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**THE RISE OF GCC AND TURKEY:
CONVERGENT AND DIVERGENT AGENDAS**

A PhD THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
ABSTRACT	x
ÖZET	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: THE GROWTH OF TURKEY AND ITS PERCEPTION OF THE GULF	17
1.1. The Rise Of Turkey In The New Middle East Power Equation	18
1.1.1. Domestic Reforms and Political Stability	18
1.1.2 Turkey’s Economic Growth	20
1.1.3. Turkey’s Growing Regional and International Role	24
1.1.4. Turkey’s Potential to Impact the Regional Balance of Power	28
1.1.4.1. Turkey’s Material and Ideational Power	30
1.1.4.2. Turkey’s Position in the New Regional Balance of Power	33
1.2 The Gulf’s Position In Turkey’s Perception	36
1.2.1. The Gulf’s Position in the Turkish ‘Strategic Depth’	37
1.2.2. Turkey’s Economic Interests in the Gulf	41
CHAPTER 2: THE RISE OF THE GCC STATES’ REGIONAL ROLE AND TURKEY’S POSITION IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS	46
2.1. The Rise Of The GCC States’ Regional Roles	47
2.1.1. The GCC Genesis	47
2.1.2. Economic Rise of the GCC States	51
2.1.2.1. Oil: A Main Driver in Advancing the GCC’s Influence	52
2.1.2.2. The GCC’s Growing Financial Power	54
2.1.3. The Growing Geopolitical Roles of the GCC States	58
2.1.3.1. Saudi Arabia	59
2.1.3.2. Qatar	61

2.1.3.3. The UAE	62
2.2. The GCC States' Perceptions Of Turkey	64
2.2.1. Turkey's Economic Importance to the GCC	64
2.2.2. The GCC's Perceptions of Turkey's Power and Role.....	67
2.2.2.1. The GCC's Common Perception of Turkey	67
2.2.2.2. GCC States' Divergent Perceptions of Turkey	68
2.2.2.2.1. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain.....	68
2.2.2.2.2. Qatar	71
2.2.2.2.3. Kuwait and Oman.....	72
CHAPTER 3: TURKEY AND THE GCC STATES: CONVERGENCE	
DYNAMICS	76
3.1. Turkish-GCC Rapprochement: A Historical Glance.....	76
3.2. Turkey And The GCC: Rapprochement Dynamics.....	80
3.2.1. Turkey and the GCC's Positions on Iraq post-2003.....	80
3.2.1.1. Iranian and Shiite Influence in Iraq.....	82
3.2.1.2. Sunni Marginalization in Iraq	83
3.2.1.3. Iraqi Kurds: Interests and Threats.....	85
3.2.2. The Syrian Crisis since 2011	88
3.2.3. ISIL Threats.....	94
3.2.4. The Yemen War	97
CHAPTER 4: TURKEY AND THE GCC STATES: DIVERGENT AGENDAS	104
4.1. Turkey And The GCC States After The Arab Spring: Emergence Of Regional Contenders	104
4.1.1. Saudi Arabia and the UAE	105
4.1.2. Turkey and Qatar.....	108
4.2. Turkey and the GCC: Cases of divergence over Arab Spring uprisings	109
4.2.1. Egypt	110
4.2.2. The Muslim Brotherhood	115
4.2.3. Libya.....	122
4.3. The Gulf Crisis: An Escalation Of Regional Competition	128
4.4. The Contest For Influence Over Regional Bases	132
4.5. Problematic Relations With Iran	138

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	154
RESUME.....	179



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	: Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
AMU	: GCC Agreement of the Monetary Union
AYM	: Constitutional Court (Anayasa Mahkemesi)
CENTO	: Central Treaty Organization
DP World	: Dubai Ports World
EEZ	: Exclusive Economic Zone
GCC	: Gulf Cooperation Council
G20	: Group of Twenty
ICI	: Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
ICM	: Islamic Constitutional Movement, Kuwait
ISIL	: Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
KRG	: Kurdistan Regional Government
LNA	: Libyan National Army
LNG	: liquefied natural gas
LPA	: Libyan Political Agreement
MGK	: National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu)
MIKTA	: Group of Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey and Australia
MINT	: Group of Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey
MoU	: Memorandum of Understanding
NTC	: National Transitional Council, Libya
OECD	: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIC	: Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OPEC	: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PKK	: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PSF	: Peninsula Shield Force
PYD	: Democratic Union Party, Syria
QNA	: Qatar News Agency
SOMO	: State Organization for Marketing of Oil, Iraq
SWF	: Sovereign Wealth Funds
THAAD	: Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system
TIKA	: Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TUIK	: Turkish Statistical Institute
WTO	: World Trade Organization
YPG	: People's Protection Units, Syria

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Turkey's Economic Growth 2002-2018	23
Table 1.2 Turkey's Trade with the GCC States 2017 (\$ Thousand)	44
Table 2.1 GCC Oil and Natural Gas Reserves and Production (2017).....	54
Table 2.2 GCC economic growth between 1981 and 2017	55
Table 2.3 GCC States Trade (2017).....	56
Table 2.4 GCC Population and Sovereign Wealth Funds (2017).....	57



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<p>Over the past two decades, both the GCC states and Turkey have experienced unprecedented economic growth and played effective regional roles. In tandem, the relations between the two parties have gradually grown from economic cooperation to strategic partnerships. This has been evident through the development of their common interests to include cooperation in all fields. As a result, Turkey was considered for a while a ‘strategic partner’ by the GCC. The new region’s disorders, such as the potential Iraq’s disintegration, the Syrian crisis, the Yemeni war, the emerging threats of sub-state actors and the expansion of Tehran’s influence have given new momentum to Turkish-GCC relations. However, this positive progress has turned into clashing agendas in the region. Two competing camps have appeared. These are Turkey and Qatar on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the other. Their differences are based on new dynamics of the Arab Spring and were clearest over Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and Libya. In addition, the Gulf crisis since June 2017 has been escalating the divergence. The differences among Turkey and the GCC states also raised a question of whether they still need an alliance to counterbalance Iran’s influence or not. This research seeks to comprehend these complicated relations, which are a mixture of cooperation and conflict, through appropriate theories of international relations: functionalism, the balance of power and the balance of threat. It has used different methods such as interviews, archive documents, books, articles, official speeches and statistics. Its scope starts in 2002 and extends to 2017. It concluded that despite their divergent agendas, their cooperation is important if they look to increase their influences in the regional balance of power equation and to counter common threats.</p>
Keywords: GCC, Turkey, convergence, divergent agendas, balance of threat, alliances

Tezin Başlığı : GCC ve Türkiye'nin Yükselişi: Yakınsak ve Iraksak Gündemler
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<p>Son yirmi yılda, hem Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi (KİK) ülkeleri hem de Türkiye, benzeri görülmemiş bir ekonomik büyüme gerçekleştirip bölgede etkili roller oynamaya başladı. Birbirine bağlı olarak, iki taraf arasındaki ilişkiler giderek ekonomik işbirliğinden stratejik ortaklıklara doğru genişledi. Bu, tüm alanlarda işbirliğini içerecek şekilde ortak çıkarlarının geliştirilmesi yoluyla açıkça ortaya çıktı. Bunun sonucu olarak, Türkiye bir süre için KİK tarafından “stratejik ortak” olarak kabul edildi. Irak’ın parçalanma potansiyeli, Suriye krizi, Yemen savaşı, devlet-altı aktörlerinin ortaya çıkan tehditleri ve Tahran’ın etkisinin artması gibi yeni bölgesel düzensizlikler, Türkiye-KİK ilişkilerine yeni bir ivme kazandırdı. Bununla birlikte, ilişkilerdeki bu olumlu ilerleme bölgede çatışan gündemlere dönüştü. İki rakip kamp ortaya çıktı. Türkiye ve Katar bir kampı temsil ederken, diğer kamp da Suudi Arabistan, Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri ve Bahreyn’den oluştu. İki kamp arasındaki farklılıklar Arap Baharı’nın yeni dinamiklerini temel alıp Mısır, Müslüman Kardeşler ve Libya konularında en açık halde tezahür etti. Bununla birlikte, Haziran 2017’den bu yana Katar ve Körfez üçlüsü (Suudi Arabistan, BAE ve Bahreyn) artı Mısır arasında yaşanan Körfez krizi taraflar arasındaki ayrışmayı arttırdı. Türkiye ile KİK ülkeleri arasındaki farklılıklar, İran’ın etkisini dengelemek için hala bir ittifaka ihtiyaç duyup duymadıkları sorusunu gündeme getirdi. Bu çalışma, işlevselcilik, güç dengesi ve tehdit dengesi gibi uygun uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri ışığında işbirliği ve çatışmanın bir karışımı olan bu karmaşık ilişkileri kavramayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada röportajlar, arşiv belgeleri, kitaplar, makaleler, resmi konuşmalar ve istatistikler gibi farklı yöntemler kullanılmıştır. Kapsamı, 2002 yılından başlayıp 2017 yılına kadar olan süre içerisindeki ilişkileri kapsamaktadır. Çalışma, tarafların farklı gündemleri olmasına rağmen, bölgesel güç denklemindeki etkilerini arttırmak ve ortak tehditlere karşı koymak için işbirliği yapmalarının önemli olduğu sonucuna ulaşmıştır.</p>
Anahtar Kelimeler: KİK, Türkiye, yakınsama, farklı gündemler, tehdit dengesi, ittifaklar

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Turkey have recently witnessed significant economic growth and increased political engagement in the Middle East. Their relations have also seen remarkable economic improvement and unprecedented political rapprochement due to the mutual perceptions of each other's importance in achieving economic goals and strengthening their positions in the region. On one hand, the emergence of the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as visible actors was accelerated in the context of the aftermath of the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the international economic crisis of 2008 and the Arab Spring since 2011. Using their growing capabilities of energy resources, capital accumulation, sovereign wealth funds and political roles as advantages, they became more involved in global issues and regional crises. On the other hand, Turkey, since 2002, with a fast-growing economy, also has an ambitious strategy to become a major regional power with an influence over the neighboring region and a prominent actor at the international level. Having relied on soft power for over a decade —through attempts to play roles of mediator of peace and stability and promoter of liberal values and democracy— Turkey has recently increased its activity in the region to maintain its interests, balance Iran's increasing influence, support political transition and counter the emerging sub-state actors, even by hard power.

The GCC states' relations have improved rapidly with Turkey over the last decade. Their growing mutual interdependence has increased in energy, trade, business and investment. In 2005, the GCC states and Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop their cooperation in trade, investments, energy, transportation and cultural exchanges. In 2008, they signed another MoU that considered Turkey a 'strategic partner' and launched a High-Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism to develop cooperation in political, economic, defense and culture fields. Geopolitically, the new disorders in the Middle East, which are threatening domestic stability and regional security, have initially increased Turkey-GCC rapprochement. The potential disintegration of Iraq and the consequences of the Arab Spring such as the Syrian crisis, the Yemeni war, the escalation of the sectarian Shiite-Sunni strife, the threats of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the expansion of Iran's influence are all critical challenges that have given new

momentum to Turkish-GCC relations. In this way, Turkey's relations have developed with Qatar and Saudi Arabia in particular, where it signed strategic partnership agreements in 2014 and 2016 respectively, while its economic relations with the UAE have reached a very advanced level.

However, the Arab Spring uprisings also produced new challenges and different perceptions that showed competing agendas and division between Turkey and the GCC as well as among the GCC states. New regional camps or alliances have appeared. Qatar has allied with Turkey to balance the increasing regional influence of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Their divergences were clear in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and Libya cases where their disputes were mainly based on ideological and political dynamics such as the advance of political Islam, the demands for democracy and the increasing possibilities of threatening the status quo and regime change. In addition, the Gulf crisis, where Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut off full relations with Qatar in June 2017, has escalated their regional divergence in an unprecedented way. To balance this immediate threat, Doha has deepened its strategic relations with Turkey and increased the military cooperation by expanding the Turkish military base, which was established in 2014. It has also restored diplomatic relations with Iran, which were severed in 2016. The increasing differences among Turkey and the GCC states raised a question of whether they still need an alliance in order to counterbalance Iran's influence or not, and whether they should perceive Iran as a threat or a partner. Furthermore, the competition was not limited to these areas, but recently reached the Horn of Africa in quest for establishing military bases and competing for regional influence.

Indeed, the study of Turkish-Gulf relations is no longer a traditional analysis of the development of the areas of cooperation between two parties. Rather, it is also concerned with the balance of power and balance of threat in the region. The visible economic growth of both parties, the rise of their political role and their new interests and ambitions are influential in the region and its future. Therefore, this research will study the growth of Turkey and the GCC states' powers, their mutual perceptions as economic partners and potential regional allies, the major geopolitical shifts that brought them closer to balancing both Iran's increasing influence and new emerging security threat, and finally the factors that have been dividing them and intensifying their competing agendas in the region.

Main argument

Turkey and the GCC states showed a desire to deepen their strategic relationship in order to sustain their economic growth and increase their influence. At times, they have also looked to create an alliance to balance Iran's power and its growing influence in the region. It is obvious that the rise of the GCC states and Turkey as regional actors has created divergent agendas and poses challenges to their common interests, which sometimes weaken their relations. Due to new differences in Turkey and Qatar's policies with some of the GCC states, mainly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the future relations of these actors will face challenges, while their alliance becomes questionable. Therefore, this thesis hypothesizes that the opposing perceptions and policies of those actors on many regional issues might divide them despite the fact that they were interested in developing their relations to form an alliance. It also hypothesizes that geopolitical regional rivalry for influence is not the only cause of conflict and re-alignment among the GCC states and Turkey. Rather, ideology, such as the potential advance of political Islam and democratic change, has also become a driver for alliance formation and competition.

Research methodology and theoretical concepts

Understanding Turkey and the GCC states' relations requires multi-theoretical approaches because it is not merely a traditional analysis of the development of areas of cooperation between two parties. Rather, it also relates to the geopolitical contest for influence on a regional scale since both parties have recently emerged as influential actors and their perceptions and interests are a mixture of consistency and conflict. Therefore, the research will use three different approaches: the balance of power theory, the balance of threat theory and the functional approach.

The Balance of power theory has emerged within the realist thought of international relations. States have always sought to balance the increasing power capabilities of rivals. Balance of power is not only mean attaining an equilibrium among states; rather it also includes competition and the looking to maximize states' relative power to maintain security through different methods.

According to Kenneth N. Waltz, the balance of power is seen by some as "the best guarantee of the security of states and the peace of the world. However, others see that it

has ruined states by causing most of the wars they have fought.”¹ Hans Morgenthau has defined the balance of power as “a device for the self-defense of nations whose independence and existence are threatened by a disproportionate increase in the power of other nations.”²

The balance of power theory exists when the order is anarchic. For Waltz, anarchy “is taken to mean not just the absence of government but also the presence of disorder and chaos.”³ He noted, “in anarchy there is no automatic harmony,” and the proposition that “among autonomous states, war is inevitable.”⁴ He suggested, “the roots of international conflict lie in both the clash of interests among states and the absence of effective supranational agencies for the regulation of this clash.”⁵ In this respect, Mearsheimer argued that the “conflict is common among states because the international system creates powerful incentives for aggression... States seek to survive under anarchy by maximizing their power relative to other states.”⁶

Forming alliances is a common method to maintain the balance of power. Morgenthau argued that the competing nations “can add to their own power the power of other nations, or they can withhold the power of other nations from the adversary.” By these choices, they pursue a policy of alliances.⁷

The theory of balance of power has recently been revised by Stephen Walt who developed a new concept of the balance of threat. The latter does not contradict the traditional balance of power theory; rather it looks to expand and explain the major factors that affected states’ decisions when they chose their allies. Where balance-of-power theory predicts that states ally in response to imbalances of power, balance-of-threat theory

¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Philippines: Adison-Wesley Publishing, Inc., 1979), p. 117.

² Hans J. Morgenthau & Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1985 [1948]), p. 131.

³ Waltz, p. 114.

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001 [1954]), p. 186.

⁵ David Singer, “International Conflict: Three Levels of Analysis,” review of *Man, the State, and War* by Kenneth N. Waltz, *World Politics*, vol. 12, no. 3 (April 1960), p. 458.

⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 12-13.

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), p. 201.

predicts that states seek allies when there is an imbalance of threat (that is, when one state or coalition is especially dangerous).”⁸

Walt argued that states make alliances primarily to balance against the greatest threats to their security. “The degree to which a state threatens others, in turn, is a function of power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived intentions.”⁹

First, aggregate power capabilities: Walt did not ignore the balance of power theory, but certainly emphasized its fundamental factor, the distribution of power capabilities, as the first element of threat sources. He stated, “a state’s aggregate power may provide a motive for balancing or bandwagoning.”¹⁰ According to Harm J. de Blij, power is “the capacity of a nation to use its tangible and intangible resources in such a way to affect the behavior of other nations.”¹¹ Morgenthau has also defined the national power as “the power of man over the minds and actions of other men.”¹² Distribution of capabilities is based on national power elements, which could include the geographic aspects of a state, natural resources, a self-sufficiency of food, national character “for those who act for the nation in peace and war and formulate and support its policies,” national morale, which means the “degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or war,” and the quality of government that can transform the aims of its people into reality.¹³

Secondly, geographic proximity: Walt assumed that states are more likely to “make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant” because the proximity states can pose greater threat.¹⁴

Thirdly, offensive capabilities: It is the ability to threaten another state. The immediate threats that offensive capabilities pose may create a strong incentive for others to

⁸ Stephen M. Walt, “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia,” *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988), p. 281.

⁹ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990 [1987]), p. vi; Stephen M. Walt, “Balancing Threat: The United States and the Middle East,” An Interview with Stephen M. Walt, *Yale Journal of International Affairs* (Spring/ Summer 2010), p. 10; Walt, “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation,” pp. 280-281.

¹⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 22-23.

¹¹ Harm J. de Blij, *Systematic Political Geography* (USA: Wiley, 1973), p. 59.

¹² Morgenthau & Thompson, p. 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 117, 130-131, 151, 153, 158-161.

¹⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 23, 29-30.

balance.¹⁵ *Fourthly, aggressive intentions:* Policymakers are likely to misinterpret their allies' efforts to improve relations with the main enemy if they focus solely on power and ignore the impact of changing intentions.¹⁶ Walt argued, "states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them."¹⁷

Alliance Formation Strategies is an important part of the balance of threat theory. Walt asked a central question: how do states select their partners? He proposed the following: First, states ally *against* states that threaten them - that is, they "balance." Secondly, states ally *with* states that threaten them - that is, they "bandwagon." Thirdly, states select allies of alike ideology. Fourthly, foreign aid induces partners. Finally, alliance can be facilitated through political penetration.¹⁸

First, balancing and bandwagoning: Walt discussed "whether states tend to balance strong or threatening powers by allying against them, or whether they are more likely to bandwagon by allying with the most powerful or threatening states."¹⁹ In a balancing world, "strong states may be valued as allies because they have much to offer their partners, but they must take particular care to avoid appearing aggressive." However, a bandwagoning world is much more competitive. If states tend to ally with those who seem most dangerous, then great powers will be rewarded if they appear both strong and potentially aggressive.²⁰

Secondly, ideology: Walt defined ideological solidarity as "a tendency for states with similar internal traits to prefer alignment with one another rather than alignment with states whose domestic characteristics are different." He assumed that alignment with similar states may be viewed as a way of defending one's own political principles and may enhance the legitimacy of a weak regime by demonstrating that it is part of a large, popular movement.²¹ He downplayed the importance of ideology in alliance choices, and

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹⁶ Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation," pp. 283-284, 313.

¹⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 25.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Macdonald, review of *The Origins of Alliances* by Stephen M. Walt, *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 51, no. 3 (August 1989), pp. 795-796.

¹⁹ Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation," p. 275.

²⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, p. 27.

²¹ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 34-35, 181.

stated, “we may exaggerate the apparent importance of ideology,”²² and added, it “plays relatively little role in determining alliance preferences.”²³

Thirdly, foreign aid: Walt assumed that states chose allies to obtain side payments of material assistance, such as economic or military aid.²⁴

These above-mentioned two theories could help in understanding the seeking for rapprochement between the Gulf states and Turkey to balance Iran’s increasing influence and to counter its threats to their security and interests in their immediate neighborhoods, particularly after the absence of Iraq’s influential power since 2003 and the emergence of new threats resultant of the uprisings in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, which are directly linked with Iranian influence. The disagreement between some GCC states and Turkey has started with the overthrowing of Egyptian President Mohammad Morsi in July 2013. This led to the emergence of new regional camps based on the divergence over ideological issues of political Islam and contest for regional influence. Primarily, Qatar has allied with Turkey to balance the increasing regional influence of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Since the Gulf crisis in June 2017, Doha has followed two main strategies of the balance of threat theory. It has balanced with Turkey and bandwagoned with Iran to balance the immediate threats of its neighboring Gulf countries after they cut off their relations with Doha. Furthermore, Turkey has more recently cooperated with Iran to counter urgent threats of non-state actors in its neighborhood with Syria and Iraq.

The research will also use insights from the functionalist and neo-functionalist theoretical approaches to comprehend how Turkey and the GCC states employ the economic cooperation to reach political rapprochement.

Functionalism was the suggested answer to the issue of “how to bring states closer together to deal with issues that transcend territorial boundaries.”²⁵ David Mitrany was one of the earliest pioneers of this approach. Later on, Ernst B. Haas has developed it and

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ Walt, “Testing Theories of Alliance Formation,” p. 313.

²⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 218, 225, 261.

²⁵ Martin Griffiths, Terry O’Callaghan & Steven C. Roach, *International Relations: The Key Concepts*, 3rd edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), p. 124.

introduced neo-functionalism that expands the area of integration to political and security fields.

The origin of functionalism stems from Mitrany's emphasis on bringing sustainable peace among nations after centuries of conflict. He argued, "The task that is facing us is how to build up the reality of a common interest in peace... that would bring them actively together, not the old static and strategic view but a social view of peace." He then proclaimed his approach in order to tackle this problem through building a common interest in protracted peace, and said, "We must put our faith not in a protected peace but in a working peace; it would [be an] aspiration of social security taken in its widest range."²⁶

At the beginning of the past century, new transnational actors began to emerge with remarkable success, such as the International Labor Organization. Its sectorial activity extended beyond national borders.²⁷

The concepts of a 'working peace system' and a ramification process were affirmed by Mitrany.²⁸ This system was built around international agencies, which had functional responsibilities in managing problems for which there was a consensus to cooperate. These international agencies were to assume some of the attributions of nation-states, within the so-called ramification process. The consequence of this process was a domino effect, as cooperation in one field could lead to a new cooperation in another field.²⁹ In this respect,

international cooperation should begin by dealing with specific transnational problems (such as disease control) where there is some prospect of applying specialized technical knowledge and where the success of ad hoc functional arrangements will hopefully lead to further efforts to replicate the experience in a widening process.³⁰

²⁶ Siegfried Schieder & Manuela Spindler (Ed.), *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 91-94, cited in David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System: An Argument for the Functional Development of International Organization* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966 [1943]), p. 92.

²⁷ Mihai Alexandrescu, "David Mitrany: From Federalism to Functionalism," *Transylvanian Review*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Spring 2007), p. 25; Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu, "David Mitrany and Functionalism: The Beginnings of Functionalism," *Revista Româna de Geografie Politica*, vol. 12, no. 1 (May 2010), p. 162.

²⁸ Robert O. Keohane, review of *The Functional Theory of Politics* by David Mitrany, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 72, no. 2 (June 1978), p. 805.

²⁹ Alexandrescu, p. 25.

³⁰ Griffiths, O'Callaghan & Roach, p. 124.

Paul Taylor, in his introduction of Mitrany's *The Functional Theory of Politics*, argued, "It was always misleading to suggest that functionalism was designed to do away with politics."³¹ Indeed, Mitrany had obviously referred to the relationship of politics and economics. He argued:

The relationship between the nature of warfare and the nature of political and economic organization became in that way so close as to approach unity... politics and economics are being welded together. When politics and economics have by the nature of things become thus closely intertwined, it will not serve to try to bring only one under the rule of reason while leaving the other to be ruled by the fist.³²

Functionalism has inspired what has become known as 'neo-functionalists' to develop its ideas. Ernst B. Haas, the pioneer of neo-functionalism acknowledged the functionalists' contribution to international organizations and said, "Although I don't agree with certain aspects of their approach, I believe that it has done more to cast the study of international organization in a dynamic and comprehensive context than most other approaches."³³

Integration at a regional level is a key concept focused on in neo-functionalism. Haas supposed, "If we want to use Functionalism as an analytical tool for the study of international organizations, we cannot sidestep the definition of integration."³⁴ He also emphasized that political integration is:

[T]he process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities to a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states. The end result is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.³⁵

The separation of technical issues from political ones is not recognized in neo-functionalism. Haas emphasized:

³¹ Keohane, p. 805.

³² David Mitrany, "Interrelation of Politics and Economics in Modern War," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 192, no. 1 (July 1937), pp. 82, 88.

³³ Ernst B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization* (UK: ECPR Press, 2008 [1964]), pp. 19-20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁵ Ben Rosamond, "The Uniting of Europe and the Foundation of EU Studies: Revisiting the Neofunctionalism of Ernst B. Haas," *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2005), p. 241.

[P]ower and welfare are far from separable. Indeed, commitment to welfare activities arises only within the confines of purely political decisions, which are made largely on the basis of power considerations. Specific functional contexts cannot be separated from general concerns... The distinction between the political and the technical, between the politician and the expert, simply does not hold because issues were made technical by a prior political decision.³⁶

Neo-functionalism has also given much importance to the spillover effect in expanding the sectors and fields of cooperation. Haas assumed that states would find themselves entangled in regional pressures and end up resolving their disputes by conceding a wider scope and transferring more authority to the regional organizations. Eventually, their people will begin shifting more of their hopes to the region and satisfying them will increase the likelihood that economic-social integration will spill over into political integration.³⁷ Increase in commercial, financial and personal transactions between individuals, institutions and sub-national groups will make it easier to reach complex deals and to attract the most uncooperative of opponents.³⁸

Indeed, using insights from a functional approach is related, in this research, to the theories of balance of power and balance of threat. Both focus on forming alliances as a method of balancing. Since the functional approach is based primarily on deepening cooperation to reach political rapprochement, this may also help states in forming alliances to protect their interests and counter mutual threats.

The GCC and Turkey's economic growth has led to increase their cooperation. While an MoU in 2005 aimed at developing their cooperation in trade, investments, energy and cultural exchanges, the High-Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism of 2014 has expanded the cooperation to the fields of politics, defense and security. On the bilateral level, Turkey has promoted its relations with Qatar to sign a mutual defense agreement in 2014 and to establish a military base. It has also employed the growing relations with Saudi

³⁶ Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State*, pp. 28, 43.

³⁷ Philippe C. Schmitter, "Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism," *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2005), p. 257.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

Arabia to reach an unprecedented agreement of strategic partnership in 2016 including political, security and defense areas.

This research has used different methods to achieve its objectives. It used primary and secondary sources such as archive documents, statements, key official speeches and statistics of both Turkey and the GCC states. It made use of interviews, which would help in explaining some aspects of both parties' mutual perceptions and their positions on related issues. It also used the most important books, peer-reviewed articles, research papers and analyses related to the topic. It analyzed and compared different statistical data to explain the growth of both parties and the development of their relations during the period of study.

Scope of the research

The scope of this research starts in 2002 and extends to 2017, because, firstly, this period has witnessed the growth of the Turkish and GCC states economies and political roles.

Secondly, before 2002, Ankara had no significant interest in the Gulf area, except through Western alliances or energy imports. In turn, the GCC states did not give significance to wide ties with Turkey because of its traditional non-involvement policy, its economic weakness and the absence of investment incentives.

Thirdly, the economic crisis in 2001 caused economic considerations to become a priority to Turkish foreign policy under the ruling of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) since November 2002. This led to the strengthening of economic ties and mutual trade exchange with the GCC states.

Fourthly, after the September 11 incidents in Washington and New York, the United States (US) foreign policy adopted a new approach towards the Middle East. It declared a 'war on terrorism' and invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. Simultaneously, it sought to strengthen the relations with its partners, particularly Turkey and the Gulf states. The US gradually started to promote Turkey as a model, which facilitates its involvement in the region's politics.

Fifthly, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 has imposed challenges to Turkey and the GCC and created a new imbalance among regional powers. Iran became a hegemon in Iraq's politics since the Iraqi Shiite parties, which are supported by Tehran, have controlled the

government in Baghdad. This situation has upset both Turkey and the GCC. Turkey, under the AKP, has sought to overcome the traditional non-involvement policy and initiated an active one. Therefore, Turkey and the GCC sought rapprochement in order to balance Iran's emerging influence. For this reason, the research takes this period as a breakthrough because both regional geopolitical realities and the new Turkish political elites facilitated this rapprochement.

Sixthly, in this period, Turkey-GCC states' bilateral and collective relations have grown in an unprecedented manner. For the first time, as above-mentioned, the GCC and Turkey signed memorandums of understanding and launched a high-level mechanism to develop cooperation in all fields. The bilateral relations have also developed substantially.

Seventhly, the period of study extends until the end of 2017 because the writing of this thesis started at this point. Furthermore, two major incidents, in both Turkey and the Gulf, have happened around this time: the failure coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 and the Gulf crisis since June 2017. Both have left a clear impact on Turkey-GCC relations because they led to increased intra-division and enhanced their opposing alliances.

However, the research traced, in short, the historical background of the evolution and origin of the GCC and the development of Turkey-GCC states relations before 2002. This could help in understanding the development of current relations.

Research questions

The research aims to answer this main question: What are the main opportunities and constraints in the newly emerging relations between the GCC states and Turkey? To answer this question, there are sub-questions linked to it:

- What are the positions of the GCC states and Turkey in their mutual perceptions?
- Is there a common vision to form an alliance to balance regional powers and counter emerging threats?
- What are the differences among the GCC states and Turkey? To what extent have they intensified the division on a regional level?

Research objectives

The research also aims to achieve many objectives, as follows:

- To study Turkish-GCC relations in a comprehensive way that explores the factors affecting their convergence and divergence.
- To trace and analyze the GCC alliance formation to balance its neighboring regional powers and emerging threats. It also traces how some of the GCC states became influential actors in the region.
- To trace and explore the growth of Turkey's power and its seeking of alliances to balance other regional powers and threats.
- To explore the contribution of economic cooperation or the functional approach to the development of the GCC alliance as well as Turkey-GCC political convergence.
- To comprehend the mutual perceptions of Turkey and the GCC states that may impact their relations, alliances and regional policies.
- To examine areas of cooperation and competition among the GCC states and Turkey.
- To add a new contribution to literature on Turkish-GCC relations.

Significance of the research

The Turkish-GCC relations have rapidly developed since the beginning of the century. The economic growth of both parties, the rise of their regional role and their seeking for influence are influential in the region and its future. Hence, it is important to study these relations in terms of current regional developments. This research attempts to introduce a comprehensive analysis and detailed information, which could help the decision-makers improve their relations and reduce their differences over regional issues.

Research's limitations

Some difficulties have faced the researcher, such as:

- Insufficient academic literature dealing directly with this topic in a comprehensive way.
- Illiteracy of the researcher in the Turkish language, which made access to government information and reports difficult. However, this difficulty was mostly

overcome because of the abundance of English literature on Turkey, mostly written by Turkish experts and officials. In addition, most of official data is produced in both Turkish and English.

Literature review

The literature on direct Turkish-GCC relations is a very small field. Despite the fact that Turkey has become close to the GCC states since the beginning of the century, most of the published books in this regard are interested in examining the Turkish policy in its broad Islamic, Arab and the Middle East contexts. The Turkish-GCC ties occupied only some chapters or pages in these books. As well, there are insufficient academic articles dealing directly with this topic. The list of previous published references showed the relatively small number of articles that relate directly to Turkish-GCC relations. They are limited to specific issues of the topic and are mostly not updated to meet the new emerging factors that affect Turkish-GCC rapprochement or competition.

There are good books and articles examining Turkish-GCC relations, such as Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem (eds.), *GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre, 2015); Ali Diriöz, "Turkey and the GCC Strategic Partnership after 5 Years," *Ortadoğu Analiz* (2013); Bulent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship," *Middle East Policy* (2005); Cameron Brown, "Turkey in the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003," *Turkish Studies* (2007); Muhittin Ataman, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia" SETA Policy Brief (2012); Özden Oktav, "The Gulf States and Iran: A Turkish Perspective," *Middle East Policy* (2011). Oktav and Ertem's edited volume is the sole book that examined this full topic. However, it consisted of fragmented articles or conference papers where each author examined a specific area. It was also written before the major division among Turkey and the GCC states happened in 2016-2017. The other works had discussed some areas of cooperation or studied relations of Turkey with one of the GCC states. In addition, most of these works had focused on the emerging cooperation between Turkey and the GCC. A few of them have touched on differences and rivalry between the two parties. Therefore, this research will provide a new contribution to the topic by presenting a full manuscript and a comprehensive analysis on a regional scale and in terms of current developments.

Topics of the research

The research includes four chapters as well as introduction and findings of the study. *Chapter one* will explore the growth of Turkey's power and the position of the Gulf in its perceptions strategically and economically. In this respect, it will trace how Turkey has sought to regain its regional status since 2002. Because of substantial domestic reforms and rapid economic growth, Turkey became an influential actor in regional politics. However, because its ability to settle problems or exert influence is limited, as the Syrian crisis shows, the Gulf region is considered an advantage for Turkey for two reasons: First, the strategic depth concept that sees this region as a part of Turkey's historical and geographical space. Second is the economic factor, where GCC markets, capital, investments and energy resources are considered great opportunities for Turkish economic growth.

Chapter two will explore the GCC's establishment, its economic significance and its rising regional role. It will also trace the emergence of some GCC member states as influential economic and regional actors and how the contest for influence has risen among them. Due to their rising power, the GCC relationships have been expanding with regional and international actors. In this way, this chapter will explore Turkey's position in the GCC states' perceptions as both an economic partner and a potential regional ally.

Chapter three will examine the convergence dynamics of the GCC states and Turkey. It will briefly trace the history of the rapprochement between the two parties. It will also discuss how major geopolitical shifts brought Turkey and the GCC states closer to balancing both Iran's increasing influence and new emerging security threats. In this way, it will examine key regional issues and threats that drive the rapprochement between the two parties. This includes, firstly, their empowerment of Sunni Arabs and Kurds in Iraq. Secondly, their agreement on Syria, that regime change could directly affect the regional balance of power. Thirdly, the emergence of the ISIL and its rapid expansion, which posed a threat to their security and created a common interest in countering it. Fourthly, the Yemeni war, which initially gained Turkey's support and raised the hopes of forming an alliance to counterbalance Iran and enhance economic partnership.

Chapter four will analyze the division among the GCC states and Turkey and their competing agendas in the region. This rivalry was raised mainly between Turkey and

Qatar on one hand and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the other. Their clash of perceptions and interests has intensified towards a number of significant issues, such as Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, Libya and Iran. In addition, the Gulf crisis since June 2017 has escalated their competition in an unprecedented way and raised questions over the impact of Turkey's military base in Qatar on its relations with other GCC states. Finally, the contest of the opposing parties was not confined to the Gulf region, rather, it extended to the Horn of Africa in seeking to establish military bases. Besides the fact that the divergence seems an ideological conflict towards such perceived threats, it is also a power politics struggle for influence.

Finally, the conclusion will discuss the research's main findings on the current relations and mutual perceptions of the GCC states and Turkey in terms of new emerging alliances and contest for regional influence. It will raise questions over the future of their strategic partnership, which has rapidly developed previously.

CHAPTER 1: THE GROWTH OF TURKEY AND ITS PERCEPTION OF THE GULF

Turkey has sought to regain its power and revive its historical status since 2002. It has been looking to alter the regional balance of power in its favor, since its influence does not meet its geographical and historical significance. A new active foreign policy has been developed, which is centered around making Turkey an influential regional power. Ankara believes that this would qualify it to exert influence in many areas, particularly in the Middle East, and allows it to have an important say in international policies.

To achieve the new strategic vision, Turkey has launched extensive domestic reforms, sought economic growth and engaged actively in regional politics. As a result, it has rapidly grown and achieved a fundamental shift both domestically and regionally. It becomes a rising or middle power in terms of power indicators and an influential actor in regional politics. However, as other regional powers in the Middle East, it cannot set agenda, settle problems or advance its influence without support of great powers or without forming alliances. Its ability to exert influence is limited even in its immediate neighborhood, as the Syrian crisis shows.

In this regard, the Gulf region is considered an advantage for Turkey. Two main factors have been playing a prominent role in recognizing the Gulf as an area of significant interest to Turkey. First, the strategic depth concept that perceives this region as a part of Turkey's historical and geographical space. The second is the economic factor, since the GCC energy resources and markets are considered great opportunities for Turkish economic growth.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first will study the factors behind the recent rise of Turkey, such as domestic reforms, economic growth and the new active foreign policy. It will also question whether this fundamental growth is enough to meet Turkey's self-aspiration as a central regional power or if it still needs the help of great powers and alliance-forming to modify the balance of power to its favor as well as counter threats. The second section will focus on how Turkey perceives the Gulf region strategically and economically.

2.1. The Rise of Turkey in the New Middle East Power Equation

The three main factors that are behind the rise of Turkey recently are the following: First, political stability and domestic reforms led mainly by the AKP's governments since 2002. Secondly, exponential economic growth.¹ Thirdly, a new foreign policy approach that engaged actively in Turkey's neighborhoods. These changes raise the question of whether Turkey has enough power to exert influence independently or balance regional powers.

2.1.1. Domestic Reforms and Political Stability

There is an effect that is mutual between home and abroad. As some theorists of international relations concur, the "transformation in domestic policy has affected the foreign policy doctrine."² The transformation of Turkish politics is basically the result of domestic changes in the country. The idea of defying the status quo and of active foreign policy is attributed to former President Turgut Özal (1983-1993), characterized by restructuring the Turkish economy and launching an active foreign policy at early 1990s.³ In October 2001, the parliament passed reforms, such as reducing restrictions on human rights. It also increased civilian representation on the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK) and adopted a new Civil Code mainly to improve freedom of association and assembly.⁴

However, the reforms policy gained momentum under the AKP. The latter's political vision shows that its foreign policies are based mainly on domestic necessities and it aims at bringing stability to the country. It stated that the party "redefined one of the key principles of Turkish foreign policy as tipping the freedom-security balance to the advantage of individual and societal freedoms."⁵ Hence, foreign relations was supposed

¹ Valeria Talbot, "Turkey-GCC Relations in A Transforming Middle East," *Analysis*, no. 178 (June 2013), p. 3.

² Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 42, no. 6 (November 2006), p. 945.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 945.

⁴ Meliha Benli Altunisik, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2008), p. 43.

⁵ "The AKP Political Vision 2023," p. 58, The AKP official website, accessed 9/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/1NQGfE7>

to be used as a means for structural reforms in Turkey to expand freedoms, promote democracy and achieve economic development.

The AKP has accelerated the reform process. In August 2003, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly were strengthened through a new package of amendments to the constitution. There was also a change in the MGK. The head of Council became civilian and the number of civilian members became equal to military members. Furthermore, the executive powers of the Council have been curtailed.⁶ A number of restrictions relate to the Kurdish issue had been lifted, such as the lifting of the state of emergency, the release of prominent Kurdish politicians from prison and the ending of bans on use of the Kurdish language.⁷ The AKP also passed reforms in the judicial system. By 2009, civilians were only to be tried in civilian courts. The constitutional referendum in 2010 increased the size of the Supreme Council of Judges and the Prosecutors (Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu, HSYK) from seven to 22 prosecutors and gave it a greater degree of autonomy from the government. It also gave citizens the right to apply to the Constitutional Court for their individual cases if their basic rights and fundamental freedoms are violated.⁸

By the constitutional referendum of April 2017, the AKP passed comprehensive reforms to the political system. The presidential system had adopted instead of the parliamentary system of the government. HSYK members were reduced to 13, where four members to be appointed by the President and seven will be appointed by the Grand Assembly. The referendum passed by 51.18 percent.⁹ These consecutive reforms have increased the role of civil society in foreign policy making.¹⁰ Furthermore, the AKP plans to adopt a new civil constitution replacing the current constitution that was created by the military rule in 1983.

⁶ Altunisik, pp. 43-44.

⁷ Ali Balci, "The Kurdish movement's EU policy in Turkey: An analysis of a dissident ethnic bloc's foreign policy," *Ethnicities*, vol. 15, no. 1 (February 2015), pp. 83-84.

⁸ Meltem Müftüleri-Baç, "Judicial Reform in Turkey and the EU's Political Conditionality: (Mis)Fit between Domestic Preferences and EU Demands," MAXCAP Working Paper, no. 18 (January 2016), pp. 13-16, at: <https://bit.ly/2QF5EX6>

⁹ Supreme Election Council, "Announcement from Supreme Election Council Regarding to the Constitutional Amendment Referendum Held on 16th April 2017," accessed 13/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2NEYdgL>

¹⁰ Bülent Aras & Rabia Karakaya Polat, "Turkey and the Middle East: Frontiers of the New Geographic Imagination," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 61, no. 4 (December 2007), p. 477.

The EU's agreement at the summit of Helsinki in 1999 of the accession Turkey was one of the main drivers in accelerating the reform process and in expanding freedoms later. The decision also prompted Turkey to seek economic ties and trade partners to boost its economy to meet EU requirements and standards.¹¹ The AKP has also given more importance to the EU's full membership. It argued, "Legal reforms and new regulations have been passed as part of the EU's *acquis Communautaire* and they have raised and strengthened Turkey's democratic standards."¹² The AKP needed a common policy agreed upon by most of the society. By affiliating itself with the EU, the AKP was aiming to build confidence in internal politics and portrayed the EU membership as a vehicle for economic and political reforms.¹³

2.1.2. Turkey's Economic Growth

Turkey has achieved an unprecedented economic rise since 2002. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Turkish economy has grown exponentially fast.¹⁴ As a mid-size economic power, Turkey has been the fastest growing economy in Europe.¹⁵ It ranks as the world 17th largest economy in 2017.¹⁶ During this period, Turkey has been able to reach to world markets.

Unquestionably, these developments had to start somewhere. After Turkey experienced economic severe crisis in 2001, it adopted financial reforms supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the negotiations with the EU for its membership and the AKP's adoption of economic liberalism. This led to economic recovery. During 2002-2007, the real GDP grew on average by 6.8 percent annually. Per capita GDP grew from \$3250 to close to \$9000 by 2007.¹⁷ The cumulative net foreign direct investment (FDI) reached about \$76 billion, which is almost eight times higher than the \$10 billion received during

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 475.

¹² "The AKP Political Vision 2023," pp. 58, 63.

¹³ Esen Kirdis, "The Role of Foreign Policy in Constructing the Party Identity of the Turkish Justice and Development Party," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2015), pp. 182-183.

¹⁴ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "OECD Economic Surveys: Turkey," July 2018, p. 13, accessed 15/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2NnCY7D>

¹⁵ Hüseyin Bağcı, "The Role of Turkey as a New Player in the G20 System," in Wilhelm Hofmeister (Ed.), *G20: Perceptions and Perspectives for Global Governance* (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011), p. 147.

¹⁶ World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Broad-Based Upturn, but for How Long?* January 2018, p. 151, accessed 15/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Fv7Aww>

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

the 1995-2001 period.¹⁸ EU membership represents an important lever for the Turkish economy and encourages foreign investment. Erdoğan stated in 2005, “We believe that the accession negotiations with the EU will play an important role in increasing foreign direct investment to Turkey.”¹⁹ On a domestic level, the AKP turned to adopting an economic liberal ideology and policies that aimed at entrusting the economy.²⁰ Certain policies were implemented such as privatization, reducing the state’s role in economy and opening the country for foreign investment.²¹

The 2023 vision of the AKP has contributed to the motivation of economic growth. The party has set specific objectives to be realized. These broad goals include: To be among the top ten economies of the world in terms of the GDP, to increase exports to 500 billion dollars per year, to increase per capita income to \$25000 and to reach an annual GDP of \$2 trillion.²² These goals are often points of reference in successive AKP electoral programs and its leaders’ statements. At his inauguration in 2014, President Erdoğan stressed the importance of achieving these goals in the coming period. “We will focus on the 2023 targets. We will realize a faster and healthier economic development,”²³ he remarked.

Therefore, the AKP often makes comparisons between the economic situation of Turkey upon assuming power and the situation that it has reached under his rule. It stated:

Between the years of 2002-2011, our GDP has increased from 230 billion dollars to 774 billion dollars while our income per capita has increased from \$3500 to \$10,000... While the interest Turkey paid in 2002 made up 15.5% of its GDP, in 2011 this rate was reduced to 3.4%... We have restored the much-deserved prestige of the Turkish Lira by removing

¹⁸ Mihai Macovei, “Growth and economic crises in Turkey: leaving behind a turbulent past?” *Economic Papers*, no. 386 (October 2009), p. 14, accessed 15/7/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2C6WLkX>

¹⁹ Defne Günay & Kaan Renda, “Usages of Europe in Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2015), p. 58.

²⁰ A. Erinc Yeldan & Burcu Ünüvar, “An Assessment of the Turkish Economy in the AKP Era,” *Research and Policy on Turkey* (2015), p. 1, at: <https://bit.ly/2RG9E11>

²¹ Gökhan Bacik, “Turkey and Pipeline Politics,” *Turkish Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2006), p. 303.

²² “The AKP Political Vision 2023,” p. 52.

²³ “‘New Turkey’ is born, says new President Erdogan,” *Anadolu Agency*, 28/8/2014, accessed 9/10/2018, at: <http://goo.gl/3zbhNn>

six zeros while reducing inflation to single digits... The foreign exchange reserves increased from \$28 billion in November 2002 to \$110 billion (including gold) in 2012.²⁴

Turkey's economic growth continues. The international economic institutions data supports this despite many domestic shocks and regional geopolitical problems. The IMF projects that Turkey's GDP at current prices reaches \$909.89 billion in 2018 and it may reach \$1,155.94 billion in 2022, while GDP per capita in 2018 was \$11,114.²⁵ Despite the setback of GDP growth rate to 3.2 percent in 2016, the World Bank data shows that Turkey has overcome the impact of internal problems and achieved a high growth rate within one year, which reached 7.4 percent.²⁶ Exports have risen from \$36 billion in 2002 to \$156 billion in 2017.²⁷ Inflation is currently running at about 11.1 percent, which is significantly down from the runaway inflation figures of the 1980s and 1990s at 65 percent.²⁸

Despite these economic achievements, Turkey is experiencing some imbalances. It remains highly dependent on imported oil and gas. In aggregate GDP Turkey ranks as the world's 17th biggest economy, but in GDP per capita it is in 57th position. Furthermore, the agricultural sector remains very big, accounting for 25.2 percent of employment, but only 9 percent of the GDP. Furthermore, the exchange rate of the Turkish lira has dropped, against the US Dollar, to an unprecedented rate during the AKP rule. It dropped from TL 1.35 in April 2005 to about TL 6.35 in September 2018.

²⁴ "The AKP Political Vision 2023," pp. 48-49.

²⁵ International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects," *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2018, accessed 15/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2xmh8a0>

²⁶ World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Broad-Based Upturn, but for How Long?* January 2018, p. 151, accessed 15/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Fv7Aww>

²⁷ Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), "Foreign trade by years, 1923-2017," at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dl0E>

²⁸ "Turkey Economy Data," Focus Economics, October 2, 2018, accessed 3/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2DcGHk1>; Jean-Pierre Lehmann, "Turkey's 2023 Economic Goal in Global Perspective," EDAM, Discussion Paper Series, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, Istanbul (June 2011), p. 2.

Table 1.1
Turkey's Economic Growth 2002-2018

	2002	2017	2018
GDP (\$ billion)	230	887	909
GDP growth (%)	-	7.4	5.1
GDP per capita (\$)	3581	10602	11114
Unemployment rate (%)	-	10.2	10.2
Public Dept (% of GDP)	74	28.3	53.2
Exports (\$ billion)	36	156	-
Inflation (%)	65 (1990s)	11.1	-
Foreign reserves (\$ billion)	28	84.2	-
FDI (\$ billion)	1.8	10.9	-

Source: Data collected by author based on the following sources: Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), at: <https://bit.ly/2CxaOAr>; World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Broad-Based Upturn, but for How Long?* January 2018, p. 151, accessed on 15/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Fv7Aww>; IMF, “Report for Selected Countries and Subjects,” *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2xmh8a0>; OECD, “OECD Economic Surveys: Turkey,” July 2018, accessed on 15/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2NnCY7D>; “The AKP Political Vision 2023,” pp. 48-49, the AKP official website, accessed 9/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/1NQGfE7>; “Turkey Economy Data,” Focus Economics, October 2, 2018, accessed on 3/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2DcGHk1>

Achieving the 2023 economic goals, particularly the objective of ranking as the 10th largest economy globally, will face some obstacles. The AKP leadership will have to overcome a challenge to meet this ‘promise’ to Turkish voters. The rise to the tenth place may not be achieved easily by the same means that got Turkey to the 17th rank in the world. It has been able to overcome many developing countries, which were shared by developmental weakness. Today, Turkey must compete with high-level industrial and productive economies to move to the next place. It should exceed seven big economic countries —like Canada (GDP \$1,798.512), Russia (\$1,719.900), South Korea (\$1,693.246), Spain (\$1,506.439), Australia (\$1,500.256), Mexico (\$1,212.831), Indonesia (\$1,074.966), and the Netherlands (\$945.327)²⁹—to be in the tenth place.

²⁹ IMF, “Report for Selected Countries and Subjects.”

Turkey is not alone in dreaming of gaining greater economic power. Countries that are currently behind Turkey have also been limbering up for a while. Competitiveness will clearly be key.³⁰

Finally, despite some economic obstacles and geopolitical tensions at its neighborhoods, GDP growth averaged nearly 7 percent in the period between 2010 and 2017,³¹ which promotes Turkey and gives its policies momentum to build partnerships and to be more engaged in regional and international economic organizations.

2.1.3. Turkey's Growing Regional and International Role

In tandem with substantial reforms and economic growth at home, Turkey sought to reflect this by expanding its influence abroad, especially in its immediate neighborhood. The AKP aspired to solve Turkey's historical and political problems with neighboring countries in order to create an appropriate environment for its active engagement after decades of self-isolation, to reduce national security threats, to boost its economic interests and to strengthen its status in the regional balance of power.

Since it came to power, the AKP emphasized that Turkey should play a key role stemming from its historical and geographical depth. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Prime Minister (2014-2016) and the main intellectual contributor to the restoration of Turkey's position,³² stated, "Central countries such as Turkey, which occupies a central position in the Afro-Eurasian continent, do not accept to remain confined to a particular region."³³ He believed that this position would qualify Turkey to exert influence in neighboring areas. Accordingly, this situation should transform the regional impact into an international one, allowing Turkey to "create international policies."³⁴ The AKP's political vision

³⁰ Lehmann, p. 2.

³¹ "OECD Economic Surveys: Turkey," p. 13.

³² Ahmet Davutoğlu, "The Restoration of Turkey: Strong Democracy, Dynamic Economy, and Active Diplomacy," *Vision Papers*, no. 7 (August 2014), pp. 19-20.

³³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *The Strategic Depth: The Position of Turkey on International Arena*, Mohammad Jaber Telci and Tarek Abdel Jalil (trans.), (Beirut and Doha: Arab Scientific Publishers and Al-Jazeera Studies Center, 2010 [2000]), pp. 609-611.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 611, 619.

reaffirmed this vision, stated, “We believe that Turkey is destined to play a historic and critical role in its region and the world.”³⁵

The AKP’s new principles of foreign policy sought to implement this vision. Davutoğlu has defined such principles as follows:

A balance of security and democracy to allow the Republic to establish an area of influence in its environs; a ‘zero problem policy towards Turkey’s neighbors’; developing relations with Turkey’s neighboring regions and beyond; adherence to a multidimensional foreign policy aimed at complementarity rather than competition; and rhythmic or sustained diplomacy including the institutionalization of Turkey’s foreign policy.³⁶

Regionally, the AKP’s vision hoped that Turkey would play active roles, including the role of mediator, model, promoter of peace and stability, third party and facilitator of communications. It envisages itself as “the only party in the region with reliable channels of communication with all parties and can engage with all.”³⁷ Turkey is based on its active mediation roles among many conflicting parties, such as its key role in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations in 2003-2004.³⁸ It played the role of facilitator between Iraqi Sunni parties and the US in 2007 to broaden Iraqis’ participation in the peace process. In 2008, Erdoğan’s effort to broker an agreement among Lebanese factions was to avoid a conflict that might have undermined the relative calm in Lebanon since 1990.³⁹ Based on its open channels with Hamas, Turkey mediated to end the Israeli attack on Gaza in early 2009. Thus, Turkey sought to be an indispensable player of all processes.⁴⁰

Turkey has also attempted to play a ‘liberalizer’ role; that refers to the efforts to export liberal values to the region as a country reconciling a liberal economic system and democracy.⁴¹ Davutoğlu has considered democracy the most important tool of Turkish

³⁵ “The AKP Political Vision 2023,” p. 57-58.

³⁶ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2008), pp.79–83.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

³⁸ Murat Yeşiltaş, “Soft Balancing in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Case of 2003 Iraq War,” *Perception: Journal of International Affairs* (Spring-Summer 2009), p. 40.

³⁹ Steven A. Cook and Hussein Ibish, “Turkey and the GCC: Cooperation Amid Diverging Interests,” The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, AGSIW Gulf Rising Series, no. 1 (2017), p. 3, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Ekcuaa>

⁴⁰ Hasan Basri Yalçın, “The Concept of ‘Middle Power’ and the Recent Turkish Foreign Policy Activism,” *Afro Eurasian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2012), p. 210.

⁴¹ Şevket Ovah, “Decoding Turkey’s Lust for Regional Clout in the Middle East: A Role Theory

soft power.⁴² Former Turkish President Abdullah Gül also believed that democracy, a free-market economy, modernization, reforms and regional cooperation are among the most prominent features of Turkey. He stated, “[T]he whole world appreciates that Turkey... has been a role model for all the world with its democratic and secular system.”⁴³ He also indicated that Turkey’s role is “attached firmly to the principles of a free-market economy and has a valuable and unique experience in implementing reforms [and] modernity.”⁴⁴

Turkey has sought to develop its relations with most states and sub-state actors in the region and has been able to build strategic partnerships with many influential countries, particularly during the first decade of the millennium. The increasing role of Turkey and its attempts to solve problems has made it aspire to be an influential regional power. However, following the Arab Spring uprisings since 2011, its policies have become vulnerable to criticism and its relations with many states have been weakened. This will be discussed later in chapters four and five.

Globally, Turkey seeks to become an actor at international arena. Indeed, the AKP perceived Turkey as “a major player that contributes to peace and stability in its region and the global order.”⁴⁵ Davutoğlu argued, “The dynamism and activeness in diplomacy necessitates that Turkey exists in the world arena”.⁴⁶ Turkey’s multi-dimensionality policy targets to increase its relevance and role on the international arena and to balance its relations with all regional and international actors. Rhythmic diplomacy also aims at intensifying Turkey’s presence in most international and regional organizations and forums and to offer initiatives to solve global problems.

In this regard, Turkey has strengthened its relations with many great powers such as Russia and China, but at the same time continues to be an ally of the US and looks forward to the EU’s membership. “As we go to the West and work for European membership, we

Perspective,” *Journal of International and Area Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (June 2013), p. 7.

⁴² Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision,” p. 80.

⁴³ A speech delivered by the Turkish President Abdullah Gül on “Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Era” at International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), see: *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, December 3, 2009, accessed 22/6/2010, at: <https://bit.ly/2PGQTTp>

⁴⁴ Abdullah Gül, “Turkey’s Role in a Changing Middle East Environment,” *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Winter 2004), p. 1.

⁴⁵ “The AKP Political Vision 2023,” p. 59.

⁴⁶ Davutoğlu, “The Restoration of Turkey,” p. 19.

will not turn our back to the East, the South or the North... More than Turkey's importance is its multi-dimensionality network of relations," Erdoğan said.⁴⁷ Russia is an example of the fundamental change in new Turkish diplomacy. Despite the historical confrontation and rivalry, it aspired to turn mistrust into cooperation and strategic partnership. Moscow is one of Turkey's largest partners and supplies it with about two-thirds of its gas needs. The bilateral trade turnover reached about \$38 billion (\$16.14 billion as Turkish exports and \$22 billion as imports) in 2018,⁴⁸ and both countries are interested in maintaining this positive trend and to reach \$100 billion in the future.⁴⁹

In addition, the AKP's political vision aspires for Ankara to play a key role in the development of the United Nations (UN). The AKP's program stated, "There will be some inevitable changes in... the UN structure of governance... Our goal and mission is to place Turkey among those countries that will shape the new global system."⁵⁰ The Turkish Foreign Ministry also noted, "Turkey has adopted a more proactive approach towards the UN in recent years striving to contribute effectively to all the issues on the UN agenda."⁵¹ Davutoğlu also added:

The last step in Turkey's active diplomacy is our work within various international organizations, primarily the UN. We were a member of the Security Council in 2009-2010, an important milestone as it was the first time after more than 50 years... We are also resolutely committed to our aim of making Istanbul the center of the UN.⁵²

Turkey also accessed global economic organizations. The Turkish economic growth led to Ankara's membership in the Group of Twenty (G20) in 2009.⁵³ The latter, which was founded in 1999, can be considered a concrete symbol of emerging middle and great

⁴⁷ A speech by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at "AK Party Group Meeting (November 3, 2009)," accessed 10/1/2010, at: <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/group03112009.html>

⁴⁸ Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), "Exports and imports by country and year 2009-2018," accessed 15/6/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dloE>

⁴⁹ Hakan Ceyhan Aydoğan, "Putin sees new opportunities for Turkey-Russia relations" *Anadolu Agency*, 28/11/2014, accessed 9/10/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1EdDGmT>

⁵⁰ "The AKP Political Vision 2023," p. 56.

⁵¹ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "The United Nations Organization and Turkey," accessed 30/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2d5ii0H>

⁵² Davutoğlu, "The Restoration of Turkey," pp. 19-20

⁵³ Selcuk Colakoglu, "MIKTA in Global Governance as a Middle Power Grouping: A Turkish Perspective," in *MIKTA: Current Situation and the Way Forward* (Indonesia: Policy Analysis and Development Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 2018), p. 53.

powers in the global economy's center.⁵⁴ Turkey also became a founding-member of some economic groupings such as MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey and Australia) in September 2013.⁵⁵ According to Rento L.P. Marsudi, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, "the fluidity of power shift as well as complex global problems give a room for 'middle powers' to play... MIKTA aspires to become a bridge-builder and agenda-setter in a changing global order."⁵⁶ In 2016, Turkey's trade with MIKTA members increased to \$11 billion.⁵⁷ Additionally, Turkey has become a member-state in some groupings such as MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), and CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa). These groupings hope to play a key role in the future functioning of the global economic system. Due to Turkey's increasing problems haunting its immediate neighborhood, it strives to extend its economic reach to other regions and to foster its own global vision by keeping close relations with other countries and through such groupings.⁵⁸

Accordingly, the AKP's governments are keen to work within international political and economic institutions, serving its strategic goal that views Turkey as a regional as well as an international player.

2.1.4. Turkey's Potential to Impact the Regional Balance of Power

Based on the rise of Turkey's economic and political regional role, several concepts such as regional power, central country, middle power and rising or emerging power have been attached to Turkey. Furthermore, Turkey looks forward to set the agenda of its immediate neighborhoods and provide them with security. However, would its power be enough to exert influence abroad or set the region's agenda? Can Turkey act independently in the foreign policy arena? Or does it still need to coordinate with other powers or form alliances to alter the balance of power in its favor?

Fundamentally, Turkey has redefined its regional and international status since 2002. Through the 'strategic depth' concept, Davutoğlu focused on the role of geography in

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁵ Colakoglu, p. 53.

⁵⁶ Rento L.P. Marsudi, "Foreword," in *MIKTA: Current Situation and the Way Forward*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Colakoglu, p. 64.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 53, 59-60.

redefining Turkey's status. He argued that Turkey occupies a geographically central position, and added:

In terms of geography, Turkey occupies a unique space. As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia's vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character... Taking a broader, global view, Turkey holds an optimal place in the sense that it is both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁹

Accordingly, Turkey has become unacceptable to describe as a peripheral, bridge or an ordinary country. Davutoğlu called on Turkey to abandon the traditional defensive policy and isolation, aspiring to play an influential role. In this sense, he stated:

A central country with such an optimal geographic location cannot define itself in a defensive manner... provid[ing] security and stability not only for itself, but also for its neighboring regions. Turkey should guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs.⁶⁰

The 'strategic depth' consists of historical and geographic depth. Davutoğlu considered the historical depth very important because Turkey has a multidimensional historical legacy. He emphasized that the Ottoman Empire is the source of this historical heritage, because it established a more stable political structure on three continents in the 16th century.⁶¹ He considered that the most important historical factor that distinguishes political culture is that Turkey was the 'center' of a civilization that built a long-lasting political system.⁶² On the other hand, the geographical depth places Turkey in its rightful place in the center of many geopolitical spheres of influence.⁶³ In other words, the geographical and historical depths extend mainly to the Muslim world, where Turkey is geographically at the heart and where historically many Muslim countries have ruled for centuries, as the center of the Caliphate.

⁵⁹ Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," pp. 78, 92.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

⁶¹ Davutoğlu, *The Strategic Depth*, pp. 88, 102, 117.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶³ "The Power Turkey does not Use is that of 'Strategic Depth'," Interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Hürriyet Daily News*, June 14, 2001, accessed 15/11/2009, at: <http://goo.gl/KGA5mT>

Despite these aspirations, some analysts argued that Turkey is defining “a position for itself that is difficult to sustain with the available power basis of the country.”⁶⁴ Middle power may be the appropriate description of Turkey so far. William Hale described it as a middle power that defines its capabilities through “military power, economic resources, and development.”⁶⁵ Davutoğlu himself recognized Turkey as a middle power that needs to coordinate with a great power. “Turkey, as a middle-size central country, on the other hand, needs the strategic weight of a continental superpower,” he stated.⁶⁶ Hüseyin Bağcı described Turkey as a “middle power, a country that cannot determine or regulate political developments alone, but has valuable ‘soft power’ assets to make a systematic impact together with other countries or through international institutions.”⁶⁷

The emerging or rising regional power concept is a fashionable term used “to underline the increasing regional engagement, capacity and activism of states in their own regions.”⁶⁸ Accordingly, definitions of the concepts of middle power, rising power and regional power are fluid because their meanings are close. The difference lies in the extent to which the state plays its role alone or needs assistance of other powers and forming alliances to do so.

1.1.1.1. Turkey’s Material and Ideational Power

To identify Turkey’s status, it is important to examine its material and moral capabilities through basic national power characteristics, such as geography, population, economic growth, military preparedness, national morale, the quality of the government and ideational power, which have been discussed theoretically in the balance of power in the introduction.

First, because Turkey is located close to different strategic areas, it was always deemed a significant asset of great power rivalry.⁶⁹ Due to its large space, 769,632 km², Turkey

⁶⁴ Yalçın, p. 205.

⁶⁵ William Hale, cited in Dietrich Jung, “Turkey and the Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities,” *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 2005), p. 2.

⁶⁶ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision,” p. 88.

⁶⁷ Ayhan Simsek, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy: From Regional to Global Player,” Qantara.de, 7/3/2012, accessed 15/8/2018, at: <http://goo.gl/1U1feO>

⁶⁸ Emel Parlar Dal, “Conceptualising and testing the ‘emerging regional power’ of Turkey in the shifting international order,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 8 (2016), pp. 1425-1426.

⁶⁹ Yalçın, p. 204.

has an abundance of natural resources. The more resources a country might have, the more it may sustain.⁷⁰ However, it is heavily dependent on oil and gas imports to keep its economy going.⁷¹

Secondly, the population is also deemed an important factor of a country's power.⁷² According to A.T. Mahan, human action is very important in order to mobilize material capabilities. Its importance depends on the quality of population.⁷³ The latter includes many quantifiable considerations such as age distribution, sex, living standards, health, education, productive capacity and skills, composition of ethnic groups and minorities and degree of effectiveness.⁷⁴ Turkey, with its estimated population of 81 million, stands as the 19th most populated state worldwide and the second in Europe.⁷⁵

Thirdly, impressive records of economic growth since 2002 is perhaps the main reason to focus on its rising power. Turkey's GDP, which reached \$909 billion, compared favorably to regional states: Saudi Arabia's \$748 billion, Iran's \$418 billion, Israel's \$373 billion, and Iraq's \$223 billion in 2018.⁷⁶ Turkey has performed well recently as aforementioned, but it is difficult to compare with the great powers such as the US, Germany, China or Russia. Nevertheless, its economy is the biggest in the Middle East region.

Fourthly, Turkey has one of the significant military power in the region.⁷⁷ It has the second largest number of military soldiers and the fourth strongest military in the NATO.⁷⁸ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that the level of military spending in 2014 in Turkey was in the 15th place in the world, at \$22.6 billion.⁷⁹ However, despite its large military and expenditure, Turkey still majorly

⁷⁰ Ažuolas Bagdonas, "Turkey as a Great Power? Back to Reality," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2015), pp. 312, 321; "Turkey," CIA World Factbook.

⁷¹ Bagdonas, pp. 312-313.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁷³ Jon Sumida, "Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician," in Colin S. Gray & Geoffrey Sloan (Ed.), *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999), p. 49.

⁷⁴ Norman D. Palmer & Howard C. Perkins, *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, 3rd edition (New Delhi: S.K. Jain; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), p. 65.

⁷⁵ IMF, "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects"; "Total Population by Country 2018," World Population Review, accessed 20/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2ODXJgc>

⁷⁶ IMF, "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects"; World Bank; OECD; Bagdonas, p. 321.

⁷⁷ Bagdonas, p. 315.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; "Turkey Military Strength," Global Fire Power, accessed 20/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2nvXCTU>

⁷⁹ "Turkey - Military Spending," Global Security, accessed 17/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2C9Om0p>

depends on great powers to buy and import arms technology systems such as recent negotiations with the US and Russia to buy F-35 fighters and the S-400 air defense system, respectively. Turkey also lacks nuclear technology, while some regional states possess nuclear weapons, such as Israel, and while Iran develops an advanced nuclear program believed to lead to the production of nuclear weapons.

Fifthly, national morale, as defined in the introduction, is a degree of supporting the government policies. There are obvious situations where national morale is likely to be high, especially at times of great crisis.⁸⁰ It is hard to measure the national morale. However, in Turkey there is an important indicator that shows the people's support of the government. The AKP's success in 11 consecutive elections and 3 constitutional referendums during the period of 2002-2018 indicates such support to the ruling party's policies. This support was most evident when a great crisis occurred, such as the failed coup d'état in July 2016. It is worth mentioning that this support has overlapped with the economic growth and political stability during this period.

Sixthly, the quality of government, which the launch of strategies that enhance a state's power cannot be achieved without a competent government. Mahan emphasized on the role of government in the national power characteristics because the result of policies is not determined by geographical factors, rather by the action of the government.⁸¹ Turkey has undergone fundamental changes since 2002. Although many factors contributed to the new changes, the 'leadership' or the AKP governments played the key role. It introduced a new program, new opportunities, new vision, and a new strategy that redefined the status of the country and its relations. In general, it defied the status quo and set up a program for changing the situation.

Seventhly, Turkey's ideational power can be explained by its soft power. But this power is not easily measured. Diplomatic activities undertaken by Turkey, development aid, the spreading of Yunus Emre Institutes and hosting of summits and forums constitute ideational power resources.⁸² Turkey's official development aid has increased from \$85 million in 2002 to \$3.3 billion in 2013. According to the Turkish Cooperation and

⁸⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau & Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1985 [1948]), pp. 153, 156

⁸¹ Sumida, 49.

⁸² Dal, pp. 1434-1435.

Coordination Agency (TIKA), “Turkey increased its official development assistance by 29.7 percent to exceed 3.3 billion USD. This ranked Turkey among the countries with highest rate of increase in assistance as was the case in recent years.”⁸³

Yunus Emre Enstitüsü is also deemed by the Turkish government a tool of soft power. It is a public foundation to promote Turkish history, culture and language. It carries out studies for teaching Turkish in the cultural centers established abroad. Starting to operate in 2009, it has more than 56 cultural centers abroad. It aims to open 100 centers by 2023.⁸⁴ According to Şeref Ateş, President of the institute, the institute looks to “play a significant role in making the ancient sound of Turkish language heard in the world as well as introducing our historical and cultural heritage.”⁸⁵ These ideational power resources may contribute to Turkey’s rising power.⁸⁶

1.1.1.2. Turkey’s Position in the New Regional Balance of Power

Despite the fact that Turkey’s policies have shown a significant shift in strengthening the state’s own capabilities and increasing the regional and international role, it has not reached the level of full independent foreign policy roles, even in its immediate neighborhood, which was clearly shown during the Syrian crisis. The settlement of such an issue required the cooperation of Turkey with great and regional powers, namely Russia and Iran. Turkey could be considered a regional power in the Middle East compared to other regional powers such as Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia. All these states have actively engaged in regional issues, but none of them can set policies or settle problems without the support of great-power allies. To advance their influence, they also need to form alliances with other states in the region or even with sub-state actors.

Some Turkish analysts believe that “Turkey is a middle power, which greatly affects the regional issues but cannot set policies of the region. One of the best proofs for this argument is that when the US retreated from the regional conflicts (especially in Egypt

⁸³ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), *Turkish Development Assistance 2013* (Ankara: Department of Strategy Development, Prime Ministry of Turkey, 2013), pp. 3-5, at: <https://bit.ly/1Rqdh6>

⁸⁴ Yunus Emre Enstitüsü official website, accessed 21/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2RGs5MY>

⁸⁵ Şeref Ateş, President of Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, accessed 21/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2IOXb0C>

⁸⁶ Dal, p. 1435.

and Syria respectively) Turkey's role started to diminish considerably."⁸⁷ On the other hand, some believe that Ankara's dependence on other great powers or alliances is relative. According to Mehmet Can Palanci, the dependency is mutual, "great powers should have to feel cooperate with Turkey in order to implement their regional policy. On the other hand, because of its lack of economic capacity, Turkey usually needs help from other countries for its regional policies."⁸⁸ Others believe that Turkey's dependency is based on its enmity or amity relations. "An enmity relationship may render impossible any policy action seemingly possible in terms of material capacity for a regional power by increasing the costs, while an amity relationship may make possible an action that seems impossible to realize for a middle power by decreasing the costs."⁸⁹

Therefore, Turkey, as a middle power, is not expected to balance others alone.⁹⁰ Turkey's power might not be sufficient to become a soft balancer in terms of distribution of power in the entire system, but its influence in region is important to become a soft balancer against great powers.⁹¹

As mentioned in the introduction, states form alliances against a potentially hegemonic state or a possible aggressor to preserve the equilibrium,⁹² because the absence of balance is too dangerous. This means that states are observing the region and growth of other actors' roles. Accordingly, they change or alter some policies or existing alliances in response to these changes and to maintain the balance of power in their favor.

Ankara's role has been affected since 2011 due to the Arab Spring uprisings. Some analysts argued that Turkey had miscalculated and overestimated its influence and cultural affinity with the Arab world, and Arab accessibility to Turkish leadership and

⁸⁷ Interview with Ahmet Ucagac, Researcher at International Relations Faculty, Sakarya University, Turkey, October 16, 2018.

⁸⁸ Interview with Mehmet Can Palanci, Researcher and lecturer at Political Science Department, Mardin Artuklu University, October 18, 2018.

⁸⁹ Interview with Bilal Yıldırım, Researcher at the Middle East Institute, Sakarya University, Turkey, October 16, 2018.

⁹⁰ Yalçın, p. 212.

⁹¹ In this context, soft balancing is "an action that does not directly challenge hegemonic state military preponderance, but uses non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive unilateral hegemonic military policies or increase the costs of using that extraordinary power." Yeşiltaş, p. 26 and 51, cited in Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 10-17.

⁹² Martin Griffiths, Terry O'Callaghan & Steven C. Roach, *International Relations: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 3rd edition, 2014), p. 19.

soft power.⁹³ Savante E. Cornell, a scholar specializing in security issues in Eurasia and Turkey, argued that the Arab Spring events suggest that the Ankara's discourse did not match by effective influence. "Building regional influence of the type to which Turkey aspires is a process that takes place gradually over decades and not as an immediate result of the hyperactivity diplomacy," he added.⁹⁴ In contrast, other regional actors have increased their influence in Turkey's neighborhoods since 2011, such as Iran, which now has an advantage in Iraq and Syria. The image of Turkey, which has been promoted as a central country or regional power that sets the agenda and provides security and stability, has been slightly diminished.

However, other great and regional powers cannot ignore Turkey if they want to succeed in the region. As aforementioned, the Syrian crisis revealed Turkey's limited influence, but no power can settle the dispute without Turkey's approval or partnership. Russia and Iran negotiate with Turkey to give impetus to their plans for ending the conflict. This is obvious through the Astana conferences⁹⁵ as well as the Turkish agreement with Russia over Idlib, a Syrian province in the north-west, in September 2018. The US also cannot ignore Ankara's views or its national interests in north-east Syria. Despite its security and military backing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Syrian Democratic Forces,⁹⁶ the US has taken into consideration Turkey's objections over this policy and agreed to deploy US-Turkish security patrols in Manbij to force these groups to leave the city.

⁹³ Alexander Brock, "Turkey: An Emerging Power in a Changing Middle East," Istanbul, Workshop Summary Report, June 18–19, 2014, Council on Foreign Relations, International Institutions and Global Governance Program, p. 2, accessed 9/10/2018, at: <https://on.cfr.org/2ysDxD9>

⁹⁴ Savante E. Cornell, "Changes in Turkey: What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Winter 2012), p. 23.

⁹⁵ Astana negotiations have launched by Russia, Turkey and Iran in in January 2017 in Kazakhstan's capital to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Negotiations between the delegations of the Syrian regime and the opposition are indirect. The three sponsoring countries signed a memorandum proposed by Russia to establish areas to ease tension in Syria. They also reached agreement to establish a tripartite mechanism to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire in Syria. In addition, a new constitution for Syria is being negotiated through this process. "The important points of Astana negotiations," [In Arabic: Abraz mahattat mufawadat 'Astana], Al-Jazeera.net, July 4, 2017, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2LzXL7G>

⁹⁶ Syria's democratic forces (SDF) were established in the northern city of Qamishli in October 2010. It defined itself as a "unified national military force for all Syrians, Arabs, Kurds, Syrians and all other components." Its inception came after the US announced its intention to provide weapons to a select group of armed forces to fight ISIL. The YPG, an armed force of the PYD, is the backbone of the SDF. "About the SDF," [In Arabic: Nubdha ann Quwwat Suryia al-Diyumuqratia], BBC, June 8, 2017, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bbc.in/2A9zEoM>

To act more effectively, Turkey needs to increase its capabilities, soft power and form alliances with great powers or other regional actors. In this way, it understands the influence of the US. It realizes that both states should cooperate at regional level to attain their goals.⁹⁷ However, their relations have recently witnessed some setbacks, particularly during the Syrian crisis where Turkey did not receive enough support to end the conflict rapidly and in a way that maintains Ankara's interests. Alternatively, Turkey has coordinated with Russia and Iran to settle the conflict despite its concerns over the roles of these two powers, which are the main supporters of the Syrian regime.

2.2. The Gulf's Position in Turkey's Perception

Turkey's relations have developed rapidly with the GCC states during the AKP rule since 2002. Two main factors have been playing an important role in perceiving the Gulf as a strategic interest. First, the 'strategic depth' concept, where the AKP perceives the Gulf as an extension to the country's historical and geographical space and one of the most important regions where Turkey could exert its influence. Turkish-Gulf relations are no longer perceived solely as traditional diplomatic cooperation between two parties. Rather, it is also concerned with the balance of power and threats in the region, in particular with Iran.

The second is the economic factor, which is fundamental in the AKP's perception of the GCC states. The Gulf region is considered a promising opportunity for Turkish economic growth. Turkey is well aware that this region, which contains roughly 66 percent and 45 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves, respectively, has strategic importance in any regional and global power struggle calculations.⁹⁸ In order to be a leading regional power, better economic relations with the GCC states may contribute to achieve this central objective.

⁹⁷ Emad Y. Kaddorah, "The Turkish Model: Acceptability and Apprehension," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2010), p. 123.

⁹⁸ Siret Hursoy, "Turkey's Foreign Policy and Economic Interests in the Gulf," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2013), p. 504.

2.2.1. The Gulf's Position in the Turkish 'Strategic Depth'

The AKP seeks to use the historical and religious ties with the regions that were part of the Ottoman Empire. It believes that Turkey has largely neglected relations with countries where it has strategic and national interests.⁹⁹ It has presented Turkey as a Muslim country that has traditional values and shares with Muslim countries geographic proximity, historical legacy, solidarity and a common destiny that brings them together.¹⁰⁰ This requires Ankara to deepen its ties with these countries and adopt an active engagement.¹⁰¹

According to Turkish analysts, Turkey and the GCC states share the same religion and have various cultural similarities mainly based on their religion and historical background.¹⁰² Others believe that Turkey should develop special relationships within all Ottoman Empire hinterland. If it desires to increase its strength and position, it must improve its relations with the GCC states because it needs their cooperation to achieve this aim regionally.¹⁰³ However, these commonalities are not sufficient to remove all other divergences in their identity and culture.¹⁰⁴

Since the Gulf is one of Turkey's maritime basins, it is a part of Turkey's strategic depth, according to Davutoğlu. He argued, "to define Turkey's maritime policy by referring to nearby maritime basins, we tried to show the areas of state's influence in the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caspian Sea and the Gulf of Basra."¹⁰⁵ By this, he indirectly refers to the importance of the Gulf in Ottoman legacy as well. Indeed, the Gulf formed the link between Basra on its northern coast and trade routes to the Indian subcontinent via the Arabian Sea. In addition, it was a way of cultural and civilizational connection between Istanbul and South-East Asia. According to Siret Hursoy, "the Gulf

⁹⁹ Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism," *Carnegie Papers*, no. 10 (September 2008), p. 15.

¹⁰⁰ Davutoğlu, *The Strategic Depth*, pp. 11-12

¹⁰¹ Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey and the Arab Gulf States: A Dance with Uncertain Expectations," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (March 2015), p. 1.

¹⁰² Interview with Bilal Yıldırım.

¹⁰³ Interview with Mehmet Can Palanci.

¹⁰⁴ Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem, "Preface," in Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem (Ed.), *GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre, 2015), pp. 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ "The Power Turkey does not Use is that of 'Strategic Depth'."

region offers Turkey a new sense of depth in southern Asia as it connects West Asia to East Asia and extends into the Eurasian region.”¹⁰⁶

By creating a group of ‘Ottoman lakes’, such as the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the Gulf, studies show that the Ottomans intended to be part of the international trading network. Piri Reis presented his world map to Selim I just after the Sultan arrived in Egypt in 1517. Selim took the map and made use of it to plan future military expeditions in the Indian Ocean. Sultan Suleyman initiated four naval expeditions to the Indian Ocean between 1538 and 1554. During this period, a powerful navy under the leadership of Grand Admiral Hayruddin Barbarossa was established. From bases in the Gulf and the Red Sea, he conquered Yemen. The Ottomans’ interest in the Gulf was about controlling the Arabian Sea region as the true passage to India to control the spice trade and timber transfer to Basra and Baghdad.¹⁰⁷ These policies towards the Red Sea and Gulf indicate the existence of a ‘trading state’ logic as well as a geostrategic approach, which are relatively similar to the essence of recent Turkish-Gulf relations.¹⁰⁸

Turkish-GCC relations have recently developed strategically. At the collective level, Turkey and the GCC signed an MoU in May 2005 including an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with its objective being a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This agreement pointed towards strengthening and developing trade, investments, energy, cultural and scientific cooperation.¹⁰⁹ Both parties insisted on increasing their mutual interdependence, encouraging the cultural activities and people’s interaction. In doing so, they paved the way to broaden their cooperation in high-politics areas to counter common geopolitical challenges.

Another MoU signed in September 2008, considering Ankara a ‘strategic partner’, which was the first country to be given this status.¹¹⁰ As aforementioned, this has intensified the

¹⁰⁶ Hursoy, p. 503.

¹⁰⁷ Bezen Balamir Coşkun, “Soul Searching in the Gulf: From the Ottoman Age of Exploration to Strategic Depth and Trading State,” in Oktav & Ertem (Ed.), pp. 50-51, cited in Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Suliman Al-Atiqi et al., “Turkey-GCC Relations: Trends and Outlook,” The Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum, University of Oxford (2015), pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁰ Both sides consider the signing of this MoU as “a step on the way to strategic relations,” because it institutionalized the relations through establishing a Strategic Dialogue Mechanism. They agreed to convene High Level Strategic Dialogue Meetings every year at the level of senior officials and Ministers. They also called for expanding the cooperation to include political, economic, military and security areas.

political and strategic dialogue. The two parties launched a High-Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism to develop collaboration in politics, economics, defense and culture.¹¹¹ They agreed to meet periodically through this new mechanism. During the first meeting in September 2008, political and strategic matters have been discussed.¹¹² Turkey's former Foreign Minister Ali Babacan stressed Ankara's interest in the stability of the GCC states. "Today, there is a belt of crisis in the Middle East, and it is unfortunately in an area between Turkey, in the north and the Gulf, in the south," he said.¹¹³ In July 2009, the High-Level Strategic Dialogue was held and the two parties decided to launch the Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation (JCEC).¹¹⁴ In October 2010, this Council was held in Kuwait, a Joint Action Plan was adopted and eleven joint working groups were established, serving several areas of cooperation.¹¹⁵ The JCEC, held in June 2011, reviewed the areas of cooperation.¹¹⁶ High-Level Strategic Dialogue was held again in January 2012 and reaffirmed the desire of deeper cooperation.¹¹⁷

Turkey has played a role in developing cooperation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and some GCC states through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), established in 2004 during the NATO summit in Istanbul. Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the UAE joined the ICI in 2006 and became NATO partners.¹¹⁸ The ICI provides states, including the GCC states, with practical security cooperation and looks to counter emerging threats.¹¹⁹

See: "GCC names Turkey first strategic partner outside the Gulf," *Gulf News*, September 3, 2008, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2CzYCQt>; Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relations between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)," accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2OcO6Fq>

¹¹¹ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2011), p. 693.

¹¹² Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2009), pp. 77-79.

¹¹³ "Turkey signs strategic agreement with Gulf states," *World Bulletin*, 3/9/2008, accessed 18/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2OkERCP>

¹¹⁴ Joint Statement of the Joint Ministerial Meeting of the GCC-Turkey High Level Strategic Dialogue, July 8, 2009, Istanbul-Turkey, at: <https://bit.ly/2Og6Sew>

¹¹⁵ Şefik Vural Altay (Turkish ambassador in UAE), "Conference on NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) '13," Dubai, October 22, 2013, accessed 18/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Oku6jK>

¹¹⁶ Joint Statement on Turkey-GCC High Level Strategic Dialogue 4th Joint Ministerial Meeting, Istanbul-Turkey, January 28, 2012, at: <https://bit.ly/2EdeOc0>

¹¹⁷ Birol Başkan, "Turkey-GCC Relations: Is There a Future?" *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no.1 (2011), p. 159.

¹¹⁸ Martin, pp. 77-79.

¹¹⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI): Reaching out to the broader Middle East," November 18, 2011, accessed 27/9/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2CCxmRl>

It was not only collective cooperation with the GCC that had made significant progress. Turkey has also tended to be more involved in the Gulf through bilateral relations. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are two main countries that Turkey has developed its relations with to the level of strategic partnerships.

With Saudi Arabia, Turkey has employed the growing bilateral relations in low-profile fields to reach the unprecedented agreement of strategic partnership in April 2016. In 2006 and 2007, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz visited Turkey to advance their relations.¹²⁰ During the visit of Erdoğan to Saudi Arabia in December 2015, the two countries decided to establish a high-level cooperation and dialogue mechanism to further deepen and diversify their bilateral relations. In this regard, during the visit of King Salman to Turkey in April 2016, an MoU was signed, establishing the Turkish-Saudi Coordination Council mechanism. The establishment of this council constitutes a significant step towards institutionalizing the multidimensional relations.¹²¹ As an indication of new cooperation in security and defense areas, Saudi warplanes joining in the war against the ISIL, led by the US, have often operated out of Turkey's Incirlik airbase.¹²²

Turkey has gradually promoted its relations with Qatar to sign a mutual defense agreement in 2014 and to establish a military base in the Gulf.¹²³ Their relations have been fostering in all areas. They closely cooperate on regional issues. The Supreme Strategic Committee was established in 2014. It has held many summit meetings.¹²⁴ The importance of a mutual defense agreement became clear during the Gulf crisis in June 2017, where the Turkish parliament approved the deployment of more soldiers in Turkey's military base in Qatar, as will be discussed in chapter four. It seems that Turkey

¹²⁰ Larrabee, p. 693.

¹²¹ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Bilateral Political Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia," accessed 18/7/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2PvnNXn>

¹²² Cook and Ibish, p. 12.

¹²³ According to article 4.2 of the agreement, Qatar permits Turkey to use "its ports/airports/airspace; deploy forces in its territory; benefit from its facilities, camps, units, institutions and military facilities." See: Republic of Turkey, *Resmi Gazete*, Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the State of Qatar on Cooperation in Military Training, Defense Industry and the deployment of the Turkish Armed Forces in the Territory of Qatar, December 19, 2014, at: <https://bit.ly/2paS99g>

¹²⁴ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Bilateral Political Relations between Turkey and Qatar," accessed 18/7/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2yyPqXY>

aims to achieve two goals: first, to strengthen its strategic partnership with Qatar and to transform it into a model of Turkish-Arab strategic cooperation. Secondly, Turkey may seek to be a third party in the equation of the regional balance of power in the Gulf, which has been confined to two regional opposing powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia, with the absence of Iraqi power since 2003.

2.2.2. Turkey's Economic Interests in the Gulf

Turkey and the GCC states' economic growth contributes to fostering their relations since 2002. Both have complementary economic structures, which offer a good basis to develop trade connections. The economic objective was fundamental to the AKP governments' stand towards the Gulf. The GCC energy resources, markets and investments are of great importance for Turkey's economy as well as its influence.

Generally, Turkey's role of trade has significantly increased in the 21st century. 'Trading state' was the motto adopted by Prime Minister Turgut Özal during the late 1980s, "trade but not aid" gained momentum and openly prioritized economic interests in shaping the outlines of foreign policy.¹²⁵ Some analysts argued that the AKP has realized that national interest cannot be solely determined in terms of a narrowly defined national security, and that economic considerations are just as important.¹²⁶

Indeed, there had long been significant financial investment from GCC states in Turkey. In the 1990s, there was considerable suspicion among Turkey's secular elites that the emergence of Anatolian bourgeoisie or Tigers associated with religious conservatives benefited from what was referred to as 'green investment' from the GCC states –the term 'green' denoting Islam.¹²⁷ At the beginning of the 2000s, this new wealthy middle class and a strong private sector emerged with a desire for more dynamic access to free and globally integrated markets. The activity of businessmen in Turkey is now a permanently operating factor in Turkey's engagement in the Gulf region,¹²⁸ while the trading state

¹²⁵ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Opportunities and Challenges in GCC-Turkey Relations," in Oktav & Ertem (Ed.), p. 29.

¹²⁶ Coşkun, p. 58, cited in Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 40 (2009), p. 33.

¹²⁷ Cook and Ibish, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Hursoy, p. 510.

phenomenon is among the main factors of Ankara's current policy making towards this region.¹²⁹

The AKP governments strengthened trade-based relations with the GCC states. The idea was that a growing role for the bureaucrats in determining the economic dimension of foreign policy, rather than the military dimension, would affect positively on rapprochement with the GCC states.¹³⁰ Some Turkish analysts deem that the GCC states are important in terms of the FDI and energy. The FDI has played a crucial role in Turkey's financial stability in the last decade. As an oil consuming state, Turkey needs to form close relationships with all oil producing states.¹³¹

Turkey's disappointment with the EU accession talks also played a role in building close relations with the GCC states.¹³² In addition, the economic dimension of Turkey-GCC relations influences political targets of Turkey's ambitious 2023 vision. Turkey needs good economic outcomes to achieve its 2023 vision objectives. The GCC states have a significant role to play in this regard.¹³³ Transportation investments, such as highways, conventional and high speed railways, sea and airports; energy investments, such as nuclear and fossil fueled thermal plants and renewable energy projects; research and development investments; industrial transformation to the production of high technology products; initiation and dissemination of venture capital and business angels – these are all investments that require high amounts of capital. At this point, policy makers attach a lot of significance to attracting Gulf capital,¹³⁴ which will be detailed in chapter two. Hence, companies and investors from the GCC have already started to invest in Turkey in sectors such as finance, agriculture and energy, particularly from Qatar. The contribution of GCC states to these investments can help Turkish services and industrial sectors to transform into a higher value-added structure with a higher level of technology, and thus make it more competitive in the global markets.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Coşkun, p. 58.

¹³⁰ Oktav, p. 30.

¹³¹ Interview with İsmail Akdoğan, Researcher at the Middle East Institute, Sakarya University, October 16, 2018.

¹³² Oktav, p. 34.

¹³³ Oktav & Ertem, p. 22.

¹³⁴ Ömer Akkaya, "The Future Role of the GCC in Turkey's 2023 Economic Vision," in Oktav & Ertem (Ed.), p. 117.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 118.

The GCC states represent an important market for Turkish products.¹³⁶ Turkey looks to increase its exports to all regions to meet its goal of exporting \$500 billion per year by 2023.¹³⁷ The GCC states are consuming societies. They look to diversify their imports from different regions and countries. Turkey is a competitive source to GCC markets because of its proximity and the diversity of its agricultural, food and industrial products. The GCC states are growing markets, which attract Turkish exports. The total trade volume reached to \$21.8 billion in 2017. The volume of Turkish exports to the GCC states amounted to \$13.5 billion, while the volume of Turkish imports from the GCC amounted to \$8.4 billion. The balance is in favor of Turkey, which amounted about \$5.1 billion (see table 1.2).

However, trade with the GCC still represents a small volume compared to other countries. Among the top 20 countries in terms of Turkish exports in 2017, the only GCC countries are the UAE and Saudi Arabia, with about \$9.2 billion and \$2.7 billion, respectively. Many countries in the Middle East exceeded Saudi Arabia in receiving Turkish exports such as Iran by \$3.3 billion, Israel by \$3.4 billion and Iraq by \$9 billion. In addition, Turkey's trade with other groups of countries is much larger than its trade with the GCC. For instance, Ankara's trade volume with the EU is \$74 billion in 2017, while Germany alone receives about \$15 billion of Turkish exports.¹³⁸ Therefore, Turkey is a large producer and has a wide range of industrial and agricultural products that can meet the demands of large markets. The GCC markets are still expanding and are promising for Turkey.

¹³⁶ Hursoy, p. 511.

¹³⁷ "The AKP Political Vision 2023," p. 52.

¹³⁸ TUIK, "Trade by country group 2008-2017," at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dloE>

Table 1.2
Turkey's Trade with the GCC States 2017 (\$ Thousand)

Country	Exports	Imports	Volume	Tablo 1. Balance
Saudi Arabia	2,734,522.34	2,110,160.66	4,844,683	624,361
UAE	9,184,156.73	5,546,920.55	14,731,077.28	3,637,236
Qatar	648,914.97	264,126.48	913,041.45	384,788
Kuwait	439,862.78	169,402.84	609,265.62	270,459
Oman	221,411.41	95,048.81	316,460.22	126,362
Bahrain	227,469.37	186,751.49	414,220.86	40,717
Total	13,456,337.60	8,372,410.83	21,828,748.43	5,083,926

Source: Data collected and calculated by author based on: TUIK, "Exports by countries, 1996-2018;" TUIK, "Imports by countries, 1996-2018."

Energy is a promising area of cooperation. Turkey imports nearly 98 percent of the natural gas, particularly from Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan.¹³⁹ It also imports about 94 percent of its oil.¹⁴⁰ Despite primary crude oil imports come from Iraq and Iran, Saudi Arabia provides Turkey with 10 percent, while Qatar provides Ankara with a quarter of its liquefied natural gas (LNG).¹⁴¹ As an emerging regional power, Turkey's increasing need for energy resources is one of reasons that push Ankara towards a rapprochement with the GCC states.¹⁴² Furthermore, Turkey's strategic location is between the major hydrocarbon-producing GCC countries and the large consumer markets in Europe, making it a natural energy hub. Therefore, Turkey looks to attract the GCC investments in projects that relate to their interests.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Catherine Long et al., "Turkey-GCC Trade and Business Relations," The Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum, University of Oxford (2017), p. vii and 3.

¹⁴⁰ Brock.

¹⁴¹ Long et al., p. 3.

¹⁴² Oktav & Ertem, p. 20.

¹⁴³ Long et al., p. 4.

Ankara is interested in other important fields of economic cooperation. It looks to expand the role of its construction companies in the Gulf, which already have contracts to build big projects such as new terminals at both Kuwait's and Bahrain's International airports, the infrastructure of upcoming World Cup 2022 in Qatar and Dubai's Expo 2020 and the Gold Line of Doha Metro. It also seeks to attract the GCC citizens to be active in Turkey's real estate market. Indeed, they have bought about one-fourth of all properties sold to foreigners in 2017.¹⁴⁴ Turkey is interested to be a main source of the GCC food imports. It ranks among the highest global agricultural export growth markets.¹⁴⁵ Tourism in Turkey is a major export sector.¹⁴⁶ Total number of visitors was about 26.3 million in 2017.¹⁴⁷ Despite the fact that the total number from the GCC states did not exceed 777 thousand in 2016,¹⁴⁸ Turkey is looking to attract more visitors from the Gulf's wealthy region. This can enhance its goal of increasing the revenues of the service sector.

To conclude, this chapter has examined the growth of Turkey's power capabilities and the potential to affect the regional balance of power. Despite the rise of its national power capabilities and the proactive foreign policy roles, Turkey is a middle or regional power, which can play some roles to settle problems through mediation, but it cannot set its own agenda or settle major problems at the regional level without fundamental support and forming alliances with great or regional powers. To meet its economic growth and advance its influence in the regional balance of power equation, Turkey looks to enhance its relations with the GCC states, which occupy a significant position in its perception, through institutionalization mechanisms as well as on the bilateral level. The following chapter will explain the importance of the GCC states, their growing regional roles and how they, in turn, perceive Turkey.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Atiqi et al., p. 42.

¹⁴⁶ "OECD Economic Surveys: Turkey," pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁷ TUIK, "Turkey's Tourism income 2002-2017," at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dloE>

¹⁴⁸ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Middle East and North Africa," accessed 10/7/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2QGp6Tm>

CHAPTER 2: THE RISE OF THE GCC STATES' REGIONAL ROLE AND TURKEY'S POSITION IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS

The Gulf, at present, has great geopolitical significance. It lies between Asia, Europe and Africa and at the crossroads of maritime trade. It also has an increasingly strategic economic position, with more than a third of the world's oil and gas reserves, all while its states possess large financial assets and foreign investments. The Gulf is no longer only of interest for the Western developed countries, but also for the emerging economies of the East, including Turkey.

The establishment of the GCC in 1981 was an expression of the desire of its founding states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) to achieve economic integration and balance both security threats and the emerging regional powers such as Iraq and Iran. Recently, the GCC economies have been among the fastest-growing in the world. Accumulation of financial surpluses resulting from oil and gas exports have increased their roles regionally and internationally. Although the GCC has reflected a common desire for collective action, its individual states have risen as leading actors in Arab politics, especially Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, and sometimes have led to intra-competitions.

The GCC states also face many challenges and threats from regional powers as well as sub-state actors. To strengthen their position in the regional balance of power and to counter threats, they sought alliances with great and regional powers. In this way, the GCC states view Turkey as an emerging economic and political power. But perceiving Turkey as a regional partner is based on the degree of convergence on its policies with those states and on common interests.

This chapter will discuss the GCC states' growth and their perceptions of Turkey. It consists of two sections. The first will examine the circumstances leading to form the GCC alliance, its objectives and its common characteristics. It will trace the economic and geopolitical rise of the GCC and its assertive roles that have steadily developed to shape Arab politics, particularly since the Arab Spring. In this regard, it will also focus on the leading actors. The second section will explore the position of Turkey in the GCC

states' perceptions as both an economic partner and a potential regional ally, despite the occasional disagreement on some regional issues.

2.3. The Rise of The GCC States' Regional Roles

The regional proactivity of the GCC states is a result of their growing capabilities as well as the changing dynamics in the regional political landscape. This section analyzes such a substantial shift through tracing and analyzing the GCC alliance genesis, the economic growth of its member states and their growing regional roles.

2.3.1. The GCC Genesis

The GCC was founded in May 1981 to encourage economic integration, promote cooperative security and balance emerging regional threats. The objectives of the organization have been outlined by article four of the founding Charter. It focused on economics, education and culture, with the aim of achieving “coordination, integration, and inter-connection between Member States in all fields in order to achieve unity between them.” It also aims at fostering relations and areas of cooperation including economic affairs and natural resources.¹⁸⁷

Obviously, the Charter focused on economic cooperation to strengthen intra-relations and achieve unity. This sought-after objective overlaps with the neo-functional approach, which argued that cooperation in common areas would lead to political convergence and the transfer of more authority to regional organizations.¹⁸⁸ Despite security issues were not mentioned in the Charter, military cooperation has become an important area for the GCC states.¹⁸⁹ The Ministerial Council, held in September 1981, called for taking immediate and effective steps to “strengthen political and security coordination.” The major objective is the improvement of member states' security arrangements by

¹⁸⁷ The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, *The Charter* [In Arabic: Al-Nizam al-Asasi], May 25, 1981, accessed 11/11/2018, at: <http://www.gccsg.org/ar-sa/AboutGCC/Pages/Primarylaw.aspx>

¹⁸⁸ Philippe C. Schmitter, “Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2005), p. 257.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph A. Kechichian, “The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Security,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 4 (October 1985), p. 854.

integrating their military capabilities.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, they established a joint force, the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), in October 1982.

A decade earlier, many major developments and threats had a profound impact on the Gulf states' perception of regional security. These circumstances had led to the formation of an alliance to defend their security and coordinate policies and developmental plans. First, the successful implementation of the oil embargo in 1973-1974 and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) decision to raise oil prices showed that they could amass influence if they coordinate their policies. The accumulated surplus capital, because of new oil prices, encouraged the Gulf states to look for greater cooperation.¹⁹¹ Secondly, the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran in 1979, which brought to power, through revolution, an Islamic and anti-monarchy regime. The Iranian revolution was a decisive turning point, shifting relations to overt tensions.¹⁹² The Gulf states shared with the Shah an interest of maintaining the status quo after the withdrawal of United Kingdom (UK) forces from the area in 1971. The Iranian revolution, however, swept away this relatively stable situation and the monarchies in the Gulf thought that they would also be threatened. Thirdly, the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 further intensified the security concerns of the Gulf states. The latter thought that the Soviets were marching towards the warm-water in the Gulf as well as strengthening their ties with the pro-Soviet states in the region. Finally, when the Iran-Iraq war broke out in September 1980, the general impression was that Iraq would impose a quick victory on Iran, which would curtail its ideological threats. This did not happen, and the war ended up in stalemate. This raised the fears of the Gulf states of the war's spillover effects.¹⁹³ Therefore, they called for the formation of a collective framework among them.

Indeed, Iraq and Iran had been excluded from the GCC. The Iraq-Iran war gave a reason for the GCC states to separate themselves from their Baathist neighbor.¹⁹⁴ They

¹⁹⁰ Hasan-Askari Rizvi, "Gulf Cooperation Council," *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Second Quarter 1982), p. 33.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁹² Sanam Vakil, "Iran and the GCC Hedging, Pragmatism and Opportunism," *Research Paper*, Chatham House, Middle East and North Africa Programme (September 2018), p. 4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5; Rizvi, pp. 30-31; Kechichian, p. 853.

¹⁹⁴ David Priess, "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Prospects for Expansion," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 5, no. 4 (January 1998), pp. 22-23.

emphasized that this regime did not share economic and political features with their conservative systems.¹⁹⁵ Iraq had considered the GCC an instrument established to curtail Baghdad's influence in the Gulf region.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, Iran is often perceived by the GCC states as responsible for promoting discontent among the Shiite community in the Gulf, whereas Iran has always viewed that the GCC meant to maintain foreign powers' (mainly the US) interests in the Gulf to subvert the Iranian revolution.¹⁹⁷

Therefore, the emergence of the GCC gives credit to the balance of threat theory. The level of external and internal threat to their sovereignty persuaded GCC leaders to pursue the protection of a regional organization and to provide common security for the Gulf.¹⁹⁸ Stephen Walt stated, "The formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council following the Iranian revolution reveals the same tendency for states to seek allies to oppose external threats."¹⁹⁹ It has also related to the balance of power theory. The withdrawal of UK in the early 1970s and the 'filling up' of the strategic void by the US encouraged the Gulf states to create an allied regional entity. These two great powers sought to prevent any international or regional power from being denied access to their vital energy interests. According to Hans Morgenthau, "Control over them [the Gulf states] traditionally has been an important factor in the distribution of power, in the sense that whoever is able to add them to his other sources of raw materials [oil] adds that much strength to his own resources and deprives his competitors proportionately."²⁰⁰ The GCC states also sought, through their new organization, to balance both Iran and Iraq, the emerging powers in the region.

Indeed, the GCC states possess common values and mutual identity.²⁰¹ They agreed on the construction of a common Gulf identity to counter the threatening ideologies in the

¹⁹⁵ Kechichian, p. 868.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 880; Letter dated 8 November 1978 -from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, "The Situation in the Middle East: Question of Palestine," Thirty-third session, Agenda items 30 and 31, United Nations, General Assembly, A/33/400, November 29, 1978, at: <https://bit.ly/2QI1i66>

¹⁹⁷ Rizvi, pp. 36-37.

¹⁹⁸ Kechichian, pp. 876-877.

¹⁹⁹ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988), pp. 313-314.

²⁰⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau & Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 1985 [1948]), p. 133.

²⁰¹ Nur Cetdnoğlu, "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) after U.S. led Invasion of Iraq: Toward a Security Community?" *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, vol. 6, no. 24 (2012), p. 92.

Gulf. Their cooperation was not only sought for integration, but also to reinforce a Gulf identity.²⁰² The founding Charter referred to common characteristics and interests that solely distinguish the GCC states. It stated, “Being fully aware of the ties of special relations, common characteristics and similar systems founded on the creed of Islam which bind them; and desiring to effect coordination, cooperation and integration between them in all fields.”²⁰³ Mohammad al-Rumaihi, Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University, said:

The GCC states are involved in many social elements. There is geographic proximity, the similarity of traditional production methods and the relations of kinship. Many Gulf Arab families have links with each other since internal migration in the past was common without any complications. Today, these states share oil and gas production, and various security concerns.²⁰⁴

John Duke Anthony, the Founding President of the National Council on US-Arab Relations, considered the GCC states’ common language and culture, similar history, compact geographic territory and common external threats the most influential factors in maintaining solidarity and cohesion.²⁰⁵ They also have similar economic structures based on hydrocarbon exports and similar experiences of rapid economic development and industrialization.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, a shared interest in maintaining monarchical rule produces solidarity among GCC ruling families.²⁰⁷ Besides Jordan and Morocco, they are the only monarchical survivors in the Middle East. Just a few decades ago, the region was fairly bristled with crowns. Iran’s Shah did not fall until 1979, and kings reigned in Egypt until 1952, Iraq until 1958, Yemen until 1962, and Libya until 1969.²⁰⁸ The GCC was

²⁰² Linda Berger, “The Gulf Cooperation Council between Unity and Discord towards the Arab Uprisings,” *Security and Peace*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2014), p. 261.

²⁰³ The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, *The Charter*.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Mohammad al-Rumaihi, Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University, Kuwait, April 1, 2019.

²⁰⁵ John Duke Anthony, “The Gulf Co-operation Council,” *International Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, (Spring 1986), pp. 387-388.

²⁰⁶ M. Evren Tok, Jason J. McSparren & Michael Olender, “The Perpetuation of Regime Security in Gulf Cooperation Council States: A Multi-Lens Approach,” *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 2017), p. 152.

²⁰⁷ Jeffrey Martini et al., *The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, 2016), pp. 12-14; Berger, p. 261.

²⁰⁸ Lisa Anderson, “Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 106, no. 1 (Spring 1991), p. 1.

perceived as an alliance because of the shared sense of *Khaleeji* (Arab Gulf).²⁰⁹ This alternative identity could weaken Iran's ideological reach in their internal affairs.²¹⁰ Thus, the establishing of the GCC reflected the desire of its members to cooperate to advance their common identity, interests and security.

2.3.2. Economic Rise of the GCC States

Enhanced economic relations was one of the pillars of the GCC. The Charter and the Unified Economic Agreement (UEA) in 1981 has focused on economic integration.²¹¹ The Charter stated, "To formulate similar regulations in various fields including the following: Economic and financial affairs Commerce, customs and communications Education and culture."²¹² The UEA aimed to reduce barriers to the movement of capital and labor within the GCC,²¹³ eliminate customs duties, establish a common tariff on imports, coordinate oil policies and monetary and banking policies, including the ultimate adoption of a common currency.²¹⁴

In 1983, the GCC launched its FTA to increase trade flows between member states.²¹⁵ In addition, a revised Economic Agreement was signed in 2001.²¹⁶ It listed specific steps to establish a GCC Monetary Union. The member states agreed to establish a customs union in 2005, a common market in 2007 and a single GCC currency in 2010.²¹⁷ While GCC common market had come into being in January 2008, there have been some setbacks to achieving the monetary union. Oman announced that it would not join the union by 2010, and in May 2007, Kuwait declared that it was moving from the dollar peg to an

²⁰⁹ M Tok, McSparren & Olender, p. 152.

²¹⁰ Berger, p. 261.

²¹¹ Martini et al., pp. 19-20.

²¹² The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, *The Charter*.

²¹³ Tok, McSparren & Olender, p. 159.

²¹⁴ Kechichian, pp. 865-866.

²¹⁵ Nasser Al-Mawali, "Intra-Gulf Cooperation Council: Saudi Arabia Effect," *Journal of Economic Integration*, vol. 30 no. 3 (September 2015), p. 538.

²¹⁶ The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Secretariat General, *The Economic Agreement between the GCC States Adopted by the GCC Supreme Council*, 22nd Session (December 31, 2001), Muscat-Sultanate of Oman, accessed 22/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2UeLHN8>

²¹⁷ Emilie J. Rutledge, *Monetary Union in the Gulf: Prospects for a single currency in the Arabian Peninsula* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 6-7; The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Secretariat General, *Agreement Establishing the Monetary Union of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf* (GCC Monetary Union Agreement), 2009, accessed 22/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2YOOSTg>

undisclosed currency basket, although it reaffirmed its commitment to join the union. The UAE has also announced that it will not participate in the initial launch of the currency due to the disagreement over the location of the GCC Central Bank.²¹⁸

Obviously, the GCC states have embarked on economic integration through collective agreements and institution-building that unites their efforts. It seems that they sought to achieve two goals: First, strengthen cooperation functionally through connecting people and political regimes with economic interests of mutual benefit to promote convergence and overcome differences. The second is the creation of a strong economic and political bloc that balances the neighboring regional powers and increases the economic role of the GCC states in the global economy, especially with the increasing importance of their role in energy exports and thus the accumulation of financial wealth, as follows.

2.3.2.1. Oil: A Main Driver in Advancing the GCC's Influence

Hans Morgenthau has clearly defined the impact of oil on world politics and the advantages to producing-states in advancing their influence. He argued that oil has seemingly made these states important and even powerful factors in world politics. He added:

[A] state that has nothing to go on by way of power, which is lacking in all the elements that traditionally have gone into the making of national power, suddenly becomes a powerful factor in world politics because it has one important asset – oil. [Such states] can exert enormous – and under certain conditions even decisive – power over nations, which have all the implements of power at their disposal except one – deposits of oil.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Al-Mawali, p. 538.

²¹⁹ Morgenthau & Thompson, pp. 134-135.

The nationalization of oil companies in the 1960s²²⁰ and the unprecedented soar of oil prices in the 1970s had led to huge increases in the financial incomes of the Gulf states.²²¹ Today, the GCC states have 40 percent of world oil proven reserves or 501 billion barrels and 23 percent of natural gas proven reserves or 1462.3 trillion cubic feet. In 2017, the GCC states contributed to world oil production with 17.32 million barrels daily as well as 412.3 billion cubic meters of natural gas (see table 2.1).

With the increasing of hydrocarbons reserves and production, the GCC states hold a key position in the global economy.²²² George Abed, IIF's director for Africa and the Middle East, felt that, "while the oil sector will remain the principal driver of the economies of the region, there are also important drivers toward diversification, especially in the larger, more populated countries."²²³ Economic diversification efforts have led to the emergence of other vibrant sectors such as agriculture, commerce, construction, banking, manufacturing, telecommunication, transportation, tourism and social services.²²⁴

²²⁰ Nationalization is the process of transforming the private property of the means of production into collective ownership, with the aim of achieving public interest. The nationalization of oil companies started in the Gulf by confiscating oil production operations and private property to obtain more revenue. For instance, in 1973, the Saudi Arabia bought a 25 percent interest in the US oil company (Aramco), increasing that interest to 60 percent the following year. In 1980, Riyadh increased its interest in Aramco to 100 percent, and in 1988, it changed the Company name to Saudi Aramco. See: "Our history: Driven by the curiosity to explore," Saudi Aramco, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2FMpRbc>; "Nationalization," [In Arabic: Ta'amim], marefa.org, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/31jMHia>; Edward L. Morse, "A new political economy of oil?" *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 53, no. 1 (Fall 1999), p. 4.

²²¹ Bessma Momani & Crystal A. Ennis, "Between caution and controversy: Lessons from the Gulf Arab states as (re-) emerging donors," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2012), p. 608.

²²² Tok, McSparren & Olender, p. 155.

²²³ Pamela Ann Smith, "GCC foreign wealth rises to \$2 trillion," *The Middle East*, no. 388 (April 2008), accessed 18/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2SfP7d4>

²²⁴ Serhan Cevik, "Without Oil, How Do Gulf Countries Move? Non-hydrocarbon Business Cycles," *Journal of Economic Integration*, vol. 29, no. 2 (June 2014), p. 245.

Table 2.1
GCC Oil and Natural Gas Reserves and Production (2017)

Country	Oil reserves (billion barrel)	Gas reserves (trillion cubic feet)	Oil production (million barrel/day)	Gas production (billion cubic meter)
Bahrain	0.632	5.5	0.20	15.1
Kuwait	104	59.9	2.70	17.4
Oman	5.4	23.5	0.88	32.3
Qatar	25	879.9	0.63	175.7
Saudi Arabia	268	283.8	9.96	111.4
UAE	98	209.7	2.94	60.4
Total	501	1462.3	17.32	412.3

Source: “OPEC Share of World Crude Oil Reserves,” OPEC, 2016, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/1jKA6cN>; Crude oil production, Institute of International Finance, October 3, 2018, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2DRtvjM>; BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2017, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://on.bp.com/2DHnh71>

2.3.2.2. The GCC’s Growing Financial Power

With the increase in oil prices, the GCC governments amassed a huge capital that will play bigger roles in world markets.²²⁵ The GCC states ranked among the most powerful economies. The World Bank’s GDP rankings for 2017 indicate that Saudi Arabia had a GDP of \$683.8 billion, the UAE was at \$382.5 billion, and Qatar was at \$167.6 billion; their global rankings were 19, 29, and 54, respectively.²²⁶ Table 2.2 shows that the GCC states have achieved enormous economic growth since the GCC’s inception. The total GDP has increased more than five-fold from \$260.5 billion in 1981 to \$1354 billion in 2017. The GDP per capita has had an average growth from \$18197 in 1981 to \$39136 in 2017.

The value of GCC export earnings had reached about \$554.5 billion in 2017, which oil and gas constitute the main commodities. The GCC imports also has grown significantly,

²²⁵ Smith.

²²⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators, “GDP (current US\$),” accessed 15/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2EcdwbS>

increasing to reach \$467.85 billion in 2017. The GCC's total foreign trade of \$1022.6 billion is considered a huge contribution to world trade compared to such small states, as shown in table 2.3.

The trade among the GCC states has grown nearly twenty-fold since its establishment. It was worth around \$5 billion in 1983 and it has reached more than \$100 billion. However, it remains relatively low. It made up about 10 percent of the GCC's total foreign trade (\$1022.6 billion) in 2017.

Table 2.2
GCC economic growth between 1981 and 2017

Country	GDP (Current billion) 1981	GDP (\$ billion) 2017	GDP per capita (Constant 2000 \$) 1981	GDP per capita (\$) 2017
Bahrain	3.47	35.31	10,452	20,240
Kuwait	25.06	120.13	15,561	31,430
Oman	7.26	72.64	5,007	14,440
Qatar	7.83	167.61	..	61,070
Saudi Arabia	183.94	683.83	15,782	20,080
UAE	32.92	382.58	44,186	39,130
Total	260.48	1354.1	18197 (GCC average)	39136 (GCC average)

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators database, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country>; Nasser Al-Mawali, "Intra-Gulf Cooperation Council: Saudi Arabia Effect," *Journal of Economic Integration*, vol. 30 no. 3 (September 2015), p. 537.

Table 2.3
GCC States Trade (2017)

Country	Exports (\$ billion)	Imports (\$ billion)	Total foreign trade (\$ billion)
Bahrain	16.7	16.4	33.1
Kuwait	54.1	30.95	85.04
Oman	34.9	29	63.9
Qatar	77.3	32.6	109.9
Saudi Arabia	203.6	174.7	378.2
UAE	167.9	184.2	352.1
Total	554.5	467.85	1022.6

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators database, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country>; Gulf Cooperation Council website, Member States, accessed 19/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2S45kSn>

As key suppliers of the world's oil and gas, the GCC states have accumulated vast wealth. They own the largest sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) of the world.²²⁷ The volume of the GCC's SWFs has reached nearly \$3 trillion in 2017. They account for more than one-third of the global SWFs, which amount to \$7849 billion. If one takes the population size in these countries into account – which is only 55 million (0.73 percent of the world's population) – the concentration of SWFs assets in the Gulf region would have a further implication. (See table 2.4). This has highlighted the significant financial power of the sponsoring governments of the respective funds.²²⁸

During the world financial crisis in 2008, the GCC's SWFs played significant role in Western financial institutions.²²⁹ Despite suffering considerable losses after this crisis, the GCC states recovered rapidly. The strong recovery in oil prices had boosted the assets

²²⁷ Rutledge, preface. The SWFs are government investment vehicles seeking a higher rate of return. They are usually funded from surplus government income. They often invested in a wide range of assets abroad. Gawdat Bahgat, "Oil Funds: Perils and Opportunities," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2 (March 2009), p. 283; Sara Bazoobandi, *The Political Economy of the Gulf Sovereign Wealth Funds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 6.

²²⁸ Bazoobandi, pp. 9-11.

²²⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The Gulf States and the Rebalancing of Regional and Global Power," James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy (January 8, 2014), p. 5.

of those funds. The GCC's SWFs become some of the world's largest net suppliers of financial resources.²³⁰

Furthermore, the rising prominence of SWFs recognized as capable of influencing the mounting geopolitical rivalry,²³¹ particularly in the Arab world. Egypt, traditionally the most influential Arab state in Arab politics, has received tens of billions of dollars in financial aid and politically-oriented investments from the GCC states during the period 2011-2017, which will be further analyzed in chapter four.

Consequently, huge wealth and capital flow have generated four strategic realities: making the GCC states major international investors, underscoring their purchasing power, enabling them to develop strategic economic partnerships²³² and advancing their political influence.

Table 2.4
GCC Population and Sovereign Wealth Funds (2017)

Country	Population (million)	SWFs (\$ billion)
Bahrain	1.49	10.6
Kuwait	4.14	524
Oman	4.64	24
Qatar	2.64	320
Saudi Arabia	32.94	718 (2 funds)
UAE	9.40	1319 (5 funds)
Total	55.25	2915.6
World total	7550	7849

Source: Sovereign wealth Fund Rankings, February 2018, accessed 15/3/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2ziJvaD>; World Bank, World Development Indicators database, accessed 21/11/2018, at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country>

²³⁰ Bazoobandi, pp. 8-9.

²³¹ Sven Behrendt, "Sovereign Wealth Funds in Nondemocratic Countries: Financing entrenchment or Change?" *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2011), pp. 65-67, 71.

²³² Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 61-62.

2.3.3. The Growing Geopolitical Roles of the GCC States

In coincidence with the economic rise, the regional political activism of the GCC states has increased significantly. Instead of traditional powerful Arab states, such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria, the GCC states became major actors in shaping Arab politics. Their assertive roles have steadily developed since the establishment of the Council. Their regional influence became obvious after the Arab Spring in 2011, where they play at least two major roles: as sponsors of regime change in some countries such as Syria and Libya and as supporters of maintaining the status quo and regime survival in others such as Bahrain. In addition, some GCC states have been playing leading roles in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

Since the establishment of the GCC, its member states' national security concerns are mainly centered on the threat of Iran, both directly to their interests and territorial integrity and, more broadly, to the spread of Iranian hegemony. This is more a matter of strategy than a matter of strong difference in threat perception among GCC members.²³³ They became more involved in security issues because of the emerging threats such as Iraq-Iran war 1980-1988, the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iraq's war in 2003 and the Arab uprisings since 2011.²³⁴ The GCC deployed their common military arm, the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), to counter the Shiite protesters in Bahrain in 2011.

The Arab Spring has provided GCC states with a chance to play a geopolitical role and expand their influence in the region.²³⁵ Besides their growing, and sometimes disputed, roles in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen, the GCC's decision in December 2011, for joint cooperation with Morocco and Jordan "to reach the desired partnership" conveyed how influential the GCC states are in supporting existing Arab monarchies.²³⁶ The GCC decided to establish a "fund for development which will begin by providing support for

²³³ Steven A. Cook & Hussein Ibish, "Turkey and the GCC: Cooperation Amid Diverging Interests," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, AGSIW Gulf Rising Series, no. 1 (2017), p. 8, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2EkcuaA>

²³⁴ Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council Strategic Partnership after 5 Years," (July 2013), *Ortadoğu Analiz*, vol. 5, no. 55 (July 2013), pp. 72-73.

²³⁵ Valeria Talbot, "Turkey-GCC Relations in A Transforming Middle East," *Analysis*, no. 178 (June 2013), pp. 2-5.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3; F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2011), p. 695.

development projects in Morocco and Jordan with an amount of 2.5 billion dollars for each.”²³⁷

The proposed formation of a Gulf Union also showed the self-confidence of the GCC’s emerging capabilities as well as a response to the Arab uprisings to cement a conservative monarchies bloc. In December 2011, King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz proposed that the GCC should move “to the stage of unity in a single entity.” The Saudi Crown Prince (at that time), Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, stated that this proposal would entail a “strong union with integrated economies, a joint foreign policy and a common defense system.” Despite the fact that this idea is not welcomed by many GCC states,²³⁸ it indicates to the new regional activism of the GCC.

With the substantive economic growth and emerging military capabilities, three of the GCC states became more active in regional issues: Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

2.3.3.1. Saudi Arabia

Because of its large natural resources, strategic location and religious importance, Saudi Arabia is deemed a significant country in the Muslim world.²³⁹ Its leadership in the Arab world has emerged since the Desert Storm Operation in 1991 and the US led-invasion of Iraq in 2003. The outcome of the two wars was the destruction of Iraq’s strategic capabilities and its absence as an Arab leading power. Two other major Arab states, Egypt and Syria, have mostly become influenced by the GCC since the establishment of the Damascus Declaration in March 1991, which gathered the GCC states, Egypt and Syria to fill the strategic gap after Iraq’s defeat. Egypt and Syria have also become receivers of financial aid from the GCC states, as will be detailed in chapter four, which contributed to weaken their political role that had been the most effective in the Arab world since 1950s.

²³⁷ The Closing Statement of the Thirty-two Session of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, December, 19-20 2011, accessed 5/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2JMx9LP>

²³⁸ Berger, p. 262; Talbot, p. 1.

²³⁹ Muhittin Ataman, “Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?” *SETA Policy Brief*, Brief no. 57 (July 2012), p. 2.

Saudi Arabia has become an active actor in many Arab issues such as Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.²⁴⁰ For example, it declared a peace initiative with Israel in March 2002, which was adopted by the Arab League.²⁴¹ Since the start of the uprising in Syria in 2011, Saudi Arabia has used this opportunity to enhance its leadership in the region. Another underlying reason for Saudi involvement is to win the Levantine front of the struggle with Iran.²⁴² It became the main counterbalance of Iran's influence in Lebanon, which supports the local Shiite party of Hezbollah, through supporting the main Sunni Muslim party, al-Mustaqbal, of the Prime Minister Saad al-Harriri. Indeed, it was enabled to form and led many alliances in the region. It formed an Arab Coalition that initiated a military operation in Yemen since March 2015 and it held an Arab Islamic-American summit in May 2017.

At the level of the GCC, Saudi Arabia is a peculiar power because it has the largest territory, population and economy as well as a religious status. It also has borders with all other GCC states. These features make Riyadh “a natural leader of the GCC organization.”²⁴³

Globally, Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of oil and it can play a key role in moderating oil prices by acting as a “swing producer,” meaning that it readjusts its production compared to the fluctuations in the production from other countries and the evolution of global crude oil demand.²⁴⁴ It is the only Arab and the only OPEC member in the G20.²⁴⁵ In this regard, it will host summit of the G20 leaders in 2020.²⁴⁶ The kingdom has strategic relations with the US because of its importance as a main supplier of oil to the international market and because of its geostrategic position in the Gulf. In

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴¹ League of Arab States, General Secretariat, Arab Summit, the Fourteenth Session, “Arab Peace Initiative,” Resolution no. 221, March 27-28, 2002, Beirut-Lebanon, at: <https://bit.ly/2FE9OKk>

²⁴² Alexey Khlebnikov, “The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry,” *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 17, no. 4 (January 2015), p. 25.

²⁴³ Al-Mawali, p. 533.

²⁴⁴ Athanasios Dagoumas, Theodosios Perifanis & Michael Polemis, “An econometric model to assess the Saudi Arabia crude oil strategy,” Energy & Environmental Policy Laboratory, University of Piraeus, Greece, MPRA Paper no. 86283 (April 2018), p. 2.

²⁴⁵ Bessma Momani & Crystal A. Ennis, “Shaping the Middle East in the Midst of the Arab Uprisings: Turkish and Saudi foreign policy strategies,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 6 (2013), pp. 1131-1133.

²⁴⁶ “The Kingdom to host summit of G-20 leaders in 2020,” [In Arabic: al-Mamlakah tastadif qimat qadat duwal majmo'at al-eshryn fi 2020], *Okaz*, December 2, 2018, accessed 5/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2IpT8JZ>

the context of the rise of the Saudi regional leadership, the role of this alliance, which has been supported in most of the regional roles, cannot be overlooked.

2.3.3.2. Qatar

Qatar has the third largest reserve of natural gas globally, directly following Russia and Iran, which accounts for over 60 percent of the GCC with about 879 trillion cubic feet. It is also the first producer of LNG globally with a production of 175.7 billion cubic meters in 2017. These natural resources have accumulated a huge capital. Qatar's GDP is about \$167 billion while it has a SWF valued at \$320 billion, despite its very limited area (11600 km²) and small population (2.64 million) (See tables 2.1 and 2.4).

It can be argued that in the aftermath of Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa's coming to power in 1995, Qatar would emerge as a remarkably proactive actor whose substantial wealth would be put to the service of its national development as much as diplomacy. Some analysts argued, "[T]oday a small country like Qatar can make a bigger impact regionally."²⁴⁷ Recently, Qatar has appeared as a prominent peace mediator such as in Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and between Eritrea and Djibouti.²⁴⁸

Qatar has also played significant regional roles beyond its small geographical size. Since the Arab uprisings in 2011, it has emerged with an important diplomatic and military role. It engaged in backing the Syrian opposition factions. It became a member-state of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People that was initiated by France in 2012 with the purpose of finding a solution to the Syrian crisis. In Libya, it conducted a leading role in financing and arming the Libyan revolution in 2011. It has also supported the Presidential Council of Libya in Tripoli as well as the Government of National Accord (LNA) led by Fayez al-Sarraj. In Egypt, Qatar has supported the Egyptian revolution that ousted the former President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. It also became one of the most active actors in supporting Egypt during the army's rule as well as the rule of the former President Mohammad Morsi 2012-2013. This will be discussed in detail in chapters four and five.

²⁴⁷ Ehteshami, pp. 6, 41.

²⁴⁸ Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2011), p. 539.

Indeed, Qatar seeks to use its financial, media and soft power capabilities to overcome the two major powers' dominance that curtail it; Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Emir of Qatar, Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, has indicated in his first speech after the Gulf crisis in June 2017 that Qataris “were able to understand the implications of the attempt to impose pressure on this country, and the gravity of the subservience to language of incitement, threats and diktats.”²⁴⁹ Mohammad al-Musfir confirmed that “the current political leadership in Riyadh poses a threat to the security, safety and independence of the State of Qatar.”²⁵⁰ On the other hand, Qatar is concerned over Iran’s increasing regional influence, particularly its policies in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. Al-Musfir stated, “Iran is a distrustful neighbor of the Gulf states for historical and sectarian reasons.”²⁵¹ To deter these perceived threats, Qatar has worked to strengthen its military and strategic partnerships with the US, and more recently with Turkey.

Furthermore, Qatar was also interested in displaying its international footprint. It hosted the WTO round (Doha round 2005) and the UN Climate Change Conference at Doha in 2012. It will also host the FIFA World Cup in 2022.²⁵²

2.3.3.3. The UAE

The UAE has been increasingly seen as an important actor in the region due to its military activities in Yemen since 2015, its political and economic support of Egyptian Defense Minister Abdel Fattah Sisi, who overthrew President Morsi in 2013, and vocally backed sanctions against neighboring Qatar since June 2017. It has also been playing a main role in countering challenges posed by the Arab uprisings since 2011,²⁵³ as will be detailed in chapters four and five.

²⁴⁹ State of Qatar, Amiri Diwan, “HH The Amir Address to the Citizens and Residents of Qatar,” [In Arabic: *Khitab summohi al-muajjah ila al-muatinin wal muqimin fi ard Qatar*], July 21, 2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2ORVEdk>

²⁵⁰ Interview with Mohammad al-Musfir, Professor of political science at Qatar University, April 4, 2019.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Ulrichsen, p. 3.

²⁵³ Anna Sunik, “The UAE: From Junior Partner to Regional Power,” *GIGA Focus, Middle East*, no. 6, September 2017, accessed 18/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2RjEANO>; Yoel Guzansky, “Sparta in the Gulf: The Growing Regional Clout of the United Arab Emirates,” *INSS Insight*, no. 882, January 8, 2017, accessed 18/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2q234g3>

While consolidating its status as a regional financial center, the UAE has also quietly become the second largest economy in the Middle East and a rising military power.²⁵⁴ Economically, the UAE has the world's largest SWFs, and accounts for \$1319 billion because of its vast oil and gas reserves and production, the returns of its investments, the financial activities, particularly through the Financial Center in Dubai, and the trading and services industries. Despite its small area (83, 600 km²) and relatively small population (9.40 million), its GDP was accounted at over \$382 billion (ranking it 30th globally) and total foreign trade of about \$352 billion in 2017 (See tables 2.1 and 2.4).

Militarily, the UAE spent \$22.8 billion on defense — ranking it the 14th globally. Arms imports increased by 63 percent between the periods of 2007-2011 and 2012-2016, according to the SIPRI.²⁵⁵ Some analysts argued, “Despite its small military (about 50,000 military personnel), the UAE is well equipped with the most advanced weapon systems and has gained operational experience in Afghanistan and Somalia.”²⁵⁶ It has participated in many military operations such as in Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and against the ISIL. The Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed appears convinced of the UAE's approach. He spoke of the “heroic role” of the military in defending “Arab security against attempts to interfere in its domestic affairs and combating the forces of extremism.”²⁵⁷

Many regional challenges have recently prompted Abu Dhabi to adopt an assertive foreign policy. First, the shift in American geostrategic priorities during Obama's presidency. The UAE and others of the region's leaders accused him of abandoning former Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in 2011. It also derided Obama's decision to sign the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015, with Tehran, believing it would embolden the Islamic republic. This has hinted at a growing sense in the Gulf that it can no longer depend on Washington as protector, adding that this makes self-reliance on its own defense capabilities a top priority.²⁵⁸ Secondly, Iran is perceived as a threat, and the UAE

²⁵⁴ Nael Shama, “Commentary: Ambitious UAE flexes military muscle,” *Reuters*, August 27, 2018, accessed 18/11/2018, at: <https://reut.rs/2r62u3Z>

²⁵⁵ Andrew England & Simeon Kerr, “UAE: The Middle East's power broker flexes its muscles,” *Financial Times*, October 24, 2017, accessed 18/11/2018, at: <https://on.ft.com/2yPmTiy>

²⁵⁶ Guzansky.

²⁵⁷ England & Kerr.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

constantly criticizes it for the involvement in Arab affairs. An analyst in Abu Dhabi argued, “Iran, in its current position, is a threat to the Gulf Arab states, because of the ambitions of geopolitical and sectarian hegemony.”²⁵⁹ In addition, the UAE accuses Iran of occupying its three islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa since 1971. It is keen to ensure that the consecutive GCC Supreme Council statements that support its sovereignty over these islands.²⁶⁰ Thirdly, the UAE leadership’s anxiety, caused by the threat of Islamism, certainly contributes to its new activism. It harbors a deep sense of enmity toward militant Islamists as well as the political Islam movements, and perceives them as an existential threat to its domestic authority,²⁶¹ particularly after the Arab Spring. It has concerns that if such movements succeed in one Arab country, they will threaten existing and status quo regimes in others.

2.4. The GCC States’ Perceptions of Turkey

The GCC states view Turkey as an emerging economic and political power. As this section will show, Turkey is perceived by the GCC states as a promising market for investments and economic diversification, particularly since the two sides have complementary economic structures. Geopolitically, the GCC states view Turkey as a significant regional power that may balance Iran’s increasing regional influence and threats. However, intra-GCC differences over Turkey’s positions are clear, which will be detailed later on.

2.4.1. Turkey’s Economic Importance to the GCC

Due to the structure of the GCC economies is dominated by hydrocarbons, economic diversification is benefiting the GCC states.²⁶² This requires the GCC states to use the accumulated wealth in investments away from oil and gas sectors. However, the GCC’s foreign investments faced a challenge. These states have been investing their surplus

²⁵⁹ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi on condition of anonymity, the United Arab Emirates, March 26, 2019.

²⁶⁰ See for instance: The Closing Statement of the Thirtieth Session of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Kuwait City- State of Kuwait, December 14-15, 2009, at: <https://bit.ly/2Uo1UPI>

²⁶¹ Shama.

²⁶² Rutledge, p. 19; Ulrichsen; Tok, McSparren & Olender, p. 155.

petrodollars in developed economies, particularly in the West. Because of the lower economic growth in Western markets, those investments have started to decline since the world financial crisis in 2008.²⁶³ Therefore, the GCC's new 'Look East' policy must be viewed in the context of the changes the world is going through. Asia is expected to become a center of global power in the mid-21st century. The newly emerging Asian powers, including Turkey, are geographic neighbors and historic partners and so it is very important for the Gulf region.²⁶⁴

Among the emerging economies, Turkey becomes increasingly attractive to the GCC states. As aforementioned in chapter one, Turkey is one of the fastest economically growing states. The growth of such a fast-emerging country provides the GCC states with opportunities for economic diversification. The GCC states are interested in the Turkish market and considered it promising since it started the economic structural reforms and, in particular, during the period of the AKP's rule since 2002.

The GCC-Turkish trade is dominated by the three GCC states, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar that constituted about 86 percent of GCC foreign trade with Turkey in 2017 (See table 1.2). Although Riyadh and Abu Dhabi offered to invest in large projects in Turkey, they carried out a few because of the divergence of political agendas since the Arab Spring. However, these investments remained large and trade exchange continued to increase. Qatar is considered the most enthusiastic to increase investments and trade with Turkey, due to geopolitical convergence, especially since the Gulf crisis in June 2017.

The Turkish Investment Promotion and Development Agency estimated that the value of GCC investments in Turkey is \$19 billion, accounting for 9.4 percent of all foreign investments. According to the Turkish Ministry of Economy, there were 1973 functioning Gulf companies in Turkey in 2017.²⁶⁵ This excludes the great growth of investment with Qatar in 2018.

²⁶³ Bazoobandi, p. 25; Ehteshami, p. 59.

²⁶⁴ Abu Backer Bagader, 'Look East: An Alternative Perspective for GCC Countries', in Ranjit Gupta et al. (Ed.), *India and the Gulf: What Next?* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2013), p. 12.

²⁶⁵ Alaa el-Minshawi, "What is the fate of \$19 bln Gulf investments in Turkey?" *Al Arabiya*, August 12, 2018, accessed 20/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2GvRRSy>

For Saudi Arabia, there are about 800 Saudi companies investing in Turkey, according to statements by Saudi-Turkish Business Council member, Ziad Bassam. The share held by Saudis in the Turkish stock market is 2.4 percent, while the total share of the GCC countries in the Turkish stock market is between 5 percent and 7 percent.²⁶⁶ Turkish imports from Saudi Arabia have been traditionally dominated by crude oil.²⁶⁷ The UAE is one of Turkey's ten largest trade partners. It is the first GCC trade partner of Turkey with about \$14.7 billion in trade in 2017 (see table 1.2). In addition, there are tens of Turkish construction companies working in the UAE that undertake big projects such as expanding Abu Dhabi Airport.²⁶⁸

For Qatar, since the establishment of the Turkish-Qatari Higher Strategic Committee in 2014, economic relations have developed in an unprecedented manner. The two countries have so far signed 46 agreements, and Qatar's investments in Turkey exceeded all other GCC states, at \$20 billion. The growth of Turkish exports to Qatar increased by 50 percent in 2017 due to the Gulf crisis. The number of Turkish companies in Qatar reached 325 and 25 new factories were opened. As a result of the growing strategic partnership, Qatar invested \$15 billion in Turkey as Ankara grappled with a collapsing lira in August 2018.²⁶⁹

As an emerging power, Turkey is a huge market for energy resources. Saudi Arabia supplied around 10 percent of Turkey's oil, while Qatar supplied a quarter of its LNG.²⁷⁰ Qatari LNG, which will be unloaded in the Turkish natural gas storage area to be established in the Northern Aegean Sea, can be injected to pipelines that will reach the European markets much more easily.²⁷¹ If the GCC states increase energy supply and transit projects through Turkey to Europe, this will increase Turkey's dependence on

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ "Kingdom, UAE dominate Turkish-GCC trade," *Arab News*, January 1, 2012, accessed 20/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2RbrOnC>

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ "Qatar to invest \$15 billion in Turkey; source says banks the focus," *Reuters*, 15/8/2018, accessed 16/11/2018, at: <https://reut.rs/2D4u7Do>

²⁷⁰ Catherine Long et al., "Turkey-GCC Trade and Business Relations," The Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum, University of Oxford (2017), pp. 3-4, accessed 10/4/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2AlnRWj>

²⁷¹ Ömer Akkaya, "The Future Role of the GCC in Turkey's 2023 Economic Vision," in Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem (Ed.), *GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre, 2015), pp. 123-124.

GCC hydrocarbons. Turkey has accelerated its efforts to acquire LNG from Qatar and to realize a long-term project of constructing a parallel Qatar-Iraq-Turkey natural gas pipeline to the Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline that will connect the Gulf coastline to the Eastern Mediterranean coast.²⁷²

2.4.2. The GCC's Perceptions of Turkey's Power and Role

The GCC states have dual feelings towards Turkey: a desire to benefit from such a regional power and an apprehension of its growing influence and competing agenda. In other words, there is a common desire to form an alliance with Turkey to balance Iran's influence. Yet, there is an intra-GCC division over viewing Turkey's role in the region. The following will explore both the GCC states' common and divergent perceptions of Turkey.

2.4.2.1. The GCC's Common Perception of Turkey

Geopolitically, the overthrow of Iran's Shah by the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the new Islamic regime has alarmed the GCC monarchies; and thereby threatens their existing political structures.²⁷³ Another major shift of the balance of power is the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which allowed Shiite Islamic parties to take power in Baghdad,²⁷⁴ and significantly increased Iran's influence. Furthermore, some Arab uprisings since 2011 have evolved into geopolitical and sectarian conflicts among regional actors, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran.²⁷⁵

Turkey has also, in different occasions, voiced its anxiety over Tehran's increasing influence in the region, particularly in Syria. It has stood on the side of the GCC in many cases even against Iran. For instance, President Erdoğan launched an unprecedented

²⁷² Siret Hursoy, "Turkey's Foreign Policy and Economic Interests in the Gulf," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2013), p. 511.

²⁷³ Anthony, p. 399.

²⁷⁴ Laurence Louër, "The State and Sectarian Identities in the Persian Gulf Monarchies: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in Comparative Perspective," in *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf*, Summary Report no. 7, Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (2012), p. 9, accessed 15/12/2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2FkAnCX>

²⁷⁵ Marc Lynch, "Why Saudi Arabia Escalated the Middle East's Sectarian Conflict," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2016, accessed 14/12/2017, at: <http://wapo.st/2DNJW0c>

attack on Iran because of its position on the execution of Shiite Saudi dissident cleric Nimr al-Nimr,²⁷⁶ describing the decision as “an internal Saudi affair.”²⁷⁷ He had blamed Tehran of looking for dominating the region.²⁷⁸

The GCC states’ common view of Turkey as an important partner for any alliance to counterweight Iran, the two parties’ convergence over many issues in the region and the debate on the so-called ‘Sunni camp’ will be detailed in chapter three.

2.4.2.2. GCC States’ Divergent Perceptions of Turkey

The competition and differences among the GCC states have existed since the establishment of the Council.²⁷⁹ One of their recent divisions is that over Turkey, which affects their relations.

2.2.2.2.1. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain

Turkey’s recent activeness in the Middle East is likely to be at the expense of some Arab countries. Negative stereotypes of the Ottoman Empire are still fresh in some Arab capitals,²⁸⁰ and the Turkish model of the AKP concerns the conservative character of some GCC monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain.

Historically, there is enmity between Saudi Arabia and Turkey because of Saudi-Ottoman clashes in the 19th century. Amir Abdullah bin Saud was the leader of a rebellion that had controlled Mecca and Medina for a decade and had declared the Ottoman sultan a disbeliever. At this time, a Salafist scholar Shaikh Mohammad bin Abdel-Wahhab made

²⁷⁶ It should be noted that Turkey’s comment on this incident was related to the broad context of regional escalation with Iran, as follows in chapter three.

²⁷⁷ Selim Hakimi, “Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Prospects of Bilateral Alliance and its Limitations,” *Turkpress*, March 15, 2016, accessed 23/11/2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2E9DCOk>.

²⁷⁸ “Erdogan: Ankara supports the Saudi Military Operation in Yemen and Iran should Withdraw,” *France 24 Arabic*, March 30, 2015, accessed 23/11/2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2DLUFs9>

²⁷⁹ Brandon Friedman, “The Arab Gulf States: Balancing Regional Security and Domestic Political Changes,” Reviewed Work(s): *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf: Diplomacy, Security and Economic Coordination in a Changing Middle East* by Matteo Legrenzi; *Political Change in the Arab Gulf States* by Mary Ann Tétreault, Gwenn Okruhlik, and Andrzej Kapiszewski (Ed.), *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2013), p. 47.

²⁸⁰ Yoel Guzansky & Gallia Lindenstrauss, “The Emergence of the Sunni Axis in the Middle East,” *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 16, no. 1 (April 2013), p. 42. Some instances of such negative stereotypes between Turkey and Arabs, especially at early 20th century, will be detailed in chapter three.

a pact with Ibn Saud. They were upholding the “banner of *Tawhid*” and “calling to the pure faith—pure of innovation and practices having no basis in the Quran, *Sunna*, and statements of the Pious Forbears.” The two made an elite force of *Ikhwan* movement, known for its religious zeal. It began to control neighboring villages and eventually Iraq. The Ottomans considered the Saudi state of Ibn Saud a departure from obedience to the Ottoman caliphate and a rebellion that must be suppressed. Indeed, the conflict between the two parties spread between 1805 and 1818. In 1811, Sultan Murad IV tasked Egypt’s army of Muhammad Ali Pasha to suppress the rebellion and restore Ottoman control over the two holy cities. The Ottoman army arrived in *Diriyah*, the stronghold area of Ibn Saud near Riyadh in 1818, who was arrested and taken to Istanbul for execution.²⁸¹

Thus, negative stereotypical perceptions emerged between the Turks and the Saudis. The Turks saw the Saudis as ‘disobeyers’ who came out against the Ottomans and declared war against them, while the Saudis saw Turks as ‘heretical’. Some Turks also believe that the “Wahhabi revolution” led to the weakening of the Sunnis.²⁸² On the other hand, Ali Mustafa, Researcher at Transworld Publicity Company in Riyadh, believed:

The relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey are still loaded with the legacy of the past, the period of the Caliphate, and its influence on the two Holy Mosques... We notice that there are differences in the Saudi (Wahhabi) approach and the Turkish (Ottoman) approach. This factor has remained a tacit instigator of concerns and fears.²⁸³

Therefore, this confrontation produced a historical psychological barrier between the two parties.

Today, Saudi Arabia is concerned over Turkey’s aspiration to lead the Muslim world, which it did during the Ottoman Empire. Mustafa argued, “Turkey still believes – or so it

²⁸¹ Cole Bunzel, “The Kingdom and the Caliphate: Duel of the Islamic States,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (February 2016), p. 6, accessed 15/3/2016, at: <https://bit.ly/2kgbnbq>; Selim Koru, “Turkey’s 200-Year War against ‘ISIS’,” *The National Interest*, July 24, 2015, accessed 9/12/2016, at: <http://bit.ly/2gIfUyL>; Emad Y. Kaddorah, “Salafism in Turkey: The Challenges of Spreading in a Sufi Society,” [In Arabic: Al-Salafia fi Turkiya: Tahadiyat al-intishar fi mujtamae mutasawif], *Siyasat Arabiya*, vol. 5 no. 25 (March 2017), p. 86.

²⁸² Hilmi Demir, “Selefiler Kimdir, Selefilik Nedir?” Teostrateji Arastirmalari Merkezi, June 30, 2014, accessed on 9/11/2016, at: <https://bit.ly/2GvWAng>; Selim Koru, *Ibid*.

²⁸³ Interview with Dr. Ali Mustafa, researcher at Transworld Publicity Company, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 30, 2019.

is understood by Saudi Arabia – that it has the supreme hand.”²⁸⁴ Recently, Saudi Arabia has been focusing on its own leadership of the Gulf, the Sunni Arab world and Muslim countries, which it clearly wanted to show in leading an Arab coalition in Yemen in 2015. Although Turkey proclaimed its support for Saudi Arabia to counter Iranian influence in 2015, it appears that Saudi Arabia does not want Turkey to play an active military role, especially since there is a historical Ottoman legacy in Yemen’s rule.²⁸⁵

The UAE shares Saudi Arabia’s common concerns over Ankara’s engagement in the Arab world since the Arab uprisings. They view that these uprisings embracing liberal political ideas and political Islamic thought, which are both promoted by Turkey. A UAE analyst argued, “ideologies which leaked into the core of the GCC countries during the Arab Spring have manifested themselves as new challenges destabilizing the conservative sociopolitical structure underpinning the Gulf region.”²⁸⁶ He assumes that liberalism and political Islam will obviously challenge current GCC’s domestic traditions. He argued that the UAE and Saudi Arabia view that “the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood collides with the conservative traditions in the GCC states and it ultimately pursues control of power and disposal of existing regimes.”²⁸⁷ Ali Mustafa believed that Turkey has depended on or employed the Muslim Brotherhood. It considered them an essential interest in the Arab region. This has made the traditional Arab governments worried.²⁸⁸

Ankara’s good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly during President Morsi’s rule in Egypt 2012-2013, and its support for other Islamic parties in Libya, Tunisia and Syria has alarmed Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The latter have been supporting parties that oppose those Islamic ones mainly to prevent such Islamic parties from

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ottoman legacy started in 1538 when the Ottoman governor of Egypt sent a fleet to capture Yemen to safeguard Mecca and Medina and to establish a commercial route to India. In 1634, after many battles with the Zaydis, the Ottomans were driven out of Yemen, which was ruled by local dynasties for more than two centuries. While the British took over southern Yemen in 1839 and expanded north and east from Aden, Ottomans returned to northern Yemen in 1849, established their rule inland towards Sana’a and Ta’izz. See: Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 2; “History of Yemen,” ArcGIS, accessed 6/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2XoHYJu>

²⁸⁶ Mohamed M. Binhuwaidin, “Essential Threats to the Security of the GCC Countries in the Post Arab Spring Era,” *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2015), p. 2.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 9-11, 15.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Ali Mustafa.

prevailing in the Gulf itself under the pretext of democracy or liberal individual rights and to halt the extending Turkish influence.

In addition, Turkey's alliance with Qatar has increased the rivalry with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. The building of a military base in Qatar in 2014 has exacerbated the situation and increased the unease caused by Turkey.

2.2.2.2.2. Qatar

At present, Turkey is the main strategic ally of Qatar. They agree over most of the current issues such as Syria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey represents the balancer of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which are perceived as a threat by Qatar, since their cutting of full diplomatic relations with it in June 2017, as follows.

Although Qatar is a wealthiest country, it is a small state in terms of area and population. It cannot deter Iran or Saudi Arabia. To compensate for this unfavorable imbalance in military power, Qatar relies on external powers to balance its neighbors. In 1992, Qatar signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US, with which the US obtained access to Qatari bases. In 1996, Qatar built the al-Udeid Airbase. In 2003, the US moved the US Combat Air Operations Center in the Middle East from Saudi Arabia to Qatar's al-Udeid Airbase. The US also constructed the world's largest pre-positioning facility in Qatar, al-Sayliyah army base.²⁸⁹

The withdrawal of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain's ambassadors from Doha in March 2014 alarmed Qatar of renewed historical threats. The Gulf crisis of 2017 and the prevention of Qatar from using its land borders and airspace with these countries posed an essential threat to its security and regime. Even with Iran, Qatar has cut off its relations in solidarity with Riyadh after the attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran in early 2016. Their relations were already strained because of opposing policies in the region post-Arab Spring. Some Qatari analysts believe that "If Iran adopts sectarianism to expand in the Arab sphere, there is no doubt that Turkey will be the active actor - by its economic,

²⁸⁹ Birol Başkan, "Turkey-GCC Relations: Is There a Future?" *Insight Turkey*, vol. 13, no.1 (2011), pp. 167-168. Michael R. Gordon & Eric Schmitt, "Aftershocks: Bases; U.S. will Move Air Operations to Qatar Base," *The New York Times*, April 28, 2003, accessed 6/7/2019, at: <https://nyti.ms/2xxcLJN>

military and demographic power - to balance Iran.”²⁹⁰ With these grave developments, along with US President Donald Trump’s initial position on the Gulf crisis, which will be discussed in chapter four, Qatar, it seems, no longer feels that the American military bases are enough to guarantee its security. Therefore, it looked to rely on a regional ally to enhance its security.

Turkey is considered an appropriate ally to Qatar. Both countries have taken assertive steps to strengthen their ties. They signed agreements in December 2014, including a memorandum to find a ‘Supreme Strategic Committee’. According to Erdoğan:

Turkey and Qatar have never drifted apart. We have always been together, we have always been in solidarity and we have always designated standing by the oppressed people of the world as our common denominator. From now on, we will again continue our resolve in the same way.²⁹¹

Turkey and Qatar have been strengthening their military agreement since March 2014. According to the agreement, both could use each other’s ports, airports, airspace and military facilities. They also agreed to cooperate in the defense industry.²⁹² In this way, Qatar has been forming a solid alliance with such a regional power to balance the threats at its proximity.

2.2.2.2.3. Kuwait and Oman

Kuwait and Oman’s policies are often calm and balanced against most regional powers. They are based on strengthening economic ties with regional actors and avoiding competition for influence. This has been reflected on their friendly relations with Turkey. Although Kuwait has policies consistent with Saudi Arabia in general, it is trying to avoid engagement in tense Saudi relations with Qatar or Turkey. At the same time, it has different policies towards some issues in the region, such as Egypt. Al-Rumaihi argued, “Kuwait’s relationship with Turkey remains a matter of mutual respect and Kuwaitis are

²⁹⁰ Interview with Mohammad al-Musfir.

²⁹¹ “Qatar, Turkey take bold step for strategic cooperation,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 19, 2014, accessed 12/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Su7Y41>

²⁹² Suliman Al-Atiqi et al., “Turkey-GCC Relations: Trends and Outlook,” *The Oxford Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies Forum*, University of Oxford (2015), p. 26.

investing in the Turkish economy, but Turkey's interference in Egypt has been viewed as unfriendly towards Saudi Arabia, which is a significant country in the Gulf."²⁹³

Kuwait and Turkey relations have been strengthened with deals in economic, trade, defense and political areas. In 2017, the two countries signed an MoU for incentives on direct investment and cooperation protocols on science and technology. In March 2018, Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah paid a visit to Ankara and signed six deals. Erdoğan hailed the visit, and said, "It will have a great impact on the future of bilateral relations and will enhance the historical legacy of the friendly relations that have characterized the two countries."²⁹⁴ In October 2018, they signed a joint defense plan aimed at enhancing military cooperation. The arrangement calls for the exchange of experience and know-how with a view to enhance military coordination. The Kuwaiti Army said that the deal was signed with aim of "accomplishing harmony, sharing experience and unifying efforts."²⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that Kuwait's relations with Turkey have gained momentum since the Gulf crisis. The signing of a military cooperation agreement signals a potential Kuwaiti desire to benefit from Turkey to create a balance in the Gulf. This also points to Kuwait's understanding of the new Turkish-Qatari military relations and that it has no reservations regarding the Turkish military base in Qatar.

For Oman, the good relationship with Turkey stems from its general foreign policy that "keens to establish friendly relations with the entire world." It insists on the principles of "equal relations with other countries... and non-interference in others' internal affairs."²⁹⁶ Oman's perception and relations with Turkey is mostly independent and has not been affected by any of the other GCC states' disputed policies with Turkey. Former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu emphasized in 2014 that the two states look to improve their relations in the field of the defense industry and to further promote mutual relations

²⁹³ Interview with Mohammad al-Rumaihi.

²⁹⁴ "Kuwait and Turkey: Six agreements signed," [In Arabic: al-Kuwait wa Turkiya: Tawqie 6 itifaqiat], *Al-Qabas*, March 21, 2018, accessed 12/11/2018, at: <https://alqabas.com/372761/>

²⁹⁵ "Turkey, Kuwait sign military cooperation agreement for 2019," *Daily Sabah*, October 11, 2018, accessed 12/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Svj8pq>

²⁹⁶ Sultanate of Oman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Policy," accessed 12/3/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2GioIbb>

politically and economically. He added, “Oman has always supported Turkey’s efforts to develop its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council.”²⁹⁷

Oman views Turkey as “a brotherly Muslim country that has longstanding and positive relations with it in the modern era dating back to the 18th century. Turkey is also a regional power that has its influential role in the Middle East.” Stemming from this perception, “Oman’s relations with Turkey have been strengthened in various political, economic and even military aspects in recent years.”²⁹⁸ Turkey looks to boost its trade ties with Oman from around \$310 million in 2017 to over \$1 billion annually in the next few years. In February 2018, Muscat hosted a business forum that gathered Turkey’s Central Anatolian Exporters Association along with the Turkish Exporters Assembly and Turkey-Oman Business Council. Turkish Ambassador to Oman Atilay Ersan said, “The distance and other logistics issues can be seen as a barrier.” But he invited Turkish companies to explore business potential in Oman, and said, “The sultanate’s geographical location and strong strategic and cultural relation with countries such as India, Iran and East African coastal countries could provide numerous opportunities for joint ventures between Turkish and Omani companies.”²⁹⁹

Therefore, Kuwait and Oman in general look forward to good relations with Turkey in political and economic areas as well as in the defense industry. The two parties have no mutual negative perceptions or disputed issues, which enhances the chances of developing relations between them.

By the end of this chapter, the discussion of the growth of both Turkey and the GCC states as well as their mutual perceptions has been completed. This chapter clearly showed how the Gulf states approached the functional theory to form the GCC as a regional organization to promote their economic and security interests. It also explained their desire to strengthen this alliance to balance Iran and Iraq, and emerging security threats. Turkey’s position as both an economic partner and a regional ally is recognized by the

²⁹⁷ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs pays an official visit to Turkey,” accessed 12/3/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/11HDp6D>

²⁹⁸ Interview with Said al-Tarshi, Researcher at Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultanate of Oman, April 11, 2019.

²⁹⁹ “Turkey Seeks to Boost Bilateral Trade and Investment with Oman,” *Muscat Daily*, February 27, 2018, accessed 12/11/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2EeD64H>

GCC states, which share common values and interests. However, their disagreement and intra-rivalry cannot be denied. The following two chapters will examine the convergent policies of the two parties and the divergent agendas in the region.



CHAPTER 3: TURKEY AND THE GCC STATES: CONVERGENCE DYNAMICS

The balance of power in the Middle East has been subjected to two major shocks recently: the US-led invasion of Iraq and the Arab Spring revolutions. Both have caused grave repercussions for the entire region, particularly the GCC states and Turkey, which have been brought together by the facing of the emerging threats.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to a fragmentation of political power and an upsurge of sectarian violence. The empowerment of the Shiite parties that control the government in Baghdad brought a shift in favor of Iran. To balance Iran's influence, the GCC states and Turkey have worked to empower Sunni Arabs and Kurds in central political institutions and to strengthen their relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to consolidate its status and to bolster Turkey's and the GCC's interests. The eruption of the Arab Spring uprisings has brought threats to the GCC and Turkey. This has produced common interests for cooperation and alliance to balance the new threats and to balance the growing influence of Iran, which has reaped the fruit of shifts in Syria and Yemen.

This chapter will examine the convergence dynamics of Turkey and the GCC states. It consists of two sections. The first will trace the history of the rapprochement between the two parties in short. The second section will discuss the impact of the invasion of Iraq and the Arab uprisings on the balance of regional power. In this regard, it will examine major emerging threats that drive agreement between the GCC states and Turkey despite some differences in their policies. This includes the consequences of the invasion of Iraq, the Syrian crisis, the emergence of the ISIL and the Yemen war.

3.1. Turkish-GCC Rapprochement: A Historical Glance

Ankara's ties with the Gulf prior to 2002 were an extension to Turkish-Arab relations. Non-involvement was a typical manifestation of Turkish foreign policy towards the region. Traditionally, there have been negative perceptions between Arabs and Turkey. Turkey's was perceived throughout the 20th century as an instrument of Western

powers.³⁰⁰ The twentieth century period has not removed Ankara's mistrust versus the Arabs based on memories of being betrayed by them as they have supported the UK against the Ottomans during the First World War.³⁰¹ The Turkish foreign policy at its early period had distanced Ankara from the Arab region.³⁰²

Indeed, Turkey's non-involvement policy and the principle of 'peace at home, peace abroad' were not adopted only as a result of such negative perceptions or to isolate itself from the Arab world, but also because of the global context during the interwar period. At that time, Turkey was generally looked at as a neutral country. Turkey's liberation war, its cooperation with the Bolsheviks in Russia against European powers until the early 1920s, and the circumstances that accompanied the establishment of the Republic in 1923 had led to the adoption of neutrality. Ankara was also willing to be non-aligned to the USSR for fear of communist ideological repercussions or the growing Soviet ambitions.³⁰³ However, it resisted the alignment with Western powers that had just liberated the country from their hands. On the other hand, Ataturk's policies of Westernization and his enthusiasm to secularize the country had contributed to gradual rapprochement with the West and isolation from its Arab and Muslim neighbors.

Turkey's association with West after the Second World War made it difficult to involve in the neighboring regions.³⁰⁴ It realized that it could not counter communism and Soviet designs alone and allied with the US, which built military bases in Turkey.³⁰⁵ After the

³⁰⁰ Dietrich Jung, "Turkey and the Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities," *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 2005), p. 3.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5; Dario Cristiani, "Turkey-GCC Ties: Ankara Sets its Sights on the Gulf," *World Politics Review*, June 7, 2010, accessed 10/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2BkF7ch>

³⁰² Jung, pp. 6-7.

³⁰³ According to David Fromkin, Ataturk sent a mission to Russia in May 1920. Stalin, Commissar for Nationalities and for State Control, evidently put Russian national interests ahead of Bolshevik ideology, and recognized that Ataturk might be able to inflict damage on the British. So Soviet money and supplies began to pour over the Russo-Turkish frontier. It was the first significant military aid that Soviet Russia had given to a foreign movement. However, Ataturk was in fact an implacable enemy of Russian Bolshevism and he was an anti-communist nationalist. See: David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), pp. 429-430, 484.

³⁰⁴ Emel Parlar Dal, "Conceptualising and testing the 'emerging regional power' of Turkey in the shifting international order," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 8 (2016), p. 1429.

³⁰⁵ William L. Cleveland & Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), pp. 255-256. In fact, the Eisenhower doctrine "authorized the deployment of US forces to protect the independence of Middle Eastern countries threatened by armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism." *Ibid.*, pp. 293-294; also see: "The Eisenhower

failure of the Baghdad Pact in 1958,³⁰⁶ Ankara focused on bilateral relations on a country-by-country basis according to their economic and political significance to its interests.³⁰⁷

When Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel came to power in 1965, one of his Justice Party programs was “to establish genuine and close friendships beyond all doubt or reservation, and to realize fruitful cooperation in many fields, with brotherly Arab and Muslim states.”³⁰⁸ During Arab-Israeli war in 1967, Turkey expressed its solidarity with the Arab states.³⁰⁹ The fire in al-Aqsa mosque in 1969 sparked popular and governmental reactions in the Muslim world. It led to the first institutional cooperation between Turkey and the Muslim world. Turkey has become the founding member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

In 1973, Turkey did not allow the US to ship supplies to Israel from its bases in Turkey. It leaned more toward Arabs since it saw the Arab world as a source of both economic promise, because of the high prices of oil, and political support, because it looked to a majority in the UN for the Cyprus issue.³¹⁰

The return to democracy in 1983, led Turkey to seek economic opportunities in Arab countries to reform its faltering economy. Conservative leader Turgut Özal (1983-1993) helped promote economic relations with the Arabs to make his reform program a success. The Turkish state, in its quest to open up to religious discourse to counter the growing threat of the country’s far left, needed to cooperate with Saudi Arabia and exchange experiences between the official religious Diyanet Foundation and the Muslim World League to promote popular religious discourse.³¹¹

Doctrine, 1957,” Office of the Historian, Department of State, United States of America, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/1FGLJMQ>

³⁰⁶ The Baghdad Pact was a defensive organization founded in 1955 by Turkey, monarchial Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran. See: The U.S. State Department, The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, “The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO),” accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2MX5UzS>

³⁰⁷ William Hale, “Turkey and the Middle East in the ‘New Era’,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2009), p. 143.

³⁰⁸ Michael B. Bishku, “How Has Turkey Viewed Israel?” *Israel Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2006), p. 184, cited in Omer E. Kurkcuoglu, “Recent Developments in Turkey’s Middle East Policy” *Diş Politika*, Ankara, June 1971, p. 73.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-186.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Andrew Hammond, “Salafism Infiltrates Turkish Religious Discourse,” Middle East Institute, July 22, 2015, accessed 12/1/2016, at: <http://bit.ly/2gF2uF9>

The end of the Cold War opened up new opportunities to Turkey in the Middle East.³¹² In 1991, it had participated in the Gulf War by mobilizing 100,000 troops on Iraq's borders, closing the Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil export pipeline, and allowing the US-led coalition to use the Incirlik airbase. Turkey did not achieve all its goals of supporting the US-led coalition. It was also not fully compensated for its financial losses that were estimated by Ankara to be around \$30 billion.³¹³ Therefore, Turkey's relations with the GCC states did not improve radically.

Under weak coalition governments, Turkey's had witnessed an economic crisis, which reached its peak in 2001. As aforementioned in chapter one, economic growth became the main objective of the Turkish people. Therefore, they supported the newly founded party, the AKP, to get rid of weak coalition governments and to promote economic reforms. The GCC states, as oil and financial powers, were promising for the new Turkish economic policy.

Since the AKP came to power in 2002, Ankara gave much importance to its relations with the Arab World. It has influenced by the 'strategic depth', which, according to Davutoğlu, would enable Turkey to increase its leverage regionally.³¹⁴ In addition to strengthening economic relations with Iraq and Syria, the AKP has given particular importance to the GCC states because of the need to expand foreign trade with these rich countries in energy and financial assets.

The AKP's policies have produced many positive developments on bilateral and collective relations with the GCC states in quite a short period. Turkey and Saudi Arabia formed the Joint Business Council and the Saudi-Turkish Joint Committee in 2003.³¹⁵ They set up a joint investment fund to encourage investment in 2005.³¹⁶ In April 2016, they established the Turkish-Saudi Coordination Council mechanism. Turkey and other

³¹² F. Stephen Larrabee, *Turkey as a U.S. Security Partner* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), p. 3.

³¹³ Cengiz Dinc & Mustafa Yetim, "Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Middle East: From Non-Involvement to a Leading Role," *Alternatives*, Turkish Journal of International Relations, vol. 11, no. 1 (2012), pp. 71-73.

³¹⁴ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2011), pp. 690-691.

³¹⁵ Rashid Hassan, "Saudi-Turkish business council seeks to boost bilateral trade," *Arab News*, November 12, 2013, accessed 12/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2U6garH>

³¹⁶ Cristiani.

GCC states have established bilateral institutions to boost their relations. The UAE-Turkish Joint Commission was established in 2005, the Bahrain-Turkey Joint Business Council in 2005, the Turkish-Kuwaiti Business Forum in 2006, and the Turkish-Omani Business Council in 2006.³¹⁷ In particular, Qatar and Turkey have developed close relations. The Qatar-Turkey Joint Higher Committee was held in 2012, while the Qatari-Turkish Supreme Strategic Committee was established in 2014. They also signed a mutual defense agreement in 2014 and established a Turkish military base in Qatar. At the collective level, as aforementioned in chapter one, Turkey and the GCC signed two memorandums of understanding in 2005 and 2008, and launched a High-Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism to develop cooperation in all fields.

For the GCC states, Turkey has become a more attractive partner due to its fast growth. It has also been in convergence with the GCC in a number of regional issues and towards common threats, most of which are related to the concerns over Iran's influence.

3.2. Turkey and the GCC: Rapprochement Dynamics

The invasion of Iraq, the Syrian crisis, the emergence of the ISIL and the Yemeni war have caused new security challenges for the GCC states and Turkey. Facing the repercussions of the emerging threats brought the two parties closer despite some differences in their policies.

3.2.1. Turkey and the GCC's Positions on Iraq post-2003

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 had changed the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. The GCC states and Turkey, who are considered the most affected by the invasion, share common interests in maintaining the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq, countering Iranian and Shiite influence, helping marginalized Sunni Arabs and strengthening relations with Iraq's Kurds.

³¹⁷ Mohammad Khalil, "Security and military dimensions of the Gulf-Turkish relations," [In Arabic: Al'abaad al-amniah wa askariah Lil aalaqat al-Khalijia-al-Turkyia], *Strategic Studies* series, no. 184, Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (2013), pp. 55, 87; Sean Foley, "Turkey and the Gulf States in the Twenty-First Century," *Weekly Blitz*, October 20, 2010, accessed 12/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2HVVvpD>

The invasion constitutes a substantial violent act because it had effects on Iraq's domestic balance and the regional balance of power.³¹⁸ Turkey and the GCC states share a common interest in a stable and unity of Iraq. They are also concerned over the creation of a power vacuum that Iran has mostly filled.³¹⁹

The GCC stance toward Iraq after the invasion has been evident through the consecutive summits since 2003, which have "reaffirmed its firm positions on the respect of Iraq's unity, sovereignty and independence and non-interference in its internal affairs as well as the conservation of its Arab and Islamic identity."³²⁰

The main concern for the GCC is clearly the shift in the balance of power in the Gulf. Even before the start of invasion, the GCC states did not hesitate to join the meetings organized by Turkey, which the neighboring countries to Iraq attended, and whose goal was to prevent a war.³²¹

For Turkey, Iraq enjoys an advanced position in its national interests. It has had historical and geographic relations with Iraq for over four hundred years since the Ottoman period. The geopolitics of Iraq (which has a 352 km long shared border) with Turkey is significant to Ankara's security. The close political, social and economic relations have continued during the Republican era.³²² Iraq is an essential source of oil and gas resources for Turkey, which looks to play a prominent role in delivering them to international markets. It also represents a huge consumer market and a promising investment environment for Turkish exports and companies. Therefore, Turkey supports the territorial integrity and

³¹⁸ Valeria Talbot, "Turkey-Gcc Relations in a Transforming Middle East," Analysis, no. 178 (June 2013), p. 2; Nur Cetdnoğlu, "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) after U.S. led Invasion of Iraq: Toward a Security Community?" *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika*, vol. 6, no. 24 (2012), p. 91.

³¹⁹ Larrabee, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," p. 693.

³²⁰ See for instance: The Closing Statement of the Twenty-fourth Session of the GCC Supreme Council, Kuwait City-State of Kuwait, December 22, 2003, at: <https://bit.ly/2InjA70>; The Final Communiqué of the Twenty-ninth Session of the Supreme Council of The Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman, December 29-30, 2008, at: <https://bit.ly/2I3GbX2>; The Closing Statement of the Thirty-Eighth Session of the GCC Supreme Council, Kuwait City-State of Kuwait, December 5, 2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2YWoga7>

³²¹ Cetdnoğlu, pp. 95-98.

³²² Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Turkey and the New Iraq," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 8, no. 2 (April-June 2006), p. 109.

unity of Iraq.³²³ It opposed the invasion because it has concerns over the disintegration of the country.³²⁴

3.2.1.1. Iranian and Shiite Influence in Iraq

The empowerment of the Shiite parties in Iraq that control the government since 2003 brought a shift in favor of Iran.³²⁵ The growing Iranian influence has some implications for the whole region, and thereof for the GCC. The first consequence is Iran's revolutionary Shiite ideology, which came evidently from 1979. With the invasion of Iraq, this ideology was refreshed.³²⁶ Another consequence came from the parties with power in Iraq.³²⁷ The invasion of Iraq not only reversed the domestic balance of power between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq; it also unleashed insurgencies that have, deepened the sectarian divide across the region,³²⁸ particularly in Bahrain and the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia.³²⁹ The Iraq invasion effectively handed Iraq over to Iran as a "gift on a golden platter," as Saudi former King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz said.³³⁰

Turkey, a predominantly Sunni country, appeared to be a valuable bulwark against Iran in the GCC states' perspective.³³¹ This is because the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, knew that Turkey also faces fierce competition from Iran in Iraq.³³²

Although the Shiite parties do not present a sectarian threat to Turkey, their sole control of power in Iraq affects Turkey's interests. As is well known, Iraq has been a highly competitive sphere of influence between Persia and the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century. Given the geopolitical importance of Iraq, being subject to the influence of one

³²³ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relations between Turkey and Iraq," accessed 22/6/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2dMBwFZ>

³²⁴ Talbot, p. 2.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Cetdnoğlu, pp. 96-98.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Jeff D. Colgan, "How Sectarianism Shapes Yemen's War," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2015, accessed 20/1/2018, at: <http://wapo.st/2ndAAkZ>

³²⁹ *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf*, Summary Report no. 7, Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (2012), accessed 15/12/2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2FkAnCX>

³³⁰ Charles W. Dunne, "Improving Iraq-GCC Relations: No Time Like the Present," July 27, 2017, accessed 12/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2RG6P8L>

³³¹ Talbot, p. 2.

³³² Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey's New Engagement in Iraq," Special Report, the United States Institute of Peace (2010), pp. 4-6, 12, at: <https://bit.ly/2Stb38e>

of these two competing powers meant weakening the other. Because Iraq is mainly made up of two major Muslim sects, Sunnis and Shiite, the control of Iraq by one of those powers meant strengthening the status of one of these Iraqi sects. With the creation of Iraq's nation-state in 1921, Iran and Turkey were weak states, striving for independence, and have had less competition over Iraq. During most of the 20th century, Iraq became a regional power. However, the occupation of Baghdad in 2003 has revived the sectarian sentiments. Many from Shiite parties who control the power in Baghdad were founded in Iran. It seems that Ankara fears that such parties would favor Iranian influence at the expense of Turkey's interests.

Although Turkey's relations with Iraq had been badly damaged by the sectarian divide during the former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's period between 2007-2014. The fall of Mosul in June 2014 at the hands of ISIL has alerted both Turkey and Iraq. Baghdad requested military and intelligence assistance from Turkey while Ankara welcomed the release of relations with Iraq, under the new Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Turkey declared its readiness to cooperate with Iraq to confront common threats. Former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated, "We are ready to provide any kind of support we can give to Iraq,"³³³ while their relations have developed significantly.

3.2.1.2. Sunni Marginalization in Iraq

Indeed, Sunni marginalization and the weak participation of Sunni Arabs in the political process in the new Iraq have also been common concerns of Turkey and the GCC states.

In 2003, Sunni Arabs in Iraq found themselves singularly ill-equipped to compete in the new Iraq.³³⁴ Iranian support for the Shiite political groups and factions has been a source of contention between Iraqi governments and the GCC states, with the latter becoming increasingly agitated about the loosening grip of Iraq's considerable Sunni population on political and economic power.³³⁵ To balance Iran's power on Iraq's domestic politics and

³³³ "Turkey, Iraq seek new measures against ISIL," *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 25, 2014, accessed 15/12/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1JlIej2>

³³⁴ Fanar Haddad, "Sectarian Relations and Sunni Identity in Post-Civil War Iraq," in *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf*, pp. 6-7.

³³⁵ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 22.

foreign relations, the GCC states believe that empowering Sunni Arabs and Kurds in central political institutions is crucial. They stressed this issue by inviting successive Iraqi governments to achieve national reconciliation among the different components of the Iraqi people, in reference to the inclusion of Sunnis in the political process. In 2006, the concluding communiqués of the Supreme Council of the GCC have repeatedly referred: Considering that national reconciliation is the key to the solution in Iraq, and that effecting reconciliation between the various sectarian and ethnic groups of the Iraqi people constitutes the fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability in Iraq... Iraq's security and stability cannot be achieved except through cooperation between all its people irrespective of their sectarian, ethnic, or religious affiliations.³³⁶

The GCC also required the Iraqi government to “redouble its efforts to achieve national reconciliation and work on the necessary constitutional amendments.”³³⁷

Although most of the Kurds in Iraq are Sunnis, with only a small minority being Shiite (e.g. the Faili Kurds), their relations with neighboring Shiite communities have in general been balanced and positive. Despite the fact that an Islam-based ideology is not a priority for the KRG, it remains a considerable factor for the Sunnis within the GCC.³³⁸ Kurdish gains in Iraq could also go hand in hand with the GCC's goals of maintaining its influence in Iraq. For the Iraqi Sunnis, the Kurds might provide the only regional alliance now available, as well as a good option for the near future. Thus, Kurdish religious identity and the Kurds' neutral stance over sectarianism make them an appealing ally for other regional Sunni players who fear Iran's hegemonic tendencies in the Gulf.³³⁹

Turkey has been visibly proactive in shaping Iraq's domestic politics. It has been supported the participation of Sunni Arabs in the political process in Iraq. It deems that the Sunni Arabs must be integrated in the system to ensure territorial integrity and stability in Iraq.³⁴⁰ After Maliki's policies evolved to exclude Sunni Arabs, including

³³⁶ The Closing Statement of the Twenty-seventh Session of the GCC Supreme Council, Riyadh-Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, December 9-10, 2006, at: <https://bit.ly/2Z3WEQq>

³³⁷ The Closing Statement of the Twenty-eighth Session of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Doha-Qatar, December 3-4, 2007, at: <https://bit.ly/2WUpMYv>

³³⁸ Marianna Charountaki, “The GCC in Kurdish Politics,” *Journal of Arabian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2016), pp. 209-210.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

³⁴⁰ Çetinsaya, p. 112.

senior Iraqi officials who took part in the political process, especially former Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, who was sentenced to death in absentia in November 2011, Turkey considered that this exclusion negatively affected its interests because “the Sunnis power is necessary for Iraq’s stability and territorial integrity.”³⁴¹ It has continued to back Sunni Arab elites and the Turkmen groups. Developing a close relationship with the Iraqi Kurds from 2012 onwards, as follows, has also enabled the Turkish government to strengthen its position both domestically and within Iraq against Shiite elites.³⁴² Thus, Turkey as well as the GCC showed a firm stance on the side of the Sunnis participation in Iraq’s politics.

3.2.1.3. Iraqi Kurds: Interests and Threats

The vacuum left by the US invasion of Iraq since 2003 has been in the interest of the Kurds in northern Iraq, who have been seen as a potential stable factor in Iraq. This was reinforced by the fact that the Kurds’ relations with most of local Iraqi parties, regional powers and even with the US are good. Turkey and the GCC states share a common interest in supporting the Kurds in northern Iraq to balance Iranian as well as Iraqi Shiite influence in Baghdad, strengthening Iraqi Sunnis and ensuring economic interests in Iraq.

Relations between the Kurds and the GCC states have been somewhat irregular. Falah Bakir, Head of Department of Foreign Relations of the KRG, confirmed that relations between the KRG and the GCC as a collective institution “only started from 2003 onwards, and especially after the adoption of the Iraqi constitution in 2005 in which the KRG was officially recognized as a legitimate federal partner.” This paved the way for the Kurds to conduct their affairs independently, and the GCC states maintained relations with the Kurds via the central government within the Iraqi federal context.³⁴³

The GCC states consider direct relations with the KRG for many reasons. First, the fall of Saddam’s regime and the rise of a Shiite-dominated government intensified the need for containing Iran and preserving the regional status quo and upholding Gulf security.

³⁴¹ Zeynep Kosereisoglu, “Turkey & Iraq: How Identity & Interests Mix in Foreign Policy,” *Muftah*, January 23, 2014, accessed 15/6/2015, at: <http://bit.ly/1da4XB6>

³⁴² Orhan Gafarli, “Turkey’s Tactical Rapprochement with Iraq and Iran,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 12, no. 27 (February 2015), accessed 15/6/2015, at: <http://bit.ly/1DZxmTt>

³⁴³ Charountaki, pp. 204, 211.

Secondly, after the expansion of ISIL in Iraq, the Kurds have a need for further regional support and alliances in order to consolidate their status. As the main frontline against ISIL in Iraq, the KRG appears to be a particularly effective military force within Iraq. Thirdly, the presence of Kurdish oil might be viewed by the GCC oil producers as the rise of another energy supplier, and therefore decreasing dependence on Gulf oil. However, Kurdish oil policies do not appear to constitute a significant threat to the economic agenda of the GCC states, which still contain huge oil reserves.³⁴⁴

Among the GCC states, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been economically active in the KRG.³⁴⁵ The UAE was the first GCC country to open a consulate in Irbil in 2012. Former KRG President Massoud Barzani was received in the UAE in 2014. It has some 150 companies in the KRG. Qatar has invested significantly in the KRG.³⁴⁶ The 2009 MoU in the fields of infrastructure, agricultural investment, tourism and aviation reaffirmed Kurdish-Qatari relations. Barzani visited Qatar in November 2012 and expressed “his thanks for its on-going support to the Kurdistan Region.” Qatar also provided humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and refugees in the KRG in July 2015.³⁴⁷ Saudi Arabia opened consulate in the KRG in 2016.³⁴⁸ This indicates the increasing importance of the KRG’s role in the war against ISIL and the direct recognition of the KRG. Relations with Kuwait have a special quality, linked to the fact that, dating back to Saddam’s period, Kuwaitis and Kurds had seen themselves victims of the same power. In April 2012, both sides expressed their wish to further strengthen ties “on the basis of brotherhood and common interests.” Kuwait opened a Consulate-General in Irbil in June 2015, with direct political representation being the most notable support.³⁴⁹

Turkey’s position is compatible with the GCC states’ positions over the KRG in two factors: balancing Iranian and Shiite influence in Baghdad and securing economic interests. Given the proximity of the Kurdish Iraqi region to Turkey and the presence of

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 201-203, 212.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

³⁴⁶ Sinem Cengiz, “The Gulf’s stance on the Kurdish referendum,” September 15, 2017, accessed 15/12/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2S9V3bX>; “Will an ‘Economically-Sovereign’ Kurdish State in Iraq Benefit the GCC?” *International Policy Digest*, January 28, 2016, accessed 6/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2t4TrRK>

³⁴⁷ Charountaki, pp. 205-206.

³⁴⁸ Cengiz.

³⁴⁹ Charountaki, pp. 206-208.

a large Kurdish minority in Turkey, the primary interests of Turkey are preventing full independence of the KRG, confronting the PKK and ensuring Turkmen social and cultural rights.

Iraq's occupation in 2003 resulted in disturbances that threatened to break the country into several entities, including the possibility of establishing a Kurdish state in the north. This could pose a threat and increase the dissident aspirations and military activities of the PKK in Turkey and the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria.

However, Ankara has contributed to the creation of the first Kurdish de facto state entity in order to control the north of Iraq.³⁵⁰ The KRG as a viable strong actor not only helps Turkey's security and economic interests, but also prevents a more chaotic situation.³⁵¹

Turkey views its good relations with the KRG is important to eliminate the PKK threats. In this regard, its policy concentrated on its ability to control its border with Iraq, which the PKK used as a transit way between southern Turkey and its base of operations in the Qandil mountains along the Iran-Iraq border.³⁵²

Economically, Turkey will have a significant influence in the Kurdistan Region. By positioning itself as the KRG's primary partner for the transiting and marketing of the KRG's energy resources to international markets, Ankara has built its influence in northern Iraq. The Kurdistan Region has an estimated 5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas reserves and 45 billion barrels of oil reserves. In 2012, Turkey became the first country to sign an agreement with Irbil on energy resource exports.³⁵³ The agreement paved the way for the construction of a new pipeline linking oil fields in the Kurdistan Region to the Ceyhan Port in Turkey,³⁵⁴ which is the most accessible outlet for northern Iraqi oil.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Marianna Charountaki, "Turkish Foreign Policy and the Kurdistan Regional Government," *Perceptions*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 2012), p. 198.

³⁵¹ Kadir Ustun & Lesley Dudden, "Turkey-KRG Relationship: Mutual Interests, Geopolitical Challenges," *Analysis*, no. 31 (September 2017), p. 10.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 22-23.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-18.

³⁵⁴ Malik Mufti, "Arab Reactions to Turkey's Regional Reengagement," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Summer 2014), p. 20.

³⁵⁵ Ustun & Dudden, p. 16; "Iraq agrees to export oil from Kirkuk and Kurdish region via Turkey," *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 2, 2014, accessed 15/6/2015, at: <http://bit.ly/1HABjjU>

Therefore, Turkey's economic cooperation with the KRG has developed significantly. The trade exchange between them reached about \$12 billion in 2014.³⁵⁶ Turkish goods account for nearly 80 percent of goods sold in the KRG. Approximately 1000 Turkish companies were operating in Kurdistan in 2016, accounting for 40 percent of all foreign firms operating in the region.³⁵⁷ Turkish investments reached about \$16 billion in the KRG.³⁵⁸

Finally, despite the GCC and Turkish rapprochement with the KRG, they did not support the KRG's referendum on independence on 25 September 2017. Turkey pushed hard for a cancellation of the referendum, as it promises to add yet another source of instability.³⁵⁹ After the referendum, a very clear deterioration shaped Turkey's relations with the KRG. However, Turkey as well as the GCC states have quickly worked to restore the relations with the KRG in order to preserve the economic gains and common interests.

3.2.2. The Syrian Crisis since 2011

The Syrian crisis since March 2011 had significant impacts on Turkey and the GCC states. After the US-led operations of Afghanistan and Iraq removed Tehran's regional adversaries,³⁶⁰ the Syrian crisis has heightened the regional power struggle with Iran. However, it also seemed to produce a common opportunity for cooperation between Turkey and the GCC. Both have taken very similar positions on the crisis. They called for protecting the Syrian people, supporting the opposition and toppling the President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Their ministers issued a joint written statement on 28 January 2012 that stated, "international efforts should be focused on bringing the bloodshed in Syria to an immediate end and paving the ground for the initiation of a political transition process in line with the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people."³⁶¹

³⁵⁶ Di Francesco Petrucciano, "Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue," *Geopolitica*, October 16, 2014, accessed 10/9/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2kcXsmo>

³⁵⁷ Ustun & Dudden, p. 10.

³⁵⁸ Charountaki, "Turkish Foreign Policy and the Kurdistan Regional Government," p. 194.

³⁵⁹ "Turkey says KRG independence vote threatens Iraq's territorial integrity," *Daily Sabah*, June 13, 2017, accessed 18/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2TAx0zl>; "Turkey calls on KRG to renounce referendum decision," *Daily Sabah*, August 24, 2017, accessed 18/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2SusOE3>

³⁶⁰ Frederic Wehrey et al., *Dangerous but not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), p. xv.

³⁶¹ Siret Hursoy, "Turkey's Foreign Policy and Economic Interests in the Gulf," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2013), p. 507.

Turkey and the GCC viewed that an alternative regime in Syria – which is distant from Iran – would enhance their geopolitical influence, strengthen their economic interdependence and allow them to connect geographically via Syria and Jordan. Indeed, Turkey realizes that the improving of its political and economic relations with Syria would facilitate its access to the Gulf region.

Turkey attaches special importance to Syria and has made it a cornerstone of its Middle East policy. It considers Syria a “gateway to the Arab world,” a hinterland and a strategic partner. They share a long border of about 900 kilometers.³⁶² Syria also has the largest population of Sunni Muslims, which could form a potential alliance to counter any sectarian threat and to balance any regional power.

The Syrian-Turkish bilateral relationship was improved with the arrival of the AKP to power. The two countries set up a Higher Council for Strategic Cooperation in 2009.³⁶³ Syria was the prime example of a zero-problem policy and Ankara wanted to set a model for transforming hostility into friendly relations.

During much of the Syrian crisis, Turkey has been a crucial ally of the GCC states. Their stances on Syrian crisis started in 2011, when Turkey expressed its growing anger at al-Assad regime’s suppression of protesters, calling it “unacceptable.” In August 2011, one of the opposition groups, the Syrian National Council, was formed in Istanbul. In September 2011, Ankara cut diplomatic ties with Syria in protest to the government’s refusal to accommodate the demands of the protesters. It also joined the war as a key supporting actor against the regime.³⁶⁴

Many objectives led to Turkey’s policy shift in Syria. First, the AKP sought to be seen as a supporter and promoter of democracy in Syria and elsewhere in the region.³⁶⁵ Secondly,

³⁶² Emad Y. Kaddorah, *Turkey: An Ambition Strategy and Constrained Policy – a Geopolitical Approach* [In Arabic: Turkiya: Strategiah tamouha wa siyah moquaida – Moqarabah geopoliticia], (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2015), p. 80; Emad Y. Kaddorah, “Turkey and the Question of Military Intervention: Pressures and Constraints,” *Policy Analysis*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (October 2014), p. 4.

³⁶³ Ömer Taşpınar, “Turkey’s Strategic Vision and Syria,” *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3 (2012), pp. 136-137.

³⁶⁴ Steven A. Cook and Hussein Ibish, “Turkey and the GCC: Cooperation Amid Diverging Interests,” The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, AGSIW Gulf Rising Series, no. 1 (2017), p. 9, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2EkcuaA>

³⁶⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, “Turkey’s Relations with the West and the Muslim World: A Fine Balancing Act,” Qantara.de, May 22, 2012, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Blq8Pu>

Ankara sought to secure its future strategic interests in Syria because the Syrian regime seemed to be on the verge of collapse.³⁶⁶

Thirdly, Ankara sought to cooperation with the Syrian opposition to balance Iran's influence in the region.³⁶⁷ Some analysts argued that "Turkey desires to see the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood come to power, or at least share power with al-Assad's Alawite regime." In addition to "sharing a similar philosophy, a government ruled by a Sunni Islamist movement in Syria could help the AKP government consolidate its influence in the Middle East."³⁶⁸ This may frustrate Tehran's ideological and political expansion. In the same vein, the declaration by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Mohammad Riad Shaqfa, of his willingness to "adopt the Turkish governance system, rather than the Iranian model, is another demonstration of the ongoing competition between the two states."³⁶⁹ As the Sunnis are a majority in Syria, it would be a reasonable assumption to expect their domination of post-Assad Syria. More profoundly still, the change of regime in Syria could affect Iran's influence in Lebanon and could lead to the balancing of Iraq's Shiite-dominated government.³⁷⁰ Thus, both Turkey and GCC states have converged on Syria as their most important geopolitical battleground, in which regime change could directly affect the Gulf's balance of power.

Fourthly, Turkey considered deepening economic relations with Syria as a key component to establish interdependence between them. Both parties could thus benefit from each other's markets and act as bridges to enter world markets, particularly the GCC markets.³⁷¹

Finally, Turkey was concerned that al-Assad might back the Kurds in northern Syria or the PKK in return for their support for Damascus.³⁷² The Syrian crisis has allowed Kurds there to carve out a space of their own between ISIL and the regime, which is what worries the Turks. That is why President Erdoğan announced, "We will never allow the

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Özlem Demirtas-Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2014), p. 142.

³⁶⁸ Damla Aras, "The Syrian Uprising: Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 2012), p. 48.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 49, cited in Bloomberg News Service (New York), November 28, 2011.

³⁷⁰ Ehteshami, p. 22.

³⁷¹ Aras, pp. 41-50.

³⁷² Ibid., p. 50.

establishment of a state on our southern border in the north of Syria.”³⁷³ Turkey began to treat the PYD, and its military faction People’s Protection Units (YPG), as terrorists on an equal footing with ISIL and PKK. The Operation Euphrates Shield began in northern Syria in August 2016 by the Turkish military to prevent the PYD/YPG from building a corridor connecting the territories under their control.³⁷⁴

The GCC states’ position toward the Syrian crisis has developed in the same way of that of Turkey. They condemned the regime’s violent reaction to the demonstrations. With the situation deteriorating, the GCC states exerted diplomatic pressure on Damascus and tried to internationalize the issue. They supported the efforts of the Arab League as well as the UN. In addition, the GCC states decided to recall their ambassadors from Damascus and expelled Syrian envoys from their countries.³⁷⁵ The GCC Secretary General, Abdullatif al-Zayani, declared that the move demonstrated a rejection of the Syrian regime’s “insistence on the military option and ignoring all efforts for a way out of the tragic situation lived by the brotherly Syrian people.”³⁷⁶

Similar to Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have called for arming the Syrian opposition. Former Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal said that “arming the Syrian opposition is a duty as the opposition cannot defend itself in the face of the violent crackdown.”³⁷⁷

The GCC states have their own reasons to adopt this position. They see Syria under al-Assad as a strategic ally of Iran.³⁷⁸ Iran has provided financial, technical and military assistance to Syria. One point of view is that the GCC’s active involvement in the Syrian crisis aims at undermining the Iran-Syria-Hizbollah axis and diminishing Tehran’s influence.³⁷⁹ In most of the GCC states’ view, Tehran is the main player embracing Shiite

³⁷³ Michael J. Totten, “The Trouble with Turkey: Erdogan, ISIS, and the Kurds,” *World Affairs*, vol. 178, no. 3 (Fall 2015), p. 5 and 9.

³⁷⁴ Adam Szymański, “Turkish Policy towards War in Syria,” *Teka Kom. Politol. Stos. Międzynar – OL PAN*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2017), p. 74.

³⁷⁵ Prasanta Kumar Pradhan, “GCC and the Syrian Crisis,” Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, June 21, 2012, accessed 15/12/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Bkahkg>

³⁷⁶ “GCC chief says Syria embassies will close,” *Arabian Business*, March 16, 2012, accessed 25/12/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2OZj40l>

³⁷⁷ Pradhan.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Konstantinos Zarras, “Prospects of GCC-Turkey Cooperation and the Syrian Crisis,” in Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem (Ed.), *GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre, 2015), pp. 204-205.

unity and joining hands with al-Assad, being an Alawite Shiite. Syria and the GCC states have divergent policies in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon³⁸⁰ and Yemen.

Saudi interest in Syria increased after its confrontation with Iran in Yemen when Saudi Arabia announced in February 2016, and again in April 2018, that it would send ground soldiers to Syria to fight ISIL with the possibility that they would confront al-Assad's forces.³⁸¹ Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir stated, "Saudi Arabia's readiness to send troops to Syria if the United States decides to expand the alliance it leads there."³⁸² It appears that the Saudi announcement reflects its attempt to confront Iran in Syria as a result of Iran's supposed involvement in Yemen.³⁸³

Economic interests were also among the reasons for the shifting of the GCC's policy in Syria. The centrality of the hydrocarbon sector in their economies needs response to changing factors that could affect this sector. Qatar and Saudi Arabia have had ideas to build a pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea, through Jordan and Syria. A Qatari pipeline would increase competitiveness over natural gas from Russia. The Syrian uprising offered an opportunity for such plans. The strategic value of an alliance with a new regime in Syria is well recognized in the GCC.³⁸⁴

The Russian factor in Syria may become an additional reason for Turkish-GCC rapprochement. Russian military intervention on 30 September 2015 in Syria was a challenge for Turkey and the GCC states. Ankara fears that the Russian presence in its south will isolate it from the region, prevent its access to the Gulf and possibly support the existence of an independent Kurdish entity in northern Syria. Russia has developed close relations with Syria because of its geopolitical importance and its influence on the balance of regional power. For decades, Russia has maintained its alliance with Syria. During the USSR era, it has provided financial and military aid to Syria.³⁸⁵ Today, Russia

³⁸⁰ Pradhan.

³⁸¹ Mahjoob Zweiri, "Yemen in the Context of Iran-Gulf Relations," in Helen Lackner & Daniel Martin Varisco (Ed.), *Yemen and the Gulf States: The Making of a Crisis* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2018), p. 92.

³⁸² "Al-Jubeir: Saudi Arabia is ready to send troops to Syria," [Al-Jubeir: Al-Saudia mustaaidah li'irsal quwwat 'ilaa Syria], *Sky News Arabia*, April 18, 2018, accessed 9/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Vvv2kY>

³⁸³ Zweiri, p. 92.

³⁸⁴ Amal A. Kandeel, "Regional Upheaval: The Stakes for the GCC," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Winter 2013), p. 65.

³⁸⁵ Jon B. Alterman, "Turkey, Russia, and Iran in the Middle East," in Samuel Brennen (Ed.), *The Turkey, Russia, Iran Nexus* (Lanham: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), p. 4.

is consolidating its military presence in Syria by building a new base in southern Latakia and expanding its old naval base in Tartus. Some analysts argued, “This is the most important Russian power projection in the region in decades.”³⁸⁶ Thus, if interests of Turkey and the GCC states, as well as the US, are further deteriorated by Russia’s growing presence, it may become a common interest to counter this influence. Turkey and the GCC states are allies of the US and, regarding the NATO, are members or partners respectively. If the US decides to contain Russian influence in Syria, Turkey and the GCC states are the most important regional candidates to play a key role.

Three things should be noted in the context of Turkish-GCC convergence on the Syrian crisis. First, although united for the common cause to overthrow the Syrian regime and to counter Iran’s influence, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the three major patrons of the Syrian opposition, associate closely with different political and military groups. While Turkey and Qatar maintain stronger ties with factions supposed to be linked with the Muslim Brotherhood, particularly Failaq al-Rahman, as well as Ahrar al-Sham, Saudi Arabia opposes these relations.³⁸⁷ Saudi Arabia has supported a major Salafi military faction, Jaish al-Islam, which had stronghold position in Ghotta, a strategic area near Damascus. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worked to weaken the position of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Syrian opposition. This weakened the chance for a potential alternative to the regime.³⁸⁸

Secondly, the involvement of the GCC countries is different in the Syrian uprising. Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been the most active in the Syrian arena. The UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain have shown much less interest.³⁸⁹

Thirdly, the Turkish sponsored Astana Peace talks on Syria with Russia and Iran since December 2016, which excluded the GCC, and led to the questioning of some GCC states about the possibility of a future alliance with Turkey to confront Iran at all. “Turkey’s pragmatism in Syria has shown that it is seeking its national interests through its

³⁸⁶ Eric Schmitt & Michael R. Gordon, “Russian Moves in Syria Widen Role in Mideast,” *The New York Times*, September 14, 2015, accessed 30/9/2015, at: <https://nyti.ms/2Go4ehE>

³⁸⁷ Zarras, pp. 206-207.

³⁸⁸ Guido Steinberg, “The Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood,” in *The Qatar Crisis*, The Project on Middle East Political Science, POMEPS Briefings, no. 31 (October 2017), p. 67.

³⁸⁹ Kandeel, pp. 59-60.

understandings with Iran,” said a political analyst in Abu Dhabi. “This has been demonstrated in Aleppo and Idlib, which raised doubts about Turkey’s eligibility to be a Sunni ally in the face of Shiite Iran,” he added.³⁹⁰

As a result, Turkey and the GCC states’ agendas in Syria meet their desire of rapprochement in the early stages of the uprising. Nevertheless, this crisis has unwelcome consequences; the emerging of Iranian and Russian prominence as a result of war, and the intra-GCC and Turkish division over supporting different Syrian opposition groups both are causes that contribute to undermining both the GCC states’ and Turkey’s goals in Syria. This frustrating outcome also has some negative repercussions on their own relationships, which will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

3.2.3. ISIL Threats

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 delivered a shock to the region, leading to rise of militant groups and reviving al-Qaeda and its ilk.³⁹¹ Following the Arab Spring in 2011, power vacuums across the region and a proliferation of non- or under-governed territories and porous borders have created inroads for such groups, in particular ISIL, to further their interests and strengthen their influence, by acquiring new territory, resources or alliances.³⁹²

The roots of ISIL can be traced to the al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad group established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi following the US invasion of Iraq. In 2004, Zarqawi joined forces with Al-Qaeda, renaming his group al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). When he was killed in a US airstrike in 2006, he was replaced by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. The latter changed the name to become the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. Capitalizing on the instability in Iraq following the US withdrawal in 2011 and extreme dissatisfaction among Iraq’s Sunni population with al-Maliki’s government, Baghdadi led a relentless campaign of suicide and car bombings. In 2011, ISI also began operations in Syria. It initially joined the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra. In April 2013, Abu Bakir al-

³⁹⁰ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi on condition of anonymity, the United Arab Emirates, March 26, 2019.

³⁹¹ Curtis Ryan, “Regional Responses to the Rise of ISIS,” *Middle East Report*, no. 276 (Fall 2015), p. 19.

³⁹² Kristina Kausch, “Introduction,” in Kristina Kausch (Ed.), *Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East* (Madrid: Fríde, 2015), p. 14.

Baghdadi renamed his group ‘the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’ (ISIL). In January 2014, ISIL took control of the city of Raqqa.³⁹³

ISIL declared itself a revived Caliphate and took control of Mosul in June 2014 and other areas. This rapid expansion alarmed the countries of the region.³⁹⁴ After the US-led coalition began launching airstrikes against ISIL targets in August 2014, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who is also the group’s chief of external operations, responded with a call for supporters to carry out lone-offender attacks. Since then, ISIL supporters and sympathizers have tried to answer his call.³⁹⁵

For most countries in the region, ISIL became a threat to their security.³⁹⁶ Its rapid expansion in Iraq and its presence in Yemen, at the northern and southern borders of Arabian Peninsula, has posed serious challenges to the stability of the GCC states, where it already has local members and supporters.

Turkey’s approach towards ISIL changed significantly since 2015. A crucial factor was the bomb attacks in Turkey organized by people connected with ISIL in Suruç in July 2015. Turkey made a decisive move against ISIL. It has allowed the US-led coalition to launch airstrikes against ISIL militants in Syria and Iraq from its Incirlik airbase.³⁹⁷

In retaliation, in October 2015, ISIL carried out twin suicide bombings in Ankara. The attacks killed 107 people and injured 500 others and was one of the deadliest attacks on Turkey. The years 2016 and 2017 saw a dramatic increase in terrorist attacks in Turkey. ISIL heralds the beginning of a new and dangerous transition in its confrontation with the Turkish state. In an audio recording released online by ISIL’s al-Furqan Media on 2 November 2016, Abu Bakir al-Baghdadi ordered fighters to take the battle into Turkey, declaring, “Turkey entered the zone of your operations, so attack it, destroy its security, and sow horror within it. Put it on your list of battlefields. Turkey entered the war with the Islamic State with cover and protection from Crusader jets.” He was referring to

³⁹³ Simone Roworth, “ISIL’s evolution and its military actions in 2014,” in Patricia Dias et al., *Strike from the Air: The first 100 days of the campaign against ISIL* (Barton: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2014), pp. 14-15.

³⁹⁴ Ryan, p. 19.

³⁹⁵ Matthew Levitt, “Introduction,” in Matthew Levitt (Ed.), *The Rise of ISIL* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2016), p. 2.

³⁹⁶ Szymański, pp. 72-73.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 74; Nodirbek Soliev, “The Terrorist Threat in Turkey: A Dangerous New Phase,” *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, vol. 9, no. 4 (April 2017), p. 26.

Turkish military incursions into northern Syria. In December 2016, ISIL urged its supporters to conquer Istanbul.³⁹⁸

In the GCC states, ISIL already launched attacks in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 2015 and 2016. It threatens several of the common characteristics that unite GCC members; namely, their investment in the state system, their commitment to monarchical forms of government and their claims to religious and tribal legitimacy.³⁹⁹ It does not believe in the territorial borders between states. It looks to change the status quo governments and replace them with what it called the 'Islamic Caliphate'.⁴⁰⁰

Thus, the GCC states were compelled to confront ISIL as a serious threat.⁴⁰¹ While the territorial conquests of ISIL took place in largely Sunni areas, Saudi Arabia did not send its troops into combat. It did, however, support Syrian factions.⁴⁰² At the Arab League summit in March 2016 in Egypt, Arab regimes, including the GCC states, acknowledged that militant Islamism and jihadi extremism were their greatest and most immediate challenges. They even agreed, in principle, to form a pan-Arab military coalition. The Joint Arab Force was supposed to comprise at least 40,000 troops. But this did not produce real actions.⁴⁰³ Saudi Arabia has managed to assemble a military coalition. It established the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, which includes 41 Muslim countries, excluding Iran, Iraq and Syria.⁴⁰⁴

In fact, Turkey and the GCC states have a common interest in cooperating to counter ISIL's threats. However, their distant geographic locations, their differing security priorities and the differing nature of ISIL operations in the two areas limit their cooperation. To make their cooperation more effective, the two parties needed to increase their coordination through the US-led coalition against ISIL as well as enhanced coordination with Iraq, which is the only land connection between them and where ISIL

³⁹⁸ Soliev, pp. 24-26.

³⁹⁹ Jeffrey Martini et al., *The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), p. 34.

⁴⁰⁰ "Daesh announces the establishment of the 'Islamic State'," [In Arabic: Daesh two'len qiam 'al-dawlah al-Islamiah], *France 24*, June 26, 2014, accessed 9/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VDfFXT>

⁴⁰¹ The Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, Press Release of the Hundred and Thirty-eighth Session of the Ministerial Council, March 9, 2016, at: <https://bit.ly/2I6lzgJ>

⁴⁰² Ryan, pp. 20-22.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁰⁴ Emad Y. Kaddorah, "The Regional Geo-sectarian Contest over the Gulf," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018), p. 30.

emerged and expanded. However, the emergence of the threat from ISIL forced Turkey and the GCC states to review and revise their policies regarding Iraq. Iraq is running a very real risk of complete disintegration due to the danger posed by ISIL.⁴⁰⁵

3.2.4. The Yemen War

The Turkish-GCC agreement in Yemen, after the fall of Sana'a by the Houthis in September 2014,⁴⁰⁶ has raised expectations that a Sunni camp may create an alliance to balance Iran's power. Some GCC states view Turkey as an important ally due to its power, a NATO member and it has a considerable Sunni population.⁴⁰⁷ The Turkish President Erdoğan had previously accused Iran of seeking to dominate the region, declaring his support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen.⁴⁰⁸

The Yemeni uprising began against former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011. After the ouster of Saleh, the government, led by his former Vice President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, tried to offer political stability and counter threats of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Houthi militants who were waging an insurgency for years.⁴⁰⁹ The GCC states presented a political initiative to ensure that Saleh would be replaced with a friendly government.⁴¹⁰ They played the role of convincing Yemenis to reach a political consensus that they hoped would pave the way for political stability in region.⁴¹¹ The deal guaranteed Saleh's immunity from prosecution for any action he committed while in power and allowed him to remain as head of his political party, the General People's Congress.⁴¹² The decision backfired as Saleh mobilized his former military units and allied with the Houthis to challenge the legitimacy of the GCC-backed government. In September 2014,

⁴⁰⁵ Gafarli.

⁴⁰⁶ Houthi movement (officially called *Ansar Allah* - Partisans of God), now led by Abdul Malik al-Houthi, brother of the first leader Hussain al-Houthi, killed by Former President Ali Abdullah Saleh's troops in 2004.

⁴⁰⁷ Kaddorah, "The Regional Geo-sectarian Contest over the Gulf," p. 29.

⁴⁰⁸ "Erdogan: Ankara supports the Saudi Military Operation in Yemen and Iran should Withdraw," *France 24 Arabic*, March 30, 2015, accessed 23/11/2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2DLUFs9>

⁴⁰⁹ Abu Amin, "Crisis in Yemen and Countering Violence," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, vol. 7, no. 7 (August 2015), p. 19.

⁴¹⁰ May Darwich, "The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018), p. 128.

⁴¹¹ Zweiri, pp. 83-84.

⁴¹² Thomas Juneau, "Iran's policy towards the Houthis in Yemen: A limited return on a modest investment," *International Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 3 (2016), p. 653.

the Houthis took military control of the capital Sana'a. This led to the outbreak of violence. At the end of February 2015, Hadi fled Sana'a to Aden and announced it as his temporary capital. On 22 March 2015, the Houthis also captured Aden. Thus, Hadi fled the country and called for external intervention.⁴¹³

On 25 March 2015, Saudi Arabia launched an attack on Yemen under the name Operation Decisive Storm, with the announced aim of restoring the legitimate government of Hadi. Eight Arab states –Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Jordan, Sudan and Morocco– announced their support for the Saudi intervention.⁴¹⁴ Turkey also announced its support.

According to the GCC states (excluding Oman) and Hadi's government, the Houthis are an Iranian proxy.⁴¹⁵ Given the importance of Yemen's domestic political problems to the stability in the Arabian Peninsula, Iran's intervention in Yemen has reflected negatively on Tehran's relations with the GCC states in general, and especially with Saudi Arabia. Iranian activism in Yemen was seen by Saudi Arabia as a "direct threat to its national security."⁴¹⁶ The alliance of Saleh with the Houthis made Saudi Arabia feel further threatened, believing that its regional rival, Iran, had embarked on directing political development in Yemen.⁴¹⁷

In fact, some argue that the conflict is solely about power politics and is not related to the sectarian aspect. Others believe that the conflict in Yemen is sectarian and the Houthi-Iranian alliance aims to extend Shiite influence in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. The latter insists that the Houthis are predominantly Zaydis, an offshoot of Shiism, and they have allied with Iran mainly based on the sectarian bond.⁴¹⁸ The Houthis' grievances were

⁴¹³ Darwich, p. 128.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Juneau, p. 647. Oman's position on the Yemeni crisis is different to that of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. "The policy of Oman is to distance itself from polarization and political alliances that constitute damages to its interests, security and stability, as well as the region... The Saudi-Emirati intervention in Yemen increases its dire consequences for the Yemeni people." Interview with Said al-Tarshi, Researcher at Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, April 11, 2019.

⁴¹⁶ Interview with Hamza Ahmad Amin, a Professor of Mass Communication at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 30, 2019.

⁴¹⁷ Zweiri, 83-84 and 89-90.

⁴¹⁸ Elisabeth Kendall, "Iran's Fingerprints in Yemen Real or Imagined?" *Issue Brief*, Atlantic Council (October 2017), p. 2, accessed 19/12/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2q0rY5z>. Zaydis are markedly different from the 'Twelver' Shiism of Iran who recognizes a line of twelve imams as the rightful successors to the Prophet Muhammad. Zaydis are known as Fivers, or followers of the Fifth Imam. Zaydism is often depicted as the variant of Shiism most similar to Sunni Islam. This was due to their positive position towards the companions of the prophet and the acceptance of the legitimacy of Abu Bakir and Umar in contrast to the

originally primarily local and political. The movement sought to develop Zaydi areas, particularly Sa'ada province in the north, and increase their political participation.⁴¹⁹ Iran considers the Houthis to be the legitimate authority currently within Yemen, as opposed to UN Security Council Resolution 2216.⁴²⁰ President Hassan Rouhani, for example, described the Houthis' take-over of Sana'a as a "brilliant and resounding victory." Iran's deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian described the Houthis as having "taken major steps to restore domestic peace and stability."⁴²¹

However, some consider that the crisis is not motivated by religion. Yemen is not a naturally sectarian country and the two main sides in today's war do not divide neatly along sectarian lines. Not all Zaydis support the Houthis, and the Houthi forces also include some Sunni fighters aligned with former President Saleh.⁴²² In addition, during the six rounds of fighting between 2004 and 2010, some Zaydi tribal militias fought alongside the government against the Houthis, while many government officials and troops are Zaydi.⁴²³

For Turkey, the Yemeni crisis has clearly shown its strategic importance to the GCC, particularly when it announced that it supported the Saudi-led Operation Decisive Storm. The Turkish Foreign Ministry stated, on 25 March 2015, "Turkey supports the military operations against the Houthis led by Saudi Arabia in cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council, based on the request of legitimately elected Yemeni President Hadi." It added, "the military intervention would contribute to the reclamation of legitimate state authority and prevent chaos and civil war."⁴²⁴ Furthermore, Erdoğan stated that Turkey was ready to provide logistical and intelligence support to the coalition forces. He had emphasized, "Iran is in efforts to dominate the region. Can it be tolerated?"

more intransigent and hostile attitude of the Twelvers. See: Najam Haider, *The Origins of the Shī'a: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 103.

⁴¹⁹ Juneau, p. 651.

⁴²⁰ Kendall, pp. 2-4.

⁴²¹ Juneau, p. 658.

⁴²² Kendall, pp. 2-4.

⁴²³ Juneau, pp. 659-660.

⁴²⁴ Nurbanu Kizil, "Turkey supports Saudi Arabia's military operation in Yemen," *Daily Sabah*, March 26, 2015, accessed 30/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2DhK3Pg>

This has started to annoy many countries in the region, including us, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. It's impossible to tolerate this. Iran must see this."⁴²⁵

One may infer that Turkey had supported the Saudi-led Operation in Yemen for many reasons. First, it was an effort to reconcile with Saudi Arabia and other GCC states after their divergences over some Arab Spring uprisings, especially in Egypt and Libya. This goal was achieved through the Saudi-Turkish summits in 2015 and 2016. Secondly, Ankara sought to deter Iran's influence through supporting the Saudi-led military coalition. Thirdly, the economic goal was important to the Turkish government. Ankara was hoping that its support for this operation would contribute to great economic and investment agreements with the GCC states.

However, the Turkish role in the Yemeni crisis remained ineffective due to several reasons. First, the geographical distance from the conflict zone. Secondly, the absence of a direct threat to Turkey. Thirdly, the tacit balance of power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Both want to expand their influence in the region. Turkey is looking forward to playing an active role in leading the Muslim world, which it did during the Ottoman Empire. According to Hamza Ahmad Amin, a Professor of Mass Communication at King Saud University in Riyadh, "Turkey has ambitions in the Gulf region, especially Saudi Arabia, for its claim to restore the Islamic caliphate and regain control of the Islamic holy sites of Mecca and Medina."⁴²⁶ In leading operation in Yemen, "Saudi Arabia clearly moved into the spotlight as a leader of the Sunni Arab world willing to back rhetoric with action in countering Iran."⁴²⁷ Fourthly, Ankara recognizes that Saudi Arabia does not wish to see Turkey's future influence in its southern borders through effective Turkish military participation in this Operation. That is why Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu stated, "There is no request for Turkey's military participation so far."⁴²⁸ Finally, the developed Turkish-Iranian relationship.

⁴²⁵ Serkan Demirtas, "Does Turkey regret supporting Saudi Arabia in Yemen war?" *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 3 2018, accessed 30/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2RvgtvF>

⁴²⁶ Interview with Hamza Ahmad Amin.

⁴²⁷ "Turkey, Saudi Arabia strive for Sunni leadership," *EU News & Policy Debates*, March 31, 2015, accessed 30/1/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/1GGlt8t>

⁴²⁸ "Turkey looks for 'political solution' in Yemen," *Turkish Weekly*, April 3, 2015, accessed 15/6/2015, at: <http://bit.ly/1H5ZF1f>; Andrius Sytas, "Turkey offers support to Saudi-led operation in Yemen," *Al Arabiya*, April 3, 2015, accessed 29/10/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/36bKAQy>

Despite Turkey's desire to counter Iran's influence, they share long borders and engage in massive economic cooperation.

Recently, Turkey's policy in Yemen has shifted since the conflict turned into a prolonged war that resulted in a humanitarian crisis. Turkey's position has transformed from supporting the military action to calling for a peaceful solution and humanitarian relief. Despite this shift, Ankara maintains its agreement with the GCC states over the legitimacy of President Hadi and the importance of the GCC Initiative⁴²⁹ to solve the problem. The Turkish Foreign Ministry stated:

Turkey has supported the resolution of the problems through peace and dialogue and on the basis of respect for legitimacy. Turkey has been supporting political settlement on the basis of the established parameters, namely the UN Security Council Resolution No. 2216, outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and the GCC Initiative.⁴³⁰

In December 2018, Erdoğan approached the Yemeni war from a different view by insisting on political solution. "An inclusive political solution seems to be the only way to achieve lasting peace and stability. We are supporting efforts within the scope of the UN to stimulate the negotiation process,"⁴³¹ Erdoğan said.

Currently, Turkey focuses on its contribution to the development and emergency assistance to Yemen.⁴³² However, it still insists on the geopolitical importance of Yemen to Turkey. An article published on an official *TRT* website had argued:

Turkey launched a backdoor diplomatic effort. After being discussed with Riyadh, Ankara tried to convince Iran to support a deal, which included asking Houthis to

⁴²⁹ The GCC Initiative to solve the political crisis in Yemen was formally announced in April 10, 2011. It stated, "The President of the Republic [Saleh] shall announce the transfer of his powers to the Vice President [Hadi]... Forming a government of national unity headed by the opposition to conduct political, security and economic affairs, and to establish a constitution and conduct elections." This is in exchange of immunity for Saleh and his family from prosecution, "All parties undertake to cease all forms of retaliation, follow-up and prosecution through guarantees and undertakings given for this purpose," the Initiative stated. See: The Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, The press release issued by the 32nd Special Session of the Ministerial Council, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, April 10, 2011, at: <https://bit.ly/2liINAw>

⁴³⁰ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Bilateral Political Relations between Turkey and Yemen," accessed 30/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2lMnoWc>

⁴³¹ Demirtas.

⁴³² Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Bilateral Political Relations between Turkey and Yemen."

withdraw from the capital to Saada in northwestern Yemen, allowing the humanitarian aid to freely enter Yemen, and forming a national unity government. However, Iran's rejection thwarted any such progress.⁴³³

On the other hand, the article insisted on Turkey's long-run geopolitical perspective, and argued:

Based on Ankara's geostrategic interests in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb coupled with historical connections rooted in the Ottoman era that bond Turks and Yemenis, Turkey has high stakes in the future outcome of Yemen's political environment and the unfolding humanitarian disaster.⁴³⁴

Yeni Safaq, a Turkish pro-government newspaper, discussed Yemen's crisis in terms of a disaster that was caused by both Saudi Arabia and Iran. It viewed that a balanced Turkish position could help to find a solution. It stated:

The war actually has two actors: the first one is Saudi Arabia and the other is Iran. These two states are continuing to fight by using their local allies against each other. As a result, there is a great humanitarian disaster in Yemen... The human-centered policy of Turkey since the beginnings of the crisis can contribute to the resolution of this crisis and end this civil war. Actually, it doesn't seem possible that any state other than Turkey could assume this intermediary role.⁴³⁵

Indeed, the Turkish shift cannot be explained only by the protracted period of conflict or the turn of the Yemeni crisis into a humanitarian disaster, but also by the growing dispute between Turkey and some GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, on many issues in the region, which has increased remarkably since the Gulf crisis in June 2017.

In conclusion, Turkey and the GCC states have achieved a large degree of divergence in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and against the ISIL to balance the Iranian power and counter the emerging threats of such major regional issues. However, intra-rivalry among those actors

⁴³³ Ali Bakeer & Giorgio Cafiero, "Turkey's influence in Yemen," *TRT World*, May 1, 2018, accessed 30/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2GvnEBc>

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁵ Ibrahim Tegli, "Turkey needs to hurry for Yemen," *Yeni Safaq*, 28/11/2018, accessed 30/1/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Q7itNf>

has also emerged in the region. The following chapter will deeply analyze the factors for this competition.



CHAPTER 4: TURKEY AND THE GCC STATES: DIVERGENT AGENDAS

Although cooperation between Turkey and the GCC states has prevailed for more than a decade, divergence has clearly emerged mainly between Turkey and Qatar from one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the other. The clash of perceptions and interests has increased towards a number of significant regional issues.

This chapter consists of five sections, each of which discuss a fundamental issue that affects the relations of those former partners. First, it examines the opposing perceptions on the Arab Spring uprisings and whether they are threats or opportunities. Secondly, it discusses, in detail, the evident cases of such division, namely Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and Libya. Thirdly, it analyzes the Gulf crisis' implications since June 2017 on the GCC's unity as well as on the re-alignment of those regional actors, particularly after Qatar feared invasion by some GCC states. Fourthly, it shows how the competition between the two opposing parties extends to the Horn of Africa for establishing military bases. It also discusses the implications of Turkey's military base in Qatar on the relations with other GCC states. Finally, it traces the recent developments of the relations with Iran and how Turkey and Qatar have become closer to it, while Iran's rift with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain has intensified. As a result, it discusses how the latter becomes reluctant to attract Turkey to balance Iran.

4.1. Turkey and the GCC States after the Arab Spring: Emergence of Regional Contenders

Although some Arab Spring uprisings produced cooperation among the GCC states and Turkey, as detailed in chapter three, this convergence faded quickly, and competition intensified in almost every arena.⁴³⁶ This section shows how the opposing perceptions on the Arab Spring uprisings have emerged among these actors. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the one hand, perceive the uprisings as full of threats to their interests and their own regimes. On the other hand, Turkey and Qatar believe that the uprisings are

⁴³⁶ Marc Lynch, "How Trump's alignment with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is inflaming the Middle East," *The Washington Post*, June 7, 2017, accessed 18/1/2019, at: <https://wapo.st/2GHBIZx>

opportunities, which reflect people's aspirations to get rid of oppression, increase political participation and promote democracy in the region. This emerging regional dynamic, in turn, may also bring their allies into power.

4.1.1. Saudi Arabia and the UAE

The GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and to some extent Kuwait felt that the Arab Spring uprisings posed a greater threat than the Arab Nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, which swept away monarchies in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Whereas Arab Nationalism was conveyed as a regional threat emanating from Arab republics, demands for constitutionalism and political participation came from the GCC monarchies' own societies.⁴³⁷ Therefore, the foreign policies of these status quo powers are primarily focus on ensuring state survival and continuity in the region's larger geopolitical setup.⁴³⁸

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have mainly been playing the leading regional role in countering such a threat. Saudi Arabia viewed the Arab Spring as a challenge. Its position was divided into two differing actions in general. Qutob Saleh, Consultant at Transworld Publicity Company at Riyadh, argued that Saudi Arabia has been hostile to these uprisings and even sought countering them. This is evident in Egypt and Yemen. On the other hand, he argued, Riyadh supported some uprisings. This is quite clear in Syria, where it sought to a regime change, but without allowing the political Islam movements (the Muslim Brotherhood) access to power.⁴³⁹ Saudi Arabia's threat perception was boosted further with the accession of some Islamic movements to power in Egypt and Tunisia. This increased the fears of the potential of rebuilding a regional order by such countries along with Turkey and Qatar. The Saudi leadership worries that the pro-democracy contagion riding on the Muslim Brotherhood could also spread into its own country.⁴⁴⁰ The uprisings

⁴³⁷ Sean Yom, "Collaboration and community amongst the Arab monarchies," in *The Qatar Crisis*, The Project on Middle East Political Science, POMEPS Briefings, no. 31 (October 2017), p. 28.

⁴³⁸ Kristina Kausch, "Introduction," in Kristina Kausch (Ed.), *Geopolitics and Democracy in the Middle East* (Madrid: Fride, 2015), pp. 13-14.

⁴³⁹ Interview with Dr. Qutob Saleh, Consultant at Transworld Publicity Company, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 30, 2019.

⁴⁴⁰ Atul Aneja, "Saudi Arabia-Iran Cold War after the Arab Spring: Implications for Gulf-India Ties," in Ranjit Gupta et al. (Ed.), *India and the Gulf: What Next?* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2013), pp. 93-94.

and instability around the Kingdom contributes to Saudi worries of spill-over, particularly taking into account Shiite minority population in its Eastern Province,⁴⁴¹ which is rich in oil reserves. That is why Abdul Latif al-Sheikh, Saudi Minister of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance, described these uprisings as “toxic and deadly to the Arabs and Muslims. They are destructive to the countries.”⁴⁴² The threat perception did not change with the uprisings, only the urgency with which the Kingdom pursued its foreign policy changed. As a result, Riyadh has sought a more active foreign policy,⁴⁴³ which led to a shift from a traditionally cautious and conciliatory policy that avoided open confrontation towards an affirmation of its interests by containing threats to the political status quo and the actual use of force such as in Bahrain and Yemen.⁴⁴⁴

The UAE views that the uprisings against Arab governments resulted in reinforcing extremist ideologies embracing political Islamic thought, liberal political ideas and sectarianism.⁴⁴⁵ The UAE worries about the spreading of liberal thought, which was revived through Arab uprisings, particularly in Egypt. Mohammad Binhuwaidin, Professor of political science at the UAEU, argued, “The adoption of revolutionary liberal ideologies by a leading Arab country will certainly threaten the conservative thought... The quest of liberalism toward absolute individual freedom is a direct threat to the power structures in the GCC states.”⁴⁴⁶ The UAE observes that Turkey and Qatar are the biggest supporters of political change in the region and they prefer the Muslim Brotherhood to be in power. This has led to “a kind of a cold war,” according to Yusuf Serif, news presenter at *Sky News Arabia* in Abu Dhabi. “After the Arab Spring, there was a strong divergence between Turkey from one hand, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the other. The relations between the two parties have turned into striking the interests of the other party,” he added.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴¹ Ana Echagüe, “Saudi Arabia: Emboldened yet vulnerable,” in Kristina Kausch (Ed.), pp. 81.

⁴⁴² “Al-Sheikh: ‘Revolutions of the Arab Spring’ are deadly poison to Arabs and Muslims,” [In Arabic: Al-Sheikh: ‘thwurat alrbye al-Arbi’ saamma muhlikah lil-Arab wal Muslimin], *Al-Hayat*, January 12, 2019, accessed 14/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2HiLLU3>

⁴⁴³ Linda Berger, “The Gulf Cooperation Council between Unity and Discord towards the Arab Uprisings,” *Security and Peace*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2014), p. 261.

⁴⁴⁴ Echagüe, pp. 77, 81.

⁴⁴⁵ Mohamed M. Binhuwaidin, “Essential Threats to the Security of the GCC Countries in the Post Arab Spring Era,” *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2015), p. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 12-13.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Yusuf Serif, News presenter at *Sky News Arabia* and a specialist in Turkish Affairs, Abu

Democracy and freedom slogans of the uprisings found an echo in the GCC states.⁴⁴⁸ In the UAE, the reform demand was in the form of a message signed by 133 national figures addressed to the President of the UAE calling for expanding the powers of the Federal National Council. What troubled the UAE government in this message, according to Abdel-Khalek Abdullah, Professor of political science at the UAEU, was that it bore the seeds of a political alliance between Islamists and liberals. He added:

The UAE believed that the Islamic figures had an opportunistic plan to exploit the change environment in the region by mobilizing the Emirati street, escalating the social movement, especially in remote areas, to tamper with stability and perhaps overthrow the government in cooperation with liberal figures.⁴⁴⁹

Abdullah had cited what Yusuf Khalifa al-Yusuf, a former Professor of education at the UAEU and a prominent figure of political Islam in the UAE, had already written, “The file of democratic reform is strongly presented in the GCC states and cannot be ignored. They cannot be acted upon as an exception to the Arab situation or that they are not concerned with the demands of correct reform.”⁴⁵⁰ Abdullah concluded, “This was not acceptable to the UAE in light of the heightened security sense of the danger of the Islamic movements in the region.”⁴⁵¹

This threat perception of the Arab uprisings pushed Saudi Arabia and the UAE to work together in leading the counter-revolutions to stop the revolutionary wave in the region as well as to alter the regional balance of power, which had begun, in the early days of the revolutions, to lean in favor of Turkey and Qatar.

Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, April 10, 2019.

⁴⁴⁸ Binhuwaidin, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁴⁹ Abdel-Khalek Abdullah, “The ramifications of the Arab Spring on the GCC countries,” [In Arabic: Enekasat al-Rabi al-Arabi ala Duwal Majlis al-Taawon al-Khaleji], *Research Paper*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (April 2012), p. 31, accessed 15/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2IuvL37>

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31, cited in Yusuf Khalifa al-Yusuf, “Gulf governments between reform and departure,” [In Arabic: al-hukumat al-Khalijia bayn al-islam wa-arahil], *Darussalam*, April 17, 2011, at: <http://www.darussalam.ae/content.asp?contentid=1816>

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

4.1.2. Turkey and Qatar

Turkey and Qatar's positions have converged towards the Arab Spring uprisings and in some cases; they stand at odds with Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Turkey had clearly supported the Arab Spring uprisings and people's demands for reforms and political change. This position was reflected through the joint statement of the Arab-Turkish Cooperation Forum in November 2011, which showed both Ankara's views as well as its increasing influence in promoting these views to be adopted by the Arab states. The statement emphasized, "the legitimate aspirations and demands of the Arab peoples for freedom, reform, development and social justice... in all Arab States."⁴⁵² In 2012, Davutoğlu had also stressed that "the course of the popular movements will be determined by the peoples of the region. In other words, the people will set the pace and the scope of the change in the Middle East."⁴⁵³ Additionally, the AKP made clear its position on the Arab Spring revolutions and stated, "Change in our region is inevitable. No regime that oppresses and kills its own people and excludes the vast majority of the people from political participation can have a chance to survive."⁴⁵⁴

Some analysts argued that Turkey has viewed the new context of revolutionization and democratization due to Arab uprisings as an area that provides the opportunity of increasing its popularity and effectiveness.⁴⁵⁵ In this regard, Davutoğlu endorsed that these uprisings are compatible with Turkish interests and indicated, "If ongoing popular movements succeed in the establishment of democratic systems, this will certainly serve the interests of Turkey. Turkey will spare no effort in supporting the processes of change and transformation in the region." He emphasized that Turkey had adopted a principled stance to support the reforms and to pursue them through peaceful transition.⁴⁵⁶

Some argued that the AKP government's foreign policy was not based on the notion of democracy promotion. Rather it was based on respecting the independence of nation

⁴⁵² Joint Statement issued at the Conclusion of the Fourth Meeting of the Arab-Turkish Cooperation Forum at the Level of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, November 16, 2011, accessed 14/3/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/30oPVB1>

⁴⁵³ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Interview by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu on 12 March 2012," accessed 14/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2LJs5g0>

⁴⁵⁴ "The AKP Political Vision 2023," p. 64.

⁴⁵⁵ Hasan Basri Yalçın, "The Concept of 'Middle Power' and the Recent Turkish Foreign Policy Activism," *Afro Eurasian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2012), p. 208.

⁴⁵⁶ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Interview by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu."

states and the principle of non-intervention in the domestic politics of states.⁴⁵⁷ Before the Arab Spring, “Turkey was getting along with the authoritarian regimes of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria.” Therefore, the Arab Spring gave “a unique opportunity to Turkey in promoting democratic regimes.”⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, Ankara’s image and its interests in the region have witnessed some setbacks due to the failure of many Arab uprisings, as the cases in the following section will explain.

On its part, Qatar viewed the Arab Spring as “an opportunity to be seized rather than a challenge to be feared.”⁴⁵⁹ According to Mehran Kamrava, Professor at School of Foreign Service in Qatar Georgetown University, “Qatar saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity to expand its strategic influence in the Levant and in North Africa.”⁴⁶⁰ In an effort to come out from Saudi Arabia’s shadow, support for the Arab revolutions and their accompanying new generation of leaders would give vast credit to Qatar.⁴⁶¹ Doha supported the uprisings through its media and financial resources and even by military power in some cases.⁴⁶² Such an approach has created fierce tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain while it becomes closer to Turkey.

4.2. Turkey and the GCC: Cases of divergence over Arab Spring uprisings

Because of the opposing perceptions and policies on the Arab Spring uprisings, the rival actors, mainly Turkey and Qatar versus Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, have been contesting regionally in order to support their local allies, promote their policies and maintain their interests. The most obvious cases for such competition are apparent in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and Libya.

⁴⁵⁷ Ziya Onis, “Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self-Interest,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2012), p. 46.

⁴⁵⁸ Fahrettin Sümer, “Turkey’s Changing Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring,” *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2013), p. 20.

⁴⁵⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “Qatar and the Arab Spring: Policy Drivers and Regional Implications,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (September 2014), p. 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Mehran Kamrava, Director, Center for International and Regional Studies and Professor at School of Foreign Service in Qatar Georgetown University, Doha, Qatar, July 15, 2019.

⁴⁶¹ Ana Echagüe, “Qatar: the opportunist,” in Kristina Kausch (Ed.), pp. 63, 68.

⁴⁶² Khaled Hroub, “Qatar and the Arab Spring,” in Joachim Paul, Bente Scheller & Rene Wildangel (Ed.), *Qatar: Aspirations and Realities* (Beirut: Heinrich Böll Stiftung-Middle East, 2012), p. 36-37.

4.2.1. Egypt

Egypt is one of the most influential regional countries in the modern era. Since its renaissance by Mohammed Ali Pasha 1805-1849, Egypt has played a pivotal role in the regional alliances. After being used by the Ottomans to end the first Saudi state in 1811-1818, Egypt invaded the Ottoman Empire itself in 1833 and briefly controlled territories from Cairo to Kutahya, at the heart of Anatolia.⁴⁶³ The weakness of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, in the second half of the 19th century, led the colonial Great Britain to control Egypt because of its symbolic status and geopolitical significance that could facilitate controlling other territories. During the Nasserite period in the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt played a leading role in the Arab world. Reinforced by Arab nationalism, as aforementioned, Egypt of the time posed an essential threat to Arab monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Despite historical divergence, the Egyptian-GCC convergence was caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The Arab Summit in Cairo on 10 August condemned the Iraqi attack and agreed to dispatch Arab forces to defend the GCC states against "any Arab aggression." Consequently, Egypt's participation in the anti-Iraqi coalition was compensated by writing off \$7 billion of its external debt by the GCC states.⁴⁶⁴ After the war in 1991, the GCC, Egypt and Syria produced a coalition for Gulf security. They signed the Damascus Declaration in March. As originally conceived, Egypt and Syria would provide military weight to the GCC states in return for economic aid.⁴⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Egyptian-Saudi alliance lasted for two decades until President Hosni Mubarak's fall in 2011. This alliance was based on containing the Iranian threat and the potential Shiite dissidents in some GCC states.⁴⁶⁶

Egypt's revolution in 2011 and the fall of Mubarak raised hopes of Cairo's return to regional prominence after two decades of being influenced by Saudi Arabia's agenda. Due to its geostrategic location, large population and traditional regional role, Egyptian

⁴⁶³ Vladimir Borisovich Lutsky, *Modern History of the Arab Countries* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), pp. 105-107.

⁴⁶⁴ Elie Podeh, "Saudi-Egyptian Relations in Historical Perspective: The Foundations of a Solid Entente," in Robert Mason (Ed.), *A Renewed Regional Policy Alliance* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2017), p. 48.

⁴⁶⁵ "The GCC: Alliance Politics," *Whitehall Papers*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1993), p. 35.

⁴⁶⁶ Podeh, pp. 48-49.

revolutionaries have sought to restore Egypt's lost regional position.⁴⁶⁷ However, domestic divergence in Egypt, the deterioration of economic situations and the regional rivalry, as mentioned below, all contributed to the rapid dissolution of such hopes and instead increased Cairo's dependence on the GCC's economic aid.

Regional rivalry on Egypt has increased because of the fact that any alliance with such a significant country is crucial in the regional balance of power. Turkey and Qatar supported the Egyptian revolution and the inauguration of the first freely elected civil president, Mohammad Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, in June 2012. Saudi Arabia and the UAE considered this substantial change as a challenge to the GCC monarchies. They supported Defense Minister General Abdel Fattah Sisi, who ousted Morsi in July 2013, branded the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization and asked other countries to do so.⁴⁶⁸

Foreign aid has been used as a substantial means of competition to attract Egypt and to form an alliance with it. Foreign aid attracts allies. Stephen Walt argued that "states select alliance partners to obtain side payments of material assistance."⁴⁶⁹ Egypt's economy was on the brink of collapse since 2011. Financial assistance from the GCC states have prevented the collapse.⁴⁷⁰

In January 2013, Qatar announced economic support for Egypt, bringing Qatari assistance to the country to \$1 billion in grants and \$4 billion in Central Bank deposits. It provided \$3 billion more through the acquisition of bonds and a favorable gas provision deal to help with power shortages in the summer,⁴⁷¹ in addition to a five-year \$18 billion investment package.⁴⁷²

Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE and Kuwait, also reacted to the overthrow of Morsi in July 3, 2013. On 9 July, they pledged a total of \$12 billion in aid to Egypt.⁴⁷³ During the

⁴⁶⁷ Kristina Kausch, "Egypt: Inside-out," in Kristina Kausch (Ed.), p. 11.

⁴⁶⁸ Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt & Maggie Haberman, "Trump Pushes to Designate Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2019, accessed 25/5/2019, at: <https://nyti.ms/2ZLUqW8>

⁴⁶⁹ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990 [1987]), pp. 218, 261.

⁴⁷⁰ Kausch, "Egypt: inside-out," pp. 22-23, 31.

⁴⁷¹ Echagüe, "Qatar: the opportunist," p. 69.

⁴⁷² Podeh, p. 52.

⁴⁷³ Ruth Hanau Santini, "Bankrolling containment: Saudi linkages with Egypt and Tunisia," workshop "Transnational Diffusion, Cooperation and Learning in the Middle East and North Africa," held June 8-9,

Egypt Economic Development Conference at Sharm El-Sheikh in March 2015, these states provided economic support for Egypt that reached \$12 billion, including deposits in the Egyptian Central Bank to support the monetary reserve, projects, investments and oil grants.⁴⁷⁴ The total volume of pledges by them during July 2013-May 2016 amounted to \$60 billion.⁴⁷⁵

In addition to being affiliated with the political Islam movement, some GCC states supported the overthrow of Morsi because of his new foreign policy. His visit to Tehran in August 2012 and the Iranian then President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to Egypt in February 2013, were severely criticized. Also, Morsi's indication of a desire to help the Syrian opposition had raised fears of some GCC states over Egypt's future role in the region.⁴⁷⁶ More than a symbolic act, Saudi Arabia closed its embassy in Cairo in April 2012, in response to Egyptian demonstrations in front of the embassy protesting the detention of an Egyptian lawyer in Saudi Arabia. However, in September 2014, it was inaugurated in Cairo and became what is considered to be the largest Saudi embassy in the world. The opening of the new embassy was a true manifestation of the recovered warmth in Egyptian-Saudi relations, triggered by Morsi's removal from power and Sisi's election as President in June 2014.⁴⁷⁷

Saudi Arabia has seized the opportunity of its warm relations with Sisi to strengthen relations with Egypt and to weaken any opportunities for Turkey and Qatar there. It signed the Cairo Declaration on 30 July 2015, which represented a major step that renewed the alliance between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The Declaration includes different facets of cooperation including development of the military cooperation to establish a Joint Arab Force, enhancing investments in different fields well as defining the maritime borders between the two countries.⁴⁷⁸ It formed the basis for King Salman's visit to Cairo in April

2016, at Middle East Studies at the George Washington University, the Project on Middle East Political Science, accessed 12/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/30fhFrZ>

⁴⁷⁴ Ashraf Keshk, "The Development of Egypt-GCC State Relations and its Impact on Gulf and Regional Security," in Robert Mason, *Egypt and the Gulf: A Renewed Regional Policy Alliance* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2017), p. 127

⁴⁷⁵ Santini.

⁴⁷⁶ Adel El-Adewy, "Egypt's Evolving Foreign Policy," The Washington Institute for the Near East, *Policy Watch*, no. 2160, October 17, 2013, accessed 10/2/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/SNNt2R>

⁴⁷⁷ Podeh, p. 44.

⁴⁷⁸ "Egypt, Saudi Arabia issue 'Cairo Declaration' to strengthen cooperation," *Ahram Online*, July 30, 2015, accessed 10/2/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/1r6yrqc>

2016. During this visit, the two parties agreed to establish a \$16-billion investment fund, settle a long-standing maritime dispute by demarcating borders, annex two islands (Tiran and Sanafir at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba) to Saudi Arabia and plan to build a bridge over the Red Sea to Egypt.⁴⁷⁹ Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, expressed the importance of Egypt to Saudi Arabia, and said, “Egypt represents one of the main and effective forces to achieve security and stability in the Middle East region.”⁴⁸⁰

Turkey views Egypt as a country of strategic importance. Both are the region’s largest Muslim-majority powers, have historical roles and strategic significance.⁴⁸¹ Turkey viewed that Egypt’s transition into democracy is an opportunity.⁴⁸² It also viewed that the democratic transition in Egypt will lead the wider region toward more democratic structures. And they will also have to shoulder the burden of managing the conflicts.⁴⁸³ In addition, some argued, “an economically powerful and democratic partner in the Middle East would fit Turkey’s foreign policy priorities, which promote regional economic and political integration as well as freedom of movement.”⁴⁸⁴

One may infer that this has raised concerns in some GCC states. The possibility of an alliance between Turkey and Egypt with considerable material capabilities and a political ideology, mainly stemming from political Islam, would alter the balance of regional power in their favor and might attract other countries to the alliance if not the Islamic movements from the GCC states themselves.

Turkey also pledged to help Egypt economically during Morsi’s period. In September 2012, the former Egyptian Finance Minister, Mumtaz al-Said, announced that it had been agreed with Turkey to provide Egypt with a \$2 billion aid package to support Egypt’s

⁴⁷⁹ “Saudi Arabia and Egypt Forge Closer Ties,” Middle East Policy Council, April 12, 2016, accessed 14/3/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/1NJZguS>; Ibrahim Al-Hatalni, “Why Egyptians’ anger at island handover is misplaced,” *Al-Monitor*, April 21, 2016, accessed 14/3/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/24sp9no>; Rami Galal, “Red Sea bridge project resurfaces,” *Al-Monitor*, April 19, 2016, accessed 14/3/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/24dc8RO>

⁴⁸⁰ Abdul Ruff, “New Emerging Saudi-Egypt relations,” *Modern Diplomacy*, April 20, 2016, accessed 18/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2WDHJL5>

⁴⁸¹ Soner Gagapatay & Marc Sievers, “Turkey and Egypt’s Great Game in the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs* (March 2015), accessed 18/2/2019, at: <http://fam.ag/1PCFCMA>

⁴⁸² Nuh Yilmaz & Kadir Ustun, “The Erdoğan Effect: Turkey, Egypt and the Future of the Middle East” *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, no. 3 (Fall 2011), p. 92.

⁴⁸³ Gagapatay & Sievers.

⁴⁸⁴ Yilmaz & Ustun, p. 92.

foreign exchange reserves and finance infrastructure projects to help boost the Egyptian economy and help restore stability.⁴⁸⁵

The ousting of Morsi provoked strong reactions from Turkey. Ankara severely criticized Sisi's new regime. Erdoğan stated that his government "does not accept the [Sisi] regime that has undertaken a military coup." He has also called Sisi an "illegitimate tyrant."⁴⁸⁶ Turkey welcomed members of the Muslim Brotherhood and gave them a media platform from which they sought to delegitimize Sisi and his government.⁴⁸⁷

Egypt has retaliated. In November 2013, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry told Turkey's ambassador to Cairo, Huseyin Avni Botsali, to leave the country. Sisi also challenged Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. In November 2014, he held a summit with the Cypriot and Greek presidents to promote a deal to supply natural gas from undersea fields off the coast of Cyprus to Egypt.⁴⁸⁸ The Cairo declaration, signed by these three countries, launched regional cooperation that might result in their agreement on Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and an energy alliance including Israel.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, Egypt has worked to weaken Turkish trade relations with the GCC states by canceling the Maritime Line Agreement in April 2015. This agreement was signed between Turkey and Egypt under President Morsi, whereby Egypt exempts Turkey from the transit fees of its goods to the GCC states through the Suez Canal.⁴⁹⁰

It seems that Morsi's ouster put an end to Turkey's hopes of relying on Egypt to promote Turkish interests and experience. Furthermore, Egypt under Sisi turned into a barrier to Ankara's ambitions in the region and a factor of divergence with important GCC states.

⁴⁸⁵ Maryam Abdul Ghani, "Foreign aid to Egypt between 25 January and 30 June: Economy in the service of politics," [al-musaeadat al-kharijia li Misr ma bayn 25 yanayir wa 30 yuniw: Al-iqtisad fi khidmat al-siyasa], *Aswat Misriya*, January 23, 2014, accessed 25/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2JEjYQh>

⁴⁸⁶ Gagapatay & Sievers.

⁴⁸⁷ Steven A. Cook and Hussein Ibish, "Turkey and the GCC: Cooperation Amid Diverging Interests," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, AGSIW Gulf Rising Series, no. 1 (2017), p. 5, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Ekcuaap>

⁴⁸⁸ Gagapatay & Sievers.

⁴⁸⁹ Pinar Elman, "Turkey's policy towards Egypt and its deepening isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Bulletin*, no. 25 (757), March 3, 2015, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2OW9Dmj>

⁴⁹⁰ "Cancellation of the 'Roro' agreement with Turkey for security reasons," [In Arabic: Eilgha' Etifaqia 'alroro' mae Turkia li Etibarata Amnia], *Misr Al-Arabiya*, October 26, 2014, accessed 15/5/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1nZcYhk>

4.2.2. The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood movement has become a key factor of division between the new regional rivalries since the overthrow of its member, President Morsi, in Egypt, in July 2013. This topic examines how Turkey and the GCC states have split regionally over the movement between a view that recognizes it as a moderate political Islam and social group that could participate in the democratic process, and the other who considers it a threat.

The Muslim Brotherhood movement, founded in 1928, by Hasan al-Banna, believed that the social and political regeneration of Egypt was intimately tied to the restoration of Islam as a guiding force in national life.⁴⁹¹ Al-Banna emphasized that Islam and politics cannot be separated. “Whoever believes that religion - or, more accurately, Islam - is not exposed to politics, or that politics is not one of its subjects, has wronged himself... and our first mistake is that we forgot this principle,” he argued.⁴⁹² He also believed that the parliamentary system could be the basis of the rule because it respects the will of the people. He stated, “The parliamentary system is based on the responsibility of the ruler, the authority of the nation and respect for its will. There is no objection to this.”⁴⁹³ Over the last few decades, the movement attracted popular support throughout the region, formed political parties and become influential opposition or participant in some Arab governments.

For some GCC states, the Brotherhood and their affiliates are seen as a genuine threat to the regimes, especially since rise to power through elections in Tunisia and Egypt.⁴⁹⁴ Courtney Freer, a research officer at the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics, argued, “the reason for such a focus on the Brotherhood lies beyond regional politics alone; rather, the persistent presence of Muslim Brotherhood movements inside the GCC states led their governments to articulate different policies toward such

⁴⁹¹ William L. Cleveland & Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), p. 185.

⁴⁹² *Collection of the Messages of Hasan al-Banna*, [In Arabic: Majmou’at al-Rasayil], Introduced by Mohammad Badie’ (Cairo: El-Twzea Publishing House, 2011), p. 315.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁴⁹⁴ Alexey Khlebnikov, “The New Ideological Threat to the GCC: Implications for the Qatari-Saudi Rivalry,” *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 17, no. 4 (January 2015), p. 20

groups.”⁴⁹⁵ Because Turkey and Qatar have welcomed the engagement of the movement in democratic processes in the region, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and then Egypt see those two countries as the allies of their domestic enemies.⁴⁹⁶

Turkey’s ruling party, the AKP, has its roots in the political Islam. Despite the fact that it abandoned the role of religion in politics stated, “AK Party rejects all exploitation of sacred religious values,”⁴⁹⁷ it seems that the promotion of democracy serves both Turkey and political Islam parties since it allows the opposition, even if it has Islamic roots, to reach power.⁴⁹⁸

Therefore, the success of Morsi in the June 2012 presidential election was viewed as an opportunity to increase Turkish activity and to transform the AKP’s model into reality in the region. According to Gökhan Bozbaş, Researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM) in Ankara, “Turkey’s active policy in the region did not constitute a major problem during the Morsi and Erdoğan period with similar ideologies. But after Morsi’s removal, Turkey has been perceived as a serious threat to the new political elite in Egypt. This situation has led to a re-away between Egypt-Turkey relations.”⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, the accession of Morsi to power was also an opportunity to the AKP government because of the significance of Egypt in the Arab world and in the regional balance of power. This made some GCC states uncomfortable with the AKP government’s policy in the region. Bozbaş argued:

The rise of pro-democratic Islamic ideology in the region became a big challenge for the GCC countries. In the rise of this ideology, the AKP experience has been a serious source of motivation for the regional actors after the Arab Spring. This ideology poses an ontological threat to the regimes in the GCC countries.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ Courtney Freer, “From Co-optation to Crackdown: Gulf States’ reactions to the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring,” in *The Qatar Crisis*, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁹⁶ F. Gregory Gause III, “What the Qatar crisis shows about the Middle East,” in *The Qatar Crisis*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁹⁷ “The AKP Political Vision 2023,” p. 23.

⁴⁹⁸ Emad Y. Kaddorah, “The Turkish Model: Acceptability and Apprehension,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2010), p. 119.

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with Gökhan Bozbaş, Researcher at Center for Middle Eastern Studies (ORSAM) in Ankara and Professor of sociology at Necemttin Erbakan University in Konya, Turkey, May 22, 2019.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

Qatar also has good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood. Close ties began to develop when Muslim Brotherhood members fled persecution in Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s and in Syria in 1982; of which many went to Qatar.⁵⁰¹ Doha has allowed the Egyptian Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi to spread his worldview in Qatar and abroad.⁵⁰² However, the Brotherhood is barely actively involved in Qatari domestic affairs. Qatar is a country where the Wahhabi creed of Salafi and Hanbali Islam prevails.⁵⁰³

With the Arab Spring, some analysts believed that Qatar came to see the Muslim Brotherhood as a powerful alternative to failing autocracies, particularly in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen.⁵⁰⁴ By having good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, Qatar has an opportunity to expect preferable economic and political ties in the countries where the Brotherhood and its affiliates are in the race for power.⁵⁰⁵ Although Qatar has depended on global and regional allies, such as the US and Turkey, to balance threats of two neighboring rival powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia, it is also trying to use its popular asset in the region by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood's right to participate in the democratic process. Kamrava argued, "Qatar sees the Muslim Brotherhood as a useful instrument, one in which it has invested for some time." He added, "Given that it had always maintained warm relations with Islamist actors, it saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity in which these groups will come to power and it would have new allies in the Middle East."⁵⁰⁶ However, Qatar objected to the prevailed argument of it supporting the Brotherhood's accession to power. Mohammad al-Musfir, Professor of Political Science at Qatar University, said:

They accuse Qatar of being a supporter of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar is based on the results of the legislative elections won by the Muslim Brotherhood and Mohammad Morsi took the presidency according to the results of the elections. Therefore, Qatar says

⁵⁰¹ Ulrichsen, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰² Guido Steinberg, "The Gulf States and the Muslim Brotherhood," in *The Qatar Crisis*, p. 67.

⁵⁰³ David B. Roberts, "Qatar, the Ikhwan, and transnational relations in the Gulf," in *The Qatar Crisis*, p. 54.

⁵⁰⁴ Mustafa Yetim, "State-led Change in Qatar in the Wake of Arab Spring: Monarchical Country, Democratic Stance?" *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, vol. 1, no. 4 (2014), p. 398.

⁵⁰⁵ Khlebnikov, p. 23.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Mehran Kamrava.

if we believe in the results of the elections, we have to accept what happened, and give the winning party an opportunity to prove its failure or success in running the state.⁵⁰⁷

Other GCC states view that the Muslim Brotherhood might pose a threat. Some analysts in the UAE believe that the Muslim Brotherhood “favored its partisan interests over national interests, carries a supra-national identity, and competes with the national state for sovereignty, religious and political legitimacy.”⁵⁰⁸ It is also seen as “the only entity that does not follow a particular state... It does not respect the sovereignty of states and does not hesitate to interfere in their affairs.”⁵⁰⁹ The UAE also sees that the movement “carries a pattern of extreme religiosity that has the potential to threaten national peace, moderation, tolerance and coexistence... It lacks real capacity to administer states and the provision of alternative government programs that promote the development.”⁵¹⁰

In the context of estrangement with Qatar, some in the UAE believed that Doha “was used as a crossover to dispatch the Brotherhood ideology to neighboring countries, particularly the UAE.” According to Binhuwaidin, “Throughout the Qatari educational aid to Dubai during in 1960s, the teachings and principles of the Brotherhood leaked into the UAE... In Qatar, major media outlets such as *Al-Jazeera* were open for Brotherhood members to proliferate their political doctrine.”⁵¹¹ *Al-Arabiya*, a Saudi TV channel based in Dubai, reported, “The Muslim Brotherhood’s secret organization in the UAE plotted to destabilize Abu Dhabi with the help of Qatar.”⁵¹² Contrariwise, Doha believes that a number of the GCC states have “used the Muslim Brotherhood as a tool at some point.”⁵¹³ Turkey, under the AKP, is also seen by the UAE as the patron of the Muslim Brotherhood. A political analyst in Abu Dhabi argued, “The political differences between some of the GCC states with Turkey began with President Erdoğan’s rule, his alliance with Muslim

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with Mohammad al-Musfir, Professor of political science at Qatar University, April 4, 2019.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi on condition of anonymity, the UAE, March 26, 2019.

⁵⁰⁹ Salem Hamid, *Brotherhood and Division in Egypt* [In Arabic: al-akhuanah wal inqisam fi Misr], (Dubai: Mezmaah Studies and Research Center, 2013), p. 5.

⁵¹⁰ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi.

⁵¹¹ Binhuwaidin, pp. 15-16.

⁵¹² Arfad Al Janabi, “Qatar plotted to destabilize the UAE, ex-Muslim Brotherhood member confesses,” *Al-Arabiya*, July 15, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2utsNV1>

⁵¹³ Mohammad al-Rumaihi, “The Repercussions, Present Reality and Future Trajectories of the Gulf Crisis: a Forecasting Approach,” [In Arabic: Al-azmah al-Khalijia wa tadaeiatuha, al-waqayie wa al-malat: Qira’ah istishrafia], *Siyasat Arabiya*, vol. 5, no. 27 (July 2017), p. 20.

Brotherhood groups in the region, his reliance on political Islam and his ambitions to lead the Muslim world.”⁵¹⁴ In this way, the UAE clearly links the local threat of the Muslim Brotherhood to their relations with the agenda of rival countries such as Qatar and Turkey. For its part, Saudi Arabia views the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology as a school of thought competing for loyalty among the GCC populations and challenging the religious legitimacy of the Saudi state, which is based on the ruling family’s alliance with Mohammad bin Abdel-Wahhab’s reform movement.⁵¹⁵ The latter’s approach considers obedience to the ruler obligatory; that is, it operates within existing or status quo authority.⁵¹⁶ Thus, Riyadh has long favored such an Islamic group that eschews political involvement. It sees the Brotherhood as an ideological rival that threatens its own governance.⁵¹⁷ Hamza Ahmad Amin, a Professor of Mass Communication at King Saud University, said, “Frankly, the Muslim Brotherhood, according to the Kingdom, is a threat to its security.”⁵¹⁸

Saudi Arabia was concerned of the Brotherhood’s growth in Egypt after the Arab Spring because of the potential of creating an influential contestant in the Arab world. It could bring back the two countries to regional competition. Saudi Arabia’s main concern was that its own Islamists would feel encouraged by a government in Egypt dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2013, for example, 56 sheikhs, some of them known to be close to the Islamic Awakening (*al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya*, hereafter *Sahwa*) movement, condemned the “removal of a legitimately elected president [Morsi]” in Egypt. They added, “We express our opposition and surprise at the path taken by some countries who have given recognition to the coup.”⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi.

⁵¹⁵ Steinberg, p. 66.

⁵¹⁶ Emad Y. Kaddorah, “Salafism in Turkey: The Challenges of Spreading in a Sufi Society,” [In Arabic: al-Salafia fi Turkiya: Tahadiyat al-intishar fi mujtamae motasawif], *Siyasat Arabiya*, vol. 5, no. 25 (March 2017), p. 86.

⁵¹⁷ Christa Case Bryant, “Behind Qatar’s Bet on the Muslim Brotherhood,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 2014, accessed 12/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/1ng2sQ9>

⁵¹⁸ Interview with Hamza Ahmad Amin, a Professor of mass communication at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 30, 2019.

⁵¹⁹ Stéphane Lacroix, “Saudi Arabia’s Muslim Brotherhood predicament,” *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2014, accessed 12/5/2019, at: <https://wapo.st/2LDOOu6>; “Statement by Saudi scholars on the events of Egypt,” [In Arabic: Bayan al-ulama’ al-Saudiin hawl ahath Misr], *Al-Jazeera*, August 8, 2013, accessed 25/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2X8mIZ3>

As a result, the kingdom's perspective on the Brotherhood is that "it is a terrorist group that must be uprooted from the region."⁵²⁰ According to Ali Mustafa, Researcher at Transworld Publicity Company in Riyadh, this procedure was driven by both domestic and regional reasons, including, first, Saudi Arabia always considering the dangers of its political system, where a religious and political discourse has begun to emerge within the country, creating a security challenge for the regime. Secondly, it found that the Turkish government employs the presence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region to support its Islamic influence. Thirdly, the Brotherhood in Egypt, after receiving power, worked to rebuild its affiliation with organizations in the GCC states and began to employ their relations. Finally, the emergence of an Egyptian political discourse under Morsi calling on the necessity of dealing with the vital Egyptian-Iranian-Turkish relationships, which is not in the interest of the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia in the long term.⁵²¹ Therefore, Saudi Arabia was concerned by Morsi's rapprochement with Iran, Turkey and Qatar, which meant the upsetting of the regional balance of power in favor of all of Saudi's rivals.

Bahrain provides an instance of Muslim Brotherhood co-optation. Because oppositional Islamic movements tend to be Shiite, the Muslim Brotherhood has traditionally been allied with Al Khalifa ruling family. However, it allied with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in countering the Muslim Brotherhood regionally. Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Khalid Al Khalifa, stated, "Bahrain is confronting the Muslim Brotherhood and its apparent terrorist threat to the stability of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. It is a threat to Bahrain and its security." At the same time, he stressed, "dealing with it is according to the law of each country,"⁵²² Which would mean that Bahrain could keep its cordial relations with the local Sunni Islamic movement, albeit limiting its political activities.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Qutob Saleh; Alexander Källman, "The Metamorphosis: The Muslim Brotherhood from a political asset to a security threat," Bachelor Dissertation in Middle Eastern Studies, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, 2014, p. 33.

⁵²¹ Interview with Dr. Ali Mustafa, Researcher at Transworld Publicity Company, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 30, 2019.

⁵²² "Manama: The Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist group and the one who touches the security of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt is our enemy," [In Arabic: Manama: 'al-Ikhwan jamaea irhabiat waman yamasu 'amn al-Saudia wal Emarat wa Misr Adounah], *Al-Hayat*, March 21, 2014, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Hr048X>

Kuwait was one of the main countries supporting the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. As aforementioned, it provided financial aid to Egypt immediately after the removal of President Morsi. In addition, some in Kuwait share with Saudi Arabia and the UAE the view that Turkey is the supporter of such a movement. Mohammed al-Rumaihi, Professor of sociology at Kuwait University argued:

The Arab political Islam movements at the bottom of its practice (non-democratic). Turkey supports them because, in part, it lacks the understanding of the evolution of these movements, which did not provide an Arab democratic model (as in part in Turkey), neither in Egypt nor in Sudan. These movements lack the mechanisms of democracy even within their ranks. Turkey's support is an interference in Arab affairs.⁵²³

At the domestic level, however, Kuwait is more tolerant. Unlike the situation in most of the GCC states, Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood or Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) is active in political life. It is not branded as a terrorist organization in the country.⁵²⁴ It has tempered its demands for social and cultural reforms while focusing increasingly on demands for broader political reforms.⁵²⁵

In Oman, the Muslim Brotherhood is less important as a political force because the Ibadi community is dominant in the country. Regionally, Oman tries to distance itself from interfering in the internal affairs of others because it believes that "it has a balanced policy and tries to have good relations with all countries."⁵²⁶ It neither shares Saudi Arabia and the UAE their perception of the Muslim Brotherhood's threat regionally nor participates in supporting President Sisi financially or politically against the movement in Egypt. Oman "considers the Muslim Brotherhood's status in Egypt to be an internal affair."⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Interview with Mohammad al-Rumaihi, Professor of sociology at Kuwait University, Kuwait, April 1, 2019.

⁵²⁴ Hamad Al-Balushi, "Why does Kuwait follow a cautious policy with Saudi Arabia and Iran?" [In Arabic: Limatha tataba' al-Kuwait siyasa hathrah mae al-Mamlaka al-Aarabia al-Saudia wa Iran?], *NoonPost*, May 26, 2018, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2JOpaQE>

⁵²⁵ Jeffrey Martini et al., *The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), p. 42; Berger, p. 261; Al Balushi.

⁵²⁶ Interview with Abdullah Baabood, Omani Professor of international relations, former director of Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University, Doha, April 18, 2019.

⁵²⁷ Interview with Said al-Tarshi, Researcher at Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, April 11, 2019.

Therefore, Oman has distanced itself from the agendas of the competing regional actors in this issue, but it does not tolerate any local presence of the Muslim Brotherhood.

One may infer that the Muslim Brotherhood is a factor of division among regional actors and affects the formation of alliances in the region. This shows how ideology, after the Arab Spring, is a key element in forming alliances. To some extent, this may oppose Walt's assumption that it "plays relatively little role in determining alliance preferences."⁵²⁸ Previously, the conservative monarchial GCC states have allied against ideological threats such as Nasserism, Iran's revolutionary Shiism and Iraqi Baathism. At present, political Islam ideology is playing a key role in the division among the GCC and Turkey. A Turkish expert in Egyptian affairs noticed this result, and argued, "If there is an ideological similarity between Egyptian and Turkish political elites, there is a rapprochement between the two countries and the community. But if there is difference, this time alienation is emerging."⁵²⁹ This does not mean ideology is the sole factor of division and forming opposing alliances. Rather, it becomes an influential one and evidently not minor.

4.2.3. Libya

Libya has been a battleground for local parties as well as regional actors since the ouster of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The conflict took on an ideological and geopolitical imprint. From an ideological point of view, the rise of the Islamic parties, some affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and their role in the Libyan revolution worried the liberal groups as well as the remnants of the Libyan army, which fear the dominance of political Islam. This conflict has also reflected the regional actors' competition, as explained in the previous section, mainly Turkey and Qatar in opposing the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Geopolitically, although Libya is geographically far from most of these states, the influence in such a strategically significant country may affect Arab countries in Africa, which witnessed the Arab Spring uprisings such as Egypt,

⁵²⁸ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Spring 1988), p. 313; Robert O. Keohane, "Alliances, Threats, and the Uses of Neorealism," review of *The Origins of Alliances* by Stephen M. Walt, *International Security*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Summer 1988), p. 172.

⁵²⁹ Interview with Gökhan Bozbaş.

Tunisia and more recently Sudan and Algeria. In sum, the contest over Libya affects the regional balance of power.

Libya seemed to be racing to complete the democratic transition after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in August 2011. In July 2012, the country held the first general elections to elect the General National Congress (GNC). In February 2014, general elections were held to select the 200-seat constituent assembly to prepare a new constitution. In June 2014, general elections were held again to elect the House of Representatives (HoR). The new Libyan authorities tried to rebuild armed forces, but most of the rebels considered the army an infamous organization because of its association with the old regime. Since August 2014, rival political parties have been engaged in a struggle to impose their hegemony over political life. Both the Islamic and liberal trends claimed legitimacy only to enact laws. Although both sides joined the peace talks under the auspices of UN Special envoy Bernardino Leon, neither side offered enough concessions to make the Libyan dialogue a success. In addition, the decision was due to the forces on the ground that controlled the weak institutions.⁵³⁰ UN Special envoy to Libya, Martin Kobler, succeeded in continuing the negotiations in Sukhairat city, in Morocco, and reached an agreement in December 2015. The political figures throughout the country agreed to unify the executive branch in one government (Government of National Accord, GNA, in Tripoli), the legislative in one parliament (the HoR), the unification of the army and the establishment of a High Council of State in Tripoli composed of President, two deputies and a rapporteur. Annex 1 of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) appointed the GNA formation under the chairmanship of the member of the HoR for Tripoli, Fayeze al-Sarraj,⁵³¹ and soon gained international recognition.

However, the crisis was dragged into continuing conflict. General Khalifa Haftar, who leads the Libyan National Army (LNA) - fighting for the Tobruk-based government of the HoR and backed by the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia - has accused his opponents of being Jihadists. He launched a military campaign in May 2014, called Operation Dignity.

⁵³⁰ Alison Pargeter, "Obstacles to democratic transition in Libya," [In Arabic: Aqabat 'amam al-Intiqal al-Diymuqrati fi Libya], in *The Elections and the Democratic Transition: Comparative Approaches* [Al-Intikhabat wa al-Intiqal al-Diymuqrati: Muqarabat Muqarnah], (Doha/ Beirut: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2019), p. 341 & 350.

⁵³¹ The United Nations, United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Libyan Political Agreement, December 17, 2015, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2L3eP4t>

On the other side, the Islamist parties of Tripoli and Misrata accused Haftar and his followers of being Qaddafian restoration forces, whose objective is to counter the revolution.⁵³² They reacted with a military campaign, named Operation Dawn, to drive out Haftar forces from their positions in Tripoli.⁵³³

Qatar and Turkey are the most backers of the GNC and GNA in Tripoli. Qatar has played a prominent Arab role in the battle for Libya in 2011. From the moment, it recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Benghazi as that country's legitimate political authority in March 2011, the first Arab country to do so. It had committed itself to a whole new level of international engagement,⁵³⁴ and to support the UN Security Council resolution No. 1973 on no-fly zones.⁵³⁵ It seems that Qatar's leading role in regime change in Libya was driven, firstly, by its attempt to make its positions on the Arab Spring consistent and non-contradictory through supporting all popular uprisings, albeit its position in Bahrain was different. Secondly, to secure the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions against possible pressure or interventions by neighboring countries, most importantly Libya under Gaddafi. Finally, its regional rivalry with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

However, Qatar's influence has faced challenges. This was obvious in the July 2014 general election when Qatar's allies lost these elections.⁵³⁶ Furthermore, Qatar was accused of providing military support to Islamic groups. In 2017, the HoR-linked government in Tobruk cut diplomatic relations with Doha in the context of the Gulf crisis.⁵³⁷ It accused Doha of "supporting terrorist groups with money and weapons."⁵³⁸

⁵³² Nicola Pedde, "The Libyan conflict and its controversial roots," *European View*, no. 16 (2017), pp. 96-97.

⁵³³ Sari Arraf, "Libya: A Short Guide on the Conflict," in *The War Report 2017*, The Geneva Academy (June 2017), p. 7, accessed 18/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2u1eSCj>

⁵³⁴ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 41.

⁵³⁵ The 1973 resolution demanded the establishment of a cease-fire, decided to establish a ban on all flights in the airspace of Libya, and froze of all funds owned by the Libyan authorities. See: The United Nations, Security Council, 6498th meeting, Resolution 1973 (2011), S/RES/1973 (2011), March 17, 2011, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VQFJCM>

⁵³⁶ Ulrichsen, p. 12.

⁵³⁷ "Libya's eastern-based government cuts diplomatic relations with Qatar," *Reuters*, June 5, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://reut.rs/2LUR3tf>

⁵³⁸ Arraf, p. 9.

For Turkey, the Libyan revolution represented a challenge to its foreign policy.⁵³⁹ At the beginning of the Libyan revolution, Turkey sought to avoid a position similar to its decisive positions on the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. It tried to make diplomatic efforts with Qaddafi to respond to the demands of the protesters and make concessions.⁵⁴⁰ This position has emerged from two motives: First, Turkey's economic interests in Libya.⁵⁴¹ Turkey became the second country after China in the area of contracting in Libya until 2014, with projects worth \$28 billion.⁵⁴² The trade volume before 2011 was about \$10 billion. In early 2011, Turkey had actual contracts worth \$15 billion distributed to hundreds of Turkish companies, with equipment worth \$1.5 billion and some 160 projects. There were about 30,000 Turks working in Libya.⁵⁴³ Secondly, Turkey concerns of Western goals.⁵⁴⁴ It seems that Turkey felt this might threaten its interests since the military intervention in Libya could be an opportunity for the Western powers to regain their influence.

However, with the intensification of the revolution, and the lack of interest of Qaddafi in Ankara's mediation, Turkey supported the NATO and participated in its operations on a large scale. It became a member of the Libyan Contact Group.⁵⁴⁵ In July 2011, Ankara recognized the NTC as the country's legitimate representative and promised it an additional \$200 million of frozen Libyan funds. Turkey has already granted the Libyan opposition \$100 million in aid.⁵⁴⁶

By these efforts, Turkey sought to balance the influence of competing regional powers in Libya. But the Turkish role was weakened after the HoR's elections in 2014, which resulted in a sweeping victory for deputies supported by the UAE. Turkey believed that the GCC states, which supported the overthrow of Morsi in Egypt are seeking to get rid

⁵³⁹ Onis, p. 52.

⁵⁴⁰ Philip Robins, "Turkey's 'double gravity' predicament," *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 2 (2013), pp. 391-392.

⁵⁴¹ Onis, p. 52.

⁵⁴² Zülfikar Doğan, "Political missteps in Libya cause Turkey's economy to stumble," *Al-Monitor*, January 6, 2015, accessed 18/2/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1q1URJb>

⁵⁴³ Ibid.; Robins, p. 391; Damla Aras, "The Syrian Uprising: Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 2012), p. 49.

⁵⁴⁴ Sümer, p. 20.

⁵⁴⁵ Robins, p. 391-392.

⁵⁴⁶ AK Group, "Turkey Recognizes Libyan Rebels, Promises More Aid," Gate Stone Institute, July 6, 2011, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2WHmaJs>

of political Islam in Libya as well. Turkish officials believed that the government of the HoR in Tobruk, which is led by Abdullah al-Thinni, is under the influence of President Sisi and the UAE.⁵⁴⁷ In 2014, al-Thinni's stated, "Turkey is a state that is not dealing honestly with us... It's exporting weapons to us so the Libyan people kill each other."⁵⁴⁸ Contrariwise, Emrah Kekilli, Researcher on foreign policy at the SETA Foundation in Ankara, believed that "Turkey has chosen to stand with the legitimate players in Libya within the framework of the LPA of 2015." He added, "The legitimate parties in the western part of the country [supported by Turkey] operate under the leadership of the GNC and the High Council of State, whose legitimacy derives from the UN."⁵⁴⁹

President Erdoğan pointed out that the challenges facing Libya stemmed from the countries supporting General Haftar, while Turkey is working to help Libya not to fail. He stated that the Libyan government faces "a dictator supported by some Arab countries. Turkey will stand firmly with its Libyan brethren as it did in the past and will exert all its potential to thwart efforts to turn Libya into a new Syria."⁵⁵⁰

The UAE also actively participated in toppling the Qaddafi regime.⁵⁵¹ The UAE and Saudi Arabia have worked to contain the political Islam movements in Libya.⁵⁵² Some analysts in Saudi Arabia consider "the Libyan conflict an internal affair, but it is concerned about Qatari intervention to support the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the Turkish intervention."⁵⁵³ Others in the UAE consider that Abu Dhabi's policy in Libya, which calls for "a consensual Libyan government," contributes to "security and stability in Libya... away from the control of Islamic militias in Tripoli, backed by Qatar and Turkey." They also believed that "the armed Islamic militias in Libya threaten Egypt,

⁵⁴⁷ Fehim Taştekin, "Libyan air force attacks Turkish ship," *Al-Monitor*, May 12, 2015, accessed 18/2/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1VE0vgK>

⁵⁴⁸ Schanzer Jonathan, "Turkey's Secret Proxy War in Libya?" *The National Interest*, 17/3/2015, accessed on 21/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/1MKQDKf>

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Emrah Kekilli, Researcher for the Foreign Policy Directorate at the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), Ankara, Turkey, May 7, 2019.

⁵⁵⁰ Emrah Kekilli, "Turkish approach to the Libyan crisis," [In Arabic: Al-muqaraba al-Turkiya lil 'azma al-Liybia], *TRT Arabic*, May 3, 2019, accessed 13/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VMOOrSL>

⁵⁵¹ Andrew McGregor, "Egypt, the UAE and Arab Military Intervention in Libya," *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 12, no. 17 (September 2014), accessed 13/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VUT5cO>

⁵⁵² "UAE lists Muslim Brotherhood as terrorist group," *Reuters*, November 15, 2014, accessed 13/5/2019, at: <https://reut.rs/2XVW19Q>; "Saudi Arabia lists 'Brotherhood' on list of terrorist organizations... Egypt welcomes," [In Arabic: Al- Saudia tudraj 'alakhwan' ealaa qayimat al-Munazamat al-Irhaby... wa Misr turahib], *Al-Hayat*, March 7, 2014, accessed 30/6/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Hs926g>

⁵⁵³ Interview with Hamza Ahmad Amin.

which the UAE sees as a threat to its own interests... the UAE also aims to keep the oil sector in Libya from being controlled by Islamic militias.”⁵⁵⁴ Therefore, Abu Dhabi support the LNA/HoR to counter Islamists.⁵⁵⁵

The UAE rejects allegations of interference in Libya for regional influence, considering that its policy is based on supporting the legitimacy of the HoR government. Anwar Gargash, the UAE State Minister of Foreign Affairs, said:

[These] allegations were merely an attempt to divert attention from Libya’s parliamentary elections [2014], in which the Islamists fared poorly: The people have spotted [the Islamists’] failure... Since their seven percent does not form a majority, Islamists in Libya resorted to violence and spread chaos across the country.⁵⁵⁶

In May 2017, al-Sarraj met with Haftar in Abu Dhabi. However, the military escalation has intensified,⁵⁵⁷ and the chance for peaceful resolution has declined.

Egypt has joined the UAE and Saudi Arabia in trying to tip the domestic balance of power in Libya.⁵⁵⁸ Under President Sisi, two main objectives have driven Egypt’s policy in Libya. First, to establish a strong central Libyan government to control its long border with Egypt. Secondly, to undermine the emergence of any political entity under the control of the political Islam movements. This strategy is based on a security approach that targets both political Islam and jihadist groups.⁵⁵⁹ Egypt not only provided political support to the HoR government, but also logistical support to Haftar. In October 2014, the HoR government and Egypt signed a bilateral security agreement that provided Cairo with approval to train the Libyan armed forces and security officers.⁵⁶⁰ Although Cairo’s policy in Libya depends on security approaches related to its domestic situation, it seems that the geopolitical factor remains dominant. The influence of Turkey and Qatar in Libya is perceived as a potential threat. Both are the biggest opposers to Sisi’s regime and, in

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with a political affairs analyst in Abu Dhabi.

⁵⁵⁵ Giorgio Cafiero & Theodore Karasik, “Can the UAE Help Libya End Its Civil War?” *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2017, accessed 15/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2HfwxAd>; Ellen Laipson, “The UAE and Egypt’s New Frontier in Libya,” *The National Interest*, September 3, 2014, accessed 15/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2SZf4gJ>

⁵⁵⁶ McGregor.

⁵⁵⁷ In particular Haftar’s military campaign against Tripoli since April 2019.

⁵⁵⁸ Kausch, “Egypt: Inside-out,” p. 28.

⁵⁵⁹ Wolfgang Mühlberger, “A Thorny Dossier: Egypt’s Libya Policy,” *Ahram Online*, January 27, 2016, accessed 30/5/2018, at: <http://bit.ly/1Tc4pIm>

⁵⁶⁰ Pargeter, p. 355.

turn, closer to his Islamist opponents. If a strong government backed by Qatar and Turkey rules Libya, the latter may become an advanced front in countering Sisi's regime. Therefore, Egypt's alliance with the UAE and Saudi Arabia in Libya is in line with the perceived threat from Qatar, Turkey and the political Islam groups.

4.3. The Gulf Crisis: An Escalation of Regional Competition

In a move unprecedented in the GCC's history, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, or what is so-called 'the quartet', moved to cut diplomatic ties, trade and transport links with Qatar on 5 June 2017. Unlike events in 2014, the measures include a blockade of land, sea and air access and the expulsion of Qatari officials, residents as well as visitors from those countries. The reason was a claimed report published by the Qatar News Agency (QNA) on 24 May 2017, that Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani stated, during the graduation ceremony of a batch of recruits for national service, that Qatar had a tense relationship with the US President Donald Trump's administration, and described Hamas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁵⁶¹ The report also described Hezbollah as a resistance movement, and that Iran is an Islamic state that represents a regional weight and cannot be ignored, warning of escalation with it.⁵⁶² Some newspapers in those countries added that Qatar considers al-Udeid air base representative of its immunity from the ambitions of neighboring countries and is the only chance for the US to have military influence in the region. They also claimed that Qatar cooperates with organizations related to al-Qaeda, such as Fatah al-Sham Front in Syria that is formerly known al-Nusra.⁵⁶³

Qatar denied these allegations. An official Qatari source stated that the website of the QNA has been hacked, and published false and unfounded news attributed to Sheikh Tamim.⁵⁶⁴ A government spokesman also said that Sheikh Tamim had attended the graduation ceremony, but did not make any comments or statements.⁵⁶⁵ However, Saudi

⁵⁶¹ Ulrichsen, "What's going on with Qatar?" in *The Qatar Crisis*, p. 6.

⁵⁶² "Qatar cracks the line.. and biased to the enemies of the nation," [In Arabic: Qatar tashuqu alsaff.. wa tanhaz li aeda' al-Uma], *Okaz*, May 24, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Juet6p>

⁵⁶³ "Recent statements by Emir of Qatar: Old... new," [In Arabic: Tasrihat Emir Qatar al-akhira: Qadimah jadida], *Al-Ittihad* (Abu Dhabi), June 4, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2WLPleJ>

⁵⁶⁴ "Qatar pursues pirates," [In Arabic: Qatar tulahi al-Qarasina], *Al-Watan* (Doha), May 25, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Q2cPJQ>

⁵⁶⁵ "Renewed discord between the Gulf states and Qatar denouncing fabricated statements of the Emir," [In

Arabia and its allies did not recognize Doha's explanations. They have issued a 13-point ultimatum to Qatar for lifting an embargo. The list of demands includes stipulations that Doha close *Al-Jazeera*, lessen cooperation with Iran, remove Turkish troops from Qatar and end contact with the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁶⁶ In addition, it seems that President Trump's warm relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the convening of an Arab Islamic-American Summit in May 2017 and the establishment of the Counterterrorism Center in Riyadh, have shown that the opportunity is ripe for change in Qatar. Trump expressed his support for the move against Qatar.⁵⁶⁷ However, then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has focused on the need to de-escalate the crisis.⁵⁶⁸

Tensions between these GCC states were nothing new.⁵⁶⁹ Their differences, in particular territorial disputes, dated back to the early 20th century.⁵⁷⁰ In 1996, Saudi Arabia was accused of orchestrating an attempted counter-coup against former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa.⁵⁷¹ The Arab uprisings since 2011 have also had a negative effect on the coherence of the GCC.⁵⁷² In March 2014, the rift culminated in the withdrawal of the Saudi, Bahraini and Emirati ambassadors from Qatar. The three countries accused Qatar of violating an agreement reached in November 2013. The agreement included two vague points: first, no support for movements or individuals who threaten the stability or security of a GCC member state, which means the Muslim Brotherhood and secondly, end any support to hostile media, referring to *Al-Jazeera*.⁵⁷³ However, after eight months the three ambassadors returned to Qatar.⁵⁷⁴

Arabic: Tajadud al-shiqaq bayn duwal al-Khalij wa Qatar tunadid bi tasrihat mufbaraka lil Emir], *Reuters*, May 24, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Q9SSB3>

⁵⁶⁶ Patrick Wintour, "Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia," *The Guardian*, June 23, 2017, accessed 18/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2swYtXR>

⁵⁶⁷ Kristian C. Ulrichsen, "Lessons and Legacies of the Blockade of Qatar," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018), p. 13.

⁵⁶⁸ Marc Lynch, "Three big lessons of the Qatar crisis," in *The Qatar Crisis*, p. 15.

⁵⁶⁹ Marc Lynch and Stephanie Dahle, "The GCC Crisis in Perspective," in *The Qatar Crisis*, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁰ For example, in September 1992, armed confrontation occurred along the border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar at al Khofous. Qatar pronounced the clash a grave precedent among the GCC states. See: Gwenn Okruhlik & Patrick J. Conge, "The Politics of Border Disputes: On the Arabian Peninsula," *International Journal*, vol. 54, no. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 233, 236.

⁵⁷¹ Momani and Ennis, "Shaping the Middle East in the Midst of the Arab Uprisings," p. 1140.

⁵⁷² Ibid.; Marianna Charountaki, "The GCC in Kurdish Politics," *Journal of Arabian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2016), p. 203.

⁵⁷³ Berger, p. 263.

⁵⁷⁴ Echagüe, "Qatar: the opportunist," p. 70.

Nevertheless, the present escalation is unprecedented. The Gulf crisis has confirmed two significant shifts: First, the GCC's division became a reality. Besides the four conflicting GCC states, which stand at odds, Kuwait and Oman have taken a third way. Both have kept themselves away from Saudi approach towards Qatar and taken a position, where they have maintained good relations with all disputed states. Kuwait has mediated to contain the crisis as it did successfully in 2014. It tries to continue its efforts in order to resolve the crisis through dialogue. Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah reaffirmed, "The Gulf disagreement is a transient no matter how long... We will never be able to face these challenges individually... collective action is the way to meet the challenges."⁵⁷⁵ Oman supports Kuwait's role in mediating the crisis. It also supports Qatar to meet its urgent needs. According to Abdullah Baabood, Professor of international relations, Kuwait and Oman "are helping Qatar overcome some of the effects of the crisis through trade and opening seaports and airports."⁵⁷⁶

Secondly, the crisis has led to the re-alignment of influential actors. Qatar has balanced with Turkey and bandwagoned with Iran to balance the threat of the neighboring Gulf countries. The Gulf crisis caused closer ties between Doha and Ankara. As above-mentioned the quartet demanded to terminate the Turkish military presence in Qatar.⁵⁷⁷ For Qatar, Turkey's responses were important in the crisis. Turkey attempted to exert diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis. Turkish government spokesman and Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmuş said that Erdoğan contacted many heads of state from the Gulf region.⁵⁷⁸ In addition, Turkey's parliament on 7 June ratified a deal on deploying troops in Qatar, which was signed in April 2016.⁵⁷⁹ On 21 June 2017, Turkey sent a first batch of troops to Qatar in line with the deal.⁵⁸⁰ This was a sign that Turkey is committed to defend its ally in the Gulf. Abdullah Ghailani, a researcher specializing in the Gulf

⁵⁷⁵ "Emir of Kuwait: Gulf disagreement is a transient no matter how long," [In Arabic: Emir al- Kuwait: Al-khilaf al-Khaliji aaber mahma taal], *Asharq Al-Awsat*, January 9, 2018, accessed 25/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2WvyVKe>

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Abdullah Baabood.

⁵⁷⁷ Özden Zeynep Oktav, "Quo Vadis Turkey-GCC States Relations? A Turkish Perspective," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018), pp. 114, 118.

⁵⁷⁸ "Turkey plays a mediating role to solve Gulf crisis through dialogue," *Daily Sabah*, June 7, 2017, accessed 22/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2ufXYS6>

⁵⁷⁹ "Turkey's parliament ratifies Qatar military deals," *Hurriyet Daily News*, June 7, 2017, accessed 22/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2JitOYF>

⁵⁸⁰ "First batch of Turkish troops arrive in Qatar," *Hurriyet Daily News*, June 7, 2017, accessed 22/5/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Q3kpnj>

affairs, argued that the crisis exposed the importance of the Turkish-Qatari partnership. “Without Turkish support for Qatar, the crisis would have taken other directions, especially with the fluctuation of the American position and the vagueness of the international situation during the first moments of the crisis,” he added.⁵⁸¹ In sum, Doha has deepened its alliance with Turkey to balance what it has perceived as a threat from its Gulf neighbors. This has further intensified the regional competition between the two rival camps.

Iran has also been invoked in the Gulf crisis. The quartet called upon Qatar to “announce the reduction of diplomatic representation with Iran, the closure of the attaches, the departure of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards affiliated elements... and cut any military or intelligence cooperation with Iran.”⁵⁸² Instead, Qatar thanked Iran, without explicitly mentioning it. Sheikh Tamim’s speech on the crisis on 21 July 2017, referred to “all those who opened their airspace and territorial waters when our brothers closed theirs.”⁵⁸³ Doha also restored its ties with Tehran that cut off in January 2016. In this way, Doha has bandwagoned with Tehran, or with one of its sources of threat, in order to balance what it perceived as an immediate and proximate threat posed by some neighboring GCC states.

Besides securing its very survival, Qatar has become more reliant on Turkey and Iran for food supply to meet its needs since the embargo was imposed.⁵⁸⁴ The three countries intend to establish a joint land transport line to deliver the Turkish goods to Doha via Iran. The new line is an alternative to the previous land line between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which accounts for about 80 percent of Qatar’s imports. The goods would be transported by land from Mardin, eastern Turkey, to the Iranian seaport of Bushehr, and then the trucks will be transported via the Roro vessels to Qatar. This would reduce shipping costs by about 80 percent if compared to air cargo. The new commercial transport line shortens the shipping time from Turkey to Qatar to two or three days.⁵⁸⁵ This increasing

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Dr. Abdullah Ghailani, Omani researcher specializing in the Gulf affairs, Muscat, Oman, May 7, 2019.

⁵⁸² Mahjoob Zweiri, “Iran and the Gulf Crisis: Gains and Losses,” [In Arabic: Iran wa 'azmat al-Khalijia: al-makasib wa al-khasayir], *Siyasat Arabiya*, vol. 5, no. 27 (July 2017), p. 40.

⁵⁸³ “Emir speech in full text: Qatar ready for dialogue but won’t compromise on sovereignty,” *The Peninsula Qatar*, July 22, 2017, accessed 30/7/2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2Y87WTl>

⁵⁸⁴ Wintour.

⁵⁸⁵ Omar Al-Qudah, “Qatar opens New Ways to Trade in the Region,” [In Arabic: Qatar tashuq turuq jadida

commercial exchange would expect to boost economic interdependence among the three countries. On the other hand, it may deepen the gap between Qatar and its GCC neighbors: Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain.

As a result, it seems that Turkey's engagement in the GCC's intra-differences, through the Gulf crisis, has alarmed both Saudi Arabia and the UAE over Ankara's rising role in their own region. This will be more discussed in the next section.

4.4. The Contest for Influence over Regional Bases

Given the economic rise of the GCC states and Turkey, the expansion of their political roles and the growing rivalry between the two abovementioned camps (mainly, in this section, Turkey and Qatar versus Saudi Arabia and the UAE), it seems each is trying to expand its sphere of influence and deprive the contender from access to its potential interests. The Gulf crisis has deepened distrust and has given unprecedented momentum to competition. The cooperation among those former partners has largely transformed into power politics and regional political polarization, which have recently extended to the neighboring African states in order to deepen commercial ties and establish military bases, particularly at the strategic coastal areas of the Red Sea and Horn of Africa.

The Horn of Africa is of strategic importance. The region connected the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean through Bab-el-Mandeb strait.⁵⁸⁶ The development of Gulf oil fields led in the 1970s to increased demand for a shipping route which would take the oil easily to European markets and beyond via the Mediterranean.⁵⁸⁷ The expansion of trade between through the strait also heightened the security imperative in the adjoining lands.⁵⁸⁸

The desire to modernize and upgrade port facilities is perhaps one of the strongest investment impulses of the Horn of Africa states. The smaller states in the region cannot stay immune from the efforts of the larger states, given their domestic political, military and economic vulnerability. They too must engage in alliance building at the regional

lil-tijarat bi al-mntiqa], *Lusail*, August 11, 2017, accessed 15/11/2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2TXFpgD>

⁵⁸⁶ Awet T. Weldemichael, "The Horn of Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror," in William H. Worger, Charles Ambler & Nwando Achebe (Ed.), *A Companion to African History* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2019), pp. 401-402.

⁵⁸⁷ Anoushiravan Ehteshami & Emma C. Murphy, *The International Politics of the Red Sea* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 178.

⁵⁸⁸ Weldemichael, p. 402.

level to hinder the ambitions of their neighbors.⁵⁸⁹ These states have also sought cooperation with regional powers to improve their ports' capabilities and revenues efficiently.

Effects of the Gulf crisis and Yemeni war have implications for states in the Horn of Africa.⁵⁹⁰ For instance, the Gulf crisis has exacerbated tensions with Somalia. The latter has remained neutral throughout the crisis. However, Riyadh pressured it to cut relations with Doha. The UAE also recalled its ambassador to Somalia when Mogadishu insisted on being neutral.⁵⁹¹ Qatar also withdrew its 400-troop peacekeeping contingent from the island of Doumeira after Eritrea and Djibouti sided with Saudi Arabia and its allies.⁵⁹² After Qatar withdrew its troops in June 2017, Djibouti accused Eritrea of occupying disputed territory along their border.⁵⁹³

The Gulf crisis also has highlighted Turkish military deployments outside the country. As aforementioned, Turkish parliament approved the deal on deploying troops in Qatar. The armies of the two countries will also be able to carry out joint exercises.⁵⁹⁴ The base is an apparent move to support Qatar.⁵⁹⁵ This military investment reflects Ankara's fundamental interests in the Gulf.⁵⁹⁶

For some in Qatar, "the Turkish base represents additional power to Qatar." According to Mohammad al-Musfir, "Turkey's position on the Gulf crisis (the blockade of Qatar and the threat of invasion) by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt was in fact a

⁵⁸⁹ Ehteshami & Murphy, pp. 163, 186.

⁵⁹⁰ Jacquelyn Meyer Kantack, "The Gulf Contest for the Horn of Africa," *Critical Threats*, September 26, 2017, accessed 30/2/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2yKn9i8>

⁵⁹¹ Abigail Kalandula & Timothy M. Shaw, "Rising powers and the horn of Africa: conflicting regionalisms," *Third World Quarterly*, published online (November 2018), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹² The Doumeira Island is located less than one kilometer off the Eritrean and Djiboutian shore near the Bab el-Mandeb. Because of the two countries' military preparation to escalate the dispute in February 2008, Qatar had mediated to resolve it through peaceful negotiation. See Berouk Mesfin, "The Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute," *Situation Report*, Institute for Security Studies (September 15, 2008), p. 6., accessed 15/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VXXdfF>

⁵⁹³ "Qatar troop removal from Doumeira sparks tension," *TRT World*, June 16, 2017, accessed 15/4/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2JjSFdR>

⁵⁹⁴ Alp Ozden, "Turkish parliament ratifies Qatar military deals," *Anadolu Agency*, June 7, 2017, accessed 8/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2I0jH9I>

⁵⁹⁵ "Turkish parliament approves bill to deploy troops in Qatar," *Reuters*, June 7, 2017, accessed 8/5/2019, at: <https://reut.rs/2VjC77h>

⁵⁹⁶ Can Kasapoglu, "Turkey's Forward-Basing Posture," *EDAM Foreign Policy and Security Paper Series*, no. 4 (July 2017), p. 7.

deterrent power for these countries and the suppression of aggression against Qatar.”⁵⁹⁷ Abdullah Ghailani, from Oman, also viewed that the Turkish base is a sovereign right of Qatar. He argued, “It is indisputable, since the GCC states have since entered into defense treaties with a number of regional and international powers. This base reflects a strategic need for Qatar to protect its national security.”⁵⁹⁸

Given the history of Ottoman rule in the Gulf, some interpreted the Turkish base as returning to the Ottoman legacy.⁵⁹⁹ The base in Qatar has heightened the situation with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. It seems that they will not tolerate Turkey’s access to the Gulf, which may support Qatar’s position at their expense. This also will offer Turkey a foothold in the Gulf, which again challenges the Saudi sphere of influence.

In Africa, President Erdoğan highlighted that Turkey aims to become a “friend, compatriot, and partner of Africa.”⁶⁰⁰ In fact, Africa ranks second in Turkey’s foreign aid, receiving about 24.7 percent.⁶⁰¹ Turkey’s membership in the African Development Bank in 2014 also paved the way for its companies to become the second in the world after Chinese firms bidding for government tenders on the continent.⁶⁰²

Turkey has strengthened its relations with the Horn of Africa countries: Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan. Erdoğan’s 2011 visit to Somalia marked a turning point.⁶⁰³ In September 2017, Turkey opened its largest military base outside its borders in Mogadishu. The base is covering four kilometers, and is intended to strengthen the Somali army by training 10,000 soldiers to counter al-Shabab threat.⁶⁰⁴ Turkey also has invested in Somalia in the management of Mogadishu’s seaport and airport.⁶⁰⁵

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Mohammad al-Musfir.

⁵⁹⁸ Interview with Abdullah Ghailani.

⁵⁹⁹ Antoine Vagneur-Jones & Can Kasapoglu, “Bridging the Gulf: Turkey’s forward base in Qatar,” *Foundation pour la Recherche Strategique*, Note no. 16 (August 2017), p. 3.

⁶⁰⁰ Recep Tayyip Erdogan, “Turkey: Africa’s friend, compatriot and partner,” *Al-Jazeera*, June 1, 2016, accessed 8/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2VksXHt>

⁶⁰¹ Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), *Turkish Development Assistance 2013* (Ankara: Department of Strategy Development, Prime Ministry of Turkey, 2013), p. 3.

⁶⁰² Pinar Tank, “Turkey as a humanitarian actor: The critical cases of Somalia and Syria,” *NOREF Report* (March 2015), p. 2, accessed 15/4/2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2II5cgu>

⁶⁰³ “Somalia famine: Turkish PM Erdogan visits Mogadishu,” *BBC News*, August 19, 2011, accessed 8/5/2019, at: <https://bbc.in/2YqLRP8>

⁶⁰⁴ Al-Shabab means ‘youth’ in Arabic. It emerged as the radical youth wing of Somalia’s Union of Islamic Courts, which controlled Mogadishu in 2006. It has labeled Turkey as an ‘enemy’. See “Who are Somalia’s al-Shabab?” *BBC News*, December 22, 2017, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bbc.in/2Mf0qQk>; Kabandula & Shaw, p. 10.

⁶⁰⁵ Kantack.

In Sudan, Turkey rebuilds a ruined Ottoman port city, Suakin, on Red Sea coast and constructs a naval dock. According to then Sudan's Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour, the two countries had signed an agreement "that could result in any kind of military cooperation."⁶⁰⁶ Some Turkish press outlets had outlined reasons behind Suakin's deal. First, to ensure the conduct of Turkish commercial vessels without any obstacles, in either the Suez Canal or the Gulf of Aden. Secondly, China will build a railway project from Sudan to Dakar at the Atlantic Ocean with a distance of 7500 kilometers. Suakin is one of the preferred places to be the starting point. This will give Turkey a prominence on this new strategic route. Thirdly, to counter the UAE's bases in the Horn of Africa, which were recently established.⁶⁰⁷

Indeed, the leasing of Suakin has sparked a reaction in the region. Some argued that Riyadh thinks Doha is the actual beneficiary of Turkish presence on the island;⁶⁰⁸ particularly due to Qatar signed a \$4 billion agreement with Sudan in March 2019 to develop the port.⁶⁰⁹ From the Saudi point of view, Turkey is working on a long-term strategy to find a presence in the region. According to Qotub Saleh, Consultant at Transworld Publicity Company at Riyadh, "the current Turkish military base in Qatar along with the military base in Suakin... constitute an active and influential military presence in the Arabian Peninsula and entire region, which may be accompanied by an economic presence."⁶¹⁰

On the other hand, the UAE and Saudi Arabia view the Horn of Africa as a strategic opportunity to enhance their capabilities to support operations in Yemen.⁶¹¹ The Western Indian Ocean is considered essential to the UAE's prosperity and its security, given its strong dependence on maritime trade and Dubai's role as a hub for commerce. Jebel Ali

⁶⁰⁶ Suakin was Sudan's major port when it was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, but fell into disuse over the last century. See: Ali Kucukgocmen & Khalid Abdelaziz, "Turkey to restore Sudanese Red Sea port and build naval dock," *Reuters*, December 26, 2017, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://reut.rs/2uYrwUW>

⁶⁰⁷ Mahmoud Hakim Mohammed, "Suakin and the completion of the Turkish triangle," [In Arabic: Suakin wa iktimal al-mouthlath al-Turki], *Turkey Post*, January 22, 2018, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2MBBiGd>

⁶⁰⁸ Kabandula & Shaw, pp. 10-12.

⁶⁰⁹ "Turkey to remain on Sudan's Suakin Island for civilian purposes," *Daily Sabah*, April 26, 2019, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2LAnYmn>

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Qutob Saleh.

⁶¹¹ Camille Lons, "Saudi Arabia and the UAE Look to Africa," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 23, 2018, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Y77mF5>

is the biggest port in the Indian Ocean and Dubai Ports World (DP World) is the busiest and largest seaport in the region. The UAE uses DP World to acquire and manage ports, particularly in the Indian Ocean.⁶¹² The investments in Doraleh (Djibouti), Berbera (Somaliland), Bosaso (Puntland) and Assab (Eritria), are giving the UAE a “string of strategically located facilities” that strengthen its influence.⁶¹³

The UAE opened a new training center in Mogadishu to train Somalia’s counterterrorism forces in May 2015.⁶¹⁴ In 2015, the UAE-based Divers Marine Company and the Puntland region of Somalia agreed on a huge renovation project that would double the capacity of the port in Bosaso.⁶¹⁵ Furthermore, the UAE has been trying to conclude deals with Somaliland for using Berbera Port in February 2017.⁶¹⁶ DP World has also signed contracts to manage the commercial ports in Bosaso and Berbera.⁶¹⁷

In Eritrea, the UAE signed a 30-year lease agreement for using the port of Assab in 2015, which is allegedly its main logistics hub for all UAE operations in Yemen. This base would allow the UAE to monitor naval traffic in the region.⁶¹⁸

The islands of Socotra and Perim in Yemen are of strategic importance to competing regional powers. After signed an agreement with Yemen’s government in 2014 to lease Socotra; the UAE invested in the development of Socotra’s infrastructure and increased its military operations on the Island.⁶¹⁹ On the other hand, Perim is an island at the Bab el-Mandeb. In 2017, Abu Dhabi and Yemen’s government agreed to establish a military base.⁶²⁰

Saudi Arabia is likely to join the states with military installations in the Horn of Africa. In July 2016, Riyadh and Djibouti negotiated on a defense and security partnership. The

⁶¹² Harry Verhoeven, “The Gulf and the Horn: Changing Geographies of Security Interdependence and Competing Visions of Regional Order,” *Civil Wars*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2018), pp. 350-351.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

⁶¹⁴ Kantack, cited in Neil Ford, “Horn of Africa: Ports in Puntland & Somaliland to Compete,” *African Business*, May 24, 2017, at <https://bit.ly/2TSMsKz>

⁶¹⁵ İsmail Numan Telci & Tuba Öztürk Horoz, “Military Bases in the Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates,” *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018), pp. 157-158.

⁶¹⁶ Kasapoglu, p. 9.

⁶¹⁷ Kantack.

⁶¹⁸ “Horn of Africa: UAE’s Foothold,” *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 53, no. 12 (January 2017), p. 21270.

⁶¹⁹ Telci & Horoz, pp. 149-150.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 151, cited in “UAE’s Battle-Hardened Military Expands into Africa, Mideast,” *ABC News*, April 29, 2017, at: <https://abcn.ws/2TIENJ>

deal is probably tied to the announcement of a financing agreement worth \$75 million between Djibouti and the Islamic Development Bank, of which Saudi Arabia is the largest shareholder, to fund imports of refined petroleum products. A base is almost part of the deal.⁶²¹ The Saudi *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, headquartered in London, reported, “The base will be able to detect and intercept Iranian supplies to the Houthis passing through the Somali coast.” Djiboutian official said, “The military cooperation agreement is overseen by a joint committee.”⁶²² Despite this, no new military facility has been opened in Djibouti to date.⁶²³ Djibouti’s understanding with Saudi Arabia did not prevent tension with the UAE, the Saudi ally. In August 2018, Djibouti has severed its relations with the UAE after stripping DP World of its concession to manage Doraleh Container Terminal.⁶²⁴

Djibouti has become host to the highest number of foreign military bases in Africa. The US, the EU, Japan and recently China have bases.⁶²⁵ However, Djibouti insisted, “it is not an open space for foreign military bases or international and regional competition. These bases are a part of the efforts to maintain international security.” Dya-Eddine Bamakhrama, Djibouti’s Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, added, “The international military bases found in Djibouti are primarily directed against terrorism, piracy and the protection of international navigation.”⁶²⁶ Indeed, this number of military bases, and competing regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey and Qatar, who compete to strengthen military and commercial ties with Djibouti, made the latter in a position to select its regional partners and negotiate strongly regarding any new military base or even to manage its main commercial port in Doraleh.

⁶²¹ “DJIBOUTI: More Foreign Bases?” *Africa Research Bulletin*, vol. 53, no. 7 (August 2016), p. 21088.

⁶²² Sahwqi al-Rayyes, “Djibouti on the Rise as Hub for Foreign Military Bases in Africa,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, September 10, 2018, accessed 11/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Q6xMDy>

⁶²³ Neil Melvin, “The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Background Paper* (April 2019), p. 13.

⁶²⁴ Dominic Dudley, “Dispute between Dubai and Djibouti over Port Seizure Continues, Despite Tribunal Ruling,” *Forbes*, August 3, 2018, accessed 4/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Yr4vpX>

⁶²⁵ Weldemichael, pp. 409-410.

⁶²⁶ Interview with Dya-Eddine Said Bamakhrama, Ambassador of the Republic of Djibouti to Saudi Arabia, June 12, 2019.

In sum, Turkey-Qatar versus the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been engaged in another competition in neighboring Africa in tandem with their fierce competition in the Arab world since the Arab Spring uprisings and the Gulf crisis.

4.5. Problematic Relations with Iran

Although the growing influence of Iran has been a significant reason for agreement between Turkey and the GCC states, as discussed in chapter three, Iran has transformed into a factor of divergence. After the Gulf crisis, Turkey and Qatar became closer to Iran while Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain have been escalating their disputes with it. Indeed, the Iran factor becomes another cause of the strained relations between these two camps.

For its part, Turkey began to reconsider its policy towards Iran because of many regional shifts. First, as for the Syrian conflict, although Ankara's stance pointedly contrasts with Iran and Russia, it has questioned whether this policy would be the solution to the Syrian crisis.⁶²⁷ Turkey focused on containing and reversing the growth of Kurdish PYD and PKK influence in northern Syria. Particularly since the December 2016 fall of Aleppo to pro-regime forces, Turkey has moved toward a Kurdish-centered policy that hinges on dialogue with Russia and Iran on outlines for the future of Syria.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, with the ISIL's expansion in Syria and Iraq, Turkey and Iran view this group as a common enemy. Instead of continuing its policy of countering Iran's influence in Syria, it seems that Turkey has cooperated with Iran and Russia to counter both the Kurdish and ISIL immediate threats to its own security. Therefore, Turkey joined Russia and Iran in the Syrian peace talks in Sochi and Astana, while its former allies in Syria, some GCC states, were excluded.

Secondly, Turkey appraised its ties with the states in the region based on the positions on the failure coup attempt in July 2016. Although the GCC statement welcomes "the return of matters to normal in the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his elected government, and within the framework of constitutional

⁶²⁷ Hossein Aghaie Joobani & Mostafa Mousavipour, "Russia, Turkey, and Iran: Moving Towards Strategic Synergy in the Middle East?" *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2015), pp. 147-148.

⁶²⁸ Cook and Ibish, p. 10.

legitimacy and the will of the people,”⁶²⁹ Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu reportedly accused a Gulf country of “financing the coup.”⁶³⁰ It seems this mistrust has weakened Ankara’s interest for an alliance with the GCC states to counter the Iranian influence. Turkey is no longer talking about the Iranian sectarian influence that it spoke about during the early days of Yemeni war in March 2015.

Thirdly, the Gulf crisis, since June 2017, has increased Turkey’s need for Iran to reach its ally Qatar. It has also reaffirmed that Iran is an indispensable partner. As aforementioned, Iran has cooperated with Qatar, provided Doha with urgent food supplies and allowed Turkey and Qatar to use its airspace and territorial waters as alternative routes. Furthermore, Iran neither commented on the Turkish presence in Qatar nor considered the military base an interference in the Gulf affairs. Turkey seems to have appreciated this position compared to positions of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, which called on Qatar to close the base.

Finally, Turkey has neither direct conflict with Iran nor a threat perception. Despite their historic rivalry, both have managed to avoid adversarial relations.⁶³¹ They have tried to maintain peaceful co-existence, minimize mutual threat perceptions and deepen political and economic ties.⁶³² Today, the value of trade with Iran is \$11.3 billion.⁶³³ They have agreed to reach \$30 billion.⁶³⁴ In addition, Turkey aspires to be an energy hub, transporting from Iran to Europe, and a center for the exchange of goods between Europe and Iran.

In contrast, the rift between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on one hand and Iran on the other has intensified since 2015 for many reasons. First, these GCC states’ escalation was driven by their fear of the potential success of the Iran Nuclear Deal of 2015.⁶³⁵ The

⁶²⁹ “The Gulf Cooperation Council welcomes the return of things to normal in Turkey,” [In Arabic: Majlis al-Taawun al-Khalijii yurahib bi awdat al'umur 'iilaa nasabiha fi Turkiya], *Anadolu Agency*, July 16, 2016, accessed 3/5/2019, at: <http://bit.ly/2aZeAD6>

⁶³⁰ “Turkey, UAE in row over Ottoman pasha,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, December 20, 2017, accessed 4/5/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2BQD5Ck>; Vagneur-Jones & Kasapoglu, p. 4.

⁶³¹ Although the 1979 Iranian Islamic revolution presented a major challenge to relations with Turkey, they have managed to overcome the differences. See: John Calabrese, “Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1 (May 1998), pp. 76-77.

⁶³² Joobani & Mousavipour, p. 149.

⁶³³ Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), “Exports and imports by country and year 2009-2018,” accessed 15/6/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dl0E>

⁶³⁴ “Iran targets \$30b trade with Turkey,” *IRNA*, July 13, 2018, accessed 8/8/2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2Ji52qF>

⁶³⁵ Marc Lynch, “Why Saudi Arabia Escalated the Middle East’s Sectarian Conflict,” *The Washington Post*,

deal did not prevent Iran from developing conventional weapons. Its mining capability, anti-ship cruise missiles and innovative tactics could hinder maritime access in the Strait of Hormuz.⁶³⁶ Given Iran's immediate proximity to the GCC states, the Nuclear Deal has increased the threat perception rather than making them safe.

Secondly, the war in Yemen since March 2015 has increased the economic and security burdens on the Saudi-led coalition. The prolonged conflict may affect the domestic political and economic stability of neighboring countries.⁶³⁷ Thus, resentment has increased from Iran. Saudi Arabia believes that Iran is the main "supporter of the Houthis" in order to balance its influence in this strategic area. It considered "the presence of any power [Iran] on the kingdom's southern border threatens its national security."⁶³⁸

Thirdly, the balance of power in Syria shifted in favor of the Syrian regime and its ally Iran, particularly after the Syrian opposition forces suffered successive defeats since 2016 in the major cities and surrounding areas of Aleppo, Homs, Daraa and Damascus. This shift bothered the GCC states because it means that Syria will mostly continue to be under the Iranian influence. In this way, Saudi Arabia's northern border becomes vulnerable to Iranian threat after Tehran managed to annex two traditional Arab powers to its alliance, Iraq and Syria.

Fourthly, Riyadh had cut off its ties with Tehran in January 2016 after the execution of the Saudi Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr led to demonstrations in Iran, where demonstrators set fire to its Saudi embassy.⁶³⁹

Lastly, the Gulf crisis since June 2017 led to the escalation of the disagreements of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain with Iran. As mentioned above, together with Egypt, they called on Qatar to limit its diplomatic representation with Iran and cut off any military or intelligence cooperation.

January 4, 2016, accessed 14/12/2017, at: <http://wapo.st/2DNJW0c>

⁶³⁶ Frederic Wehrey et al., *Dangerous but not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), pp. xvii-xviii.

⁶³⁷ Karen E. Young, "War at Any Price: Domestic and Regional Economic Consequences of Yemen's Civil War," The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW), Issue paper no. 6 (May 2017), pp. 10-11.

⁶³⁸ Interview with Hamza Ahmad Amin.

⁶³⁹ Emad Y. Kaddorah, "The Regional Geo-sectarian Contest over the Gulf," *Insight Turkey*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2018), p. 27.

One may conclude that these recent divisions in perceptions and relations with Iran have made those GCC states reluctant in continuing to attract Turkey to an alliance in order to balance Iran.

To conclude, this chapter has analyzed the present position of the Turkish-GCC relations, which have become dominated by a power politics struggle rather than political cooperation. Their ideological and geopolitical competitions are not confined to the regional issues of Egypt, Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. Rather, intra-GCC and Turkey's relations have been affected. This is clearly reflected in the Gulf crisis and its negative repercussions, as well as the extension of the competition to neighboring African countries, not only for commercial goals but also to establish military bases. As a result, the objective of founding a reliable alliance among Turkey and the GCC states to strengthen their strategic partnership or to balance Iran's influence has mostly diminished.

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Over the past two decades, both the GCC states and Turkey have experienced unprecedented economic growth and played effective regional roles. In tandem, the relations between the two parties have gradually grown from economic cooperation to strategic partnerships. This has been evident through the development of their common interests to include cooperation in the economic, cultural, political, security and defense fields. As a result, Turkey was considered for a while a ‘strategic partner’ by the GCC and the two parties have the established High-level Strategic Dialogue Meeting mechanism.

However, this positive progress, which is based on mutual perceptions of the importance of each other economically and in the regional balance of power equation, has turned into apprehension and clashing agendas in the region. The division is not confined to Turkey versus the GCC. Rather, two competing camps have recently appeared. These are mainly Turkey and Qatar on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain on the other. Their differences are mainly based on new dynamics that related to the consequences of the Arab Spring, such as the advance of political Islam movements, the growing demands for democracy and, therefore, the increasing possibilities of threatening the status quo and the change of regimes. These factors have fueled their competition for regional influence.

Methodologically, the research sought to comprehend these complicated relations, which are a mixture of cooperation and conflict, through the lenses of three appropriate theories of international relations: functionalism, the balance of power and the balance of threat. They also helped in examining the research’s main argument, which hypothesized that the opposing perceptions and policies of those actors on many regional issues pose challenges to their common interests and might divide them despite the fact that they were interested in developing their relations to form an alliance or at least strengthen their strategic partnership.

Accordingly, the tracing and analysis of the developments of relations among the GCC states and Turkey as well as the major regional shifts, which influenced them, agreed with the main argument of the research and the relevant theories as the following findings illustrate:

First, at the level of the GCC, the research showed, as detailed in chapter two, that member states used the functional approach in expanding their economic, cultural and societal cooperation to improve their political convergence and to establish this Council. In addition, the increasing threats and imbalance of power in the Gulf region—especially after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which had overthrown the Shah’s monarchial regime, and the Iran-Iraq war— were also among the main motives for forming the GCC. Balancing, the main strategy of the balance of threat theory, was the main behavior of the GCC against Iran because the latter is perceived as a power that has all threat factors. It is in close proximity to the Gulf, and it has offensive capabilities, growing power and aggressive intentions. In sum, the GCC alliance has helped its member states coordinate their policies and relatively increase their weight in the regional balance of power. However, the emergence of the regional roles of some GCC states (such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar) and their quest to strengthen their own influence have turned them into rivals, weakening the GCC alliance.

Secondly, at the level of relations between the GCC and Turkey, the research showed, as discussed in chapters two and three, that despite the rise of each party economically and geopolitically, they realize that their cooperation is important if they look to increase their power in the regional balance of power equation and to counter common threats. Although the GCC is an alliance that combines the material capabilities of its six member states and it is an influential financial power, it does not have enough power capabilities (population and military) to protect its security and huge energy resources. The imbalance dilemma in the Gulf has heightened after the absence of Iraq’s power as a counterbalance to Iran since 2003. To balance Iran’s power and its perceived threats, the GCC states have been looking to ally with great and regional powers. Sometimes, Turkey is recognized by them as both an economic partner and a growing regional power that may help in their endeavor. Despite the substantial growth of Turkey’s power and its proactive regional role since 2002, it is still a middle power that can play some regional roles. It cannot set its own agenda or settle major problems on the regional scale without fundamental support and forming alliances with great or regional powers, as the Syrian case is a case in point. To maintain its economic growth and advance its regional role, Ankara has sought to enhance its relations with the GCC states, which occupy a significant position in its perception. It has therefore sought to increase its economic cooperation and to

establish strategic partnerships in the hope that this would lead to the formation of a future alliance and to the increase of its weight in the regional balance of power.

However, this mutual perception of potential interdependence did not reach its ends. In addition to their division after the Arab Spring, it seems that the GCC states and Turkey have not overcome their historic differences. Sometimes, traditional negative stereotypes are called upon when there is a clash of interests. Although all these countries were founded in the 20th century, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries still strongly appears in the new tensions.⁶⁴⁰ This indicates that this factor is one of the main determinants of the GCC and Turkey's relations even though they have worked hard in the past decade to improve their dialogue and promote political understanding. This renewed call for old disputes raises doubts about future relations and any possible alliance between these supposed partners.

Thirdly, the Iran factor as a motive for an alliance between the GCC and Turkey was temporary, not permanent. In fact, it has also negatively affected their relations. Despite the fact that the advance of Iran's influence in the region was an important driver for GCC-Turkey convergence, as chapter three detailed, their common interest to balance Iranian power and threats no longer exists. For instance, the US-led invasion of Iraq has strengthened Iran's regional influence through the empowerment of its Shiite parties' allies in Baghdad. The Syrian crisis and the Yemeni war, after the Houthis' control of Sanaa, have also heightened sectarian escalation and the regional struggle for power with Iran. During much of this period, Turkey has been perceived as a crucial partner by the GCC to form an alliance or what is so-called the 'Sunni camp' to weaken the Tehran-led

⁶⁴⁰ The Ottoman presence in the Gulf, the Ottoman-Saudi hostility (as aforementioned in chapter four) and the claim that the Ottomans robbed the holy monuments from al-Medina are sometimes raised at the present time. For instance, after Turkey sided with Qatar during the Gulf crisis in 2017, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs, retweeted a post said, "Do you know that in 1916, the Turkish Fakhri Pasha committed a crime against the people of the Prophet's city, stole their money, kidnapped them... The Turks stole also most of the manuscripts of the Mahmudiyah Library... These are Erdogan's ancestors and their history with Arab Muslims." The Turkish Foreign Ministry summoned the chargé d'affaires of the UAE Embassy in Ankara over these comments. In addition, İbrahim Kalın, Spokesman for Turkish President Erdoğan, replied, "It was Fahreddin Pasha who bravely defended Madinah against the British plans then." See: "Erdogan ignores the bloody and colonial history of his ancestors," Al- Mezmaah Studies & Research Centre, Dubai, December 28, 2017, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2SUh3EJ>; "Turkish Foreign Ministry summons UAE chargé over FM's pasha tweet," *Turkish Minute*, December 21, 2017, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Mq2O9z>

Shiite camp. The GCC states have viewed Turkey as the most important country in this regard because it is a regional power, a member of the NATO and it has a considerable Sunni population. However, Iran has transformed into a factor of divergence, as discussed in chapter four, and a cause of strained relations among these states. Turkey became more focused on containing and reversing the growth of ISIL, PYD and PKK's influence in northern Syria. It has moved toward a policy that hinges on dialogue with Iran and Russia on the future of Syria. It seems that Turkey has cooperated with Iran to confront these immediate and proximate threats to its security. Furthermore, it seems that there is no agreement among the GCC states on perceiving Iran as a threat. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain consider Iran an essential threat. Oman does not recognize Iran as a threat, and enjoys significant bilateral relations. Qatar and Turkey perceive Iran as a neighboring country and enjoy cordial relations despite sometimes having conflicting agendas with Tehran in the region. As a result, the alliance with Turkey to balance Iran has lost much of its importance to many of the GCC states, making them reluctant to develop future strategic relations with Ankara.

Fourthly, the Gulf crisis since June 2017 has become a turning point in GCC-Turkey relations. It has heightened their intra-division and led to re-alignment in the region. It brought about closer relations among Qatar, Turkey and Iran. Doha sought to balance with Turkey (through hosting and expanding a Turkish military base) and bandwagon with Iran (which is one of its sources of threat) in order to balance the immediate and proximate threat from the neighboring GCC states. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain became closer allies that fiercely compete with Turkey and Qatar. This regional competition has had a negative impact on relations among the GCC and Turkey. Each camp has sought to increase its influence and weaken the adversary in key conflict areas, such as Egypt, Libya and even in the Horn of Africa. Once again, the conflict between the two camps was in Iran's interests, undermining their primary objective of cooperation to strike a balance with Tehran.

Fifthly, ideology became a key driver for competition among the GCC states and Turkey. It has also played an important role in re-alignment in the region. Chapter four showed that the spreading of political Islam and liberal thoughts due to the Arab Spring uprisings—which brought to power the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Tunisia through the democratic process—has been perceived as a threat by most conservative monarchies in

the GCC. Contrariwise, it was perceived as an opportunity by Turkey and Qatar. The spill-over effects of such a shift have become a major area of regional conflict and rivalry between the pro-revolutionary and anti-revolutionary camps. Turkey and Qatar have seen that the success of the uprisings and spreading of democracy would eliminate old regimes and bring a new elite to power. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain have realized that regime change would not only threaten the status quo in the region and overthrow their allies, but would also threaten their own regimes by local liberals and Islamists who were inspired by such a fundamental change and demanded more freedom, reforms and political participation. The coup d'état in Egypt was a breakthrough in this conflict, while the current civil war in Libya is a clear representation of this ideological polarization. In addition, one of the reasons for the outbreak of the Gulf crisis was justified by Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

On the other hand, ideology as a conflicting factor is not confined to these Sunni states. It also had an impact in the context of competition with Iran. As above-mentioned, most of these states have concerns about Tehran-led Shiite influence in the region. They sometimes sought an alliance to counterbalance this perceived sectarian threat.

But ideology as a cause of conflict or alliance formation does not operate in isolation from geopolitical regional rivalry. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood's rise in Egypt was crucial in the regional balance of power equation. Saudi Arabia realized that Egypt's active involvement in the region under the Muslim Brotherhood would be an influential contestant in the Arab world just as Nasserism was during the fifties and sixties. In addition, Morsi's convergence with Turkey, Qatar and Iran concerned Riyadh because this would threaten its influence and upset the regional balance of power in favor of Saudi rivals. In Libya, the current conflict also reflects the regional competition for influence. The advance of any conflicting local parties means the advancement of their regional supporters' agendas.

Sixthly, Turkey's current active policy under the AKP conflicts with the policies of some GCC states. By focusing on 'Turkey-Erdogan' argument by some in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as a reason for their disagreement with Turkey, this means that the AKP's policy and ambitions hinder their roles and influence in the region. This may also mean they may prefer a Turkish policy far from their areas of interest, and not involve in supporting

Arab uprisings or ally with Qatar in the Gulf. In other words, they might favor Turkey's traditional policy of non-involvement in the Middle East that prevailed throughout the 20th century. But this view seems to have been influenced by the new division environment because over the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey's relations, also under the AKP, have been constantly evolving with all the GCC states economically and politically, while serious criticism has been absent.

Seventhly, with the increasing divergence between Turkey and some of the GCC states, it seems that the latter will stop trying to attract Turkey as an ally, in particular to balance Iran. In sum, this may deepen the rift between the GCC states and Turkey.

In brief, initial development of the GCC-Turkey's political convergence has recently declined. It has turned into divergence and intra-competition. This has led to two outcomes. On one hand, collective cooperation has weakened because its mechanisms are no longer functioning well. For instance, the GCC and Turkey agreed to convene High-level Strategic Dialogue Meetings every year at the level of senior officials and Ministers.⁶⁴¹ In 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2012, it was held almost regularly, and then became rare, with the last meeting being held in 2016. On the other hand, the initial desire to balance adversary regional powers and common threats has diminished. Instead, balancing behavior has prevailed among these partners. In short, their competing agendas and contest for regional influence is, often, at the expense of their own interests.

Based on these findings, predicting strong relations or an alliance between the GCC states and Turkey seems ideal. However, the high cost of competition and the potential rise of other powers in the region may, at some point, make the parties reconsider current relations and look for political understanding. To make convergence possible again, some procedures or ideas may need to be taken into account to attain this objective and avoid an unwanted outcome. They may invest heavily in the following:

First, ideology division needs to be overcome by deepening the sense of common identity. The elements of common identity between the GCC states and Turkey were among the drivers of convergence. Initially, Turkey has been presented as a country that has

⁶⁴¹ Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relations between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)," accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2OcO6Fq>

traditional values and shares with the GCC its religion (Sunni Muslim), historical legacy, solidarity and has various cultural and customs similarities. Both parties used these communalities, particularly in the first decade of the century, to deepen peoples' interaction and strengthen political convergence. In addition, they have shared political interests and security concerns. However, due to their ideological competition, the communalities have relatively disappeared while mutual concerns prevailed. Similarly, the common characteristics of the Arab Gulf identity (*Khaleeji*)—such as religion, common language, culture, similar history, geographical proximity, the relations of kinship and the similarity of economies—compelled the GCC states to cooperate and made them natural allies in establishing the GCC.⁶⁴² However, the ideological factor has divided them. For instance, Oman has been distancing itself from the policies of the other GCC states when it comes to sectarian conflict with Iran in the region. This does not depart from the fact that the prevailing sect in Oman is Ibadi, not Sunni. In addition, “despite that Qatar shares with Saudi Arabia Wahhabism with some different features,” it neither involved itself in fighting the Muslim Brotherhood nor responded to the requests of dispelling some of them from Doha as a prerequisite for ending the Gulf crisis. Indeed, Qatar is “in general open to political Islam movements. Through their religious and political weight, it can also create an Islamic reference to balance that of Saudi religious authority.”⁶⁴³ It seems that the success of any political rapprochement or future alliance among the GCC states and Turkey depends, among other factors, on respecting ideological differences. Ideological identification could not be a condition for convergence. Despite the fact that “interests, rather than common ideals or identity, are the driving force behind any integration process,”⁶⁴⁴ it is necessary to deepen common identity ties to ease ideological division.

⁶⁴² Interview with Mohammad al-Rumaihi, Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University, Kuwait, April 1, 2019; John Duke Anthony, “The Gulf Co-operation Council,” *International Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, (Spring 1986), pp. 387-388; M. Evren Tok, Jason J. McSparren & Michael Olender, “The Perpetuation of Regime Security in Gulf Cooperation Council States: A Multi-Lens Approach,” *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Spring 2017), p. 152.

⁶⁴³ Interview with Dr. Chafic Choucair, Researcher at Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies specializing in the Levant and Islamic movements, Doha, July 26, 2019.

⁶⁴⁴ Philippe C. Schmitter, “Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism,” *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2005), pp. 259-260.

Secondly, aggressive intention is a factor of threat, as mentioned in the introduction. If mutual suspicions continue between the GCC and Turkey, a sense of threat will prevail rather than a cooperative environment based on trust. What helps alleviate a sense of aggressive intentions is to promote shared values and interests and focus on the win-win formula rather than competition and power politics.

Thirdly, the restoration of past negative stereotypes is pointless. In order to overcome this traditional barrier among the GCC states and Turkey, it is necessary to think about the future rather than the past, because the nature of the relations between sovereign states in today's world is different from the legacy of the former empires. Those states need to focus on a new discourse that fosters a positive mutual perception through education, cultural exchange and media, as well as on broad historical relations rather than on periods of tension and conflict. In its political discourse, Turkey also needs to focus on cooperative relations with sovereign states in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf, and refrain from repeating the concepts that provoke such countries such as strategic depth and Ottoman legacy. This is because these concepts are understood differently, such as the desire for a return to influence and the ambition for domination in the region.

Fourthly, strategic dialogue is necessary to resolve differences among partners and strengthen relations. According to Jack Froude and Michael Zanchelli, dialogue is a “facilitated process that brings stakeholders together in a conflict or around a problem or concern to transform drivers of conflict.”⁶⁴⁵ P.R. Chari also stressed the importance of regular meetings of strategic dialogue. The strategic dialogue is usually held “to insure regular, high level, comprehensive and forward-looking exchanges on a wide range of issues.”⁶⁴⁶ In fact, periodic sessions of the strategic dialogue between the GCC states and Turkey, even in times of strain, can help all parties achieve a greater understanding and mitigate the impact of conflicting regional agendas. The activation of existing strategic cooperation mechanisms could help to further the dialogue and make it institutional, not affected by situations of disagreement. This continuity can be ensured through the establishment of formal and coherent subsidiary mechanisms such as the establishment

⁶⁴⁵ Jack Froude & Michael Zanchelli, “What Works in Facilitated Dialogue Projects,” the United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, no. 407 (June 2017), p. 1.

⁶⁴⁶ P.R. Chari, “Strategic dialogue: What does it mean?” *International of Peace and Conflict Studies*, November 1997, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2OtdGGd>

of a Secretariat to coordinate meetings between officials at all levels, from summits to specialized technical commissions. Officials and professionals regularly gather from all relevant countries, and can generate ideas for rapprochement, plan and implement joint projects, and help ease tensions. The ultimate goal is not a union, like the EU, but a solid strategic partnership to maintain mutual gains and make future alliances among those states possible to balance common threats.

Fifthly, expanding and deepening areas of strategic cooperation is important. The GCC states and Turkey have complementary economic structures that provide a good basis for deepening their relations. Chapters two and three detailed some areas of potential cooperation between them. But the sustaining of a strong partnership in the future requires a focus on strategic areas that respond to their growth demands, deepen their interdependence and increase their weight in the regional balance of power. To mention a few, the following areas are of great importance in this way:

- (1) The conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is usually an indicator of close relations. Although negotiation on a FTA between the GCC and Turkey started in 2005,⁶⁴⁷ the talks were suspended because of the growing strain.⁶⁴⁸ Indeed, Turkey's trade with the GCC (\$21.8 billion) still represents a small volume compared to other groups of countries. For instance, Turkey's trade volume with the EU is \$74 billion in 2017, while Germany alone receives about \$15 billion of Turkish exports. Even many countries in the region exceeded Saudi Arabia in receiving Turkish exports (\$2.7 billion) such as Iran by \$3.3 billion, Israel by \$3.4 billion and Iraq by \$9 billion.⁶⁴⁹ This has raised a question of whether the GCC is genuinely interested in turning its relations with Turkey into a strategic partnership or whether its concerns about Turkey's regional active engagement will keep these relations at a normal level, if not reduced. In general, the volume of total trade between the GCC and Turkey does not fit in with their rapid economic growth or their growing regional power. This

⁶⁴⁷ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," *Turkish Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2011), p. 692.

⁶⁴⁸ Dorothee Schmid & Jules Subervie, "Turkey/GCC economic relations," Institut Français des Relations Internationales-IFIR (September 2014), p. 8, accessed 2/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2YkR8vP>

⁶⁴⁹ Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), "Trade by country group 2008-2017," at: <https://bit.ly/1T0dl0E>

may require both parties to activate the FTA negotiation process and make the right decision that can contribute to increased trade away from political volatility.

- (2) The area of energy is of great importance to common interests. Access to energy supplies is a key factor in Turkey's growth. Ankara is also interested in increasing GCC oil and natural gas supplies not only to meet its growing demands, but also to transfer energy to Europe rather than relying heavily on Russia and Iran.⁶⁵⁰ Dependence on a restricted number of suppliers further pushes Turkey towards diversifying its supplies. Turkey's efforts to be a hub between producers and consumers depends on the development of its relations with the GCC states. Turkey's geographical situation as a pivot between Europe and the Middle East is used as an argument to impose the country as a secure hub or corridor for the transit and re-export of energy commodities. Although the situation in Syria has put an end to this ambitious scheme, similar projects may be re-envisaged with the GCC states as soon as the regional situation allows it.⁶⁵¹
- (3) Agriculture and food security is becoming an important element of the Turkey-GCC relationship. Turkey, with 40 percent of its land being fertile, is attractive for GCC investors in this sector. Strategic dialogue with Turkey on agriculture is thus also seen as a way to secure food supplies in the long run.⁶⁵² Turkey, as the region's biggest agricultural producer, besides having a comparative advantage in terms of geographical proximity, has great potential in this sector with the Gulf region.⁶⁵³
- (4) The joint defense industry. The geopolitical importance of the GCC states grew dramatically as the developing world's most vibrant market for sophisticated weaponry. They emerged as the world's most prolific importers of arms.⁶⁵⁴ On the other hand, Turkey's defense industry has developed rapidly and has been able to meet more than half of its domestic military forces' needs since 2010. Turkey's

⁶⁵⁰ Ali Tekin & Paul A. Williams, "EU-Russian Relations and Turkey's Role as an Energy Corridor," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61, no. 2 (March 2009), pp. 332, 342-349.

⁶⁵¹ Schmid & Subervie, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁵³ Ömer Akkaya, "The Future Role of the GCC in Turkey's 2023 Economic Vision," in Özden Zeynep Oktav & Helin Sarı Ertem (Ed.), *GCC-Turkey Relations: Dawn of a New Era* (Cambridge: Gulf Research Centre, 2015), p. 119.

⁶⁵⁴ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 17.

exports in this sector to the GCC region are very limited.⁶⁵⁵ However, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain were in the top ten Turkish defense export destinations. They accounted for nearly a quarter of all Turkey's defense exports in 2012. The UAE has signed an agreement with a Turkish missile producer to import Cirit missiles, while negotiations for ATAK helicopters were in progress with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Riyadh was planning to buy Turkish tanks (Anka) and surveillance drones (Altay) worth \$2 billion.⁶⁵⁶ The 2014 military agreement between Turkey and Qatar includes cooperation in the defense and arms industry.⁶⁵⁷ Instead of the seller-buyer traditional relationship, the GCC and Turkey can develop a new formula for the joint production of advanced weapons and ammunition. Each has a complementary advantage: Turkey has factories, technologies and experts, while the GCC states can finance projects and develop their expertise. Both sides need to become productive and relatively self-sufficient in order to increase their independence from the world's traditional arms producers and to balance other regional powers in this area.

- (5) Nuclear projects are a potential area of cooperation. Recently, Turkey, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia adopted national strategies to establish peaceful nuclear plants.⁶⁵⁸ Other GCC states may also announce nuclear programs. Iran's nuclear program and its growing influence in the region are likely to be one of the main drivers of the GCC states' and Turkey's interest in this shift in order to adjust the regional balance of power.⁶⁵⁹ Thus, it seems that this interest requires the initiation of a regional nuclear energy forum that regulates common nuclear affairs, exchanges knowledge, technicians and experts, coordinates policies, holds conferences and workshops,

⁶⁵⁵ Akkaya, p. 121.

⁶⁵⁶ Valeria Talbot, "Turkey-GCC Relations in A Transforming Middle East," *Analysis*, no. 178 (June 2013), pp. 9-10; "Saudi Arabia considers \$2 bln Turkish arms deal," *World Bulletin*, April 23, 2013, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Yllr5S>

⁶⁵⁷ Yunus Paksoy, "Turkish Military in Qatar: Bonds of mutual trust," *Daily Sabah*, June 12, 2018, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2JyclIWf>; "As a brotherly country, Turkey will continue supporting Qatar," *Qatar Tribune*, October 20, 2018, accessed 3/8/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2yG2JH7>

⁶⁵⁸ "Nuclear Power in Turkey," World Nuclear Organization, December 2018, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2Ka3RZz>; "Nuclear Power in the United Arab Emirates," World Nuclear Organization, June 2019, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2GGpCHV>; "Saudi plans to invite bids for nuclear power project in 2020: sources," *Reuters*, April 4, 2019, accessed 12/7/2019, at: <https://reut.rs/2yrzeZb>

⁶⁵⁹ Ian O. Lesser, "Can Turkey Live with a Nuclear Iran," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 2, 2009, p. 2, accessed 10/9/2019, at: <https://bit.ly/2ILLcJO>; Aaron Stein, "Turkey's Nuclear Regulatory Regime: Questions about Independence," *EDAM Non-Proliferation Policy Briefs*, no. 1 (February 2013), p. 2.

provides an advanced and safe environment for nuclear plants, and constitutes a pressing lobby to prevent non-peaceful nuclear proliferation.

Sixthly, the need for more in-depth research into the various aspects of relations between the GCC and Turkey. In fact, this research dealt with these relations in a comprehensive manner that covered their mutual perceptions, common interests, attempts to build alliances and issues of cooperation and disagreement. Given the limitations of the size and scope of this research as well as the great importance of these countries, more research is needed to explore the potential of their economic, political, cultural and social relations. For example, each of the above strategic areas of cooperation needs to be studied extensively.

In the end, relations among the GCC states and Turkey, in a short and reliable period (2002-2017), have undergone various cases of cooperation and division. Common challenges have made them think of an alliance to balance other powers and threats, but many emerging issues have turned them into rivals for regional influence on divergent agendas. All parties have tasted the fruits of cooperation and experienced the costs of conflict. It is time to redress the course of relations and start a strategic dialogue that overcomes past mistakes and maintains mutual benefits for their people, who share common values and interests.

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RESUME

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