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The Rise of Small States in the Arabian Gulf: The Case of UAE and Qatar: A Historical Sociology Perspective

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Abstract

Over the past fifty years the impoverished and tribal Arab Gulf states have become some of the most developed and influential political players in the Middle East. These states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, underwent a program of modernisation starting in the early 2000s which has led to both Abu Dhabi and Doha becoming cultural, economic, and diplomatic hubs of the Arab World and gateways to the Greater Middle East. To understand this transformation, resulting in increased foreign policy and economic power and soft cultural influence, this paper seeks to investigate the historical changes experienced by both the UAE and Qatar following their independence in the 1970s.

I argue that, based on historical sociological analysis, the rise of both UAE and Qatar was an inevitable by-product of several changes. To understand the driving forces behind this phenomenon, this paper suggests a trifold analytical framework which attempts to understand the social, political, and economic dynamics behind this shift. Firstly, on a domestic level, the rise of small states in the Arabian Gulf came about because of ongoing socio-political and socio-economic development, ambitious leadership, and a hybrid concept of state identity. Secondly, regional structural change was brought about through equalisation of rich Gulf States and their neighbours, shifting international power dynamics and the radical (yet devastating) changes in the MENA region over the past 20 years. Lastly, the system level has contributed to this phenomenon by recognising the nature of international politics, including the transition and/or diffusion of power, and accommodating small states' vibrant diplomacy.

Keywords

IR Theories, Small States, Middle East, Historical Sociology, UAE, Qatar

Introduction

Since the creation of the modern Arab Regional System (ARS) after World War II, this is the first time where the small Gulf States occupy this prominent status. In the last seven decades, large and middle size regional powers such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A.) were the key actors in the region. But since the early 2000s, small and even micro-states such as the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Qatar have become some of the key players and central actors of this regional system. With the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings in 2011 and their aftermath, both countries have become the most influential players in the region (economically, diplomatically and politically). The Gulf (or the *Khaleeji*) power triangle that includes Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar dominant the region, where the power structure in the region have shifted tremendously.

If there is an affirmative law in international politics, it is the fluctuation of power, which leads to the rise and fall of great powers. Today's superpowers could be tomorrow's sick-man of world order. From the Pharaohs, Persians, Greeks, Romans, to the Islamic empire, through European imperial powers, and recently to the U.S. unipolar domination, the game of power politics of the international system is an infinite cycle of rising and falling. In the modern Middle East, the major regional powers concentrated on countries like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, along with Iran, Turkey, and Israel as non-Arab regional powers. Except for Israel, the large geographic and population size, massive natural resources, significant geopolitical location, and the considerable size of militaries gave these states a relative advantage in the regional balance of power compared with small and 'vulnerable' neighbours. In the Arab World too, Egypt was the strongest regional power for more than three decades. Since the mid-1970s, Iraq and Syria shared the domination over the Eastern part of the Arab World until the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia was the regional hegemon of the area that contains the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) organization and Yemen. Lately, for nearly a decade and half, there were notable evidences refer to the emerging changes and new developments that occur in the region, especially in terms of the traditional regional balance of power and soft power diplomacy. Where the power transit from old regional powers like Egypt, Syria and Libya to the hands of new small rising powers in the Gulf region, in particular the UAE and Qatar.

These transformations include the retreat of classical regional (Arab) powers, due to the fundamental changes in the distribution of power among Arab countries, the accumulation of oil revenues, the completion of nation-building process in the Gulf States, the increasing regional influence of Iran, the changing balance of power in favor of the Gulf Arab States especially Saudi Arabia. As well as

the enormous flourishing of *Khaleeji* economic development, cultural inspiration, strategic ambition, changing political identities, and the increasing of political and diplomatic leverage of the Gulf monarchies.

Perhaps the most important pillar of the Emirati and Qatari rising is their financial and economic capabilities, which are inevitable outcomes of the accumulation of oil revenues that associated manufacturing industries during the past four decades. These two countries succeeded in reinventing their posture by investing and employing their wealth in establishing durable economic and development base, which became the foundation of their economic, political, and diplomatic strength. The second pillar is stability, which contributed to the resilience of political regimes and improves the concentration on realizing economic, social, and political development that relies on the achievement of social justice, welfare, respect citizens' rights, and securing their basic needs. The third pillar is the multilateral dynamic diplomacy approach. Both countries declare their firm commitment of constructive interaction with other countries, abide by the rules of international law, support the rights of other nations, promote multilateralism through international organizations such as the United Nations and the Arab Leagues. Likewise, concentrate on cultural activities, robust participation in the peacekeeping missions, humanitarian activities, development aids, and promoting international dialogue.

Apparently, these approaches improve the UAE's and Qatar's images and inspired them engage further in international activities. Both UAE and Qatar have succeeded in proper exploitation and reinvestments of their national (economic and political) capabilities to construct their foreign policies and using it to expand their global weight. In fact, small Arab Gulf countries re-emphasised the assumption that internal stability strengthening the influence and engagement on the international arena (Mastanduno, Lake, and Ikenberry, 1989). These pillars are manifested in three fundamental facets, economically, politically and culturally. As a result, Abu Dhabi and Doha have become the political, diplomatic, economic and cultural gravity centers of the Arab World and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since the early 2000s. This radical change in the regional power dynamics still overlooked by most of the region's experts and not been investigated systematically or in depth.

Research Questions

This paper has two main aspects, theoretical and practical. On the theoretical level, it tries to illuminate and decrypt to what extent does the recent literature of theories of International Relations (IR), and Middle East studies succeed in addressing the phenomenon of the rise of non-Western 'Small States'? Likewise, it inquires what are the political domestic conditions can drive small states to adopt

expansionist foreign policy?

On the practical level, the paper inquires and investigates the genesis of historical process and trends that made the Arab-Gulf countries the most powerful and influential actors in contemporary Arab politics. What are the main constituents of the increasing power of small Arab-Gulf states? What are the nature and the forms of domestic and external change that artefact the process of growing of the external influence of the small Arab Gulf states?

Scholars of IR and Middle Eastern studies should seek to offer an answer to these questions for many reasons. Theoretically, these questions are seeking to investigate and examine whether theories such as change theory in international relations, soft power, role theory, and others have had success in explaining the phenomenon of the rise of (non-western) small powers in the international system. It is necessary to expand the scope of investigation to provide a rigorous analysis of this phenomenon. Practically, these questions challenge dominant discourses and literature on the overwhelming impact of the power structure, balance of power, changing security architecture, and political dynamics in the Middle East. Moreover, these questions address the recent developments in the region by refuting and criticizing the neorealist-neoliberal dichotomy of the role of small states, power relations and the foreign policy of the Arab Gulf Countries apart from the political economy of oil, security and power politics relational. Likewise, the identities, interests, and behaviours of the rising powers in the Middle East are still under-researched. Therefore, this paper tries to navigate and uncover historical, sociopolitical and socioeconomic trajectories of the increasing influence of Small Arab Gulf countries, whilst elucidating how they have become the most powerful actors in the region over the last four decades.

The Argument

Most of IR theories had failed to address the trends and forms of change in the Middle East since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, this study argues that the main reason for these changes finds its roots in the process of not only power shift that occurred in the region since the Iraq War of 2003, and the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings of 2011. Instead, it argues that the origins of these changes are fundamentally lying on several sociopolitical and socioeconomic transformations that have taken place within the Gulf region since the early 2000s.

As the foreign trade exchange, diplomatic relations, international engagement and intervention tendencies of the UAE and Qatar grow, so does their political role and obligations to maintain peace and stability of their neighbourhood and beyond. These small states have been known for their policies of international institutionalism, constructive engagement, and belief in the achievement

of peace through multilateral dialogue within the respective international institutions, most notably the United Nations (Al-Mashat, 2010). The ascension of the significance of the UAE and Qatar in the global economy is further underline by the fact that these are Arabic and Islamic countries with modern institutions and therefore are well placed to be key players between the East and the West.

The paper concerns on investigating the process of socioeconomic and sociopolitical transformation, which allows these newborn, tribal, and underdeveloped city-states to become vibrant economies, some of the most powerful actors in the Middle East, and vital stockholders of the international economic system in less than fifty years. The paper concentrates on examining the impacts of nation-building and formation process, capacity-building measures, power shifting and transition (domestically and regionally), the correlation between social and political mobilization and the growth of external power and influence of small states.

The emerging power of the GCC countries, notably the UAE and Qatar, synchronizes with the deterioration of the political and economic conditions of the rest of the classical regional powers. The growing political and economic power and influence of these small countries is a product of increasing economic growth that was achieved by the oil high prices and the resilience of political and social systems of these countries reflected in a constant increasing level of stability, public satisfaction, confidence and content with the performance of the governments. Likewise, it was a product of the process of dynamic economic development, regional megaprojects, and tremendous foreign direct investment (FDI). Furthermore, the proliferation of political and diplomatic activities these states enjoyed finds its roots in their abilities to anticipate the instability in the region, which have led to expansion of their external involvement in regional crises and disputes, as well as successes in managing and resolving some of the region's recent conflicts. The growing significance of the small states in the Arab Gulf region further lies in the diversity of their economic prosperity continues to attract. These countries have become hubs for different cultures and people of diverse backgrounds. Bringing these groups together is nevertheless a considerable task. Both UAE and Qatar have been able to hold the internal affairs sound and secured so far. Nevertheless, one of the main concerns of this paper is to examine how can the UAE and Qatar keep external factors, as well as internal affairs under control, and how they consolidate their power and external influence?

All these reasons compel to assume that, in the first half of the twenty-first century, the small states of the GCC organization will have the upper hand in determining the future's course of the Middle East (Abdullah, 2012). Foreseeably, the events of the Arab uprisings, the deterioration of the situation in both Egypt and Syria, the disintegration of Iraq under the yoke of occupation and Iran's dominance, dealt to the Arab political arena blow and created a tremendous regional

power shift and strategic vacuum in the MENA region. The pattern of external attitudes of both the UAE and Qatar since 2011 show their intention and determination to fill that vacuum and lead the region.

To understand the changing status and the foreign policies of both the UAE and Qatar, the paper will substantially concentrate on the interplay between material and ideational variables of small states' foreign policy and external role. The increasing external influence, the assertiveness of their foreign policies, regional power projection and expansion of both the UAE and Qatar were artefact by the dialectic relations between ideational and material variables. The material variables include the process of nation-building, state formation, institution capacities, power-structure, authority building, social mobilization, economic diversification and the transformation from oil-based economy to knowledge-based economy (or from a rentier state into post/new rentier state), while the ideational variables include the role of identity, norms and other non-material factors; e.g., branding, soft power and cultural diplomacy. Simultaneously, the study will take in consideration the interlaced role of domestic-international nexus and the impact of the complexity of international political/economic structure, the balance of power consideration, and the distribution of capabilities over the development of small states' foreign policy.

Literature Review

Traditionally, the International Relations (IR) discipline is known for being "Big States" field with substantial attention to the great powers which are considered to be the most significant actors in international politics (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). The vast majority of the mainstream theoretical literature (Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism) revolves around great power politics; i.e., security strategies, diplomatic and foreign relations of the great powers, how they behave, move, interact, etc. Surprisingly, even though the majority of the international system (two-thirds of 193 members of the United Nations) could be classified as small states, these actors have been intentionally neglected and pushed out the mainstream of theoretical debate within and between the three dominant schools of thought in the field of IR (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2006: p. 3). In order to fill this gap, this study tries to bring the small states back-in the debate on the change process, the changing nature of power, and the study of international politics in the 21st century. Because of the limit of space, this section excludes the ongoing debate on small states in theory and practice. Instead of that, the paper will concentrate on the case study of certain small states that are still outside the Eurocentric and Western IR theories' interests.

The main purpose of this paper is to identify what is missing in the debate on small states in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf regions. Notably, most of the

recent literature on the Arabian/Persian Gulf region has focused on the pillars and facets of the growing regional influence. This paper will not engage in this debate, which starts from the assumption that the emerging power of smaller states such as the UAE and Qatar is a pre-given fact. It does not question or investigate the roots of this power or how it had been constructed, developed and manifested in the domestic, regional and international levels simultaneously. Instead, this paper seeks to address this lacuna and present different perspective by exploring and navigating the origins of the vibrant diplomacy, assertive foreign policy orientations and power projection (military, economic and cultural) schemes of the small Gulf States in the last two decades. Moreover, outlines mystification and ambiguity of how small states' power, actions, and identities have been constructed which is still under-studied and neglected topic within the field of Middle Eastern and Gulf studies. Via the lens of historical sociology, this paper will explore how small states construct their practice and power.

As mentioned earlier, due to the overlapping nature of this topic, the literature review will concentrate on two main strands that deal with this subject, highlighting the case study of both the UAE and Qatar.

International Relations theories and Small States

Apparently, many International Relations (IR) and foreign policy analysis (FPA) scholars believe that the study of small states' foreign policy is important for two main reasons. According to the first one, they allow to draw lessons for foreign policy analysis and international relations in general and provide potential for enormous intellectual payoffs for international relations and foreign policy analysis (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017; Elman, 1995). Due to their unique characteristics, the study of small states is crucial for understanding the changing nature of power and dynamics of interaction in modern world politics in general, and in the Global South in particular. According to Thorhallsson and Steinsson, in the field of international relations, small states are considered a unique phenomenon for many reasons, 1) they have unique vulnerabilities, 2) they have different needs, 3) they adopt different foreign policies, 4) and they have a harder time achieving favourable foreign policy outcomes (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017: p. 1).

When discussing small states, most academics stress the smallness and shortage of resources and capabilities, which are considered to be outcome of the size of population, territory, economy, and military, which in turn determine power and influence of any certain actor in the international community. Small states refer to as "member states of the United Nations (UN) [that] have a population of under 10 million" (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017: p. 1). Others regard states with 15 to 30 million inhabitants as small. Likewise, other studies, in a pasteurized manner, define small states simply by differentiating them away from other

larger units such as great powers or middle powers in terms of influence on the international system at any given time (Handel, 1981).

The correlation between the state's size and its capabilities or aggregation of power (the total quantity of resources and capabilities that can be employed) is not inevitable. Being small does not necessary mean being weak. Some of the states that have been categorized as small have different sources of national capabilities that could translate into power advantages and inflate their influence, if geostrategic significance or/and wealth of resources. According to Thorhallsson and Steinsson, these characteristics could compensate for other disadvantages. They argue that:

“Studies of influential small states indicate that they are able to develop issue-specific power to make up for what they lack in aggregate structural power. Small states can, therefore, develop power disproportionate relative to their size on the few issues of utmost importance to them.” (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017: p. 2)

It is obvious that the 'realist' approaches, which concentrate on the fact of the physical size as the determination for defining and measuring small states' power, are outdated (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017: p. 3). In order to overcome this predicament, Thorhallsson suggests a framework that claims that the size of states can be identified either through:

1. Sovereignty size (the degree to which a state controls its internal affairs and borders and is recognized);
2. Political size (which measured based on the state's military and administrative capabilities, domestic cohesion, and foreign policy consensus);
3. Economic size (measured by the state's GDP, market size, and development level);
4. Perceptual size (or how a state is perceived by internal or external actors); and
5. Preference size, which encloses the ideas, ambitions, and priorities of the domestic elites regarding their role in the international system (Thorhallsson, 2006: p. 8).

It is common knowledge to claim that in term of hard power (military in particular) small states, especially the newly independent, are weak and vulnerable to external coercion. Given the smallness of their economic and human capabilities, diplomatic forces and institutional leanness, small states are unable to mobilize large numbers of forces, and therefore invest less in military technology and sustain (or even launch) military campaigns for a longer time. These other constraints

reduce its influence and make them less attractive allies (coalition-partners) as they do not have large foreign policy apparatuses (Panke, 2010). Nevertheless, small states have their own capabilities and power sources. For example, a number of studies emphasise the role of neutrality as a source of power for small states. Likewise, promoting perception and image-building of being peaceful and coalition-building can enhance the power of small states as being entrusted in neutral and as being non-threatening states (Karsh, 1988). Moreover, in order to evade the lack of material capabilities and weak aggregate structural power, and in contrast to neorealist insistence on states pragmatically seek to achieve mainly material benefits, small states' pursuit ideational objectives too. Studies show that insufficient power capabilities do not inhibit small states from seeking "status" just as their larger counterparts do (Wohlforth, 2015). One of the means to do that is by creating normative appeals and relying on international legitimacy and the norms that underline cooperation through diplomatic networks and international organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organizations and other frameworks (Pedersen, 1987; Vandenbosch, 1964; Cooper and Shaw, 2009; Archer, Bailes and Wivel, 2014; Long, 2017; Narlikar, 2011).

Other studies have referred to "soft power" as a tool of power and as a source of success in international politics for any country given the changing nature of power in the international arena (Nye, 1990, 2002, 2004, 2011). Interestingly, in contrast with hard power, soft power is not exclusive to particular states. In fact, any country can develop its own soft power capabilities. Likewise, soft power does not only achieve ideational benefits but material advantages too. Recent studies show that soft power has both economic benefits and diplomatic clout in a variety of issues such as human rights, conflict resolution, mediation, humanitarian, environment and development issues (Ingebritsen, 2002).

Small states can exert influence on world politics by using appropriate strategies in spite of the substantial disadvantage of being small. To overcome the lack of broad aggregate power, small states need to prioritize their efforts by concentrating on issue-specific power, "Through a willingness to direct more resources to specific issues, small states can exert as much or even more influence than large states" (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017: p. 9). Small states need to emphasise certain policy sectors that represent a vital diplomatic and economic importance to their survival, national interests and areas where they can gain direct strategic benefits (Panke, 2010; Thorhallsson, 2000; Habeeb, 1988).

In sum, the unique characteristics of small states compel them to conduct and adopt certain strategic behaviors and tactics. For example, small states prefer to work within a multilateral institutional framework, which reduce the power asymmetry between states, decrease the transaction costs of diplomacy, and impose constraints on large states (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2006). Most scholars believe

that small states benefit the most from these organizations. Small states employ these organizations abilities in gathering, analyzing, and disseminating of data, a forum for exchanges of views and decision-making. Likewise, these organizations defining the norms, creating the rules, monitoring and enforcing of rules, settling of disputes, allocating resources and assistance, and deploying forces. Finally, the multilateral nature of these organizations compensates the poor diplomatic outreach of small states and helps them to fill these gaps (Karns and Mingst, 2004).

What is missing in the theoretical debate on small states in international politics in general, and regarding the power of small states in particular? Most of the literature emphasises Eurocentric case studies such as Iceland, (Corgan, 2002; Thorhallsson, 2018) EU and Western experiences overall (Steinmetz and Wivel, 2010; Thorhallsson, 2000). The number of studies on non-Western small states is very modest (Braveboy-Wagner, 2008; Hey, 2003). Likewise, most of the studies that investigate the power of small states begin with completely contradictory assumptions. These studies argue that, due to possession of strategic natural resources and geostrategic significant location, certain small states (such as the Gulf States) have regional and international influence. Other studies focus on suggesting alternative strategies to small countries, which are believed to strengthen the security of these small states and expand their influence in international forums. These kinds of literature assume that through tools and means such as multilateralism, strategic hedging, appeasement, and soft power diplomacy, small states can execute influence in international politics.

Surprisingly, these assumptions neither discuss nor trace the origins of small states building their capabilities, nor the historical and social genesis of state-formation, and capacity-building process per se. Overlooking political transformation that these states have undergone prevent from understanding ways in which small states construct and build-up these capacities. Rather than assuming that these capabilities are pre-given or are de facto variables, the mainstream literature on small states in international politics does not question the socioeconomic and sociopolitical foundations which makes them insignificant to understand the process of change and development of the small state. This will impede the efforts of understanding complexity of international relations of small states and examining the dynamics of the relationship between small and large states, away from the dichotomy of realist security and survival strategies, and the neoliberal emphasis on the functional role of international institutions, international trade, and liberal economic cooperation.

The Small States in the Arabian Gulf

The literature on small states in the Gulf region focuses on three main topics. International politics of the Gulf States, their foreign and security policies, and to

which an increasing attention has been paid to the study of growing accumulative power and influence of small Gulf States recently, especially the UAE and Qatar after the outbreak of the Arab Uprising of 2011.

Since the beginning of the 21st century the Arab Gulf region is still neglected or under-researched. According to Onn Winckler, there were “only two books had been written on this country prior to the early 2000s and I doubt if there was any full academic course in any university outside the Gulf on Qatar until recent years” (Winckler, 2015: p. 159). This paper investigates the rise of small states in the Arabian Gulf region, which includes the six-member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) organization, plus Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. This nine-member-order contain five small states (Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Yemen, and Kuwait). Most of the literature deals with these different actors in semi-unified category under the wider umbrella of Middle East studies (Kornay and Des-souki, 2010; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, 2014), Persian Gulf Studies (Kamrava 2011; Moghaddam, 2009; Gause, 2010), or the GCC umbrella (Legranzi, 2011; Ulrichsen, 2017; Young, 2017). Other studies combined these divergent countries under the umbrella of rentier economies (Ulrichsen, 2016) or oil-based economy societies (Foley, 2010, Ross, 2013). Therefore, as Karen Young correctly pointed out, in order to understand diverse trends in the Gulf States, IR and foreign policy scholars should avoid the common mistake of most of “typology” of the Gulf States based on the false assumption of a shared model of governance, culture, and traditions. (Young, 2017: p. v).

Because of methodological considerations, this paper is not interested in this analytical direction, although the author believes that the Arab Gulf States have many similarities (historically, economically, culturally and socially). On the contrary, the author believes that in spite of these similarities, each Gulf country has its unique historical and developmental experience, where the process of nation-building, and foreign policy orientation was basically manufactured and produced individually through distinct socioeconomic and sociopolitical features. Likewise, this literature review, justifiably, had to eliminate cases of other small states in the Gulf region such as Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait. Bahrain lacks financial and economic capabilities of the UAE and Qatar. As for Kuwait, which is considered to be one of the richest countries in the region and in the world (in term of GDP per capita), it does not share the same vision as the UAE or Qatar, and it also does not adopt same assertive or ambitious foreign policy trend of these two states (Al-Ebraheem, 1984 [2016]). Finally, under the longstanding ruling of Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Sultanate of Oman with its moderate finance and economic capabilities kept conducts and adopt genuinely a different foreign policy and strategic choices (neutrality, non-intervention, and reconciliation) than the Abu Dhabi and Doha and the rest of the GCC members (Al-Khalili, 2009).

The Rise of Small Arab Gulf States

Most of the studies on small states in the Arab Gulf Region (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE) focus mainly on the security strategies of survival, oil, the strategic relations with great powers, regional relations, economic cooperation, political economy of oil, and the increasing soft power capabilities (Almezzani and Rickli, 2016; Colombo and Ragab, 2017). The growing influences of the Arab Gulf States attract attention of Gulf experts worldwide. Since 2010, the number of studies that inspect this phenomenon has grown rapidly. Abdulkhaliq Abdullah called this phenomenon “*the Gulf Moment*” (Abdullah, 2012, 2010), while other scholars saw the enormous impact of these states as the beginning of the so-called “the Gulfization of the Arab World” process (Jones, Porter, and Valeri, 2018). Rory Miller considered these states as global powers in the making (Miller, 2016).

These studies stress the manifestations of the Gulf States rising after the Arab uprisings, especially towards traditional regional powers such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The argument of these studies claims that to protect and preserve their security and economic interests, spread their influence on the regional arena, and consolidate their regional status, the Gulf countries seek to spoil, foil and vanquish these revolutions through tools and means such as foreign aid, military intervention, political manipulation, and economic sanctions. Because of the Arab uprisings, the Gulf countries are facing new kinds of challenges the most threatening ones since the fall of Saddam’s regime in 2003 (Davidson, 2012). For instance, the popular intifada reached Bahrain and Oman in mid-2011, the Islamic State (IS) rose violently in Syria, Iraq and across the region, and the regional landscape became more chaotic and radicalized. These challenges and threats forced the Gulf countries to reappraise orientations of their foreign policies and approaches of dealing with regional crises and conflict.

The Arab Spring represents a transformative moment in the history of the Arab Gulf States that manifest the growing power of these small states. For instance, many studies investigated consequences of the Arab uprising on the group of six GCC countries (Davidson, 2010, 2012, 2016). Others focus on the way the Arab uprising represents a threat to the Gulf countries (Ulrichsen, 2015; Pollack, 2011). While some studies considered Arab Spring to be an unexpected opportunity to the Gulf countries in exerting dominance and regional hegemony (Althani, 2012), other scholars concluded that the Gulf countries are leading the counter-revolution camp that seek to abort the Arab awakening (Lynch, 2014; Hass and Lesch, 2017). Likewise, some scholars argued that to expand their soft power and enforce their regional influence, the Gulf countries became prominent proponents of the Arab Uprising, namely Qatar and the U.A.E. (Ulrichsen, 2014; Guzansky, 2014).

Furthermore, the experts' attention was attracted by the Gulf policies toward the rise of political Islam, and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular (Ramadan, 2012; Hamid, 2014), as well as the balance of power dynamics and the regional security architecture (Almezaini and Rickli, 2016; Fürtig, 2014). Last but not least, there is a number of studies focused on investigating the relationships between Egypt, Iran, Turkey on the one hand, and the Arab Gulf countries on the other hand, in the post-revolution period (Mason, 2016, 2014; Fuller, 2014; Yossef and Cerami, 2015; Joyce, 2012; Saikal, 2016).

For instance, in his *"Kingdoms of Desert"*, Rory Miller, chronologically starts from the early 1970s with the creation of newborn small states that coincided with the first wave of oil boom and them taking control of their own fortunes. Miller emphasises on the role of changing prices of oil on the challenges that the Arab Gulf states faced, specifically in terms of using their oil and gas wealth to pursue stability at home and influence abroad (Miller, 2016: p. 1). Miller described the incredible journey of a group of small Arab Gulf countries that was only fifty years ago "had no towns or cities with populations exceeding 15,000," and becoming now "a bustling centre of international commerce and finance, home to state-of-the-art infrastructure, major international sporting events, and world-class museums and galleries". Likewise, Miller outlines how these small states have "taken major stakes in prominent companies, prime real estate, top financial institutions, and luxury brands" in Europe, North America and elsewhere (Miller, 2016: pp. 1-2).

The problem with Miller's study (and with majority of studies that discuss the phenomenon of small Gulf States' rise) is its descriptive nature. The book describes features and forms of the Gulf ascension without going into details and discussing how these Khaleeji kingdoms, especially small sheikhdoms such as the UAE and Qatar, have become that most influential regional actors. Likewise, Miller discussed the regional and international manifestations of these kingdoms, but he did not discuss the process of sociopolitical and socioeconomic transformation inside these kingdoms since the oil boom in the 1970s, which is the subject of this paper.

The Case of the UAE & Qatar

Christopher Davidson's *"The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival"* is one of the few serious empirical and theoretical studies that engage with the process of state formation, the role of social contract, and the influence of socioeconomic development on the survival and the intensity of the UAE. This book discusses the process of historical transformation of a newborn, underdeveloped and pre-modern sheikhdom of the UAE that was established in 1972. Based on fieldwork and archival research, Davidson explores the historical background of the lower Gulf region by emphasising the role of the British Empire in the development of it and

its effects on local systems, oil finding, and geostrategic significance. These factors were the main determinations of the region's position in the international system (Davidson, 2005: pp. 21-25). Davidson also examines the correlation between the capitalist-based structure of Gulf economies and the smooth transition of power after the British withdrawal from the Gulf region, and facilitating the process of independence, and nation-building. For Davidson, the incorporation of capitalist structure within the newborn states made it more functional and helped the new rulers secure their political and social stability (Davidson, 2005: pp. 139-144).

Davidson pointed out the role of traditional social hierarchy and the structures of power in this tribal society. He explored the tactics and methods that the founder of the UAE (Sheikh Zayed Bin Nahyan) employed to assimilate and unite tribes and families together (Davidson, 2005: pp. 97-102). Another critical issue discussed by Davidson was the economic dependency of a small, desert and arid state such as the UAE. He showed that despite its massive wealth, the UAE tried to transform its economy Oil-based into more diversified model, from consumption to production. This was a possible thanks to the petrodollar revenues of the oil and with a goal of improving its long-term position. The UAE governments traditionally encouraged the transmission and internal substitution of foreign technologies to overcome what Davidson called "*internal pathologies*" and the challenges this process confronted (Davidson, 2005: pp. 262-266).

Overall, this book presents one of the most rigorous and comprehensive analytical frameworks on the process of state formation, authority building and regime development of the UAE. This framework can provide valuable insights for our study, especially with regards on the dialectical relations between socioeconomic structure, the development of state-building process and strategies of survival employed by small states.

Qatar is considered to be the most rentier state in the world with the highest GDP per capita and the lowest national population in the MENA region. The study of Qatar has started to get more attention since the early 2000s. The discovery of massive reserves of liquid natural gas (LNG), and the new technology which allowed gas to be liquefied and exported in tanker ships made Qatar into one of the top worldwide exporters of Gas. This leads Qatar to increase its influence as a vital member of OPEC organization, consolidating its relations with great powers and enhancing its international status.

Before the discovery of LNG, like any other small states in the region, Qatar was rarely on the radar of international political research and academic agenda. Since the mid-1990s, and particularly after the establishment of the state-owned gigantic media network 'Al-Jazeera' in 1996, which has become one of the most influential tools of Qatar's regional and international '*soft*' power, Qatar has started

to get more attention from both academic and business circles all over the globe.

In his “*Qatar: Small States: Big Politics*”, Mehran Kamrava seeks to answer the question of “how can a small state, with a little previous history of diplomatic engagement regionally or globally, have emerged as such an influential and significant player in shaping unfolding events across the Middle East and elsewhere?” (Kamrava, 2013: p. 1) To do so, Kamrava outlines the manifestations of Doha’s power and external influence as an emergent small power based on what he calls “*subtle power*” of small states (chapter 2). For Kamrava, there are three main fundamental changes which are considered to be the constitutive origins of Qatar’s rise. The first is the steady shift in the regional balance of power in the Middle East with the diffusion and transition of power from countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria toward the Gulf countries. The second is the changing nature of power in the international arena: where the hard/traditional forms of power are not the only means of success in international politics anymore, and where soft and smart forms of power (especially what Kamrava calls ‘subtle power’ that rests mainly on a “highly visible position of centrality”) are gradually considered to be vital means of reaching desired objectives (Kamrava, 2013: p. 12). The third change is the strong relationship between state and society in Qatar, where the ruling family employs enormous revenues of oil to increase community loyalty, reduce political opposition, reinforce national identity, and obtain community support for ambitious development projects and economic transformation plans (Kamrava, 2013 pp. 10-12).

Methodologically speaking, Kamrava’s book seems very descriptive and lacks to rigorous and substantive theoretical and empirical analysis in comparison with Davidson’s on the UAE. In contrast with Davidson, who presents insightful analysis of the transformations in the UAE, Kamrava does not engage or navigate the genesis of sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes of Qatar that make such micro-states “quickly become one of the most consequential and influential actors in the region” (Kamrava, 2013: p. 1) and successfully adopt “big politics” strategies.

How to Study Small States: A Historical Sociology perspective

The paper mainly concerns on measuring the nature and forms of change within small states by emphasising such features as state formulation process, authority building mechanism, state-society relations, state-capacity and institutional development, etc. On the regional level, it investigates the role and impacts of power dynamics, the rise and fall of regional power in the Arab World, war, identity formation processes, evolving institutional structure of the region and ways in which it relates to the case of small Arab Gulf States.

In order to understand the rise of small states in the Arab Gulf region as a form

of change, this paper claims that Historical Sociology (HS) as the main methodological framework (Hobson, 1998). Basically, HS refers to “a subfield of sociology studying the structures and processes that have shaped important features of the modern world, including the development of the rational bureaucratic state, the emergence of capitalism, international institutions and trade, transnational forces, revolutions, and warfare” (Pula and Stivachtis, 2017: p. 1). According to Fred Halliday, HS mostly investigates “the core components of a political and social order, state, ideology, and society, and focuses specifically on how institutions, be they political or social/religious power, are established and maintained” (Halliday, 2005: p. 36). These institutions include coercion, disciplinary and appropriation institutions that had been established in the modern times and the role and impacts of both domestic variables such as ever-changing, non-state social forces and systemic variables such as global structures of power and imperial/capitalist competition (Halliday, 2005: pp. 72-73).

Basically, HS is an attempt to pave the way for greater engagement between IR and sociology, since the central core of this subfield aims to understand large-scale historical change and identify transformative moments that reshaped social structures and institutions and revealed hidden social structures that frustrated or advanced human aspirations (Pula and Stivachtis, 2017: pp. 1-2). Unfortunately, most of the HS studies emphasis on system and sub-system level of analysis and less attention had been given to the study of small states or individual cases. Within the field of international relations, the relevance of HS has been disputed due to the underestimation of the importance of history and historical analysis in this filed. IR theories consider history as superfluous or exogenous to the subject matter of the discipline (Pula and Stivachtis, 2017: p. 3).

In general, mainstream IR theorists employ an “*instrumentalist*” approach of history, where they only used it as a tool to confirm theories of the present, not to rethink the present (Rosecrance, 1973; Cox, 1986; Barnett, 2002). In contrast to this instrumental and functionalist use of history, historical sociologists such as John Hobson called for a “constitutive” reading of history. According to Hobson, the constitutive reading of history “examine[s] history not simply for its own sake or to tell us more about the past, nor simply as a means to confirm theorising of the present, but rather as a means to rethink theories and problematise the analysis of the present, and thereby to reconfigure the international relations research agenda” (Hobson, 2002, p. 5).

Neorealists either assume that history is repetitive nothing ever changes because of the timeless presence of anarchy (Waltz, 1979) or that history takes on the form of repetitive great power/hegemonic cycles, each phase of which is essentially identical, with the only difference of great power either rising or declining (Gilpin, 1981). Consequently, neorealists either assert that world politics has

always been governed by timeless and constant logic of anarchy or argue that balance of power politics has been practiced for over millennia (Waltz, 1986, p. 341; Kaufman, Little, and Wohlforth, 2007). As Waltz claimed, the utility of historical-sociological inquiry is dismissed (Waltz, 1979, pp. 43–49).

From HS perspective, mainstream IR theories appear to be caught within two modes of ahistoricism: “*chronofetishism*” and “*tempocentrism*”. According to Hobson, chronofetishism represents the assumption that the present can be adequately explained only by examining the present (Hobson, 2002: p. 6). In sum, by presenting international history as a static entity that operates according to a constant and timeless logic, tempocentrism ignores the fact that there has not been one international system but many, all of which are quite different. Likewise, the HS declines the neoliberals’ perspective on the process of change and state formation in international system. Neoliberals believe that historical progression has occurred from a world divided into states to the one in which the non-state (transnational) has become significant, and that change and growth in the international system over time can be characterized as a linear process over time (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane 1989). As proponents of critical school, historical sociologists argue that neoliberal assumptions reflect the Anglo-Saxon assumption and Eurocentric experience intentionally neglecting and overlooking other forms of organizations, governance, development, and administration produced by other communities and nations outside the West (Halliday, 2005; 255–257).

With regard to constructivism, and despite the similarities with HS, there are a number of differences between HS and constructivist approaches. Many historical sociologists believe that constructivism tends to swap external, imposed categories from the vantage point of regional actors. Moreover, constructivism deliberately overlooks the role and impacts of material factors in favor of ideational and normative factors. For historical sociologists, when it comes to the Middle East, constructivism is considered to be old-fashioned deception and a self-delusional analytical frame (Halliday, 2005: pp. 32–33).

The main questions HS are related to political power, state formation process, social change and improvement of human conditions by unmaking and remaking human institutions that play a crucial role within societies since industrialization in 18th and 19th centuries Europe (Gellner, 1988; Elias, 1994). Further, HS challenges assumptions of linear development of history and the interpretation of modernity as an evolutionary process with roots in Western Europe. Moreover, it questions the validity of noncritical theorizing of structures of power organized around such conceptual and analytical categories such as class, gender, race, and completely neglecting the concept of the state (Skocpol, 1979; Moore, 1966; Tilly, 1975, 1978, 1981; Wallerstein, 1974). In contrast, the HS understand modernity, the rise of the modern state and other events, as a product of transformative his-

torical events such as wars, revolutions, and structures of social inequality, or what Charles Tilly called “big structures, long processes, huge comparisons” (Polanyi, 1957; Tilly, 1984).

Historical Sociology and the rise of Small Arab Gulf States

Historical sociology perspective, as a co-constitution of the inter/trans-national and the state levels, that traces the impact of long-term macro transformations, path-dependency, variegated regime types (Hinnebusch, 2013: p. 137), could help us illuminate the parameters of the state formation process, and authority-building paths leading to the rise of small states in the Arab Gulf region. Given the fact that states in the Middle East are operating in “a quasi-autonomous fashion” (Hurd, 2005: p. 245), it makes the analysis of Middle Eastern politics into a convoluted process. Fred Halliday suggests that HS provides an analytical framework that could “combine an awareness of that margin of independence... in the face of all theories of total foreign control of events, with a study of the factors that do constrain and shape a state’s foreign policy” (Halliday, 2005: p. 43).

In contrast with the widely accepted presumption of “the ruler decides” model of understanding the policies of Arab and Gulf states, historical sociologists believe it is a false argument. They argue that the leaders of Middle Eastern countries operate within a variety of domestic and external restrictions such as bureaucratic interests, public opinion, state capacity (including economic, demographic, and geographic factors), norms (nationalism, revolution, Islamism), and a more developed, prosperous aggressive external world (Halliday, 2005: pp. 69-70). For instance, analyzing the Middle Eastern states and societies through historical sociology, Fred Halliday emphasises four main analytic frames, which include military conflict, modern ideologies, transnational actors, and international political economy (Halliday; 2005: 197-302). Others, like Raymond Hinnebusch and Adham Saouli, believe that the status of small states of the Arab Gulf (and almost all members of the Arab Regional system) can be explained and understood by the context and process of state formation and state-capacity building (Saouli, 2012; Hinnebusch, 2015, 2010).

Hinnebusch argued that state’s status pathways in the Middle East are mainly a product of how state-builders address three fundamental challenges: nation-building, economic development and authority building (Hinnebusch, 2010: p. 201). These strategies were shaped through negotiation of environmental opportunities and pressures on the domestic level (balance of class power, wealth, political culture), on the regional level (war, oil, ideology, identity), and on the international level (international structure, deepening globalization). According to Hinnebusch, the outcomes of these strategies depend on sufficient congruence of a regime’s strategy with its environment incentives, and/or the ability to resist

its restraints (Hinnebusch, 2010: p. 201).

Hinnebusch claimed that to understand the process of state formation, building state-capacity and power transition it is important to understand the process of nation-building and regime types in the Middle East and the Gulf region and to illuminate the dialectical relations between identity and territory, which could enhance or inhibit unity and seize legitimacy. In the Middle East, there was a prevalent incongruence between territory (state) and identity (nation) or between norms of sovereignty (sub-state) and the norms of supra-state identities; i.e., Islam and Arabism; the *Dawla* [state] and the *Umma* [nation] (Eyadat, Corrao, and Hashas, 2018; Al-Barghouti, 2008; Tibi, 2009; Ayubi, 1995; Zubaida, 1989). The balance between these ideological regimes has affected state cohesion, integration, and determined policies and strategic outcomes through the last six decades (Hinnebusch, 2010: p. 200; Barnett, 1995, 1993).

In order to understand and analyze the process of change in the international system, HS gives great attention to the process of state formation. For the Middle Eastern case, historical sociologists stress the role of external forces and internal developments factors such as imperial competition, colonialism, the creation of modern state institutions, forging of national identity, secularization process, and the emergence of ideological movements after the end of the First World War (Halliday, 2005: pp. 79-82; Buzan, and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009). Historical records show that the rise of the modern state (even in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf regions) involves the process of producing and the promoting of ideology, nationalism, legitimization of this division (Halliday, 2005: p. 257). Consequently, historical sociologists are perspicacious in asserting this argument as a springboard for advancing our understanding of change processes in the Middle East, and the rise of the small Arab Gulf States, respectively.

Future studies should emphasise the connection between porous boundaries of state-society relations and the persistent of structural power factors; e.g., global financial system, balance of power, climate of ideas, and the character of technology for both state and non-state actors. For example, Hurd suggests broadening the framework of analysis to encompass the discussion on traditional and modern methods of governance, the ability to understand the transformation in the Middle East in will augmentative (Hurd, 2005). This kind of studies could enhance our understanding of how small states such as the UAE and Qatar look at their relations with larger neighbours such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and to each other. While the narrow lens of realist-neoliberal dichotomy of national interests, security considerations, balance of power calculations, and economic interdependence, HS analysis emphasise deconstruction of the tribal, religious, ethnic and communal genesis of these states, and ways in which these variables effect the process of state-formation, boundaries-making, foreign policy and interstate relations. After

all the Arab Gulf states, like most of the Middle East countries, are still just “*tribes with national flags*” in the words of Bassam Tibi (Tibi 1997; Ayubi, 1996; Glass, 1990; Khoury and Kostiner, 1990; Ajami, 1991).

A suggested Three-level model

Why (and how) certain small states become strong and emerge as a *power* on international stage, while others do not? Neorealists and neoliberals argue that international politics is an eternal field of struggle and competition between *big* countries, how small states grow such influence over other larger, stronger and more powerful countries? The essence of this paper is to understand the constitutive process of “the rising power of small states in international politics”.

This paper interested in understanding the genesis of small states’ power in world politics rather than explaining the way small states act in international politics or explaining their power and how they implement it. Therefore, the dilemma this study is trying to deconstruct is: where does the power of small states come from? How is it manifested, produced, and projected? I am interested in the study of the source of power, not its implications, origins not outcomes.

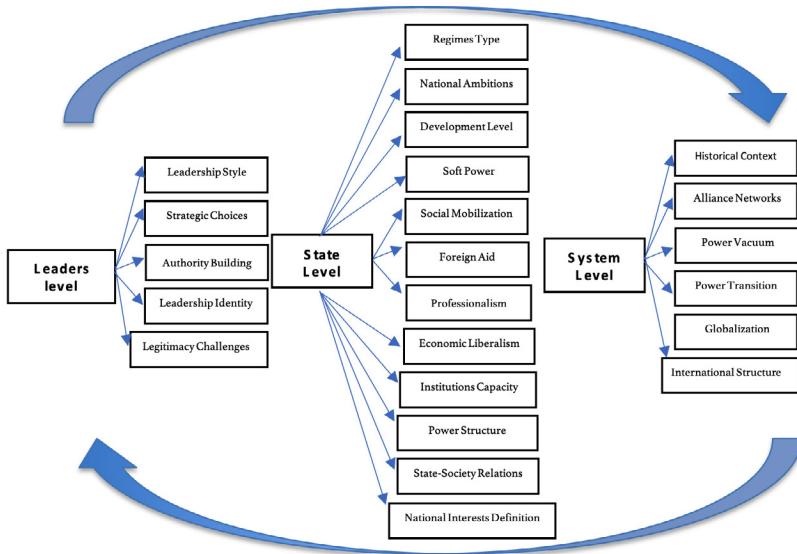
My critique of the IR mainstream theories addressing this problematique emphasises not only the absence of questioning the origins of power of small [Arab Gulf] states, but also explores how do we know what we think we know about these small states? Historical Sociology, especially John Hobson and Stephen Hobden works on neorealism and neoliberalism, suggests that traditional IR theories construct our mind and knowledge of IR phenomenon (Hobden and Hobson, 2002; Hobson, 1998). With all its fallacies and shortcomings (e.g., chronofetishism and tempocentrism) that had been based on the Western experience and understanding of international political dynamics (Hobson, 2002: pp. 6-15). Annette Barker’s classic study on “*The Power of Small States*” [1959] and Matthias Maass’s “*Small States in World Politics*” [2017] reflect the most obvious (and dominant) examples of this fallacy. If the case studies of these works were small states in Africa, Latin America, Asia or the Middle East, with all historical and colonial experiences of these regions and societies, the results and findings of such studies be the same? Clearly, the answer is no.

Nevertheless, despite the attractiveness and promise of such argument and the critique of IR theory it offers, this kind of questions and inquiries are outside the scope of this paper. What this paper is trying to investigate is how and why certain small states become strong and powerful?

If IR scholars understand how the power of small states is established, they can explain the way the small states act in world politics, shape their foreign policies. However, how to modify the theories that deal with the actions and foreign

policies of small states, and states in general. To dissolve this puzzle, this paper claims that the process of small states' rising in international politics find its roots in a number of variables which are embodied in the three level of analysis; i.e., individual level, state level, and system level (see figure 1). However, it comprises several ideational and material variables, which are usually being neglected or/and overlooked. These variables do not encompass traditional realist and neoliberal material sources of power, e.g., military power, economic power, natural resources, population size, etc.

Figure 1: The Rise of Small State: Thre Levels Model



Source: The author

Based on the second law of dialectical materialism that predicts that “*qualitative changes—in a manner exactly fixed for each individual case—can only occur by the quantitative addition or quantitative subtraction of matter or motion*” (Engels, 1987: p. 356), this paper explores the essence of small states' rising process on domestic, regional and international scales (see figure 2).

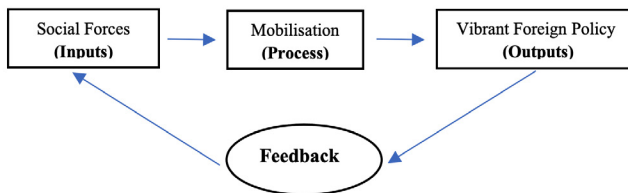
Figure 2: Materialist Dialects of Change



Apparently, the relationships between these levels are overlapping, interconnected and cannot be separated. A full understanding of the phenomenon of small states' rising should incorporate an understanding of the dialectic of interconnectivity and mutual influence of these variables and indicators, and how they constitute and affect each other. The variables of these three levels of analysis (as inputs) play a crucial role in the process of small states rising (the outputs) through their interactions and the relational dynamics within the surrounding domestic and external environments (see figure 3). On the individuals' level (or the leadership level), variables such as legitimacy challenges, leadership style and persona, strategic choices, learning, authority building, and leadership identity are crucial elements to understanding of the micro-foundations of the process of small states' rising. On the state level, a number of variables play an essential role in formulating and constituting the rise of small states. These variables include regime type, power structure, national ambitions, the level of development, soft power, the level of modernization, state-society relations, domestic social ruling alliance, social mobilization, institution capacity and professionalism, foreign aid, economic liberalism and clear definition of national interests, objectives, and vision. Finally, on the system level, historical context plays a vital role in the process of small states' rising, international structure (polarity), alliance networks, power vacuum, power transition, and the relative power of great and regional powers; i.e., great powers fatigue and exhausting, the retreat of regional powers.

Neorealists and Neoliberals believe that every foreign policy is a product of strategic considerations and geopolitics, where nation-states mainly seek to improve their positions in the region to balance and confront foes and rivals. Despite the fundamental role systemic (structural) variables plays in determining the status and the position of states in international politics, the variables of state and individuals' level of analysis are the most important for understanding the process of small states rising in international politics. Evidently, when it comes to the case of small states, the relation between domestic social forces is the most influential one.

Figure 3: Systematic Process of small states Rise



Several studies argue that assertive, ambitious, and even aggressive, foreign policy

of small states is a result of power change, domestic political struggles, leadership personalities and strategic motivations that demonstrate what the leaders are aiming to obtain through adopting certain foreign policy programs (Lawson, 1992: pp. 26-29). Likewise, Robert Gilpin argues that any attempt to measure the change in the international system and how it relates to influence depends on two main variables. First is an extent to which the domestic social structure is efficient. The second is when the profits of national activities start to accumulate and grow in the favour of private sector for the public good interest (Lawson, 1992: p. 30). Gilpin stated that the tendency of a society to seek changes in the international system depends “not only on decreased costs but also on domestic factors that influence the capacity and willingness of a society to pay these costs” (Gilpin, 1981: p. 96).

In the case of the Arab Gulf states, while the UAE and Qatar have not been historically the most efficient regimes (comparing with Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia) they are the only two [small] regimes that adopt such assertive and ambitious foreign policies. These tendencies are still ambiguous and vague. There are five main types of mobilization and transformations, which took place in the UAE and Qatar in the last four decades and which lead to the rise of these two countries. Similarly, the failure of other small countries in the Gulf region to cope is a result of the insufficiency of these transformations. In contrast with Abu Dhabi and Doha, others small Arab Gulf states failed to address modernization crisis, i.e., economic demands for a big industrial base away from the rentier economy model, establishment of more flexible and efficient administrative apparatuses, and maintenance and strengthening of state-society relationships (public sphere, business elites and civil society). These transformations contain: 1) social mobilisation: transforming from tribe-based society into modernism; 2) economic mobilization: converting from fishing to oil into post-oil economy; 3) political mobilization: developing from tribe and ruling family into nation-state; 4) security and defence mobilization: revolutionizing from protection rackets into independence; 5) foreign policy mobilization: moving from dependency to engagement, into leading and primacy, which is a result of high level of professionalism and institutionalisation of foreign policy decision making process (see table 1).

Table 1: Mobilization type in Small Arab Gulf States

Type of mobilization	Details
Social	form tribal-based society into modernism
Economic	from fishing to Oil into post-oil economy.
Political	from Tribe to family, into nation-building.
Security/Defense	from protection rackets into Independence.
Foreign Policy	from dependency to Engaging, into leading and primacy.

Source: *The author*

Conclusion

The foremost objective of this study is to elucidate how in certain periods the strategic situation could be a tool of implementing vibrant and ambitious external activities. The question here is: why the UAE and Qatar succeed in expanding foreign polities despite their small size, while the other small [and *larger*] Gulf countries fail to act the same? Which social forces are most linked to the Emirati and Qatari external effectiveness, and what are the conditions that create incentives for these social forces to use economic and financial resources as a tool to control and confront their local political rivalries and to strengthen the state's political power? How do these social forces succeed in implementing this policies domestically? Furthermore, the study seeks to provide a conceptual and analytical connection between local political struggles, sociopolitical and sociopolitical mobilization, and the rise and growth of external influence of small Arab Gulf States such as the UAE and Qatar.

Besides HS, and in order to understand the change process in international politics, the paper also suggests using and employing methods such as the case study. In fact, recent studies show that social science starts to move away from variable-centered approach to causality and towards a case-based approach, where case study has become ubiquitous and the most widely used research design in almost every major research program in the field of international relations (Lamont, 2017; John Odell, 2004; Bennett and Elman, 2007: p. 171). According to Brady and Collier, the case study method can establish a variegated set of tools to capture the complexity of social behaviour (Brady and Collier, 2004; Gerring, 2009). John Gerring claims that the epistemological shifts in the field of social science enhanced the attractiveness of the case study format, especially with the retreat of positivism. This retreat tends to underestimate and downplay the importance of causal mechanism in the analysis of causal relations, and the transformation of the debate within social science into investigating the causal inference and the study of the social world (Gerring, 2009; Lamont, 2017).

The aim of using case study method can be justified by claiming that instead of searching for universal generalizations, this paper applies HS framework to emphasise causal mechanisms, which have varying effects, depending on contexts. The paper will adopt McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's analogy that relying on using "paired comparisons of uncommon cases to find out how recurrent causal mechanisms combine differently with varying initial and environmental conditions to produce radically different outcomes" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: p. 8). The use of case study method could be advantageous for many reasons. It could illuminate causal processes and causal mechanisms, investigate theory testing and the generation of new hypotheses, advance in-depth knowledge of particular events, notions, or practices, and examine the conceptual validity, either through

refining concepts under examination, or creating explanatory typologies (Lamont, 2017; Elman, 2005; Collier and Mahon, 1993).

The Case study method could also help to understand the way in which states (particularly small states) generate, produce, and execute power. Moreover, it could help to explore why in which changes in relative power calculations influence conceptualization of the role of the state within the international system and state's foreign policy choices and international political outcomes (Bennett and Elman, 2007: p. 183). For example, in a different example, Fareed Zakaria attributed the case study of the rise of the United States as an expansionist nation-state, to the development of certain mechanisms that allowed the government to extract and allocate resources for military action in the decades that followed the end of the American civil war in 1865 (Zakaria, 1998: pp. 11-12). The changes of the US behaviour can be indicated and understood through investigate the nature of changes that occurred in the structure and their scope, as well as capacity of the state to develop from a "decentralized, diffuse and divided" state in the 1880s and 1890s into a modern, assertive, and muscular state (Zakaria, 1998: pp. 39-41). Likewise, in the case study of India and its army, Stephen Rosen claims that the differences in social structure identifying people's loyalties, and that "the dominant social structures of a group of people might lead to characteristic strengths and vulnerabilities of each society when making money or making war" (Rosen, 1996: p. 24). Furthermore, such methods could help us understand a dynamic phenomenon such as the rise of small states.

As mentioned above, the paper assumes that the phenomenon of the increasing power of small Arab Gulf states finds its roots in the changing nature of certain ideational variables i.e., identity, norms, institutions, and interests, as much in material variables such as the balance of power, economic development and security considerations. Therefore, the rise of the small Arab Gulf States is a product of the large-scale historical change in the social and institutional structures of both the UAE and Qatari societies.

To elaborate further, in order to expand our understanding and adding value to our knowledge about such phenomenon, future studies should investigate, interrogate and examine various hypotheses; i.e., 1) As the long-term power of the small states increases, the state will increase its external mobilization/extraction. In other words, as the long-term level of modernization and internal mobilization increases, the small state will expand its external extraction and validation; 2) As the nation-building and legitimacy-building process being consensual and socially rooted, the state will pursue external validation and engage in international affairs. Meaning, the more peaceful the state-building process, the more likely small states will focus on adopting external strategies, and vice versa; 3) Ambitious leaders of small states will rely on international strategies to greater

extent than other small states leaders. Conversely, moderate/conservative leaders of small states will rely on domestic strategies to a greater extent than ambitious leaders; 4) There are no direct correlations between small States' possession of natural resources, financial and economic capabilities and the external influence and effective foreign policy. Namely, the possession of strategic and significant natural resources (e.g., oil and gas) does not necessarily guarantee that a small state would be internationally powerful or influential; 5) Domestically strong states will emphasise external strategies more than will domestically weak small states. In other words, as long-term domestic stability increases, the small state will increase its external extraction and allocate resources to engage in the international arena; 6) If national identity is clear and lucidly defined, the small state will adopt an efficient foreign policy. In other words, if the differentiation between the *Darwala* (the state) and the *Umma* (the nation) is clear, the foreign policy of small states will be unchained and energetic; 7) As the long-term professionalism and institutionalization level of the decision-making process of the small states increases, the external involvement of small states will increase; and last but not least 8) As the greater-scale of large and middle powers' burdens and fatigue increases, the small states will increase their engagement in the regional neighbourhood and in international affairs. In other words, the weaknesses of regional and international powers increase the possibilities of small states' external extraction and allocation of resources for the purpose of engaging in the international arena.

Bio

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