supporting different pan-regional causes at different times” (Roberts 2014c).

But unlike Saudi Arabia, Qatar never gave any administrative foothold to the Muslim Brotherhood, but mainly kept them a part of their educational system beside Wahhabi scholars, by doing so it decreased the Saudi influence domestically. The presence of Muslim Brotherhood members grew also in Saudi Arabia during the 1950`s which created eventually Saudi Islamist movement called *Sahwa*. After the Persian Gulf War decades later the US presence in the Kingdom grew and Brotherhood members came to protest against it fiercely, including the Saudi affiliate *Sahwa*. Collision between the regime and protesters was inevitable. In the aftermath during 1995-2002 many of the Muslim Brotherhood members and affiliates in the country were deported from Saudi Arabia as accused of being the “source of all evil in the Kingdom” (Lacroix 2017). Later on the local *Sahwa* was accepted quietly, in return it did not have the right to criticize the government in anyway, this neutralized the relationship between the Kingdom and Muslim Brotherhood. The growing influence of the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring led Saudi Arabia to go against the organization, which eventually went as far as banning all Muslim Brotherhood books, and criminalized the supporting of the organization, and at the same time appointed Muslim Brotherhood for being a terrorist group.

While Qatar kept hosting its Muslim Brotherhood members (excluding few they deported after 2014 diplomatic crisis), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt demonized the organization in a fear of losing their administrative power. Qatar bears a threat in the eyes of Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt while supporting Muslim Brotherhood members financially and offering safe haven to its members. The continuing support for Muslim Brotherhood members from the side of Qatar government, and agreements made with Saudi Arabia to align itself regarding policies related to Muslim Brotherhood are giving mixed signals and are not serving well the officials of Saudi Arabia.

2.3. Security

2.3.1. Iran

Iran`s population is more than all the GCC countries together, this fact, and the differing regional and foreign policies have been seen traditionally as a threat for regional stability among the GCC countries (Vasil 2018). The 13 demands list given to Qatar included notion where “Qatar must shut down diplomatic posts in Iran, expel any members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and only conduct trade and commerce with Iran that complies with US sanctions” (Falk 2018). The convergence of ties between Qatar and Iran has raised concerns among GCC member states, especially in Saudi Arabia whom is constantly competing with Iran to gain the regional supremacy. After Donald Trump took the position as the US president, he started to back up his allies Saudi Arabia and UAE rather than Qatar, whom it saw as a threat for regional security because of the relations between the Qatar and Iran (Ulrichsen 2017a).

The embargo against Qatar was laid after Trump's visit to the region which shows strongly the “favoritism” towards its closest allies in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and UAE. The anti-Iran stance from Trump's side is nothing new. In 2015 US together with five other states signed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, to ensure the peaceful nuclear program and to easen Iran's sanctions laid by these countries. The peaceful progress with Iran was seen as a threat for Saudi hegemony and was criticized strongly among the Saudi officials (Vakil 2018). During and before his presidency Donald Trump has given several statements where he has made clear of its stance against Iran and the JCPOA agreement ratified by Barack Obama during his presidency. Later on 2018 Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA agreement made with Iran ensuring itself a lot of embracing from Saudi officials (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2018). Before Trump's withdrawal Saudi Arabia strongly criticized Iran`s close connections to terrorist groups, and it's actions of causing sectarian confrontations in the region (Yemen, Bahrain, Syria) (Vakil 2018). The growing regional presence of Iran during and after 2012 in Syria has raised concerns in Saudi Arabia, and the bilateral liaison between Qatar and Iran has fueled the insecurities even more inside the kingdom (Ulrichsen 2017a).

Saudi Arabia has used its power towards its smaller GCC neighbors including Qatar, for pressuring them to follow its anti-Iranian policies. Despite of its effort Qatar has kept its self-determination and has maintained bilateral relations with Iran. Qatar bears with Iran mostly because of the financial interests. Together with Iran they are sharing the world largest gas field North Field and have had several trade and security pacts. Countries close proximity has also increased their “mutual understanding”. The relationship between Qatar and Iran started to warm up during the 1990's. 2006 Qatar voted against resolution 1969 during the United Nations Security Council

meeting that were supposed to impose sanctions towards Iran because of its nuclear activities (Vakil 2018). Later on Qatar bend align with international community and was in favor of further sanctions. This didn't cause any troubles for the relationship, and diplomatic relationship continued. In 2010 Qatar together with Iran signed a security pact, to symbolize Qatar`s independent foreign policies (Vakil 2018). Unlike Saudi Arabia Qatar was pleased from the JCPOA agreement, and furthered the relationship between the countries by concluding agreements related to trade including free trade zones in Iranian Port of Bushehr, Doha and Al Ruwais (Vakil 2018).

In April 2017, Qatar was once again in the middle of criticism while paying 700 million dollars to Iran linked terrorist group Kata'ib al-Hezbollah in return of Qatar's royal family members, that were held hostage by the group in Iraq (Gordon, Yadin & Heistein 2017). Qatar officials have denied such claims, and insisted that instead of giving money directly to the Hezbollah group money have been given to Iraq officials. This led Saudi Arabia together with Bahrain, UAE and Egypt, of accusing Qatar of contributing funding of terrorism. Not long after the hostages were relieved on May 23 Qatar News Agency posted a statement given by the Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad al-Thani, praising the importance of Iran as a regional power, and affirmed the close relations with Iran, Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Next day officials rushed to convince that the News Agency was hacked. According to some researchers such as Marc Jones, the accusations about hacking are most likely true, but still unsolved issue (Jones 2017). Fingers are pointing Russia, UAE and the US, but evidence are lacking for further examination of the issue.

While the embargo continues, Qatar has come even closer with Iran together with other GCC states; Oman and Kuwait (Lynch 2017). Right after embargo was set against Qatar, Iran rushed to offer its help by providing food supplies and unrestricted airspace for Qatar Airways. Iranian non-oil exports to Qatar has increased 100 percent after the embargo started (Vakil 2018). The closer bonding between Iran and Qatar might destabilize the region even more, if the embargo imposed against Qatar will continue since this might increase security pressures against Saudi Arabia (Asisian 2018).

2.3.2. Turkey

Qatar and Turkey are sharing long history together as enemies and friends, starting from the times of Ottoman Empire. Today Qatar and Turkey share similar geopolitics interests in the Persian Gulf

region, and have formed alliances concerning regional clashes, such as in Palestine and Syria (Aras & Akpinar 2017). The given 13 points list insisted Qatar to remove Turkey`s troops from Qatar`s soil where Turkey today is holding one of its military bases (Falk 2018). The military base which had been ratified as the first Turkish base in the Middle East in 2016 is hosting over 100 Turkish soldiers (Aras & Akpinar 2017). There have been questioning about the reasons why Turkey wanted to establish the base, but according to current Turkish president Erdogan, the purpose was not to go against other GCC countries that might feel threatened about the military base presence, but to widen co-operation with its ally. Qatar is hosting the military base for two possible reasons; it undermines the Saudi hegemony in the region, and as being NATO member Turkey`s presence guarantees the military help from other member states if it encounters any hostility (Asisian 2018).

During the Arab Spring Turkey and Qatar found themselves of supporting same ideologies, and often same causes. Both of the countries were in favor of Muslim Brotherhood and found themselves going against Saudi Arabia and UAE, which were strongly opposing the movement. Turkey and Qatar were certain that Muslim Brotherhood would take the lead during the revolutionary times, and saw that backing up the organization would secure their geopolitical goals. Both countries had the position as being mediators before the uprising together with strong western endorsement, but during the Arab Spring both countries revealed themselves as interventionists. In Palestine both Turkey and Qatar were supporting Hamas, by doing so they both polished their image as being against radicalism, embracing democracy and reformation in the Middle East, and backing up fellow Muslims (Pala & Aras 2015). In Syria these two countries turned against their old ally Assad after he had disregarded previous advises from Qatar and Turkey to make reformations demanded by the Syrian people (Pala & Aras, 2015). Both countries were to become part of the opposition and their funding. One reason for Turkey to interfere Middle East crisis was its constant endeavor to have its share from Middle East markets, which Syria was providing. The uprising was good opportunity for Turkey to grow its regional power, and for Qatar to strengthen its position and influence regionally. The outcome of Syrian civil war to these countries and their actions was quite opposite. Turkish government lost much of its credibility in the eyes of western governments, and Qatar was caught up in regional battles with its neighboring monarchies.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Small States Theory

After the ending of Cold War between great powers, small states have been gaining more attention among academic disciplines, especially in the field of IR studies. Before the 20th century small states were seen as powerless and weak in front of great powers, and therefore they were also referred as small powers. Today small states have more influential role regarding international system, where international organizations and agreements are backing up their legitimate rights, and the usage of diplomatic tools are widely available also for the small states. This progress made regarding small states credibility in the eyes of international system, has increased the number of small states. Yet it seems that small states are still vulnerable regarding international system. The perfect example of this vulnerability would be the 2008 financial crisis, where it seems that small states were the ones that were suffering the most, such as Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia and the city of Dubai (Cooper & Momani 2011). But on the other hand, many small states are the most prosperous ones when measuring GDP per capita figures, including the state of Qatar (IMF 2018). One could say that small states today are vulnerable regarding international system, but weakness no longer portrays small states like it did in the 20th century.

How one can tell if a state is classified as a small or a big one? There are ongoing dispute related to this topic. As some researchers simply describes the small state according to size of its population (Maass 2009), or comparing the size of population regarding two states. One can also use to measure the size of population, economics, demographic and military all together to define whether the state has enough power in international sphere and falls to the category of small states (Asisian 2018). Or measuring just one of these quantitative characters like economic prosperity and GNP. Karl Deutsch uses GNP for determining whether a state is small or not, if the country's GNP is less than 1% of the whole world GNP the state is classified as small (Maass 2009). Also measuring the size of military power and soft power capabilities are used. It is possible for the small state to be powerful internally yet prone to sensitivity externally. I am addressing Qatar as the small state in a sense of its decreased capabilities (military power) and size (population, geographic) regarding its neighboring Saudi Arabia.

Despite of lacking mutual agreement of the definition regarding small states, international relations theories can be best used to describe small states behavior and their foreign policies. I chose specifically the neo-realist school of thought which sees that small (and big) states are subject to the anarchic structure of the international system. To best describe the situation related to current Qatar crisis I chose the balance of power theory from the perspective of Stephen Walt, and his theory of alliance formation - the theory explains how countries are either going to form alliances using strategies of bandwagoning or balancing. Bandwagoning happens when the smaller state joins to an alliance with the greater power or most threatening power. Balancing occurs when the smaller state forms alliance(s) to balance against the greater power/threatening power. States are prone of bandwagoning when they are weak, this style of bandwagoning especially concerns small states, since their capabilities are limited and they opt for the winning side (Walt 1985). The closeness of great power increases the behavior of small states for bandwagoning as well, or the fact that there are no allies close by. Balancing is more likely to happen when a smaller state is preventing the stronger state to become a hegemon, but rather it forms an ally together with less dominant states which balances the power of the stronger state (Walt 1985). By doing so the smaller state among its weaker partners might gain increased influence. Instead if it would opt for the bandwagoning strategy, the small state would decrease its influence compared to the more powerful state. As the posture of small states is defensive, and the main thing for them is to keep their sovereignty, thus bandwagoning is more used strategy for weaker and smaller states facing instant threat close to its borders without the close proximity of allies (Walt 1985). Still the balancing behavior is more used tactic for states to guarantee their safety against the threatening states (Walt 1985). Many small states are joining alliances in a form of security organizations such as NATO or GCC to encounter regional threats, alliances can thus be bilateral or multilateral. GCC in the lead of Saudi Arabia was formed to balance the power of Iran 1981 (Asisian 2018). The more likely a small state is going to opt for balancing actions when it faces an aggressive or threatening behavior against it, thus destabilizing its safety.

3.2. Small State Qatar and Big State Saudi Arabia

The state of Qatar is an example of a small state that has risen from weak fishermen village to be one of the largest exporters of LNG. During the recent years Qatar has become as being noteworthy

international foreign policy actor, using its soft power capabilities; acting as a mediator on regional issues, and having strong public diplomacy tools (Al-Jazeera) to affect public opinions (Ulrichsen 2014). While other strong regional influencers kept losing their power for economic and political reasons, Qatar had the chance to improve its regional influence by using its wealth and political stability during the Arab Spring. Although Qatar has increased its involvement internationally and grown its reputation as well as possessing an enormous wealth, it still has limited military capabilities of its own. The largest security providers for Qatar has been the presence of Great Britain, and after World War II followed by the US presence. Currently US is hosting the biggest air base in the Middle East in the soil of Qatar, Al Udeid Air Base which is hosting about 10 000 US military personnel's (Wallinn 2018). Also the inclusion of Turkish military base in the soil of Qatar was seen as balancing act against Saudi Arabia (Asisian 2018). Which it more likely has been. The presence of US military has been growing since the World War II to protect its strategic interests in the region. Ever since 1940`s US have made several security related agreements with Saudi Arabia, including Carter Doctrine signed January 1980 which guarantees the military help of US to protect its national interests in the Persian Gulf region (Ulrichsen 2017b). US has also been eager for balancing the power against Iran, and has been encouraging Saudi hegemon in the region. The introduction of GCC as regional security organization in 1981 was an act of balancing power against Iran, this formed an official alliance among the Persian Gulf countries (Asisian 2018). The organization was lacking mutual foreign policy objectives and other Persian Gulf monarchies were afraid of growing Saudi influence since GCC establishment (Asisian 2018). According to some researchers such as Ulrichsen there are little influence of GCC as security provider in the region, and the current diplomatic crisis only worsens its position (Ulrichsen 2017b).

Since its formation Qatar has acknowledged its weaknesses against its bigger neighbors, which has left a little space for maneuvering. In early 20th century British reports revealed that one of their concerns in the region was that the long existence of Qatar was unlikely because of its more powerful neighbors (Fromherz 2017). But during the early years of Qatar its domestic and foreign policies were leaning more towards Saudi Arabia, which made Qatar less vulnerable for Saudi intrusions. Qatar took the Wahhabism as part of their domestic policies just to please Saudi ruling elite (Fromherz 2018). Saudi Arabia has been using Wahhabism (Salafi Islam) for advancing their interests and ideologies globally and regionally for decades (Gause 2018). This branch of Islam has been connecting many extremists' movements across Middle East, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Before the 1990's Qatar's strategy of bandwagoning with Saudi Arabia by aligning itself to its

policies was successful, and there were no bigger confrontations nor disputes between the countries (excluding territorial disputes). Things changed critically when Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took the charge and overthrew his father 1995, this marked the time of reformations regarding Qatar's foreign and regional objectives. The emir was in favor of more independent Qatar, and his mission was to “bring Qatar to the level of Saudi Arabia, economically and politically, and to create a Qatar that was a regional power to be reckoned with” (Brown 2017). Even though emir's vision about Qatar`s future was ambitious according to some, he was capable of increasing the wealth of the states by LNG exports and new technologies (Brown, 2017). This gave confidence to the country and it started to implement more aggressive foreign policies, and balancing the Saudi power in the region (Ulrichsen 2014).

Qatar`s foreign policy differs from the `usual` small state multilateral approach, mainly because its position as large LNG exporter where it has made a lot of bilateral long-term energy contracts (Ulrichsen 2014). Qatar was able to increase its LNG exports hugely between 1994 and 2014 by taking advantage of the new technology, which made it possible to bypass Saudi owned pipelines and due the increased transportation via shipments (Brown 2017). Between the years of 1994 and 2014 the growth of GDP in Qatar exploded from 7,4 billion dollars to grew over 206 billion dollars in the end of 2014 (IMF 2018). After the 1990`s Qatar reformed its strategies and opted for more aggressive foreign policies (Brown 2017). Before that it aligned itself stronger with Saudi influence (Fromherz 2018) by using the theory of alliance formation one could come to the conclusion that Qatar`s strategy of bandwagoning changed after the new Emir took the charge, and by the 21st century this strategy change started to show as confrontation and diplomatic crisis. The first confrontation occurring 2002 when Saudi officials withdrew their ambassador from Doha as a result of Al-Jazeera's criticism towards the Saudi king. This diplomatic crisis lasted for years. The second confrontation happened 2014, after Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain announced Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, the long lasted and continuous support from the Qatar led it yet again cutting diplomatic ties with these countries (Freer 2018).

The current situation could as well be a byproduct of all these previous confrontations, and Qatar`s balancing measures against Saudi Arabia. Instead of bandwagoning with Saudi Arabia, Qatar has chosen to form alliances with those he thinks are more useful for it and not undermining its sovereignty, such as Iran, Turkey and Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar has also realized that it is no longer a weak state, but sees its influence through economical growth and soft power capabilities (Ulrichsen 2014.) According to Walt`s theory, bandwagoning is more used strategy for weaker

and smaller states facing instant threat close to its borders without the close proximity of allies (Walt 1985). Before heading to the 21st century Qatar did not possess huge wealth like it does today (IMF 2018) in a sense we might call it weak at the time, thus bandwagoning was best strategy for it. But while gaining more wealth during the years Qatar also increased its skills of diplomacy and took the mediator role internationally which made it more influential regarding international system, and also more powerful thus being a threat for Saudi Kingdom. Qatar took advantage from this new image of his and dared to start balancing against Saudi Arabia, since according to Walt those small states that opt for balancing behavior are trying to reject the hegemony of greater power (Walt 1985) and this was its foreign policy objective after Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took the charge and overthrew his father 1995 (Brown 2017). The presence of US military and Turkish troops serves Qatar`s interests well and its balancing behavior. It is very unlikely that military confrontation is possible between the Saudi led coalition and Qatar when US is backing up both Saudi Arabia and Qatar militarily (Walt 2012).

CONCLUSION

My thesis argues that Qatar's changed foreign policies led Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt to impose an embargo against Qatar on June 5th 2017. Qatar's former position as mediator changed during the Arab Spring, and the state rebranded itself as interventionist. Walt's theory of alliance formation is supporting my hypotheses, as it can be illustrated how the balancing behavior of Qatar's has replaced bandwagoning when it comes to the relationship with Saudi Arabia. These actions have put regional Saudi supremacy in danger, and thus the Saudi coalition is trying to balance the Qatar power by imposing a total embargo against it.

The results of this thesis shows that the Islamist movement Muslim Brotherhood is a powerful organization in Arab world, and many of the authoritarian leaders are threatened by its existence. The fact that Qatar has not labeled Muslim Brotherhood to be terrorist organization unlike Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, and that it has hosted its members for decades bears a risk for the opposing parties. Saudi Arabia tolerated Qatar's close relations with Muslim Brotherhood before the Syrian uprising, but while Qatar and Saudi Arabia drifted to support opponents and rebels they became adversaries by supporting different groups (inter alia Qatar supporting Muslim Brotherhood). This caused a rivalry between the two.

The wide distribution of Al-Jazeera network in the Arab world challenged also governments and their leaders in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt during the Arab Spring. Multiple Muslim Brotherhood members were hired as journalists by the channel, and it received a lot of criticism from its pro-Muslim Brotherhood stance. For many people living in the Arab world freedom of press is not something you are used to. Al-Jazeera has been trying to challenge that from the very beginning. But it has failed to deliver this since governmental control has increased because of its strong influence, and Qatar's ambitious efforts to use Al-Jazeera as public diplomacy tool. The governments of Saudi Arabia and UAE have been criticized by the channel continuously despite of several notions from the ruling families. Now Qatar faces accusations of intervening its neighbor's domestic policies, and is demanded to shut down Al-Jazeera and the affiliates.

The diverging ties between Qatar and Iran, and the ratified Turkish military base in Qatar's ground was threatening inclusion for Saudi Arabia. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been competing for the regional supremacy, and diverging ties of small GCC country and giant Iran in a form of increased

trade and security agreements were only diminishing Saudi influence regionally. Presence of Turkish troops in Qatar serves both parties well thus Qatar gets safety guarantees from NATO member and Turkey gains access to the Persian Gulf region, which has been its geopolitical goal to achieve.

As being a small state and because of its position according to neorealist balance of power theory Qatar needs to decide whether he aligns itself with Saudi Arabia (bandwagoning) or is going to act against it (balancing). Historical events can show us that Qatar's behavior changed after 1995 when the Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took its position and started to make his own approaches regardless of Saudi withstanding. During and after the Arab Spring Qatar made bold decisions and undermined Saudi leadership which led confrontations between these two.

This thesis concentrates on Qatar's foreign policy objectives and its relationship with Saudi Arabia. This research does not take into consideration whether those objectives are carefully planned or not. The main focus is in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and does not include detailed information regarding other participants involved to the embargo. The theoretical part is only looked from the neorealist perspective thus makes the research narrow. More research need to be conducted to find out how the crisis can be solved.

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