

CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

SMALL STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Foundations and Application of the Complex Model of Size

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Supervisor: László Csicsmann, PhD
Associate Professor

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Budapest, 2018

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International Relations Multidisciplinary Doctoral School

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INTRODUCTION

“It is the vice of the vulgar mind to be thrilled by bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are a thousand more wonderful than one square mile, and that a million square miles are almost the same as heaven. This is not imagination. No, it kills it.”¹

On the basis of the words of E.M. Forster, the mainstream schools of international relations (IR) can be criticised for having a vulgar mind. Scholars of the discipline consider the importance of size and the benefits of bigness as almost axiomatic, unintentionally putting an equitation mark between “power” and “size”. Kenneth Waltz, one of the most influential theorists in IR built the neorealist framework on the basis of the different capabilities (e.g. size) of functionally identical actors in the anarchic environment, which led to an almost complete neglect (and even contempt) of small states. Waltz [1979, 72-73] himself even jokes about those who would build theories on smaller states – according to him, *“it would be as ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica as it would be to construct an economic theory of oligopolistic competition based on the minor firms in a sector of an economy”*.

Following the logic of Forster, one can argue that by identifying small states as negligible, the school of IR “kills its own imagination” in many ways. First, it creates a blind spot for itself which includes the majority of states in the international system (depending on the definition of “smallness”). Second, as theory-making wittingly concentrates solely on larger actors, the applicability of each political model and presumption for other entities is highly questionable. Third, with exaggerating the importance of material size in world politics, scholars have built up a cognitive cage for themselves in which they fail to identify and properly analyse the behaviour and the impact of small states in the international system. This self-limitation makes it harder for scientific advancements from other fields which question the exclusive causality between

¹ From Forster, 2007, 31. The present doctoral dissertation is not the only piece in the small state literature to use this quote, see e.g. Payne, 2009, 287.

material resources and power² to penetrate the realm of international political science. Fourth, by the 21st century, the traditional constraints put on small states have been significantly eased due to systemic processes like globalization, the institutionalisation of world politics, the emergence of complex interdependences [Neumann – Gstöhl, 2004, 7-8]. Therefore, our automatically accepted axioms in relations with size and its effects on state power should be revisited and restructured to keep our discipline relevant and theoretically up-to-date.

As a result of these phenomena, mainstream IR became unable to fully comprehend and interpret the effects of size on a state's foreign policy. Nonetheless, without the automatic acceptance of the “millennia-old wisdom” that size equals power, the study of international relations can reinvent its imagination. Creating a new and comprehensive way of modelling the effects of size would enable us not only to interpret the behaviour of small states, but to revisit and reconsider the history of conflicts, the decisive moments and the political outcomes of international interactions.

Such attempts have been made in the realm of historiography as well. Tony Smith [2000] suggested a “pericentric framework” to revisit the history of the Cold War. In the words of Charles K. Armstrong [2013, 4],

“a shift of focus from Great Power conflict to the role of smaller actors in the international system might give us a very different view of recent international history. (...) The Cold War cannot be explained by US-Soviet rivalry alone. Certain local actors – including North and South Korea, East and West Germany, Cuba, Israel, the Mujahadin in Afghanistan, the Solidarity movement in Poland, and many others – were not merely manipulated objects, but active subjects shaping, exacerbating, prolonging, or helping to terminate the Cold War at the local and even the global levels.”

Consequently, the idea of the “*tail wagging the dog*” or the “*tyranny of the weak*” [ibid] is not an unprecedented notion, nonetheless it is treated rather as an exemption from the general rule and thus have not been fully theorized in international relations. As it will be

² This is why for example the so-called “three faces of power” debate (taking place in the second half of the Twentieth century) which created a better conceptualization of power and its sources than the traditional way had a limited impact on theorizing international relations.

seen in the following chapters, the majority of the literature of small state studies (SSS) has been following the path trodden by the mainstream IR schools and therefore much of it has reproduced and basically confirmed the fascination of their mother theories on size.

Therefore the aim of the present dissertation is to create a *complex model of size* which 1) excludes every theoretically unproven but automatically accepted view of the importance of material capacities, 2) builds upon the relevant thoughts and theories related to size and smallness, 3) provides a widely applicable theoretical and methodological framework to investigate the role of size and small states in international relations, and 4) leads to new scientific results. From a methodological point of view, I would like to propose a formal model [Sprinz – Wolinsky, 2002; Snidal 2002], which helps us understand how size effects foreign and security policy in a comprehensive manner.

These four aims determine the two hypotheses of the dissertation, the first of which is the following:

H1: A single model (i.e. the complex model of size - CMS) can be set up on the basis of previous theories related to size and smallness which excludes the researcher bias towards largeness.

In order to have an inclusive framework, the complex model of size has to include material and immaterial, as well as systemic and individual theories regarding small states. The common denominator, nonetheless, requires us to start the investigation on the systemic level. Similarly to almost every other factor in international politics, the meaning, importance and consequence of the size of a state varies in different times, international systems, regions and inter-social situations. It interacts with other domestic and systemic variables which determines political processes. Therefore, the implications of smallness can better be understood by setting the systemic approach as a starting point rather than with an individualist, bottom-up view.

This is true regardless of thinking about international relations in solely material or immaterial aspects: on the one hand, a region full of small states is highly different than one with a handful of powerful actors and lots of minor entities, while on the other, inter-social meanings connected to size can also be different in the 19th century and the 21st as well. Neither the material nor the immaterial meaning of size should be considered as constant through time and space and the experiences with size (and the lessons drawn

from them) can vary [Cooper – Shaw, 2009, 5-7.]. As the different notions of international relations such as sovereignty, power, norms [Katzenstein, 1996b, 520-523], size can also have different consequences in the different regions.

Nonetheless, if the analysis remains on the global or regional level, one could easily find oneself in the methodological trap of considering size as a “master variable” which triumphs over other attributes in international behaviour [Katzenstein 1985, 136-137]. That is why Victor Gignoux [2016, 28] argues that foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a better tool in small state studies than systemic theories. Setting the latter one as a starting point, therefore, does not mean the exclusion of individual, state- and sub-state level analyses.

That is why in the present dissertation, I will not consider “size” as the sole independent variable and “foreign policy behaviour” as the dependent variable. One of the basic foundations of the research is that smallness, in itself, does not create a set policy outcome; its effects work in conjunction with other variables and together they constitute a basis for dependence or other mechanisms.

Another methodological challenge for my inquiry is the fact that none of the cited authors share the same definition of small states, which makes the comparison of their thoughts and the identification of the common denominator harder. In general, the lack of the same conceptualisation is a major obstacle in the study of small states, which hinders advancements in the field [Maas, 2009]. In section 1.3., I will provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for small states in which the most frequently used definitions can be included, in the meantime I use the term to those entities which are characterised by the scarcity of material resources, especially in terms of population and economic capacities.

By itself, creating a new theoretically grounded framework does not provide added value for social sciences. In order to avoid meaningless reproduction, the CMS should help us in the investigation of international affairs. That is why I set up a second hypothesis:

H2: The complex model of size provides a widely applicable methodology which leads us to scientific novelties in the research of international relations.

The majority of theories and models in small state studies were very limited in their range and aimed only at investigating a handful of small states in a very specific set of time and place. My endeavour seeks to generalise these observations with the creation of a theoretically founded framework which only has a minimal number of criteria which are required to apply the theory. These conditions are the following:

- *Condition 1*: The system which we investigate should necessarily include modern states as the main actors. This requirement does not mean that they should be the only entities with agency (since no such system exists),³ nonetheless our theoretical framework is wittingly not applicable in premodern times or in the distant future.
- *Condition 2*: Reliable data about the basic notions of size should be available for the researcher.

The second part of H2 refers to scientific novelties. My expectation is that besides the intellectual inquiry, the creation of the CMS in the framework of the constructivist scientific research program⁴ should bear further importance for social sciences. Building new concepts and using different angles are only useful if they contribute to the better understanding of international politics. That is why I included H2, so that my inquiry should only be considered successful if the complex model of size helps us to reach novelties in small state studies in at least one of the following four ways [Elman – Elman, 2003, 34-38]:

- *temporal novelty*: the discovery of new facts which seemed “improbable or even impossible in the light of previous knowledge”;
- *new interpretation novelty*: explaining old facts in a new, more probable and accurate way;
- *heuristic novelty*: the discovery of facts which were not used in the creation of the theory in any ways;

³ Or that we should exclude all variations of state models. On the contrary: the particularities of the regional variations of the modern states should also be investigated (as I will do so in the second chapter).

⁴ We use the framework of Imre Lakatos for interpreting our own endeavour in the dissertation. In this regard one can argue that we seek to implement an “inter-program problem shift” which would change the „hard core” of current small state studies. See Elman – Elman, 2003.

- *background theory novelty*: the discovery of facts which cannot be explained by other, background theories, including the best rival theory.⁵

In order to prove the relevance of the complex model of size, I will apply it to the Middle East region for the time period between 1970 and 2017 and its small states. The choice of the region has multiple reasons. Firstly, it fits the conditions described above, therefore there should be no question marks about the adequacy of the region. Secondly, when it comes to small state literature, usually the European or the Pacific region is analysed, and no such work has been written about the Middle East. Thirdly, the region provides an intriguing case study due to its unique social and economic development differing from the West. Fourthly, the author of the dissertation has a special academic interest in the examination of Middle Eastern countries.

It is important to mention that the complex model of size is both an epistemological and an ontological theory – it proposes new objects of analysis and situations (small states and their behaviour in specific social contexts) and a distinct set of methods (to be outlined later) at the same time.

The structure of the dissertation rests on the hypotheses outlined above. The complex model of size will be outlined in Chapter 1, in which a framework will be set up to review the existing literature and the conceptualisation of small states and the description of the proposed methodology of CMS will be provided. Methodologically speaking, the CMS will be built up as a formal model, which aims at interpreting the behaviour of actors and the interactions between them based on a series of assumptions regarding different variables. In Chapter 2-4, I will apply the model to the Middle East and its small states. In the conclusion, I will reflect on the hypotheses and give recommendations for further research.

Naturally, the question rises whether size is an important enough variable to analyse in foreign policy or international relations. Small states come in many shapes and have many different features thus they behave in markedly different ways. While I accept the validity of this argument, I question the conclusion drawn from it. Size is not the sole

⁵ We understand that the conceptualisation of Lakatos on scientific advancements is not a universally accepted way to describe novelties (especially in terms of the new interpretation novelty), nonetheless we argue that a theorising work should include some metrics to evaluate the successful nature of theory-building and, on the other hand, the framework of Lakatos is still the best way to do that (although the comparison of such methodologies does not constitute the topic of the present dissertation).

and probably not the most important factor in foreign policy, nonetheless, it would be foolish to argue that it cannot or does not play an important role in many ways. I follow the pathway of Katzenstein [1985] arguing that connected to other variables, size and smallness have a huge effect in political outcomes, and it is the duty of the researcher to unfold and interpret these connections. Moreover, as the importance of the different variables always change in international relations, all other aspects should be treated the same and none of them should monopolize the interpretation of foreign policy.

1. THE COMPLEX MODEL OF SIZE

The aim of the first chapter is to set up the basic notions of the complex model of size, review and place the most important pieces of the related literature in its framework and to offer an applicable methodology. In Part 1.1., I will conceptualise size and draw the basic idea behind the CMS, then, in Part 1.2., I review the literature based on these thoughts and identify their place in the CMS. The complex model of size and the methodology of the dissertation will be outlined in Part 1.3., which also includes the structure of the dissertation.

1.1. Conceptualising size

The size of political communities – let them be states, city states, empires, etc. – has always been a widely-discussed topic in social science for millennia. Since the notion is unavoidable in several disciplines – including political science, international relations, sociology and economics – the exact meaning and the conceptualisation of size varied to a surprisingly great extent. In consequence, one cannot provide a complete, exhaustive overview of all literature related to the size of states.

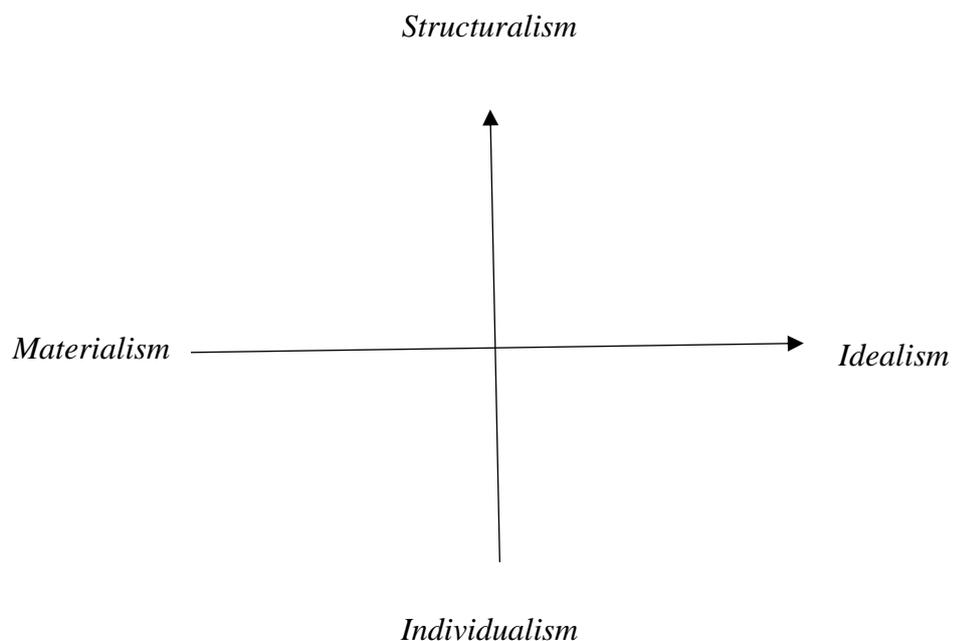
Therefore, my intention here is to create a framework which can comprehend and interpret only the major traditions concerning size and smallness in international relations. For this endeavour, I will use a constructivist framework which appears in Alexander Wendt's Social Theory [1999, 22-39] as well as in *The Culture of National Security* [Jepperson – Wendt – Katzenstein, 1996, 36-42].⁶ According to the model (outlined in Chart 1), different theories of IR have belonged to four distinct set of knowledge formed on the basis of two separate questions – whether they dealt with material or immaterial variables (realism or idealism) and whether they looked at international politics from a top-down (emphasizing system-level variables) or a bottom-up approach (emphasizing the agency of units) (structuralism or individualism).

Based on this framework, the fundamental idea of the CMS is that size should be conceptualised in these four ways in order to get a complete and insightful picture of how size and smallness effect state behaviour and foreign policy (see Chart 2). First, the

⁶ As a result, in spite of the holistic vision of the dissertation, the complex model of size clearly builds upon a constructivist viewpoint and belongs to that tradition of small state studies. I strongly believe that among the major schools, it is constructivism which can serve best as a common denominator.

quantity of the available resources shape all entities “from the inside” or from the bottom-up materially, especially in terms of resource allocation, effectiveness, (dis)economies of scale, autarchy or scarcity, etc. This is what we can call the realist or materialist individualism. This notion has been a characteristic of a handful of writers representing classic realism and neoclassical economics. In the following, I will call this attribute of a state “absolute size”. Second, the resources which a state possesses do not exist in a vacuum; the regional distribution of resources and the position of a state in this distribution also effect foreign policy. This notion of “relative size” was born in the realm of realist or materialist structuralism and it dominated IR through the neorealist framework, maybe most clearly visible by the analysis of regional and global balance of power.

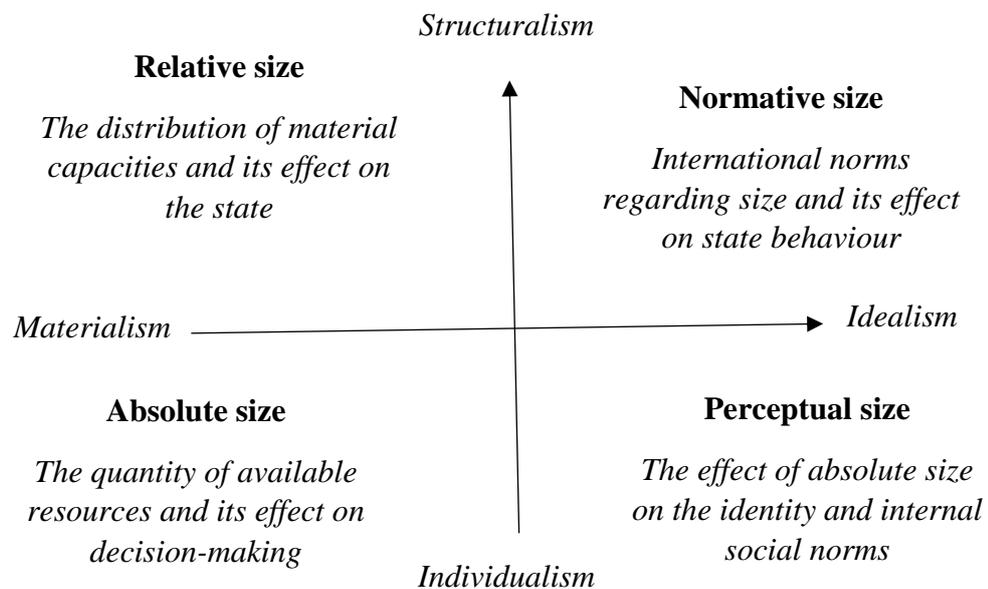
Chart 1: The four sociologies of international politics



By opening up to immaterial factors, I can also include idealist viewpoints in the inquiry. The third way in which size effects behaviour is through identity and internal norms, namely the way in which the meaning of smallness and largeness is socially constructed in the political community. Size undoubtedly shapes the ego’s perception of self and thus, foreign policy. This “perceptual size” (i.e. the way in which decision-makers see the state as small or large, weak or strong and the interpretations they draw from this perception), constitutes a fundamental part of the investigation.

The fourth and last way in which size effects foreign policy is the combination of structural and idealist thoughts – the understanding of the international system more as an international society (in which actors obey or defy existing social norms, constitute and reconstitute the image about each other and create immaterial and normative rules which govern their relations) helps us investigate how size is conceptualised by the international community as “normative size”.

Chart 2: The basic framework of the complex model of size



These four ways are the ones in which size effect state behaviour and thus political outcomes. Almost all pieces of the related relevant small state studies literature can be inserted into this framework, nonetheless, they usually only cover one aspect or mix them unintentionally. Our argument is that in order to fully understand a state’s behaviour, one should take all four aspects into account.

Consequently, instead of one size, students of international relations and small state studies speak of four different types of size, using the same term to describe it. This necessarily leads to methodological confusion and misunderstanding in the literature. Investigating all four types of size requires different methods and approaches as I will show in the following chapters. Smallness in the four types of size mean drastically different notions with fundamentally different consequences.

In the following parts, I seek to describe the four different types of size more thoroughly. All parts will include an overview of the related general IR and small state

literature and the conceptualisation of small states from their respective point of view. Nonetheless, the following description will not be a traditional literature review but rather a reorganisation of thoughts of the different scholars in the framework of the complex model of size.⁷

1.2. *The four types of size*

1.2.1. *Absolute size – materialist individualism*

The first tradition of thinking about the size of political communities has been that of materialist individualism. In this framework, size and smallness has been conceptualised in absolute terms, solely in relation with the *unit* itself, and not in the context of the international community or any kind of social relationship. From the perspective of realist individualism, size is solely an attribute of the individual unit which affects its internal dynamics, can cause benefits and disadvantages as well.

Two interrelated questions have been investigated traditionally in this framework: firstly the optimal size of states (and the reasons for the discrepancy between their actual and optimal size), and, secondly, the material consequences of smallness to the state and the society. After the overview of these two topics, I will turn to the possible definitions of small states from the absolute point of view.

Ever since the very early periods of political thought, many philosophers and historians have dealt with the actual and optimal size of political communities. In general, there have been three approaches to the question [Alesina, 2003, 303].⁸ First, the classic Greek and Arab thinkers had a normative stance to figure out the perfect conditions for the state and the society. Second, historians had a more empirical viewpoint on why states or nations became as big as they are. Third, representatives of economic science also dealt with the question to find the balance point for each state.

The idea that bigger is not necessarily better and there are (or should be) some limits to the growth of a political entity can be considered as the first academic advancement in the field. In the second book of Plato's *The Republic*, Socrates considers the size of a state healthy if it provides enough to serve the needs of the population. He even warns that the urge in the society to possess more than the "*bare necessities*" leads

⁷ Consequently, there will be several authors (e.g. David Vital) whose thoughts will belong to different sections in the analysis.

⁸ In the cited work, Alberto Alesino enlists only the first two approaches, nonetheless he himself represents the third school.

to the situation in which “*the territory which was originally adequate to feed the original population will no longer be adequate. It will be too small*”. Growing bigger, therefore, results in an immoral entity of the “*luxurious state*”, which, in its “*pursue of unlimited wealth*”, goes to wars for resources with other states [Plato, 2004, 55-57]. In the fourth book, Socrates returns to the thought and explicitly sets the bar for the optimal size: “*I would allow the State to increase so far as is consistent with unity; that, I think, is the proper limit (...) let our city be accounted neither large nor small, but one and self-sufficing*” [Plato, 2004, 168]. According to Owen Arthur, the former Prime Minister of Barbados, the Platonic optimal state’s small size “*was intended to encourage intimacy and friendship among its inhabitants; its modest living stands to ensure sobriety and moderation and discourage excess and debauchery*” [cited by Henrikson, 2007, 50].

The Platonic idea of differentiating the “optimal size” from the “largest possible” has been debated heavily ever since. Jean Gottmann [1990, 29] put this concept in contrast with “*an Alexandrine model of a vast, expanding, pluralistic political and cultural system, bound together and lubricated by the active exchanges and linkages of a network of large trading cities (...). The former model [the Platonic idea] offers a set static ideal, the latter a dynamic one*”. He also added that looking back from the twentieth century, it is easy to see that the ideas of Plato “*were not realistic. History did not follow his advice*” [Gottmann, 1980, 220].

Nonetheless, many philosophers and writers echoed the concept of Plato. Ibn Khaldoun [1967] for example also differentiated between political communities which desire only the necessities and those which want more. Talking about discrepancies between Bedouin and settled societies in *al-Muqaddima*, he states that “*the Bedouins (al-Badw) restrict themselves to what is necessary in their conditions (of life) (...) and are unable to go beyond them, while sedentary people (al-hadar) concern themselves with conveniences and luxuries in their conditions and customs.*”⁹ Building on this thought, al-Farabi mentions the “necessary city” (*al-madina al-darariyya*) as a type of city in which “*the people’s aim is restricted to what is necessary for the subsistence of the body in (the way of) food, drink, habitation and sexual intercourse and to cooperation in obtaining these (things)*” [Pines, 1971, 128]. Nonetheless, unlike Plato, al-Farabi (and Averroes/Ibn Rushd similarly to him) does not connect the necessary city to inevitable peacefulness or morality; he rather sees it as a simple society [Pines, 1971, 134-135].

⁹ Translated by Solomon Pines [1971, 126].

The idea of connecting the optimal size of the state to self-sufficiency (and, in some cases, to morality) was reborn in the modern literature on sustainability and the criticism of over-consumption [DeWesse-Boyd – DeWesse-Boyd, 2007;]. In *Small is Beautiful*, E. F. Schumacher defies the “*idolatry of giantism*” which is imprinted in the basics of economic science [Schumacher, 2011, 51]. He questions the importance of having a huge internal market in the modern age and argues that the discourse on connecting the viability of a state to size is quite outdated as largeness creates problems in itself.¹⁰ Speaking about the problem of small independent countries, he asks “*how can one discuss a problem that is a non-problem?*” [Schumacher, 2011, 54].

Nonetheless, self-sufficiency was not the only condition set for the optimal size of the state. In *Politics*, Aristotle agrees with Plato that a state too large (both in terms of population and territory) can only be governed badly. He also repeats Plato’s argument about the importance to satisfy the needs of the population, but he goes further and proclaims the importance of defence [Aristotle, 1998, 44]:

“the case of property is similar. Enough needs to be available for use within the city-state, but also to meet external dangers. That is why there should not be so much property on hand that more powerful neighbours will covet it, and the owners will be unable to repel the attackers, nor so little that they cannot sustain a war even against equal or similar people”

This quote illustrates that Aristotle considered size to have a deterrent effect,¹¹ consequently he thought of it in the context of a premodern security dilemma, in which growing is necessary to protect oneself but growing too large can actually provoke others to attack the community. While generally Aristotle accepted that wealth has beneficial effects, he set the “*best limit*” for the optimal size as the state in which “*those who are stronger will not profit if they go to war because of the excess, but as they would if the property were not so great*” [ibid].

As it can be deduced from the above mentioned arguments, both Plato and Aristotle preferred relatively small population, firstly because of their ability to be self-

¹⁰ He argues that instead of the state, we should analyse the viability of the people in it, but by the simple enlargement of the community, one can hardly achieve anything. Moreover, as modern technology made people more mobile, they can easily become footloose, thus, the problem of having the „drop-outs” in a society is much more severe in larger countries [Schumacher, 2011, 51-53].

¹¹ Later, Aristotle also talks about the fact that regarding territory, it is more important to have a well protected country than a large one.

sustainable and secondly because they both put emphasis on the negative political consequences of largeness such as lack of social coherence or bad governability. Plato set the ideal number as 5040 heads of families, whereas Aristotle was a little more permissive with accuracy, claiming that citizens in the ideal political community should be able to maintain face-to-face relationship with each other [Beer, 1993, 88-89]. Such fears about large size were echoed by, among others, Niccoló Macchiavelli, Montesquieu, James Madison, Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte [1973] [Alesina, 2003; Beer 1993], who all considered growing heterogeneity, diversity in thoughts and customs as well as the consequent problems of governability as the main arguments against largeness.

While the argumentation seems convincing, one has to mention that there are many who defy these observations from different angles. Firstly, some say that heterogeneity does not necessarily cause conflict. According to Richard Posner [2012] for example, “*it might seem obvious that ethnic and religious heterogeneity would be a fissiparous factor because of hostility among different ethnic and religious groups. But in many countries that has not been a problem*”, citing the examples of the post-Civil War United States, Switzerland, India or Canada. Secondly, it is also ambiguous whether small states are actually less diverse than larger ones only due to the small size of their population. Arguing with some conclusions of Dahl and Tufte in their book from 1973 entitled “*Size and Democracy*”, Dag Anckar [1999] offers an empirical critique to this observation, claiming that in terms of ethnic and religious diversity, there is no significant difference between small and large states; only in terms of social attitudes.¹²

The question of homogeneity was also important for those who analysed the question of size from a historical point of view. In order to understand why states are as big as they are, goes the logic, one has to study the context of the state-building process which resulted in the creation of the modern international system. In this regard two interrelated developments shaped the size of states – modernisation and nationalism. “*Nation-statehood*”, argues Thomas Nairn [1997, 144], “*was configured by the pressures and constraints of development (...), and these ensured that only entities above a certain threshold of scale had any chance of surviving, or of attaining independence – or indeed, the right to do so*”. This brings us back to the question of the necessary size for self-sufficiency, or “*viability*” as Nairn puts it. The bar for this was set by the emerging competitive capitalism as the “*first-wave industrialisation had to emancipate itself both*

¹² In the investigation of small Middle Eastern states, I came to similar conclusion (see part 2.1.).

from the confines of the city-state (where capitalism had always been at home) and from the bureaucratic hierarchies of the ancient empire-state” [ibid 147]. Thus the model for the ideal size of a nation state was set by France, a “*medium-to-large nation state, capable of constructing a distinguishable political economy of its own, the range of cultural and administrative institutions needed for managing this, and an army capable of defending it*” [ibid, 133]. In accordance, Eric Hobsbawm [1994, 286] refers to the prevailing economic conditions of the era – contrary to the Middle Ages, small economic units were not viable in this competitive environment and were regarded as “*economic jokes*”. Nonetheless, due to the changes in the growing volume of the global exchange of goods and services, the 20th century brought back the renaissance of such small entities.

Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore [2005] tried to generalise these dilemmas in their book entitled “*The Size of Nations*”. Coming from the realm of economic sciences, the main argument of the authors was that “*the size of national states (or countries) are due to trade-offs between the benefits of size and the costs of heterogeneity of preferences over public goods and policies provided by government*” [ibid, 3]. Conceptualising the size of a state as a trade-off between costs and benefits is quite useful to integrate all the above mentioned aspects.

The basic point of their argument [ibid, 4-6] is that while clearly there are a number of advantages of largeness, some disadvantages are observable as well. Without this counterbalance, the countries of the world should have already united into a single entity. Among these negative factors the authors focus on the growing costs of governability over large population and territory, but not necessarily in the classical terms (of ethnicity or religious groups): they rather emphasize the diversification of interests and preferences in larger societies, a fact that ensures partial dissatisfaction after each governmental decision. Therefore, a trade-off is needed between the benefits and disadvantages connected to size, which presupposes the existence of an “*equilibrium size*”. At this point, the costs of largeness are minimal and the benefits arising from it are maximal.

According to their argumentation, the equilibrium size is determined by international economic conditions, more specifically the country’s integration into the world economy and the prevailing trade regime. In a complete autarchy and protectionist environment, the size of the population is the same as the market for national companies, which enlarges the disadvantages of smallness. On the other hand, in a completely liberalised environment in which all states are equally and fully integrated, the size of the

market is (at least theoretically) the same for everyone. Therefore, the “*benefits from country size are smaller the larger the degree of international openness, and, conversely, (...) the benefits from openness are smaller the larger the size of the country*” [ibid, 87]. That is why the more liberated the international trade, the lower the trade-off for countries, which is why (according to the authors) the rise in the number of small states and the liberalisation of the world economy went hand in hand after the second world war – a conclusion very similar to that of Nairn and Hobsbawm.

On the basis of these thoughts, absolute size is an independent attribute of states which is dominantly unrelated to other entities.¹³ In this regard, smallness can be conceptualised as the state in which a political community is materially below its optimal/equilibrium size. This creates a series of challenges which the state has to face. According to the majority of scholars, Maurice East was wrong to say that “*small state is the same as the large, except for its size*” [East, 1973, 558], since the scarcity of resources create additional obstacles in the way of national development. Not surprisingly, the related literature is quite pessimistic about small states, and only a handful of writers attach positive attributes to absolute smallness, most frequently in connection to a bigger incentive for innovation (“*in many cases, necessity has been a mother of innovation*” [Cooper – Shaw, 2009, 5]).

Although the systemic description of the consequences of smallness was the product of modern IR research, the classical writers also had some references to the effects of smallness on the political community. According to the above cited Ibn Khaldoun [1967, 274], the citizens of small cities are doomed to be poor and indigent due to the smallness of the internal market, which is why “*their labour (...) does not yield them a surplus which they can accumulate as profit. They have no increasing profit*”. Regarding domestic politics, Aristotle argued that small cities tend to be less stable than larger ones. This is due to the observation that the strongest political communities are based on the middle class (and not the rich or the poor), which is more numerous in greater communities. In contrast, “*in small city-states, (...) it is easy to divide all the citizens into two, so that no middle is left and pretty well everyone is either poor or rich*” [Aristotle, 1998, 120]. Surprisingly, Aristotle [ibid, 129] also talks about administrative

¹³ The inclusion of the capability of defence and the level of liberalisation in the international economic system have some structural ramifications, though the main focus in both ideas is on absolute and not relative terms.

consequences of small size. He states that in smaller countries, the state has to have less offices or combine them in a few hands.

The first comprehensive list of the consequences of smallness was created by David Vital [1967, 3-117] in his book entitled “The Inequality of States”. In this, he divided the challenges of small states into four different categories, which provides a useful framework for the overview of the literature.

First, mental and administrative capacities refer to the institutional and political consequences of limited human resources and administrative capacities, manifested in the smaller size and amount of diplomatic missions, the lower quality of the work provided by diplomats. The literature therefore predicts lower level of human and material resources available to the foreign and security policy apparatus [East, 1973, 558]. As a result, they have to face severe informational discrepancy vis-à-vis greater states.¹⁴ On the other hand, because of the smaller bureaucracy, the competition between the different institutions is presumably less intense than in larger states [Handel, 2006, 150]. Moreover, less hierarchy and the lower level of formality and strictness in decision-making processes makes the diplomacy of small states more flexible,¹⁵ especially in the policy areas in which they do not have vital interests [Thorhallson, 2006, 221-223]

Second, economic disabilities rise from the small size of the internal market (very similarly to Ibn Khaldun)¹⁶, which creates the need for either constant aid from abroad or, more commonly, extensive foreign trade. Dependence on the international markets and foreign economic actors therefore is a common feature among small states, which, in practice, is enlarged by the concentration in terms of goods and partner countries [Vital, 1967, ; Wiberg, 1987, 342].¹⁷ On the other hand, this necessary openness urges specialisation for small states, which could be beneficial for their competitiveness,

¹⁴ Nonetheless, Vital mentions that small states might limit their foreign policy to their direct environment, which can shrink this informational deficit on the (sub)regional level [Vital, 1967, 22-23].

¹⁵ Thorhallson investigated the behaviour of small states in the European Union, and apart from the flexibility, he also pointed out the more closer and personal relations between the diplomats and the representatives of supra-national institutions (such as the European Commission) [Thorhallson, 2006, 223-225].

¹⁶ The small internal market creates additional challenges too in terms of diseconomies or disadvantages of scale – national producers will more likely be less competitive, having a weaker incentive to invest in research and development [Handel, 2006, 164-165].

¹⁷ Vital built on the empirical analysis of Michael Michalek [1962], who introduced the coefficient of commodity concentration and the coefficient of geographic concentration and investigated the differences between large and small (as well as developed and under-developed) economies. His data showed that even after becoming modernised, the foreign trade structure of small states remains highly one-sided. Moreover, the model of McGowan and Gottwald [1975] suggested that with modernisation, the stress sensibility (the degree to which domestic structures are effected by external changes) of (small) states grows even further.

while also making them vulnerable to external shocks. [Venner, 2012] In this regard, the constant need for accommodation [Moses, 2000] is not necessarily a bad thing; contrary to the pessimists [such as Handel, 2006, 154-164], Peter Katzenstein [1985] argued that this constraint creates flexibility and an ability to react more quickly and efficiently to external crises.¹⁸

Third, due to these economic hardships, small states are not able to spend much on national defence and do not dispose over substantive military industry. They have to buy their equipment from larger states which creates a dependence in national security matters [Handel, 2006, 180-181]. This observation is clearly backed by empirical data – between 2012 and 2016 for example, the five biggest weapon exporters (the United States, Russia, China, France and Germany) account for the 74% of the global volume [Sipri, 2017], with the top ten¹⁹ having a 90% share [Al Jazeera, 2017]. This means that the rest of the world is basically dependent on these ten countries in their national security. Moreover, increasing the defence budget would mean the extraction of money from other sectors, which is true for every state, although the dilemma is much more problematic for smaller states, especially since the costs of governance on per capita basis are, in general, higher [East, 1973, 558].

Fourth, because of all these factors, small states will be more vulnerable to coercion. They have a deficit in both influential capacity and resilience to external pressure [McGowan – Gottwald, 1975]. In such circumstances, the classic tools of foreign policy are not all available to them, therefore their international behaviour is limited to specific strategies [Lee – Smith, 2010, 1091].

In the small states literature, special attention has been drawn to the investigation of small island states [Lockhart – Drakakis-Smith – Schembri 2001; Barnett – Campbell 2010; King – Tennant 2014; OECD 2016; World Bank – Commonwealth 2000; Kolok 2017]. These works usually investigate the challenges of small island states in connection with environmental change and degradation, remote geopolitical position and sustainable development. The small island state literature is maybe the most clear-cut example of analysing the effects of smallness paired up with another variable (island statehood, environmental challenges, etc.).

¹⁸ However, we have to mention that Katzenstein does not handle smallness as the only cause for this flexibility. He rather investigated the dynamics between size and other cultural and political factors (see later).

¹⁹ Apart from the above mentioned countries, the United Kingdom, Israel, Italy, South Korea and Ukraine also made it to the top ten [Al Jazeera, 2017].

It is important to emphasize that without the thorough investigation of the position of small states in the international system, scholars were able to make predictions (and even guidelines) for the foreign policy of small states, solely based on their absolute size. Naturally, there is no consensus over which courses are preferable for small states on the global stage, especially between the realist and liberal scholars,²⁰ but a general picture can be drawn about the limitations of small state foreign policy by having the following characteristics:²¹

- survival as the utmost priority and many times the maximal aim of foreign policy [Handel, 2006, 151-152; Hey, 2003a, 5; Keohane, 2006, 58-59];
- limited foreign policy activity both in terms of geography and policy areas, concentrating on the state's imminent region and those questions in which it has vital interests [East, 1973, 557; Hey, 2003a, 5]
- preference of international institutions offering formal equality, multilateral diplomacy [Hey, 2003a, 5; Jazbec, 2010, 79; Keohane, 2006, 58; Neumann – Gstöhl, 2006, 20-21]
- refraining from the use of force [East, 1973, 557, Fox, 1959; Hey, 2003a, 5];
- a tendency of neutrality in armed conflicts [Fox, 1959; Hey, 2003a, 5];
- due to their dependence in terms of economy and defence, they focus on international stability on the financial markets and international peace [East, 1973, 573-575];
- priority of alliance-making as the most important decision of security policy [Hey, 2003a, 5; Keohane, 2006, 64-68; Neumann – Gstöhl, 2006, 18; Teterault, 1991; Vital, 1967, 186-187; Wieberg, 1987, 343-345];
- inability to formulate strategically viable answers to unforeseen events, which either results in slow responses or high-risk behaviour [East, 1973, 567-573];
- the need to focus on foreign trade and economic policy, to capitalise on globalization and to create the circumstances which avoid protectionism as well as hurtful liberalization [World Bank Commonwealth, 2000, 29-35; Moses 2000; Dommen – Hein, 1985];

²⁰ Realists tend to overemphasize the role of alliances and neutrality, whereas liberals focus more on international institutions and the development of international law.

²¹ Naturally, there has been several debates regarding the effects of size on foreign policy. One of the most important discussions was related to the level of activity of small states, whether the constant struggle for survival urges less or more engagement in international affairs [East, 1973, Duvall – Thompson, 1980].

- the possibility of refraining from even having a foreign policy due to the lack of effective agency and influential capacity [McGowan – Gottwald, 1975, 473-476; Hey, 2003a, 5; Vital, 1967, 121-122].

As we can see, a complete theory of small state foreign policy can be built solely on absolute size.²² Nonetheless, as many scholars expressed, such descriptions which lack the investigation of the international environment is insufficient to describe the situation of small states [Duval – Thompson, 1980, Hey, 2003a]. That is why the turn towards the system in the study of international relations in the 1970s effected small state studies to a great extent, creating new ways, analytical tools and methodologies to analyse resource-scarce entities. The related literature – which was significantly growing due to decolonisation and the proliferation of small states – easily took in the scientific advancements offered by the neo-neo debate and started to concentrate more on relative size.

Scholars using the absolute size approach usually define small states in two steps: first they identify the main resources which they consider the most determinative (e.g. population, economic capabilities) and second they set an objective limit for the size of smallness [Szalai, 2014a, 147-148]. Most quantitative definitions (let them be absolute or relative) use population, territory, and economic or military capacities (hereinafter referred to as *general aggregate resources – GARs*) in different constellation and different limits: Mathias Maas [2009, 75] considered 1 million inhabitants as the traditional conceptualisation which, with time, grew to 5 million [Bailes, 2009] and to 10-15 million [Maas, 2009, 76]. The joint taskforce of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank used the 1.5 million population benchmark as a starting point, although they stated that they do not recommend the creation of a special category for small states [World Bank – Commonwealth, 2000, i]. David Vital [1967] differentiated between economically developed (10-15 million inhabitants) and underdeveloped (20-30 million inhabitants) countries. Maurice A. East [1973] referred to the “traditional theory” and combined all four types of capacities, saying that a small state should be small in at least one variable.

Following this tradition which is present both in the literature on absolute and relative size, I will also use territory, population, economic output and military capacities as the basis for constituting size.²³ In the last three cases, the relevance of the given

²² The notions of absolute size will be revisited in Chapter 3.

²³ To be operationalised properly in part 1.3.

resource is self-evident, though territory does not speak for itself, as many scholars argue that it became “passé” [Rosencrance, 1996]. It is true that since the end of the era of traditional territorial states, the size of the land area which a government can control is not of primary importance, though it has severe geopolitical and economic consequence (e.g. in terms of natural resources). Besides these very tangible factors, territory is still connected severely to conflict [Senese, 2005; Dzurek, 2005], nationalism and the legitimacy of the state [Stilz, 2011] as well as “population structure and dynamics” [Adams, 2001, 277]. Moreover, social groupings always had some kind of spatial logic to various extent. Boundaries, i.e. the limits of one’s territory, are “*constructed and maintained by people’s mental maps, which divide home from alien territory, the included from the excluded, the familiar from the other*” [Migdal, 2004, 7]. Smaller territory means a smaller space for one’s community, customs and management, which (if it is below the “optimal size”) can severely impact not just policy outcomes but relations with neighbours [Adams, 2001]. These factors necessitate the inclusion of territory into the research of small states.²⁴

As a conclusion, we can say that absolute size can provide an interesting viewpoint for an analysis, nonetheless by itself it cannot provide a sufficiently thorough analysis. Territorial, demographic, economic and/or military smallness can effect states and societies in markedly different ways, which is why it is always important to investigate the interaction of smallness and other variables.

1.2.2. Relative size – materialist structuralism

Starting from the late 1970s, systemic theories started to take over the dominance in mainstream IR theories and foreign policy analysis methods as well. Apart from the reform of the liberal and realist tradition, the English school and structuralism also chose the systemic level as a starting point. As we will see, the study of small states was also effected by the change and the emphasis was taken from absolute to the relative size approach.

In one of the most influential scientific works of the era, Kenneth Waltz [1979] laid down the basic premises of neorealism. Throughout the chapters of *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz moved away from the human nature approach of classical

²⁴ On the other hand, the acceptance of the diminishing role of territory as a result of globalisation does not mean that neglecting territory is the right analytical decision (see the argumentation of Hibou [2004] on false dichotomies).

realism and considered the most important features of the international system as the main explanatory forces of world politics. In his model, the international system has three major attributes [Waltz, 1979, 87-99]: the ordering principle (anarchy), the characters of units (functionally identical states) and the distribution of capabilities. Since theoretically only the third one differentiates between actors, the share in the distribution of valuable and politically practicable resources (i.e. relative size) will be the most important variable in the analysis of state behaviour.

Using this point of view, it is not surprising that neorealism became quite pessimistic about small states. If the system “*is defined as the distribution of material capabilities under anarchy*” [Wendt, 1999, 16], small units are weak and vulnerable. The lack of relative capabilities will define power relations with other countries and thus the foreign policy of the small state [Handel, 2005; Neumann – Gstöhl, 2006, 17-19]. The primary aim of the related neorealist research program will be to determine what role do, can and should small states play in the international system.

From a methodological point of view, the main attribute of the neorealist discourse is identifying power with relative size. According to Richard Rosecrance [1996, 54], *analysts presumed that the state with the largest stock of raw materials and goods derived from land would prevail. CIA estimates during the Cold War were based on such conclusions*. In the words of Arunas Molis, “*the most important criteria determining the size of the state are its comparative power and geopolitical position*” [Molis, 2006, 82].

In a more sophisticated way, one can differentiate between the two sides of power – influence or influential capacity (the extent to which a state can alter its environment) and independence (the extent to which a state can withhold external interference into its internal affairs) [Goetschel, 1998b, 14; Garai – Koncz-Kiss – Szalai, 2017, 17]. According to McGowan and Gottwald, material size mostly effects the former, while the latter (which they called stress sensitivity) is more connected to the level of modernisation [McGowan – Gottwald, 1975, 475-476]. Waltz also differentiated between the two, nonetheless he also combined them in “power”, arguing that “*an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him*” [Waltz, 1979, 192]. All in all, small states lack the necessary power to shape international politics not because of their absolute, but relative size.

Definitions in this research program are quite similar to those in the previous section, though with one major difference – the limit for smallness is not set by an absolute number but rather a ratio of the international system or a specific subsystem.

Karl Deutsch called small states as those entities which contribute to the global GNP with a maximal share of one percent [Baehr, 1975, 459-460]. Others [Calenzo – Muhindo, 2011, 158-159; Bailes, 2009, 2; Garai – Koncz-Kiss – Szalai, 2017, 12-13] argue for a regional approach in which the limit of smallness is set by, for example, the average of a geographic area. The logic behind this is twofold – firstly, the activities of small states are many times limited to a given region and secondly, a specific size can be small and large depending on the size of the neighbours.

Naturally, scholars analysed the position of small states in the international arena even before the systemic turn in the 1970s, though these attempts were not theoretically strong and often referred only to geopolitical circumstances. Actually, the neorealist narrative about putting an equation mark between smallness and weakness has its roots in the *Melian Dialogue* of Thucydides [Baldacchino, 2009], which was basically a cautionary tale for relatively small states to accept the will of great powers. “*The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must*”, argue the Athenians in the dialogue, as the fate of the Melians “*hang on a single turn of the scale*”. The small island state do not listen to the words of the “*masters of the sea*”, and at the end get what they deserve in the form of complete annihilation [Thucydides, 416 B.C.].

Modern IR continued the interpretation of Thucydides, picturing relatively small states as helpless incapable entities. Analysing the war-time survival methods of different small states, Anette Baker Fox [1959] came to the conclusion that geographical considerations and the expectation of political leaders are the major determinants of success. David Vital argued that in order to overcome the difficulties of smallness, a state can choose between three strategies: the active one (to balance the discrepancy between the state and its external environment, to get more resources or to enlarge its leverage), the passive one (to refrain from any kind of foreign policy activity) and the defensive one (to contribute to the maintenance of the status quo, but nothing else) [Vital, 1967, 121-181]. Vital argues that external factors, most importantly the geopolitical situation and proximity to greater powers, many times determine the survival capacity of small states, therefore they are highly vulnerable to the external environment.

Neorealism, neoliberalism and neo-Marxism all incorporated the relative size approach, though they came to different conclusions. The most comprehensive analyses of the role of small states in the international system were conducted in the neorealist framework. Because of their limited capabilities, the most important decision a small state has to make (and the one with the most comprehensive effect on the international system)

is its alliance-policy. In anarchy, “*small states join an alliance*”, argues Erich Reiter, “*because they ‘take refuge’ in alliances to be safe from big states*” [Reiter, 2001, 12]. They can also receive “*a variety of non-military benefits*”, such as economic or political support [Krause – Singer, 2001, 21]. In the context of the cold war [Wiberg, 1987, 343-345], small states had practically five options: to make an alliance with a superpower (Japan), to build an alliance with other small states (the Benelux cooperation), to join a multilateral alliance which includes a superpower (small NATO members), to stay unaligned and neutral (Austria) or, lastly, to stay unaligned without neutrality (Egypt).

In the post-bipolar world, at least according to Sándor Fábíán, there are four traditional strategies for small states to defend themselves: building up and sustaining traditional military forces large enough to deter larger states; they can join a collective security agreement; they can choose neutrality; and last but not least, they can obtain weapons of mass destruction which could also serve as a deterrence [Fábíán, 2012, 3-5]. Nonetheless, he argues that “*a small state has a better chance to defeat a numerically and technologically superior enemy when utilizing irregular-warfare techniques instead of traditional military approaches*” [op. cit. 7.] According to him in this age, this is the most innovative and effective way for self-defence.

From a theoretical point of view, the main question of alliance policy is whether a small state follows a *bandwagoning* or a *balancing* strategy. Stephen M. Walt defined the former as an “*alignment with the source of danger*”, whereas the latter is “*allying with others against the prevailing threat*” [Walt, 2000, 96]. As he emphasizes, this choice is not precisely translatable into the choice between the stronger or the weaker side, although the balance of power and threat-perception are the most important elements [ibid, 98]. Kenneth Waltz [1979, 117-126] argued that for weaker states balancing is more likely, since joining a more powerful alliance practically means to give up its independence to its allies. The only condition for balancing is for the weaker side to have enough capacities to deter direct military confrontation. He also said that the balanced distribution in the system is beneficial for small states, since their room to manoeuvre is larger.

Contrary to Waltz’s arguments, the majority of researchers [e.g. Schweiller, 1994; Garai – Koncz-Kiss – Szalai, 2017] come to the conclusion that small states will prefer bandwagoning over balancing, due to three reasons: firstly, because of their small size, they are not able to decisively change the existing balance of power, therefore balancing has smaller strategic benefits. Secondly, their security situation would

deteriorate if they do not join the stronger side. Thirdly, the potential material costs and the expectations towards small states are lower in bandwagoning. That is why aggregately, small states do not contribute to a balanced distribution of power in the international system, they are more likely to foster the *imbalance of power* [Fox, 1959].²⁵

Nonetheless, empirical research shows that balance of power (or its modified version, the balance of threats) does not fully explain alliance behaviour, because it is not able to interpret state interests [Sweeney – Fritz, 2004]. One attempt to overcome this methodological challenge was Randall L. Schwaller's balance of interests theory, which tried to incorporate the attitude of the actors towards the prevailing status quo [Schweller, 1994, 99-106]. He presented four different roles in the "jungle" of the international system: lions who are the strong defenders (and beneficiaries) of the status quo; lambs who bandwagon to lions; wolves who are the main challengers of the lions; and lastly the jackals, those smaller powers which make alliances with the wolves. In this model the decisive factor is not threat perception or power relations, but state interests vis-à-vis the status quo. Small states can either be lions or jackals depending on their attitudes towards the status quo and their willingness to sacrifice to gain more [ibid, 102].²⁶

Another debate in the literature is the usefulness of small states in a multilateral alliance. Based on the above described viewpoint, one could easily come to the conclusion that small and thus weak states do not play a constructive role in international relations, only that of a free-rider, benefiting from multilateral cooperation but not willing to meet its obligations [Lee, 2006, 144; Vandenbosch, 301]. Nonetheless, many scholars provided convincing counter-arguments. Anders Ahnlid [1992] found that contrary to the general belief, small states do not take advantage of the free trade regime while refusing to abandon their protectionist policies.²⁷ Péter Marton [2017] enlisted a number of public goods which small states can bring to the table in a coalition, including providing legitimacy, geopolitical access, niche capabilities, disproportionately large contribution or strengthening the norm of the necessity of supporting coalition efforts.

Among other material systemic theories, the neoliberal school also built up its separate research program, which was more optimistic (and a little less deterministic) about the position of small states. The reason for this is the neoliberal critique to the

²⁵ For an empirical research of the question, see e.g. Van Straden, 1995.

²⁶ For a practical application of the model to small states in the case of the Visegrad countries during the migration crisis, see Garai, 2017.

²⁷ He argued that the main variable which decides the extent to which states follow the norms is the presence of coercive leadership.

Waltzian neorealism, which can be summarized in three points [Powell, 1994, 314-315]. First, they argue that realists tend to overemphasize the Hobbesian nature of anarchy in which survival is only achievable through self-help. Second, according to neoliberals, states are motivated by absolute and not relative gains, which defies the concept of zero sum games in international politics. Third, cooperation can be a result of the logic of the system, whereas the possibility of the distribution of gains in a specific situation can create a much bigger incentive for states than the fear and distrust predicted by neorealists.

The neoliberal framework puts emphasis on the changing nature of international relations, the phenomenon of complex interdependences, the development of international law, technological change and interconnectivity, all of which helps the situation of small states considerably [Keohane – Nye, 2012, 201, 217, 218, 254]. From this point of view, relative size remains an important, though less dominant factor regarding state behaviour. In the context of globalization, namely “*a process in which the combined force of different elements leading to an increase in countries dependence on or (...) of interactions with the rest of the world*” [Bhandari – Heshmati 2005, 1], the position of each state is dependent on various factors, among which size is only a single (and not necessarily the most important) variable [Key 2004, Henry 2005]. Moreover, due to the more and more complex nature of international challenges, multilateral governance (as the “*sum of the many ways that individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs*” – O’Brian et al 2000, 2) became the way in which issues are handled on the world stage and not anarchic power competition.

These processes question the fundamentals of the neorealist approach to small states.²⁸ Robert Keohane [2006, 59] even defied the usage of the notions of “small”, “middle” and “large” states, and proposed an alternative logic. According to him, we should distinguish between system-determining (those states which mostly determine the course of international politics), system-influencing (those states which can influence political outcomes), system-affecting (those states which cannot influence the system by themselves) and system-ineffectual states (those which have no effect on international politics at all).

From this neoliberal point of view, the optimal strategy of small states is to advocate integration, international organizations (IOs) and international law [Neumann – Gstöhl, 2006, 20-21; Garai – Koncz-Kiss – Szalai, 2017, 38-44; Cooper – Shaw, 2009,

²⁸ On the other hand, naturally, globalisation also means a threat to globalisation as it erodes state sovereignty in general [Von Daniken, 1998]

10-13]. Creating or joining IOs serves several purposes: it can strengthen international acceptance and thus independence [Duursma, 2006, 97], serve as a forum [Vandenbosch, 1964, 311], enlarge their representation and say in international governance²⁹ and even effect policy outcomes.

The neoliberal tradition moved away from the strict perception of power as a resource and moved closer to the so-called relational concept of power [Nye, 2011, 4-10]. Focusing on the processes in which decisions are made, representatives of the school understand power not as a commodity or attribute of an actor but rather an ability to influence other's behaviour. In this regard they integrated some elements of the so-called three faces of power debate taking place in the literature in the second half of the twentieth century. According to the participants of this debate, power can be conceptualised only in a social relationship in three forms:³⁰

- *coercion*: the ability to force others' behaviour to act against their preferences;
- *agenda-setting*: the ability to form the frameworks in which decisions are made in a way which is beneficial for one's interests and contradicts others';
- *attraction*: the ability to change others' preferences in order to alter their behaviour.

While realists preferred to use the resource-based concept of power (or coercion by neorealists), neoliberals tend to focus on the second form of power, namely agenda setting, which is quite similar to (although much narrower than) Susan Strange's notion of *structural power* or Stephen Krasner's *metapower* [Guzzini 1993]. This opened up a completely separate research program of how can small states influence decision-making and agenda-setting and how they behave in international organizations [Chowdhury 2012; Gillissen 2006; Keating 2008; Koncz-Kiss, 2017; Schwebel, 1973; Schiff, 2002, etc.], especially in connection with the European Union [Goetschel, 1998a; Kőváriné Ignáth, 2017; Thorhallson, 2006; Thorhallson – Wievel, 2006, etc.].

Another advancement by the neoliberal school was putting more emphasis on sub-state variables to the foreign policy analysis of small states. From the neorealist logic one can easily come to the conclusion that because of its vulnerability, practically only

²⁹ Naturally, this process did not happen from one day to another, it has been a centuries-long development. In the Congress of Vienna, no small states were allowed to the table, which was practically the same during the peace conferences after World War 1 and 2. Nonetheless, the Hague conferences included small states too, as well as the League of Nations and the United Nations framework [Vandenbosch, 1964, 295-300], not to mention regional organisations such as the EU.

³⁰ See Dahl, 1961; Bachrach – Baratz, 1962 and Lukes, 1974.

external and geopolitical factors shape the international behaviour of such entities. Many authors [Katzenstein, 1985; Baechler, 1998, Hey, 2003a] defied the complete neglect of other variables (such as domestic institutions, form of government, the economic system etc.), even if they accepted the importance (or even the dominance) of external factors. These attempts rhymed with the thoughts of classic FPA writers, especially those of James Rosenau, who argued that besides size, the most important determinants of foreign policy are the level of development and the political system [Rosenau, 2006, 176].

In maybe the most comprehensive analysis, Jeanne Hey edited a volume in which eight analysts had to answer whether the individual, domestic or systemic level had the most important effect on the foreign policy of specific small states. Although the results showed that “*system level is a key explanatory factor in small state foreign policy*”, the individual level (especially in the case of underdeveloped and less institutionalised states) cannot be ignored [Hey, 2003b, 186-189].

Besides neorealism and neoliberalism, neo-Marxist world system theory also built up a separate structural materialist theory. Since Immanuel Wallerstein and his co-workers focus on international dependence (especially between states of the global North and South), its notions can be applied in empirical research of small states’ development path after decolonisation. Nonetheless, world system theory cannot be used as a primary framework for the study of small states as it does not investigate the effects of size on centrum-periphery relations [Bernal, 2015, 27-28]. Giovanni Arrighi [1994, 15-16, 33] one of the forerunners of Wallerstein, briefly touched upon the issue, which shows that size is of less importance for this school of thoughts:

“the conventional view of inter-state power (...) [is] consisting primarily of relative size, self-sufficiency, and military forces. Such a view entirely overlooks the fact that the “technology of power” of capitalism (...) has been quite different from territorialism. (...) Territorialist rulers tend to increase their power by expanding the size of their container. Capitalist rulers, in contrast, tend to increase their power by piling up wealth within a small container and increase the size of the container only if it is justified by the requirements of the accumulation of capital.”

In *Adam Smith in Beijing*, Arrighi revisited the thought of the comparison of those European empires which enlarged their territories as opposed to small Italian capitalist

states which aimed at attracting capital [Arrighi, 2007, 236]. All in all, we can come to the conclusion that for Arrighi, size did not matter much as he considered both largeness [336, 356] and smallness [386-387] beneficial in different contexts.

Chart 3: Comparison of the main theories of material structuralism

	Neorealism	Neoliberalism	Neo-Marxism
<i>Conceptualisation of relative size</i>	Relative size determines state power	Relative size partly determines power	Relative size is of minor importance
<i>Definition of small states</i>	States with relatively small material capabilities	States with limited effect on system and multilateral governance	None
<i>Evaluation of the overall situation of small states</i>	Determinist	Less determinist	Determinist
<i>Main determinants of foreign policy</i>	Systemic level variables	Systemic, state and sub-state level variables	Systemic level variables
<i>Optimal strategy for small states</i>	Alliance-making	Participation in international organizations, influencing interdependences	Depending on their situation in the world-system
<i>Research questions</i>	1. How should small states form alliances? 2. What role do small states play in the regional balance of power?	1. How do small states behave in IOs? 2. How can small states effect political outcomes?	1. How can small states better their situation in the world-system?

The works of Immanuel Wallerstein offer an explanation for the neglect of the question of size in the neo-Marxist school: the phenomena and the processes it wants to investigate (dependence, the work of the capitalist market, etc.) do not have a direct relationship with physical size. Territory solely “*define the limits of the immediate impact of state policy*”; the internal structure of the population and the economy is more important than its aggregate size, and due to the modern world system, markets are open [Wallerstein, 1989, 68-69], which questions the viability to analyse national economies as separate entities.³¹

Therefore, in general, our conclusion is that in neo-Marxism, the evaluation of size and smallness depends heavily on the context.

All in all, theories of material structuralism offer a wide and colourful range of descriptions of size. The implications of smallness and largeness, the available strategies for small states and the adequate research questions depend on how one sees the nature of the international system (see Chart 3).

1.2.3. Perceptual size – idealist individualism

As a result of the constructivist turn in International Relations, non-material and idealist factors became the subject of analysis, both in terms of the structural and the individual level. The change effected small state studies as well, though only to a limited extent – both in terms of epistemology and ontology, constructivism did not turn into a coherent research program. Nonetheless, progress has been made in different areas which can constitute the fundamentals of other notions of size.

The first of these on the individual level is what we can call *perceptual size* [Thorhallson, 2009, 131-135]; namely the perception of a state’s size by its own government and people, and thus the existence of smallness or largeness in the identity of the state. The size of the community (and its physical boundaries) can easily serve as an “identity provider” [Baechler, 1998, 273], nonetheless the way in which it does it is not self-evident. “*The point is not simply to argue about whether smallness should be seen as a positive or negative attribute*”, argues Christopher Browning [2006, 673-674], “*but to step outside this positivist framework and adopt a more interpretivist methodology where it is actors’ understandings that become the focus of attention*”.

³¹ Similarly to Arrighi, Wallerstein also mentions size with positive and negative connotation too. In the case of Portugal, smallness gave an incentive for expansion [Wallerstein, 1974, 51], while in the case of France, largeness proved to be an advantage in economic dominance [Wallerstein, 1974, 170-171]

The basis of the argumentation is that material factors do not effect politics and foreign policy in a direct way [Keohane, 2006, 60]. All aspects of state behaviour – interests, security concerns, etc. – are constructed collectively in process where immaterial factors, primarily identities and norms, play the crucial role. The environment in which decisions are made is not just material but cultural and institutional as well [Katzenstein, 1996a; Jepperson – Wendt – Katzenstein, 1996, 33]. Based on this logic, one can argue that not only physical size (let that be absolute or relative) shapes state behaviour but the way in which the state sees itself as small or large and what cognitive consequences it draws from it. As Goetshchel [1998b, 30] argues, “*a state's size has lost its direct impact on state power. It only intervenes indirectly as a component of a state's security identity, which determines the foreign and security-policy options available*”. In the words of John Campbell and John Hill [2009, 554],

“there is nothing automatic about any of this. This is because a country's leaders construct these perceptions out of the objective realities available to them – realities marked by the size and cultural composition of the country”

Naturally, the idea that the size of a state determines its identity and self-perception was not born as a result of the constructivist revolution. Max Weber – elaborating on the prestige of power – wrote in 1946 [161] that contrary to small states, “*big political communities are the natural exponents of such pretensions to prestige*”. In the geographical theory of the already cited Jean Gottmann, the size and the delimitation of a community's territory effects the dynamic between different communities, but through cognitive and not necessarily material processes. “*Human psychology*”, argued Gottmann in 1973 [9.],

“was, of course, at the root of the matter (...) Accessibility is the central and most permanent problem, as well as the indirect reason for partitioning of space, regulating the conditions of access. A community fences a territory off to control the access of outsiders to its land, people and resources. Still, the same community wants to enable its members to gain some access to the space, peoples, and resources of the outside world. Thus, (...) a constant conflict exists between the political purposes of greater security on the one hand and broader opportunity on the other.”

Therefore, “*the territory should reflect not only the organizational projects of a society, but also its unconscious projections, which materialize in spatial structures as well as in space partitioning*” [Muscárá, 2001, 286].

Nonetheless, methodologically more mature attempts have only been made since the 1980s. In his influential book entitled *Small States in World Markets*, Peter Katzenstein argued that smallness – and other material factors [Katzenstein, 1985, 80] – contributed to the emergence of the culture of “democratic corporatism” in Western European small states, which helped them manoeuvre successfully in the economic storms of the 1970s. Faced with unavoidable openness and exposure to external processes, these countries “*have developed corporatist structures that enhance political predictability by facilitating cooperation and compromise*” [ibid, 96] and search for “*reactive and flexible policy of industrial adjustments*” [ibid, 24]. This way, they can achieve “*economic and political success measured in terms of both prosperity and legitimacy*” [ibid, 194]. In contrast, larger states were not forced to have such a culture and political elasticity, which makes them less likely to produce the necessary decisions fast enough in the face of external shocks.

Although Katzenstein’s conclusion cannot be generalised for all small states and his methodology is quite interpretative, at least two lessons can be learnt from his description. First, smallness coupled with other factors (such as openness, geopolitical position or political developments) can have severe effects on both material and immaterial structure of the state and the society. According to him, the relationship between size and policy outcomes are not inherent but more historical [Katzenstein, 1985, 80]. This means that geopolitics matter to a great extent not just from the neorealist aspect but also as a determinant of normative and political development. Second, the inclusion of immaterial factors can open the window for less inherently pessimistic description of the situation of small states and helps the analyst to include positive aspects of smallness as well.

Apart from Katzenstein, many scholars tried to connect small state studies with self-perception, moreover, several analysts proposed to build the definition of small states on self-identification [see Baehr, 1975; Maas, 2009, Szalai, 2014a]. Rothstein argued for example that “*small power is a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states*” [cited by Keohane, 2006, 56]. Some wanted to mix material and immaterial

factors saying that “*small states must be small in quantitative terms but must also feel and act small*” [cited by Maas, 2009, 80].

Nonetheless, a common argument against this analytical framework is that self-perception is not a constant variable and is continuously reconstructed by different actors who might have interests in reshaping identities. According to Elsa Tulmets for example, this perception in the Czech society of being a minor power is used by politicians to picture the EU as a “*threat image against which the ‘political and economic interests’ of the Czech Republic, conceived as a ‘small state’ despite its middle size, had to be defended*” [Tulmets, 2014, 88].

Therefore, instead of including it in the definition, other scholars tried to investigate the effect of size on identity and later on foreign policy. Laurent Goetschel [1998b, 27-31] talked about “*security identity*”, which is the “*product of past behavior and images and myths linked to it which have been internalized over long periods of time by the political elite and the population of a state*” [ibid p. 28.]. His thoughts are in perfect harmony with those of Dan Reiter [2006], who emphasizes the role of “learning” in foreign policy making, arguing that when decision makers have to face unexpected challenges, they tend to rely on personal and institutional experiences more than on sophisticated rational calculations. As a consequence, the historical experience related to the size of a state defines and limits the decision maker elite’s cognitive leverage. This can result in “*small state mentalities*” [Goetschel, 1998b, pp. 27-31], which would still effect foreign policy even in changing material circumstances. Vital [1967, 21-22] also discussed some mental consequences of smallness, for example the lack of enthusiasm for diplomats and employees in the national security apparatus due to the insignificance of their actions.

On the other hand, we have no reason to assume that smallness goes hand in hand with the same pack of mentalities and behavioural patterns [Browning, 2006, 673-674]. Societies and government can construct their perception of smallness in different ways and can draw quite different conclusions from it. To better understand the relationship between identity and state behaviour, Herrera R. Abdelal and his colleagues offered a new analytical framework, according to which [Abdelal et al., 2006], identity consists of four separate parts:

- *constitutive norms* (formal and informal rules to define group membership and the limits of the appropriate behaviour for the members),

- *relational comparisons* (differentiation between in-groups and out-groups and the “*understanding of oneself in relationship with the other*” [Abdelal et al., 2006, 698-699] ,
- *cognitive models* (frameworks for interpreting and explaining material circumstances), as well as
- *social purposes* (collective goals for the community).

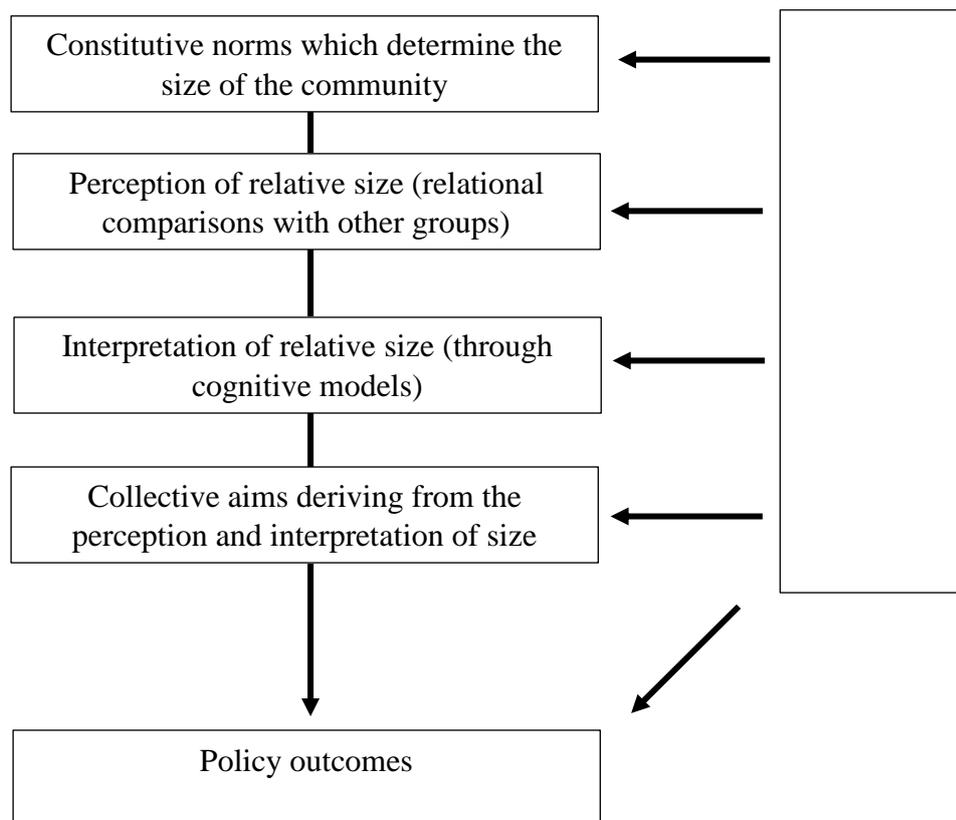
Size can play a unique role in all elements of identity in the model (summarised in Chart 4). Firstly, it will be the constitutive norms which determine the size of the community by defining the “admission rules” of a given community. Practically this can manifest in laws regarding citizenship and migration. Secondly, the community’s perception of its own relative size will be articulated by relational comparisons. It is possible to imagine that some materially small communities do not constitute themselves small, or vice versa, a big community can picture itself small. Thirdly, besides the perception of its own size vis-à-vis other groups, the society can assign different meanings and interpretations to perceived smallness and largeness. It is not necessary for any social group to identify size with power [Browning, 2006, 681-682]. Fourthly, as a result of these variations, the social purposes deriving from smallness can be quite different. It is not self-evident what neorealists assume, namely that small states automatically accept that they are destined to pursue survival as the maximal foreign policy aim due to their size.

Lastly, as Abdeal [et al, 2006, 696] and his fellow colleagues point out, the community is not necessarily agreed on the elements of its own group identity. They call this factor “contestation”, namely the degree of agreement among the members about a specific element of identity. Disagreement regarding the perception of size and power of the community, as well as their consequences can shape the dynamics of domestic politics, which can alter foreign policy to a great extent. Günther Baechler [1998, 271-272] even argues that the ability of small states to compensate for their smallness relies on the domestic acceptability of the foreign policy strategies of the government.

Although the research program related to perceptual size is quite limited, there have been a couple of attempts to describe the effects of the perception (and its alterations over time) of foreign policy. Baldur Thorhallson [2009, 131-135] argued that changes in the perception and preferences of the Icelandic elite (among other factors) led to its more active foreign and EU-policy in the 2000s. He mentioned that the previous perception of the state as a weak and small entity prevented the government from applying for Security Council membership in the UN. Christopher S. Browning [2006, 674-681] followed the

evolution of the Finnish identity after the Second World War, a process in which the meaning of smallness changed from a vulnerability to an opportunity in the 1950s, and later to smartness in the 1990s. Dan Marek and Michael Baun [2010, 30] argued that “*the notion that the Czech Republic is only a small state and thus cannot change anything within the EU (...) can lead to pessimism and a critical view of European integration*”, which is why “*Czechs are rather cautious and sceptical about attempts to deepen European integration*”.

Chart 4: Operationalisation of perceptual size



All elements of perceptual size are heavily affected by state building processes and historical developments, which is why the notion gains special importance in regions where state making was artificial or externally altered. In the case of Central Europe for example, where size became the “*most worrying and pressing question for nations*”, (Bibó cited by Hegedűs 2006, 92.), many research questions can be raised regarding perceptual size.

First of all, boundaries of nations and states do not necessarily overlap. The ethnically mixed nature of Central European countries [Roter 2012, 181] led to the separation of formal (citizenship and borders) and informal (ethnic and national

affiliation) membership groups. This process affected states differently: in the case of Hungary, for example, the national population has been larger than the collective of the citizens (due to the existence of Hungarian communities abroad whose size is approximately the quarter of the population of Hungary).³² This made the Hungarian elite perceive “Hungary” larger than its actual size [Kiss, 2009, 282]. On the contrary, Estonia witnessed a contradictory process due to the Russian community in the country, constituting approximately the quarter of the population.³³

Second, the disjoint nature of the borders of nations and states necessarily created conflicts and grievances for the losers of border settlements processes, shaping national discourses and social identity to a great extent. In the case of Hungary, for example, the experience of small state and the remembrance of being a European empire exist simultaneously [Kiss, 2009, 283], which can alter the country’s foreign policy course from the theoretically expected one.

All in all, idealism on the individual level opens up new research programs for the study of small states to investigate a state’s perception of its own size and its effects on foreign policy. Though identity is a quite broad notion, based on the above described operationalisation, one can come to rich conclusions. On the other hand, the most severe challenge in the analysis of perceptual size is methodology. While many refer to norms, identities and self-perceptions, the proper investigation of them (let them be positivist or post-positivist attempts) is quite difficult to apply. Usually there are six ways to analyse identity: through discourse analysis, surveys, content analysis, experiments, agent-based modelling or cognitive mapping [Abdelal et al., 2006, 702-705], none of which is universally feasible. Nonetheless, methodological obstacles do not mean that the observable phenomena (identity effecting foreign policy) is non-existent or not worth analysing (which I will do in Chapter 3).

1.2.4. Normative size – idealist structuralism

The international normative environment represents another source of state behaviour and another way to conceptualise size. The “*international structure (...) of meaning and social value*” in which states are embedded shape their self-perception, interest-formation and, eventually, foreign policy [Finnemore, 1996, 2]. These normative elements (which

³² See Bárdi, 2013; Szalai, 2014.

³³ See Kirch – Laitin, 1994; Vihalemm – Masso, 2003; or Kirch – Talts – Tuisk, 2004.

include inter-state perceptions as well as the content and distribution of the shared knowledge of the international society) give meaning to material factors. The relationship between norms and actors are, therefore, not casual but constitutive as they mutually constitute each other, which undermines positivist methodologies to fully understand international politics [Wendt, 1999, 23-29; 49-50].

In the IR literature, three theoretical traditions deal with the interpretation of the normative structure of international politics [Finnemore, 1996, 14-22]. Constructivism focuses on intersubjective understandings, the English school highlights the explicit and implicit norms of the “international society”,³⁴ whereas the institutionalist tradition (closely connected to some aspects of Wallersteinian structuralism) in this field concentrates on the institutional dimension of global culture, which created notions like the “modern state”, “rationality”, “modernisation” and so on, setting normative goals for all members of the international system. While all three approaches created their separate research program, I will not differentiate between their viewpoints; what matters to us is that one cannot understand the effects of size of the state or any other material variable without the investigation of the social context and the cognitive environment. Nonetheless, I will choose the English school to analyse these immaterial tendencies later as it provides the widest perspective.

Normative size refers to the internationally perceived size of a state and cognitively associated consequences of it. These norms should not be considered as necessarily constant throughout ages, systems, regions and actors. Not all small states are perceived in the same way, whereas size was considered quite differently for example in the context of a debate in the General Assembly of the UN during a peace negotiation in the Cold War or in 19th century Europe.

Daniel Thürer [1998] argues that in general, two separate myths exist about smallness side by side. One considers small states as political entities in a prison of weakness, an object of power-play between great powers, creating only meaningless features and urging the country to be an “ugly neutral” (an actor which does not want or does not dare to take part in conflicts) and another one which romanticises smallness and

³⁴ Indeed, the very existence of the international society and its norms benefit small states as they create behavioural expectations for larger powers enforced by the system and legal rules which they have to obey [Maas, 2005, 7]. Therefore, the non-material nature of the international system itself represents a huge playing ground for small states to pursue their interests.

small states, picturing them as an ideal place, open for innovation and progressive thought. In a less structural way, other writers expressed the same two myths; Chong [2010, 385] argued that “*psychologically we attach positive things to size*”, whereas Nairn [1997, 147] says “*people dislike and despise tiny states*”. On the other hand, Katzenstein [1985, 190] cites Sir Ernest Simon, according to whom the existence and behaviour of small states afford „*definite proof that when the existing tide of barbarism has subsided, men will succeed in building a new and nobler civilization*”. Franz Von Daniken [1998, 48] stated that in the age of post-bipolar globalisation, “*small states became fashionable again. They can create a sentiment of identity and globalization.*”

The tension between the two myths related to small states leads us to the question of a specific “research bias”, articulated by several scholars. The study of international relations has been the playground of great powers (such as Great Britain, the United States and Russia). Consequently, small states were analysed solely from the outside, therefore it is not surprising that their role has been neglected and many times underemphasized [Neumann – Gstöhl, 2006, 22-23]. As David Vital [1967, 10] warns, “*the nature and significance of the ‘facts’*”, like size and smallness, “*are determined to a substantial degree by the political purposes of those who select them at any given level of hierarchies. It is the purposes that guide the selection of data, that give them relevance and meaning and that largely determine the level of generalization at which they will be employed in analysis and policy formulation.*” Almost all founding fathers of modern IR and social sciences were born in large states and therefore it is not surprising that they did not concentrate on (or even care about) the fate of small states. They might not even have had the ability to analyse these entities as they probably did not speak their languages [Neumann – Gstöhl, *ibid*]. Godfrey Baldacchino [2009, 23-24] even refrains from using the term “*small states*” as it expresses the “*tendency in the literature to equate ‘large states’ as ‘normal’*”. Eventually, small states managed to break the monopoly of their larger counterparts in IR research about themselves (see the Icelandic Small State Research Centre for example), and thus managed to shape the “vulgar mind” of international research focusing on size as a determinative factor.

Such norms and the related behavioural expectations for small states are not solely intellectual debates but can emphatically shape the leverage and the behaviour of small states. Identities are acquired by participation in collective actions and meanings [Wendt, 1992, 397] in which the reactions of the “other” to “ego” effects the latter’s

perception of itself [ibid 404-407]. If a state is treated as small and weak and unable to pose a threat [Baechler, 1998, 280], it may internalize it and renounce from any kind of foreign policy activity, as predicted by David Vital previously. Large states many times did not even tolerate their interference in important questions, which “*was close to being deemed intolerable*” [Baldacchino, 2009, 24].

According to Victor Gingleux [2016, 27] this is the reason why the international behaviour of small states vary widely, contrary to the expectations of both neorealism and neoliberalism. He suggested a framework which he calls “*national role conceptualizations*” (NRCs),

“defined as ‘policymakers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system. Roles also emerge from a process of socialisation through which states adopt roles that other political actors expect them to occupy” [Gingleux, 2016, 28].

Consequently, NRCs include self-definition by “ego” and social recognition by “alter”. This way, argues Gingleux, one can connect the systemic and the state levels of analysis in a subtle manner thus connecting the notions of perceptual and normative size.

The international normative environment does not only help to understand interest-articulation and foreign policy making but also represent a new set of toolkit for small states related to the third face of power (persuasion). Such tools can be divided into two different categories. The first is the way in which small states can alter or use the existing perception about themselves in the international community to their advantage. Alan Chong [2010] called the strategy of enlarging one’s importance as “virtual enlargement” and enlisted three possible methods: the promotion of national political economy potential, the articulation of a national model of good governance and positioning oneself as a diplomatic mediator. Small states might actually have an advantage in these strategies if the “smallness is beautiful” narrative is strong in the normative environment. Using these steps, small states can persuade other actors that they are interested in their survival and well-being, can make their voice heard in different

social relations and even contribute to conflict resolution or other political outcomes as the representative of moral rightness.

The second category refers to strategies of pursuing one's interest by influencing the normative environment in more general terms. Since not only size-related norms affect the leverage of (small) states, they can be interested in developing (or weakening) such implicit or explicit notions. For example the existence of the norm of the prohibition of the use of force (even if it is not complete and imperfect) means a significant development for them and a clear move away from the world described by Thucydides. The same goes for sovereign equality, multilateralism or global governance.

Christine Ingebritsen [2006a] described the norm entrepreneur efforts of Scandinavian countries. According to her, remote geographic position, the limited material capabilities and the unique domestic institutions made North European countries adequate for this role. Ingebritsen argued that Scandinavian states were able to strengthen norms related to sustainable development, multilateral security and global welfare in the international sphere and thus influenced world affair to an unexpected extent. With a much lower level of intensity (and success), the same process is being done with some Persian Gulf states in relations with international finances, energy market coordination and climate change [Ulrichsen, 2012, 4]. Thus one observes that while small states cannot lead in world politics, they can form the framework in which leadership is conducted [Ingebritsen, 2006b, 289-290].

1.3. The basic analytical concepts and the methodology of the complex model of size

After the overview and re-organization of the small state literature, now I turn to the basic methodological and conceptual framework of the complex model of size. First and foremost, the core idea behind the CMS is that in order to be able to understand and comprehensibly analyse the behaviour and the leverage of small states, one has to include all four concepts of size into account. Thus the term "small state" should be actually divided into four markedly different concepts:

1. *Absolute small states*: states below their optimal size which cannot provide the desired level of welfare, security or institutional quality for its population.

2. *Relative small states*: states whose size in terms of the resources deemed the most important in the given regional or global system is below the average of that given system.
3. *Perceptual small states*: states which are considered small either by their society, the elite or the government.
4. *Normative small states*: states which are considered as small by other actors in a given region.

The CMS suggests that the four separate types of smallness effect behaviour in a different manner. Absolute smallness probably creates sub-optimal institutional frameworks for foreign policy decision-making, which makes incoherent or irrational behaviour more likely. Naturally, this is not necessary, as governments in absolute small states can put more emphasis on foreign policy than on other policy areas (for example in a hostile environment) which, probably, creates internal pressure among interest groups. Relative small states, on the other hand, should not be expected to necessarily have a lower level of institutionalisation as relative size depends on their regional counterparts. Consequently, these entities can be quite big in absolute terms: next to giants middle-sized entities can seem “small”.

Perceptual small states might have enough resources both in absolute and relative terms and might be able to influence international political outcomes but, because of their self-perception of being small and/or weak, might refrain from such activities. Lastly, normative small states might have enough capacities but because of the perception of other actors (or the unfavourable norms in the system) they will not have a seat at the table.

Although we can presume a positive correlation between the four types of smallness, this does not mean that they necessarily go hand in hand with each other. Such discrepancies can create various patterns of foreign policy. For example relatively small, but absolutely large states have a bigger chance to not perceive themselves as small, especially from the perspective of the society as their demands are met by the government. Normatively small, but perceptually large states have more incentive to be revisionists due to the discrepancy between the domestic and the international perception of the state.

After the differentiation of the four types of size and small states, the second core idea of the CMS is that in order to fully understand the effects of smallness, one has to

take into account additional variables which interact with size on the systemic and individual level both. It will be these interactions which determine the role of smallness in foreign policy and international relations.

The complex model of size also presumes a pattern of investigation which should be commenced on the systemic level with the delamination of the analysed region³⁵ and the distribution of those material capacities which are deemed essential in the given structural environment. Among these, territory, population, economic output and military capacities (*general aggregate resources – GARs*) should constitute the starting point, though other resources (e.g. water, wheat, oil) can be included as well, depending on the system and the nature of the inquiry. Nonetheless, in the following, I will only consider GARs as the basis for the inquiry and measure them in square kilometres of possessed land area, the size of the population, absolute gross domestic product, while for military capacities, I will use two different metrics: the size of the official military budget and the number of armed personnel.

By the calculation of the regional average, we can identify the small states in relative terms which will become our objects of analysis. One should differentiate between the different GARs as scarcity in them can mean strategically different effects on states (see Chart 5). Moreover, it is not enough to determine whether a state is small or not, as by itself, smallness can be beneficial and disadvantageous as well – therefore the effects of size is determined by the context and by the interaction between size and other variables.

Differentiating between the four dimensions enables us to investigate *territorial, demographic, economic and military small states* separately. Those countries which are small in only one category can be called *one-dimensional small states*; those which have a below the average score in multiple variables are *two- or three-dimensional small states*, whereas *complex small states* are small in all four dimensions.

³⁵ Five arguments have usually been made to support a regional approach to international relations [Kelly, 2007, 200-201]. Firstly, states are more likely to care about actors located close to and not distant from them. Secondly, even though global players can intervene in regional affairs, their local partners use their interference to fight their local adversaries, which gives a distinct dynamic to the events. Thirdly, by focusing on the global level, one can easily neglect the importance of local or regional players. Fourthly, by the end of the twentieth century, the myth of an omnipotent superpower was damaged further than to describe international relations as a monolith system of hierarchy and hegemony. Lastly, regionalists argue that global systematic inquiries urge researchers to ignore events, relations and actors deemed as irrelevant in the pursuit of research parsimony.

Chart 5: The positive and negative effects of smallness in terms of the four GARs³⁶

	Positive effects of smallness	Negative effects of smallness
Territory	Can be more defendable, cheaper infrastructure development	Lower amount of natural resources
Population	Less expensive social policies	Bigger human capacities
Economy	More flexibility, easier specialisation	Dependence on external markets and processes, lower production,
Military	More available governmental funds for other policies	Weaker physical capabilities

With this categorisation we can create several different types of small states with unique characteristics. In Chart 6, I enlisted the different categories and mentioned a couple of examples for them on the global stage. Solely based on this analysis, one can make theoretical expectations inductively about the environment of the given state as well as for the domestic economic and political system (without the quest for certainty). The only exceptions are complex small states as their category is so wide that on this level we cannot draw a clear conclusion about their attributes. Even in this regard, it is the interaction of relative size in different categories which leads us to predictions and not smallness by itself.

In a time series analysis, it is important to analyse trends, whether small states *outgrow* their smallness or larger states shrink *below* the average. The complex model of size suggests that in this case (namely a substantive change in the relative size of the state) its behaviour should change accordingly.

Naturally, a global comparison has its severe limits as it neglects differences in direct geopolitical circumstances, while the extreme values distort averages. I consider regional analysis more relevant, though the global one is spectacular for illustrating the methodology and the theoretical expectations of the different types of small states.

After the quantitative analysis, a general overview of the regional system should follow in terms of the traditional neorealist and neoliberal aspects, namely the structure

³⁶ Based on the literature.

of the balance of power, the existing regional institutional frameworks and, naturally, the position of the designated small states in this framework.

Following the investigation of material attributes of the system, the attention should turn to the normative environment. In this part, one should analyse the explicit and implicit norms effecting the status of small states in the given international society (including sovereign equality, collective security, the nature of state level competition, the role of resources, etc.) as well as the perception of the designated small states in the interstate community.

Methodologically it is quite a challenge to measure interstate perceptions and the attribute of states which is called normative size. Lack of proper operationalisation and available data poses a huge obstacle in identifying the perceived size of a state in the international system. Nonetheless, it is an important step in our analysis of small states.

Chart 6: Types of relative small states

Dimension	GARs ³⁷	Examples on the global stage	Expectations and ideal types
One-dimensional small states	T	Korean Republic, Japan	High density, modern economy and infrastructure, high level of security
	P	Saudi Arabia	Low density, high level of GDP/capita ratio and living standards and security
	E	Pakistan, Sudan	Low level of living standards, forced armament
	M	Argentina, Canada	Probably stable environment
Two-dimensional small states	T-P ³⁸		High level of living standards with a probably developed army
	T-E	Morocco, Philippines	Probably a small third world country with low level of living standards
	T-M		High density, probably stable environment
	P-E	Venezuela ³⁹	Underdeveloped, hostile environment or autocratic political system
	P-M	Australia	Low density, high living standards, (probably developed agriculture)
	E-M	Ethiopia	Low GDP/capita ratio, dominance of agriculture
Three-dimensional small states	T-P-E	Cambodia	Probably low living standards, hostile environment or dictatorship
	T-P-M	Netherlands	High standards of living, probably a welfare state, stable environment
	T-E-M	Kenya	High density, low standards of living
	P-E-M	Niger, Peru, Somalia	Low density, dominance of the agricultural sector
Complex small states	T-P-E-M	Hungary, New Zealand, Paraguay, etc.	

³⁷ T refers to territory, P to population, E to economic capacities and M to military capacities. All data are the freshest available from World Bank, 2017.

³⁸ Based on available data, there are no states in two categories of two-dimensional (T-P and T-M) states, though such states can exist at other times or in other context.

³⁹ Economic data from 2013.

The third and fourth steps should move away from the structural level to the individual one and concentrate on the absolute and perceptual dimensions of size. Taking into account various political, economic and social variables, one can investigate their interactions with smallness and decide whether the given state is absolutely small or not, whether smallness effected its internal capacities, institutions and economic attributes – and if so, how. Lastly, through the analysis of strategic documents, speech acts and survey results,⁴⁰ one can determine the extent to which smallness is part of the identity of the state and what conclusions it draws from it (in terms of weakness primarily).

After the investigation of the structural and agent-level dimensions and consequences of smallness, we can turn to the analysis of the small state behaviour. My basic question is how smallness effects foreign policy behaviour and state power (influential capacity) in the given cases. That is why, instead of a general overview of foreign policy strategy, I advise to use a comparative behavioural analysis in different social interactions as case studies for two reasons. Firstly, FPA on the strategic level tends to over-generalise behavioural patterns, especially when it comes to decades-long analysis. Secondly, as I already established in the conceptualisation of power in part 1.2.2., state power is not a constant variable as it changes constantly. That is why I have to model specific social situations and interactions to determine how states influence each other and political outcomes.

In Chart 7, the methodological steps of the complex model of size are summarised in one table. The first three steps related to the regional system will be conducted in Chapter 2, the fourth and fifth (which constitute the individual level of analysis) in Chapter 3, whereas the sixth and seventh (case studies) will be done in Chapter 4. At the end of the dissertation, conclusions will be drawn both for theoretical and practical purposes.

⁴⁰ The former two refers to state identity, while the last is used to determine social identity.

Chart 7: Methodological steps for the application of the complex model of size

Steps	Level of analysis	Specific methods	
1. Analysis of the distribution of GARs and identify relative small states.	Systemic material	Statistical comparison	Chapter 2
2. Analysis of material regional systemic variables	Systemic material	Traditional interpretative neorealist and neoliberal IR methods	
3. Analysis of immaterial regional systemic variables and identify the normative size of states	Systemic idealist	English School methods and statistical comparison	
4. Analysis of domestic material factors connected to smallness and decision whether the states are absolutely small and what effect smallness has	Individual material	Traditional interpretative methods, statistical comparison	Chapter 3
5. Analysis of domestic immaterial factors connected to smallness and decision whether the states are perceptually small	Individual idealist	Traditional IR interpretative methods, discourse analysis and surveys	
6. Selection of case studies for social interactions on the state level	Event-level	Case study selection	Chapter 4
7. The analysis of state behaviour in the context of smallness	Event and individual-level	Interpretative methods of IR and FPA	

2. THE APPLICATION OF THE COMPLEX MODEL OF SIZE – THE MIDDLE EAST

The aim of the following chapter is to analyse the structural and regional environment of small states of our case study as the starting point of the application of the complex model of size (see part 1.3.). The chosen region is the Middle East, by which I mean the sixteen state-like entities (fifteen states⁴¹ and the Palestinian Authority)⁴² located between Egypt and Iran on the one hand, and Turkey and Yemen on the other. This region is constituted by two of the three sub-systems (Maghreb, Mashreq and the Gulf) usually designated as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region [Malmvig – Quero – Soler i Lecha, 2016, 36], nonetheless due to analytical parsimony, I excluded the Maghreb.

The chapter is divided into two subchapters. In the first one, I have two aims – first, to analyse the basic trends of the distribution of general aggregate resources and to identify the different types of relative small states, with a special emphasis on complex small states (Part 2.1.1.), which will be the object of my analysis afterwards.⁴³ Second, I will investigate the most important attributes of these complex small states in the view of the distribution of general aggregate resources (Part 2.1.2.). In the second subchapter, I will turn to the analysis of the regional environment of the complex small states, in terms of material (Part 2.2.1.) and immaterial (Part 2.2.2.) variables, which will also include the investigation of the normative size of complex small states.

2.1. *Identifying complex small states*

2.1.1. *Distribution of general aggregate resources⁴⁴*

In 2017, the sixteen state-like entities in the Middle East possess 7 239 421 square kilometres of land, approximately 429 million people, 3 701 billion USD of aggregate

⁴¹ Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

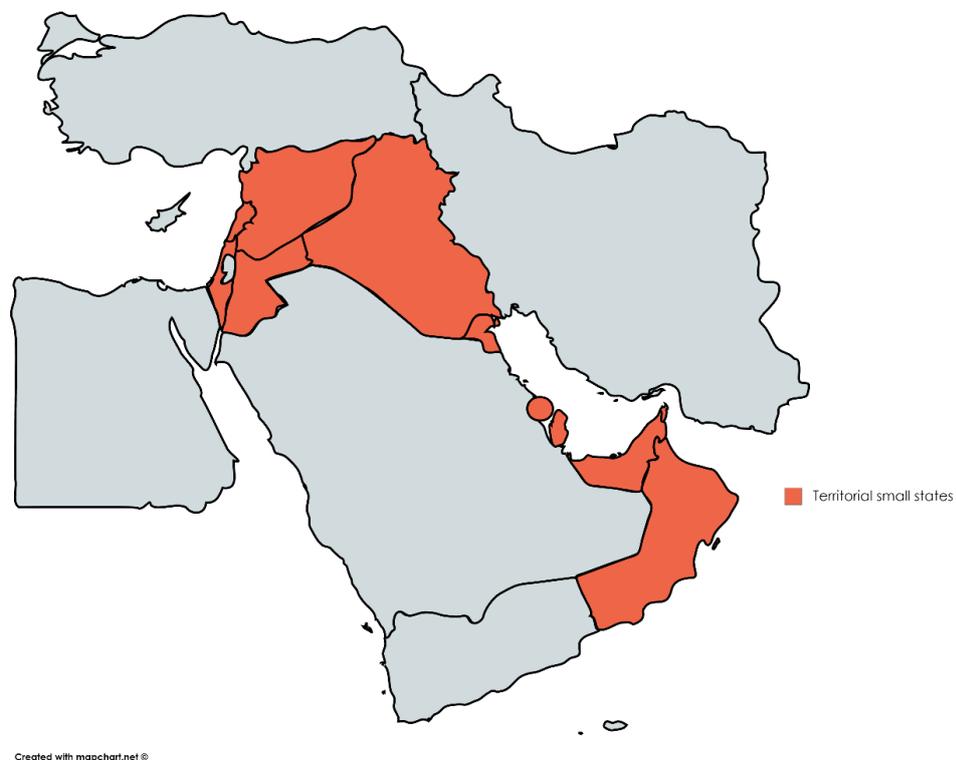
⁴² The declaration of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a not state actor is not a political decision but an empirical one. The PA does not fulfil the basic requirements of statehood thus it will be excluded from the analysis. Nonetheless, as it disposes over resources, they will be included into the regional data as neither a large, nor a small state.

⁴³ Since the number of complex small states is too high for a thorough study, I will concentrate on the four Gulf states afterwards.

⁴⁴ All data in this sub-chapter were extracted from the World Bank Database [2018].

GDP⁴⁵ and 177 billion USD of military spending.⁴⁶ These data amount to 5.6%, 5.7%, 4.6% and 10% in global comparison respectively, which already indicates two phenomena: firstly, normal distribution would suggest that a group of sixteen countries would dispose over 7-8% of the resources of human kind,⁴⁷ which shows a relative scarcity in the region vis-à-vis others in terms of the first three GARs. Secondly, the high military spending suggests a hostile regional system with states considering physical power as an important tool in politics, either domestic or international.

Map 1: Territorial small states in the Middle East (2017)



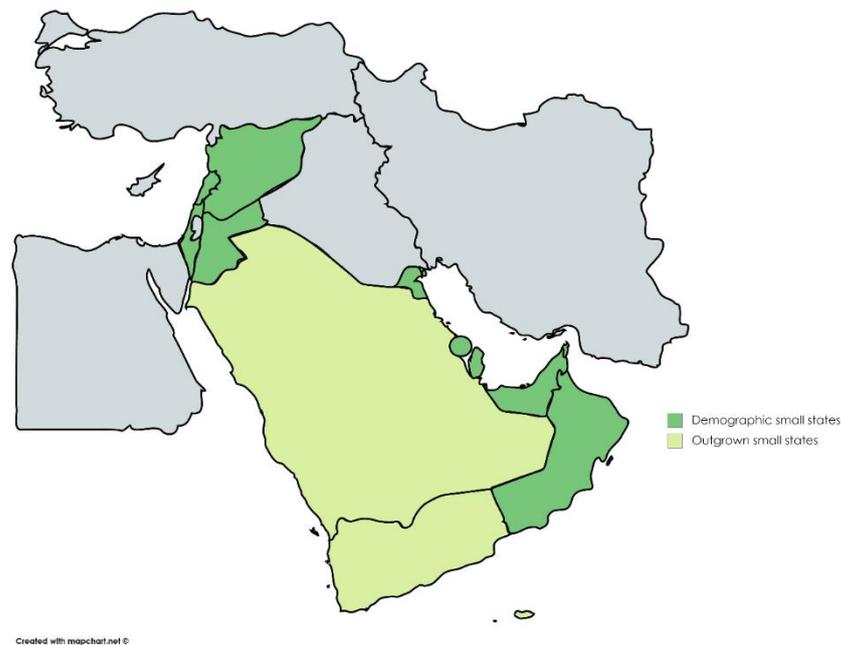
⁴⁵ Data for Yemen and Syria is missing for 2017 – in both cases, I used the latest officially available data (2016 and 2007 respectively). This method will not produce concrete exact results but the two other choices (leaving the two countries out or to get information from other sources) would cause greater disturbances in the dataset. Throughout the dataset, I will use the same technique, but I will always indicate if the data is missing. If data is missing only for a given period but is available both before and after that period, I will use the average of the two proximate data.

⁴⁶ Data is missing for UAE (2014), Qatar (2010), Syria (2007) and Yemen (2014), while the West Bank and Gaza is excluded.

⁴⁷ Calculating with 217 states and state-like entities enlisted in the World Bank Database.

Land area has been the most stable variable during the analysed period of time (1970-2017).⁴⁸ The average size of territory in the Middle East has been approximately 452 000 km², though only five countries (Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Yemen)⁴⁹ surpass it. The smallest territorial state is Bahrain with 690 km², while the biggest one is Saudi Arabia with 2 149 690 km². When it comes to arable land, Syria and Iraq replace Yemen and Egypt in the top five. Altogether, there have been 10 territorial small states in the Middle East between 1970 and 2017: Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman (see Map 1).

Map 2: Demographic small states in the Middle East (2017)



Unlike the territory, the population of the Middle East has grown significantly since 1970 from 137.7 million people to 428.7 million.⁵⁰ As a result, the average value also rose from 8.6 million to 26.8 million. Nine countries (the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) were small states in the entire period, whereas Saudi Arabia grew out of the category in 1986, and Yemen in 2009 (see Map 2). Until 2006, Qatar was the smallest state in demographic terms, but after that Bahrain has

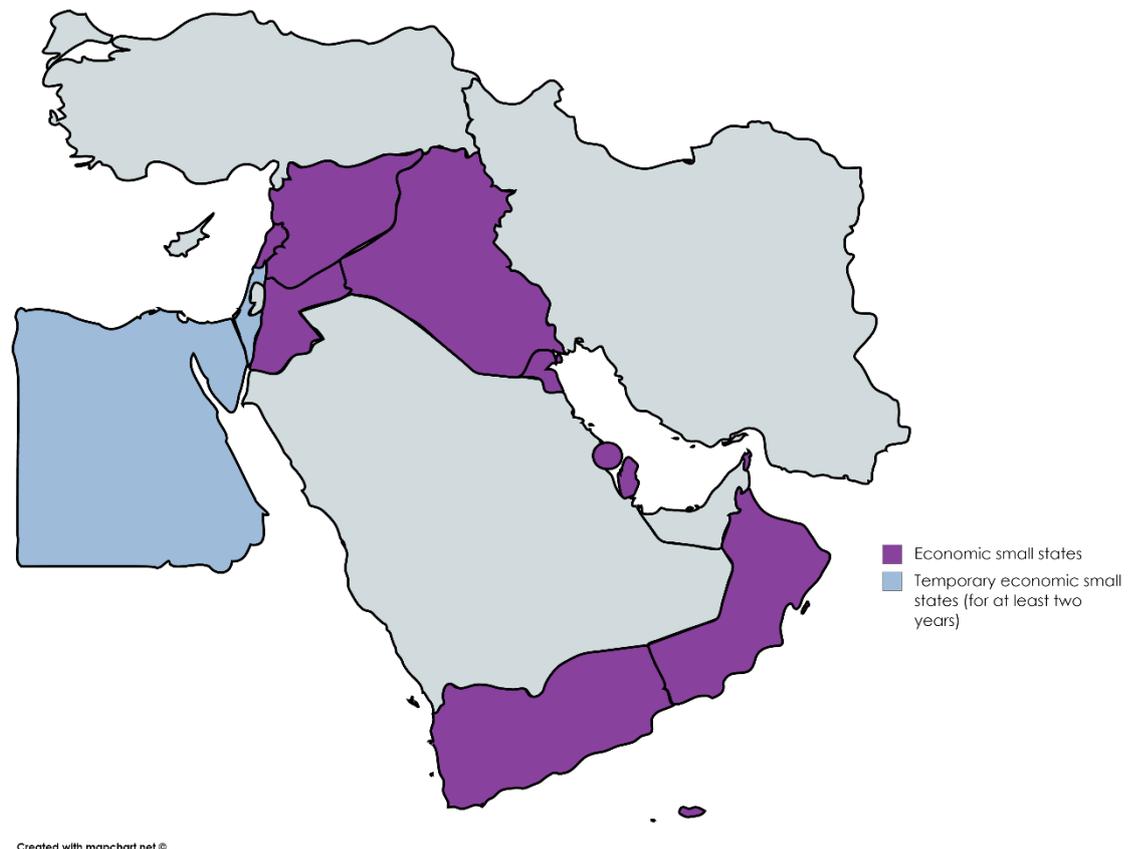
⁴⁸ World Bank Data shows three changes in the land area of Middle Eastern states: in 2008/2009, Jordan grew by 540 km² and Iraq lost 3 050 km², whereas Bahrain, gradually between 2003 and 2014, gained 61 km² of territory.

⁴⁹ World Bank Statistics do not differentiate between South and North Yemen.

⁵⁰ Data is partially missing for Palestine (1970 and 1987) and Kuwait (1990-1992).

been occupying the position with 1 492 584 inhabitants today while the largest one has constantly been Egypt (97 553 151 people in 2017).

Map 3: Economic small states in the Middle East (2017)



The economic output of the region grew more considerably,⁵¹ altogether 42 times larger between 1970 and 2017. In 2017, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Yemen, Syria (and Palestine) had a below the average score in their economic output. Interestingly enough, the picture since 1970 have been relatively stable, with two minor differences: Saudi Arabia was slightly below the average for only a year and Yemen was slightly over it for the same time. Egypt slipped down to being an economic small state several times (between 1974-1986, 1990-1992 and 2004-2008), the United Arab Emirates did that only in 1986, while Israel also between 1975 and 1986 (see Map 3). These data

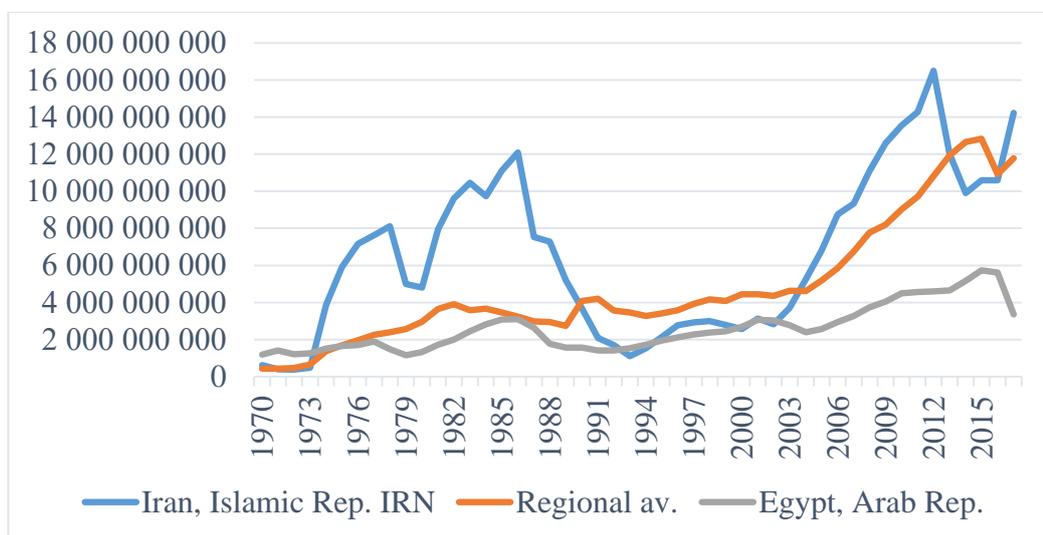
⁵¹ Data is partially missing for UAE (1970-1975), Bahrain (1970-1979), Palestine (1970-1993), Lebanon (1970-1987), Yemen (1970-1989; 2015-2017), Iran (1990-1991), Iraq (1991-2003) and Syria (2008-2017).

clearly show how the economic performance of these entities has been greatly affected by the changing tendencies in the oil price.

Military small states are defined as those states whose military expenditures in absolute term and the size of the armed forces are both below the regional average. Nonetheless first, I analyse these two variables separately. The mean of absolute military expenditures⁵² rose 29 times bigger during 47 years. In 2017, the largest defence budget was produced by Saudi Arabia while the lowest was by Bahrain. This year only the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were able to surpass the regional average (11 784 147 872 USD), the eleven other states spent less.⁵³

The two most surprising cases in the comparison are those of Egypt and Iran (see Chart 8). The North African country has not reached the regional average of military spending since 1975, regardless of the prestige of the Egyptian army. This is not the case with Iran, which was not a military small state between 1973 and 1990, neither between 2004 and 2016. By 2017 nonetheless, the Islamic Republic outgrew the regional average once again.

Chart 8: The Egyptian and Iranian military expenditure vis-à-vis the regional average (1970-2017)



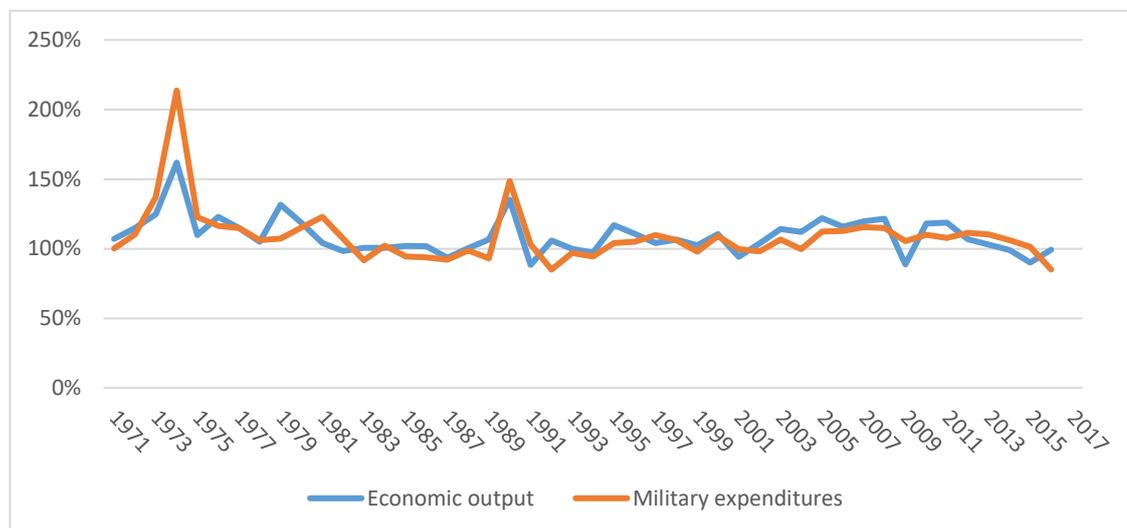
⁵² Data is calculated on the basis of military expenditure compared to GDP and the GDP in the World Bank Database, therefore data is partially missing for those enlisted in footnote 50, and additionally for the UAE (1976-1996; 2015-2017), Kuwait (1975-1976), Oman (1971), Qatar (1970-1979), Saudi Arabia (1974-1976), Lebanon (1989), Qatar (1992-2001; 2011-2016).

⁵³ The UAE was also below the average between 1973 and 1998, as well as Turkey between 1980 and 1988 (and briefly for a year in 1974).

Comparing the fluctuation of the economic and military expenditure averages reveals important dynamics in the region (see Chart 9). Whenever the latter surpasses the former, small states come under severe pressure to enlarge their defence spending to a larger extent than their economic growth. Such periods occurred for example between 1973 and 1975, as well as between 2012 and 2015. 2014 and 2015 were especially crucial years as average military expenditures rose (by 6% and 1% respectively), the economic output shrank to 99% and to 90% (compared to the previous year's average).

If we include the size of armed forces,⁵⁴ Israel (184 500), the United Arab Emirates (63 000) lose their status as large states, while Syria would “grow out” (307 500). Besides the civil war-torn country, the regional average (206 753) is surpassed by Saudi Arabia (251 500), Iran (563 000), Iraq (209 000), Turkey (512 000) and Egypt (835 500). All states which do not reach the mean value in 2016 have not done so in the past 27 years,⁵⁵ but some larger countries slipped below it in some years. Saudi Arabia has been steadily above the average only since 2010, while Iraq and Syria did not reach it three times (2004, 2013, 2014 and 2011, 2012, 2013 respectively).

Chart 9: Correlation between the yearly fluctuation of the average of economic output and military expenditures (1971-2017)



⁵⁴ Data is unavailable for 1970-1984, 1986-1988, 2017, while for Palestine, it is only available for the period 2005-2012.

⁵⁵ Comparable data are only available since 1989.

Map 4: Military small states in the Middle East (2016)

Conclusively, there are seven states in the Middle East which do not reach the average size of either military budget or armed forces (see Map 4): Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen and Oman. Four states (Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria) spend less than the mean value while Israel and the United Arab Emirates have a smaller army. These discrepancies, by themselves, tell a lot about these countries – one can say that the army of Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Syria are under-funded compared to their relative size while that of Israel and the UAE are smaller but better equipped.

All in all, the main statistical data about the distribution of general aggregate resources (GARs) are summarised in Chart 10. In all categories, the dispersion is higher than the average value of the sample, which suggests positive outstanding values.⁵⁶ The overall share of small states in the given resource never reaches the share of the single largest state and differs in all four areas. In terms of population, the nine demographic small states only have 15% of the Middle Eastern society. More than half of the countries (precisely 56%) are economically small but they only produce the 20% of the regional economic output. Small states have approximately the same position when it comes to military expenditure; they constitute the 62% of the states while are responsible for the

⁵⁶ Given the lack of negative values in the sample (there are no states with negative territory, population, economy or military capacities).

21% of regional military expenditures. On the other hand, in the size of armed forces they (62% of Middle Eastern states) cover only 17% of the military personnel. These data suggest that small states are militarised with high governmental spending without the necessary economic or demographic background to support such defence build-up.⁵⁷

Using this statistics, one can categorise the states of the region according to the model described previously (see Chart 11). Today there are four countries in the Middle East which are not small in any respects, namely Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Egypt. Nonetheless, the latter two currently spend less than the average on their defensive capabilities, though Iran is likely to surpass it in the coming years. The region lacks any one-dimensional small states. Israel and the United Arab Emirates have a very similar position in the system as demographic and territorial two-dimensional small states, whereas Yemen is also two-dimensional, although in economic and military terms. The reverse nature of their status (Israel and the UAE vis-à-vis Yemen) shows the huge discrepancy in the regional weight – while the former ones have a large economy and military for fewer people and territory, the latter one has a huge society to look after on a large territory without the sufficient economic and defence capacities to provide welfare or security. Iraq is small territorially and economically, which suggests a demographic pressure and high level of militarisation. Syria is a three-dimensional small state with relatively large-sized armed forces, though its military spending is below the average.

⁵⁷ According to Mehran Kamrava [2016, 19], due to the „position of relative weakness, disadvantage, and often dependence in the international arena, states in developing countries are likely to find it particularly taxing to marshal human and material resources for purposes of warfare”.

Chart 10: The main statistical data about the regional distribution of GARs in the Middle East (2017)

	Territory (km²)	Population (number of people)	Economic output (billion USD)	Military expenditures (billion USD)	Armed forces
Average value	452 464	26 792 543	231.4	11.8	206 754
Minimum value	771 (Bahrain)	1 492 584 (Bahrain)	14.5 (Palestine) ⁵⁸	0.7 (Yemen)	19 460 (Bahrain)
Maximum value	2 149 690 (Saudi Arabia)	97 553 151 (Egypt)	851.1 (Turkey)	69.4 (Saudi Arabia)	835 500 (Egypt)
Distance⁵⁹	2 148 919	96 060 567	836.6	68.7	816 040
Dispersion⁶⁰	622 464	31 817 416	251.4	17.3	239 381
Number (and ratio) of small states	10 (62%)	9 (56%)	9 (56%)	10 (62%)	9 (62%)
Share of the largest state	30%	23%	23%	39%	25%
Share of small states	16%	15%	20%	21%	17%

Lastly, there are altogether six complex small states (37.5% of the regional actors), namely Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

⁵⁸ Among the states, Yemen has the lowest GDP with 27.3 billion USD.

⁵⁹ The difference between the minimum and maximum value.

⁶⁰ The average distance of each element from the average value.

Chart 11: Categorisation of Middle Eastern states based on their size

	Population	Territory	Economy	Military
Non small states	Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran			
Two-dimensional		Iraq		
	Israel, United Arab Emirates		Yemen	
Three-dimensional	Syria			
Complex	Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain			
State-like entities	Palestinian Authority			

2.1.2. The main attributes of Middle Eastern complex small states

The six complex small states of the Middle East (see Map 5) can be geopolitically divided into two groups: Lebanon and Jordan on the one hand with relative closeness to the Eastern Mediterranean; and Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman on the other located in the Persian/Arabian Gulf sub-region. Hereinafter I refer to them as the *Mashreq cluster* and the *Gulf cluster* and will analyse their systemic position separately in the remaining part of this Chapter. Nonetheless, due to formal constraints of the dissertation, I will focus only on the Gulf cluster in Chapters 3 and 4, in order to reach a desired profundity in the individual analysis of complex small states and their behaviour.

Out of the six complex small states, four have been under the average of all GARs between 1970 and 2016.⁶¹ Oman briefly surpassed the average of military expenditures in 2012 as a result of the domestic protests taking place in the years of the “Arab Spring”, while Kuwait did the same for some years in the 1990s (between 1990 and 1992, as well as 1994 and 1995) in the aftermath of the Kuwaiti war. Their counterparts showed no similar anomalies in the researched period.

⁶¹ Though data for the size of armed forces are only available since 1989.

Map 5: Complex small states in the Middle East

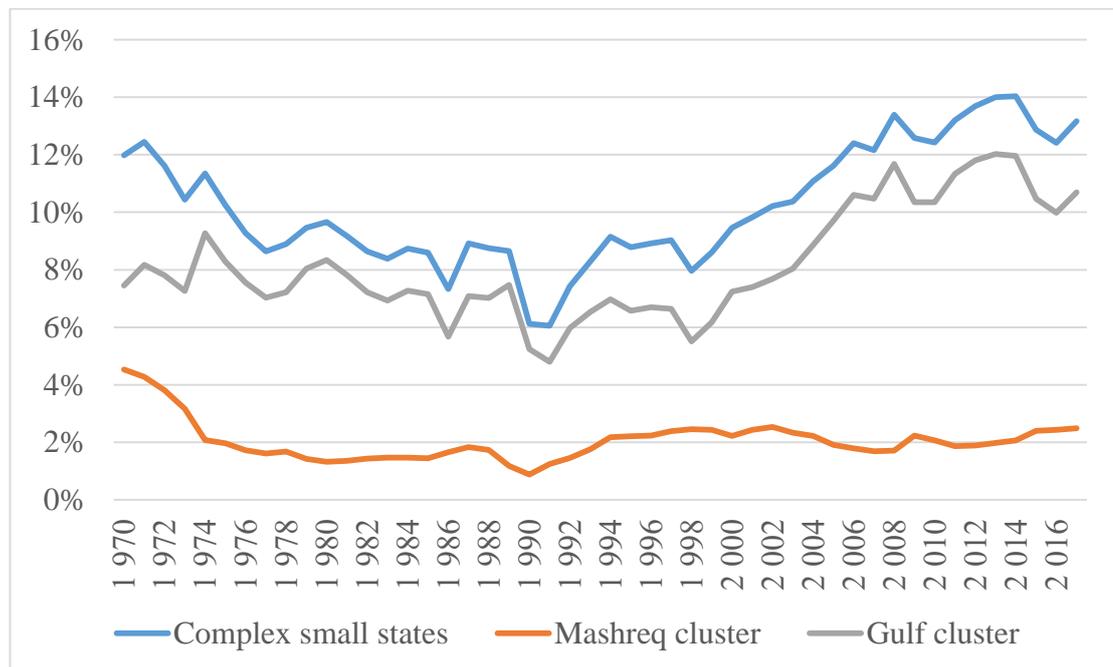


The share of the seven states in the overall territory of the Middle East is 6% out of which 1.4% belongs to the Mashreq cluster and 4.7% to the Gulf cluster. The same ratio for population is 6.7% (28.7 million people) for all complex small states, which represents a limited growth since 1970 from 4.2% (5.8 million people). The internal distribution of this number has also changed throughout the decades: whereas in 1970 the Gulf cluster had only 1.3% (compared to the 2.9% of the Mashreq cluster), today it grew to 3%. Meanwhile, the Mashreq small states remained at relatively the same level (3-3.7%), which shows that difference between them is shrinking constantly. The reason for this is actually a policy of the Gulf small states to invite migrant workers since the early 1990s from East Asia (see part 3.2.). This, on the other hand, altered the ethnic composition of their societies.

The fluctuation of the economic share of the complex small states also reveals important dynamics (see Chart 12). The relative economic performance of the six

countries was basically cut in half between 1970 and 1990 (from 12-13% to 6%), after which there was a relatively steady growth until 2014 (14%) and stagnation ever since (13-14%). The difference between the two clusters grew steadily: in 1970 they were very close to each other as the two Mashreq states provided 5%, while the four Gulf states did 8%. Later on, nonetheless, the gap between their output widened to 8.5 percentage points (2.5% and 11% respectively).

Chart 12: The fluctuation of the economic share of complex small states (1970-2015)

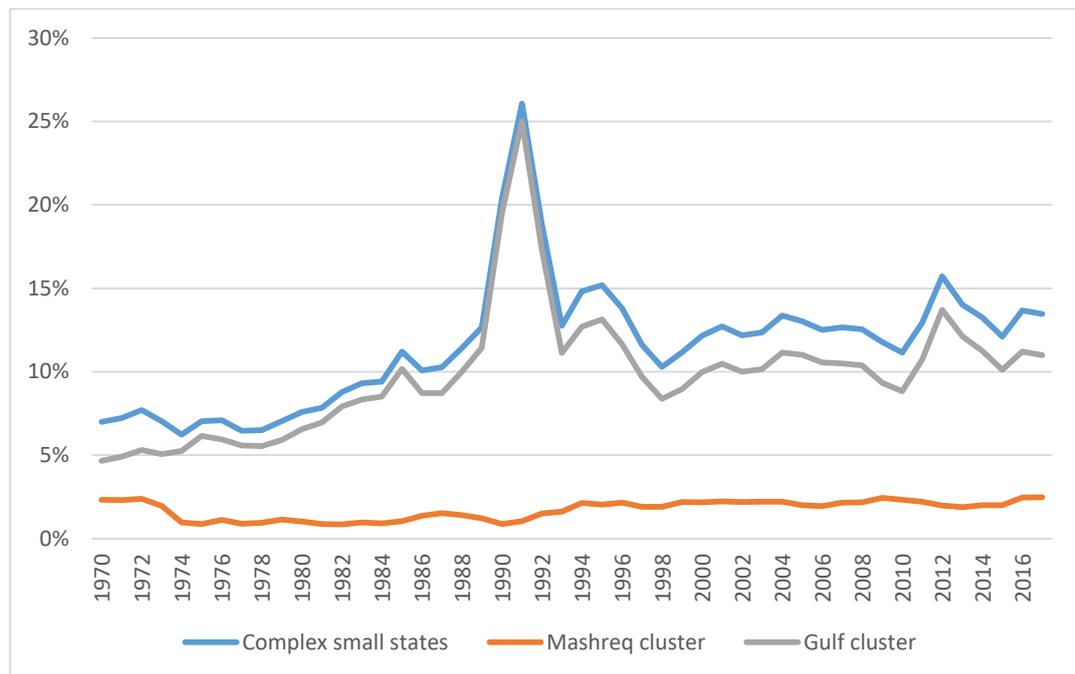


Similar (though not the same) tendencies can be observed in terms of military capacities (see Chart 13). The share of Mashreq small states stagnated at the level of 1-2% throughout the examined period, while that of the Gulf cluster rose from 5% to 11%. It is clear from the data that basically it is the Gulf cluster which moved the rise of the share of complex small states from 7% to almost 14%. It is very telling that the peak took place in 1991, when the seven countries were responsible for the 26% of all military expenditures in the Middle East, out of which 1% was produced by the Gulf states.

Besides 1991, another sharp increase was observable between 2009 and 2012 during the first years of the “Arab Spring” with a rise in the share of the Gulf cluster from 9% to 14%. Simultaneously, the Mashreq cluster fell from 2.44% to 1.99%. These data suggest that in the different sub-regions small states perceived different threats – or they reacted to them differently.

The share of Mashreq countries in the overall size of the armed forces in the region is, on the other hand, almost twice the size of that of the Gulf states (5.9% compared to 3.3%). The difference between them has always been between 2-4 percentage points since 1989, regardless of the changing demographic tendencies. This means that this discrepancy cannot solely be explained by the difference in the size of the population.

Chart 13: The fluctuation of the share of complex small states in military expenditures (1970-2017)



Besides the general description, I tested some of the usual hypotheses regarding small states in practice (see Chapter 1). Many of the expectations regarding resource-scarce entities are fulfilled in the Middle Eastern context:

- Complex small states trade more than larger states. While the regional average of the trade to GDP ratio was 77.5% in 2016,⁶² complex small states had their number at 94% (while larger ones did 65.5%). There is a significantly different value for the Gulf (100%) and the Mashreq (86%) cluster since the late 2000s.⁶³

⁶² Trade data (including exports and imports) for 2017 is not available for most states. Syria is excluded from the dataset.

⁶³ Between 1970 and 1999, the average ratio for the Gulf states was 115.7%, whereas 109.5% for the Mashreq cluster.

- The economy of complex small states is more dependent on import (50.6%) than that of the large states (34.2%). Nonetheless, the Mashreq states (51.6%) have a higher import to GDP ratio than Gulf states (47.3%), while also having a lower export ratio (30.3% and 52.7% respectively). This means that participating in international trade is less beneficiary for them.
- Although generally the small state average of GDP per capita⁶⁴ has constantly surpassed the large state average since 2000, the breakdown of the data shows that it is only due to the performance of the Gulf cluster. In 2017, the four Gulf states had an average of 32 967 USD, four and a half times the size of the Mashreq cluster (6 327) and more than double the size of the large states' average (15 741). On the other hand, the discrepancy would diminish significantly (but would not completely vanish) if we excluded the Qatari per capita GDP of 63 505 USD.
- Smaller states in the Middle East are more urbanised. The overall average ratio of the urban population is 90% for small and 69% for large states. The Gulf countries stand out again with only 8.7% living outside of cities, but the 13.9% for Mashreq countries is still lower than in the case of an average large state. Four out of the five most urbanized countries (Qatar, Kuwait, Israel, Bahrain and Lebanon) are complex small states. This feature can be tracked down to the historical development of the region as major trade cities have been the primary form of social gathering until lately. Smaller states were artificially created on the basis of these major cities and their wider agglomeration.⁶⁵ Larger states have more cities and more agricultural territories as well, which facilitates possibilities to live outside of cities.
- The complex small states are more globalised than their larger counterparts in the Middle East. Their average position in the global ranking of 2017 Index of Globalization survey⁶⁶ (50) is higher than the other eight countries (90), especially in economic (45 to 105) and social (52 to 91) dimensions. On the other hand, larger states are more globalised politically (93 to 109). This supports the

⁶⁴ In current USD. Syria is excluded from the data, while for Yemen, only the 2016 data is available.

⁶⁵ Beirut (Lebanon), Amman (Jordan), Doha (Qatar), Manama (Bahrain), Kuwait City (Kuwait) were major centres for centuries. The only exception is Oman in this regard with a more spontaneous development, though Muscat is an obvious example in the list.

⁶⁶ The Index of Globalization measures the embeddedness of each country in the global environment in three dimensions: economic (including actual flows and restrictions), social (personal contacts, information flows and cultural proximity) and political (number of embassies, membership in international organizations, number of treaties signed and participation in UN peace missions) [ETH, 2017].

prediction that small states have less money to maintain widespread political relations in world politics. A discrepancy exists between the Mashreq and Gulf cluster as the latter is more globalised economically (59 to 37 respectively) and socially (69 to 43), but not politically (78 to 125).

- When it comes to human development, the average of small and large states and the region as a whole is very close to each other (0.797, 0.717 and 0.747 respectively). Therefore size barely effects human development in general, though both clusters of small states outperform the larger states, while the average of the Gulf cluster (0.819) is outstanding in all comparisons.⁶⁷

In the political and social dimensions, the picture is somewhat more mixed. Contrary to theory, the openness of small states does not translate automatically into more democratic political structures. As the famous categorisation of Mehran Kamrava suggests (see Chart 14), five out of the six complex small states are clearly non-democracies with Lebanon being the only exception. Members of the Gulf cluster belong to sultanistic oil monarchies, while Jordan has been a sultanistic state with civil myth. This means that in the Middle East, 83% of complex small states are non-democratic while the same ratio of larger states is 56% (five out of nine), at least according to this approach.

Chart 14: Categorisation of Middle Eastern states (small states in italics)⁶⁸

Non-democracies				Democracies	
Exclusionary		Sultanistic			
Military	Mukhaberat	Oil Monarchies	Civil Myth	Inclusionary	Quasi-Democratic
	Egypt	<i>Bahrain</i>	<i>Jordan</i>	Iran	Israel
	Syria	<i>Kuwait</i>		Iraq	<i>Lebanon</i>
	Yemen	<i>Oman</i>			Turkey
		<i>Qatar</i>			Palestine
		Saudi Arabia			
		UAE			

⁶⁷ Data provided by the UNDP [2018] referring to the year 2015.

⁶⁸ Source: Kamrava, 2005, 284. North African countries were excluded from the table.

In contrast, the report of the Freedom House [2017a] about political rights and civil liberties shows a weak negative correlation between size and freedom. The average score of complex Middle Eastern small states in *Freedom in the World* is four points higher (30) than that of their larger counterparts (25.7), nonetheless the Mashreq cluster (40.5) proves to be much more democratic than the Gulf one (24.8). On the other hand, if we exclude Turkey, Iran and Israel, the average for the Arab region drops to 22.8 with large Arab states having only 16 points. Therefore, inside the Arab world, small states tend to be more democratic than their larger counterparts. The level of the freedom of the press [Freedom House, 2017b]⁶⁹ is somewhat higher in smaller countries (68.7) than in larger ones (76.2), although the difference grows if we exclude large non-Arab countries (81.2).

Small states are, generally, more stable in the Middle East than those possessing larger amounts of resources. According to the State Fragility Index (which grows in case of instability),⁷⁰ complex small states achieve a score of 64.5, contrary to the 86.4 of larger states. Again, Gulf states are much more stable (55) than Mashreq countries (83.5), though even the latter shows less fragility than larger ones. Excluding non-Arab countries would cause a drop in the above-the-average category to 88.6. This discrepancy is not a result of the previous years and the “Arab Spring” – data from 2007 shows almost the same figures.

Contrary to the theoretical expectation, the society of complex small states is not more homogeneous than larger states. Though official statistics do not exist for many states, but we can expect the society of these smaller states to be as or even more diverse than larger ones. This is especially true for the Gulf states for two reasons: firstly, their ethnic composition was severely altered since the 1990s and the changes in the migration policies. Secondly, unlike the Mashreq states, they lean on the Sunni-Shia regional cleavage, which divides their society into at least two large Muslim groups (see part 3.1.2.).

Lastly, the data of the *State Power Index* (SPI) provided by *In.Europa* [2017] also bears some interesting conclusions. Since five out of the seven indicators which are included in the SPI are connected to material resources (and the sixth one, the “*cultural*

⁶⁹ The higher the ratio the less free the press.

⁷⁰ Data extracted from the database of Fund for Peace, 2017.

index” presents the ability of the country to promote its national culture, which is also dependent on financial and demographic resources), there is no surprise that small states are lagging behind. Nonetheless, SPI also includes the “diplomacy index”, which puts Egypt at the first place by far (4.82 points), but at the second place, there is a tie (0.12) between Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Jordan. If we exclude the score of Egypt as an extreme value, small states have a higher average (0.115) than their larger counterparts (0.098). On the basis of this metric, one can predict that smaller Middle Eastern states – due to their lacking military power – were forced to invest in diplomacy and were able to compensate with it.

All in all, the majority of conjectures regarding small states is supported by empirical data in the Middle Eastern context. Complex small states are generally more trade-oriented, import-dependent, globalised (especially economically and socially) and urbanised than their larger counterparts. On the other hand, their level of development, both in terms of GDP/capita and human development, is dependent on their geopolitical position. Their society and political system is slightly more open, though they cannot be called democratic at all. Complex small states in the Middle East are less fragile but (contrary to what is expected) they are as heterogeneous as larger states. Due to the lack of military power, they improved their diplomatic capabilities and do not necessarily suffer a deficit in these areas.

2.2. The environment of the two clusters of complex small states in the Middle East

After the comparative description of the main attributes of complex small states, I turn to the examination of their external environment. The evolution of the Middle Eastern interstate system will be presented from the perspective of small states both from the material and immaterial aspect. While usually the region is described as an anarchic and hostile environment in which zero sum games define international relations, my main argument in this sub-chapter is that due to the distinct way of regional development, Middle Eastern small states have a wider leverage than what is theoretically expected. The roots of this phenomenon will be supported by both material and immaterial factors.

According to Barry Buzan, the Middle East constitute a separate regional security complex [Kelly, 2007, 206], which is closely connected to other ones – primarily to the post-Soviet space, Europe and Central Africa – but has its own dynamics and structures. Consequently, the analysis of the status of complex small states should start

on the Middle Eastern regional level, with references to its connections to the global and the local levels. On the other hand, one can and should differentiate between systemic effects on the Mashreq and the Gulf cluster. Threats are “*unevenly geographically distributed*” [Kelly, 2007, 198], which means that based on geopolitical position, they might have different effects. Therefore, it may be true that the experience of being a small state differs considerably in the Gulf and the Mashreq region. That is why I will try to highlight such discrepancies as well.

The structure of the analysis of security complexes is not self-explanatory. Péter Marton, István Balogh and Péter Rada [2015, 56-57] argued that they should be analysed using three sets of questions: its spatial structure, its other fundamental attributes as well as its social organization. While their attempt is not completely applicable in this case – since they are interested specifically in the security complex and not its effects on a specific group of actors – , almost all of the questions they enlisted are present in the following two parts. The logic of my differentiation is the separation of material and immaterial factors which, while sounding logical, can be as arbitrary as any other structure. As it will be observable, material and immaterial factors effect, strengthen and weaken each other, therefore they should be viewed in a complementary way. Nonetheless, the differentiation derives from the basic premises of the complex model of size, therefore it will be the best logic to be used for this analysis.

2.2.1. The material environment: historical developments and balances of power

Halliday [2009, 6-10] argues that there are three main attributes of the Middle Eastern regional complex. First, the development and international dynamics were affected greatly by outside interference. Despite the fact that almost all territories in the region belonged to the Ottoman empire until its disintegration,⁷¹ European presence grew directly and indirectly since the late 18th century [Yurdusev, 2009, 79]. Later, the United States were involved in the region during the Cold War and the post-bipolar era as well. The Middle East, consequently, has always been a “penetrated system” [Brown, 1984, 3-5], a region open from the above.⁷² Second, despite the artificial and problematic nature

⁷¹ European influence grew not just despite, but because of the Ottoman rule in the region. Istanbul played a transmitter role of “Europeanism” into the Middle East, which actually made it easier for the “modern state institution” to take hold [Yurdusev, 2009, 79-81].

⁷² Although several times external actors interfered in the region not due to regional affairs but because of their global interests or fears. For example the British presence grew due to London’s fascination with India, while the American interventions during the Cold War were driven by perceptions of the Soviet threat [Kupchan, 1988-1989].

of state-building processes, the institutional form of state survived in the region and attempts to tear them down and build something new (or old) resulted in failure. That being said, Middle Eastern states remain weak. The third aspect, very closely connected to the second one, is that non-state actors have played a disproportionately substantive role in international politics.

All of these factors favoured small states more than larger ones and widened their leverage. The presence of external actors made regional powers “smaller” and prevented them from becoming omnipotent [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 3-4]. Great Britain, the United States, Russia and others were never interested in the rise of a regional hegemon. This way small states were able to pursue their interests. On the other hand, the weakness of statehood in the region affected all actors and made them more vulnerable from the inside. That inherent weakness made governments redirect sources spent on foreign policy to domestic policies, which created a window of opportunity to harm and influence larger states. Moreover, the data in the previous chapter suggested that small states managed to get more stable, which means that the threat was unevenly distributed. Third, actor-pluralism in both the qualitative and quantitative sense⁷³ represented possible new allies (and, naturally, adversaries) for small states against larger states.

The effect of these three attributes will be described with respect to the discrepancies between the Mashreq and the Gulf regions. The analysis will reflect on the slightly modified version of the Waltzian framework⁷⁴ [Waltz, 1979, 88-99], suggesting that (considering anarchy as a constant phenomenon) the two main attributes of an international system are the character of its actors and the distribution of power among them. Therefore, after a quick overview of the process of integration of complex small states into the state system, I investigate the main functional peculiarities that Middle Eastern states have, and then analyse the balance of power and the political competition between them.

Integration into the state system

⁷³ The presence of non-state actors did not just elevate the number of actors but introduced a new kind of actor which is not state-like.

⁷⁴ Waltz argued that “the states that are the units of international political systems are not formally differentiated by the functions they perform” [Waltz, 1979, 93]. I defy this notion and try to prove how Middle Eastern states differ from the theoretically expected. These functional differences determine the leverage of small states, as well as larger ones.

Becoming a state is the most profound and significant moment in the history of a political community. The process can be formalised into two types: “‘*state-building*’ as a conscious effort at creating an apparatus of control, and ‘*state-formation*’, as a historical process whose outcome is a largely unconscious and contradictory process of conflicts, negotiations, and compromises between diverse groups” [Berman – Lonsdale, 1992, 5]. Naturally, practice shows a mixture of both processes in each case, especially in the Middle Eastern context.

In general, the evolution of the Middle Eastern state system can be divided into three periods: the Ottoman era until the First World War; the period of European dominance (usually between the two World Wars), and post-independence state-building [Sharabi, 1988, 6] which can be considered as a decades-long, never-ending process. Solely based on these periods, one could spot the two major differences between the Mashreq and Gulf cluster. First of all, most of the Middle Eastern states were built on the ruins of the Ottoman empire and thus both Lebanon and Jordan constituted the integral part of the Ottoman state by the early 20th century, today’s Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman evolved on the periphery of the empire [Bennison, 2009, 45]. Second, the period of European dominance took place in different times in the two cases: Gulf states were under British control between the late 18th century and the 1960s, the Mashreq ones were French and British mandates only between the two world wars. Their formal independence was fulfilled almost thirty years prior to the that of the Gulf states.

Today’s Lebanon and Jordan were part of the historical region called the Fertile Crescent and belonged to its Western flank generally called as “Syria” or “greater Syria” [Hourani, 2013, 90-92]. The closeness of these territories to Anatolia and the fertility of its land made the territory valuable to the Ottoman Port, which conquered it in the early 16th century.⁷⁵ The campaign of Istanbul started out against the Safavids of Iran but eventually led to the occupation of Syria and Egypt from the Mamluks [Özbaran, 2009, 61]. These victories had profound effects on the region – they gave the “*Ottoman State an imperial character*” and the defeat of the Mamluks provided help to the Portuguese fleet to gain ground in the region [Özbaran, 2009, 62].

⁷⁵ Sultan Selim defeated the Mamluk army in a battle taking place in 1516, north of Aleppo, in which the Mamluk Sultan himself died. This way he was able to conquer greater Syria without any resistance. By the end of the year, he appointed his governors to all major cities of the region [Imber, 2002, 47]

Ever since the last decades of the fourteenth century, the Ottoman empire organised its territory into formal provinces, therefore by the seizure of the Western parts of the Fertile Crescent, there was a territorial system in place [Imber, 2002, 177-178]. The huge territories conquered by Selim were divided into four new provinces by 1527, namely Syria, Egypt, Dyarbekir and Kurdistan. During the course of later centuries, they were reorganised many times. Two different practices existed – to appoint a local/previous leader in exchange for taxes and other benefits for the Port or to send a trustee to manage the affairs. Nonetheless, by the mid-sixteenth century, almost all “governor-generals” were appointed solely by the Sultan [Imber, 2002, 182]. Thus local leaders were severely dependent on the ruler and had no territorial base. The provinces were divided into *sinjaks* and the land inside the *sinjaks* were divided into three categories: privately-owned, part of trusts and lands owned by the Sultan himself [Imber, 2002, 184-193]. In the 19th century, as a result of the reform process called *tanzimat*, they reorganized the territories as *vilayets*, though the logic remained untouched.

This imperial system differed from the European modern state system in two ways [Arany – N. Rózsa – Szalai, 2016, 109-110]. First of all, the rule of the Sultan was not connected primarily to the land but rather to the people of the empire. The duality of the Ottoman ruler as someone having political and religious authority at the same time made him the leader of the *umma* (the community of Muslims) and not the leader of a given territory. Naturally, there was a special logic rendered to the political community, but it did not prevail as much as it did in the European context [Anderson, 1987, 3-5]. “*One would be hard-pressed to find any indication of where the Ottoman lands ended*”, argues Reşat Kasaba [2004, 29]. “*There were no border posts or barbed wires that separated the Ottoman Empire from its neighbours, and one certainly did not need a passport to travel to and from the territories of the surrounding states*”.

Second, as the above described multi-layered structure shows, the authority of different power centres overlapped with each other. In contrast with the Western model in which the state had the sole sovereignty over the land, Istanbul had varying level of power in the different parts of the empire [Barnett, 1996, 160]. The influential capacity of the Sultan depended not just on the vicinity of a territory to the capital but also on the importance of it: cities and lands with high production ratio witnessed direct governmental control, while others experienced indirect or – especially in territories which were difficult to reach – practically non-existent influence [Hourani, 2013, 138].

That being said, the Ottoman state was able to exercise direct control over greater Syria [Hourani, 2013, 226], at least over the most important parts of it. Through the manipulation of the local status quo and the balance of power between influential tribes and families, the Sultans were able to hold a tight grip on these areas. The importance of greater Syria was twofold [Özbaran, 2009, 52] – firstly, its cities (mainly Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut and Tripoli) gave room for active economic activities and trade which represented a huge source for taxation. This necessitated a direct control over the cities. Secondly, these territories connected the Ottoman heartland with the holy cities of Islam (one of which, namely Jerusalem, was located here as well), therefore hajj routes had to be defended. In Jordan, the Sultans developed the travel infrastructure and built up a series of square fortresses to protect pilgrims [The Office of King Hussein I, 2017]. This resulted in the neglect of rural areas and other infrastructure not related to either trade or the hajj.

Besides political development and the organization of power, the Ottoman rule effected the composition of the society as well. Jordan received a large amount of Circassian and Chechen people in the second half of the 19th century, especially after an Ottoman-Russian treaty signed in 1860, which included an obligation for the Ottoman empire to accept such immigrants [Shami, 2009, 145].

The states of the Mashreq cluster gained their independence as a result of the disintegration of the Ottoman empire during and after the First World War [Kamrava, 2005, 39]. Two interrelated developments framed the state-building efforts in this sub-region: firstly, the Arab Revolt starting in June, 1916 indirectly led to the Hashemite rule in Jordan (as well as in Iraq, although only until 1956). This would have not been imaginable without the second development, namely the partition of Ottoman territories between the French and the British empires in the framework of the mandate system of the League of Nations, which eventually led to the creation of independent states. Though usually this process is connected to the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, the system was formalised as a result of the Conference of San Remo (1920) and the Treaty of Sévres (1920) and Lausanne (1923). Lebanon (and Syria) became French protectorates, while Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Iraq fell under British imperial control. Traditionally, the British Middle Eastern policy was much more coherent than the French one in terms of aims and means, though Paris vindicated the right to be the guardian of Christian communities, especially in Lebanon [Kamrava, 2005, 37].

The mandatory powers did not accept the Ottoman internal borders between vilayets as demarcation for the newly organised mandates and states [Yurdusev, 2009, 82], specifically with the division of Palestine and Syria. In the case of Lebanon, the French considered the traditionally evolved principality of Mount Lebanon (or Petit Liban), which was inhabited by mainly Christian and Druze communities, “*too small and too weak to maintain itself*”. As a result they choose to attach Muslim territories to the newly formed mandate, thus creating Grand Liban, today’s Lebanon [Lewis, 1994, 133-134].

The arbitrary borders inevitably led to decades-long internal pressure and territorial disputes, though it would be unscientific to argue that otherwise local rulers would have definitely accepted the status quo. The newly formed mandate-states had international legitimacy in the League of Nations framework, though lacked national legitimacy, which led to multiple public unrests in their territories [Kamel et al., 2016, 15-16].

In contrast, the territory of the current Gulf states had never been fully conquered by the Ottoman empire. The region – due to the lack of the necessary resources – never produced a major power⁷⁶ and was never attractive enough for others to finance a campaign to fully capture it.⁷⁷ Thus it served as a buffer zone in the competition of others [Commins, 2014, 1-2]. The most important feature of the Gulf was the trade activity between the port and trade cities [Ulrichsen, 16-17] which connected the region to the wider economic system of the Indian ocean [Commins, 2014, 4-6]. None of the local centres managed to rise above the other, which resulted in the “dispersion of power” [Commins, 2014, 2]. Therefore, any major external actor which decided to intervene was more powerful than local ones – the question was only whether there are external actors who want to intervene.

The first Europeans arriving to the Persian Gulf were the Portugal fleet, which established a permanent presence along the Southern coasts in the last years of the 16th century [Crystal, 2014, 158]. The Ottomans actually arrived in the Gulf after the Portuguese: in 1546, Istanbul conquered Baghdad and then moved to the South, to Basrah,

⁷⁶ Except for, naturally, the first Arab empire, but it is quite telling that the Umayyads instantly moved their capital to Damascus.

⁷⁷ Even for the Ottomans it was only the Western coast of the Arabian peninsula which was valuable because of its religious importance.

Qatif and al-Hasa [Al-Qasimi, 1999, 2-3; Özbaran, 2009, 93-105].⁷⁸ The predominance of Portugal in the Gulf trade was over by 1622, when Persian and British forces expelled them from Hormuz [Al-Qasimi, 1999, 17]. Later came the Dutch as well, but the British empire managed to build its monopoly by the middle of the 18th century [ibid] as the Netherlands were forced to withdraw from the region by 1766 [Al-Qasimi, 1999, 188]. London had the most pressing incentive to be present in the region: besides the general urge to oversee maritime trade (an aim shared by all European maritime empires) the Arabian Peninsula gained importance due to its closeness to the Indian colonies [Ismael – Ismael, 2011, 388].

The British forces gained the upper hand not because of the brute use of force but by understanding and manipulating the competition between the local actors (including Safavid Iran, Oman and other Arabian tribes) [Commins, 2014, 41-61]. When they were able to, they preferred to use indirect methods of persuasion, bribery or negotiations. Because of the actor-plurality in the region, local leaders got used to playing out empires to survive and to benefit from their struggle.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, by the eve of the 19th century, their strategy was in jeopardy due to the intensification of piracy, escalating conflicts between the local tribes and some attempts by France to gain ground in the region [Al-Qasimi, 1999, 40-41]. That is why the British Crown decided to change tactics and initiate a series of contracts with local tribal leaders and form formal alliances with them in the pursuit of maintaining the status quo.

The so-called “trucial system” included a series of bilateral and multilateral agreements between 1798 and 1916 between London and the tribes. These documents were crucially important in the political and institutional development of the Gulf as they represent the basis of modern statehood. In exchange for protection and recognition, local leaders had to maintain the order on a given piece of land and refrain from any kind of “foreign policy” activity unauthorised by the Brits. The long-lasting effects of the trucial

⁷⁸ Parts of the al-Hasa elayet belong today to Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, but the Ottoman rule was more formal than actual. As a British merchant wrote about Basra in 1583, the city “*in times past was under the Arabians, but now is subject to the Turke. But some of them the Turkey cannot subdue*” [cited by Özbaran, 2009, 191].

⁷⁹ See the example of Bahrain in 1559 [Özbaran, 2009, 117-133].

system can be summarised in the following points [Crystal, 2104, 159-160; Ismael – Ismael, 2011, 388; Hazmeh, 1994; Szalai, 2013, 5]:

- The monarchic structures were reinforced as the agreements were made between London and local leaders and not communities or institutions.
- The logic of territoriality was introduced.
- The legal system became dual in nature as the traditional Sharia law was mixed with the British custom law.
- The territory of the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula was divided into smaller pieces of land which never unified completely.
- Other external forces were excluded, and the British monopoly was strengthened considerably.

The crucial system practically meant that the leading tribes and the territory to which they were assigned to became British protectorates. Gulf communities had to live through the next eventful decades (the disintegration of the Ottoman empire, the two world wars, the discovery of oil, the creation of Israel and the rise of Arab nationalism) inside the protective cage of the British empire. Later, as London decided to remove all its military presence from the East of Suez in 1956, the small territories were about to experience freedom [Al-Hamad, 1997]. By the 1970s, all smaller Gulf countries became integrated into the international state system, joining the small states of the Mashreq region.

Nonetheless, state building was not complete by gaining independence, and many cases the process is still ongoing, institutions change and evolve. Raymond Hinnebusch [2014, 22] argues that the progress “*followed a bell-shaped curve, increasing to a peak in 1985 and then declining*”. State-building has never been a one-way process as structures can regress or disintegrate in some periods. Therefore, the analysis of the behaviour of complex small states in different situations should include the assessment of the state of state-building at the given time, since it determines not just the leverage of it but that of the others as well, since “*powerful states*” (in the institutional sense) “*are increasingly interfering in the affairs of weaker ones*” [Cammack et al., 2017, 2].

While the circumstances of the state formation processes of the Mashreq and the Gulf small states differed to a great extent, they also have shared experiences in the process. Jordan and Lebanon became independent states much earlier than Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Moreover, while the former two had almost four

hundred years of Ottoman “occupation”, the latter four had no similar experience as they had been developing on the edge of the empire. The closeness of the Mashreq to the Ottoman heartlands meant that by the 20th century, there was no other outside force to challenge the Sultan’s rule, contrary to the Gulf experience, which included the continuous manoeuvre between imperial interests and the intent to manipulate the rivalry to their interest.

Nonetheless, the independence and institutional development in both cases were made possible by the presence of European forces which laid down the foundation of their statehood in the framework of the mandate system (Lebanon and Jordan) or the British protectorate system (the four Gulf states). London was overseeing the process in the case of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Jordan, while Paris was in charge in the case of Lebanon. Contrary to European state-building, the “national” communities did not build their own bureaucratic capacities to defend themselves from outside threat, but imperial powers constructed their institutions [Gaub, 2017, 61-64]. Both clusters went through this process to become members of the Middle Eastern interstate system.

The functional character of the Middle Eastern state

Due to the artificial and externally built states in the Middle East, the functional character of the state differs considerably, which makes traditional theories hardly applicable in the regional context [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 1]. A more thorough analysis is required to get a better picture about the regional security complex and its effects on small states.

The above described nature of the state-building process in the region had four distinct effect on the state as an institution [Anderson, 1987, 6-7]. First of all, as I have already mentioned, the boundaries between states turned out to be quite arbitrary, which do not reflect the local economic and social circumstances. Second, the modern state structure was not demanded by the population but was adopted by the alliance between European powers and some local elites. Third, as a result, the process benefited only some of the local elite groups but disenfranchised others and the wider public as well. Fourth, the institutional strength of the state varied significantly geographically and over time: Egypt or Tunisia, on the one hand, managed to develop a modern bureaucracy but Libya or Lebanon, on the other, needed decades to work off this disadvantage.

This process led to a particular Middle Eastern state model, which behaves differently than what is theoretically expected from a “modern state” [Anderson, 1987;

Brichs, 2013; Brichs – Lampridi-Kemou, 2013]. During the 20th century, the institutionalisation process took place in the framework of the competition of local power groups or elites (*differentiated accumulation of power*). This competition has usually been fought for natural and other resources. Thus the state itself and the control of state institutions represented a new resource in the rivalry, which provided the necessary tools to exert dominance in the country. Therefore, the state became the primary resource to rule other social groups. The elite which could acquire control over the state institutions was able to form a *regime*, which includes authority structures (formal and informal patterns of the way power is distributed), values (aims and principles) and norms (specified procedures which are expected and accepted in decision making) [Stenslie, 2012, 6-7].

As a result, state policies should be better conceptualised as “regime policies”, as they only intend to serve the interests of the ruling elite vis-à-vis rival power groups. The Middle Eastern state is far from being monolith or cohesive but rather fragmented [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 1-2]. There are at least three types of domestic actors which try to influence policies: primary elites (those with the largest share in political and economic power), secondary elites (subordinate or dependent social groups which, nonetheless, are part of the competition), and the general public which usually is unable to acquire agency and become a subject (and not object) of power plays. On the contrary, the support of the population is also considered to be a type of resource [Brichs – Lampridi-Kemou, 2013, 14-18].

The effect of this alternative state model – which is not uncommon in the developing world – is far-reaching. First of all, it reshapes the nature of security and conflict. The main security threats a government has to face are coming from the inside, not the outside. The state (at least initially) lacks both the ability to coerce its population to follow the laws (despotic power) and the necessary resources and know-how to get people to cooperate on the basis of efficiency (infrastructural power) [Jackson, 2009, 149]. In such circumstances, governments tend to build up their coercive capacities, though this prospect leads us to the *insecurity dilemma* [ibid, 148]: if the state becomes too strong, it may provoke the rival elites to rise against the government; but if it is too weak, it can be defeated easily. In conclusion, domestic politics can be as conflictual as international politics, which questions several expectations laid down by IR theory.

Chart 15: Conflicts in the Middle East (1970-2017)⁸⁰

Conflict	Date	Type	Main state participants	Sub-region
Jordanian civil war	1970	Transnational	Jordan, Israel, Syria	Mashreq
Yom Kippur War	1973	Interstate	Egypt, Syria, Israel	Mashreq
Iraqi Kurdish Revolt	1974	Internal	Iraq	Gulf
Lebanese civil war	1975-1990	Transnational	Lebanon, Israel, Syria	Mashreq
Iraqi Kurdish civil war	1978-1979	Internal	Iraq	Gulf
Iraqi Shia revolt	1979	Internal	Iraq	Gulf
Yemeni war	1979	Interstate	North and South Yemen	Gulf
First Gulf war	1980-1988	Interstate	Iraq, Iran	Gulf
Osiraq attack	1981	Interstate	Iraq, Israel	Mashreq
South Yemen civil war	1986	Internal	South Yemen	Gulf
First intifada	1987-1993	Transnational	Israel	Mashreq
Second Gulf war	1990-1991	Interstate	Iraq, Kuwait, coalition forces	Gulf
Iraqi Kurdish and Shia revolts	1991	Internal	Iraq	Gulf
Yemeni civil war	1994	Internal	Yemen	Gulf
Saudi-Yemeni border conflict	1998	Interstate	Saudi Arabia, Yemen	Gulf
Second intifada	2000	Transnational	Israel	Mashreq
Third Gulf war	2003-2011	Interstate	Iraq, coalition forces	Gulf
Houthi insurgency	2004-	Internal	Yemen	Gulf
Israeli intervention in Lebanon	2006	Transnational	Israel, Lebanon	Mashreq
North Lebanon conflict	2007	Internal	Lebanon	Mashreq
Gaza war	2008-2009	Transnational	Israel	Mashreq
Bahraini “Arab Spring”	2011	Transnational	Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Gulf
Egyptian “Arab Spring”	2011-2013	Internal	Egypt	Mashreq
Syrian civil war	2011-	Transnational	Syria, Iran, Israel, coalition forces	Mashreq
Yemeni civil war	2014-	Transnational	Yemen, Saudi Arabia (Iran)	Gulf
Iraqi civil war	2014-	Transnational	Iraq, coalition forces	Gulf

⁸⁰ Conflicts with small state involvement highlighted (see Chart 17 for more detail).

This theoretical phenomenon is easily observable in the Middle Eastern context. In Chart 15, I enlisted the main armed conflicts between 1970 and 2017 and separated them into three categories: interstate conflicts in which the major players are states; internal conflicts, in which predominantly domestic actors fight each other; and transnational ones which include both types of actors.

The main conclusion of the chart is that states have to fear internal threats more than external ones. Out of the 26 enlisted conflicts, only 7 were purely interstate wars, 10 transnational and 9 internal. Out of the 11 conflicts where small states were involved, 7 were transnational, 2 internal and 2 interstate. This phenomenon is a constraint for all states but since internal weakness is present in larger states as well, the phenomenon can be considered as an opportunity for smaller states to influence their larger counterparts. If the government of a small state can maintain internal stability it can play out social groups in larger states against each other to harm the state as a whole and pursue its interest.

Second, as security and the nature of conflicts determine foreign policy, the phenomenon have had profound effect on the (domestic and) international behaviour of Middle Eastern states. Governments which feel that their internal threats are more pressing than their external ones will direct their foreign policy course to counter domestic and not necessarily international challenges – a strategy usually called “*omni-balancing*” [David, 1991], which is very much visible in the crisis management strategies of small Gulf states (see part 4.2.).⁸¹ Such behaviour occurs especially in the case of low level state building [Hinnebusch 2014a, 20-21].

The ultimate motivation for actions will be the logic of *regime security* (and not state or national security), which usually results in regime-alliances in the region or (especially in the penetrated system of the Middle East) external actors [Jackson, 2009, 154-155]. The state, arguably, lacks the interest but also the ability to “*deal with socio-economic grievances and disparities*” [Cavatorta, 2017, 40], as the short-term security of the regime triumphs over any other motivation, including state building or social progress

⁸¹“When choosing *omni-balance* [strategy], a state undertakes an international action that will allow it simultaneously to address an internal problem. *Omni-balancing* assumes that a Third World country will choose the strategy that will allow it to achieve a balance on as many fronts as possible, solving as many problems as it can at once. Since the regimes in these states usually lack stability, internal problems are at least as important as external threats. In many cases the ruler or ruling elite did not come to power by a democratic vote. The personal wish to survive (physically and politically) influences decision making more than the wellbeing of the entity governed” [Rosman-Stollman, 2004, 186].

[Jackson, 2009, 154-155]. The inability of governments to meet the needs of their society is closely connected to the legitimacy crisis of Middle Eastern states [Razi, 1990, 84] (to be elaborated in the next part), which leads to more aggressive approach against popular demand.

The authoritarian approach by the Arab governments can easily lead to a vicious circle very similar to the “insecurity dilemma” – repression leads to the lack of social trust, which turns into discontent. Political frustration in the society will mobilise segments of the population against the government, which will respond with more repression [UNDP, 2004]. The mechanism, coupled with high military expenditures “*made rulers over-confident in their ability to suppress opposition, as with the defunct Hashemite monarchy in Iraq*” [Ahram – Lust, 2016, 12].

Third, the Middle Eastern state model can also be attributed to having a dual character of premodern and modern structures simultaneously. While all social and political institutions officially have the attributes of a modern state, the practical way of the distribution of power follows the logic of neopatriarchy, “*the dominance of the Father (patriarch), the center around which the national as well as the natural family are organized*” [Sharabi, 1988, 7]. In such society [ibid],

“citizens not only are arbitrarily deprived of some of their basic rights but are the virtual prisoners of the state, the objects of its capricious and ever-present violence, much as citizens once were under the classical or Ottoman sultanate. As we shall see, the neopatriarchal state, regardless of its legal and political forms and structures, is in many ways no more than a modernized version of the traditional patriarchal sultanate.”

The logic of neopatriarchy and the duality of the nature of the state is observable in many aspects of social life. Though several countries have elections in the region, basically “*all Arab electoral systems were configured to give the ruling power elite a built-in majority*” [Khouri, 2017, 27]. In those states where the social organization is more tribal (like in the case of the Arabian Peninsula or Jordan), the regime has to “pay” to get tribal support, which translates itself into formal governmental policies [Salzman, 2016, 212-215]. The logic of the Western institutional approach often fails to highlight such premodern dynamics.

Fourth, as states are not designed to satisfy the needs of the society but to maintain the ruling elite’s dominance, social groups are likely to form civil organizations

and other forms of non-state actors. This term refers to organizations which “*are at least in principle autonomous from the structure and the machinery of the state, and of the governmental and intergovernmental bodies below and above the formally sovereign state*” [Josselin-Wallace, 2001, 3]. Although there is no general theory to social activism or non-state actors, one can conceptualise their appearance in cases where demands by some segments of the society are not met by the capacity or the willingness of state institutions [Wiktorowitz, 2004, 6].

Among the various types of non-state actors, usually non-governmental organizations (“*voluntary, not for profit, private and self-governing*” institutions), highly empowered individuals and violent groups using illegal violence are the ones mentioned in the Middle Eastern context [Valensi, 2015, 61-62]. A typical form of the regional NGOs are “Islamic movements” which, under the name of Islam, provide services which the state cannot or will not provide. Therefore their activity is shaped by, among other factors, the nature of state repression, the institutional strength of the government or the instability of elite alignments [Hafez – Wiktorowitz, 2004, 65]. Such Islamic movements include the Muslim Brotherhood network, the Hamas [Robinson, 2004], the Hezbollah [Valensi, 67-70] or even the Islamic State [Arany – N. Rózsa – Szalai, 2016, 132-137; Fromson – Simon, 2015; Valensi, 70-74].

The role of NGOs in the Middle Eastern state building processes has been ambiguous. On the one hand, they many times obstructed institution or nation building intentions (like in the case of tribal organizations defying the newly formed state structures), but on the other hand, due to the essential weakness of the state, governments often needed the help of sub-national actors, especially in the case of militias to maintain order and control [Gaub, 2017, 57-58].

Accordingly, the dynamics of the relations between such NGOs and small states in the Middle East can be quite different. Firstly, weak, dysfunctional and/or authoritarian states might be suspicious of any kind of civil activity and organizations and consider them as a manifestation of a rival elite group. In this case, hostility between them is the most probable outcome. Secondly, on the other hand, resource-scarce small states might welcome such organizations as they ease the pressure on them to meet all social demands.⁸² Consequently, domestic cooperation can be formed in these cases. Thirdly, small states can also instrumentalise NGOs operating in other states (let them be smaller

⁸² Lebanon, for example, acknowledges the role of the institutions of religious communities in the area of personal status law [Gaub, 2017, 56].

or larger) in order to use them and influence their activities in their interests (see part 4.5.). The usage of non-state actors as a foreign policy tool is not uncommon in the region [Kausch, 2017], especially in turbulent periods [Marchetti – Al Zahrani, 2017]. This tool is cheap enough that several small states can use such strategy.⁸³

The Muslim Brotherhood can be used as an example for all cases of small state relations with non state actors. In 2016, Jordan securitised the Brotherhood's local affiliate and closed down its headquarters [BBC, 2016]. The small Gulf states cooperated with the “brothers” until the early 1990s in different sectors of the society, especially in culture and education [Abd al-Ghaffar, 201]. Lastly, Qatar used the MB's network in Syria, Libya or Egypt as a foreign policy tool to shape political developments [Ulrichsen, 2014b].

All in all, the functional characteristics of the Middle Eastern state effect the role and policies of small states in various ways. Both the essential weakness of state institutions, the logic of regime security and the prominent role of NGOs can be advantageous and disadvantageous for resource-scarce entities, though in general – as these phenomena theoretically effect all states equally– it represents wider leverage in the international arena. On the other hand, the simultaneous existence of premodern and modern institutions effects decision-making to a great extent which presupposes various policy outcomes among small states, even facing the same external threat.

Balance of power (1920-2017)

Analysing the fluctuation of the balance of power in the Middle East, one can make four general observations. First of all, due to the historical development of the region, none of the members of the sub-system became close to achieve a hegemonic or system-determining status [Lustick, 1997]. This, in theory, leads to more conflicts than in the case of a single actor-dominated system [Lake, 2009]. Second, though the presence of external players was constant throughout the decades, the extent of it fluctuated greatly. Third, state-building processes and strengthening or weakening of state institutions has shaped regional dynamics as it triggered conflicts and rivalry.

Fourth, while the two clusters of complex small states share the same structural environment, they had diverse pressures from the outside due to their different location.

⁸³ As Kausch argues, NGO as proxy agents are usually used as military challengers to adversaries, as future leaders, as bearers of a specific identity, as a source of legitimacy, or as a leverage card vis-à-vis other actors [Kausch, 2017, 81-82].

The Gulf region has been basically a three-pillar sub-system with Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia constituting the power centres [Ulrichsen, 2011b, 3]. Except for Oman, the members of the Gulf cluster are squeezed between the three. Geopolitically, Kuwait is more exposed to Iraq, whereas the others are dependent on Saudi Arabia as their sole land neighbour. Apart from complex small states, only the United Arab Emirates are located in the sub-region, a two-dimensional small states in terms of population and territory, which means that the federation is larger than them both in economic and military capacities. The closed position of complex small states is somewhat bettered by the fact that none of them are land-locked and thus enjoy a free pathway to international water.

In comparison, the Mashreq cluster has a somewhat more open setting. The sub-region is effected by three large states (Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia), three two-dimensional states (Iraq, Israel and the United Arab Emirates), a three-dimensional one (Syria) and a non-state entity (Palestine). More actors mean more intensive interstate competition (which is also indicated by the fact that none of the states are military small states), which can be beneficial and dangerous for small states at the same time. The vicinity of the Palestinian territories, a relatively large area without effective and permanent state control for decades might indicate further instability and transnational actors. The closeness of Israel and one of the major structuring conflicts of the region (the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) creates particular security threats and considerations for the Mashreq small states.

Naturally, the balance of power and the allocation of threats varies not just in space, but time as well. Based on the description of Hinnebusch⁸⁴ [2014b] and Kamrava [2005], I divided the modern history of the Middle East into six periods, all with different effects on the Mashreq and Gulf small states.

1. 1920-1955: *the age of imperialism and oligarchic multipolarity* was characterised by strong non-Arab periphery states (Iran, Turkey and Israel from 1947), which were all allied to Western powers, having an advantage in state-building and nation-building; and a weak Arab core, which included unstable and unconsolidated states. The formation of Saudi Arabia and the ambitions of the

⁸⁴ I slightly modified his period framework as Hinnebusch constituted an intermediate age between 1970-1975 and left the last period open.

Hashemite states (Iraq and Jordan) were the most important developments and efforts in the era.

2. 1956-1975: *the age of Arab nationalism and pan-Arab revolution* was characterised by Egyptian hegemonic ambitions in the Arab region and region-wide dissatisfaction with the post-colonial state structure, which paved the way for several revolutions. In this environment, the attempt of Gamal Abdel Nasser to make Egypt the core Arab state on the basis of pan-Arabism had its momentum in the fifties but started to decline after the war of 1967. The discredited Nasserism failed to achieve substantial military victory against Israel or to satisfy the desires of the Arab peoples, which eventually led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations and the end of the pan-Arab hegemonic ambitions of Egypt. The Mashreq cluster was exposed to the effects of the three Arab-Israeli wars and the nationalist foreign policy of Syria and Egypt, two states which witnessed leadership change in the era. In parallel, members of the Gulf cluster just achieved independence in the last years of the era, which, in such a turbulent era, practically meant the loss of the British protective umbrella.
3. 1976-1990: *the age of realism* came as state institutions started to be consolidated to a substantive extent in the Arab region while Arab nationalism in general was discredited by regional developments. This paved the way for growing room to manoeuvre for Islamist movements. Nonetheless the last representative of Arab nationalism, Saddam Hussein, came to power in 1979 and by attacking Iran, he gave a new push for the ideology with a Sunni flavour, but then it completely lost its momentum. At the same time, international instability rose due to the Iranian revolution, the first and the second Gulf crisis and the Lebanese civil war. The centre of crisis in the Middle East moved from the Israeli question to the Iraqi-Irani-Saudi triangle, which deteriorated the security situation of the Gulf cluster.
4. 1991-2010: *the age of American hegemony* witnessed substantial interference by the global superpower in form of military interventions (in the second and third Gulf wars) or intensifying alliance-building and subsidies (Turkey, the Gulf states, Israel and Egypt primarily). After the turning point represented by the Kuwaiti war, the 1990s was an era of relative stability with the end of the superpower rivalry,⁸⁵ the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian negotiation and the system of sanctions

⁸⁵ A very interesting contemporary evaluation of the possible scenarios after the Gulf war was presented by Hudson, 1992.

against Iraq and Iran. The situation of the Mashreq cluster significantly bettered as the Lebanese civil war ended and Jordan managed to sign peace a agreement with Israel, while under the dual containment policy (in which the United States sought to contain both Iraq and Iran), the Gulf state enjoyed privileged partnership with Washington. The situation worsened after the second Intifada, 9/11 and the Iraqi war of 2003, which paved the way for the collapse of a central state in the Middle East, the rose of Iranian influence and the growing role of non-state actors. As Turkey turned its attention back to the Middle East, the three non-Arab members of the system became the dominant actors once again.

5. 2010-2017: *the age of Arab uprising and competitive multipolarity* resulted in the manifestation of the structural failure of the Arab state in many cases and the outbreak of transnational armed conflicts. The illusion of Arab unity faded away completely as inter-Arab rivalry (in Syria, Libya or the Gulf Cooperation Council) intensified. The end of *Pax Americana* was undeniable as Washington refused to play a deal-breaker role during the “Arab Spring” and the growing Russian influence in Syria and the region strengthened. The role of Iran rose significantly as a result of the Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni developments, which led to an intensified and more aggressive Saudi-Iranian competition. In such instability, none of the internal or external actors were able to build hegemony, power got more and more diffuse, which exacerbated the international rivalry and “*long-term instability and power vacuum*” [Lorenz, 2015] and loosened alliances. This new era, which is frequently called “*competitive multipolarity*” [Kausch, 2014] or “*heteropolarity*” (with the inclusion of non-state actors), provides three fates for small states: internal weakness and the growing presence of external actors (Lebanon or Bahrain), cautious and self-restraining behaviour (Jordan or Kuwait) or active and ambitious foreign policy to form transnational developments (Qatar or Oman). The states in the latter category are usually called “*swing states*”, emphasizing their flexibility [Kausch, 2016].

Chart 16: The main periods of the modern Middle Eastern regional system

Time	Internal dynamics	External interference	Number of conflicts (IS/I/TN)	Gulf cluster	Mashreq cluster
1970-1975: Age of Arab nationalism	The crisis of Arab nationalism	Relatively low	3 (1/1/1)	Losing British umbrella, twin pillar policy	Israeli-Arab tensions, leadership change in Egypt and Syria
1975-1990: Age of realism	State consolidation and international instability	Relatively low	9 (4/3/2)	Almost constant wars	Lebanese civil war and the first intifada
1991-2010: Age of Pax Americana	Relative stability turning into deepening transnational crisis	High (American)	9 (2/4/3)	Dual containment and instability after 2003	The rise and fall of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Turkey's re-emergence
2011-2017: Age of Arab uprisings	Competitive multipolarity	High (weakening American and growing Russian)	5 (0/1/4)	Instability	Instability

In Chart 16, I summarised the main attributes of the periods between 1970 and 2017 as my analysis only refers to those years. The main conflicts are also included on the basis of Chart 15. As we can see, the number of conflicts are relatively stable, though the share

of interstate conflicts has constantly diminished. It is also observable that the regional environment evolved in contradictory direction for the two clusters: for the Mashreq (as the intensity of the Arab-Israeli conflict was lowered) it improved significantly while for the Gulf it fluctuated considerably: between 1970 and 1991 it worsened, stabilised between 1991 and 2003 and again destabilised afterwards. Nonetheless, the new era starting in 2011 meant instability and chaos for all small states as they were all exposed to regional developments.

Chart 17: Small state involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts

Conflict	Date	Sub-region	Small state involvement	Type of involvement
Jordanian civil war	1970	Mashreq	Mashreq	Passive
Yom Kippur War	1973	Mashreq		
Iraqi Kurdish Revolt	1974	Gulf		
Lebanese civil war	1975-1990	Mashreq	Mashreq	Passive
Iraqi Kurdish civil war	1978-1979	Gulf		
Iraqi Shia revolt	1979	Gulf		
Yemeni war	1979	Gulf		
First Gulf war	1980-1988	Gulf		
Osiraq attack	1981	Mashreq		
South Yemen civil war	1986	Gulf		
First intifada	1987-1993	Mashreq		
Second Gulf war	1990-1991	Gulf	Gulf	Active and passive
Iraqi Kurdish and Shia revolts	1991	Gulf		
Yemeni civil war	1994	Gulf		
Saudi-Yemeni border conflict	1998	Gulf		
Second intifada	2000	Mashreq		
Third Gulf war	2003-2011	Gulf	Gulf	Active
Houthi insurgency	2004-	Gulf		
Israeli intervention in Lebanon	2006	Mashreq	Mashreq	Passive
North Lebanon conflict	2007	Mashreq	Mashreq	Passive
Gaza war	2008-2009	Mashreq		
Bahraini “Arab Spring”	2011	Gulf	Gulf	Active and passive
Egyptian “Arab Spring”	2011-2013	Mashreq	Gulf	Active
Syrian civil war	2011-	Mashreq	Mashreq, Gulf	Active and passive
Yemeni civil war	2014-	Gulf	Gulf	Active
Iraqi civil war	2014-	Gulf	Gulf	Active

In Chart 17, I investigated the level and nature of the involvement of small states in the different conflicts. “Active” involvement refers to situations in which small states attacked other states, or intervened/heavily assisted different actors in a transnational conflict outside of their territories. “Passive” means the opposite, namely if a small state was attacked by external actors, suffered a civil war or others intervened in their territory. This category also included those cases when a small state had to suffer the consequences of wars outside of their territories (e.g. refugees, migration, spill-over).

In this framework, one can clearly see that the nature of small state involvement dominantly changed throughout the decades. Between 1970 and 1991, small states played a passive role three times, and they only contributed to international fighting efforts once. Between 1991 and 2010, they were victims two times (Lebanon twice) and assisted the 2003 Iraqi war. Nonetheless, after 2011, complex small states were involved in all conflicts, and almost all times actively with only Bahrain suffering a transnational conflict while Jordan and Lebanon were exposed to the effects of the Syrian civil war.

Conclusively, the material environment of the Mashreq cluster has been characterised by multipolarity, the closeness of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as some territories outside of firm state control. Their security situation bettered between 1970 and 2011. In contrast, the Gulf cluster were put in a predominantly three-pillar system, which meant a stable environment between 1991 and 2003, but turbulence and constant fear of war and danger in other periods. After 2011, both clusters had to face growing international instability, conflict and war, which, on the one hand, enlarged their influential capacity, but on the other, diminished their level of integrity or independence.

To sum up the material environment of the complex small states in the Middle East, it is observable that several systemic attributes widened their leverage. Due to the weakness of the Middle Eastern states and the influential presence of non-state actors, it is easier for them to use unconventional methods to interfere in larger state’s affairs. Nonetheless, this process is a two-way one, which means that small states face a similar challenge in their internal affairs, as they are also more open to external interference. The balance of power constantly changed for both the Mashreq and Gulf cluster, but its evolution affected them quite differently – for the Mashreq cluster it worsened while for the Gulf cluster it bettered until 2011. Since then, both have had to face severe instability.

2.2.2. *The immaterial environment: norms related to size and power*

After the material structures surrounding the Middle Eastern small states, now I turn to their immaterial environment. Two topics will be discussed in detail in the framework of the English school: firstly the immaterial dimensions of the regional political development, secondly the primary and secondary institutions which govern the Middle Eastern international society. Last but not least, I will seek to model interstate perceptions and see whether the relative complex small states are perceived normatively small.

Normative dimensions of the regional political environment

The normative environment of states – as well as their material one – should not be considered constant worldwide, as it shows regional discrepancies. Local and regional actors can regulate relationships among each other by creating new norms or altering global ones in the regional context in a process called “norm subsidiarity” [Acharya, 2001, 96]. A complete description of these normative attributes is not a part of my endeavour, I would only seek to highlight three of the main features of the Muslim Middle Eastern normative environment, which might affect the situation of small states today.

First of all, the political theory, as well as the “IR theory” of Islam has always structured the world in a binary setting. Right after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the fiercest debates were fought over who is a true Muslim and who is not [Saeed, 2006, 6]. Later, the Muslim worldview divided the Earth into two “regions” or “domains” [Bennison, 2009, 45]: *dar al-Islam*, which referred to all Muslim countries and people, and *dar al-Harb*, the “house of war”, which included all non-Muslim territories. This logic was not territorial but rather a normative one – the former was the land of peace, while war, at least theoretically, was the order of the day in the latter. A third region is also present between the two “houses”, namely the *dar al-‘ahl*, the house (domain) of agreement or truce between Muslims and non-Muslims [Bennison, 2009, 49], but only in the time of Muslim weakness [Tibi, 2001, 58].

The normative dichotomy has been reproduced in many forms in more recent times as well [Murden, 2009, 134]. Empires, which were the dominant form of political communities in the region until the 20th century, “*recognize no other ‘worlds’ outside of themselves*” [Steunebrink, 2008, 10], therefore one either belonged to the sole legitimate political entity or not. After independence, Arab countries constituted “friends” and “foes” on the basis of Arab nationalism and certain expectations attached to it – it was

not enough to be an Arab state, but one had to behave accordingly [Barnett, 1996, 413-422]. “*Since the beginning of the Arab state system*”, argues Michael Barnett [1998, 5], “*Arab states and societies have been negotiating the norms of Arabism*”. Another example of binary world views includes the Sunni-Shia divide or the fact that *takfir* – declaring someone not Muslim – is still an act of huge importance, which is many times used by radical Jihadist organizations to attack or prosecute someone [Lynch, 2007, 73-74; Wagemakers, 2009, 292].

Naturally, binary thinking is also present in other cultures and religions, including Christianity [Kuhn, 2016]. In the era of the modern Westphalian state, the dichotomy between pacific and hostile, hierarchy and anarchy, “us” and “them” manifested mainly in the distinction between “domestic” and “foreign” affairs [Kiss, 2009, 56-58]. Nonetheless, two key features distinguish the Muslim Middle Eastern political thought from the Western – first, the survival of premodernity in the disguise of modern political structures (see 2.1.) gives greater way to the traditional political thought. Second, the European differentiation between “us” and “them” predominantly reflects national or regional borders, while in the Middle Eastern context, it is more normative and not necessarily connected to geography.

In such an environment, power and the legitimacy of a leader at least partially derives from belonging to a specific normative group. Being part of a supranational community (let that be Muslim, Arab, Sunni or Shia) means protection and collectivism on the one hand, but expectations regarding one’s behaviour on the other. This translated itself into a tool in inter-Arab politics which we can call “*identity takfir*”: proving that your adversary does not respect the basic constitutive norms of the group can seriously harm its status domestically and internationally. In these circumstances, Stephen Walt [1987, 148] argues that

“the most important source of power has been the ability to manipulate one’s own image and the image of one’s rivals in the minds of other Arab elites. Regimes have gained power and legitimacy if they have been seen as loyal to accepted Arab goals, and they have lost these assets if they have appeared to stray outside the Arab consensus.”

Small states can easily be the beneficiaries of such normative competitions in general. Firstly, if the general perception of small states is positive, they are less likely to be incriminated for not serving a collective purpose, therefore this tool is less likely to be used against them. Secondly, “*identity takfir*” can be a potential political weapon in their hands to fight their larger counterparts if they are able to prove that they do not meet specific normative expectations.

Naturally, the efficiency and the usage of “*identity takfir*” has been varying in the last decades. As state formation progressed and the Arab unity endeavours lost their credit and momentum, one can observe a “*normative fragmentation*” in the region since 1967 [Barnett, 1998, 49-52; Gause, 1999, 16]. While this process questions the applicability of this tool, the fact that Islam still plays an important role and the Sunni and Shia sectarian narratives also re-emerged recently, group identity expectations are still critical for the survival and perception of states and regimes. The manifestation of “*identity takfir*” can mean expulsion from supranational institutions (the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council or the Conference of Islamic Cooperation), as they represent these identities in general terms (see later).

The second highlighted attribute of the Middle Eastern normative environment is the multiple identities manifesting in the societies simultaneously. “*Because the borders of MENA states were often arbitrarily imposed by Western imperialism at the expense of a pre-existing and relative cultural and linguistic unity, the mass loyalty to the state (...) is (...) limited by strong popular identifications with both larger supra-state communities – the Arab nation, the Islamic community – and also with smaller sub-state identity groups*” [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 9-10]. Since the dynamics among them vary throughout the region and time, this phenomenon leads to diversity “*in religion, in language, in culture, and above all in self-perception*” [Lewis, 1998, 131]. The tendency was amplified by globalization through simplifying the maintenance of transnational identity groups, especially for the youth [Ehteshami, 2007, 130-143].

While multiple and mixed identities had been a fact of life in the Middle East historically,⁸⁶ the creation of nation states led to a new level of identity, as well as a huge challenge for “national” elites. As Beverley Milton-Edwards [2006, 222-223] put it,

“the nation-state, by its very definition, demands the loyalty of a nation; a sense of national consciousness among its citizens. (...) Many ruling elites have had to set about creating new identities where other loyalties previously existed. (...) When integration occurs it is not uniform but usually privileges one majority, or even minority group (the Alewites in Syria, the Takriti in Iraq, the Jews in Israel) over all the other. This malintegration exacerbates ethnic tension and highlights the lack of formal political mechanisms for plurality and the continuing problem that many states in the region have.”

This feature, coupled with the chronic inability of regimes to advance social and human development, contributed to a constant legitimacy deficit for the Middle Eastern states. From a political (and strictly not legal) point of view, legitimacy can be broadly conceptualised in two ways – first, as the set of norms and values that are sufficiently shared by a political community to constitute the state and second, the extent to which a regime accepts or violates these norms [Razi, 1990, 70]. As the concepts of legitimacy and identity has a close connection to one another, it is very hard for Middle Eastern leaders to be seen by all groups in their society as legitimate leaders. To counterbalance this legitimacy deficit, governments and political actors have tried various tools, including creating the image of traditional or religious entitlements, individual charisma, revolution against the prevailing regional order, popular mobilisation, military prowess and so on [Salzman, 2016, 211; UNDP, 2014, 129].

This phenomenon effects foreign and security policy in multiple ways. First, the constant need for compensation deprives governments from valuable resources in international relations and creates a constant urge to prove oneself to be worthy of social loyalty. Second, the international role a state plays, and its views of the status quo depends heavily on the “*social forces incorporated into a regime’s ruling coalition*” and whether

⁸⁶ In an imperial setting, multiple identities do not necessarily cause much tension as in a structure of nation state. The legitimacy of the Sultan was derived from being the head of the umma on the one hand and the ability to exert influence on the other [Bennison, 2009]. The newly formed nation states lacked both sources.

their “*identity is satisfied or frustrated by state identities*” [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 21]. If one is not pleased by the borders and feels a discrepancy between the material and immaterial size of its community, it will more likely become revisionist. Third, societies where tribal affiliations are relatively more important, tend to question the hierarchic distribution of power and the monopoly of the government over the legitimate use of force [Salzman, 2016, 207-208]. In countries like Saudi Arabia, the smaller Gulf states, Jordan or Libya, the state needed the consent of tribal leaders to effectively govern, which they acquired (or tried to acquire) through bargaining. It is, consequently, questionable whether we can talk about monolith national security.

A third feature of the Middle Eastern normative environment is the prominent role of religion and Islam in politics and social dynamics. Naturally, no one can fully describe the effects of Islam on the regional international system in its complexity on a couple of pages, nonetheless there are a few points which cannot be neglected. The importance of Islamism (defined as an umbrella term including political ideologies based on the interpretation of Islam) grew especially after 1967, as Arabism proved to be unable to fulfil its promises connected to the fight against Israel and for social development [Tibi, 1983].

The lack of separation of the religious and political affairs in the Islamic thought effected the norms related to legitimacy and the expected behaviour of all states in both foreign [Razi, 1990, 75-79] and domestic affairs [Mayer, 1987]. Even the creation of nation states did not replace Islam as the basis of the political identity [Lewis, 1995, 158]. This does not necessarily mean that regimes have to respect Islamic norms in any cases, but at least they have to *seem* to do so. For example, in the context of Islamist pressure, several repressive Middle Eastern governments created national human rights institutions invoking Islamic norms [Cardenas – Flibbert, 2005], in order to picture themselves as true Muslims.

All in all, the main normative features of the region – the binary worldview, sub-state and supra-state identities and the dominant role of Islam in political life – also strengthen the leverage of small states as it provides new foreign policy tools – such as “identity takfir”, usage of transnational identities as well as Islamic norms or networks against other states – which are normative in nature, therefore relatively cheap (in comparison with traditional foreign policy tools).

Primary and secondary institutions of the Middle Eastern interstate system

In the above described normative environment we can find different norms and rules of foreign policy in the Middle East that can alter, limit and extend the leverage of small states, therefore their investigation is quite important in understanding the position of such entities. Using the vocabulary of the English school, I refer to such rules as “institutions” – let them be explicit or implicit – and differentiate between two types: primary institutions, namely relatively fundamental and durable practices that constitute the patterns of legitimate activity in social interactions [Buzan, 2004, 167] as well as secondary institutions, namely institutional or formal manifestations of such values in the forms of regimes and intergovernmental organizations [Buzan, 2004, 192].

Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez [2009] reviewed the main primary institutions governing international relations on the global level and their alterations on the Middle Eastern regional level. Based on her conclusions, one can say that the major differences lie in the following points:

- Westphalian *sovereignty* is much more limited due to the existing gap between the regimes and the society, the constant and unquestionable role of external actors, the vulnerability to intervention and the role of religion;
- While *territoriality* is generally accepted, its exclusivity has not developed indigenously. Due to the presence of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the norm is connected to conflict. That is partly why territoriality has been violated many times (e.g. the Kuwaiti war, the Iraqi and Syrian civil wars).
- *War* (as armed conflict between states) had been forbidden in inter-Arab politics until the Kuwaiti war,⁸⁷ which had a profound effect on the institution. After 1991, the possibility of armed conflicts became real, which made regimes more cautious and distrustful with each other.
- *Equality of people and social accountability* is severely damaged by the existence of regimes and political elite groups which possess disproportionately large amount of resources.

⁸⁷ The author did not consider the wars between North and South Yemen as interstate conflicts.

- Institutions like *nationalism*, *market* and *environmental stewardship* are present, although should not be considered to be the same as on the global level.

The normative prohibition of interstate armed conflict and the weakness of sovereignty leads us to the same conclusion as the investigation of the material environment, namely that transnational violence and direct or indirect interventions (let them be material or immaterial) are bigger threats than direct military confrontation with other state actors. Whereas Arab interstate conflicts are rare, interventions into domestic affairs have been practically constant in the modern times [Halliday, 2009, 15-17]. This does not mean that a war between two Arab states is unimaginable, as the threat to use violence against each other, especially after 1991, is existing.⁸⁸ My conclusion is simply that the normative environment incites states to avoid classic interstate conflicts and pursue their interests in other ways, such as the above described *identity takfir* or indirect interventions. This feature of the Middle East, again, reduces the discrepancy between the leverage of larger and smaller states as the former is restricted to use its biggest advantage – coercion by material capabilities.

The evolution of secondary institutions followed the path of developments in the material balance of power and the normative environment. The main interstate organization has been the League of Arab States (LAS), founded in 1945, which was designed to protect the norms of inter-Arab cooperation (*ta'aun*), independence (*istiklal*) and sovereignty (*siyada*) [Mithaq Jamiah al-Daul al-Arabiyah wa-Mullaqatihu, 2017, 2]. This practically meant that the LAS created an atmosphere of consensual intergovernmental cooperation, in which the respect for sovereignty and the normative incentive to cooperate with each other was also present [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 15; Murden, 2009, 122].⁸⁹

Small states generally benefit from such environment – their autonomy is respected on the one hand, while the strong presence of the norm of cooperation limits the larger states' leverage to use their military might against them. Therefore, the LAS should not be considered as a manifestation of hegemonic attempts but rather as a

⁸⁸ Particularly since the normative rules prohibiting interstate conflicts are not deeply institutionalised [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 17].

⁸⁹ The Islamic Cooperation Conference/Organization serves a similar purpose as it also strengthens the norms of sovereignty, independence but also solidarity – the difference is that it is normatively based on Islamic and not pan-Arab identities [Hinnebusch, 2014a, 15].

framework in which Arab states can discuss their affairs. It is therefore not surprising that small states played an initiator role in the creation and maintenance of the League of Arab States [Solingen, 2008, 284-285]. The outstanding role of small states in the Arab interstate system is also proven by their participation in mediation efforts: between 1945 and 2000, representatives or leaders of “small-countries” were present in 45% of mediation talks [Yassine-Hamdan – Pearson, 2014, 93-94].

Another practical example of this positive environment is the case of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute over the independence of the latter between 1958 and 1961 [Yassine-Hamdan, 2014, 117-126]. When it became clear that Great Britain will let small Gulf states to become independent, Iraq officially claimed in June 1958 that Kuwait historically constituted the part of Southern Iraq. When three years later, the tiny emirate abrogated the protectorate status and issued a request for membership in the League of Arab States, Iraq questioned its independence and rejected the request. Nonetheless, Arab states and the institutions of LAS stood behind the Kuwaiti membership bid and proclaimed their willingness to defend the emirate by force if necessary, which meant that small states are protected by the Middle Eastern interstate society. In this case, accession to the League meant admission into the state system.

The Kuwaiti struggle bears serious similarities with the fight of Liechtenstein to become a member of international organizations despite its smallness. The Principality was rejected from the League of Nations, and the first IO which accepted the country was the Council of Europe in 1978 [Duursma, 2006], almost two decades after the independence of Kuwait. This comparison suggests that the Arab Middle Eastern interstate system was more generous in accepting small states as members.

Nonetheless, in parallel of the weakening of pan-Arabism, the League of Arab States also found itself in crisis for several reasons [Murden, 2009, 125-126]. First, besides its normative function, the LAS has never been an efficient organization and never managed to fulfil its promises [Little, 1956 and Toffolo, 2008, 121-122]. Due to the lack of inter-Arab trade and financial relations, the economic interests to deepen the integration has never been strong enough. Second, after 1973, it became evident that the Gulf states, which had the strongest economies in the Arab region, would like to pursue a more independent course of foreign policy, which was more about aligning to the West than to strengthen Arab solidarity. Third, the inter-Arab political crisis manifested after

the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty hit the LAS hard, as even the headquarters of the organization was moved from Cairo to Tunis. Fourth, the lack of clear and unequivocal support by the Arab states for Iraq during the first Gulf crisis and the inability of the League to handle the second Gulf crisis questioned the very essence of the institution as a functional entity.

A symptom of the crisis of the League of Arab States was the arising political will by Arab states to create sub-regional institutions of cooperation [Murden, 2009, 131-131]. Such initiatives to create smaller and geographically more concentrated secondary institutions include the Gulf Cooperation Council (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) (GCC) in 1981, the Arab Cooperation Council (Egypt, Jordan and North Yemen) and the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) in 1989 [Zartman, 1999, 177-182]. This process can be seen as a manifestation of normative fragmentation (described in part 2.2.1.) in the region on the one hand and of the territorially unequal distribution of threats in the region on the other, as the GCC for example was founded as a reaction to the Iranian revolution [Albareda – Barba, 2011]. A significant difference between the LAS and these sub-regional forms of cooperation is that in their case, hegemonic ambitions by middle and large powers (Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria) constituted a significant driving force behind the integration. [ibid].

The different position of the Gulf and Mashreq small states should be noted in sub-regionalisation. While the former group took part in a sub-regional institution, the latter was left out from the first wave. Later, as during the 2000s Turkey turned its attention more to the Middle East, there were some initiatives which included Jordan and Lebanon as well (for example the so-called Quartet Cooperation Council [ibid] aiming to create a free-trade zone and a visa-free travel regime [Al Arabiya, 2010]), but they usually failed to materialise. This could imply three phenomena – firstly that threats are more severe in the Gulf, secondly that the normative background is stronger, which induces cooperation or thirdly, the presence of a leading power – Saudi Arabia – mattered to a great extent; without that small states are less likely to cooperate on the sub-regional level.

All in all, regarding the primary and secondary institutions of the Middle Eastern interstate system, one can observe a clear development. After the Second World War, there was a relatively strong presence of independence and sovereignty, at least from the

outside, but Arab and Islamic solidarity on the other hand incentivised cooperation. In this framework, Arab states in the region had the pressure to cooperate with each other and refrain from direct military confrontation, but at the same time, there was no substantial respect towards non-intervention. Throughout the decades, the norms of Arab or Muslim solidarity weakened significantly, which led the region to normative fragmentation, manifested in, among others, the emergence of sub-regional institutions and the growing possibility of interstate conflicts. In general, small states are beneficiaries of the original normative system but the process of fragmentation meant a less safe and less predictable environment.

Interstate perceptions – Measuring normative size

The third part of the Middle Eastern normative system is to analyse the normative size of the different actors. In part 1.3., I conceptualised normative size as the perceived importance of a given state in the interstate system. Naturally, importance is a quite difficult term to be properly investigated, nonetheless I propose the following method on the basis of discourse analysis.

Based on the methodological considerations described in Part 1.3., I will measure the normative size of states based on the level of interstate interactions. The “number” of these interactions can be measured through the mentions of the given bilateral relationship in the media. Naturally, this relationship can be either positive (cooperative) or negative (confrontative), since importance itself can be positive or negative. Therefore, to measure “perceived importance” of state “A”, I will use the number of articles written about the expression of cooperation and/or confrontation of any governments vis-à-vis the government of state “A”.

Using aggregate, long-term data, one can draw a general picture of a state’s weight in the interstate system. Data for the inquiry will be provided by the database of GDELT project including articles about “events of confrontation/cooperation” published since January 1, 1979, and will be divided into decade-long periods (1979-1988, 1989-1998, 2009-2017).⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Data for the last period covers only 9 years from 2009 to 2017, due to the time of the submission of the thesis.

Chart 18: Normative size of small states in absolute terms

	1979-1988	1989-1998	1999-2008	2009-2017	Sum
Qatar	17	354	971	6 617	7 959
Kuwait	322	994	1 408	4 102	6 826
UAE	40	194	879	6 692	7 805
Oman	60	243	308	1 896	2 507
Bahrain	37	207	1 057	8 753	10 054
KSA	1 665	4 659	16 613	61 772	84 709
Turkey	1 042	6 245	12 229	60 526	80 042
Iran	2 008	4 408	15 612	49 802	71 830
Israel	4 604	15 089	35 471	86 511	141 675
Yemen	306	1 199	2 199	9 536	13 240
Egypt	3 562	10 031	15 827	33 894	63 314
Syria	2 141	3 858	8 223	51 010	65 232
Iraq	1 348	6 282	18 323	22 988	48 941
Lebanon	2 422	2 868	7 267	12 989	25 546
Jordan	4 082	8 153	9 380	21 747	43 362
Sum	23 656	64 784	145 767	438 835	673 042
Average	1 577	4 319	9 718	29 256	44 869
Small state average	1 157	2 137	3 399	9 351	16 042
Large state average	1 857	5 774	13 931	42 526	64 088
Gulf cluster average	109	450	936	5 342	6457,75
Mashreq cluster average	3 252	5 511	8 324	17 368	31928

Explanation: the number reflects the sum of articles written about “evens” of verbal cooperation and confrontation with the given state’s government in the given timeframe.

While raw data with the absolute numbers of events (see Chart 18) is insufficient for the analysis, one can spot interesting developments also in this regard. First of all, the difference between the average of small and large states is growing significantly since 1979 – while in the first decade, the mean value of the former reached the 62% of that of the latter, but the same number for the period 2009 and 2017 is only 22%. This means that in the interstate system, the relative importance of larger states in the Middle East vis-à-vis smaller states is growing. Second, in each time period, all members of the Gulf cluster had smaller normative size than any of the Mashreq small states. The perceived

importance and size of Jordan and Lebanon is larger than those of Qatar, Kuwait, Oman or Bahrain. This data in itself is remarkable and proves that the normative size of a state is not necessarily in parallel with the relative material size of it.

Third, among the relative complex small states, Jordan has the largest normative size, followed by Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. Fourth, the normative size of the Gulf small states varied vis-à-vis each other – Bahrain became the biggest among them only due to the surge between 2009 and 2017; before that, Kuwait was constantly the first one, but it lost its importance in the last decade significantly. Qatar also displayed a spectacular normative growth, starting between 1989 and 1998, being able to surpass Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates as well. Oman remained the smallest state not just in the Gulf cluster but in the whole region as well. These data suggest that war (the first and second Gulf crisis in the case of Kuwait), domestic instability (in 2011 in Bahrain) and foreign policy strategies (in the case of Qatar and Oman) has the most significant effect on the changes of normative size (see Chapter 4). Fifth, Jordan performed quite well even vis-à-vis larger states – between 1979 and 1988, it was the second most important state in terms of bilateral relations in the whole region; between 1989 and 1998, it was third. After 1999, it lost its prominent role, nonetheless it outperformed Yemen, Syria (before 2008), Iraq or the United Arab Emirates.

Comparing the share of small and large states in the overall number of articles (see Chart 19) bears more significance. Again, we can see a clear diminishing role of small states in general which suggests that larger Middle Eastern states are gaining importance in the eyes of the interstate community. The share of small states shrank from 29.3% to 12.8% between 1979 and 2017.

Nonetheless, the Gulf cluster aggregately grew significantly in normative terms – their overall share rose from 1.8% to 4.9%. In parallel, the ratio of Mashreq small states fell from 27.5% to 7.9%. While absolutely this is still larger than that of the Gulf cluster, the tendency predicts that the international perception of the importance of Jordan and Lebanon will shrink below that of the small Gulf states.

Chart 19: Normative size of small states in relative terms

	1979-1988	1989-1998	1999-2008	2009-2017	Aggregate average
Qatar	0.1%	0.5%	0.7%	1.5%	1.2%
Kuwait	1.4%	1.5%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%
UAE	0.2%	0.3%	0.6%	1.5%	1.2%
Oman	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Bahrain	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%	2.0%	1.5%
KSA	7.0%	7.2%	11.4%	14.1%	12.6%
Turkey	4.4%	9.6%	8.4%	13.8%	11.9%
Iran	8.5%	6.8%	10.7%	11.3%	10.7%
Israel	19.5%	23.3%	24.3%	19.7%	21.0%
Yemen	1.3%	1.9%	1.5%	2.2%	2.0%
Egypt	15.1%	15.5%	10.9%	7.7%	9.4%
Syria	9.1%	6.0%	5.6%	11.6%	9.7%
Iraq	5.7%	9.7%	12.6%	5.2%	7.3%
Lebanon	10.2%	4.4%	5.0%	3.0%	3.8%
Jordan	17.3%	12.6%	6.4%	5.0%	6.4%
Average	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Small state average	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	1.2%	1.0%
Large state average	7.9%	8.9%	9.6%	9.7%	9.0%
Gulf cluster average	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	1.2%	1.0%
Mashreq cluster average	13.7%	8.5%	5.7%	4.0%	5.1%
Small state share	29.3%	19.8%	14.0%	12.8%	14.3%
Gulf cluster share	1.8%	2.8%	2.6%	4.9%	4.1%
Mashreq cluster share	27.5%	17.0%	11.4%	7.9%	10.2%

Explanation: the percentage number reflects the ratio of articles written about “events” of verbal cooperation and confrontation with the given state’s government in the given timeframe.

Regarding the individual small states, Qatar and Bahrain are the only ones whose importance grew since 1979; Kuwait slightly shrank from 1.4-1.5% to 0.9-1%, Oman, maybe purposefully (see part 4.4.), maintained its share of 0.2-0.4%, while both Lebanon and Jordan suffered significant loss. These data suggest that while Qatar (0.1% to 1.5%) and Bahrain (0.2% to 2%) became more and more important in the interstate community, other Middle Eastern small states became more and more insignificant.

Looking at the data provided in Chart 19 in general, one can come to the conclusion that while the normative size of a state depends partly on its actual material size, the changes in normative size have more to do with the international developments. The importance of Jordan and Lebanon is presumably the result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; as it lost its prominent role, both states started to lose their perceived importance. Both Syria and Iraq gained attention only due to their internal instability, while it is telling that after 2009, the international community lost its interest in the latter one. Israel, a two-dimensional small state has the highest normative size, followed by the large states (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Egypt) while the United Arab Emirates, another two-dimensional small state with the same attributes as Israel, has normatively been smaller than Kuwait or Bahrain, who presumably gained their importance due to their closeness to Iraq and Iran (and the subsequent internal and external pressure) respectively.

Comparing the ratio of the events of verbal confrontation in all events (see Chart 20) can help us detect the general perception of a state in the international system and whether smallness helps to picture oneself as a friend. The higher the ratio the less friendly the international community with the given state.

Aggregate data shows that relatively, the cooperation ratio with Middle Eastern small states is higher than that of larger states – while 11.7% of events were confrontational in the case of larger states, it was only 5.8% for small ones. While the difference was always significant in the different time periods, it was only in the last decade that the discrepancy grew astonishingly (13.4% and 6.2%), which is mostly due to the growth of the ratio of verbal confrontation against large states. Therefore the presumption that small states have a better image in the international community is proven when it comes to Middle Eastern states.

Chart 20: The ratio of events of verbal confrontation in all events

	1979-1988	1989-1998	1999-2008	2009-2017	Aggregate average
Qatar	5.9%	4.0%	4.7%	4.4%	4.4%
Kuwait	7.1%	5.7%	4.4%	4.5%	4.8%
UAE	7.5%	3.6%	3.5%	3.3%	3.4%
Oman	0.0%	0.4%	2.6%	2.0%	1.9%
Bahrain	5.4%	5.3%	3.5%	8.5%	7.9%
KSA	4.0%	3.3%	5.2%	8.8%	7.7%
Turkey	8.9%	6.3%	6.9%	11.6%	10.4%
Iran	15.3%	7.9%	9.9%	12.4%	11.7%
Israel	12.6%	10.1%	10.2%	12.7%	11.8%
Yemen	2.0%	4.6%	5.1%	17.8%	14.1%
Egypt	4.5%	3.8%	3.0%	12.3%	8.2%
Syria	4.3%	2.2%	6.4%	30.7%	25.1%
Iraq	12.1%	16.5%	13.5%	11.0%	12.7%
Lebanon	6.5%	5.9%	9.9%	11.1%	9.8%
Jordan	6.3%	5.8%	3.1%	7.1%	5.9%
Average	8.1%	7.3%	8.0%	13.2%	11.4%
Small state average	5.2%	4.5%	4.7%	6.2%	5.8%
Larger state average	7.9%	6.5%	7.1%	13.4%	11.7%
Gulf cluster average	4.6%	3.9%	3.8%	4.8%	4.7%
Mashreq cluster average	6.4%	5.9%	6.5%	9.1%	7.8%

There are other important lessons to be learnt from Chart 20. Traditionally, the three non-Arab countries and Iraq have a confrontational ratio above 10% (though the latter one is shrinking), while countries where a major crisis erupts suffer a pike as well, like Kuwait in the first analysed decade (7.1% shrinking to 5.7% later), Yemen in the last decade (from 5.1% to 17.8%) or the aggregately least popular Middle Eastern state, Syria (6.4% to 30.7%). The Gulf small states had always had a lower confrontational ratio than the Mashreq ones, nonetheless in the last time period, both clusters saw a rise. In this regard, the 2000s were the best decade for the perception of small states. Lebanon has the highest ratio, being on the same level as Egypt and Turkey, while Oman has always had the lowest value in the region. The average ratio for Qatar and Kuwait (around 4.4-4.8%) is quite strong, though it is still higher than that of the UAE (3.3-3.5%) except for the 1980s.

Jordan's data (5.9%) is mediocre, while Bahrain (7.9%) has a relatively bad value, especially in the last decade (8.5%).

To sum up, the main conclusion about the normative size of the Middle Eastern small states:

- The normative size of states (namely their perceived importance in the international community) correlates with, though does not equal to their relative material size – at least in the Middle Eastern context. While Gulf states outgrew the Mahsreq cluster, Jordan and Lebanon are still considered more important as more governments express confrontation or cooperation with them.
- While Qatar and Bahrain grew normatively since 1979, other complex small states shrank or stagnated. Data suggests that these tendencies are more to do with international developments and foreign policy strategies than actual size.
- Hostility towards Middle Eastern small states is lower than towards larger states. Lebanon has the worst image among them, while Oman has the best.

When it comes to the previously investigated normative environment of the complex small states, we can come to the following two conclusions:

- Contrary to the perceived anarchic nature of the Middle Eastern system, the original normative institutions of the region were beneficial for small states as their formal sovereignty was accepted and the norm of solidarity prohibited larger states from waging war against them, but the normative fragmentation created a less stable and more confusing environment for them.
- Specific aspects of the Middle Eastern normative elements – the multi-layered identities and the duality of the Islamic world view – endow small states with affordable tools, such as identity takfir or indirect interventions in other states. Naturally, these can be used against them as well, nonetheless these are cheaper and more available to them than the traditional toolkit of power struggles (e.g. traditional military).

3. THE APPLICATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL THEORIES OF SMALL STATES – THE SMALL GULF STATES

Before I turn to their foreign policy behaviour in the fourth chapter, I will investigate the individual characteristics of complex small states in this one. The four Gulf states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman – were chosen to be the case studies for the investigation. The analysis will focus on the effects of absolute size and perceptual size on the political, economic and/or social attributes of these states.

The chapter is divided into three sub-chapters based on three criteria for the comparative analysis of the four small Gulf states:

- Absolute size (3.1.): how does the lack of resources translate into self-sufficiency in terms of territory, population, economy and military capacities?
- Perceptual size (3.2.): what role does smallness and size play in the identity of the complex small states?
- Regime and political decision-making (3.3.): how does the lack of resources effect political leadership and decision-making?

The chapter will be concluded with a summary (3.4.) highlighting the main findings of the research.

3.1. Absolute size⁹¹

In the investigation of absolute size, I will follow the footsteps of Katzenstein (see 1.2.1.) and will not consider smallness in any of the four categories as an inherent weakness. The meaning and interpretation of the effects of size should be based upon the interactions between size and other variables. That is why I primarily investigate the effects of the interaction between territorial, demographic, economic and military smallness with other variables.

⁹¹ All statistical data in this chapter without a specific reference was extracted from the World Bank Database, 2018.

To determine whether the size of each state can be seen as absolutely small, I will use a behavioural approach, assuming that if the resources of a state are insufficient in a given field, then the government will adopt a policy to compensate for the insufficiency. I will call these acts as *compensatory policies*, and try to identify them separately.

In the next pages, the four general aggregate resources will be analysed separately to see how the small Gulf states handled smallness in the given resource.

3.1.1. Territorial smallness

Bahrain is the smallest country in the Middle Eastern region when it comes to territory. Qatar and Kuwait are larger than Bahrain and Lebanon only, while Oman is relatively big (with almost 31 square kilometres) in the cluster, surpassing Israel, the UAE, Jordan and Syria as well (but falling behind Iraq). Small territory interacts with two other variables in the Gulf – the climatic environment and geopolitical position.

Climatic environment

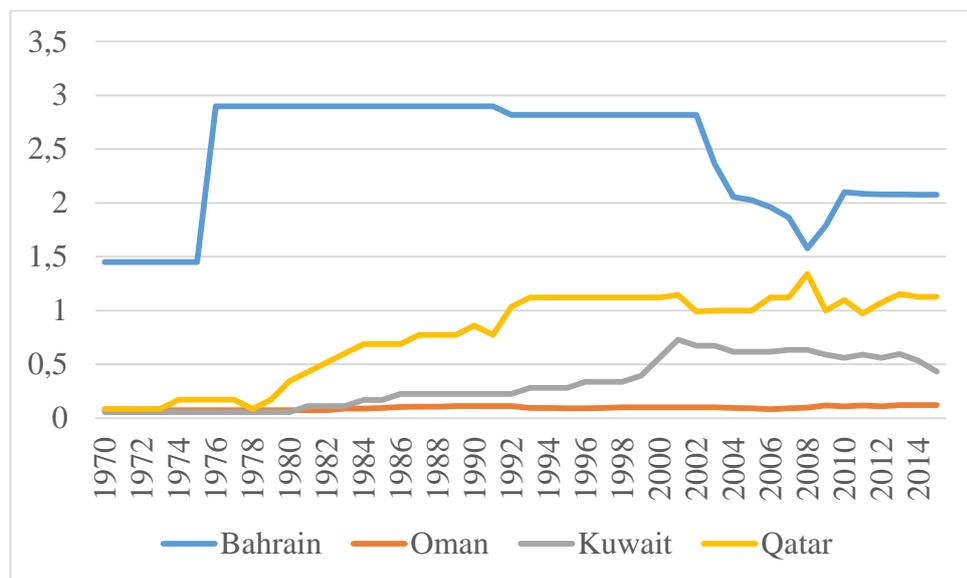
Due to the intensive transformation of the climate, a massive warming took place around 3000 B.C., creating a bad environment for agricultural production [Crystal, 2014, 157]. According to David Commins [2014, 2], this environment can be blamed for the late state-making processes, since it was “*difficult to marshal economic and material resources for a powerful state*”, which “*barred the development of economic foundations for empire*” [Commins, 2014, 9]. It is important to take note that serious institutional building only happened in parallel with the start of oil production in the twentieth century – except for Oman, which was the first to introduce new water management technologies on the Peninsula [Commins, 2014, 7-8].

Besides the lack of institutional state building, the climatic circumstances led to two trends. The first was a pivot to the sea both economically and socially, which led to the prominence of pearling, fishing and participation in maritime trade. This lasted until the 1930s, due to the collapse of the regional pearl market and the discovery of oil [Rumaili, 1980, 50]. Second, in parallel, the ratio of arable land has always been low (see Chart 21). Bahrain, which scores the highest ratio, was only able to approximate 3% from

below, while Oman was never able to reach 0.13%.⁹² Agriculture activities were limited to oases and some other sorts of nomadic production [ibid].

As a result, economic autarchy was never an option for these states, since there have never been enough arable lands to support the population. According to the World Bank, the size of arable land per person in the four states was the highest in Oman in 1970, when it reached 0.03 hectares (by 2015, it went down to 0.009). The data for Qatar peaked in 1993 with 0.025 hectares (0.005 hectares in 2015) while neither Bahrain, nor Kuwait ever reached 0.01 hectares (0.0011 and 0.0019 in 2015 respectively). This is far from enough to sustain the basic food demands of the population: the global average for cultivated (and not arable) territory is 0.65 hectares per person [Alexander et al. 2016, 90], which is 21 times the size of Oman in 1970. Even for low income countries, the average is 0.17 hectares [FAO, 2018]. Consequently, the ratio of agriculture has always been low to the GDP (1-4% in the GCC level), with only a few percent of the workforce occupied in the sector [NCB Capital, 2010, 2].⁹³

Chart 21: The ratio of arable lands in all land area (1970-2015)⁹⁴



Apart from (but connected to) the lack of meaningful food production, there are other commodities which have been available only in very low quantity, notably drinkable water and wood [Potter, 2009, 9-10]. This has been a vital vulnerability, which effects

⁹² This fact puts the relatively big land area of Oman into perspective, as more than 99% of its territory is infertile.

⁹³ Except for Oman, due to low level of urbanization and some specific policies (see later).

⁹⁴ Source: World Bank Database, 2018

social well-being, housing and general economic development. In history, the lack of wood was problematic especially in military and security terms – for centuries, regional actors were not able to build a proper fleet –, while in modern times it is primarily the construction sector which needs the most timber [Timber Design & Technology, 2018].

The lack of proper water supplies is also crucial in the case of small GCC states [Darwish – Abdulrahim – Mohieldden, 2014]. With less than 100 cubic meters renewable water resources a year, all four states are on a “minimum survival level” which is characterised by compromised supply for industry and commercial purpose and the inability to meet internal demand. When it comes to overall natural water resources, Oman has almost seven times more than the other three states combined, but Muscat still needs additional water for sustaining agricultural production and everyday life, determining local economies to be able to produce only not water-intensive crops (such as dates), fish or dairy [Economist Intelligence Unit, 2010 16]. As a result, all four states rely on desalting seawater, which, on the other hand, is both highly labour and capital intensive. Besides importing these commodities from external partners, the lack of such vital resources led to several technical innovations in history, including the so-called *qanat* or *falaj* system⁹⁵ of underground aqueducts in Oman or, in more modern times, sea water distillation processes [EPL, 1973, 539].

These data indicate that the small Gulf states have always been reliant on food import, which evidently creates a form of dependency. This feature is common in the region due to the climatic environment and the population boom taking place in the second half of the twentieth century, which caused a six-fold increase in food demand between 1961 and 2011 on the regional level [INRA, 2015, 2]. Reliance on food import exposes the Gulf states to “*inflationary and quantity risk*” as well as shocks in demand or supply on the world market [NBC Capital, 2010, 11], such as the huge increase of food prices in 2007-2008, which was enlisted among the top reasons behind the “Arab Spring” in the region [Gerges ,2014; Rosenberg, 2011; Zurayk – Gough, 2014;]. It is needless to say that this dependency creates a huge political risk for the stability of the Gulf states, especially since food constitutes approx. 20-35% component of the consumer price index in these countries [ibid] (see part 4.5.). The aim to keep food prices on a stable level puts pressure on both the fiscal and monetary policy of these states.

⁹⁵ Known also as “aflaj”, the plural form of falaj in Arabic.

Small Gulf states cannot really defeat food dependency, nonetheless they tried to compensate for it to some extent. First and foremost, they all wanted to reach and maintain a healthy trade balance. Due to the fact that the oil industry developed prior to the independence of these states, the balance of trade has been predominantly positive. The data of the World Bank shows that the amount of surplus (and occasional deficit) has been a result of two circumstances – trends in the oil price and armed conflicts. As a result, the best periods in this regard were the 1970s and the 2000s, (with the volume of exports being three, or even six times the size of the volume of imports), while the worst period was observable in the case of Kuwait, between 1990 and 1992.⁹⁶

Another attempt to ease the pressure and deal with the lack of arable land was outsourcing the agricultural sector to other countries through investments in arable lands [Smaller – Mann, 2009; Woert et al., 2008, NCB Capital, 2010]. This strategy was put into practice more visibly only in the 2000s, in spite of the fact that the question was on the agenda since independence.⁹⁷ The primary destination of such investments have been Central Asia and Africa (and more recently the Balkans and Turkey), and more specifically those states which are perceived as geographically, economically and culturally close to the GCC countries (such as Sudan or Pakistan) and which do not have economic leverage on them.

Geopolitical position

Besides the climate and the lack of arable lands, another aspect which helps us understand the importance of the small territory in the Gulf is the investigation of the geopolitical environment. In this regard, the four states have advantages and disadvantages at the same time.

As I already argued in part 2.2.1., three out of the four small Gulf states are squeezed between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, all of which are much bigger than them. All four states border Saudi Arabia, nonetheless, there are slight differences in their position: Qatar shares its land borders only with the Kingdom, making its position highly vulnerable; similarly, Bahrain's only connection has with the mainland is the King Fahd Bridge, leading to the Saudi city Al-Khobar. Kuwait has a part of the so-called "Divided

⁹⁶ Nonetheless, data are not available for Qatar prior to 1994 and for Bahrain prior to 1994.

⁹⁷ Even in 1973, the West tried to sanction GCC states because of the oil price raise through preventing food trade with them.

Zone” or “Neutral Zone” located on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. This 6,200 square-mile land was divided between the two states in 1992 and contains altogether 5 billion barrels of oil and 1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, the production of which is conducted together [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 87]. The existence of the Divided Zone can be seen as a source of interdependence with Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait has shared borders with Iraq as well, a country which claimed historical rights over the territory of the small Gulf state several times in modern history [Sluglett, 2002, 783-784]. Therefore, Kuwait is exposed to Iraqi intentions and to the Iraqi security challenges to a greater extent. Moreover, some parts of the Kuwaiti society (especially economic elites) exerted influence over the ruling family by threatening to support Iraqi territorial claims [Louer, 2014, 134].⁹⁸

The geopolitical position of the Sultanate of Oman is also unique in the peninsula for two reasons. First, having the easiest exit to the Indian Ocean, political powers residing in today’s Oman managed to build up a maritime empire, which incorporated African and South Asian territories as well. Second, Oman is the only small Gulf state which is directly connected to Yemen, which exposes the country to the political development of its unstable neighbour. Besides Yemen, Saudi Arabia also borders the country.

Such geopolitical exposure to the Saudi Kingdom can be blamed for the small states’ fear of Saudi hegemony [Martini et al. 2016, 10]. Each Saudi power in history conducted an expansionist foreign policy from the internal parts of the Peninsula in order to reach the shores of the Gulf [Peterson, 2011, 26]. Therefore, the smaller Gulf states, whose existence is the result of British patronage, were too small to protect themselves from Saudi Arabia, making their relationship a two-faced one, representing a security partner for outside dangers and a genuine threat at the same time [Wright, 2011a, 88]. Naturally, the latter perception tends “*to be strongest when the external threat environment is most benign*” [Martini et al. 2016, 10].

⁹⁸ This trans-national threat helped the Kuwaiti elites to institutionalise power-sharing with the regime [ibid].

3.1.2. Demographic smallness

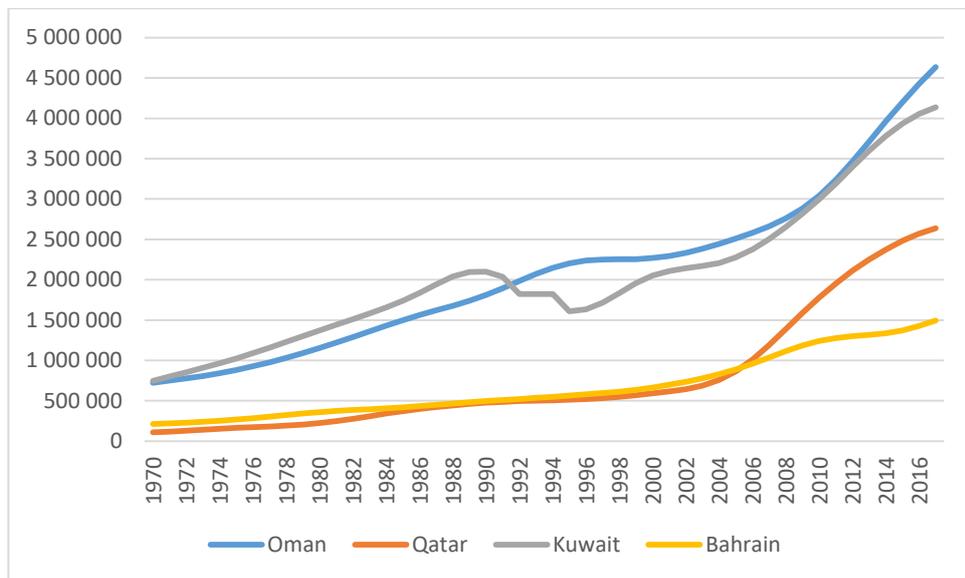
Based on population size, the small Gulf states can be put in two categories – Oman and Kuwait have always had significantly larger population than Qatar and Bahrain (see Chart 22). Due to the Iraqi invasion, the population of Kuwait fell behind that of Oman and was never able to retake its first place. On the other hand, Qatar grew out Bahrain clearly in the middle of the 2000s and got closer to the Kuwaiti-Omani duo. In all cases, we can see an almost constant rise in the number of inhabitants, which is mostly driven by migration as the population boom in the national community slowed down considerably in the second half of the twentieth century.⁹⁹

Small population size interacts with four variables: territorial smallness, imbalance between the demand and supply in the labour market; the compensatory policy of labour import; and social heterogeneity.

Territorial smallness

Since the territory of the small Gulf states remained constant but the population multiplied at least four-five times, population density also changed considerably. Bahrain had always had the highest population density, which was five times the size of the regional average in 1970 (308 people per square kilometres compared to 61) and more than six times the size of the regional average in 2016 (1848 compared to 298). This shows that the territorial constraints were more problematic for the island country than to the other small Gulf states. The population density of Kuwait grew steadily in line with the regional average until the second 1990-1991 war and was not able to completely recover regarding this variable ever since. The Qatari data show a higher increasing ratio since the mid-2000s and approximated the level of Kuwait in the late 2000s only. Last but not least, Oman lagged behind in this data as well, constituting only one fourth of the same data of the third least populated country (Qatar). The Omani data has been constantly rising only with a moderate pace, reaching approx. the 1975 level of Qatar only in 2016.

⁹⁹ Nonetheless, the pace of deceleration differed in the four countries. The main gap lies between Bahrain and Qatar on the one hand and Kuwait and Oman on the other. According to a study conducted in 1991-1992 [Klitsch, 1994, 79-80], the difference between the median age of the first marriage in the case of the 45-49 and the 25-29 years old cluster fluctuated heavily in the region: it was almost eight years (14.8 and 22.5) in Bahrain and almost six in Qatar (15.9 and 21.4), while in Oman and Kuwait, the discrepancy was limited to two years. In fertility rates, Bahrain and Qatar fell down to 4.2-4.5%, while the other two states produced 6.5 and 7.8 percent rates.

Chart 22: Population size in the four small Gulf states (1970-2017)¹⁰⁰

High population density fostered urbanization in the Gulf which explains the high ratio of the urban population in the four states (observed in Part 2.1.2.). This process transformed the region into the most urbanized in the world [Ramadan, 2015], creating risks to human development as well as to economic performance and social structure, including the exacerbation of economic disparities, unsanitary living conditions, water and electricity shortages and air pollution [Palanivel, 2017]. While this feature undoubtedly represents a serious challenge for the Gulf states, they were able to manage them through economic and city planning (enabled by large hydrocarbon incomes).

Imbalance between the demand and supply in the labour market

If a state's population is relatively small but absolutely is big enough to support the labour needs of the population, there is no need for compensatory policies. On the other hand, if production is constrained by human capital limitations, it can lead to insufficiencies and disadvantageous consequences [McGillivray, 2016, 280-281] both in the public sector and the private sector, as well as suboptimal policy outcomes.

From this point of view, the size of the inhabitants of the four small Gulf states has never been big enough since the 1970s to meet the labour needs of economic development [Birks – Sinclair, 1980, 140]. Due to these requirements, the GCC countries

¹⁰⁰ Source: World Bank Database, 2018

developed a very intensive migration policy to attract foreign labour, which led to the third largest migrant worker population in the world (after the European Union and the United States) [Al-Khouri, 2012, 1] and a very harsh contradiction between the “small national population” and the “sea of expats” [Tok, Alkhater, Pal, 2016, 16].¹⁰¹ Even in the 19th century, there was a steady flow of migrant workers from the Indian subcontinent participating in pearling, trade and fishing; so much so that Indian rupee was a widely accepted currency [Althani, 2012, 39].¹⁰² Naturally, the oil boom of the twentieth century made the problem of labour force scarcity even deeper, which created a demand for skilled workers as well [Winckler, 2010]. By 1970, all of the four states had a sizeable foreign community (see Chart 23), which continued to grow until today, which suggests that migration policy can be seen as a basic compensatory policy.

Chart 23: Population statistics in 1970¹⁰³

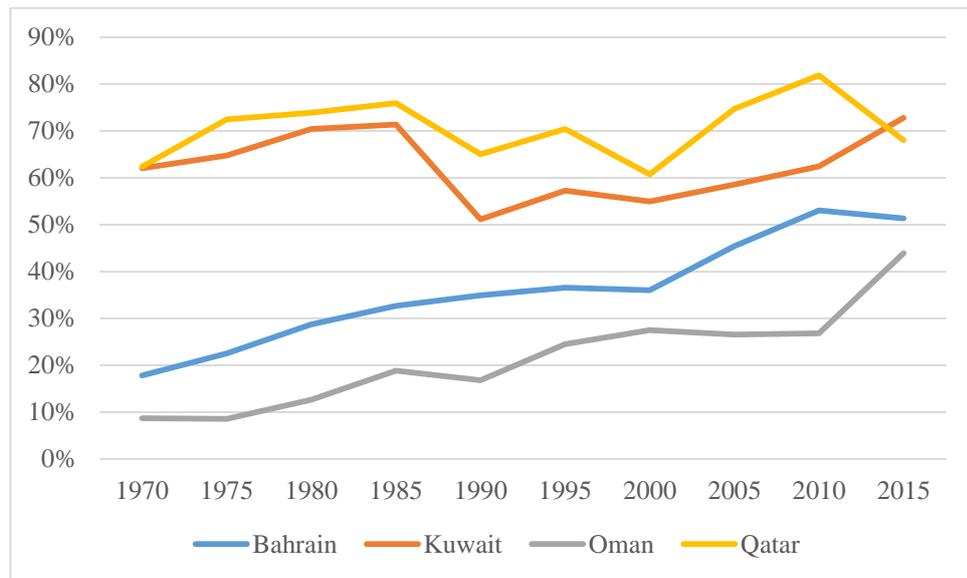
Country	Total population	Migrant population	Share of migrant population
Bahrain	212 605	37 946	17.8%
Kuwait	746 767	463 366	62%
Oman	723 852	62 804	8.7%
Qatar	109 514	68 339	62.4%

Based on the data of the share of migrant population (see Chart 24), we can divide the four states into two groups – historically, Kuwait and Qatar have had a higher migrant population share (somewhere between 50-80%), whereas Bahrain and Oman have had a significantly lower one (between 8-50%). While the difference between them is shrinking, it is clear that migration policies differed in these countries, partly due to their different demographic composition (see later).

¹⁰¹ Although the quoted article refers only to Qatar, the notion is broad enough to use for the other small Gulf states as well.

¹⁰² Besides the Indian rupee, the most popular currencies at that time included the British, the Iranian, as well as the Austro-Hungarian Maria Theresa thaler [ibid].

¹⁰³ From the World Bank Database, 2018.

Chart 24: Share of migrant population, 1970-2015¹⁰⁴

Naturally, inviting foreign population to compensate for the smallness of the national labour market has down-sides as well. Between the 1950s and 1990s, huge numbers of Arab migrants travelled to the smaller Gulf states for work,¹⁰⁵ but due to their language knowledge and cultural closeness, they almost instantly got involved in local politics [Chalcraft, 2012, 69]. In Bahrain for example, migrant workers from Egypt, Palestine and other Arab countries participated in demonstrations against the regime, while in Kuwait, Palestinian teachers politicized the curricula in the education system [ibid]. Naturally, pan-Arab ideas had a foothold in large Arab communities living in another Arab countries,¹⁰⁶ which also represented a danger. To tackle these challenges, the small Gulf states developed policies aiming at balancing the population composition so that citizens can maintain their dominance in the population [Gokhan, 2008, 125].

It was due to these challenges that the migration policies of smaller Gulf states changed dramatically in the 1990s and 2000s to favour South Asians over Arab workers (who do not speak the language). Indians and Pakistanis have always been part of the labour force of the Gulf economies – even in 1975, workers of Asian origin constituted 55% of the Bahraini employee community, 63% of the Qatari one [Birks – Sinclair, 1980,

¹⁰⁴ Source: World Bank Database, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ For the migration policies of the decades between the 1930s and 1950s, see Errichiero, 2012.

¹⁰⁶ This was dangerous, especially since Arab nationalism had already spread in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly among the well-educated segments of the Gulf societies, organizing strikes and social reform movements [Kinnenman, 2011, 35]. Late, in the 1950s, there were still signs of the presence of the ideology, for example in the Bahraini Saout al-Bahrain (The Voice of Bahrain) daily, which also spread Communist and Leftist ideas [ibid, 32].

143], but aggregately Arab workers constituted the majority in the region.¹⁰⁷ In the 1970s, the Gulf states witnessed the first governmental policies to raise the number of non-Arab migrants due to political and economic reasons, but at this time, the sending countries did not welcome the initiative [Birks – Sinclair, 1980, 146-149]. Nonetheless, due to the growing economic possibilities at the end of the 20th century, the perception of South Asian governments changed and they also engaged in the flow of migrant workers.

As a consequence, the ratio of Arab migrants in the community of foreigners in the GCC shrank from 91 to 33 percent between 1975 and 2004 [ibid]. In parallel, the absolute number of migrant workers rose constantly due to the economic boom of the 2000s – by 2012, the overall ratio of migrants in the labour force reached 60% in Bahrain, 65.7% in Oman, 80% in Kuwait and 89.5% in Qatar [Ulrichsen 2011a, 89].¹⁰⁸

The labour import is mostly conducted in the framework of the so-called *kafala system* [Damir-Gelisdorf – Pelican, 2018; Diop – Johnston – Le, 2015; Longva 1997; Rahman 2010, Szalai 2015]. The two main pillars of the system are the dominant role of the employer (*kafeel*) and the fixed-term contract of the employee. Although specific details differ in the GCC countries, the *kafeel* has wide-ranging rights and influence over the employee in each case. He controls the mobility and the visa of the migrant worker therefore his/her life in general. If the contract is terminated, the migrant worker has to leave the country or have a new contract immediately. The kafala system is heavily criticised from a human rights point of view, since it leads to cultural and physical segregation, the lack of opportunity to gain a citizenship and complete dependence on one's employer. The only small state which has a less strict migration policy is Bahrain, which conducts a large-scale neutralization program to change the sectarian composition of the country (see later) [Kinninmont, 2015, 17].

The compensatory policy of labour import

Interestingly enough, in the case of the Gulf states, the compensatory policy (which rose from the interaction of small population size and imbalance between the demand and

¹⁰⁷ Oman was an exception also in this regard, where the majority of migrant workers has always been of South Asian origin due to the unique history of the country [Winckler, 2000,33].

¹⁰⁸ The cited data are only estimates as there are no official statistics on the subject.

supply on the labour market) interacted with small population size itself, and led to severe, sometimes grotesque consequences.¹⁰⁹

Due to the disenfranchised situation of migrant workers who by today constitute the majority of the population, Anh Nga Longva [2013, 119] argues that the Gulf states have effectively become “ethnocracies”, meaning the “*tendency for an elite to posit their own physical characteristics and cultural norms as the essence of the nation over which they rule, thus narrowing its definition and excluding all those within the polity who do not exhibit the same characteristics (...) In practical terms, ethnocracy is government by an ethnic group*”. As Paul Dresch [2013, 6], claims. “*an appeal to exclusive culture (...), and to local values or principles (...) such as those of family, is in part an assertion of autonomy*”.

The narrow and nativist definition of the nation suggest that being independent and having a dominant role in shaping the community has been more important for the small Gulf states than the actual size of the community. These constitutive norms (as discussed in section 1.3.) have got even tighter since the 1970s as a self-defence mechanism [Dresch, 2013, 24] due to the fear of globalization and the growing ratio of migrant workers [Tetreault, 2011a, 83]. When it comes to defining the “other”, three circles emerged as a logic of differentiation: Khaleeji (Gulf) societies as the most familiars; Arabs as a middle ground; and foreigners or Ajnabi for everyone else [Dresch, 2013, 25]. In practice, this is visible in cases like marriage rules or citizenship.¹¹⁰

Opening the labour market for foreign workers has international consequences as well, creating a form of interdependence between the country of origin and the country of residence. On the one hand, the economy of the small Gulf states would not be able to operate without guest workers coming from South Asia. On the other hand, sending workers to the Gulf represents a huge source of income for the sending societies in the form of remittances. In 2016, the total amount of remittances peaked at 31% of gross domestic product of Nepal, the majority of which was coming from Qatar and the UAE

¹⁰⁹ In Qatar, the foreign population outnumbers the citizens by 10 times, and according to some estimates, the community of the Indian or the Nepalese community became larger by itself than the Qatari one [Babar, 2015, 132].

¹¹⁰ In Saudi Arabia, for example, government permission is required to marry a non-citizen, except if the non-citizen is from the GCC [Theodorou, 2014].

[Desilver, 2018]. While the same ratio for India was only 2.8%, the absolute sum was 62.7 billion USD, more than any other country in the world [ibid].

Social heterogeneity

Smallness in the case of the population of Gulf states coincided with social heterogeneity in the region in terms of tribal, ethnic and religious communities. Accompanied by smallness, the mixed nature of the Gulf societies represented a huge challenge in the process of state-building [Salzman, 2016, 207-210]. The tribal nature of the structure of the society stands in contrast with the hierarchical power structure of a modern state, creating a collective self-help system in which the members of a tribe defend each other against out-groups. The leaders of today's Gulf states had to rule over tribal societies, in which they had to build up a role for themselves. This role can be conceptualised as being on a scale between forcing hierarchy and reshaping loyalties so that they point more to the state and not the tribe on the one extreme and accepting the dominance of tribal groupings and putting decision-making on the local level on the other. In practice, all Gulf states developed a solution somewhere in the middle, which is why in order to effectively conduct their tasks, state institutions need the approval of tribes almost constantly.

Due to the lack of historical national identity and the prevalence of tribal identities, the governments of the small Gulf states focused heavily on national identity building [Patrick, 2012]. Attempts to create civil ethnocracy, imagined and reinvented national traditions and citizenship regulations all take part in this endeavour [ibid]. These steps practically meant that “*local elites have harnessed the global discourse on ‘heritage’ to construct an ethnicized and gendered¹¹¹ vision of a primordial Arab homeland*” [Koch, 2015, 522]. Initiatives include using falconry [Krawietz, 2014], Islamic art [Gierlichs, 2014], sports [Baabood, 2008] state institutions [Eggeling, 2017] and even national companies. These efforts tried to connect local traditions with the ruling family, thus creating a national identity which serves the legitimacy of the rulers' power [Fromherz, 2012, 159]. The large-scale urbanization process taking place in the twentieth century helped identity building efforts in the small Gulf states to create a “*unified national space*” and to provide a “*formative collective experience that unites Gulf citizens of different background*” [AGSIW, 2016, 5].

¹¹¹ As scholars take note, discourses on identity are shaped by and for men in the Gulf societies. For an attempt to build a counter-narrative, see Driss, 2005.

Granting or revoking citizenship has been usually used as a political tool [Kinninmont, 2013, 53-56] to regulate not necessarily the size but more like the cohesion of Gulf states. This point shows that the constitutive norms of the national communities include expectations regarding political behaviour.

Forging a national identity did not aim to completely disturb tribalism, but rather to “*disburse patronage selectively in order to maintain alliances based on family, tribe, and region*” [Patrick, 2009, 11]. In a paradoxical way, behind the disguise of a modern state and society, Gulf regimes continued to use old tribal relations to govern and to maintain “national” social cohesion. That is why the term “nation-building” may better be changed to “*identity management*” [Holes, 2013, 52]. This conceptualisation has a bigger explanatory value also because of the governments’ reactions to the heterogeneity of the society of the small Gulf states: naturally, they want to build a unified basis for the national identity but do not want to eliminate all tribal, linguistic,¹¹² ethnic or religious differences [Holes, 2013; Fahy, 2018].

In these efforts of identity politics, the technical side of mass communication has always played an important role for two reasons. First, creating their own channels, small Gulf states were able to gain their own discursive power vis-à-vis global companies dominated by Western states [Sakr, 2013]. Second, fearing supra-national (Arabism, Islamism) and sub-national identities and the danger they represent for regime security, Middle Eastern states tried to monopolize the means of public communication in order to dominate identity politics [Telhami – Barnett, 2002, 20]. Nonetheless, as technology evolved and transnational and cross-border mass communication got easier, some states identified an opportunity to shape other states’ domestic discourse about political issues related to identity. One of such tools, the al-Jazeera satellite TV channel, is run by the Qatari elite [Telhami – Barnett, 2002, 21].

Another important tool in identity management (and also a general compensatory policy tackling smallness) was higher education and human capacity building. These policies can also be seen as being aimed at reducing the reliance of the small states on British, American and Western educational institutions (in other words at achieving real independence from their “formal colonial masters” [Bahgat, 1999, 128]). Investing in the

¹¹² For the particularities of language and identity in the Gulf, see Holes, 2011.

school system is also important to reach diversification and to move towards a knowledge-based economy [Tadros, 2015].

The cleavage which gained the most attention recently is the sectarian composition of the Gulf societies, however, there is no official data available concerning religious composition. Based on the available estimates (see Chart 25), the ratio of the Shia community in the small Gulf states varies between less than 5 percent (Oman) and a two thirds majority in Bahrain. Nonetheless, the role of the Shia in the political, economic and social life of the Gulf states is not solely dependent on their size, but other political factors as well.

**Chart 25: Estimated ratio of the Shia community in the small Gulf states
(Matthiesen 2013)¹¹³**

Country	Estimated percentage
Bahrain	60-70
Kuwait	20-30
Qatar	10
Oman	<5

Despite having the smallest population, Bahrain is the most socially divided country both in ethnic (Arab and Persian) and sectarian (Sunni and Shia) terms [Crystal, 2014, 169-171]. Another division is between the “native” and the “immigrant” families in the society, which basically refers to the population movement of the past centuries taking place in the Arabian Peninsula [ibid]. The Sunni Bahraini government perceived these social schisms as threats and possibilities for other states (especially Iran) to intervene, therefore these divisions – especially the sectarian one – is heavily securitised especially since the Iranian revolution of 1979 (see part 4.2.). As it was already mentioned, Bahrain

¹¹³ Since all numbers are estimated and not official, there is no data series available to track the changes of the Shia community since 1970, nonetheless systematic changes did not occur during the examined period.

conducted a wide scale program of neutralization of Sunni migrant workers in an attempt to make the society more Sunni.¹¹⁴

Moreover, historically, the island of Bahrain has been politically unified for centuries with some Shia territories on the mainland now belonging to the Saudi kingdom, which created many tribal and family connections between the Bahrain and Saudi Shia community [Matthiesen, 2015, 24-25]. These trans-border connections and networks are perceived as a threat not just to the Bahraini government but also to the Saudi one as well.

From a demographic point of view, Oman is an odd-one-out in the GCC. First of all, the slight majority of the population belongs to Ibadi Islam, a third community which originates from the Kharijite succession in the seventh century [Al-Khalili, 2009, 5-9]. Lacking official data, sources debate whether the Ibadis have an absolute or relative majority in the country, due to the fact that the Sunni community is also above 40 percent (centred in the Dhofar region), while the Shias constitute only a small minority¹¹⁵ [Valeri, 2014, 181]. Second, the ethnic origins of the Omani society is more mixed than its neighbours due to the imperial history of the country – many families are considered to be of “Zanjibari” (East-African) and Baluchi (Pakistani-Iranian) origin [Kharusi, 2013, 429].

Third, nonetheless, the main split in the society is not ethnic or religious but rather tribal. Historically, two political entities emerged in the territory of modern-day Oman: the Ibadi Imamate from the inner lands of the country, and the Sultanate of Muscat, residing in the maritime imperial capital [Rabi, 2016, 80-82; Al-Khalili, 2009, 3-5]. The tribes of the Imamate had a more traditional, conservative, inward-looking society with the Imam as the main mediator and arbitrator between the main tribes. On the other hand, the Sultanate was the cosmopolitan centre of a huge maritime empire which dominated regional trade. The different economic interests and social tensions led to a troubled relationship between the two polities, which was reflected in the British recognition of the territory as the protectorate called the “*Sultanate of Muscat and Oman*”. While the

¹¹⁴ In parallel, Qatar wanted to give citizenship to Bahraini families to raise the ratio of “nationals” vis-à-vis migrant workers [Kinnenmont, 2014, 29].

¹¹⁵ The Shia tribes of Oman belong to two distinct groups: the Lawatiya community, which is a merchant community probably of a mixed Arab-Indian origin and the Bahrani of Iraqi descent [Kharusi, 2013, 429].

society is much more integrated today than it was before, the differences between the tribes of the land and the tribes of the shore still exist.

Due to the heterogeneity in the ethnic and religious composition of the Omani society, the state institutionalised a much more inclusive concept of citizenship than other Gulf states [Kharusi, 2013, 428]. According to nationality laws, Omani citizenship is given even to those born inside or outside of Oman of Omani fathers, of Omani mothers and an unknown father, those born in Oman of unknown parents [Al-Rasheed, 2013, 100]. After the coup in 1970, Qaboos realised that the labour needs for the economic development can be met through inviting (and nationalising) Zanzibari Arab families (who got to East Africa during the time when it belonged to the Omani empire), thus starting to transfer them to mainland Oman in an organized way. This was also beneficial for the regime as these tribes of a mixed Arab-African heritage “*claimed tribal links with important sections of Omani society yet were considered to be relatively far removed from Oman’s internal conflicts*” like the Dhofar rebellion or the tensions between inner Omani lands and Muscat. That is why “*they were thus seen as potential supporters of the regime*” [Al-Rasheed, 2013, 102]. As a result, we can see that Sultan Qaboos treated the challenges of internal heterogeneity with more, imported heterogeneity, while also advocating an open and inclusive Omani identity.

A particular feature of the Kuwaiti society is the social tension between the urban society and the beduin tribes (*bidoon*) [Longva 2013, 120]. While all of the Gulf societies include some unsettled tribes and thus a conflict between the settled and the unsettled population (for example Qatar, see Fromherz, 2012, 36-37), this challenge is especially empathetic in Kuwait due to the larger rate of the *bidoon*. The divide overlaps with the tensions between the “*asli*” (original) and the “*mutajannis*” (neutralized) communities, a division which is connected to the Battle of Jahra of 1920. In national memory, this event is seen as the founding moment of the country, in which the Kuwaitis managed to defeat the conquering Saudi army of the Ikhwan. The families who participated in the battle (in other words those who resided in Kuwait before 1920) are seen as the original population of the country, whereas those who arrived later are the neutralized. The members of the tribes arriving to Kuwait after the Battle of Jahra are seen as the *bidoon*, who did not get the right to vote until 1966 [Louer, 2014, 136]. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the emir gave citizenship to many *bidoon* tribes to build up its loyal base vis-à-vis other

groups in the society [Baugrand, 2016, 8]. Nonetheless, many of them still do not have citizenship and are basically still in a political “limbo” [Crystal, 2014, 163].

The lack of basic political rights for inhabitants hampered the institutionalization of state sovereignty, but also raises the question of loyalty [Bacik, 2008, 122-124]. Basically, it was due to the smallness of the Kuwaiti national community that the question of the integration of the *bidoon* remained on the agenda, which caused the most intense internal debates about who is Kuwaiti and who is not in the region [Longva, 2013, 120-122]. According to the 1959 nationality law, members of Bidoon tribes did not get citizenship (as it only recognised those families which were in the country before 1920), therefore they got into the same category as expats and other Arab nations. This debate about the treatment of the *bidoon* was brought to an end by 1980 as they got neutralised – nonetheless, ever since, the gates have been pretty much closed for mass numbers of foreigners to become Kuwaitis.

Tensions between the *bidoon* and the settled tribes did not cease to exist in the 1980s. Due to the fact that some *bidoon* tribes – primarily the Shammar and the Anayzah – had families in the territory of Iraq, the government accused their members to cooperate with the invading Iraqi army in 1990 [Crystal, 2014, 163]. As a result, people of *bidoon* origin were fired from public jobs, many left the country in the following years.

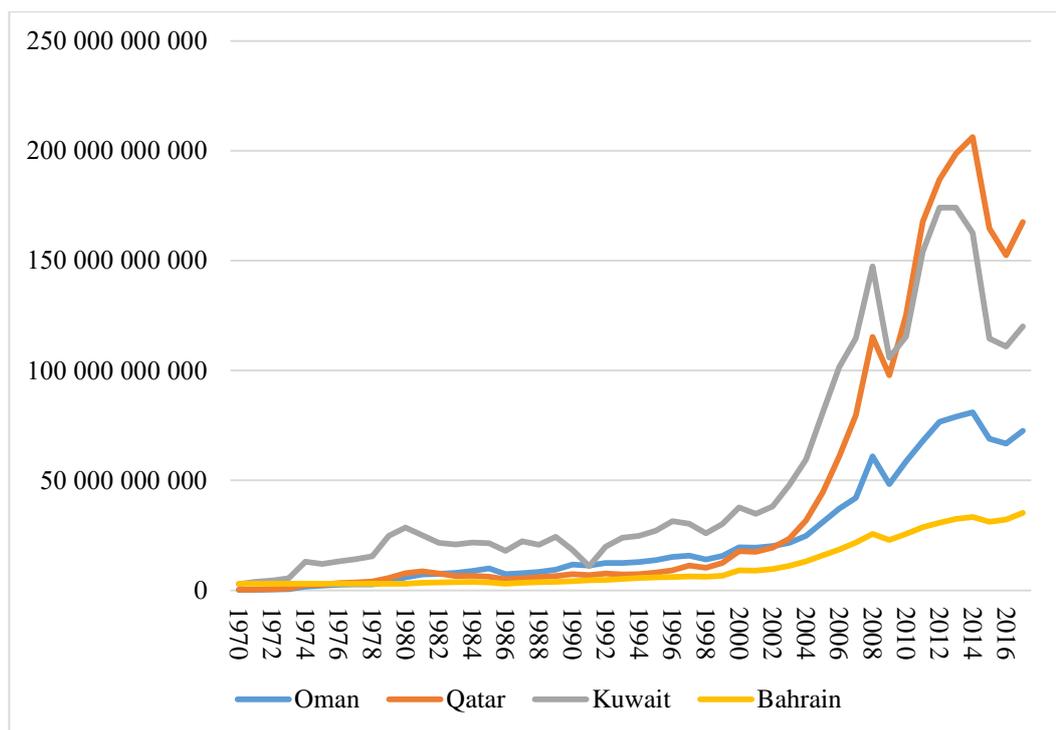
The Kuwaiti Shia community is well integrated into the society and they many times serve as a political ally of the emir vis-à-vis the Sunni merchant class. Shias of Kuwait belong to three distinct communities on the basis of family origin – the *Ajam* from Iran, the *Hasawiyyin* from Saudi Arabia (Hasa) and the *Baharna* from Bahrain [Louer, 2014, 135]. In many cases, these Shia families escaped religious prosecution in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, therefore they do not have strong ties to either states. Nonetheless, with the arrival of Shia networks from Iraq, the sectarian question got more and more complicated.

The Qatari national community is the most homogeneous in the region, therefore the Thani regime had to face the lowest number of domestic problems in this regard [Fromherz, 2012, 26]. The Qatari ruling family is the largest in ratio to the whole population, which means that the regime itself is large enough to dominate the society. Shias are present but well integrated in the economic and political elite.

3.1.3. Economic smallness

Despite their similar position as complex small states, there are huge differences between the size and the efficiency of the economy of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. Even in 1970, the Kuwaiti economic output was ten times the size of Oman and nine times the size of Qatar. Until the first Gulf war, Kuwait maintained to have the largest GDP, but in 1991, its output shrank to 60% of the previous year. That is why for one year, Oman had the biggest economy, nonetheless Kuwait took back the lead in 1992. In the 2000s, Qatar reached the highest growth rate and managed to outgrow Oman by 2003 and Kuwait as well by 2010, taking the lead ever since (see Chart 26). On the other hand, even in 2017, the Qatari GDP is still only 43.8% of that of the Emirati one and only 24.5% of the Saudi output.

Chart 26: The Gross Domestic Product of the four small Gulf states, 1970-2017 (current USD)¹¹⁶



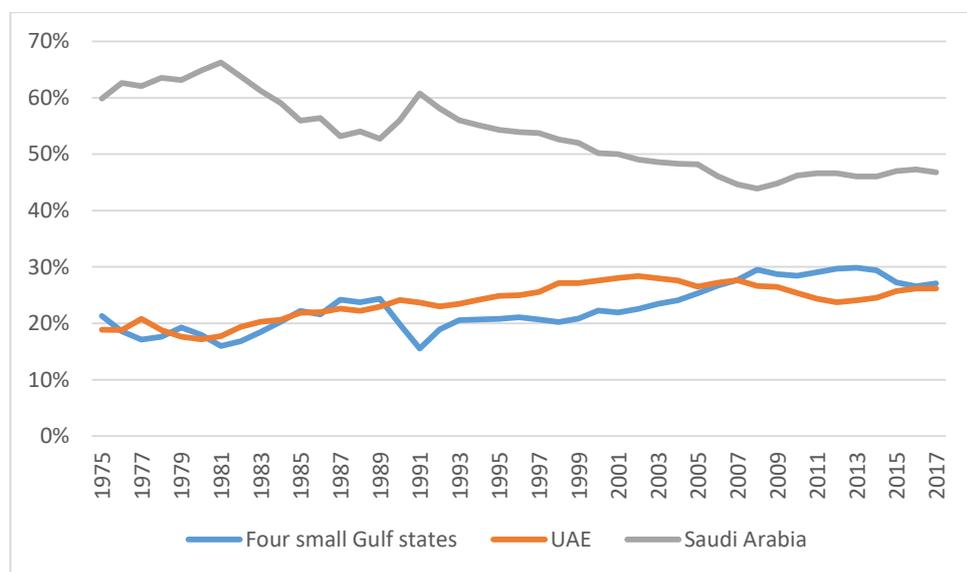
To put national economic data in context, it is worth investigating the share of the four small Gulf states' output in the GCC (see Chart 27). The aggregate ratio of the GDP of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar fluctuated between 16% and 30% between 1975 and 2017 with an evident growing tendency since 1991. The UAE had a somewhat

¹¹⁶ Statistics on Bahrain is not available between 1970 and 1980.

similar share to the four small Gulf states combined: between 1989 and 2006, the federation surpassed the ratio of small states.

In light of these data, the first decade of the 21st century witnessed two structural changes. First, the Saudi ratio of the GCC's economic output shrank from over 60% to below 50% by 2002. Second, the UAE lost its prevalence vis-à-vis the smaller Gulf states in 2007.¹¹⁷ These two data suggest that mainly due to the economic growth of Qatar, the four small Gulf states managed to better their economic position on the Peninsula.

Chart 27: The ratio of the members of the GCC in economic output (current USD) (1975-2017)¹¹⁸



The small economic output of the Gulf states interacted with two variables: the huge amount of hydrocarbon resources and demographic smallness.

Hydrocarbon resources

Besides their absolute small size, the most important feature of the economy of the small Gulf states is, naturally, the huge quantities of hydrocarbons to be found in their territory. Despite their limited economic output, all four states possess large reserves of oil or natural gas. As of 2017, Kuwait possesses 6 percent of all proven oil reserves (101.5 thousand million barrels), Qatar has 1.5 percent (25.2 thousand million barrels), while Oman has 0.3 percent (5.4 thousand million barrels) [BP, 2018a, 2]. The amount at the disposal of Bahrain reaches only the 0.01 percent of all reserves (less 150 million barrels).

¹¹⁷ In 2012 and 2013, the four small Gulf states had a seven percentage point lead over the UAE.

¹¹⁸ Bahraini data is missing between 1970 and 1980, and for the UAE until 1975.

When it comes the natural gas, Qatar has the highest ratio with 12.9 percent, followed by the 0.9 percent of Kuwait, 0.3 percent of Oman and 0.1 percent of Bahrain [BP, 2018b, 2].

Although the extraction and export of these commodities started between the 1930s and the 1950s,¹¹⁹ for decades it remained to be an “*external commodity*” as “*it was extracted by Western oil companies, sold to Western consumers, and the bulk of the profits from this process were pocketed by the oil companies*” [Ehteshami, 2013, 51].

The utilization of oil profit in national development happened gradually and differently in all Gulf states, through the processes of bargaining with oil companies (and reaching so-called 50-50 profit agreements¹²⁰ in the 1950s), increasing demand in the West and East Asia, as well as the rise of the oil price on the global level in the 1970s. By this decade, basically all Gulf states managed to gain full control of the fields and means of oil production [Koren – Tenreyro, 2012, 188]. The huge income source helped the states to have a firm grasp of the national economy and to go through a “rentierization” process [Ehteshami, 2013, 57].

The effect of rentierism (the reliance in economy on a single unearned income)¹²¹ on the state and society is somewhat debated in the literature [Hanieh 2011; Mahdavy 1970; Neary – Wijnbergen, 1985; Kamrava, 2016; Ulrichsen 2016]. On the one hand, the higher level of economic incomes – accompanied by a small population – allows the small Gulf states to build and maintain well-functioning state institutions, a strong social net and relatively high military expenditures (see later) [Crystal, 2014, Ismael – Ismael, 2011]. Moreover, possessing 10% of the global proven oil reserves, the small Gulf states were able to build up relationships of interdependence with other states through commerce and other economic activities. They “*have naturally taken notice of*

¹¹⁹ In Bahrain and Kuwait it started in the 1930s and in Qatar, Oman in 1940s [Koren – Tenreyro, 2012, 188].

¹²⁰ The main idea of the 50-50 agreements was that the host government received half of the profits deriving from oil commerce in two portions – first through a royalty amounting to the 12.5 percent of the value of the oil at the “posted” price (minus the cost of production) and second through an “income tax” of 37.5% [EPL, 1973, 432]. Since the posted price was designated by the oil companies, the host governments did not trust that they truly received 50% of the profit, which led to further changes in the distribution of the income and, eventually, to the partial nationalisation of the oil sector.

¹²¹ More broadly speaking, the exact effects of having disposal of such natural resources are debated in the theoretical and applied literature as well. By definition, natural resources are basically unearned capacities which are fixed in supply and inelastic [Al Sabah 2013, 17], which can easily cause political and economic challenges.

the importance attributed to oil by the major powers, and attempted to take advantage of it, acquiring guarantees for their security (...) as well as access to sophisticated weapons systems” [Luciani, 2005, 88]. These circumstances came handy in several foreign policy actions for the small Gulf states (see part 4.5.).

From the perspective of the regimes, the huge income from rents represented also an opportunity to make a new kind of social contract with the society. According to Uzi Rabi [2014, 83], the “*power attained through oil revenues is vested in the hands of the ruling elite and the people’s rights to political participation is exchanged for social welfare*”. These benefits given to the society include housing, distribution of available lands, financial support for the unemployed, cancelling debts, as well as free education and healthcare [Davidson, 2012, 50-56]. The primary form of delivering such benefits was hiring citizens in the public sector.

On the other hand, it has many negative effects on economic planning and performance as well as international relations. First, it exposes national economies to global economic trends, something that they cannot affect individually. Growth rates have been glued to the fluctuation of oil price at least since the 1970s: after the oil crisis of 1973, the rising revenues of the small Gulf states enabled them “*to reformulate traditional tribal structures into modern forms of governance*” [Ulrichsen, 28]. This period lasted until the late 1980s, after which the governments had to accommodate their fiscal policies to a lower oil price. This was the time when the elites started to discuss diversification, namely to develop other sectors of the economy independent from the energy market. The next wealthy period started in the 2000s and lasted until 2014, during which instead of diversification, the small Gulf states started to accumulate wealth.

This reliance on hydrocarbon commodities does not only translate into a form of dependency, but also a risk to high volatility in terms of the standard deviation of annual growth rates, which, in the 1970s, reached 9.5, 9.7 and 12.5 percentage points in the case of Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman respectively, and 4.7 in the case of Qatar [Koren – Tenreyro, 2012, 190-191]. In the next decades, volatility shrank in almost all cases, except for Kuwait (which witnessed a 40.2 percentage point volatility rate in the 1990s) and Qatar (6.2 and 5.3 percentage points in the 1990s and 2000s), largely due to global trends [ibid].

Moreover, as the academic literature on absolute size predicted (see part 1.2.1.), small Gulf states have a relatively high export market concentration ratio (see Chart 28).¹²² Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar mostly trade with the European Union, the United States and some Eastern-Asian states (Republic of Korea, Japan, China). By 2015, the export of Kuwait and Qatar had the highest concentration ratio and Bahrain had the lowest in the group, but in international comparison with other small states, the Bahraini data is still high [Meilak, 2008, 43].

Chart 28: Export market concentration ratio in the small Gulf states [UNCTAD, 2016, 183-189]

Country	1995	2015
Bahrain	0.3957	0.3123
Kuwait	0.6057	0.5982
Oman	0.7480	0.4467
Qatar	0.6305	0.5078

Since none of the oil-producing states were big enough to individually alter market conditions, they stood together to form the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960 simply to extract more favourable terms from the corporations [Citino, 2002, 155]. The cooperation managed to grow out to be the most dominant (though not hegemonic) institutional player on the global oil market. The founders of OPEC – especially Saudi Arabia – wanted to avoid an Arab oil organization fearing of the nationalist tide, therefore several non-Arab states were invited to the cooperation [Citino, 2002, 145].

Second, the dominance of rents in the economy has huge moral consequences as well. The unearned nature of such revenues fosters the persistence of rent-seeking behaviour and a bias towards “*unproductive activities*” [Karl, 1997, 5] for all economic actors. This process can be seen not just in the financial world but also in social relations,

¹²² The Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index (HHI) was used to determine export market concentration ratio, which is “calculated by taking the square of export shares of all export categories in the market” [Meilak, 2008, 37]. The HHI is widely considered to be the “simplest and most affordable indices due to [its] ease of comprehension and availability of data” [Meilak, 2008, 2008, 46].

as it de-incentivises economic efficiency and self-improvement for the members of the society, (for example in the education sector [Baghdady, 2016, 136]). Another moral consequence of mixing the rentierism with the Middle Eastern state structure is the constantly high level of corruption and the constantly high expectation of the society to receive many things freely without individual contribution [Issawi, 1982, 207].

As a result of benefit-distribution system, citizens were hired in the public sector even if they had no real job to do. This put huge pressure on state budgets and led to a very inefficient public sector, which downgrades the performance of state institutions.

Third, the phenomenon of the so-called Dutch Disease, namely the way in which *“discoveries or favourable price changes in one sector of the economy, for example, petroleum, [can] cause distress in other sectors”* [Karl, 1997, 5] is especially critical in under-developed economies such as those of the Gulf region during the 1950s. According to Charles Issawi [1982, 209], while *“considerable advantage in infrastructure, housing, manufacturing, and social services was achieved”* due to oil incomes, *“agriculture grew only slowly, a fact that aggravated inflation. Shortages and bottlenecks ensued, since neither the transport system nor the construction and other industries could cope with the huge demands made on them and the supply of nontradeable goods could not be expanded fast enough to meet demand”*.

As one result of the Dutch Disease, the small Gulf states are among those countries which have the highest commodity dependence¹²³ in the region. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), only the UAE was more reliant on oil exports in the 2010s than Qatar, Oman and Kuwait. Bahrain has a little bit better position and its commodity dependence data is closer to that of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, but still worse than Yemen for example [UNCTAD, 2016, 182].

Fourth, oil reserves in the Gulf and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa created a division and a constant source of tension between oil-rich and oil-poor states in the region [Luciani, 2005, 96-99]. Nationalist regimes such as Nasserist Egypt frequently articulated a claim to the Gulf states and others to share the income coming

¹²³ Commodity dependence is a concept used to measure the reliance of a national economy on the export of a single commodity. It is usually measured by the share of export earnings of the top single commodity (or the top 3 commodities), the percentage of people engaged in the production of the given commodity (or commodities), or the share of the income from the given commodity (or commodities) in all government revenues [UNDP, 2011, 56-64].

from oil revenues in the name of Arab solidarity. Though oil-producing states engaged in some forms of mechanisms to aid their poorer neighbours – through formal financial assistance or labour migration and remittances – these steps were seen many times as insufficient by economically unstable regimes.

Moreover, the presence of oil reserves makes the strategy of relative deterrence unavailable for small Gulf states. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the idea is based on raising the costs of a possible attack to a degree which overweigh the possible gains. Possessing such valuable natural resources in such a high quantity, small states are not protected from being attacked by. That is one reason for the perception of constant outside threats in the region.

These tendencies lead to a constant political discourse about diversification, especially due to the limited nature of resources which will probably run out in the lifetime of those born today [Kinnimont, 2015, 16].¹²⁴ Incomes from oil dominate not just economic activity, but fiscal governmental revenues and exports as well [IMF 2016, 7]. Despite the fact that diversification has been in the public discourse in all periods since the 1970s, when oil price declined, the Gulf states did not manage to substantially alter their economic structure. In 2014, 70-80% of fiscal revenues and 60-80% of the export was still attached to the hydrocarbon sector, nonetheless it is true that in the overall composition of the GDP, the energy commodity sector dropped down to 24% in the case of Bahrain, as well as 51, 56 and 63% in the case of Qatar, Oman and Kuwait [IMF, 2016, 8]. Besides the rise of the service sector generally, the most notable success of the Gulf states was the diversification of the oil sector itself with subsidizing oil-based industries such as refinery [Hvidt, 2013, 7].

In the last twenty or so years, all small Gulf states (alongside the UAE and later Saudi Arabia) issued a “national vision”, namely a mostly economic and social reform program aiming to diversify the economy and make it more effective (see Chart 29). Having the lowest amount of oil reserves, Oman and Bahrain were the first to move, while due to constant political debates, Kuwait managed to formulate its reform strategy the last. While all visions have slightly similar set of tools, all of them share some

¹²⁴ The oil reserves to production (R/P) ratio (which shows the years of production remaining at the current extraction levels) is only 15.2 years for Omani oil, 36.1 for Qatari oil and 91.9 for Kuwaiti oil [BP, 2018a, 2] (Bahraini data is missing). The same numbers for natural gas are much higher (20.6 for Oman, 97.6 for Kuwait, 141.9 for Qatar and 10.3 for Bahrain), but mostly due to much smaller production ratios (except for Qatar) [BP, 2018b, 2].

commonalities such as having more ambitions than actual results, focusing on nationalisation of the labour economy (more precisely the private sector), and also to emphasize human development [Ulrichsen, 2016, 62-66]

Chart 29: National visions in the small Gulf states [Ulrichsen, 2016, 64]

Country	Title	Year of publication
Oman	Oman 2020: Visions for Oman's Economy	1995
Bahrain	Economic Vision 2030	2008
Qatar	Qatar National Vision 2030	2008
Kuwait	Kuwait Vision 2035	2010

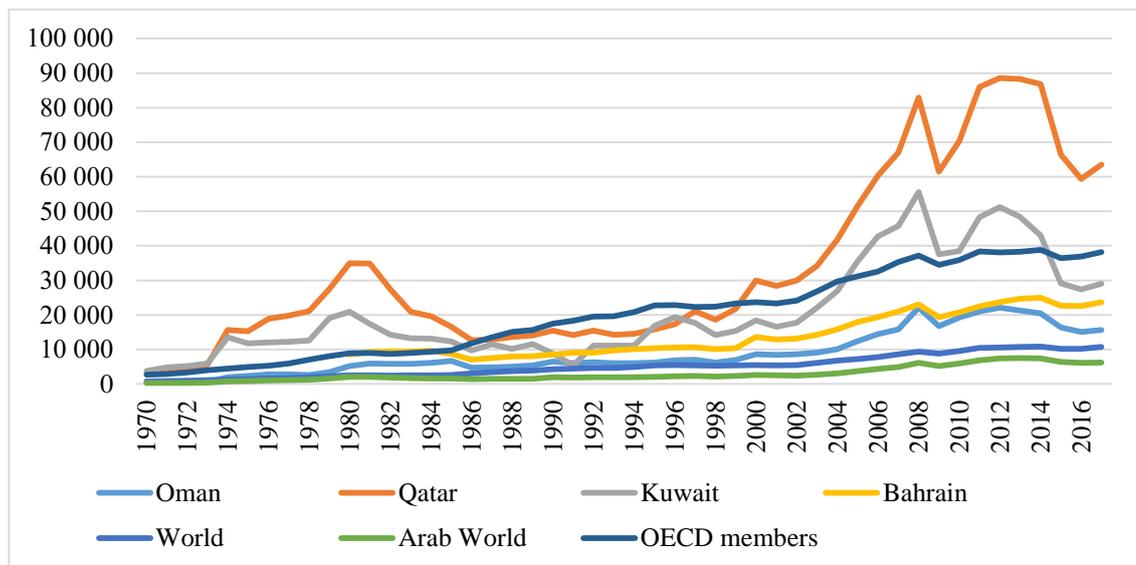
A major problem with diversification in the small Gulf states is that due to the structure of their economies, increasing national output is largely labour-intensive. According to an IMF estimate conducted in 2011, one percent rise in the non-hydrocarbon GDP goes hand in hand with 0.7-1.7 percent rise in total employment [IMF, 2011, 4]. This is one reason why diversification – which basically aims at increasing the share of the non-hydrocarbon sectors – is not just an opportunity to reform the labour market but can cause serious social tension between nationals and non-nationals. In Bahrain, the most diversified economy among the small Gulf states, the competition between Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis is higher than in its neighbours, and paradoxically, employment opportunities can be more scarce for citizens [Kinninmont, 2011, 51].

Among the small Gulf states, Bahrain and Oman were able to achieve the most visible success in diversification. They managed to lower their commodity dependence on hydrocarbon export between 1995 and 2015, while Kuwait stagnated in this regard. Data on Qatari economy statistically even worsened in this respect, nonetheless this is due to the huge rise of the natural gas production capabilities (see later) taking place in these two decades [UNCTAD, 183-189]. On the other hand, they all diversified their export markets and lowered their concentration ratio (see chart 28), especially Oman [ibid].

Demographic smallness

Economic smallness and huge natural resources interacted also with small population size in the forms of GDP/capita ratios and fiscal surpluses (see Chart 30). In the latter, all four Gulf states have been above the Arab world average almost constantly since the mid-1990s. Moreover, Qatar has surpassed the OECD average since the late 1990s, while Kuwait was also above it in the mid-2000s. According to the World Bank Database [2018], Kuwait had the highest GDP per capita ratio between 1970 and 1973, but Qatar took the lead in 1974 and holds it ever since,¹²⁵ except for three years between 1995 and 1997, during which the population of Kuwait in the aftermath of the war shrank considerably (in fact, it only reached the pre-war 1990 size of the population in 2001).

Chart 30: GDP/capita ration in the four small Gulf states and selected country groups (1970-2017)¹²⁶



When it comes to fiscal surpluses, the question is rather complex [IMF, 2012; 13]. Analysis shows that due to their pro-cyclical fiscal policy and without long term fiscal planning and proper financial institutions and regulations in place (especially in the early decades), the balance of the budget in the GCC countries has been fragile. Their fiscal room to manoeuvre has been dependent on the fluctuation of oil price: between 1973 and the mid-1980s, as well as in the 2000s, the Gulf governments were able to pay for higher

¹²⁵ The first available data for Bahrain is only from 1980. If we project the data from that year, Bahrain would be the richest between 1970 and 1973, but Qatar would still be the first since 1974.

¹²⁶ Data extracted from the World Bank Database, 2018.

expenses, while in the late 1980s and the 1990s, they had to cut their expenses. The same is true for the period after 2016 (see Chart 31).

The periods with high incomes enabled GCC states to create sovereign wealth funds (SWFs). The first SWF of the world was actually created by Kuwait in 1953 (the Kuwait Investment Authority – KIA) [Yang, 2015, 16-17] followed by the Omani State General Reserve Fund in 1980, the Qatar Investment Authority in 2005, the Oman Investment Fund as well as the Bahraini Mumtakilat Holding Company in 2006 [SWFI, 2018].

Chart 31: The inflation-adjusted monthly oil price between 1971 and 2017¹²⁷



The initial aim of sovereign wealth funds was to eliminate the potential impacts of oil price fluctuations – basically as a tool of counter-cyclical fiscal policy – but they were transformed in order to also conduct strategic financial investments and to help the diversification attempts [ibid]. While the creation of SWFs is a world-wide phenomenon, Middle Eastern SWFs dominate the market with a 75% share of global SWF capital [op. cit. 18]. The 2000s represented an opportunity for oil exporting states to enlarge their reserves: between 2002 and 2008, the oil price rose from 22 to 147 USD a barrel [Ulrichsen, 2012, 10-12]. As a result, the small GCC states are on the top of the list of the wealthiest SWFs – the KIA is number four and QIA is number ten [SWFI, 2018]. Among the four states' SWFs, the QIA is the least conservative and is willing to take the highest

¹²⁷ Data show the Brent Crude Oil price per barrel on a yearly basis Source: Trading Economics, 2018.

risks [Setser – Ziemba, 2009, 23-24], and is also designed to make politically motivated investments (e.g. in relation with France and Great Britain).¹²⁸

Despite having the same macroeconomic framework, each small Gulf state has specific economic attributes as well, many of them connected to their size.

Due to its ineffective and small-sized economy and the scarcity of oil resources, modern Bahrain has been financially dependent on Saudi Arabia [Kinninmont, 2011, 31 and 48-49]. In the pre-modern era, in contrast, Bahrain had disposal of more natural resources – especially fresh water, dates and pearls – than other territories in the Gulf, but since the 1930s, the economy was based on oil production. Due to the limited quantities of cheap oil¹²⁹ belonging to the island state [Hvidt, 2013, 19; McLachlan, 1980, 89], Bahrain was and is a front-runner in diversification, which targets aluminium production (with the ALBA flagship company), financial services, refinery and tourism. The problem with these policies is that almost all of them connects the Bahrain economy to the Saudi one, deepening the dependence on it. From a statistical perspective, Bahraini economic policy planning has not been effective even compared to other GCC states, as the country-specific component of volatility is the highest since the 1970s [Koren – Tenreyro, 2012, 197].

Bahrain is an odd-one-out regarding its sovereign wealth fund. First of all, it was the latest to be established, as Mumtakalat was only founded in 2006. Second, it manages non-oil assets in the country and focuses almost solely on diversification and not foreign investments. According to Juergen Braustein [2018], the reason behind this is the existence of a relatively strong and well-organized private sector which did not let the government to freely use the surplus in the economy and wanted it to reinvest the amounts inside the country. This phenomenon deprived Bahrain of a mechanism which can create a leverage in international affairs to a great extent.

Kuwait, on the other hand, has always been a “*desert economy*”, having “*extremely poor relative endowment of natural resources*” besides oil [McLachlan, 1980,

¹²⁸ As David Roberts [2013, 3] put it, “*a key Qatari state policy is to make Qatar centrally important to key actors. By virtue of Qatar’s unprecedented investment in London, the Qatari elite by now know every key businessman and -woman in London, to say nothing of key politicians. As and when Qatar either needs advice, or should something happen and Qatar needs assistance, the country has years of contacts and goodwill to exploit.*”

¹²⁹ The breakeven price for Bahrain was estimated to be 100 USD a barrel in 2011, compared to 80 USD in the case of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE, and 40-50 USD in the case of Kuwait and Qatar [Hvidt, 2013, 34].

188]. Due to its geopolitical location, Kuwaiti businessmen have traditionally been engaged in regional and long distance trade, making the class of merchants relatively stronger than in other states [Crystal, 1995, 5]. After the discovery of oil, the trade elite remained united and posed a counterbalance to the emerging state institutions, forcing the emir to provide constant financial assistance to them (e.g. the land acquisition program in the 1950s and 1960s) [ibid]. On the other hand, Kuwait had the largest exportable quantity of oil in its territory compared to its regional partners and had higher income from oil exports than Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia until the middle of the 1960s [Ehteshami, 2013, 53].

The main turning point in the economic history of Kuwait was the 1990-1991 war, which emptied out state reserves and caused severe instability [Crystal, 2014, 164]. In response, the government wanted to attract foreign capital to a much greater extent than before – restrictions on foreign ownership were annulled and the so-called Project Kuwait was announced in order to attract foreign oil companies to the country. Domestic opposition to the plan was huge since the merchant elites felt threatened by the growing foreign presence.

Historically, agriculture had been the basis of the economy of mainland Oman [Wilkinson, 1980, 122] due to geo-economic circumstances as well as a relatively developed irrigation system called the *falaj*¹³⁰ (or *aflaj* in the plural form)/*ganat* system [ibid 124-126]. After the 18th century and the expansion of the Omani empire, Muscat became “*the centre of a vibrant trading system in the Indian Ocean*” [Hanihah, 2011, 8]. Their dominance was based upon the control of Zanzibar, the Eastern African island which served as a link between the European, the Asian and the African trade routes. Nonetheless, due to the rising British interests in the seas and the oceans, Oman had to give up Zanzibar and it quickly fell under the influence of London.

The traditional Omani agriculture survived and still plays an important role in the Omani economy. Traditional and modern techniques are mixed in order to fight the challenge of the dry climate to be found in all parts of the country (except for the Dhofar region) [Al-Marshudi, 2001]. According to the World Bank dataset, in the early 1970s, agriculture provided the 10-15% of the overall Omani GDP, after that it fell to 2-3% until

¹³⁰ “A *falaj* consists of a tunnel to tap groundwater and bring it to the surface for distribution to crops and housing. It is designed to transport groundwater to the surface without any mechanical device or costly expenditure of fuel” [Al-Marshudi, 2001, 262].

2003, after which it was set to 1.5-2%. This is still the largest share among the small Gulf states (since it only reaches half percent in the case of Kuwait for example). Accordingly, the employment in agriculture is approx. 5-6.5% in the total workforce, falling from 9-10% measured in the early 1990s.

Oman, alongside Bahrain, is a frontrunner in economic liberalization and in reshaping the economy in a more market oriented manner. As early as 1970, the government realised its human resource problem (deriving from the lack of quantity and quality of the Omani workforce), which is why it started to involve local governments as well as central state institutions to develop the skills of the society. Nonetheless, a thorough human resource strategy was only included in the Vision 2020 program adopted in 1995 [Al-Hamadi – Budhaw – Shipton, 2007, 103]. It is the only GCC small state which plans to privatise major public firms [Hvidt, 2013, 37].

Qatar also has a unique situation compared to its neighbours. Due to its remote position distant from major trade routes, merchants did not play a powerful role in the society until the 20th century [Crystal, 1997]. Before oil production, the only major economic activity was pearling, which strengthened the rule of the emir and its men who collected tax, a dynamic which only strengthened after the discovery of oil production.

Qatar is the only GCC economy which relies on natural gas production primarily and not oil. Qatar has the third biggest natural gas reserves in the world after Russia and Iran. The most important gas source, the so-called North Field was discovered in the 1970s, but the government only decided to develop production infrastructure in 1984, the same year as the Qatar Liquefied Gas Company (Qatargas) was established [Sastry, 1993]. Actual productions only started in the 1990s in three phases: first, the government wanted to develop the gas industry for domestic consumption, than to neighbouring states via pipelines and lastly to other states in liquid form (LNG – liquid natural gas) [Hashimoto – Ellass – Eller, 2004]. The reason for slow implementation was due to high oil prices in the first half of the 1980s and the lack of proper institutional framework for economic decision making. Since then, Qatar managed to become the largest LNG-exporter in the world, being responsible for one third of all LNG exports [Bridge – Bradshaw, 2017, 13].

With such a position, Qatar strengthened its role in the global economy considerably, nonetheless, gas production also creates a dependency on Iran as the aforementioned Northern Field is shared with the Islamic Republic. Moreover, the Iranian

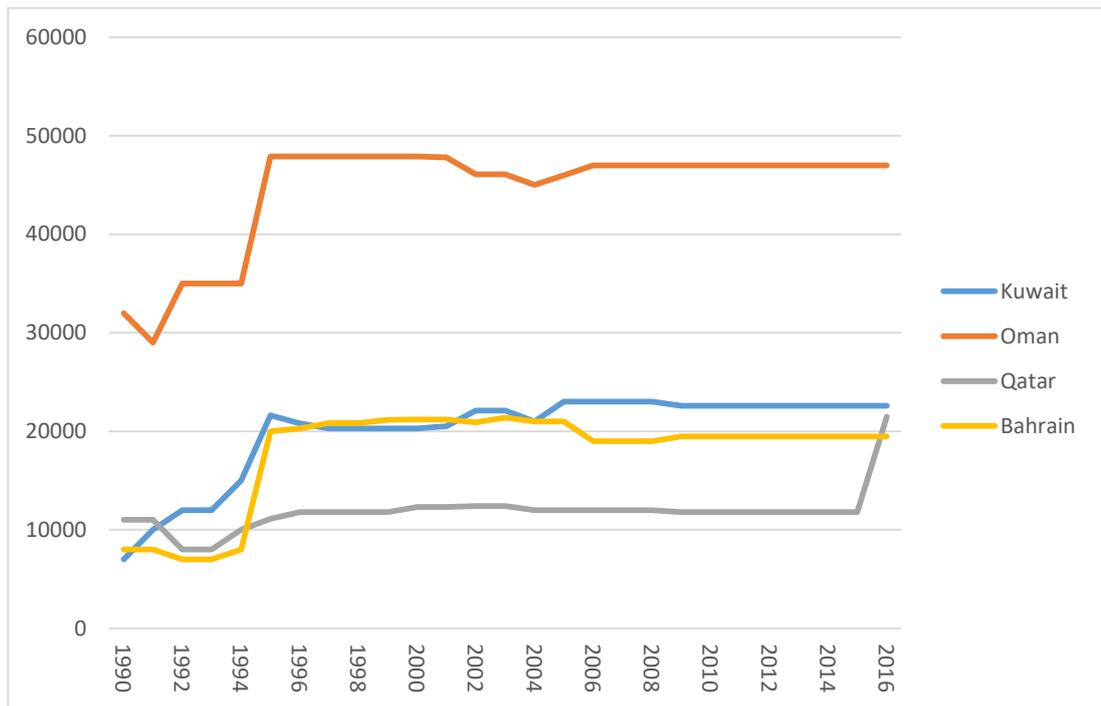
government sporadically accuses Qatar of stealing gas from its territories of the gas field (known as South Pars field) [Dargin, 2010], which creates a constant source of tension and interdependency in the bilateral relations (see Chapter 4).

Due to the large supply of natural gas, Qatar has no urge to diversify or to implement unnecessary or risky economic reforms in the short term [Hvidt, 2013, 38]. The current diversification plan is not innovative and includes basically the same elements as the others, with a special emphasis on tourism and, like in the case of Oman, human resource development. The establishment of the Qatar Foundation as a source of innovation can be seen from this perspective [Morokabati – Beavis – Fletcher, 2014].

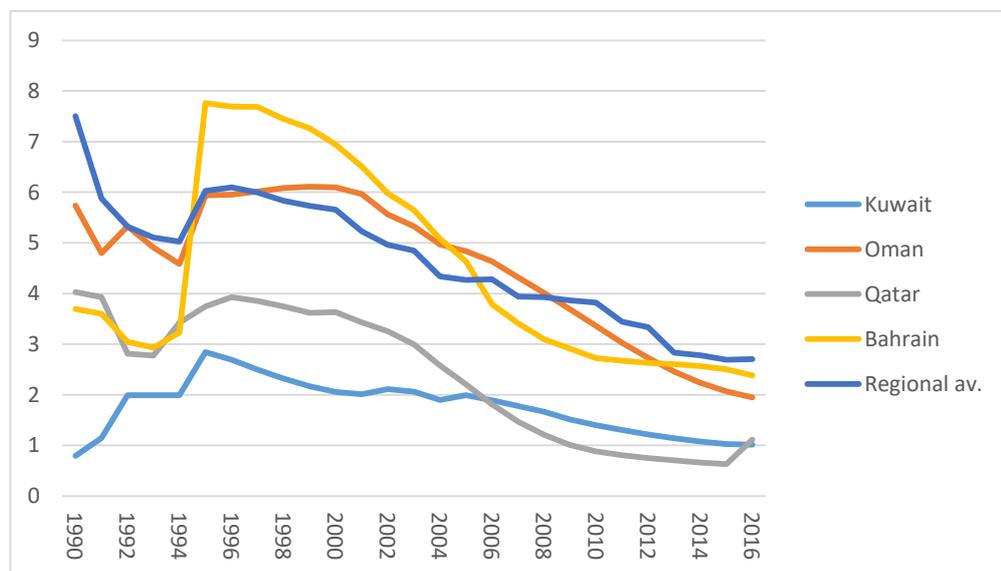
3.1.4. Military smallness

In modern history, neither small Gulf states managed to build up armed forces with 50 000 men (see Chart 32). Oman had disposal of the largest military capability in terms of personnel since World Bank data is available (1990), fluctuating between 29 000 and 47 900 between 1990 and 1994, since when the number stayed approximately at the same level. The military build-up is noticeable in all cases in the first half of the 1990s, which can be seen as a reaction to both the Iraqi-Kuwaiti war and the worsening security environment identified in the previous chapter. Since then, Kuwait and Bahrain consolidated their army size at around 20 000 men (with the former taking the second place after Oman since 2004), while Qatar had the smallest army until 2015 at around 10 000 men. In the last two years however, Qatar doubled the size of its armed forces and jumped up to above 20 000 personnel, overtaking Bahrain, as a reaction to the worsening relations with the GCC countries (see part 4.5.).

Comparing the size of the armed personnel to the size of the workforce (see Chart 33) shows that currently all small Gulf states are under the regional average, nonetheless only since the late 2000s. Before that, Kuwait and Oman had outperformed the mean value since 1995. According to this data, we can say that the small Gulf states have built small armies even in proportion to their small population size. This means that the human resource problem is perceived more severely in economic development, which is why the government does not try to allocate more people to work in the army.

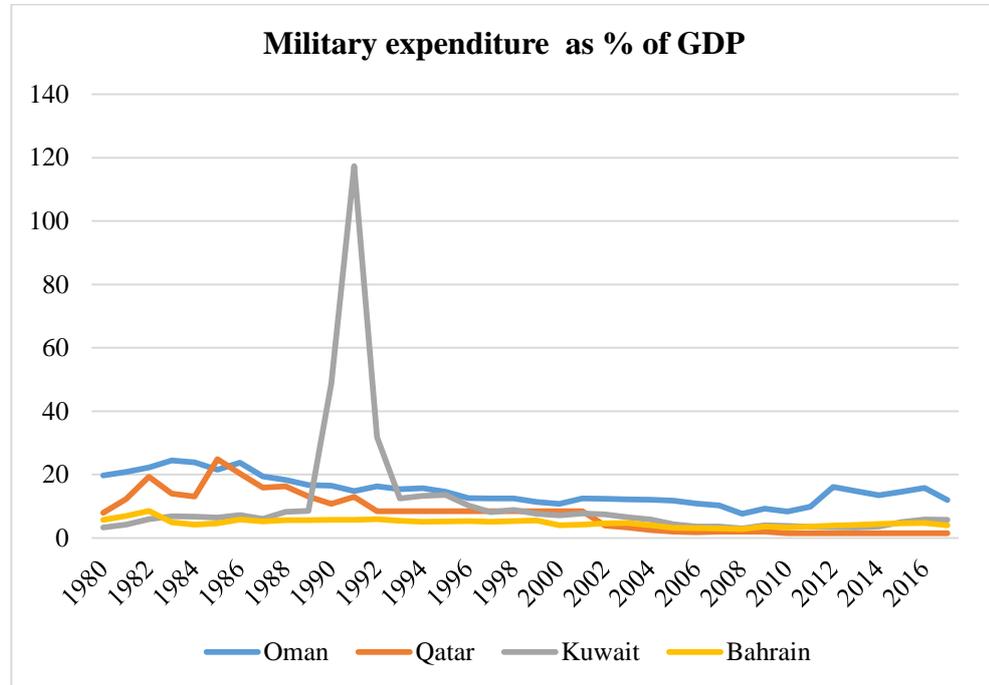
Chart 32: Armed personnel in the small Gulf states in absolute terms (1990-2017)

When it comes to military expenditures, we can see that in the last twenty years, all small Gulf states spent much on defence relative to their GDP (see Chart 34). Except for the three years following the Iraqi invasion and 1985, Oman has been producing the highest military expenditures, amounting to more than 10% of the national output. Generally speaking, the ratio of the defence budget has been shrinking among the small Gulf states, but this is more due to the rising economic output than to disarmament.

Chart 33: Armed personnel in proportion to the national workforce (1990-2016)

Weak military capacities engage in an interaction with geopolitical circumstances, systemic attributes and alliance policy as a compensational policy.

Chart 34: Military expenditures in ratio of GDP (1980-2016)



Systemic developments

As it was discussed in part 2.2.1. and 2.2.2., the Middle Eastern political system went through a profound change since the 1970s as a security architecture, a change which was driven by Gulf actors and effected them in return as well. While the regional system favoured interventions over traditional interstate conflicts, the Gulf sub-region witnessed three major wars of the second kind between 1980 and 2003, which severely altered their security calculations [Ehteshami, 2013, 195-208].

These systemic developments affected how one should identify the impacts of military smallness of the Gulf states in three major ways. First of all, the emergence of inter-state wars highlighted the importance of military strength. If the system had remained to be dominated by more subtle interventions by state actors in each others' domestic affairs instead of traditional armed conflicts, the importance of military smallness would have been diminished and resources could have been allocated to block outside interference (see parts 4.2. and 4.3.). But *“war has had a direct and deleterious effect on interstate relations in the subregion, and domestic political pressures, coupled with pressures from the extra-regional major powers, have meant that relations between*

these states have been highly securitised. The result has been the sustained militarization of the subregion”. [Ehteshami, 2013, 208].

Armed conflicts and instability in the neighbourhood caused a threat of spill-overs for the Gulf states. [Byman, 2011]. Let that be direct military attack (like in 1984, when a Kuwaiti tanker was attacked), terrorism (like the spread of the Al-Qaeda network in the 2000s in the Peninsula), refugees (after 2003 and 2011) or other aspects, the small Gulf states feared that the external environment might affect their politics and policies in undesirable ways. This motivation is observable in many cases.

Second, the dual threat of Iraq and Iran triggered an arms race in the Gulf, in which Saudi governmental decisions played the central role. In the wake of the Iraqi-Iranian war, Saudi military expenditures rose 164 percent by 1984 compared to their 1979 value and continued to increase exponentially [Ehteshami, 2013, 198]. In such circumstances, small Gulf states had to engage in armament to some extent, at least to achieve some form of relative deterrence.

Since the small Gulf states also lack significant weapon industry to meet the needs of the armament process, they rely on import in the sector. Realising their common interests and defence needs, Arab states – namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE – founded the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation in 1975 to build up their military industry and to tackle dependence on external exporters [Gaub – Stanely-Lockman, 2017, 20-21]. Due to different priorities and to the deteriorating relations between Egypt and the Gulf states in the late 1970s, the initiative emptied out and later in 1993, nobody but Egypt remained to be a member.

An interesting development in the Gulf recently is the successful strategy of the UAE to build up its defence and technology industrial base and to become a net arms exporter in the region [Gaub – Stanley-Lockman, 2017, 47-62] This intention is aimed at serving national defence as well as a diversification attempt. Although the initiative is yet to be matured, it can be seen as an opportunity and a threat for small Gulf states at the same time – the UAE can be a source of diversification of arms supplies and a move to lower the level of dependency on Western partners, but on the other hand the development of the Emirati defence industry discourages other states to build their own production capabilities (as the UAE is a more advanced competitor even by now).

Armament led to a classic security dilemma in the Gulf [Lawson, 2011, 51-56], the intensity of which rose decade by decade. Moreover, this race included the purchase of weapons which are more useful in offensive, not in the defence of territory. As a result, despite the huge military expenditures and weapon deals, the Gulf states arguably failed to become safer or relatively stronger vis-à-vis each other.

Third, the Gulf states were vanguards in the process of normative fragmentation in the 1980s and 1990s. The aforementioned developments made small Gulf states realise that ethnic and religious ties (or even tribal ties) will not prevent governments from attacking each other. The creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council can be seen as a result of the normative fragmentation process and a direct consequence of the perception of relative military smallness.

Individual geopolitical circumstances and strategic decisions

As it was discussed in the second Chapter, the Gulf region has traditionally been relatively weak compared to outside empires, therefore the region has served as a buffer zone between outside entities [Commins, 2014, 2]. The military weakness of the independent small Gulf states is not a new phenomenon, but fits the historical developments of the region.

States have limited military capacities in such geopolitical situation and could theoretically choose two paths to defend themselves. First, they can build up relative deterrence capabilities or rely on a stronger state in defence. The second option can be divided into two sub-option – to rely on a strong neighbour, either Iran or Saudi Arabia (either individually or collectively), or on an extra-regional force such as the United States or Russia. Historically, reliance on an outside force was the number one choice, which, as I mentioned previously, determined state formation as well. [Ulrichsen 2011, 16-17].

At first glance, it seems that all four states chose the first option and aligned with Saudi Arabia collectively through the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is true that in the early 1980s, security considerations were among the primary motivations behind the creation of the GCC [Martini et al, 2016, 6]. “*The formation of GCC*”, argues Reyadh Alasfoor [2007, 33], “*was direct response to the situation created by series of events in the region and around the world in the end of the 1970’s, these included, the emergence of Marxist state in Ethiopia, the downfall of the Shah’s regime in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, outbreak of Iran-Iraq war, and oil market developments*”.

Nonetheless, due to the historical tensions between the ruling families, the tradition of relying on external forces (e.g. Great Britain during the state-building process), and the painful experience of the Kuwaiti war (in which the GCC cooperation was not able to deter or protect one of its members), the small Gulf states started to rely on their bilateral security cooperation with the United States (see part 4.3.). These actions should not be seen as a multilateral common approach but rather parallel decisions made in the same direction. It is true that cooperating with the same partner can exacerbate cooperation (e.g. in the case of interoperability), but at the end of the day, all small Gulf states started to consider the U.S. as the guarantee of their security and not the GCC [Martini et al, 2016, 8-9].

Despite what theory suggests, it is the smaller Gulf states – especially Oman and Qatar – which reject complete security (and political) unity in the GCC, as they prefer to maintain their wider decision-making freedom [Martini et al, 2016, 16]. In many cases, these states are more concerned with the Saudi hegemony than other security matters [Martini et al, 2016, 41], especially Oman and Qatar, due to the fact that these two states are geopolitically not exposed to a third party (as Bahrain or Kuwait is).

The armed forces of the small Gulf states have rarely been deployed to actual combat. Even if they contribute to international coalitions or multilateral efforts, they usually play a supportive role [Davidson, 2012, 85].¹³¹ Among the Gulf states, only the UAE participated in the Afghani intervention of 2001 [Harb 2014], with Oman [Katzman, 2018b, 16] and Qatar [Katzman, 2018a, 13] offering logistical support. Omani facilities were also used in the Iraqi intervention until 2004 [Katzman, 2018b, 16]. In 2011, Qatar – alongside with the UAE – contributed to the Libyan intervention of the NATO under the jurisdiction of the Security Council Resolution 2011 with air and special forces [Dalton, 2014].

Recently, this tendency changed to some extent in two cases. First, all four states participated in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS [USDOS, 2018a]. Nonetheless, their involvement should not be overestimated – besides occasional bombing against fix low priority targets, their role was rather symbolic initially [Wehrey, 2014]. Later, they were more engaged in logistical support, counter-messaging and counter-terrorism efforts in

¹³¹ The contrast is really sharp with the UAE, which tried its forces in almost all regional armed conflicts since the 1970s [Davidson, 2012, 85-87].

their own countries [Boghardt, 2017]. Second, small Gulf states also took part in the Saudi-led coalition to intervene in Yemen in 2015, except for Oman [IISS, 2017, 396-397]. Qatar was also kicked out of the joint efforts in 2017, as a result of the boycott against the country [Middle East Eye, 2017].

Bahrain has the smallest military in the region. Due to the lack of military capacities, a compensatory policy was to rely on external forces for protection [Bahrain – Kinninmont, 2011, 32]. Besides membership in the GCC, security is achieved by the presence of the American 5th Fleet and the official status of a major non-NATO ally (MNNA) since 2002. While Bahrain has frequently participated in military campaigns recently, one could argue that the state does not have the ability to defend itself and is hugely dependent in many areas, for example to meet mobility requirements [IISS, 2017, 370]. Bahrain relies on Saudi Arabia in training and the development of armed forces [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 66] and also on the United States in weapon import. For example, the US was the only state from whom Bahrain bought any weapons between 1993 and 2004 [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 68].

Kuwait is also highly vulnerable, especially vis-à-vis Iraq. According to the official aim of the military, the armed forces should be able to withstand an external attack for 48-72 hours so that international forces can defend the country [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 89]. In defence policy, the emphasis has been put on developing the army and the air force, while the navy was only in the last place. The country also followed the path of getting under the American security umbrella in the 1990s, and of achieving an MNAA status in 2004. Contrary to other small Gulf states, Kuwait chose to purchase arms in large quantity not just from the United States, but from other partners alike (including European states and Russia) [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 90]. Since 1991, Kuwait was not able to fully rebuild its army, though military expenditures and arms imports rose significantly [ibid]. The National Guard of the country recently launched a development plan for 2015-2022 to review the structure of the armed forces, nonetheless it is yet to bear fruit [IISS, 2017, 387].

Oman has disposal of the most powerful armed forces among the small Gulf states [Cordesman – Rodhan, 2007, 125]. Omani defence policy relied more on human resource development and not necessarily on modernising the equipment. A special emphasis has been given to protecting the country from smaller incursions from Yemen

and other neighbouring territories, but also on defending the Strait of Hormuz – even if the Omani naval forces are not strong enough to withstand Iranian aggression on the sea [ibid].

Oman relies the most on British connections, but cooperation with the United States also plays an important part in modernising its army. The country was especially important for London due to the Royal Air Force facilities on the Omani Masirrah Island [Takriti, 2013, 157]. Nonetheless, when a rebellion broke out in the Dhofar region in the 1950s, the British government was not satisfied with the way in which Sultan Said tackled the issue, which is why in 1970 British forces ousted him and put Sultan Qaboos in place, who is still the ruler of the country. London helped him out to organize power and crack down on the armed opposition in Dhofar [Gardner, 2015].¹³² Therefore the British connection was strong from the beginning.

Qatar is not much more self-reliant in defence than Bahrain, with the second smallest military in the region [Tok – Alkhater – Pal, 2016, 2]. According to leaked diplomatic cables, the Qatari military considers both Iran and Saudi Arabia as threats to national security [Kamrava, 2014, 163], so the general aim of defence policy is to develop a solid border guard on the Saudi-Qatari borders and to maintain some form of deterrence vis-à-vis Iran [Cordesman – Rodham, 2007, 145]. That is why the Qatari regime's choice was to rely on American protection. Besides security agreements and army deals, this practically means institutionalising American military presence in the Qatari peninsula. There are two bases on Qatari soil – the al-Udeid and the al-Sayliha – which are used by the American army (both of which were installed during the reign of Hamad emir), as well as the regional forward headquarters and air operation centre of the US Central Command [IIS, 2018, 322]. Due to the geopolitical value of these installations, there is an effective interdependence between Qatar and the United States, which is basically a compensatory policy by Qatar.

In the 21st century, the Qatari regime started to develop the army to a greater extent. Although official data is not available, academic estimates suggest that Qatar was the third largest importer of defence items between 2007 and 2016 (behind India and Saudi Arabia) [IISS, 2018, 322]. The problem for the Qatari defence policy is not the

¹³² Nonetheless, British influence should not be over-emphasized in the early period of Sultan Qaboos, as many pieces of evidence indicate that the Omani government had an independent strategy and was able to say no to London in domestic and foreign affairs as well [Gardner, 2015].

ability to buy equipment but rather man it up and sustain the necessary human capital to reach their full operation capability [IIS, 2018, 323].

Despite the deep cooperation with the United States, Qatar does not engage in coalition training as frequently as its neighbours and did not build strong connection with foreign training academies or military advisers [IISS, 2018, 323].

Alliance policy as a compensational policy

As in the case of the demographic smallness, military smallness also interacted with a compensatory policy to tackle smallness and caused additional problems – namely the active alliance policy with the United States (and other actors). Engaging in security cooperation with regional and global powers led to severe consequences, which were summarized by Fred H. Lawson [2011, 56-70] in three non-traditional security dilemmas:

- *The alliance dilemma* refers to the mechanism in which the actions of members of a political or security alliance reinforce the extent of belligerent or accommodative approaches of each other towards a commonly perceived adversary. This practically means that if a smaller state's security is at least partially dependent on a bigger ally, than that state will mirror the behaviour of the ally vis-à-vis a third, hostile party in order to prove its own value or to act preemptively in case of a major confrontation or reconciliation with the third, hostile party. For example in the 2000s, the smaller Gulf states followed the steps taken by Saudi Arabia to reach a rapprochement with Iran, but as the Saudi-Iranian relations changed, they altered their course as well in a demonstrative manner. This phenomenon questions the rational nature of interstate relations.
- *The dilemma between external defence and internal stability* refers to the paradox nature of building relations with the United States specifically. While the U.S. can protect small Gulf states from an external, conventional threat, cooperating with Washington could undermine regime stability as the societies did not welcome American troops on their soil. This dilemma would not exist if the threat of conventional wars had not grown since the 1980s.
- *the dilemma between outside patronage and regional insularity* refers to the contradictory desires of being protected by external forces and of remaining independent. Since small Gulf states make such cooperation with stronger forces, they lost some part of autonomy by engaging in an alliance with bigger powers.

A possible solution for the dilemma could be to balance great powers in the region – a strategy which is recently becoming more and more visible – nonetheless, it risks the possibility of the Gulf turning into, once again, a buffer zone of greater powers.

These security dilemmas have shaped foreign and security policy of the small Gulf states in depth, a process to be described in detail in part 4.3.

In conclusion, I wanted to determine the absolute size of the four states regarding the four GARs through the interaction of territorial, demographic, economic and military smallness with other variables and each other. A summary of such variables and interactions is outlined in Chart 35. Altogether, we can say that in the framework of absolute size, all four Gulf state are small in terms of territory, population and military, as the governments tried to introduce compensatory policies to tackle disadvantages in these fields. When it comes to economic capabilities, the small Gulf states should not be considered small in the absolute sense. Governments in this regard conducted compensatory policies only in relation with the huge hydrocarbon capacities and by tackling their relative, and not absolute smallness by deepening interdependences and through active investment policies. Chart 35 also suggests that demographic and military smallness is the most pressing for the small Gulf states as there are the two dimensions which interact with the most variables, causing structural dependencies.

Chart 35: The interaction of variables determining the absolute size of the four Gulf states

	Territorial smallness	Demographic smallness	Economic smallness	Military smallness
Climatic environment	Lack of arable lands, inability to self-sustainability, overdue state building process			

	(except for the case of Oman)			
Geopolitical situation	Vulnerability towards KSA (Qatar, Kuwait), Iran (Bahrain, Kuwait), Iraq (Kuwait) and Yemen (Oman)			Exposure to Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia
Territorial smallness		High population density and high level of urbanization		
Imbalance in the labour market		Need to import labour		
Importing labour (compensatory policy)		Ethnocracy, interdependence, feeling of cultural invasion		
Social heterogeneity		Identity management, nation-building Domestic institutions		
Huge hydrocarbon resources			Rentierism	Lacking ability of

				relative deterrence
Demographic smallness			Fiscal leverage	
Systemic developments				Need to build up traditional defence capabilities
Alliance- policy (compensatory policy)				Alliance dilemmas

3.2. *Perceptual size*

Analysing identity in the small Gulf states and the Gulf region in general is a very complicated task due to the lack of profound studies, the closed nature of the political system, the non-existent freedom of the media and expression, and so on. Therefore one should rely on approximating measures to define the role of smallness in the national and/or state identity in the four small Gulf states. After a quick theoretical introduction, I will try to use available and reliable surveys to see what we can know about the role of smallness in the social identity (that is the identity of the society), after which I will turn to analysing official speech acts to see whether size plays an important role in state identity (that is the identity of the state as an institution).

One can easily make the hypothesis that small Gulf states easily perceive themselves small, especially due to two reasons – an internal and an external one. First of all, internally, the strictly interpreted nature of the “nation” and the policy of recruiting migrant workers from abroad (see the previous part) led to the situation in which the national community is a minority in one’s own homeland, which is definitely playing a role in the self-perception of the societies [Bacik, 2008, 104]. Analysing the case of Qatar,

Justin Gengler [2012, 71] describes this phenomenon as the “*cultural invasion*”, which incorporates all the social fears about the national culture being exposed to foreign and global tendencies. As John Fahy [2018, 4] points out, this feeling is closely connected to modernization, development, and economic growth itself:

“This [the cultural invasion] presents the state with a dilemma; how can Qatar modernize as quickly as possible without compromising its cultural identity, traditions and values? How can it ensure that Qataris do not feel like an embattled minority in their own country? (...) Qataris’ anxiety about unrelenting immigration, coupled with fears of its increasingly Western orientation, has become a latent subtheme in Qatar’s rapid modernization”.

Anh Nga Longva [2013, 122] observes the same phenomenon in the case of Kuwait: “*As minority in their own country, Kuwaitis live with the feeling of being permanently under siege. It is not that they fear the competition of foreigners in business, political power or social prestige. They know very well that, given the existing legislation, expatriates cannot compete with them on these counts. What they worry about can be summed up under the vague term ‘cultural integrity’*”.

Fahy calls the connection between economic growth and cultural invasion “*the dilemma of development*”, which is at the heart of the concept of perceptual size. The government of the small Gulf states chose modernization and economic growth (economic size) even if it led to opening up to globalization and massive immigration. On the other hand, the societies in the Gulf feel their minority status (demographic size) and identify economic growth as a challenge to the integrity of the society.

Second, externally, the smaller Gulf states are squeezed between three large states, which has always meant a strategic challenge for them. Geopolitics sometimes reinforce social threat perceptions of being small, like in the case of Bahrain and Kuwait. Due to its island statehood, Bahrain developed a relatively independent national identity from other GCC states [Kinninmont, 2011, 31]. The island was previously held by many empires, including the Portuguese, the Omani and the Persian one; while the formers did not affect national identity to a large extent, the latter did; especially since “*Iranian*

politicians still sporadically express nostalgia for Bahrain's former role as Iran's 'fourteenth province' [Kinninmont, 2011, 32].

Accompanied by smallness, these verbal intimidations constitute a basis for a threat perception for Bahrainis, which is very similar to that of Kuwait vis-à-vis Iraq.¹³³ Both states have constructed their nationality laws (introduced in 1962 and 1959 respectively) in order to strictly separate their population from their larger neighbours [Beaugrand, 2016, 3-7]. It is due to this security reason (deriving from the transnational nature of the Gulf society) that the citizenship rules in almost all Gulf states are generally very restrictive and do not favour neutralization in order to protect the Arab Sunni identity as well as the tribal balance of power [ibid].

The very small size of the Qatari nation (not more than 300 000) and the geopolitical exposure to Saudi Arabia can easily cause a sense of smallness in the case of Qatar as well as a big challenge for the Qatari nation to differentiate itself from the neighbouring national communities of Bahrain, the UAE, Kuwait or, especially, Saudi Arabia, which was always seen as an “expansionist force” in the region [Peterson, 2011, 26]. The primary tool to be independent from other, larger communities has always been alliance-making and foreign policy by the Thani regime (e.g. cooperation with the British empire [Fromher, 2012, 45-46]), even during the state-building process. This is where the foundation of the cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the State of Qatar lies. Due to the fact that the founders of the country – the Thani family and others connected to it – were staunch followers of Wahabism¹³⁴, which is “*indelibly linked to Saudi Arabia*”, the perception of Saudi interference in cultural affairs was there from the first day of institution-building. This explains why the Qatari state gave more room to the teachers and leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood network in the country and also utilised them in state-building, a group which is free from Saudi state influence [Roberts, 2013].¹³⁵

¹³³ Kinninmont [2011, 32] argues that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is connected to the Bahraini fears of a similar action from the part of Iran, since both actions were/would be accompanied by historical claims.

¹³⁴ It was Jasim Al Thani in 1902 who officially became Wahabi [Fromherz, 2012, 62], and others followed.

¹³⁵ Besides active alliance policy, recently nation branding became an empathetic tool in keeping Qatar out of the direct influence of Saudi Arabia [Kamrava, 2014], an effort which is maybe the most visible in terms of sports diplomacy [Silva, 2014].

While the unique nature of the Omani identity made it easier for the state to limit external societal dangers, it was always suspicious of Saudi interventions in its domestic affairs. This also contributes to the possibility of the emergence of smallness in the national identity, although to a lesser extent than in the previous cases.

These two developments suggest that smallness is present in the identity of small Gulf states. Proving this hypothesis, nonetheless, is more difficult in terms of both social and state identity.

3.2.1. Surveys and polls – social identity and normative homogeneity

Surveys and polls are not the best source of information regarding the Gulf or Middle Eastern societies in general [Pollock 2008; Gengler, 2017]. Firstly, in countries where the basic notions of the freedom of expression and of media are severely limited, the trust between the questioner and the respondent might not be strong enough to conduct honest communication. Secondly, as a result, there are no comprehensive data available which would enable meaningful comparative and time series analysis in my subject. Thirdly, almost all of the available polls are not representative, questioning their adaptability. In the Gulf countries, the huge refusal rates as well as the inability to reach the female population is a special problem [Pollock, 2008, 9].

Nonetheless, there are some useful surveys which bear value in investigating the role of smallness in the social identity of the Gulf societies. I will cite those three reliable pieces of research which aimed at measuring social cohesion and state loyalty¹³⁶ and also any reference to smallness and weakness vis-à-vis external forces or larger states.

*Arab Barometer*¹³⁷

The Arab Barometer conducted comparative analysis of altogether fourteen Middle Eastern countries in four waves (2007, 2011, 2013, 2016). Bahrain was involved in the first wave while Kuwait was in the third one (Oman and Qatar were excluded). The

¹³⁶ I included this point into the investigation due to two reasons – first, theories overviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that smaller societies are more unified due to the threats posed by the external environment, and second, the normative trends identified in Chapter 2 showed the importance of political interference in each other's affairs which can be prevented by social unity.

¹³⁷ Available at Arab Barometer, 2018.

questions were different in the two cases, so comparison cannot be done with satisfactory methodological quality, nonetheless the data can be used for individual analysis.

In the case of Bahrain, three observations can be made regarding the data. First of all, national identity building was not decisively successful. Less than one third (31.5%) identified as Bahraini “above all”, while 48.3% called him/herself Muslim. 41.8% said that family and/or tribe is the most important social and geographical affiliation in the first place, compared to 29.2% who picked the country.¹³⁸

Second, loyalty to the government was questionable. 58.4% of the respondents “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the statement that “people should always support the decisions of the government even if they disagree with these decisions” (compared to 34.7% who agreed or strongly agreed). 50.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that government officials seriously consider citizens’ opinions, with only 39.5% agreeing.

Thirdly, smallness and foreign interference was not the primary fear of the Bahraini society. There was one question in the form which actually referred to the lacking financial resources and capabilities (i.e. economic smallness) as a possible reason for the inability of the government to provide all services to the people, but only 2.3% chose this possibility, compared to the 18.2% who voted for corruption and 16.8% who simply stated that the government does not care. The Bahraini society was divided in evaluating the cultural exposure to the West – 41% agreed to some extent that it is harmful, while 48% disagreed. Even talking about the Arab world in general, only 12.9% of respondents agreed that only external/international factors caused the lack of development compared to other regions in the world, while 33.6% marked internal/domestic factors and 41% both.

All these results suggest that in the early 21st century, the domestic tensions were more important for the Bahraini society than external developments of dangers. This contradicts theoretical expectations for the society of small states to concentrate on threats coming from the international level.

Kuwait was involved in the Arab Barometer survey only in 2013, and the responses were quite different from those coming from Bahrain. 57% of the respondents

¹³⁸ Nonetheless, in the second place, the relative majority (32%) picked Bahrain.

agreed that citizens should support the government's decision even if they disagree with them with 41% disagreed or strongly disagreed – a ratio which is almost the exact opposite of the Bahraini numbers. On the other hand, 73% agreed to a great or some extent that foreign interference is an obstacle in the country's development, with only 20.5 disagreeing. Another poll shows that Kuwaitis are more concerned with international interference, with almost one third (29.8%) of the respondents agreeing that external forces are the primary reasons for the lack of development in the Arab World, compared to 21% who blamed internal factors and 44.44% who thought that both played an important role. Despite the general positive feelings about the United States' role in the country's development, the relative majority (28.4%) answered that the US should not interfere in the region, and should not play any substantive role. In the interpretation of these data, it should be mentioned nonetheless that this survey was conducted after the "Arab Spring", which might have caused more suspicion regarding global powers in the region.

Religious tensions were not particularly strong in Kuwait when the poll was made. The respondents from Kuwait were overwhelmingly open to religious freedom as 89.2% strongly or somewhat agreed that Shias and Christians have the right to practice their religion freely. 48% agreed that the relationship between Christians and Muslims is brotherly, nonetheless 15.8% said it was strained due to foreign conspiracy. Unfortunately, questions regarding identity and the role of tribes were not asked in the survey.

*World Value Survey (2010-2014)*¹³⁹

The Sixth Wave of the World Value Survey research, which was conducted between 2010 and 2014, included the investigation of Kuwait and Qatar. Since most of the questions were the same, one can compare some of the results in a stricter manner.

When it comes to national identity, data indicates a stronger Qatari identity than a Kuwaiti one among the participants.¹⁴⁰ While 98.3% of responders said they are "very proud" (and 1.4% was "quite proud") of being Qatari, the same number is only 75.7% for Kuwaitis. Even if we add the 15.4% who are quite proud, the ratio is still lower than in

¹³⁹ Available at WVS, 2018.

¹⁴⁰ Therefore it was not only the Gulf rift erupted in 2017 which strengthened Qatari national identity (see part 4.5.).

the previous case. Moreover, 92.4% of Qataris strongly agreed that they see themselves as a part of the Qatari nation (with 7.6% simply agreeing) compared to only the 58.1% of Kuwaitis (and 28.9% respectively). Interestingly enough, the number is almost the same in the case of Kuwait when asked about feeling part of the GCC (52.6% and 29.5%).¹⁴¹ 97.8% of Qataris said that they were willing to fight for their country compared to 74.7% of Kuwaitis, while the ratio of those who said no was 1.9% and 17% respectively (!).

On the other hand, stronger national identity fits in with seeing oneself as a “world citizen” in the case of Qatar. 91.2% agreed to some extent that they see themselves as one, while in the Kuwaiti case, the same ratio was only 68%. This suggests that the Kuwaiti identity is more inward-looking, concentrating on sub-national identifications.

When it comes to social fears, it is also striking that the Qatari society was more afraid of armed attacks. 85.5% percent of Qataris said that they worry about a war involving the country “very much” or “a great deal”, while the same number is only 69.1% for Kuwaitis. The same ratio for a terrorist attack in the country is 82.5% and 62.5%.

Wilson Center’s Looking at Iran Survey (2012)

Concentrating on the Iranian threat perception in the GCC and other Middle Eastern countries, the Wilson Center’s Looking at Iran Survey bears much value for understanding how the small Gulf states’ see themselves and their neighbourhood, especially since all four states were included in the investigation.

The research quantified the social attitude towards regional (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt), global (US, UK, Russia, China, France) states and international organizations (United Nations and the Arab League). The difference between those who have a favourable view on the given actor and those who have an unfavourable view is represented in Chart 36. Positive value suggests that the majority of the respondents had a positive view on the given actor.

¹⁴¹ This question was not asked in the interviews with the Qataris.

Chart 36: The difference between those who have a favourable view on the given actor and those who have an unfavourable view (percentage point)¹⁴²

	Kuwait	Bahrain	Qatar	Oman
Iran	6	-14	-63	-25
Saudi Arabia	49	-20	36	35
Egypt	31	30	12	42
Turkey	29	3	1	38
United States	0	-33	29	-17
Russia	-1	-9	8	-6
China	-29	-7	-6	-16
France	-3	-50	-30	-27
United Kingdom	-3	-36	-15	-26
The Arab League	32	-29	30	-12
United Nations	29	-27	48	-34

Aggregate data suggest that the perception of the Bahraini and Omani society is closer to each other, as well as that of the Kuwaiti and the Qatari society.¹⁴³ The former two consider almost every actor unfavourably except for Egypt and Turkey – two states which do not have a substantive role in the Gulf vis-à-vis other actors enlisted in the survey. The only major difference between the Bahraini and the Omani society's perception is about Saudi Arabia, which is viewed more positively in the Sultanate. On the other hand, Kuwait and Qatar differs mainly in the case of the United States (which is seen by Qatar in a much better light), of Russia (on which the Kuwaiti society is divided) and emphatically on Egypt and Turkey.

Nonetheless, data shows that the Bahraini and Kuwaiti, but even the Omani society is divided based on religious affiliation (see Chart 37).¹⁴⁴ Iran and the Arab League divides all three societies, but Bahrain the most extremely. The Sunni and Shia community of the island state has radically different views of Saudi Arabia as well, nonetheless it is interesting to see that even the Sunni Bahrainis do not have an overwhelmingly positive view on the Kingdom compared to Kuwaiti or Omani Sunnis. Another important fact is that the United States is not as divisive as it could be expected

¹⁴² From Wilson Center, 2012, 1-2.

¹⁴³ This phenomenon is probably due to the cultural hegemony of Sunniism in the former two societies.

¹⁴⁴ Due to the small size of the Qatari Shia community, they were not included in the investigation.

– the most important feature in this regard is that the Kuwaiti society has more favourable views on Washington than other societies, presumably due to the American actions in the 1990-1991 war. A third important lesson from these data is that the major differences in the Omani society are more between the Ibadi and the Sunni or the Shia community, and not between the Sunni and the Shia.

Chart 37: The perception of Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League and the United States in national and sectarian communities

		Kuwaiti Sunni	Kuwaiti Shia	Bahraini Sunni	Bahraini Shia	Omani Sunni	Omani Shia	Omani Ibadi
Iran	<i>Fav.</i>	32	72	4	76	6	25	47
	<i>Unfav.</i>	63	21	94	23	89	70	39
Saudi Arabia	<i>Fav.</i>	75	67	55	14	69	62	63
	<i>Unfav.</i>	21	27	43	71	31	35	29
The Arab League	<i>Fav.</i>	32	72	4	76	49	51	32
	<i>Unfav.</i>	63	21	94	23	45	41	56
United States	<i>Fav.</i>	53	43	29	31	43	39	34
	<i>Unfav.</i>	45	54	62	64	49	55	57

The report shows serious division in the perception of Iranian activity in specific regions [Wilson Center, 2012, 15]. 82% of Bahraini Shia and 68% of Kuwaiti Shia think that Iran plays a positive role in Iraq, while the same data for the Sunni community is 3% and 15% respectively. When it comes to the Iranian role in the Arabian peninsula, the difference is a little bit smaller (68% and 2% for Bahraini Shias and Sunnis and 69% and 10% for Kuwaiti Shias and Sunnis), but still huge. In contrast, the majority of each community is concerned by rising sectarianism to a different extent – the Bahraini Shia (60%) and the Omani Ibadi (62%) less and the Bahraini Sunni (90%) the more.

When it comes to the nuclear program of Iran, the majority of all religious-national communities agreed that it makes the region less secure [Wilson Center, 2012, 43]. On the other hand, only the minority of all analysed communities thought that in the case of the continuation of the nuclear program, military action should be authorized against the Persian Republic, except for two groups [ibid 48] – two-thirds of Bahraini Sunnis believed that armed response would be necessary, while Omani Sunnis were almost completely divided on the issue (with 46% supporting and 45% opposing military action). These data show again that smallness does not necessary make a society more

peaceful, and internal coherence is more important in this regard. On the other hand, this support shrinks to approximately 20-25% if the international legal background is missing [ibid 52].

An interesting question in the investigation referred to as perceived superiority of the respondent's national culture over the Iranian culture. Though this phrasing cannot be translated into perceptual size, it is connected to the notion. Interestingly enough, the majority of all small Gulf states said that their culture is superior to the Iranian. There are only two religious-national communities whose absolute majority does not share this view: the Bahraini Shia and the Omani Ibadi community (see Chart 38).

Chart 38: Opinion on the national culture being equal, superior or inferior to the Iranian culture¹⁴⁵

	Kuwait		Bahrain		Oman			Qatar
	Sunni	Shia	Sunni	Shia	Sunni	Shia	Ibadi	Sunni
Equal	14	17	11	26	11	10	27	16
Superior	80	65	80	30	80	76	47	69
Inferior	1	11	4	30	6	11	17	12

While the cited polls were not able to give a complete picture about the perception of the small Gulf states' of themselves and of their environment, a few conclusions can be made. Firstly, results suggest that the attitudes of the Gulf societies are shaped by internal division to a greater extent than by their size. This idea helps to interpret the narrow definition of nation identified in the previous sub-chapter. Secondly, based on these data, one can draw a picture about the relative homogeneity of the four societies. Qatar has the most cohesive society, followed by Kuwait, while the biggest internal divides are seen in the case of Oman and Bahrain. In the former one, the main difference is between the Ibadi community and the other two religious communities – in other words, the historical divide between the inner Omani tribes and the rest of the society still exists. In the case of Bahrain, the Sunni-Shia division is the most crucial one. Nonetheless, it has to be said again that these data are inconclusive and can only support or question statements drawn from other sources.

3.2.3. The role of smallness in self-perception – behaviour in the Security Council

¹⁴⁵ Wilsion Institute, 2012, 34.

The primary tool for the investigation of the self-perception of the leaders of the state (and the role of smallness in it) is discourse analysis of official strategies, documents and speeches. Nonetheless, due to the unequal political and bureaucratic culture in the Gulf states, I was not able to make a database which would allow a thorough comparative analysis. In the case of Qatar, almost all official strategies are available in written form, nonetheless this cannot be said for Oman or Kuwait, where even the official development strategies are hard to find. Royal speeches could also form a basis for comparison, nonetheless these official texts are randomly available either in English and Arabic. In the case of Sultan Qaboos of Oman, for example, all speeches delivered on the national day celebrations are available between 1970 and 2000 in Arabic [Sultan Qaboos, 2018], a collection which is unique in the region. The Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs also have a set of royal speeches for the period between 2010 and 2018 in Arabic [BMFA, 2018a] and for the period 2010 and 2014 in English [BMFA, 2018b], but these are not exhaustive lists.

For the sake of comparison, I turned to the speeches delivered in the United National Security Council (UNSC) by the official representation of the four small Gulf states for two reasons. First, the verbal communication in the sessions of the UNSC are completely available and researchable in the official languages of the United Nations, all four states participated in its work, therefore the database is thorough and large enough for comparison. Second, speeches in the UNSC in theory reflect how states perceive themselves and the international system as well. It is true that such verbal actions are aimed at the external environment and not the population, nonetheless it can be assumed that what the official representatives proclaim in these speeches is within the realm of their identity and does not contradict it.

Based on the framework of Abdelal et al in .1.2.3., I analysed the speeches delivered in the UNSC to form conclusions on the content of the state identity.¹⁴⁶ I was interested in two aspects: relational comparisons and cognitive models. In other words, I tried to investigate whether the representatives of the four small Gulf states call themselves small or large, and what consequence they draw from smallness and largeness. This tells us whether size plays a role in the state identity or not.

¹⁴⁶ UNSC speeches are not good sources to measure the level of contestation of such identities, since they reflect only the official discourse.

In order to fully understand how small Gulf states perceive the importance of size, I also investigated whether they frame other questions concerning international peace and stability in the context of differences in material resources and size.¹⁴⁷ This helped me to understand if they consider state size as an important factor which shapes international relations or not.

Chart 39: The basic data on the behaviour of the small Gulf states in the Security Council¹⁴⁸

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar
Year of non-permanent membership	1998-1999	1978-1979	1994-1995	2006-2007
Number of indexed speeches in the Security Council	126	189	83	255
Percentage of speeches delivered during membership	48.4%	25.9%	69.9%	45.5%

As it is observable on Chart 39, Qatar spoke up the most times in the UNSC with 255 speeches and Oman the fewest times at 83 occasions. All four countries have been a non-permanent member in the Security Council for one period only,¹⁴⁹ and their activities in other periods varied significantly. Oman barely delivered speeches in the UNSC when it

¹⁴⁷ To facilitate the research, I used the phrases “small”, “tiny”, “big”, “large”, “rich”, “poor”, “resources”, “scarcity”, “lacking”, “size”, “power”, “powerful” as well as their grammatical variants

¹⁴⁸ Sources for the chart are UNSC, 2018 and UNBISNET, 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Kuwait is a non-permanent member again for 2018-2019, but speeches delivered in this period are not yet available.

was not a member, while Kuwait was quite active outside of this period, mostly due to the Iraqi invasion.

Smallness plays the clearest role in the self-identification of Kuwait, as the representatives of the Emirate called the country small several times. In a debate about the situation in Lebanon, the permanent representative criticised the resolution draft “*as the representative of a small country*” [UNSC, 1978, 5]. Referring to the year 1908, he also proclaimed that Kuwaitis “*were in the depths of poverty. Deprivation was our lot. (...) We were poor*” [UNSC, 1979, 4]. Discussing the Iraqi-Irani war in 1984, a Kuwaiti diplomat said that his state and its neighbours turned to the Security Council “*not out of weakness or fear, but rather out of faith in the need to settle international disputes in accordance with the principles embodied in the Charter*”; nonetheless, he added that these are the principles which “*will obviate the resort to force, with all its devastating effects on national construction, which we developing nations need so badly*” [UNSC, 1984a, 4].¹⁵⁰

During the discussion of the attack of Iraq in 1990, Kuwait referred to itself as a small state many times, framing the attack of Saddam Hussein in the context of a large power attacking a weak one, and thus proclaiming the responsibility of the United Nations and the international community to defend the weak. In the first debate about the Iraqi aggression in which Kuwait participated [UNSC, 1990a, 3-10], Ambassador Abulhassan discussed that

“The Council’s quick response is in keeping with the principle of justice and righteousness, the Council is responding to the provisions of the Charter, whose authors wanted it to provide security not only to big nations, but – primarily – to small nations. (...) Kuwait, a small country, draws its strength and support in international legitimacy, represented by the Security Council and its role in implementing the provisions of the Charter. This is a test for the responsibility of the Council vis-à-vis peace and security in that vital area of the world and towards all small nations that are defenceless and helpless.”

¹⁵⁰ Actually, the diplomat liked this thought so much that he repeated it at another discussion in the same year, citing himself word by word [UNSC, 1984c, 14].

Kuwaiti diplomats repeated this notion several times. On the next meeting, Ambassador Abulhasan declared that after the Iraqi attack, *“no small nation anywhere in the world can feel safe or immune from such aggression”* [UNSC, 1990b, 6], nonetheless Resolution 660 *“was an expression of the fact that the Council defends international peace and security, represents the conscience of the world and indeed protects small nations”* [UNSC, 1990b, 4-5]. On another meeting, he said that *“Kuwait, a small and peaceful country does to serve its citizens, to provide them with a welfare system and to make optimal use of Kuwait’s God-given natural resources* [UNSC, 1990c, 5]. Sheikh Al Sabah Al-Hamed al-Jaber Al Sabah, the minister of foreign affairs of Kuwait cited the Secretary-General of the UN, Javier Peres du Cuellar with agreement that the due to the Iraqi invasion, *“an injustice has been done to a small country that has been one of the states most attached to the United Nations and its objectives”* [UNSC, 1990d, 83].

The narrative remained after the intervention of the international coalition in Kuwait. According to these quotes, the Kuwaiti state learnt from the case that the small states could rely on the UN and the institution strengthens their security. *“It is true that Kuwait is a small country, both in size and population”*, said Minister Al Sabah in another meeting, *“but thanks to the massive and overwhelming international support which is being extended to us on the basis that justice is a true shield of peace, we find that Kuwait is indeed a Power that carries significant weight”* [UNSC, 1990f, 13]. As a result of the acts of the UN, *“people may rest assured that the stronger will not prey on the weaker”* [UNSC, 1990f, 11]. The international community *“proved that the Organization, with its Security Council, is an effective instrument for collective security and the maintenance of world peace and security, and that all states, large or small, can depend on the security guarantees afforded by the Charter (...) We are truly witnessing a new dawn in the world that emanates from international legitimacy, and it will become the shield of all states, large and small”* [UNSC, 1991, 11-12]. *“The members of the Council”*, said the Kuwaiti ambassador in 1994, *“have just demonstrated a very strong stand on the side of right and strong determination to uphold the law. These expressions assure every small State that it is safe from the law of the jungle and make every small State much more attached to the United Nations. To all members here, my friends, we express our gratitude for the devotion to peace and security and our thanks for the concern they have shown over Kuwait as a country and a people”* [UNSC, 1994b, 12].

After the 1990-1991 war, Kuwaiti representatives did not call their country small, but the framing of world events in the binary setting of small and large, weak or small states occasionally returned. Talking about a possible American intervention in Iraq, the Kuwaiti ambassador stood up for multilateral action. *“This should be done only within the framework of the United Nations system, because unilateral actions taken as a result of being in a position of power could prove, down the road, as ineffective as a reluctance to pitch in due to weakness* [UNSC, 2002b, 10]. In a debate about climate change, Ambassador Alotaibi claimed that *“statistics and reality confirm that developing countries — particularly the least developed countries, African countries, landlocked countries and the small island developing States — are most harmed by the negative effects of climate change. The Arab States stress that the potential consequences of climate change will have adverse effects on the Arab region, especially in arid and semi-arid areas”* [UNSC, 2011, 20]. Moreover, in a debate about the reform of the Security Council, the Kuwaiti representative proclaimed that the UN *“must take into account the representation of small states, which account for more than half of the membership of United Nations”* [UNSC, 2015, 97]. While these quotes are not direct evidences of the presence of smallness, they imply that the logic of size continued to influence Kuwaiti decision makers in the long term.

In a sharp contrast, the other three small Gulf states have not called themselves small or used adjectives related to size or resources. Nonetheless, their self-narratives were so meaningful and different that we can draw relevant conclusions regarding their self-perception.

Qatar did not call itself small in any debates, which indicates that smallness does not constitute a part of the identity of the Qatari state. During a debate in 2009 about the reform of the Security Council, several ambassadors (including the Australian, Costa Rican, Indian, Uruguayan, Maltese, Singaporean, German and Pakistani ones) stood up for the broader inclusion of small states in multilateral decision-making – the Qatari was not one of them, despite his presence and lengthy intervention [UNSC, 2010, 25-26].

Another interesting observation is that diplomats from Qatar barely framed international events in the dichotomy of small and large, weak or strong, poor or rich states. Most of the argumentation of Qatar relied basically on moral and legal reasons. For example, in the only speech of a Qatari diplomat about the Iraqi-Kuwaiti war [UNSC,

1990e, 23-30], the ambassador did not refer to the differences in size or state power, but more to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to “*evil and wrongful acts*”, to a “*situation*” which “*runs counter to justice*”, in which “*good will prevail over evil*”. He also added that “*great nations are made by great pains*”, which shows how morality dominate the Qatari perception of greatness instead of material size.

A few exemptions, nonetheless, are available. Talking about the Yugoslavian civil war, the Qatari ambassador called out the international community to “*repudiate the Serbian aggression. The aggressor is stronger and larger party and the victim of aggression is a smaller and weaker neighbour and a Member of the United Nations. Aggression must be prohibited in all cases. (...) The Government of Belgrade, which continues to organise and engineer aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the smaller and weaker party, must desist. Every state, large and small, strong and weak, must abide by the provisions of the United Nations Charter*” [UNSC, 1992, 18-20]. Discussing the role of the UN in armed conflicts, the diplomat stated that “*Qatar expresses its grave concern over the proliferation of war and conflict in poor developing countries (...). Furthermore, war and conflict directly threaten international peace and security, adversely affect the sustainable development of small developing countries*” [UNSC, 2005, 11].

In a few cases, Qatar emphasised the different responsibilities of large and small, developed and developing states, with bleak indication about the place of Qatar in this categorization. In 2006, Ambassador al-Nasser said that “*the effectiveness of the international legal system depends on the degree of commitment shown, in particular, by the powerful States that play a primary role in the system*”. He added that “*we have all come to realize that the more effective and robust international law is, the more it irritates such Powers*”, which might suggest that Qatar does not think of itself as such Power [UNSC, 2006, 20]. In the field of climate change, ambassador Al-Nasser talked about “*differentiated responsibilities of all states*”, namely that “*rich, developed and industrialized countries are assigned responsibilities different from those of poor and developing countries*” [UNSC, 2007a, 10].

These examples represent only a fraction of the verbal contributions of Qatar to the Security Council, but in the vast majority of times, its representatives did not talk about size or the discrepancy of resources as a factor in international relations.

Interestingly enough, two pieces of speeches delivered by Qatari diplomats explain the reason behind this phenomenon. First, in 2007, there was a debate in the UNSC about the role of natural resources in armed conflicts. Ambassador al-Bader, the representative of Qatar commented in length, and his main point was the irrelevance of the topic of natural resources in the work of the Security Council [UNSC, 2007b, 9-10]:

“we would like to stress that the root causes of most conflict situations today are due, not to natural resources, but rather to various international and domestic political reasons. (...) Thus, it would be more useful for States to discuss the issue of natural resources in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in the context of the development agenda, rather than here in the Security Council. Such an approach would enable the developing countries to manage their natural resources without foreign trusteeships or interference, in a way that serves their national interests, and within the framework of a just international economic order.”

Second, in another debate in 2013, the representative of Qatar repeated the exact same idea, saying that *“ambiguity about the link between natural resources and conflicts must be clarified. The presence of natural resources such as extractive materials is not per se a source or cause of, or an environment conducive to, the outbreak of conflict, threats to international peace and security, or the spread of corruption and human rights violations”* [UNSC, 2013, 10]. He also emphasized that natural resources have more domestic than international implications, adding that *“it is clear from our concrete experience that natural resources can be a boon to the countries that enjoy them if they are harnessed the right way to drive economic growth, progress, development and job creation, to develop indicators of social, cultural and human development and human rights, to support good governance, reinforce the rule of law and the fight against corruption, to strengthen political and economic stability, and to improve the livelihoods and well-being of citizens”* [ibid].

These quotes suggest two conclusions regarding the perceptual size of Qatar. First, differences in size is not considered an important factor in international relations by the state, which explains why it has not frequently constructed questions of international

peace and security in this framework and has not designated itself as “small” in the Security Council. Second, Qatar concentrates more on the absolute and not relative notion of size, as resources are constructed in having a role in the domestic and not international affairs. However, these quotes do not tell us whether Qatar perceives itself small vis-à-vis other states – nonetheless, it does not consider this a question of utmost importance.

It is worth to compare the case of Bahrain primarily to that of Qatar. Similarly, Bahrain never ever called itself small in the Security Council, and made only few comments on the basis of which one can assume that it does not consider itself a great power. In 1983, during a discussion of the Palestinian question, a representative of Bahrain emphasized the special responsibilities of great Powers “*for safeguarding peace and security in the region*” [UNSC, 1983, 11]. Sixteen years later, in 1999, Ambassador Buallay referred to “*developed states*” in a context which definitely suggests that Bahrain does not list itself among them [UNSC, 1999c, 18]. Regarding regional security, a Bahraini diplomat proclaimed in 2014 that the country “*has always assumed its fair share of burden*”, which can be an implicit reference to the limited size of the country [UNSC, 2014b, 30].¹⁵¹

Despite the similarity to neglect size both as a determinant of identity and as a framing tool, there are three major differences in the state discourses of Bahrain compared to that of Qatar. First, Bahraini diplomats do not agree with their Qatari colleagues about completely disconnecting the topics of international peace and stability and natural resources and national economic growth. In a different debate taking place years earlier, Bahraini Ambassador Saleh contradicted the speech of Qatari Ambassador al-Bader almost word-by-word [UNSC, 2002a, 25]:

„We can draw a similarity in the relations between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and those between development and peace. The relationship between these two terms is quite close and a lot can be said in this respect. We believe that investment in human capital contributes effectively towards avoiding armed conflict. Development cannot be achieved unless there is peace; peace is endangered if there is a problem with

¹⁵¹ In a single remark about Bosnia, the Bahraini ambassador differentiated between the “*material and moral force*” of the country [UNSC, 1999a, 23], nonetheless he did not specify what he meant, therefore we cannot draw conclusions regarding the perception of the connection between size and power.

development. Consequently, we believe that the roles of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council are complementary.”

At another time, the Ambassador of Bahrain claimed that “*the root causes of many African problems and issues are economic*”, which is why “*it may be necessary to intensify consultation and cooperation between the Security Council, on the one hand, and the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations specialized agencies, on the other*”. In this speech, the lack of development was due to the misuse of natural resources: “*we must recall the vast resources and wealth that are available in Africa, but which, for many reasons, are poorly and improperly exploited*” [UNSC, 1999d, 14].

Second, a recurring theme in which Bahrain interprets international events and political developments is the values of social heterogeneity and the dangers of mismanaging it. “*Post-cold-war conflicts*”, goes the argument, “*are of an internal, ethnic or religious nature*” [UNSC, 1999b, 18]. Bahraini diplomats suggested to work for national reconciliation and unity in various cases, including that of East Timor [UNSC, 1999e, 4], of protecting civilians [UNSC, 2000, 14], Iraq [UNSC, 2014b, 30], and post-conflict peace-building in general [UNSC, 1998, 24].¹⁵²

On the other hand, multiculturalism plays a role in the Bahraini state identity. “*Bahrain is an oasis of multiculturalism and multiracialism in the region that was the cradle of civilization. We have woven a social fabric that is open and welcoming to all, no matter what religion or doctrine they may belong to. The mosque, the synagogue and the church sit close together in our capital Manama, within less than one square kilometre*” [UNSC, 2015, 74]. At other times, the Bahraini diplomats stood by the value of “*coexistence*” (in the sense of ethnic and religious groups in a society) [e.g. UNSC, 2014a, 67; 2014c, 66].

This sensitivity of social cohesion is probably the consequence of the heterogeneous nature of the Bahraini society. It seems that the government perceives the potential threat, and tries to picture itself as a good example of the proper management of multiculturalism. It is also important to take note of the fact that such speeches were most observable during the 2010s – before that, Bahrain barely spoke about its own identity.

¹⁵² Naturally, other states raised the question as well, nonetheless the occurrence of such reasoning was higher in the case of Bahrain.

The third particularity of the verbal communication of Bahrain is several references to Iran as a power interfering in its affairs. The very first speech delivered by a Bahrain diplomat in the UNSC included a reference to the Persian country, dated in 1973, six years before the revolution. According to Ambassador al-Saffar, the independence of Bahrain (which, according to him, was due to the efforts of the UN and the Secretary-General specifically) settled a historical dispute with Iran, “*a dispute which had lasted for so long. By this solution, foreign influence, which had lasted a century and a half in Bahrain, also ended*” [UNSC, 1973, 13]. Connecting the idea of Bahraini independence to the UN on the one hand and to vanishing Iranian influence on the other is an obvious sign. Another example of talking about Iranian influence was a recent speech from 2017, in which a Bahraini diplomat called “*on the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with the principles of good-neighbourliness, uphold the sovereignty of the States of the region and halt its interference in neighbouring States*” [UNSC, 2017, 59].

Lastly, the Omani diplomatic discourse was the hardest to analyse, due to the limited number of speeches and the overall general style of the comments. Its representatives have not called the country small in the Security Council, except for one occasion. In a discussion regarding the Iraqi-Iranian war taking place in 1984 [UNSC, 1984b, 8], the ambassador of the Sultanate declared that

“it wishes to maintain good-neighbourly and friendly relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This wish does not stem from weakness or from fear of a stronger and more populous neighbour, because our national capabilities and our relations with friendly countries are enough to deter any attack on our territory or national interests; rather our position is based on a sincere belief in respect for the rights of national sovereignty and in the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and the settlement of all disputes by peaceful means.”

In this quote, Ambassador Ali stated the differences between Oman and Iran in their demographic and military size as a relational comparison, but did not interpret this fact as a matter of weakness. The diplomat explained even the reason behind this: the natural resources of Oman and the friendly countries “*are enough to deter any attack*”. This statement clearly rhymes with the concept of relative deterrence outlined before.

The idea of deterrence came up in a speech of Sultan Qaboos himself as well on the national day celebration in 1975. He said that “*we are able, with the help of Allah, to deter aggression, whatever its size. Because our men are protectors of faith. We carry weapons in defence of our religion, our nation and our dignity*” [Sultan Qaboos, 1975]. He spoke of the importance of moral aspects in strength and defence other times as well [e.g. Sultan Qaboos, 1976 and 1981].

The previously cited quote from the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman from 1984 continues even for another interesting sentence. He concluded that “*we [Omanis] also believe in the inadmissibility of major-Power hegemony over smaller States; we believe that the power of smaller States derives from their adherence to and respect for the Charter*” [ibid]. Contrary to the previous sentences, this statement is more inclined towards a liberal-institutionalist interpretation than a realist one.

Oman barely interpreted events in a binary framework of small and large states, the only clear exemption was a reference to the Yugoslavian civil war in 1995, according to which Oman believes “*that the imbalance of power in the region has led the Bosnian Serbs to take advantage of the situation*” [UNSC, 1995a, 8]. The primary glance through which Omani diplomats interpret conflicts is cultural, primarily ethnic and religious in various times. When the United States bombed Libya in 1986, the Omani Ambassador proclaimed that “*the Arab nation is united in its opposition to the threat of use of force in international relations (...). We are united against the unlawful, inhumane military raid carried out last night against Libyan civilian targets. As Arabs, we are against terrorism in all its forms*” [UNSC, 1986a, 28]. In the same year, he called both Iran and Iraq “*fraternal, Muslim countries*”, in a situation in which all other small states sided with the latter [UNSC, 1986b, 21]. Omani diplomats also raised the question of religion in the case of the conflict between the Serbs and Bosnians as they proclaimed that the Sultanate joined “*many third-world countries, the Muslim nations and others in their rightful orientations*” to proclaim that Bosnia has the right to defend itself [UNSC, 1994a, 63]. One year later, on the same subject, Ambassador Al-Khussaiby declared that “*Oman believes that there is an obligation — a moral obligation, a political obligation — on all members of the international community to work together united with one voice that would say “No” to “ethnic cleansing”, “No” to rape of Muslim women*” [UNSC, 1995b, 5].

Naturally, the other small Gulf states also use religious or ethnic rhetoric to interpret conflicts, but there are two major differences. First, most of the times, the other three states use such words in relations with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Second, Oman used this kind of language much more often, on the basis of which we can assume that besides a general legal perspective, the cultural dimension is the one through which Omani diplomats describe international conflicts.

All in all, analysing the speeches delivered in the Security Council bears important conclusions regarding the differences of the role of smallness in the identity of the four small Gulf states. Kuwait proved to be the clearest example of a rhetorically observable self-perception as a small state, while for the other three countries size did not bear that much of relevance in interpreting themselves and international politics. Qatar does not connect the size of resources to the question of international peace and stability, which means that even if they see themselves as small, that does not limit their perception of their abilities. Bahrain concentrates more on cultural heterogeneity and multiculturalism as a source of identity and conflict. Smallness plays (or played) a role in the self-perception of Oman, but not necessarily as a limitation but more as a fact of life, which does not necessarily weaken the security of the country, as bigger importance is given to cultural, moral and ethical questions.

As a conclusion of the part about perceptual size, Chart 40 summarises the main commonalities and differences. It is important to bear in mind that the utilised tools are not perfectly conclusive and should only form a basis of further research. On the other hand, what was proven by the analysis is that size does not affect the identity of states in the same way. Due to their different cultural and geopolitical background, small states interpret their smallness in their own way, regardless of what theory or the outside world predicts.

Chart 40: Commonalities and particularities in the perceptual size of the small Gulf states

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Qatar	Oman
Commonalities	“Cultural invasion” Identity management			
Particularities	Geopolitical threat from Iran as a part of the identity Multiculturalism and heterogeneity as a source of self-perception and threat	Geopolitical threat from Kuwait Smallness plays a strong role	Homogeneous society The amount of resources is not connected to international politics to a significant extent	Treating heterogeneity with heterogeneity More inclusive national identity Emphasis on cultural questions Smallness does not make Oman vulnerable

It is interesting to compare the normative and the perceptual size of the small Gulf states (described in part 2.2.2.). The most important conclusion we can draw regarding these data is that the two times when radical changes happened in the normative size of the states – Kuwait in the 1990s and Bahrain in the 2010s – coincided with the times when the two states proclaimed their identity more clearly – Kuwait as a small state and Bahrain as a multicultural one. This revelation leads to the assumption that a growth in normative size does not translate into a growth in perceptual size but more as an opportunity to articulate one’s identity the most clearly.

3.3. *Regime security in the small Gulf states*

Regimes in the small Gulf states have to secure their position in the circumstances which are dominated by smallness and other variables described in parts 3.1. and 3.2. As we will see, the regime security of these states are determined by factors enlisted previously, especially in case of the interactions between economic smallness and social heterogeneity, as well as military smallness and other variables.

All small Gulf states are traditional monarchies which are autocratic in nature with a regime consisting of the ruling family and its tribal allies. Due to their similar historical and economic background, the political system of the four states share many commonalities, many of which are affected by the attributes described in the previous sections. These features include¹⁵³

- the concentration of legislative, executive and juridical powers;
- centralised and personalised decision-making, which usually include the monarch, the crown prince, the prime minister and/or the ministers of the most important ministries (in charge of foreign affairs, defence or domestic affairs);
- the presence of consultative bodies of tribal origin, usually called Majlis al-Shura or Majlis al-Umma with limited autonomy;
- stable institutions which change in a slow manner;
- creating a social pact with the society to exclude them from political decision making in exchange for welfare and social net maintained by oil revenues;
- the problematic question of handling the Shia minority and the Islamist movements as the two main opposition forces (with varying degrees); and
- the constant fear from ideologies which question the traditional legitimacy of the monarchies, especially Arab nationalism and republican Islamism.

The stability of the Gulf regimes is highly debated in the literature [Herb, 1999; Lucas, 2004; Christopher, 2012; Bank – Richter – Sunik 2014; Derichs – Demmelhuber, 2014; Lucas, 2014]. These discourses usually focus on three questions [Lucas – Demmelhuber – Derichs, 2014]: whether there are any meaningful and provable difference between the resilience of monarchies and republics in the region; if so, how can it be explained

¹⁵³ A summary based on Byman – Green, 1999, Crystal, 2014; Csicsmann, 2007; Davidson, 2012; Ismael – Ismael, 2011, Wright, 2011a.

theoretically; and lastly, how do these factors affect political outcomes in the Persian Gulf monarchies. While the questions are interesting for academic inquiries, it is a better and more efficient approach to investigate the case of the regimes separately.

Besides the general attributes of the leadership of small Gulf states, the political threats to regime will also be enlisted. These are usually categorised as domestic or international threats [Jackson, 2009, 150-151], but in this section, I will describe only the former ones (as the latter ones will be dealt with in the fourth chapter) In the Gulf region, two main political threats can be identified originating from the domestic sphere¹⁵⁴ – the promotion of identities which defy the official state identity discourse (e.g. sectarian Shia identity) and political ideologies (e.g. Islamism and other republican ideas). Besides these traditional analytical categories, I will also investigate the dangers eliminating *from within the regime*. This description refers to the destabilizing effects of the competition between the different branches of the ruling family or between the allies of the main ruling elite.

In the case of Bahrain, the ruling Sunni Khalifa family originates from mainland Arabia. Their tribe¹⁵⁵ arrived to the island in the 18th century and managed to gain political power by 1783 by forcing the Persian empire out. Two contradicting historical narratives exist regarding their arrival (Kinninmont, 2011, 32; Louer, 2014, 118-119) – according to the “official” one, the Al Khalifa brought peace and stability to a society in which Shias have always constituted the majority. Those who oppose their rule are seen as the “fifth columnists” for Iran. Others, nonetheless, consider the ruling family an outside force ruling over the “Baharna” (the indigenous population of the island). Besides sectarian mistrust, the hostility towards the dynasty is rooted in the social memory of destruction as a result of the conquest of Bahrain by the Khalifa from Persian rule. Warfare, depopulation and mismanagement of agriculture led to an economic downfall in the early Khalifa years, affecting the perception of generations of Shia middle class of the new elite [Fuccaro, 2009, 16-42].

Therefore, the main challenge for Bahraini regime security has been the historical opposition to both the monarchic structure and the rule of the Sunni Al Khalifa

¹⁵⁴ Barry Buzan and his colleagues [1998, 142-154] also talk about threats caused by the level of integration of a society into the global world order. These dangers are manifested in the Gulf in relation with the GCC and the hegemonic attempts of Saudi Arabia and the globalized youth which many times questions the legitimacy of the leadership. These points will be touched upon in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁵ Al Khalifa is part of Bani Utub, the same tribe as the Kuwaiti Al Sabah [Kinninmont, 2011, 32].

by large parts of the society, especially Shia groups. Between the 1920s and the 1970s, seven organized and long-standing series of anti-establishment protests took place in 1921-1923, 1934-1935, 1938, 1947-1948, 1953-1956, 1965 and 1975 [Ulrichsen, 2014a, 334-335]. These protests were dangerous because the organizers managed to mobilize in both the Sunni and the Shia community, therefore the usual narrative of a Shia revolution was not usable. From this respect, the Iranian revolution of 1979 helped out the Bahraini regime in the sense that the Sunni communities in the Gulf got more suspicious of any kind of Shia activism (see part 4.2.). Growing sectarianism hampered the organization of large-scale protests until 1994 [Diwan, 2014, 144].

To tackle this challenge, the regime used a mixed toolkit, which included slight liberalization attempts as well as different forms of oppression. In 1973 the National Assembly was created only to be suspended two years later [Crystal, 2014, 172]. In 1975, the State Security Law was introduced, which gave the government wide-range authority to implement harsh measures against the opposition. In the 1990s, as most of the anti-government protestors were Shias, the government easily conducted a severe response and arrested several hundreds of protesters [ibid]. Nonetheless, in the 2000s, a series of political reforms started, which included the introduction of the constitution (adopted after a referendum), the creation of a bicameral National Assembly with elected members and slightly enlarged legislative powers, while the State Security Law was abolished. Elections have been held since 2002, nonetheless tensions remained to be substantial, and meaningful liberalization is yet to be conducted.¹⁵⁶

Islamist movements in Bahrain did not evolve as an anti-regime political force [Hedges – Cafiero, 2017, 143-145]. The Islamic Mimbar society (the local affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood network) served as a counter-weight to Shia political forces. It was only after the growing security dependence of Bahrain on Saudi Arabia after 2011 (outlined in part 4.4.) that the Bahraini regime was put under pressure to push back against the MB, which it did to some extent [Freer – Courtney, 2017].

¹⁵⁶ The protests of 2011 should be mentioned in this context too (and not just in the context of the Arab Uprisings, see part 4.4.). The first gatherings were organized on the ten year anniversary of the constitutional referendum, showing that the society wanted the reforms to continue [Kinnimont, 2012, 1]. While first the government seemed to be open to negotiations, they later turned to violent means to oppress the protestors. As government response got more and more aggressive, so did the opposition's claims – after a month, some started to demand the creation of a republic. Eventually, the regime managed to suppress opposition voices, however, it was only able to do so with the help of Saudi and Emirati police and military forces [Crystal, 2014, 173]. Since then, the domestic political situation remains to be unstable as violence occasionally intensifies.

The Bahraini regime had traditionally been stable from the inside. Since gaining independence, two rulers led Bahrain – Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa (1971-1999) and Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (1999-).¹⁵⁷ Succession was due to the natural death of Isa bin Salman and was planned for quite a while as Hamad was the designated heir since 1964. The personality of the monarch has had great effect on state policies – for example the timing of the liberalization process in the 2000s was mainly caused by Hamad’s personal views and not by structural developments.

Besides the king and the crown prince, the position of the prime minister is also crucial in the Bahraini political system [Kinninmont, 2011, 40]. While the international focus is usually on the first two, the last one was the most stable centre of power – since the independence of Bahrain, only one person (Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa) has occupied the position [ibid]. Recently, news surfaced about a possible ouster of the prime minister due to the pressure of the Emirati and Saudi crown princes – Mohamed bin Zayed and Mohamed bin Salman – who consider Khalifa bin Salman unreliable and having more power than he needs [Middle East Eye, 2018a].

Dynamics inside the regime have recently been shaped by the rise of the *Khawalid* branch of the Khalifa family [Diwan, 2014, 162]. The descendants of Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa, the governor of al-Riffa in the late 19th and early 20th century, who was a staunch opponent to the evolving British-Bahraini alliance and has been known as having a “*worldview steeped in Sunni chauvinism, amplified due to the growing Shi’a empowerment within the Persian Gulf region*” [Diwan, 2014, 163]. The Khawalids were persona non grata for decades in the high circles of the Bahraini regime, but after 1999 – primarily due to the family policies of King Hamad, whose mother also belongs to the Khawalids – they managed to create a powerful centre of gravity in the regime.

Due to the dispersion of economic and political power in Kuwait (outlined in the previous sections), the ruling dynasty – the Al Sabah – was chosen by the powerful families in the 18th century. The deal was basically a “*functional division of power*” [Ismael, 1982, 28] between the maritime merchant elite, the Sabahs, who were engaged in caravan trade, therefore they were able to exert influence over nomadic tribes [Louer, 2014, 134]. Two developments changed this dynamic between the ruler and the merchant elite – first, in 1899, the British Empire promised protection to emir Mubarak the Great

¹⁵⁷ The ruler of Bahrain used to be called “emir” but the constitution of 2002 changed the title to “king”.

and also provided a regular fiscal source to the Sabah family, and second the discovery and rise of oil resources [Roberts, 2011a, 92-93].

These processes granted broader leverage for the ruler but at the end of the day, the merchant elite did not lose its influence completely and managed to institutionalise their power. It is due to this division of power that Kuwait has the longest constitutional tradition among the GCC states. The first consultative council was established as early as 1921 [ibid], while the constitution of the country was adopted in 1962, afterwards the National Assembly was created in 1963 [Crystal, 2014, 165]. This body, like in the case of the country's neighbours, is more consultative than legislative, but all of its members are elected and have actual power to shape or to voice concerns about governmental policies. While decision making remains autocratic in nature, the institutional break represented by the National Assembly slows down the process, leading to a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis the other small Gulf states.

This feature is quite unique in the Gulf region, which is why the Kuwaiti political system has been labelled in very distinct ways, such as “*hegemonic electoral authoritarianism*” [Diamond, 2002, 31], or “*quasi competitive and a quasi-free plural authoritarianism*” [Zaccara, 2013, 82].

Neither Islamist, nor Shia political movements evolved systematically as an anti-establishment political force [Crystal, 2014, 167]. As many other groups, the Islamists are also divided in Kuwait to followers of the local Muslim Brotherhood branch, Salafis and independents. In the 1960-1970s, Islamist served as a counterweight to Arab nationalist forces as well as the merchant elite [Roberts, 2011a, 94]; recently, they are successful in representing the poorer, mainly bidoon population in the National Assembly.

The Iraqi invasion affected political dynamics, too [Roberts, 2011a, 95]. Many families and tribes, including the Emir, left the country when the Iraqi army arrived, but many others stayed. Between these two groups – called *al-Samidoon* (those staying) and *al-Hariboon* (those leaving) the tension remained to be lasting. Since social anger also focused on the fleeing Emir, the elections organized in 1992 led to a two third majority of the opposition in the Majlis (which only lasted until the 1997 elections). The first decade of the 21st century brought heavy parliamentary debates again, which made the emir dissolve the institution several times (in 2006, 2008 and 2009). A huge change

happened in 2003 when the appointment of a new prime minister (Sabah Al Sabah) ended the tradition that the direct heir should be the PM, a change which endowed the parliament with the tool to criticise the PM more fiercely.

In 2008, the Islamist-tribal opposition profited largely from the elections, which resulted in a changing policy from the government [Beaugrand, 2016, 10]. While previously the regime gave citizenship to many *bidoon* families, they reversed the policy and in 2014, they actually denaturalised some people, accusing them of forgery in the neutralization process. As the tribal-Islamist alliance was seen as a growing domestic threat, the balancing strategy of the Sabah family led to more cooperation with Shia fractions. These processes prove the constantly changing nature of domestic alliances in Kuwait, which is the primary feature of the country's political system.

Tensions inside the regime and in the domestic political life started to surface during the 2000s [Alnajjar – Selvik, 2016; Gharba, 2014]. The main reason behind this phenomenon – besides the decreasing importance of the Iraqi threat which traditionally unified Kuwaiti elites to some extent – was the rise of Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah to the throne in 2006. Although he has been playing a dominant role in Kuwaiti politics since the 1960s,¹⁵⁸ he disregarded the balance of power between the two main branches of the family, the al-Ahmad and the al-Salim, in favour of the former. Instead of appointing a crown prince from the al-Ahmads, the new emir appointed his own half-brother, Nawaf al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Ahmad. Since then, the cohesion of the ruling family weakened considerably.

The Omani ruling family originates from Sa'id bin Sultan, who ruled the country between 1806 and 1856 [Valeri, 2011, 135]. In the history of the independent and modern Oman, there was only one ruler, namely Sultan Qaboos, who is in power since 1970. The previous Sultan, Said bin Taimur ruled the country since 1932, and kept Oman in a relative isolation from its neighbours due to the identity of distinctness and the intention to keep foreign influence out of the country [Winckler, 2000].

Owing to the heterogeneous nature and the tribal structure of the Omani society, the main aim of the Omani Sultan has always been to stabilize internal relations and to

¹⁵⁸ Previously, Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah served as a foreign minister between 1963 and 2003, and as a prime minister between 2003 and 2006 [Cafiero – Karasik, 2017], which provides him great respect from the society and other regional leaders.

avoid foreign interference. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Omani government had to fight two successive movements, both with geopolitical and ideological reasons: one based on the Ibadi Imamate originating from the inner, more conservative territories surrounding the city of Nizwa, and another movement in the Western Sunni parts of the country with communist ideology [Al-Khalili, 2009, 65-73]. After a coup against his father in 1970, Sultan Qaboos managed to pacify both movements in the 1970s and managed to hold the country together ever since.

Oman does not have a very clear anti-regime opposition – due to the Ibadi nature of the society and the regime, neither the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, nor the Shia networks are able to form meaningful political resistance. Even if some movements start to grow, the Omani state cracks down on them with force, as they did in 1994 or in 2004 [Hedges – Cafiero, 2017, 139].

The Omani political system is slightly more personalised due to the strong personal role of Qaboos in the institutionalisation of power and his long reign. Therefore, as the Sultan who was born in 1940 gets older and his health gets worse, some expect a political crisis in the short term [Davidson, 2012; Said 2015]. Qaboos has no designated heir or son, the rules on succession have never been put into practice and they are not self-evident. Coupled with the worsening economic situation (see part 3.2.), the changing political atmosphere after the Arab Uprisings¹⁵⁹ and the absolute nature of the political system, the transition process might cause problems in the rule of law in the country [Said, 2015, 50-57]. Some legal reforms conducted in 2011 – which affected succession laws, the leverage of the Majlis, as well as the independence of the judiciary – were not enough to control the process [ibid], therefore destabilization is easy to imagine in the country (see part 4.5.).

There are three major differences between the domestic position of Qatar compared to other Gulf state neighbours [Kamava, 2014, 161]. First of all, due to the peripheral location of the Qatari peninsula, the lack of natural resources and effective trade routes and the relatively modest role of Islam in the state-building process, the economic and religious elites have never been true rivals to the Thani family. That

¹⁵⁹ Although the Omani regime managed to tackle the “Arab Spring” protests, there is growing interest within the society about taking part in politics. The number of registered voters in the 2011 Majlis elections was 52.94% higher than in the 2007 elections [Zaccara, 2013, 88].

practically means greater regime hegemony over the society. Second, the community of citizens in the country is much more homogenous than in other countries, and the Shia population (constituting approx. 20% of the national population) is considered to be integrated and loyal to the regime. Third, nonetheless, the ruling family was numerically bigger (reaching 10 thousand members) and therefore more internally divided than other ruling families on the peninsula. This is shown clearly by the fact that two out of the three successions in the history of modern Qatar were forced, which is very dissimilar to the Arabian peninsula.

When it comes to regime and state development, the history of independent Qatar can be divided into two distinct periods. The first took place between 1971 and 1995, during the tenure of Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, who had no major ambitions in world politics and was occupied by internal strife in the ruling family. His son, Hamad bin Khalifa organised a bloodless coup in 1995, which represents the start of the second period (lasting even today, even if Hamad abdicated in 2013 to his son, Tamim), the era of transformation and reform.¹⁶⁰ Hamad's rise to power meant three major shifts: increased institutional rule and forced unity in the Thani ruling family; more articulated affiliation to the United States; as well as an ambitious foreign policy trajectory aimed at putting Qatar on the map of world politics [Kamrava, 2014, 160-161]. These changes – accompanied by popular reforms such as the dissolution of the Ministry of Information – managed to strengthen state capacities and ensured a relatively free hand for the emir of Qatar both domestically and internationally.

Since 1995, Hamad emir has shaped the foreign policy of Qatar in a distinct way vis-à-vis its small counterparts, making the country a frequently analysed case study to develop small state theories in the IR literature. Alan Chong's virtual enlargement notion fits perfectly to the case of Qatar – the small country capitalised on its normative smallness to be accepted as a moderator and a negotiating partner, while also enlarged its importance through branding activities, as well as other diplomatic and financial tools. According to Kamrava [2014, 167-181], the above mentioned circumstances allowed Qatar to upgrade the bandwagoning or omni-balancing strategies typically used by Middle Eastern small states to a strategy he calls "hedging", which means the build-up of good relations with every major player in the region.

¹⁶⁰ Some call this the 'transformative state project' [Al-Malki, 2016, 255].

Hedging and branding can be seen as a compensatory policy. On the one hand, first of all, it aims at developing interdependences with several major players, which can create a relative security vis-à-vis aggressors and outside threats. Second, it also enables Qatar to exert influence outside of its borders. These achievements came handy in both maintaining the domestic leverage of the regime (by distributing the profits arising from such activities) and in foreign relations as well. The ambitious foreign policy which we can see since 1995 is a result of the political leadership's decision and not a systemic variable or smallness by itself.

Moreover, the ambitious nature of the Qatari foreign policy highlighted the problems arising from smallness especially in terms of human and institutional capacities (e.g. in the case of failed mediation affairs and the lack of ability to follow-up foreign policy actions) [Kamrava, 2014, 166]. These problems are shared by all small states but are more visible in the case of Qatar conducting such a high-profile foreign policy (see parts. 4.4. and 4.5.).

Tamim's rise to power in 2013 was the first time since independence that a Qatari ruler did not have to organize a coup to win the throne. This data show that the most important challenges in Qatar originate more from within the regime and not from the society. Rival elite groups are basically non-existent, while the Thani family is huge enough to witness internal rivalry. This is why the institutional reforms implemented by Emir Hamad bin Thani were crucial to stabilize the domestic politics of the country. As of today, it seems that his project was successful enough which handles the Qatari emir a wider leverage.

3.4. Conclusion – the triangle of absolute size, perceptual size and regime security and compensatory policies

Chapter 3 aimed at providing a thorough and detailed description of the triangle of absolute size, perceptual size and regime security and the dynamics between these three elements. This triangle enables us to interpret the differences between the four Gulf states. In spite of their similar relative size, alterations in absolute and perceptual size, as well as regime security settings urges states to adopt different compensatory policies (see Chart 41), on the basis of which one can make the assumption that their foreign policy behaviour might differ as well. This leads us to the conclusion that despite what systemic materialist theories suggest, these aspects might be more useful to interpret a small state's foreign

policy than its relative position in the system. Nonetheless, one can verify this thesis only through the analysis of foreign and security policy behaviour of the examined states.

Chart 41: Compensatory policies in the four Gulf states

	Territorial smallness	Demographic smallness	Economic smallness	Military smallness and regime security
Common features	Active trade policy Outsourcing agricultural production	Identity management Labour import Education policies Nation building	Diversification Active investment policies	Cooperation with U.S. Building interdependencies and participating in the international community Letting in global powers
Bahrain	Deep security cooperation with Saudi Arabia	Neutralising Sunni migrant workers	Economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia	Deep security cooperation with Saudi Arabia
Oman	Active agricultural policy	Tackling heterogeneity with heterogeneity	Active agricultural policy	Relatively high military expenditures Deep security cooperation with Great Britain
Kuwait		Neutralising the bidoon Institutionalising power sharing		
Qatar	Inviting the Muslim Brotherhood		Specialisation on natural gas exports	Institutionalising family decision-making

				Hedging Virtual enlargement
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4. CASE STUDIES OF FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY BEHAVIOUR

In the fourth and last chapter, I analyse the behaviour of complex small states on the basis of the results of the first three chapters. The aim of the chapter is three-fold. Firstly, I will see how smallness effects foreign policy and with which other variables it interacts in this process. Secondly, I will see how the concepts described in the previous sections determine political outcomes in the region. Thirdly, at the end of the chapter, I would like to determine which tradition of small state foreign policy theory was the most effective to describe the international behaviour of the four small states.¹⁶¹

As I have already mentioned, I do not wish to analyse the strategic or doctrinal level of foreign policy, I rather concentrate on specific episodes of the Middle Eastern security complex. The reason behind it is that this is a better analytical viewpoint to understand the role complex small states play in different conflicts and negotiation processes.

The choices of the case studies are both temporal and theoretical, which means that I connect a specific social situation in the Middle Eastern history (e.g. the Arab Uprisings) with references to given theoretical questions interpreted in the framework of the complex model of size (e.g. domestic resilience). The aims of the chapter do not include the description of the cases in a comprehensive manner, only in relation to the perspective of the small Gulf states.

4.1. Debates regarding a Gulf union and the creation of the GCC (1968-1971)

The decision of the British government to withdraw its military from the Gulf region in 1968 paved the way for the true independence of Bahrain (1971), Kuwait (1961), Oman (1970) and Qatar (1971) as well as the so-called Trucial States (Abu Dhabi, Dubai,

¹⁶¹ The neorealist, neoliberal and the meo-Marxist tradition was described in part 1.2.2., while the constructivist school's very broad assumptions were touched upon in 1.2.3. and 1.2.4.

Sharjah, Umm al-Quwain, Ra's al-Khaima, al-Fujairah and Ajman). Locked between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia (see part. 3.1.1.), the rulers of the small emirates engaged in a series of negotiations about a political unity between themselves, which involved the Trucial States, Qatar and Bahrain. As a result of the negotiations, the United Arab Emirates was founded in 1971, however, first with only five members (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Umm al-Quwain, al-Fujairah and Ajman), later joined by Ra's al-Khaima.¹⁶² Despite their geopolitical exposure to their larger neighbours, Bahrain and Qatar decided to leave the negotiations and try their independence separately.

While in retrospect this process seems self-explanatory, in the given historical context it was a result of severe geopolitical calculations, which were determined, among others, by the size of the different countries. In the following pages, I will investigate the motivations of the small Gulf states in the negotiations and the role of size in the formation of the outcome.

The British decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf region, among others, was not out of the blue in the late 1960s. As a mandatory power, London was a primal actor in the Middle East after the first World War in Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, and the Gulf, nonetheless by the second half of the 1950s, the British focus was almost solely on the Persian Gulf [Pickering, 1998, 105]. The changing British policy was due to structural economic and political reasons coupled with the realization of lacking vital British national interests east of the Suez which would be worth spending so much money on [McCourt, 2009].

Despite this decades-long process leading to the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Gulf, the actual decision came as a surprise for the leaders of the small Gulf states [Heard-Bey, 1999, 129]. This is due to the fact that by 1967, the Gulf region was not designated as a territory from which the approx. 6,000 British troops would leave. In a White Paper about defence policy issued in 1966, the British government announced that they would abandon the Aden base in a few years and “*South Arabia* [today's Yemen] *is due to become independent not later than 1968*” [Ministry of Defence, 1966, 233].

¹⁶² The motivation for Ras al-Khaima to refuse to join the federation the first time was in opposition to the passivity of the other emirs regarding the loss of the Tunb islands in 1971. A day before the announced withdrawal of British forces, Iran invaded the Greater and Lesser Tunb island, and forced the government of Sharjah to agree to the loss of Abu Musa. The eventual accession of Ras al-Khaima to the UAE determined the relations between Iran and the UAE to a great extent [Zahlan, 1978, 195-196; Al Roken, 2001; Hellyer, 2001; Mobley, 2003].

Nonetheless, in this document, London proclaimed that it would increase its remaining military presence in the Persian Gulf in order to fulfil its obligations set by the treaties made with the Gulf emirates. Even in the Supplemental White Paper on Defence published in July of 1967, there was “*nothing to indicate that the government was planning a future withdrawal from the area*” [Heard-Bey, 1999, 129].

The reason behind this delayed announcement was a prolonged debate within the government about the role of the presence of the military in the region: the Board of Trade and the Treasury agreed that the primary British interest in the region (namely safe access to oil) can be reached through “*normal diplomatic and commercial procedures*”, while the Foreign Office believed that military presence was vital in the process [Dockrill, 2002, 52].¹⁶³ Nonetheless, after recalculating the costs of stationing defence forces in the Gulf states, the debate was finally won by the former argument [Dockrill, 2002, 153-155].

It was only on the 16th of January, 1968 that the British government announced its withdrawal from the territory in only three years [Heard-Bey, 1999, 129]. The declaration took the emirs by surprise – state institutions were yet to be fully developed, security capacities were lacking, and even border disputes were not settled in a satisfying manner.¹⁶⁴ These territorial disputes – which originated from political and economic, and not ethnic, religious or tribal reasons [Okruhlik – Conge, 1999, 248] – are important as they “*were symptoms rather than causes of broader political dynamics between the shaykhs and their rivals*” [Friedman, 2017, 113-114] and they symbolize the tensions among the small emirates on the one hand and between the small emirates and their larger neighbours on the other.

Nonetheless, as a result of the sudden shock of the announcement, the emirs of Abu Dhabi and Dubai invited their neighbours for official negotiations on the 18th of February, which marked the commencement of the federalization of the Gulf. The decision to engage in dialogue regarding a political unity “*followed the gradual evolving of a consensus that their small population, their small size, (...) and their poverty (...) did not permit the emirates independently, or in smaller groupings, to establish a viable,*

¹⁶³ The biggest concern in this regard was the territorial integrity of Kuwait in light of its geopolitical exposure to Iraq [Dockrill, 2002, 127].

¹⁶⁴ Regarding, for example, the Hawar Islands and Zubarah between Bahrain and Qatar, Khwar Al Udayd and Sabkhat Mutti between Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, the Abu Musa and the Tunbs Islands between the UAE and Iran, Qaru and Umm al-Maradim between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, the Buraimi Oasis between Abu Dhabi, Oman and Saudi Arabia, the borderlands between Sharjah, Dubai and Oman [Peterson, 2011].

independent, political and constitutional entity” [Al Abed, 2001, 121]. Political leaders realised that due to the reasons described in Chapter 3 (namely military weakness accompanied by huge oil resources), relative deterrence was unreachable to them; as Rosmarie Said Zahlan [1987, 194] argues, they realised that “*the enormous wealth, small size and strategic location of the shaykhdoms made them especially vulnerable to any kind of threat*”.

Talks about a possible Gulf unity were not without a precedent [Smith, 2004, 49-77; Al Abed 2001, 121-126]. The first proposal to integrate the Trucial States, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar was made by Great Britain in 1937. The question remained on the agenda for a couple of years, but no implementation followed. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of forging different forms of integration between the Gulf states resurfaced in the British government, primarily because of the questions regarding the viability and sustainability of such small entities in the region. Nonetheless, official meetings organised by the Brits among the Gulf sheiks usually took place in a formal and distanced manner, as a result of which British diplomats felt that the only reason the tribal leaders participated in the meetings was showing courtesy to London. Besides historical distrust between the ruling families, a major obstacle in any kind of serious integration dialogue was the different size of the emirates – Kuwait and Abu Dhabi in terms of economy, Bahrain in terms of population, and Qatar in terms of state institutional capacities. These emirates engaged in a competition of influence over the smaller emirates, which added to the historical tensions between them and resulted in a general feeling of mistrust. London also did not see how the integration could work independently in a way in which British influence would not vanish.

The different size of the Gulf monarchies played an important role also in the negotiations starting in February of 1968. According to Heard-Bey [1999, 29] three aspects determined the final outcome of talks regarding a Gulf Unity: the centralisation of power in the hands of ruling families over the territory of their nascent states; the growing number of immigrants; and the differences between the states participating in the negotiations in terms of wealth (economic size) and institutionalisation. “*Five of the shaykhdoms – Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Fujairah, and Umm al-Qaiwain – possessed limited economic resources, while Abu Dhabi and Dubai were beginning to experience the exponential growth of their financial resources as a result of expanding oil revenues. Bahrain and Qatar had produced oil wealth for more than twenty years.*

(...) It was the need for protection [that] dominated the ruler's relations with their tribes, other rulers, regional powers and the British government" [Friedman, 2017, 113]. Therefore negotiations were also characterised by the desire of each emir to preserve their economic resources or to benefit from the resources of the other.

The leaders of small entities (the "little five" as the British diplomats called them) found themselves between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they wanted to restrain some form of independence, while, on the other, they wanted to feel safe from any possible outside intervention and also have their share from their neighbours' oil incomes. Four of the five emirates usually supported Abu Dhabi and the Nahyans, due to its perceived richness¹⁶⁵ and the closeness to their inner Omani identity [Friedman, 2017, 119-120]. Ras al-Khaima on the other hand stood many times independently and wanted to use its brotherly relations with the Saud family in order to put pressure on the larger emirates. All in all, all five emirates complained that the negotiations were dominated by the four "big monarchies" – Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai: at one point, the Qatari Emir even suggested that the five smaller emirates should be represented by a single ruler who should only have one vote [Smith, 2004, 80-81].

The interesting notion here is not the fact that the relative size of the smaller emirates mattered, but rather the fact that it mattered more than the threat perceived from Iran and/or Saudi Arabia. While all political leaders were stuck with fighting each other, Iran had territorial claims regarding many of them, at the same time as Saudi intensions were pursued to dominate the region. The logic of both realism and tribal political thought would suggest that facing an external threat while losing the main provider of security in the region (Great Britain), the smaller Gulf emirates should have cooperated to a much greater extent [Friedman, 2017, 114].¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the Gulf states "*did indeed realize the risk of falling under the influence of powerful neighbours such as Saudi Arabia if they remained independently separate, they loathed even more the idea of surrendering their national prerogatives to a federal government structure*" [Legrenzi, 2011, 18].

Talks on a merger, therefore, were rocky from the beginning. The invitation made by the leaders of Abu Dhabi and Dubai on their bilateral meeting on 18th of

¹⁶⁵ Oil production in Abu Dhabi started in 1962, and while it was not as wealthy as Qatar or Kuwait [Sarbadhikari, 1977, 143-144], the smaller emirates saw it as a primary actor in the Trucial Coast, due to its geographical closeness.

¹⁶⁶ The leaders of the nine emirates oftentimes visited Riyadh or Tehran for consultation and to use them against other smaller states [Friedman, 2017, 117-118].

February, 1968 did not aim to create a new integration together by finding the common ground, but to join a union of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the foundations of which they already decided on at their separate meeting. According to their offering, the federation would include joint decision-making in the areas of foreign affairs, defence, security, immigration and social questions, while remaining judicial and internal affairs would be retained by each member [Al Abed, 2001, 128]. In spite of the already settled framework, the emirs accepted the invitation, and travelled to Dubai at the end of February to discuss the details, where they reached the so-called Dubai agreement about the creation of “*Federation of Arab States*” of the nine emirates.

While the document’s 12 points served as a cornerstone for the future constitution of the United Arab Emirates, the evaluation of the achievements reached at the meeting were mixed at best. According to a British diplomat, the outcome of the summit was “*by no means negligible*”, and the “*rulers have taken one step forward and things can never be quite the same again*”, but “*no one who has had to deal with a meeting of the seven Rulers of the Trucial States is likely to be optimistic about the prospects*” [Smith, 2004, 79]. The leaders of Bahrain for example admitted that they only signed the Dubai agreement so that the meeting would not break up in disarray – moreover, they only participated in the meeting to avoid the perception of being the “*odd man out*” [ibid]. Pressured from the Iranian claims over the islands of Bahrain, the Khalifa family was open to negotiations (or even to Saudi protection), but accepting the leading role of Qatar and/or Abu Dhabi was a hard pill to swallow. The Saudi family advised Bahrain to take a back seat in the negotiation process because their larger weight in the process could have easily triggered an Iranian intervention [Friedman, 2017, 116]. These calculations made the Bahraini participation half-hearted at best.

According to the British diplomats, the Qatari presence was not sincere either – they just wanted to hinder (or stall) the deepening of the relationship between Abu Dhabi and Dubai by diluting the cooperation. The Qatari Thani family felt betrayed by the Maktoums of Dubai, as they left them out of the talks with the Nahyans. Due to their historical rivalry with Abu Dhabi, Qatar considered Dubai an ally, which was strengthened by marriage as well, as the Qatari Emir Ahmed al Thani married the daughter of the Dubai Emir [Friedman, 2017, 115].¹⁶⁷ Throughout the negotiations, Qatar

¹⁶⁷ Other information suggested that the activities of Qatar were attributed to Saudi Arabia, which wanted to prolong the discussions in order to get back the Buraimi oasis. The main aim of Qatar, in this narrative,

constantly wanted to undermine the leadership of Abu Dhabi in the process, for example it was Qatar who initiated the nine-party meeting to take place in Dubai.

Negotiations were hampered also due to the small-scale armament process which started in the late 1960s between the nine emirates [Friedman, 2017, 117; Pakistan Forum, 1973]. While building up military capacities after the announcement of British withdrawal was logical, it quickly turned out to be a form of arms race between the parties, which did not help the already lacking trust between them. As a matter of fact, Edward Kennedy said that the security dilemma originating from the arms race was not recognized even in the larger Gulf states [Kennedy, 1975, 26]. Moreover, by late 1969, there was also a “state institution-building race”, at least between Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain and Qatar, in order to prove that they are ready for independence if the negotiations collapse [Friedman, 2017, 120].

Talks between the nine emirates continued after the Dubai agreement in the framework of the Supreme Council, consisting of the nine rulers. The last meeting of the forum took place on the 21st of October, 1969, which marked the failure of the negotiating format [Al Abed, 2001, 130]. It was during these 20 months that Bahrain and Qatar practically left the conversation and focused on their individual independence. According to the records, the Khalifa and the Thani family framed the negotiations as a competition for political power, and they feared that if they compromised, they would lose influence to the other or to Abu Dhabi. For example, they seemed unable to reach an agreement even on the capital – Bahrain wanted to postpone the selection of a permanent centre (while temporarily agreeing to put the seat in Abu Dhabi), as they thought that in time they can solve the issue of Iranian territorial claims, and later they can use their demographic size to pressure the others to let them become the capital.

On the other hand, Qatar, supported the establishment of a new federal city on the borders of Abu Dhabi and Dubai [Friedman, 2017, 118], which they saw as a symbolic way to limit the influence of the Nahyans in the federation. The most problematic notions for the Thani family came when the nine parties discussed veto rights and financial contribution to the common budget [Friedman, 2017, 122]. First of all, Qatar did not support the idea that in case of the lack of unanimity, the vote should be repeated within

was to loosen up the integration, as it did not want to see a federalised entity emerging, but more like a group of small states which were mostly smaller than Qatar [Smith, 20004, 79].

a month when only a simple majority would be sufficient. Second, being demographically small but economically large, Qatar was outraged by the idea that each member state should pay to and receive from the federal budget proportionally to their economic size and population size. Due to these technical disagreements, among others, the Qatari leadership felt that they would not be able to balance the influence of Abu Dhabi in the forming structure, even in cooperation with Dubai [Zahlan, 1978, 195]

For the Khalifa family, the most important question was the voting system in the federation. As they were the largest state demographically, they wanted to have a weight designated to each member state based on the size of their population. As the eight other emirates did not agree on this principle – even after the acceptance of the island state in the UN, which at least temporarily eased the Iranian pressure –, Bahrain announced that it would refrain from further negotiations [Al Abed, 2001, 131]. It turned out that it was only due to the fear from Iran and diplomatic pressure from Saudi Arabia that Bahrain did not jump out of the negotiations before [Friedman, 2017, 12-125]. Eventually, Bahrain declared its independence on the 14th of August, 1971, followed by Qatar on the 1st of September.

The subsequent federation consisting of seven emirates fit the British vision of the Gulf as well. They did not want to see a weak state which is vulnerable domestically and internationally at the same time, but rather a more centralised entity with a single, dominant leader. London quickly realised that this aim is unachievable with the participation of Qatar and Bahrain, therefore they accepted the smaller federation to reach higher level of unity, thanks to the domination of the Nahyan family of Abu Dhabi [Smith, 2004, 80-82]. Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the emir of Abu Dhabi, always preferred this option, as they wanted to have the dominant role in the federation.

Regarding the motivations of Qatar and Bahrain to opt out of the federation, three remarks should be made. First, it is clear that rational calculations did not dominate the strategic thinking about a unity, as historical rivalry and mistrust between each other clouded the decision-makers' rationale. Second, both of them "*preferred weak independence to a strong union in which they would not be the first among equals*" [Friedman, 2017, 125], even if that meant geopolitical exposure to Iran and Saudi Arabia. Third, neither of them wanted to decide about independence without the approval of the Saud family.

Although both Kuwait and Oman skipped the negotiation process, it is important to investigate their motives regarding and approaching a possible Gulf unity. For both states, joining a federal entity was out of the question as state-building processes were much more developed there than in their neighbours [Davidson, 2015, 26-39].¹⁶⁸ Therefore, for both states, the issue was more of a foreign policy question. From this perspective, they both realised that the power vacuum created by the British withdrawal enables outside forces – especially Baathist Iraq and the Communist block – to intervene in regional and even domestic affairs, therefore the power hiatus should be minimized. According to historical documents, the Kuwaiti prime minister and crown prince, Jabir al-Ahmed Al Sabah even advised the British government to hand over the Gulf to the Saudis [Friedman, 2017, 114]. As this idea did not come to life, Kuwait constantly tried to make the nine emirates compromise on as many issues as possible, as they saw parallel independences as a threat to stability.

Oman, on the other hand, only passively pledged support for the plans of the federation of the nine [Kechichian, 1995, 77-78]. The Sultan's attention was stuck on fighting the domestic threats from the rebellion of the Dhofari Marxists, a fight in which his strategy was to gather regional support [Owen, 1973, 271]. That is why Sultan Qaboos was among the firsts who welcomed the creation of the UAE as a hopefully powerful neighbour with whom security cooperation is possible. Oman did not have any large claims over the smaller emirates and did not seek to assimilate the tiny emirates into some kind of "Greater Oman", to the surprise of many diplomats [Wright, 2011c, 306].

All in all, we can see from the case of the talks regarding a possible Gulf union in the early 1970s that size mattered greatly in the formation of security perception of the small emirates, although not in the way in which it seems the most obvious. While naturally, all entities feared their large neighbours – Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia – to varying extent, they focused more on the difference in size between each other and, in parallel with that, the distribution of power. Bahrain tried to use its demographic size to dominate the decision-making process in the forming union, although unsuccessfully. Qatar considered its own perceptual size greater than that of Abu Dhabi, making itself impossible to accept the dominance of Nahyans in the new federation. The other most important factor which determined the outcome of the discussions was the level of state-

¹⁶⁸ In the case of Kuwait the state became independent in 1961, after which the country remained under British protection [Rossiter, 2017].

formation – those two states, Kuwait and Oman, which had the highest level of institutionalisation, did not consider joining the union. The same logical connection was observable in the case of Bahrain and Qatar to a little smaller extent.

4.2. Threat perception, the Iranian revolution and the first Gulf war (1979-1989)

The Iranian revolution and the first Gulf war between Iraq and Iran (1980-1988) represented the first major foreign policy challenge for the small Gulf states. In the late 1970s, state-building was far from complete, while experience was also lacking to deal with such a huge crisis. This case will show two interesting points. First, the reasons of the different perception of external threats in the small Gulf states and second, how they treat military and political threats differently.

In order to understand the true effects of the Iranian revolution of 1979 on the small Gulf states, we have to underline that it did not represent a new security threat, but more like the transformation of an already existing one. *“Already, by virtue of its geographic size and location, its population, and its resources”*, argues Mehran Kamrava [2005, 177], *“Iran posed a formidable geostrategic challenge to its Arab neighbours to the west and south of the Persian Gulf”*. Comparing the foreign policy of the pre- and post-revolutionary foreign policy of Iran, Efraim Karsh [1989, 26] stated that *“the two regimes share a striking similarity in their perception of Iran’s regional role: both have been hegemonic powers motivated by the unyielding determination to assert Iran’s supremacy throughout the Gulf”*. The *“Persian Gulf is a Persian lake”* in the Iranian social memory, *“which means Iran is the main littoral power”* [Marschall, 2003, 5], the rightful hegemon of the region.

Under the Shah, Iran’s role in the Cold War system was to act as a stabilizing entity in the region, to suppress revolutionary movements and to protect American interests [Theberge, 1973] – that is why Tehran supported the Omani stabilization efforts in the Dhofar region. Nonetheless, under the image of a good ally to the Americans, Tehran used the situation to act on its own regional interests. This was especially observable in the 1970s, as Iranian activities intensified in the region [Zabih, 1976]. Reasons for this growing interest include the politicisation of oil in 1973 as well as the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Gulf, which, according to the Iranian government, represented an opportunity to shut out extra-regional interference in the region. Despite being a strong ally of the United States, the Shah warned the American government in an

interview of the New York Times conducted in 1969 that they should not replace the British Empire in the region [Marschall, 2003, 7].

Enjoying American sympathy, Iran acted out to achieve its interests by the seizure of the several smaller islands previously belonging to Sharjah (Abu Musa), Ras al-Khaima (Tunb islands) and Oman (Umm al-Ghanam) in the early 1970s. After that, the main interest of Tehran was to preserve the 1971 status quo, namely to conserve these territorial gains and to keep further superpower interference out. The once revisionist actor became a pro-status quo force. Consequently, by the mid-1970s, the biggest threat to this system was posed by Iraq, due to its territorial claims on Iranian territories, the Satt el-Arab debate, as well as the Soviet orientation of Baghdad, which showed support for the Dhofar rebellion in Oman in the 1960s.

Despite being a larger, stronger and more powerful neighbour, the role of Iran was somewhat acceptable to the Gulf monarchies. While they were not able to balance Iran and the overweight of the Persian country was overwhelming, the international situation was bearable and even beneficial for the survival of the small Gulf states.

What changed in the Iranian foreign policy after 1979 revolved “*around both the nature of the aspired hegemony and the success to attain this goal. Whereas the Shas perceived hegemony in purely geopolitical terms, namely assertion of Iran as the strongest power in the Gulf and attainment of general recognition of this fact, the Islamic Republic has extended its hegemonic claims from the geopolitical to the spiritual (or ideological) domain as well, envisaging Iran’s supremacy as taking place within an entirely new, and hitherto unprecedented system – that of an Islamic order*” [Karsh, 1989, 26]. This changed the game and has determined the threat perception of the small Gulf states until today.

The Iranian revolution grew out of the mostly economically motivated demonstrations and strikes organised since 1976 [Kamrava, 2005, 140]. Many different political, social and economic power groups joined a more and more anti-regime movement, including anti-establishment political parties, guerrilla organizations, independent intellectuals, and the clergy [Kamrava, 2005, 149-151]. The revolution swept away the old regime, and the Islamist fraction led by Rumollah Khomeini took the power – as a result of the historical referendum taking place in the last days of March, 1979, the new political system turned out to be an Islamic Republic.

It is important to bear in mind that similarly to all states in the region, major political change did not happen overnight and the institutionalisation of the new system was a lasting process. Mehran Kamrava [2005, 154-156] divided the history of the new Iranian state into three republics: the first between 1980 and 1988, which was the most radical due to stabilizing the new order and fighting the eight-year long war with Iraq; the second between 1989 and 1997, the era of consolidation, modernization, recovery and path-searching after the death of Ajatollah Rumollah Khomeini, and the third phase has lasted since 1997, which is dominated by the political fight between the “moderates” and the “conservatives”. As the Iranian state-building process went on, the threat posed by Iran also changed for small Gulf states.

The events taking place in 1979 had lasting regional and international consequences. The “guardian” of the Gulf was defeated and a new, anti-American power replaced it. Moreover, the leaders of Iran proclaimed that they would support the spread of their values and ideology to other countries in the Middle East. In the words of Ajatollah Khomeini,¹⁶⁹

“We should try to export our revolution to the world. We should set aside the thought that we do not export our revolution, because Islam does not regard the various Islamic countries differently and is the supporter of all the oppressed peoples of the world. On the other hand, all the superpowers and the [great] powers have risen to destroy us.”

Naturally, it is questionable whether the Iranian government actually wanted to actively export the revolution or to intervene militarily after 1979. Leading politicians themselves did not agree on the question. The first interim government led by Mehdi Barzargan rejected the idea of any tangible interference with neighbours’ domestic affairs, even if Ajatollah Khomeini, prior to the revolution, appointed representatives to lead the Shia community in Bahrain and Kuwait [Gause, 2010, 46-51]. Abol-Hasan Bani-Sadr, the interim president, proclaimed that the revolution will not be victorious if it is not exported. Moreover, a few politicians outright threatened Bahrain with an intervention. In September 1979, Ibrahim Yazdi, the member of the interim government said in a public speech in Qom that *“since the ruler of Bahrain oppresses the nation, does not abide by*

¹⁶⁹ Cited by Kamrava, 2005, 176.

Islamic laws and confiscates the public wealth, we wrote to him and told him 'if you do not want to stop oppressing the people, and restore Islamic laws, we will call on the people to demand annexation to the Islamic government of Iran' [cited by Marschall, 2003, 34].¹⁷⁰ Sadeq Rohani, a member of the Revolutionary Council, said that Iran should invade Bahrain if Shias do not take control. While these comments sound serious, it should be noted that Mohamed Montazeri – one of the leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – almost immediately denied the claim and said that Rohani is a CIA agent who does not represent the Iranian government [Ostovar, 2016, 105].

It is important to note that while the aggressive rhetoric was fortified after the revolution in 1979 and became more ideological, Iranian claims were not new in the Gulf. As I already mentioned in part 4.1., the Iranian government wanted to melt Bahrain into itself even before 1979. The claims over the island state derived from three principles – protecting disenfranchised Shia communities, restoring Persian-Iranian hegemony in the Gulf, and balancing Saudi Arabia in the region [Belfer, 2014, 32]. These principles did not emerge as a result of the Islamic revolution, they were merely strengthened by it with an ideological layer. The novelty of the events was due to the fact that “*while the Arab monarchies in the Gulf had distrusted the shah’s regional ambitions, they knew that he did not seek to destabilize them domestically*” [Gause, 2010, 50].

The Iranian revolution war perceived differently in the small Gulf states [Baktiari, 1993, 72; Gause, 2010, 46-51]. Initially, two ideas were circulating in the Arab monarchies – to reject the Iranian revolution and discredit it, or to acknowledge its legitimacy and try to maintain normal and friendly relations. In the first months, the second option was stronger as Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE were sharing it, but in a little more than a year, the tables turned.

The first sign that the Iranian revolution is quite threatening was a series of demonstrations inspired by the Iranian revolution. The two most exposed states were Bahrain and Kuwait, due to the large size of the Shia community and the presence of Iranian nationals in the country. Bahrain witnessed a series of popular pro-Iranian Shia demonstrations in August 1979, as well as between April and June, 1980. A similar event took place in Kuwait too, problematically in front of the American embassy in Kuwait

¹⁷⁰ The constant references to the Bahraini government not respecting Islamic laws can be seen as an identity taqfir attempt.

City, in November 1979. On the other hand, Qatar and Oman did not go through this process. Due to oil resources and the political strategy of the regimes, the fruits of modernization efforts were shared among Sunnis and Shias (and Ibadis in the case of Oman), which decreased the Iranian leverage in the county [Marschall, 2003, 42].

The involvement of Iran in the protests taking place in the Gulf in the early 1980s is debatable. While many state officials from the Gulf states blamed Iran, Tehran denied any involvement [Pelletiere, 1992, 61]. According to Christin Marschall [2003, 25], the Iranian government was focusing more on exporting the revolution to Iraq and Lebanon, where they had stronger connections to the Shia community than in the Gulf. On the other hand, the reception of the Iranian message was stronger in those Shia communities which were in a worse socio-economic position [ibid], which was more true for the Gulf countries, especially Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

To evaluate the effects of the Iranian revolution, one has to bear in mind the evolution of Shia Islamism in the Gulf, which served as a context for the interfering activities. Although the Shia communities were not unified in the region, they engaged in a “*sturdy but flexible organizational network which binds the members of the various Shi’i communities together. This network, informal and highly personalistic in nature, crisscrosses the Gulf, having as its nodes Shi’i homes, shops, diwaniyyahs (places of assembly), mosques and mourning centers*” [Bill, 1984, 121].

In the region, two networks emerged by the 1970s, all with ties to Iraqi and Iranian clerics [Matthiesen, 2013, 33-49; Szalai, 2018, Wright, 2017, 67-68]. The *Dawa network*, which is influenced by the political-religious centre of Najaf, was the most widespread in the Gulf, with mostly moderate leaders emphasizing the importance of dialogue with the local governments to better the socio-economic situation of the Shia communities. Their counterbalance is the *Shirazi or Modarrisi network*, which is more connected to the families of Kerbala and Iran itself. The Iranian leadership was ideologically closer to the Shirazi network as it accepted the usage of violence for achieving political goals.

As a tangible step taken to export the revolution, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (*al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li Tahrir al-Bahrayn – IFLB*) was founded by Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi al-Modarresi, under the coordination of Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri [Wright, 2017, 67-68]. The IFLB was part of the Shirazi

network, though it was seen as a proxy organization of Iran led by the brother of Mohhamed Taqi, Hadi al-Modarresi. In December of 1981, the Bahraini police arrested 73 individuals on the charge of alleged plotting to overthrow the government in the IFLB [Pelletiere, 1992, 61]. None of those arrested were Iranian – sixty were Bahraini, eleven were Saudi Arabian, and there was one from Kuwait and Oman, which shows the exposure of Gulf societies' to the networks [Wright, 2017, 68]. The alleged coup attempt contributed to the perception that Iran is fighting an asymmetric war with the Gulf states, aiming to crash them from the inside, using proxies and networks [Wright, 2017, 69].

In Kuwait, similar network-building was going on after the revolution. Due to the local particularities, Iran wanted to use the members of the Dawa network to infiltrate the Kuwaiti Shia community [Hunter, 1988, 747]. The authorities suspected that Abbas al-Muhri, the brother-in-law of Ajatollah Khomeini [Commins, 2014, 235], was appointed to a similar position than Hadi al-Modarresi in Bahrain – he was arrested in September, 1979 and eventually got deported from the country with his family, all members of which were stripped of their citizenship [Boghardt, 2006, 33]. Kuwait also kicked people having Iranian citizenship out of the country, as well as some Lebanese and Iraqi nationals [Hunter, 1988, 747-748].

Saddam Hussein, who became the president of Iraq on the 16th of July, 1979, realised that the Iranian revolution and the fear it created among the Gulf states and across the Middle East in general can be used to push for regional dominance. In the words of Mehran Kamrava [2005, 177], *“by 1979-80, the Arab world desperately needed a new hero, a new leader who would inspire confidence, project power, personify the Arabs' resurgence and dispel their collective malaise. Nasser was long gone; Sadat had betrayed the Arab cause by negotiating with the Zionist enemy; and the bombastic Qaddafi was too removed from the heart of the Arab world”*. By defending the Arab Sunni world from Iran, *“Saddam saw himself as the only natural standard-bearer of the Arab world; the only one capable of restoring to the Arabs the glory they deserved, defending the honor and territory of the Arab peoples”* [ibid]. Moreover, Iraq wanted to settle the territorial disputes with Iran once and for all, including the one over the control of the Shatt el-Arab [Sirriyeh, 1985].

To achieve this aim, Saddam wanted to use the small Gulf states to gather the necessary financial and normative support to wage war on Iran on the one hand and to

occupy the leader's position in the Arab World. Before 1979, the small Gulf states aimed at balancing between Iraq and Iran, but, according to an Omani official, "*with the success of the revolution, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf panicked – in a view of revolutionary slogans, revolutionary ideas and the West telling them that the revolution would spread. At that time, the Gulf countries needed a regional power to counter Iran. It was a good opportunity for Iraq to take that role*" [Marschall, 2003, 66]. To further persuade the Gulf states, Saddam Hussein offered to send troops to Bahrain and Kuwait, and demanded the return of Abu Musa and the Tunb islands to the UAE in October 1979 [Marschall, 2003, 67]. During 1980, both countries – Iran and Iraq – sent delegations to the small Gulf states (the former to Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, the latter to Oman) to persuade them about the evilness of the other and requesting support in the case of a possible attack.

In these efforts, Iraq was much more successful. While the role of the Gulf states in encouraging or approving an Iraqi attack on Iran is not completely clear, it can be assumed that they were convinced by Iraq between May and September, 1980 [Gause, 2010, 63]. According to Iranian and Kuwaiti newspaper sources, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, alongside the UAE and Saudi Arabia, agreed to lend 14 billion USD to support a military attack on the 19th of September, 1980, three days before the start of the war [Baktiari, 1993, 74-75].

After a few months of border clashes and growing political tension, the Iraqi army attacked Iran on the 22nd of September, 1980. The war between the two giants lasted for eight years, representing a constant threat to the Gulf states. The war is usually divided into three periods by researchers [Gause, 2010, 57-58]: the first period between September 1980 and the summer of 1982, during which Iraq was in offensive on Iranian territory; the second between 1982 and 1987, during which most of the fights took place on Iraqi soil as a result of an Iranian counter-attack; and the third in 1987 and 1988, the final year, which led to a stalemate and a cease-fire in July, 1988.

The confrontation between the two giants did not only threaten them with direct military confrontation but also meant that the region, once again, got exposed to superpower rivalry as they both had their stake in the developments. Moreover, the activities of Iran also changed as a result of the war – while in the first months and years Iran tried to inspire massive demonstrations, later they directly attacked ships with the

flag of Gulf states and organised sabotage operations, especially from 1984 [Marschall, 2003, 34; Wright, 2017, 69].

Kuwait was geopolitically the most exposed to the fighting between Iraq and Iran, and the victory of the latter would have meant a radical transformation of the direct environment of the country. This was not far from happening. In February, 1986, the Iranian military forces managed to seize the Faw Peninsula, which enabled them “*to potentially cut off Iraq’s access to the Persian Gulf, attack Basra to the north, and target Iraqi communications lines to Kuwait*” [Ostovar, 2016, 93]. According to a leading Iranian politician, “*Faw (...) is possibly on the way to Saddam’s defenders in the region. This is terrifying to them. They’re witnessing our dominance over the Persian Gulf, which has been one of the most important outcomes of this operation*” [Ostovar, 2016, 94-95].

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Supporting the war ambitions of Iraq put a target sign on Kuwait. In 1980, a Kuwaiti airliner was hijacked and the offices of the Kuwait Oil Company in London was bombed. In the same year, two explosives went off at the office of the al-Rai al-Amm newspaper, which represented the first attack on Kuwaiti soil [Boghardt, 2006, 42-43]. In October of 1981, an Iranian aircraft attacked Kuwaiti oil fields [Pelletiere, 1992, 61]. In 1983, a series of coordinated explosions took place, while in 1985, the authorities stopped an assassination attempt on the emir himself [Gause, 2010, 77]. Between 1984-1987 altogether 28 ships with Kuwaiti flags were hit by Iranian naval forces as retaliation for the support given to Iraq [Ostovar, 2016, 96; Ahrari, 1993, 143].¹⁷² The culmination of spill-over attacks on Kuwaiti tankers and the Iranian capture of Faw led to deeper anxiety in Kuwait about the prospect of direct military confrontation with Iran [Boghardt, 2006, 104].

Another way in which the crisis of the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war effected the Gulf states was the energy market. In the framework of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which was founded in 1960, the small Gulf states, alongside Saudi Arabia, cooperated with Iran to determine the level of oil production and to thus effect global oil prices. Tensions in the organization started to

¹⁷¹ The territory was retaken by Iraq only in 1988, a few months before the conclusion of the war.

¹⁷² In comparison, seven Bahraini ships and only two Qatari ships and a single Emirati ship were recorded to have been hit between 1984 and 1987. The Kuwaiti casualties were only outnumbered by the Saudi ones with 36 ships being attacked [Ahrari, 1993, 143].

surface in the mid-1970s as Iran had revenue shortage and due to the political tensions in the country, it needed more profit, but other states, especially Saudi Arabia and Algeria, did not want to change the production level [Halliday, 1981, 11]. Due to the strikes in the Iranian energy sector and the collapse of the old regime by 1979, oil prices rose significantly very quickly, which led to the collapse of the OPEC regulatory system – at one point in March 1979, the Saudi oil minister basically said that the pricing system in place turned out to be a “free-for-all” system [Gause, 2011, 52-53]. This process, while lasted for a definite period of time, had positive effects on small Gulf states as their oil incomes rose significantly.

The reaction of the smaller Gulf states to the Iranian revolution and the first Gulf war differed to some extent, depending on their perception of the importance of the two dimensions of the threat (see Chart 42). As I already described, the danger coming from the events of 1979 and 1980 had a military dimension (physical attacks and spill-overs) and a political one (domestic and ideological movements). *“These weak, rich states are vulnerable to internal subversion or external attack”* [Rubin, 1989, 121] at the same time. What shaped the strategy of the regime is the relative perceived importance of the military threat – if they considered it to be great, like in the case of Bahrain and Kuwait, they concentrated more on the tools with which they could tackle them. On the other hand, Oman and Qatar did not feel the military threat to be that great, so they prioritised domestic stability.

Chart 42: The threat perception of the four Gulf states regarding the Iranian revolution and the first Gulf war

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar
Military threat	High, due to the historical claims by Iran over Bahrain	High, due to the geopolitical exposure to the war	Low, due to the distant location from the events and somewhat stronger military	Low, due to the distant location from the events

Political threat	High, due to the Shia majority	High, due to the presence of the Shia networks in the country	Low, due to the lower ratio of Shias in the society and the lack of sectarian tensions	Low, due to the lower ratio of Shias in the society and the lack of sectarian tensions
Joint policy response	Cooperating with superpowers (with the US first and foremost) Establishing the GCC			
Individual policy response	Supporting Iraq and cracking down on Shia networks	Supporting Iraq, cracking down on Shia networks and reopening the National Assembly	Active neutrality, mediating between Iraq and Iran	Passive neutrality with limited support for Iraq

The two dimensions (the military and the political) of the threat needed different tools to tackle and these might be contradicting with each other. The primary form of defending the countries in military terms was balancing the Iranian threat with allying more with Iraq [Gause, 2010, 50], especially after the attacks on Gulf ships by Iran getting regular [Wright, 2017, 69]. Exact numbers are not available regarding the amount provided by the Gulf states to Baghdad, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia gave Iraq loans and grants worth approximately 25 to 50 billion USD [Ostovar, 2016, 81]. Besides financial support, Gulf monarchies, primarily Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, gave Iraq access to ports and military facilities [Gause, 2010, 76]. Kuwait, alongside Jordan and Turkey, also helped Iraq to find new overland routes to sustain its foreign trade relations [Alnasrawi, 1986, 874].

Since the revolution came only a few months after the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the two questions were connected as the Iraqi leadership was eager to isolate Egypt (as it was seen in a meeting taking place in Baghdad at the end of 1979), therefore in order

to get closer to Baghdad, the Gulf states had to loosen ties with Cairo. All small Gulf states, besides Saudi Arabia, decided to do so, except for one – Oman.

Sultan Qaboos did not break relations with either Egypt or Iran in the late 1970s for several reasons. First of all, Sultan Qaboos did not fear the export of the revolution as its Shia minority was well integrated and were mostly of Indian origin (see part 3.1.2. and 3.3.) [Marschall, 2003, 42]. Second, Oman did not want Iraqi influence to grow in the Gulf. Baghdad had a history of supporting the Dhofari rebels, which was unacceptable for Muscat. Second, Oman wanted to keep communication ties open with Iran due to maritime stability.

Even during the Iranian-Iraqi war, Oman had the most neutral position in the region and even tried to mediate between the two parties [Kechichian, 1995, 110-112; Valeri, 2017, 156-157]. Sultan Qaboos did not break diplomatic ties with Iran, as he remembered the assistance which Iran gave the country in the fight against the Dhofar rebellion. The Omani leadership was quite suspicious of the ambitions of Saddam Hussein – they did not let the Iraqi army use their facilities, even when Iran did not respect the territorial integrity of Oman in the Persian Gulf. Sultan Qaboos felt that Iraq believes that “*Arab duty dictates that we should support it without reservations and regardless of the consequences*”. Nonetheless, “*Iran, as a Muslim country, deserved similar assistance because of its Islamic credentials*” [Kechichian, 1995, 111-112]. The Omani Sultan maintained his position even if he also admitted that Iran was much less open to the Omani mediation efforts than Iraq.

Oman also actively contributed to the resolution of the conflict [Valeri, 2017, 157; Allen – Rigsbee, 200, 191]. In 1987, a special representative of the Omani government, Thuwayni bin Shihab mediated between Iraq and Iran, and also convinced the Irani leadership to accept the UN cease-fire resolution of 1988.

While Qatar did perceive the Iranian revolution as a threat, it did not want to side with Iraq, due to two reasons [Kamrava, 2017, 172-174]. First, the Thani regime feared that due to the military might of Iran, Tehran can easily retaliate (as it did in the case of Kuwait). Second, they feared that cooperating with Saddam Hussein might jeopardize the domestic equilibrium between Sunnis and Shias, which so far had not represented a challenge for the country. Qatar did not cease diplomatic ties with Iran as for example Bahrain did after the alleged coup attempt, and tried to remain as neutral as it could.

Nonetheless, as a result of the start of the tanker war, the fights got very close to Qatari borders; at one point, a massive oil slick had almost reached Qatari desalination plants. This led to some confusion and inconsistencies in the Qatari foreign policy, which included advocating for more sanctions on Iran on the one hand and simultaneously engaging in reconciliatory dialogue with Islamic Republic on the other.

In another form of achieving military security the Gulf states also looked for superpower protection. At one point, Oman invited the American, British and German fleets to patrol the Low Gulf seas, fearing further instability. Nonetheless, upon the proclamation of Saddam's Arab Charter (which called for the neglect of superpower participation in the conflict),¹⁷³ they withdraw their claim [Pelletiere, 1992, 30]. Later, in 1986, after the shock of the Iranian capture of Faw, Kuwait invited both the Soviet Union and the United States to send naval patrols to overview security and stability off shores. The most striking of this initiative was the fact that Kuwait did not only ask the US but its foe as well [Pelletiere, 1992, 124].

It is debatable whether Bahrain and Kuwait made a mistake by putting too much emphasis on handling the military threat even at the expense of internal stability. With the revolution, Iran changed from a traditional security threat based on the inequality of power and size to a political threat which is, theoretically and practically, able to interfere in the domestic affairs of the small Gulf states. Iran "*made the methodology clear*", argues James A. Bill [1984, 118]: "*force is considered unnecessary, counterproductive, and anti-ethical to the tenets of Islam*". Even Khomeini himself said in 1982 that "*by exportation of Islam we mean that Islam be spread everywhere. We have no intention of interfering military in any part of the world*" [ibid].

The political threat posed by the Iranian revolution included three elements. First of all, naturally, there was the Shia element – a revolution built on the support of Shia Islamism with strong network connections in Iraq and the Gulf countries can radicalise Shia minorities. Second, the existence of a state itself, which is based on the mixture of Islamist and democratic elements, can be seen as a threat to the monarchic-autocratic political system of the Gulf states. "*For Gulf Arabs dissatisfied with the political status quo in their own countries, neighbouring Iran presents a readily observable alternative*

¹⁷³ The Arab Charter was born after the refusal of a deeper security cooperation with Iraq by the Gulf states [Legrenzi, 2011, 29].

model of government. They may not accept an official Iranian label of “Islamic democracy”, but they do perceive genuine citizen participation in the government process, a popular role which is generally anathema to the ruling families” [Hooglund, 1992, 20]. “Populist Islamic political rule in Iran (...) has appeal for the lower and middle classes of the Gulf states. The revolution was, after all, a movement carried out by the masses” [Bill, 1984, 118].

That is why, primarily, the Iranian revolution was a political, and not necessarily a military threat. “*The New Islamic Republic*”, argues Gregory Gause [2010, 50], “*was weaker military, but much more aggressive towards them, politically encouraging domestic opposition and openly proclaiming the monarchy was ‘non-Islamic’*”. The Gulf monarchies realised that the second element is more dangerous to their stability, therefore they used a sectarian narrative to interpret the events, thus trying to hinder cooperation between the Sunnis and Shias in their societies [Boghart, 2006, 30-31].

The third element of the Iranian political threat is very much connected to the phenomenon of identity taqfir described in part 2.2. Iran wanted to persuade Muslims all around the world that the leaders of neither the monarchies, nor Arab nationalist republics have been faithful to Islamic principles [Sreedhar, 1982, 255-256] due to their domestic policies as well as their foreign policy orientation. Ayatollah Khomeini frequently used the term “enemies of Islam” in his speeches [Ahrari, 1985, 49], even for Muslim people and powers, which is a clear way of the usage of identity taqfir. Facing such a narrative, the small Gulf states did not only have to defend themselves domestically and internationally, but also had to prove to their societies that they are doing it while adhering to the Islamic principles.

At the end of the day, the exportability of the revolution was dependent on those willing to “import the revolution” in the Gulf countries. The reasons why for example the Saudi Shias of al-Hasa – and arguably the Bahraini Shias – were inspired by the events of 1979 were more of socio-economic nature [Naruzzaman, 2012, 543] and did not result from the direct interference. Iran certainly took many actions to persuade the citizens of the Gulf countries that they should rise up, for example in March 1982, when the Association of Militant Clerics and the Revolutionary Guards in Tehran gathered members of the *ulema* from Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and other states

[Marschall, 2003, 28]. Nonetheless, these activities just wanted to capitalise on an already existing problem.

Naturally, the Gulf states realised that they have to deal with the political dimension of the problem. The most important measure taken in this regard was the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981. Of course, the negotiations of the Gulf union between the independent monarchies dated back to the 1970s, but the Iranian revolution and the break-out of the Iraq-Iran war gave the necessary impetus for the talks.

Matteo Legrenzi [2011, 27-33] describes the negotiations which lead to the creation of the integration, showing two important points. Firstly, the GCC was meant to deal with internal political problems and not with military threats or other questions. *“The GCC is not an experiment in political unification, but rather a flexibly organized council of states whose members remain in constant communication with one another. It is designed to stand independent of the two warring Gulf powers, Iran and Iraq, and to develop enough credibility and strength to deter superpower intervention into the region”* [Bill, 1984, 123]. The fact that the GCC was seen more as a political security and not military security cooperation by the founders is proven by the fact that after its creation, in 1982 (upon the previously mentioned claims made by the Bahraini government that Iran hired 73 people to plot against the government) Saudi Arabia made defence agreements with Oman, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar [Marschall, 2003, 36].

Second, different threat perceptions determined the different viewpoints of the six countries – while Oman was focusing on maritime security, Kuwait wanted to put more emphasis on cultural and educational cooperation, in order to avoid the perception that the GCC is a Western-oriented security organization.

Eventually, the GCC evolved into more of an organization of political security than military cooperation. The only manifestation of the latter was the creation of the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF) in 1986, after a series of joint exercises of the GCC member states. The military capability of the PSF is based on the Saudi contingent and does not represent a strong force in the peninsula but rather a symbolic manifestation of solidarity, for example after the Iranian conquest of Faw [Legrenzi, 2011, 18].

Two additional steps were taken by Bahrain and Kuwait to tackle the domestic political pressure caused by the Iranian regime [Bill, 1983, 123]. First, governments put more and more pressure on the Shia population, a practice which was taken from Saudi

Arabia and Iraq. In Kuwait, high level Shia bureaucrats were forced out of their jobs, while fewer and fewer permits were given to the Shia communities to build mosques or huseiniyyas. In October 1979, a new law prohibited the private meeting of more than 20 people without prior approval of the authorities, and also expelled Iranian nationals from the country [Boghardt, 2006, 34-38]

Second, small Gulf states started to reinforce institutions which represented the establishment and mainstream Islam(ism) vis-à-vis the populist Islam(ism) represented by Sunni fundamentalists. Their policies aimed to appease the domestic Islamist sentiment on the one hand and cracking down on potential revolutionaries [Rubin, 1989, 123] on the other. In Kuwait, the parliament, which was dissolved in 1976, was reinstated in 1981 [Boghardt, 2006, 34-38]. While the regime officially declined to say that organizing elections had anything to do with the Iranian revolution, the timing tells volumes. The government manipulated the results (with tools like gerrymandering) to lower the votes casted to both Shias and Arab nationalists in favour of Islamists and the bidoon who they thought would be a pillar against the anti-establishment forces. Censorship rules in local newspapers were also eased. These liberalising tendencies lasted until the mid-1980s – as a result of the growing feeling of insecurity after the Iranian capture of Faw, the Kuwaiti emir dissolved the National Assembly [Boghardt, 2006, 108], which is a clear sign that the government wanted to focus more on the international level of the conflict. He officially declared that the institutions only divide Kuwaitis in a moment of crisis [Commins, 2014, 237].

These steps taken by Bahrain and Kuwait did not ease the domestic tension on the regimes, as terrorist activities and anti-establishment movements remained to be organised extensively. In Kuwait, a very worrisome development was the fact that even in the second half of the 1980s, Kuwaiti citizens were involved in plotting terrorist attacks in the country, which “*represented the most serious breach of the fundamental social contact between citizens and the ruling family*” [Boghardt, 2006, 103]. The situation was worsened by the 1982 financial crisis, which caused the collapse of the Suq al-Manakh, a semi-official stock exchange of the country [Commins, 2014, 236], erasing the savings of many Kuwaiti families.

In Bahrain, no major domestic demonstrations happened between 1981 and 1994, nonetheless it was during the early years of the Iraq-Iran war that Shia religious

identity became extensively used as a symbol of protesting the regime, while the Bahraini government also embraced “*a sectarian definition of concepts of loyalty and disloyalty, [which] tempted to see any Shia as a potential threat*” [Louer, 2013, 247]. The security forces went through a transformation as a result of which Shia members were expelled and the army was “*Sunnitized*” [ibid], conserving the anti-establishment attitude of Shia communities.

In the case of the Iranian revolution and the Iraq-Iran war, we can see that the strategies of the small Gulf states were determined by their threat perception, more specifically the perception of the relative importance of the military and the political component of the crisis. Building on the framework developed by Péter Marton, István Balogh and Péter Rada [2015, 56-64], we can say that in the Gulf security complex, the securitisation of the Iranian revolution did not take place consistently and major differences took place in the securitisation of the threat as Bahrain and Kuwait over-emphasized the military component. The reason behind this is probably that the regimes thought that their domestic political position is stronger than it was. Building on the thoughts of James Bill [1984, 122], we can say that there were two reasons for the regimes to feel themselves stable. First of all, the small size of the population combined with high income from resources, enabled them to provide relatively high living standards (as I described in the third chapter), while, on the other hand, the tribal structure and small population created the feeling (or the illusion) that they managed to remain close to the people. Nonetheless, problems including corruption, inequality, political development, social justice and intensifying cooperation with the West (see the description of security dilemmas in part 3.1.4.) created social tensions, which were amplified by siding with Iraq and repressing the Shia minorities. Disregarding these developments, Kuwait and Bahrain exposed themselves to external interference, which led to chronic vulnerability.

This case also shows that the reason for the vulnerability of the Gulf states derive not primarily from their size, but rather the interrelationship of smallness and mismanaged heterogeneity. In the Middle Eastern system (as described in part 2.2.), this combination can be lethal to domestic stability and regime survival.

4.3. Alliance-making, superpowers and the second and third Gulf war (1990-2003)

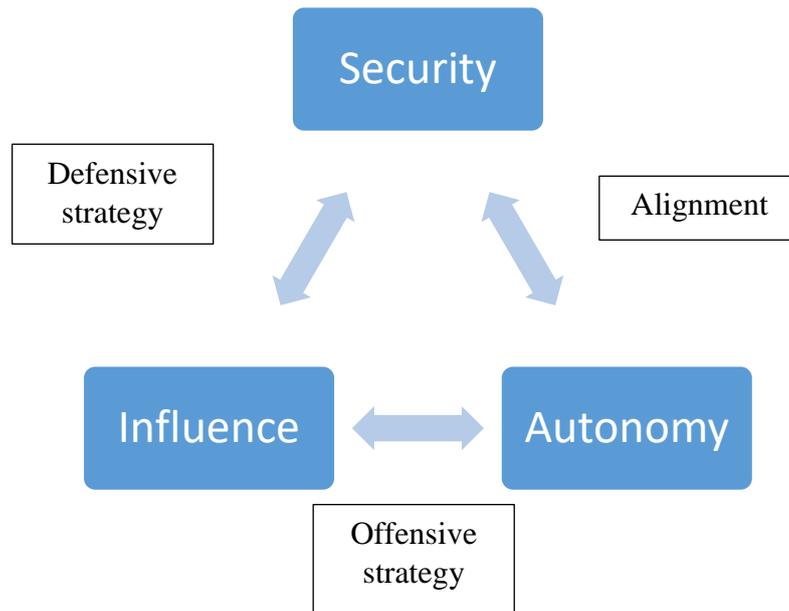
The second (1990-1991) and third (2003) Gulf crises represented the most profound transformation of the regional balance of power in the post-Cold War era in the Gulf

region, therefore it had major effects on the foreign and security policy of the small Gulf states. During the first war, one of them, Kuwait, was attacked by Iraq in 1990 and an international coalition led by the United States had to intervene to restore the territorial integrity of the Emirate. Thirteen years later, in 2003, the regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown by another coalition, pushing Iraq into decade-long instability, igniting a regional competition for influence in the country.

Both crises can be analysed from many different points of view. In order to narrow down the investigation, I will be interested only in the way in which the two wars effected the alliance-making policy of the small Gulf states and interpret the changes in it in connection with global powers.

The alliance policy of the small Gulf states can be understood as a choice in the triangle of security, influence and autonomy [Almezaini – Rickli, 2017b, 12-15], illustrated in Chart 43. All three values cannot be reached at the same time, therefore the smaller Gulf states had to choose their priorities. The choice is manifested in three policies: firstly, *alignment* means to join a permanent alliance or coalition, which provides security and influence; secondly, a *defensive strategy* focuses on security and autonomy, thus avoids long term alliances, prefers neutrality and aims to stay out of conflicts; and thirdly, an *offensive strategy* means to prioritise autonomy and influence, in practice pursuing foreign policy aims actively without joining any long standing security alliance.

In this conceptual framework, the alliance policy of smaller Gulf states had three distinct periods. The first, starting from independence until the second Gulf war, was mostly characterised by a defensive strategy, which excluded long lasting formal alliances with great powers and trying to avoid involvement in a conflict. The second stage, between the second and third Gulf war, witnessed a turn to alignment policy with formalising security ties with the United States. The third stage, starting from the third Gulf war, marked a slow alteration of this alignment policy to be more diverse and individualised.

Chart 43: The triangle of alliance policy in the Gulf

As it was described in part 4.2., the small Gulf states did not engage in deep security cooperation with extra-regional partners until the Kuwaiti crisis. As Gregory Gause put it [2010, 127-128], Gulf states wanted to keep Washington “*on the horizon*’, *close enough to come to their defence but far enough away to allow some political space between them and the United States*”. In practice, the deepness of relations varied in the four cases, with Bahrain having the most advanced ties before 1990. Bahrain hosted the biggest naval port used by American ships in the region since 1949 [Joyce, 2012, 40], which, in 1966, included the USS Valcour, the flagship of the American Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) fleet [Joyce, 2012, 27]. The American military presence – like previously the British one – was welcomed by the Bahraini government as they feared that Communist inspired political networks or Arab nationalist might manifest in the country. Nonetheless, until the late 1980s, American-Bahraini relations did not evolve to a great extent, even the Bahraini ports were used by only a single digit number of vessels [Gause, 2010, 127]. On the other hand, Bahrain was the last small Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union (which took place only in 1990) [Melkumyan, 2015, 6].

Due to the Marxist nature of the Dhofar rebellion, Oman was very suspicious of the Soviet Union – did not even establish diplomatic relations with it until 1985 [Commins, 2014, 165; Melkumyan, 2015, 5]. Nonetheless, Sultan Qaboos was positively open to cooperation with The United States – he signed an arms treaty with Washington

in 1975, which provided TOW missiles for Muscat to fight the Dhofar rebellion [Kechichian, 1995, 146]. Five years later, in 1980, the two parties signed the so-called Facilities Access Agreement (FAA), which was the most profound security agreement between a Gulf state and the US up until that point [Baabood, 2017, 109]. The FAA allowed the United States to use its military installations in Salalah, Thumrayt, Masirah Island, Mutrah, Seed and Khassab, in exchange for an economic and military assistance of approx. 80-100 million USD [Kechichian, 1995, 147-150].

Ten years before the Kuwaiti crisis, the agreement represented an anomaly not just in the Gulf, but in the Arab region as well, which is proven by the fact that Arab and GCC governments heavily criticised the FAA [Gause, 2010, 127]. Even during the talks preceding the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Oman was seen as conducting an openly pro-American foreign policy, which hampered the finding of a common denominator [Strategic Survey, 1983, 79].

Relations with Qatar were tense in the 1980s, as a result of Doha recognizing the Soviet Union and establishing diplomatic ties with it on the 1st of August, 1988 and engaging in arms cooperation right away [Fromherz, 2012, 105-106]. The reason behind the step which surprised both Saudi Arabia and the United States was that Washington sold Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to Bahrain, while it refused to do so in the case of Qatar. The Thani regime decided to acquire the weapons from the black market, through relations with the Soviet block. The following American-Qatari dispute froze economic and military cooperation between the countries, moreover, the American Congress banned arms sales to Qatar altogether [Blanchard, 2014, 4]. Diplomatic tensions remained tense until 1991.

The fourth small Gulf state, Kuwait, actually established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union as early as 1964 [Melkumyan, 2015, 3-5], only three years after it did so with the United States [Katzman, 2009, 4]. This development was perceived problematic in the eyes of the American government, especially since Bahrain and Qatar refused to establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union (SU) after their independence, despite Russian offers [Joyce, 2012, 42]. The Sabah regime was annoyed by the fact that throughout the decades, Moscow always sided with Iraq in its territorial disputes with Kuwait, therefore they tried to build their own backdoor relations with the Soviet Union. From this respect, it is arguable that the SU was more important for Kuwait than the US.

While relations remained limited and only referred to technical and cultural cooperation, they signed a military agreement in 1975.

Later, during the Iraq-Iran war, Kuwait tried to upgrade relations with the SU, a step which was seen as a security guarantee of territorial integrity for the country. They were so serious about maintaining positive and trustful relations with Moscow that before agreeing to the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, they wanted to have the diplomatic approval of the Soviet Union [Legrenzi, 2011, 31]. That was the reason why Kuwait refused the Omani initiative to create a full-fledged security cooperation (see the previous part), which, they feared, would look like a security alliance with the West (due to the strong connections between the US and Saudi Arabia). On diplomatic forums, Kuwaiti representatives always tried to emphasize the neutrality of the GCC in relations to the Cold War setting [ibid]. Even during the height of the tensions of the Iraq-Iran war, the Kuwaiti government tried to maintain its projected non-aligned stance, which is why it called both the United States and the Soviet Union to provide defence for tankers in the Persian Gulf in 1987 (mentioned in the previous section). After this call, Moscow sent enough military presence to defend three vessels. Due to the special interests of Kuwait, American relations did not evolve considerably until the second Gulf war [Katzman, 2009, 4].

The lukewarm approach of the small Gulf states towards the United States was mutual. Despite its generally positive attitude towards them, Washington did not attain major importance for the small Gulf states before 1990. From the American perspective [Yetiv, 2008, 30-64], the primary importance of the Gulf region was conceptualised before 1990 from two perspectives – maintaining stable access to hydrocarbon resources on the one hand and containing Soviet expansion on the other. The latter aspect got stronger in the 1970s due to the Iraqi-Soviet approximation manifested in arms trade and the 1972 bilateral Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which enabled Moscow to use the Umm Qasr Iraqi base. Subsequently, the United States adopted the twin pillar policy approach, which built on the support of Iran and Saudi Arabia, as the most important actors in the region. This approach neglected small Gulf states as they were deemed unimportant in the regional balance of power. Naturally, the Iranian revolution undermined this policy, since the state which should have played the role of the counterbalance of Iraq collapsed and turned into a threat itself.

Partly due to strategic indecision and partly due to the intent and desire to see both Iraq and Iran get tired out, the US did not get involved in the war until 1981 (a policy sometimes referred to as “benign neglect”). Nonetheless, as the threat posed by Iran (both militarily and politically) seemed bigger, the United States started to side with Iraq, providing arms and other material support¹⁷⁴ in the conflict. The commitment of Washington varied significantly in the second half of the 1980s – see the Iran-contra affair for example –, but it strictly stood up to any attempts of the Soviet Union to step into the Gulf region or against any attacks on the small Gulf states. In March 1987, for example, the US agreed to reflag Kuwaiti tankers, and intensified joint US military manoeuvres with GCC states.

Thus, we can see that the American relations only started to slowly build up in the 1980s on the basis of the mutual aim of countering Iran. The first Gulf war which “reduced – but not yet eliminated – the Gulf states’ reservations about close co-operation with the US and other Western countries [Strategic Survey, 1983, 79]. In parallel, the Soviet Union started to be perceived as getting less and less influential. In the 1960s and 1970s, Moscow stood behind Iraq, the Dhofar rebels, South Yemen and several Arab nationalist regimes. Initially, the 1979 Iranian revolution was seen as an opportunity for the Soviet Union to spread its influence, nonetheless the anti-Soviet policy of the new Islamic Republic, as well as the fact that Iraq did not ask for permission from or even consult with the SU before it attacked Iran (and later Kuwait) made it more and more clear that Moscow is not a major threat to the security of the small Gulf States [Trenin, 2018, 27-34]. Since the 1980s, the SU actually followed the steps of the US in the Gulf region, siding with Iraq and later with Kuwait, which downgraded the sensitivity of the Soviet question – probably that is why small Gulf states were open to establish relations with Moscow in the second half of the 1980s.

The dynamics of regional politics nevertheless changed considerably after the end of the first Gulf war [Gause, 2010, 88-102]. Iraq was not able to capitalise on its “victory” as it hoped to do previously. The Arab Gulf states did not accept its leading role over them and stopped giving substantial aid or support to the Saddam regime. As a result, Iraqi leaders concluded that domestic, regional and global powers worked together to undermine their rule in the country. Relations with Kuwait started to gradually reiterate

¹⁷⁴ Later, Washington even shared intelligence information.

during 1990, mainly due to three reasons. First, there were unresolved territory disputes (e.g. Iraq wanted to get a foothold in islands belonging to Kuwait, such as the Bubiyan and the Failaka islands) which (re)surfaced after the end of the Iraq-Iran war. Connected to this, Iraq claimed that Kuwait illegally drained oil fields belonging to Iraq in the Rumaila oil fields with slant drilling. Second, Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of disrespecting its OPEC quotas and of artificially keeping the oil price low by overproducing it.¹⁷⁵ Third, the Iraqi government desired to get the debts of the country to the small emirate to be erased.

Sources suggest that Kuwait underplayed the seriousness of the accusations [Ibrahim, 1992, 10-11]. The government thought that such misunderstandings and issues are nothing out of the ordinary, and through diplomatic negotiations, they could be solved peacefully. In July 1990, Kuwait agreed to reduce the level of production of oil and was open to coordinate the issue of the Rumaila oil as well. Even one day before the invasion started, on the 1st of August, 1990, the Kuwait and the Iraqi government had a meeting in Jeddah, with the mediation of Saudi Arabia, to solve the aforementioned issues; eventually, the discussion was broken off when Iraq left the table due to the uncompromising stance of Kuwait in terms of debt-relief and territorial disputes.

As a result of miscalculation regarding the reactions of global and regional powers,¹⁷⁶ Iraq attacked Kuwait on the 2nd of August, 1990 [Commins, 2014, 245-246]. Due to the unpreparedness of the Kuwaiti army, Iraqi forces were able to have a quick victory and Saddam was able to announce the annexation of Kuwait to Iraq. In November, the Security Council set the 15th of January, 1991 as a deadline for Iraq to withdraw from the country and re-establish the territorial sovereignty of Kuwait. One day after the deadline passed, the United States and its allies began a six week long campaign to expel Iraqi forces, which they managed to do quickly. The quick reaction of the United States was to be attributed to two factors – first, the already mentioned strategic aim of defending safe access to oil resources in the Gulf, and second, the post-bipolar design of the global

¹⁷⁵ The Kuwaiti oil production policy aimed during the 1980s to provide the necessary fiscal background for increasing welfare benefits implemented to stabilise the domestic political situation [Commins, 2014, 235].

¹⁷⁶ Iraq was surprised to see that the Soviet Union and Egypt would support the coalition against it, while even its closest allies, Jordan and Yemen, refused to recognise the annexation of Kuwait. Moreover, Saddam Hussein did not expect Saudi Arabia to agree to American military presence in the country.

order, which included the utmost respect of territorial integrity and the rejection of military means in conflict settlement [Gause, 2010, 110-114].

Small Gulf states, except for Oman, took part directly in Operation Desert Storm [Hura et al., 2000, 191]. Kuwaiti planes participated in altogether 780 sorties (all of which were air interdictions), Bahrainis in 293 (out of which 122 were air interdiction, 152 combat air patrol, 14 offensive counterair), and Qataris in 43 (air interdictions). All of these numbers are well below the 6775 sorties conducted by Saudi Arabia, but the Kuwaiti and Bahraini data is above the that of the UAE (109).

The survival of Kuwait was important from a geopolitical perspective as well – if it had ceased to exist, Saudi Arabia would have been a direct neighbour of Iraq, exposing the most important American partner in the Gulf to the unpredictable behaviour of Saddam Hussein. Actually, in the beginning of 1991, Iraqi forces broke into Saudi territory as well as seizing the border town al-Khafji on the 29th of January [Commins, 2014, 247]. The settlement was retaken by Saudi-Qatari forces with coalition support shortly afterwards [Khadduri – Ghareeb, 2001, 174].

Naturally, the Kuwaiti crisis had profound effects on the Gulf region on different levels. In Kuwait, the Iraqi invasion was preceded by domestic political debates regarding the reinstatement of the national assembly [Commins, 2014, 247-249].¹⁷⁷ In 1989, a petition was circulating to ask the Emir to reopen the legislative institution, and while it was signed by a few thousands of people, Emir Jabir refused to meet with the organizers. In the next year, the monarch proposed a new “National Council”, which would have taken over the function of the national assembly with much more limited jurisdiction. While the opposition rejected the idea, elections took place two months before the Iraqi attack with satisfactory turnout (62%).

The seven months long occupation of Kuwait paused the debate on the surface, but on the other hand it intensified already existing tensions in the society and created new ones as well [Al Essa, 1992; Crystal, 2013, 172-180; Boghardt, 2007, 147-171]. Firstly, tension rose between those who left the country and those who stayed. The political leadership operated the government in exile, while many remained in the country, some cooperating with the Iraqis and some working against them. This cleavage was, more importantly, connected to the Sunni-Shia divide in the country, as Shias were

¹⁷⁷ For the background of the debate, see the relevant parts of 3.1.2. and 4.2.

overrepresented among those who stayed (partly because many Sunni officials had enough income to pay for vacation abroad during the summer of 1990, so they were not even in the country when the attack took place). After the war, some of these military people engaged in political organization, for example General Muhammad Badr created the 2 August Movement, which pressed for the resignation of leading officials and also for reforms. They even threatened with disobedience in case their demands would not be met.

Second, doubts regarding the loyalty of two groups in the population rose significantly. One of such communities were the bidoon, who constituted approximately three fourths of Kuwaiti armed forces personnel before the attack, as many bidoon families travelled to Iraq after the invasion – many only to find refuge at related families. A second one was the expat community, among whom, according to the Kuwaiti government, many supported the Iraqi forces during the seven months. Between April and June 1991, 164 people were tried by military courts with the charge of collaboration, almost all of whom were expats [Boghardt, 2007, 161-162]. A special attention was given to Palestinians who, on the eve of the attack, constituted approx. one fourth of the population. As a result, many expats – especially of Palestinian or Iraqi origin – were expelled in the next years (thousands each year in the early 1990s), a tendency which led to the changes of migration policies in the Gulf outlined in part 3.1.2.

Third, the parliamentary movement, which was silenced by the war, was once again demanding political reform loud and clear. They were supported by the international coalition and the general atmosphere after the armed conflict [Commins, 2014, 278]. In order to divide the parliamentary opposition, the government announced that the National Council will convene on the 9th of July, 1991, with the same composition as it was elected during the summer elections of 1990. Nonetheless, it narrowed its mandate further and excluded the investigation of the reasons behind the dissolution of the National Assembly in 1985. On the other hand, they also announced that elections of a new National Assembly would be held in October, 1992, much later than the opposition would have hoped for.

All of these social and political effects were accompanied by the severe economic consequences of the war, which is already demonstrated by the data shown in parts 3.1.3. Broadly speaking, the Iraqi invasion effected the Kuwaiti economy in three

ways [Karsh, 1996, 747-755] – first, the puppet government established in 1990 (the “Kuwait Free Provisional Government”) started to transfer the financial assets of the Kuwaiti state;¹⁷⁸ second, Iraq wanted to confiscate the oil resources of the country, which it did not manage, but during retreat, Iraqi forces started to burn oil fields;¹⁷⁹ and third, through the destruction of industrial, welfare, educational and transport infrastructure.

On the regional level, the most important change was the development of the institutionalisation and build-up of direct American military presence in the Gulf states [Gause, 2010, 127]. The factors which enabled this process were the transformation of the Gulf-policy of the US on the one hand and that of the alliance-policy of the Gulf states on the other. The former meant the willingness of Washington to contain Iraq and Iran at the same time (dual containment) actively through advocating multilateral economic sanctions [Schwab, 2008, 67], as well as through stationing deterrent forces in the Gulf region.

The latter was a manifestation of changing security strategies and perceptions on the side of small Gulf states. “*The strong moral, political, diplomatic, and military support that the GCC received from regional and global powers during the Kuwait crisis*”, argues John Duke Anthony [1992, 121], “*convinced it of the necessity to ensure that such support will be readily forthcoming in the future, if necessary*”. Regional institutions seemed unable to solve the crisis as only the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation dealt with it – the GCC did not manage to produce any added value for the resolution [Khadduri – Ghareeb, 2001, 161]. While logistically, the small Gulf states contributed to the success of the coalition forces, their military was not directly involved as the governments “*decided not to take part in the military operations on the ground [because] their military forces were relatively small and confined to defensive purposes only*” [Khadduri – Ghareeb, 2001, 167]. Therefore, external actors were needed to restore the territorial integrity of Kuwait and to sustain the security of the Gulf states – consequently, American support is the only thing in which the GCC can trust to “*provide a sufficiently credible deterrent to a threat from either Iraq or Iran or, in a worse-case scenario, from both*” [Anthony, 1992, 132].

¹⁷⁸ More precisely the funds of the Kuwait’s Holdings abroad, the royal family and the gold and currency deposits in Kuwaiti banks.

¹⁷⁹ It took eight months to extinguish burning oil wells [Commins, 2014, 277].

The change of the alliance and foreign policy behaviour of small Gulf states can be attributed, according to L. Carl Brown [1992, 32-33], to the growing importance of the GCC states in regional politics, triggered by the Iraqi invasion. This is basically the same development which I was able to identify with the complex model of size in the investigation of changes in the normative size of Middle Eastern states in part 2.2.2. According to Brown, the strategy of smaller Gulf states prior to 1990 was based on “*defensive, reactive diplomacy with ‘protection money’ paid to potential adversaries (...), and keeping lines open to all*”. This policy, according to him, was due to the interaction of military smallness and rich hydrocarbon resources of the Gulf states, as their behaviour “*was a realistic stance for vulnerable countries that were too rich to provoke the envy and greed of their neighbours and too weak to defend themselves with their own resources*”.

In other words, the lack of recognition by the small Gulf states of their inability to relative deterrence was at the heart of the problem in 1990. “*The failure inherent in the Gulf war*”, according to Michael C. Dunn [1992, 204] , “*was the fact that there was no deterrent to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. That failure was itself a result of the lack of an adequate defence for the oil-rich states of the Arabian Peninsula*”. Arguably, even with extensive military build-up taking place not just in the small Gulf states but the UAE and Saudi Arabia as well would have not been able to defeat the Iraqi army – therefore, external protection was needed. In this situation, relative military and demographic smallness and social heterogeneity were the primary determinant variables in the changes of the alliance policy of the four states. Despite any military build-up policy, “*Gulf states cannot challenge Iran or Iraq in the future because of the small population size and the socio-political make-up of the Gulf states*” [Al Essa, 1992, 180].

As a result, they started to deepen their security cooperation with the US. Kuwait welcomed the military presence of Washington, which manifested in approx. 5,000 American troops and two dozen attack aircrafts and heavy equipment (including approx. fifty armed vehicles) in Kuwait. The naval forces stationed in Bahrain were upgraded to a fleet (the Fifth Fleet) in 1995 with approx. fifteen vessels, including an aircraft carrier stationed there. Qatar agreed to host a new military airbase near al-Udeid, and heavy military equipment, including approx. one hundred armed vehicles. While Oman, through the FAA, had already given permission to the US to use its facilities, the military presence stationed in Oman also grew significantly [Gause, 2010, 127]. Bilateral security

agreements were signed with the United States by Bahrain and Kuwait in 1991 and Qatar in 1992 [Katzman, 2009, 5; El-Katiri, 2014, 10].

During the Kuwaiti crisis, it was not yet fully clear that events would unfold accordingly. The GCC states experimented with a regional alliance which would have included Syria and Egypt as well. In February 1991, the Damascus Declaration was signed in this “*six plus two*” format, which aimed to create a permanent Egyptian and Syrian combat force stationed in the Gulf in exchange for 10 billion USD [Whitehall Papers, 1993, 35-38; Marschall, 2003, 117]. Nonetheless, debates between the participants and the general mistrust between the Syrian regime and the GCC led to the practical death of the Damascus Declaration and the withdrawal of Egyptian and Syrian forces. During this time, it was Sultan Qaboos of Oman who was appointed as the head of the GCC committee for regional security arrangements, and he was highly sceptical of the success of the Damascus Declaration all along.

Direct American military presence became the norm in the Persian Gulf. The United States became “*an integral part of the regional balance of power system, and, in fact, (...) the military hegemon in the Gulf*”, leaving behind its previous role as an “*offshore balancer*” [Ayoob, 2011, 130].¹⁸⁰ From a military security perspective, this development, alongside with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the sanction regime put on Iraq, was favourable for small Gulf states. The Communist threat ceased to have strategic importance, and while they still feared Iraq and Iran, they enjoyed American protection and access to American weapon systems [Ehteshami, 2013, 33-34]. On the other hand, such systemic frameworks favoured the positions of both Saudi Arabia and Iran, which contributed to a more binary balance of power in the Gulf region (see 2.2.1.).

Nonetheless, from a political perspective, deepening security ties had disadvantageous, if not dangerous consequences for the small Gulf states. The question which was described in part 3.1.4. as a dilemma between external defence and internal stability (and its interaction with smallness) presented itself in the early 1990s. The GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, “*emerged from the war increasingly*

¹⁸⁰ I think it is questionable whether the US was truly a military hegemon in the region. According to Gregory Gause [2011, 88], “*it is difficult to regard a country as hegemonic in a region when it did not even have embassies in two of the most important regional capitals. American military power was sufficient, however, to sustain the regional territorial and political status quo*”.

internally divided and domestically insecure” [Ayoob, 2011, 129], due to the alliance of the Muslim regimes with an “infidel” government fighting against another Muslim regime (that of Saddam Hussein). This set social developments in motion, which strengthened anti-American sentiments in the GCC states as well as the transnational network of Jihadists and their social background [Ulrichsen, 2011a, 29]. Under the policy of dual containment (and later, the global war on terror), small Gulf states were seen as logistical hubs for the execution of American foreign policy, which complicated their internal and external relations. Many speculated in the Gulf media that the US only used the Gulf crisis to capitalise on the weakness of the Gulf states to advance its agenda in the region [Kostiner, 2011, 99]. Moreover, the GCC states and the US were divided on the Palestinian issue [Schwab, 2008, 71], an aspect which was heavily used by Iran in its rhetoric to criticise the Gulf states. Due to these reasons, the small Gulf states had to keep their relations with the US “*restricted, at least in the eyes of the domestic public opinion*” [Kostiner, 2011, 99].

The process of growing American presence coincided with falling oil prices until the 2000s, which decreased the leverage of Gulf states, giving more room for Islamists and other opposition parties [Ulrichsen, 2011a, 30]. The small Gulf states realised these tendencies, they just concluded that “*the risk of internal political turmoil was lower than doing without Washington’s protection*” [Commins, 2014, 251].

To balance the negative repercussions of the American alliance and the worsening economic situation, the small Gulf states initiated a series of limited political reforms in the 1990s [Niethammer, 2011, 243-249; Ulrichsen, 2011a, 32; Commins, 2014, 277-287; Lucas, 2014, 172-173].¹⁸¹ Even during the crisis, many segments of the society – especially in Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE – started to publish articles demanding more political participation [Al Essa, 1992, 183]. In Kuwait, the re-installed National Assembly started to work in 1992, with regular elections and in 2005 it was the first Gulf state to extend voting rights to women. In Qatar, Emir Khalifa did not take social calls for more representation seriously, but his son Hamad, who overthrew his father in 1995, opened up the municipalities for popular election in 1999 and started to draft a new constitution, which came into effect in 2005. The organization of trade unions

¹⁸¹ After 2001, another motivation for further liberalization was to fit into the democracy-promotion agenda of the Bush administration. Nevertheless, the United States favoured stability over democratic reform in this region [Niethammer, 2011, 239], which was understood also by the ruling families, therefore such cosmetic reforms were enough to please their ally.

was also made legal in 2004. Hamad also promised the creation of a Consultative Assembly, but it was constantly postponed and is yet to happen. In Oman, Sultan Qaboos replaced the State Consultative Council with the Consultative Council, the members of which are selected by the Sultan from nominees elected by a small electorate of 500 voters per province. The electorate was gradually increased in the 1990s and 2000s, reaching universal suffrage in 2003. In 1996, the Sultan also issued a Basic Law, which served as a constitution for the country, but in contrast with the other Gulf states, it was never put on a referendum. In the same year, the Sultan made the legislation a bicameral body – to complement the work of the Consultative Council, he created the State Council which, together, would form the Council of Oman (Majlis al-‘Oman). Reforms were also limited in Bahrain, where the streets witnessed large demonstrations between 1992 and 1995, demanding new elections of the National Assembly, which was dissolved in 1975. A new Constitutional Council was created in 1993, but a more substantive reform process took place after the death of Emir Isa in 1999, which led to the adaptation of a new constitution in 2002 (transforming the country from an Emirate to a Kingdom). Nonetheless, internal sectarian tensions hampered a true liberalization process in the country, which was strengthened by government policies as well.

In the next decade, “*quite a bit happened in the Persian Gulf (...), but not that much changed*” [Gause, 2011, 134]. Besides the strengthening tendency of Islamist opposition and the sanction regime on the Iraqi state and society, the other important development of the 1990s was the slow opening of Iran to the Gulf states. By 1989, the Islamic Republic managed to stabilise relations with the small Gulf states and the UAE, but it was only able to re-establish diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in 1991 [Marschall, 2003, 101]. In the first decade of the post-bipolar era, Iranian foreign policy seemed to return to its pragmatic past before the 1979 revolution which was still menacing, but at least familiar and less harmful [Akbarzadeh, 2017].

Oman and Qatar, the two states most open to Iranian relations during the Iran-Iraq war, fostered the integration of Iran in the Gulf security system. Qatar, at the annual GCC summit in 1990, proposed closer ties with the Islamic Republic to counter the Iraqi threat in the future [Marschall, 2003, 110]. Between 1988 and 1991, Oman played an important role as a mediator firstly between Riyadh and Tehran, organizing a secret meeting for the Iranian and Saudi foreign ministers in May, 1989, and secondly between Baghdad and Tehran prior to the second Gulf crisis [ibid]. The words of the secretary

general of the Omani Foreign Ministry are very revealing about the way in which Oman saw the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic [Marschall, 2003, 114-115]:

“Iran tried to improve relations with the Gulf and the former Soviet Union as much as possible. It was a victory for the pragmatists. It has been Oman’s policy to help the pragmatists. If you accuse them, they will not answer, but if you have good relations, it is easier for us to influence them.”

From the perspective of the Gulf regimes, the Kuwaiti Iran-policy changed the most significantly since the 1980s. While a decade ago, Iran was seen as a primary threat to the region, now the perception was changed to a counterbalance to Iraq [Gause, 2011, 130]. Re-building relations actually started before the second Gulf crisis, as the first foreign minister level visit from Iran since the revolution took place in July, 1990 [Marschall, 2003, 104]. During the American-led counter-attack on Iraqi forces, Iran secretly opened up its space [Marschall, 2003, 110-111] and tried to diplomatically and humanitarily contribute to the resolution of the conflict, for which the Kuwaiti government remained thankful. In the 1990s, Tehran offered technical services and aid for reconstruction. Kuwaiti-Iranian relations after the second Gulf war were *“correct, not overly warm, and not hostile”*, according to Muhammad al-Sabah, the then Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States. *“It is objective and goal-driven, the aim is to contain Iraq”* [Marschall, 2003, 115]. These quotes suggest a stable relationship which is not build on trust, but more on the realization of mutual interests in some fields [Akbarzadeh, 2017].

The only country which did not significantly alter its relations with Iran was Bahrain [Wright, 2017, 70-75]. Due to the aforementioned demonstrations in the country, the government perceived internal tensions to have been provoked by Iran. Officially, the government declared that the events in 1990s were a result of direct interference by the Islamic Republic, which wanted to organize a coup similarly to 1981. This perception limited the extent to which Bahrain engaged in cooperation with Iran – while it was ready to establish diplomatic relations, it did not welcome any attempt to integrate the country into the security system. Bilateral relations changed only slightly after the death of Emir Isa – his successor, Hamad bin Isa, invited the Iranian president to the country in 2003, during which President Khatami was able to meet with Shia religious leaders, which was surprisingly indulgent from the Bahraini regime.

The next milestone in the history of the alliance policy of the small Gulf states was the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. 2001 and the attack on the Twin Towers did not represent a turning point, although it put the GCC-US relations under strain as 17 out of the 19 terrorists were from the GCC, though none from the small Gulf states (15 from Saudi Arabia and 2 from the UAE) [Ulrichsen, 2011a, 31-32]. Therefore, the most important pressure was put on the Saudi-American relations [Gause, 2010, 136-148].

The smaller Gulf states, in the first years of the global war on terror (GWOT), accommodated to the new international agenda put forward by the United States and wanted to prove their value in the new circumstances. Oman once again allowed American forces to use its facilities in the intervention against the Taliban government in Afghanistan [Al-Khalili, 2009, 118]. Bahrain contributed to the training of Afghan police forces [Kishk, 2016, 10]. After 2001, Qatar served as a mediator between the United States and the Taliban, which also opened a representation in Doha [Barakat, 2014]. These efforts can partly be attributed to the fact that they also identified non-state actors and transnational Jihadi networks as growing security threat [Ulrichsen, 2011a, 34].

In the years leading up to the 2003 intervention, two of the small Gulf states tried to dissuade the American government from the attack. Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa visited Washington in February, 2003, and tried to convince President Bush about finding a peaceful solution [Joyce, 2011, 112]. The Omani government realised that such American intervention could only stress the already existing tension between domestic stability and military alliance with the US. Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Allawi declared in a GCC Ministerial Council meeting that another war in Iraq “*will cause deep anti-American feeling and will provoke revenge and violence in Arab and Islamic countries*” [Al-Khalili, 2009, 118]. Fearing its internal stability, Sultan Qaboos tried to mediate between Saddam Hussein and President Bush – the Omani government invited the Iraqi president to Muscat on the 2nd of October, 2002, where he brought a letter. While the content of the letter is unknown, it is generally suspected that Hussein wanted Qaboos to deliver a message to Washington [Al-Khalili, 2009, 119]. The only small Gulf state which explicitly supported the Iraqi intervention was Kuwait, which wanted to see the regime of Saddam Hussein fall [Roberts, 2011a, 108].

When the war erupted in 2003, the small Gulf states did not publicly endorse the operation (except for Kuwait), but many of them contributed to its success in one way or

another [Kostiner, 2011, 100]. Kuwait was the most open in their cooperation – it opened its borders and allowed the US to set up a military base for deployment of approx. 30 000 troops and 522 armed vehicles [Tucker-Jones, 2014, 12]. Qatar provided space for the American Regional Headquarters (CENTCOM) in 2002, which has stayed in the country ever since, and when the Saudis asked the American government to leave the Dahran air force base, they volunteered to replace the installation at the Al-Sayliyah base. These centres were highly important in the coordination of military operations, while they also stationed 3,000 troops and 175 armed vehicles [Tucker-Jones, 2014, 12]. Bahrain welcomed the transfer of the US Marine Forces Central Command to the country [Joyce, 2012, 112]. Oman allowed American and British forces to use air bases on its lands [Al-Khalili, 2009, 119].

The discrepancy between the rhetoric before the attack and helping the American-led coalition can be explained by the perception that while none of the small Gulf states supported the war, they calculated that the worst case scenario is prolonged instability and war in their neighbourhood. That is why once the decision was made in Washington and confrontation was inevitable, the primary aim was to stabilize the country so that it can balance the Iranian threat [Al-Khalili, 2009, 120]. Nevertheless, the intervention did not happen accordingly.

The third Gulf war profoundly altered the perception of the value of American alliance in the Gulf states. The intervention in 2003 and the management of its aftermath represented a “double betrayal” of Washington [Gervais, 2017]. First, the neoconservative pro-democracy agenda contradicted the domestic political system of Gulf states. It seemed that the US was actually willing to engage in a military confrontation with another state based on the democracy agenda, which was seen aggressive and problematic for the Gulf monarchies [Kostiner, 2011, 100]. This was a huge shift vis-à-vis the dual containment policy which, with all its flaws, was an inherently realistic strategy [Goldfischer, 2017].

Actually, from the perspective of the Gulf states, the rhetoric of the Bush administration was surprisingly similar to that of the Soviet Union previously. They “*had come to see – and fear the United States as the revolutionary disrupter of the regional status quo that needed to be guarded against and contained. It was exactly the way they had seen and feared the Soviets for so long. But now, (...) the dangerous, revolutionary*

and unstable ideology that an alien and secular superpower was determined to unleash upon the region was not communism but democracy” [Sieff, 2004].

In parallel, the perception of Russia slowly started to change from an ideologically-driven empire to a pro-status quo superpower [Shumilin – Shumilina, 2017]. Even before 2011, the Russian government took some steps which were seen positive in contrast with the American foreign policy (e.g. siding with Lebanon in 2006). But especially after the Arab Uprisings, the image of Moscow started to change to a stabilizing force. While severe differences still exist between the Gulf countries and Russia (especially in the perception of Iran and Syria), Moscow started to build relations in the Gulf, particularly with Bahrain and the UAE.

Second, the intervention could be foreseen as leading to the rise of Iranian and Shia influence in the region [Goldfischer, 2017, 71-72] as well as sectarian violence, for which the Gulf leaders blamed the US [Kostiner, 2011, 101]. The Gulf leaders perceived the Iraqi intervention as creating the environment in which Iran can build up the “Shia Crescent”, a geopolitical concept which would connect Shia networks in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon [Ulrichsen, 2011a, 38-41]. The previous Sunni nationalist regime in Baghdad was replaced by a Shia government perceived as having strong ties with Tehran [Bahgat, 2008a, 237], which opened up the way for Iranian influence. Nonetheless, in contrast with the Iranian revolution, the Gulf governments realised that the threat is more domestic than foreign. They feared that the rise of Shia parties to power in Iraq strengthens transnational Shia networks in the Gulf, which would lead to domestic unrest. This effect was only intensified, but not necessarily caused by the more active style of the Iranian foreign policy under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [Wehrey, 2014, 17-18].

Besides these two developments, the small Gulf states also feared the potential and actual spill-over effects of the intervention [Byman, 2011, Ulrichsen, 2011a, 49-55]. In the 2000s, approximately six million refugees left Iraq, and while the majority left for Syria or Jordan, the Gulf states also accommodated a couple of thousands. Due to the changing perception of Arab migrant workers outlined in the Part 3.1.2., Gulf governments were completely suspicious of them. Sunni Jihadi terrorists also managed to capitalise on the disintegration of Iraq – the network of al-Qaeda (AQ) and that of the al-Qaeda in Iraq (later to be known as the Islamic State of Iraq) threatened the stability of

Gulf states. The AQ cells in the Persian Gulf countries – later to be called the Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP – had operated actively in the peninsula since 2003. Connected to this threat, the waves of radicalization of the Sunni population could also shake the domestic equilibrium in the region.

Small Gulf states, especially Bahrain and Kuwait, suffered domestically from the political effects of the 2003 war [Wehrey, 2014]. In the case of Bahrain, the Shia opposition did not only observe Iraqi political developments – especially after the 2005 Iraqi elections – but they were also refreshed and reactivated themselves in Bahraini politics, ending the boycott on parliamentary elections. In parallel, the Sunnis of the island state also followed Iraqi news and were many times angered by the abuses suffered by the Iraqi Sunni community. In Kuwait, the Shia communities used the events of 2003 to push for greater concessions in cultural and religious spheres. On the other hand, Kuwaiti Shias became more fractured than ever before – the different Shia networks (primarily the Shirazi and the Dawa networks) engaged in a rivalry in the community. On the other hand, Sunni politicians in Kuwait also criticised the government for not standing up strongly enough regarding the atrocities against the Iraqi Sunni. Such situations, both for the Bahraini and Kuwaiti governments, represented a serious dilemma – they wanted to ease sectarian tensions but did not want to undermine their position in the Sunni community either.

As a result, the post-2003 Gulf region can be characterized by growing Iranian influence and the lack of any comprehensive strategic answer from any other potential regional balancer. As Iraq was out of the equation, Saudi Arabia would have been able to represent a pillar against the Islamic Republic, but Riyadh was very slow to react and was able to give a strategic reaction only after 2015. Therefore, as a result of growing Iranian influence, the negative consequences of the American military presence and the emergence of transnational challenges, the security environment for smaller Gulf states considerably worsened after 2003.

Despite this backlash, the GCC states were not able to articulate any comprehensive policy regarding Iraq [Bahgat, 2008a, 239]. Most of their actions aimed to prevent a certain, undesired scenario rather than to push to reach a specific goal. This eventually led to the individualisation of foreign policy and security perception of the small Gulf states, in line with the systemic changes described in part 2.2.1. While

differences between the international behaviour of the four states had existed before 2003, these differences intensified and became more and more visible.

While 2003 represented the turning point in the evolution of the assessment of the American alliance, such tendencies were reinforced after 2011, due to two reasons [Rickli, 2016, 4]. First, the “wait and see” approach of Washington in the events of the Arab Uprisings and the incoherent strategies towards the events in Libya, Syria and Egypt for example led to deepening distrust for American decision-makers in general. Second, the rhetoric about a pivot to Asia and the perception of an American desire to disengage from the Gulf also represented an incentive for the small Gulf states to rethink their alliance policies.

These developments resulted in two major changes in the small Gulf states’ behaviour. First, they tried to diversify their security cooperation, with making security arrangements with France (Kuwait and Qatar), Great Britain (Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman), or Turkey (Qatar) [Rickli, 2016, 8-9]. These defence pacts, nevertheless, do not aim to replace the American relations, just to build up alternative possibilities for the long term. Second, the tendencies led to different outcomes in the strategic thinking of the small Gulf states. Among the four countries, we can identify three patterns which they followed after 2003.

First, Kuwait and Bahrain remained aligned with the US and did not change their course significantly. Identifying the fears of the Gulf states after 2003, the United States launched the Islamic Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 2014 between the GCC member states and the NATO as a multilateral forum for tackling joint challenges including the fight against terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, border security, civil emergency planning, defence reform and other fields of military cooperation [Bahgat, 2008a, 240; Rickli, 2016, 9]. Both countries signed up for the initiative as well as for other forms of cooperation. Bahrain was the first Gulf state with which the US made a free trade agreement [Kinninnmont, 2011, 57].

Both countries continued to buy weaponry from the United States in great amounts. Between 1999 and 2006, Kuwait bought American arms in the value of 2,900 million USD – the highest number among the Gulf states –, while Bahrain did the same in the value of 1,000 million USD [Bahgat, 2008a, 240].

Second, Qatar did share similar security policy measures with Bahrain and Kuwait in keeping strong ties with the US, it also tried to be more independent in its foreign policy and tried to build up its regional influence [Soubrier, 2017, 129]. While these initiatives were partly due to domestic political reasons (outlined in part 3.3.) and had been conducted since 1995, they intensified after 2003. Qatari Emir Hamad bin Thani invited Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who previously demanded the military disengagement of the US from the Gulf region, to the GCC summit in 2007 [Bahgat, 2008b, 313]. In the same year, Qatari diplomats engaged in rhetoric fights with Americans in a conference held in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, about the role of Iran in the region – after the American Secretary of Defence Robert Gates tried to persuade the Gulf states that Iran is a bigger threat to their security than Israel, the Qatari PM Hamad bin Jassem Al Thani responded that “*we can’t really compare Iran with Israel. Iran is our neighbour, and we shouldn’t look at it as an enemy*” [Bahgat, 2008b, 318]. Qatar also capitalised on the 2008 economic crisis to strengthen its role in the global economy with building South-to-South networks and greater participation in Western markets at the same time [Ulrichsen, 2011b].

This more active policy of Qatar did not mean a break with the United States, as the presence of American forces on Qatari soil represents a cornerstone of the security in the country. Military cooperation rests on the usage of Qatari military facilities by the American military, arms sales (which rose significantly after 2010) and regular military-to-military contacts [Saidy, 2016, 299]. Nonetheless, this “*security alignment with the (...) Western powers will coexist alongside economic (and possibly ideational) reorientation toward a variety of new partners in Asia, Africa and even Latin America*” [Ulrichsen, 2011b, 244]. Moreover, diversified economic relations are used also as a soft security guarantee by the Qatari state, which makes it less reliant on the hard security provided by the American military presence. “*Such diversified security gives Qatar a great deal more power on the international stage as it can increasingly rely on political support for its security*” [Wright, 2011b, 130]. The active foreign policy of Qatar taking place in the 2000s in Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Libya and other countries can be attributed to this diversification and the active foreign policy it allowed for Qatar (see parts 4.4. and 4.5.).

Third, Oman followed its own course as well. While Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar took part in the ICI, Oman, alongside Saudi Arabia, opted out from deepening security

cooperation with the NATO [Bahgat, 2008a, 240]. Their absence severely limited the relevance of the ICI in the Gulf, as they account for the 70% of the defence expenditures in the region [Beshr, 2015].

While Sultan Qaboos remained open to American military presence in the Gulf (and also continued to buy American arms [Bahgat, 2008a, 240]), he did wish to become an official partner of the ICI. According to Yenigun [2016, 16-17], the main reasons behind the decision include the intentions to keep Oman's neutral position alive between Iran and the United States; to limit the publicity of cooperating with the NATO, which has a negative image in the Omani and Gulf society; and to keep cooperation with the Western countries on the bilateral and not multilateral level. Moreover, Oman realised that the lack of common security visions among the Gulf states, not to mention the NATO states, represents an obstacle in deep and public cooperation. That being said, Oman did engage in various activities in the framework of the ICI [Rickli, 2016, 9].

In line with the decision of not taking part in the ICI, Oman's alliance policy has been characterised as active neutrality. In the triangle of alliance policy, Muscat tried to prioritise security and autonomy, despite its alignment with the United States. After 2003, these tendencies strengthened as Oman tried to remain neutral in most conflicts and also to actively solve them through mediation. In 2007, Oman helped to negotiate the release of 15 British navy personnel captured by Iran, and did the same in 2009 with three Americans. Later, during the Obama-presidency, Oman was a "go-between" between Iran and the US in the years leading up to the nuclear talks [Neubauer, 2016]. Later, it tried to mediate between the different fractions in Yemen and the Saudi coalition in 2015 [Baabood, 2017, 118].

To sum up, interpreting the history of the alliance policy of the small Gulf states, one can come to the conclusion that between the 1980s and the 2000s, the second and third Gulf wars represented the turning point for all of them. Generally speaking, the small Gulf states prioritised security and autonomy before 1990, with only one of them (Oman) signing a security agreement with the US, which only included access to Omani facilities. Nonetheless, one can argue that during this first period, Kuwait (and to some extent Bahrain) made a foreign policy mistake by not conducting a defensive policy in the Iranian-Iraq war and sided with Iraq (while Qatar and Oman wanted to have a more neutral stance). As a result of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait, the alliance policy of small Gulf

states turned to alignment with the prioritisation of security and influence, nonetheless this choice decreased their leverage and caused internal tensions with their population being dominantly anti-American. Lastly, the American attack on Iraq also altered alliance patterns of the small Gulf states – in parallel with the systemic changes taking place in the Middle East, the strategy of the four states became diverse. Bahrain and Kuwait continued to prioritise security and influence (alignment), while Qatar turned to an active foreign policy with diversifying its security guarantees and Oman moved back more to a defensive stance, which included active neutrality, focusing on mediation between Iran and the US.

Using the complex model of size, three conclusions can be made regarding the reasons behind these alliance policy patterns. First, the inability of relative deterrence, which is a result of the interaction of military and demographic smallness with huge oil resources, is a primary factor in shaping foreign policy behaviour. The need of a security guarantor is intensified not primarily due to the relative smallness but to its effects. The fact that Kuwait underestimated the Iraqi threat and stood up to Iraq in the debates during 1988-1990 without a clear superpower backing shows that they did not see that huge oil resources accompanied by military smallness constitute an attraction, which has to be balanced with considerable deterrent force – something which the Omani government already had seen since the 1970s.

Second, the growing normative size of the Gulf states actually meant an incentive to engage in a military cooperation with a greater power. More visibility, especially in connection with the inability to relative deterrence, means that for a small state invisible behaviour in international relations might not only be an inevitable consequence of smallness, but also a survival strategy. If we see the case of the different paths of the alliance policy of Oman and Qatar after 2003, we can clearly see that the former chose normative smallness, which enables behind-the-door active neutrality, while the latter chose normative growth, which enables active and interest-driven foreign policy.

Third, again, due to the normative regional environment of the small Gulf states, social heterogeneity and its mismanagement represented a great threat to Kuwait (and to Bahrain), arguably greater than their relative military and demographic smallness. One can argue that this led to foreign policy miscalculations and eventually a less favourable

position in the Middle East than that of Oman and Qatar, which faced the challenges of the 21st century with greater leverage and stronger domestic background.

4.4. The Arab Uprisings – domestic and foreign policy strategies (2011-2013)

The Arab Uprisings starting from 2011 represent another important case study for the investigation of the foreign policy behaviour of the small Gulf states. The regional turmoil shook not just the regional order but many states in the Middle East as well, throwing them into instability and chaos.

In general, the Arab Uprisings¹⁸² effected small Gulf states differently. On the one hand, Bahrain witnessed the most profound domestic challenges rising from the revolutionary movement in 2011. Kuwait was forced into a political limbo from which its political system was not able to recover. On the other, Oman and Qatar was better equipped with domestic stability, though cracks started to be seen in the former. Doha was arguably the biggest winner of the events and was managed to influence the developments taking place in Syria, Libya and Egypt, nonetheless its strategy backfired by 2013.

In the following pages, I will analyse the behaviour of small Gulf states during the years of the Arab Uprisings (2011-2013) from two perspectives – first, how they tackled their own internal political developments and second, how they behaved on the international level. A focus will be put on the interaction between domestic and foreign policies.

The Gulf was not exposed to the series of Arab Uprisings as much as other sub-regions in the Middle East were. In 2011, the number of sizeable anti-government protests¹⁸³ did not reach 10 in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar (the last not having any such demonstrations). On the other hand, Bahrain witnessed more than 30, which was the fourth largest number in the Middle East (after Syria, Yemen and Egypt), and even surpassed the number of protests in Tunisia [Lucas, 2014, 197].

¹⁸² I conceptualise the Arab Uprisings as the events taking place between 2011 and 2013. In many cases, developments did not come to an end in 2013 (e.g. the Syrian civil war is still ongoing while the Libyan conflict got into a new phase in 2014, so did the Yemeni one in 2015), but due to the limited space, I narrowed down the topic to the analysis of the events which lasted until July 2013, the coup against the presidency of Mohammad Morsi in Egypt.

¹⁸³ Defined as “any peaceful public gathering of at least 100 people for the primary purpose of displaying or voicing their opposition to government policies or authority, excluding demonstrations of a distinctly anti-foreign nature” [Lucas, 2014, 197].

The reasons behind the relative stability of the Gulf monarchies (except for Bahrain) during the Arab Uprisings can be explained in different ways. Firstly, many attribute the lack of political upheaval to better socio-economic conditions. In their econometric investigation of socioeconomic variables between 1991 and 2014, Nayef al-Shammari and John Willoughby found that the two most important determinant variable in explaining the extent of political instability during the Arab Uprisings are commodity food price shocks and youth unemployment rates, with regime durability as another empathetic one [Al-Shammari – Willoughby, 2017, 12-13]. The political and economic marginalization of the youth in many countries created the social background for widespread political mobilization [Bjorvatn – Hoiglit, 2016, 41-45]. From this perspective, the Arab Gulf regimes were relatively sheltered [Luciani, 2016] – the rise of commodity food prices in the region was mainly attributed to the rise of the oil price, which was crucial for oil-importers. In contrast, for the oil-exporting Gulf economies, enlarged revenues allowed compensation through price subsidies and other fiscal measures. Regarding the unemployment rate, the small Gulf states were divided – Kuwait and Qatar had an official unemployment rate of 1-2% prior to 2011, while Bahrain and Oman produced 7-8% [Luciani, 2016, 194].

Secondly, some identify the stability of the “rentier bargain” as the main reason for the survival of Arab Gulf regimes, which refers to the mechanism that “*rulers would distribute significant portions of the oil income to secure a high living standard for the indigenous population, while the latter would accept being denied any access to political decision making*” [Utvik, 2016,2]. “*Rent revenues, the argument goes, are distributed to key social groups in order to stabilize political order*” [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 165]. From this perspective, the small demographic size of the Gulf states can be seen also as an explanatory variable, given the fact that not all oil producers were able to withhold the effects of the Arab Uprisings – besides Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, only Saudi Arabia and the UAE were able to survive the “Arab Spring” without any substantial grassroots mobilization, the latter also being a two-dimensional small state in terms of demographics and territory (see part 2.1.1.). One can make the argument that in the Middle East, the interaction of demographic smallness and the rentier bargain is a good combo for survival (Bahrain being the only exception), as the distribution of rent revenues is more efficient in a smaller society.

Thirdly, some claim that the monarchic political system and the related neopatriarchic social structure in the Gulf was also a source of stability [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 165-166; Aydin, 2013, 127]. The monarch, with the help of the royal family and social groups connected to it primarily through tribal relations, can create a stable environment in which the survival of the regime is also in the interest of the co-opted elites. Since their independence, the Gulf monarchies learned how they can use different sources of legitimacy (Arabism, nationalism, Islam, etc.) in different situations in order to survive. *“A skilful king can bundle compromises and illusions with ‘personable personalism’ into arguments for staying on”* [Tetreault, 2011b, 635]

Nonetheless, the relative stability of the small Gulf states did not mean that their domestic order was not effected by the Arab Uprisings. It is worth investigating the four countries in three categories. The first is Qatar by itself, which remained almost completely untouched by the Arab Uprisings, witnessing no major demonstrations. One can argue [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 173-175] that the small size of the Qatari population helped the stabilization of the country as politics is more personalised, tribal and family connections therefore are more effective in maintaining stability.

The second group is formed by Kuwait and Oman, which witnessed some social movements and protests but nothing which would threaten their regime’s survival. In Oman, the larger cities – Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Sur – witnessed larger protests with people demanding more jobs, better salaries, higher living conditions, less corruption and the release of political prisoners [Valeri, 2011, 159-160; Okruhlik, 2016, 19]. More problematically, the demonstration wave reached the Dhofar region as well, and after a couple of weeks, the taboo to criticise the Sultan himself was broken [Mathhiesen, 2013, 112].

In Kuwait [Mathhiesen, 2013, 93-109], youth movements and other segments of the society organized demonstrations heavily in 2011 and 2012, putting huge pressure on the regime. The networks which stood behind these actions are said to be originating from another series of protests in the mid-2000s called the “Orange Movement”, which served as the basis for the visual representation of the protests of 2011-2012. Originally, the Orange Movement fought for the voting right of women and the reduction of electoral constituencies successfully. Since 2009, the network of youth organizations and other NGOs aimed to force the removal of the prime minister, Nasser al-Muhammad al-Sabah.

Actually, political tensions were high even in 2010 – on the 8th of December, 2010 (nine days before the self-immolation of Muhammad Bouazizi, the generally accepted symbolical start of the Arab Uprisings) special forces cracked down on an opposition group at a *diwaniya*, assaulting an ex-member of the parliament (Jamaan al-Hirbish) and other participants.

This signals that the Kuwaiti events of 2011 and afterwards are not completely connected to the Arab Uprisings but are more rooted in the decade-long political crisis [Alnajjar – Selvik, 2016; Gharba, 2014]. Since the re-establishment of the National Assembly in the 1990s, political division got deeper and deeper, which is shown by the number of interpellations made against members of the government – while between 2000 and 2006, 15 of such questioning happened, the number rose to 27 between 2006 and 2011, 22 of which effected a member of the ruling family. Such tensions are the result of the clashes between the different political and economic interest groups and communities in the country, the conflicts created by the partially democratic political structure, the desire of having higher salaries, but also between the different members and branches of the Sabah ruling family (see part 3.3.).

The demonstrations in Kuwait took place in two different waves. The first started in late 2010 and peaked in November 2011, when youth activists stormed the parliament, by which they forced the prime minister to resign. This was the first time that a head of government resigned as a result of public pressure in Kuwait, but arguably in the GCC as well [Gharba, 2014, 11]. In the same year, bidoon tribes also took to the streets to demand equal rights [Barany, 2012, 5]. Elections were held in February, 2012,¹⁸⁴ in which opposition forces were able to form a majority of 35 MPs in the 50-seat national Assembly [Gharba, 2014, 12]. As a result, the Emir dissolved the legislative institution later that year (eight days before it would have been able to pass a bill guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary), giving impetus to the second wave of protests at the end of 2012. These were the most numerous demonstrations in the history of Kuwait and were called the “Dignity of a Nation” (*Karamat Watan*) after a social media account which was prominent in organizing the demonstrations. Due to severe tensions and the harsh actions of the authorities, many people got injured and were jailed. New elections took place in December, 2012, which were boycotted by many opposition forces (including Sunni

¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless, this was the first election in the history of Kuwait during which there was a monitoring mechanism in place led by the Kuwait Transparency Society [Zaccara, 2013, 93].

Islamists and tribes). Finally, the Constitutional Court annulled the results of these elections as well, setting the 27th of July, 2013, as the date for the new elections. This time, the elected National Assembly was in place until 2016.

Third, Bahrain also constitutes a category in itself, as the island state witnessed the most dangerous and severe manifestation of public anger towards the regime in 2011 [Matthiesen, 2013, 33-49; Khalaf, 2013]. Demonstrations both from Sunni and Shia background occupied the Pearl Roundabout¹⁸⁵ in the centre of Manama between the 14th of February and 18th of March, 2011, demanding higher salaries and greater political representation. During these weeks, the traditional opposition parties and new organizations (such as the Coalition of the Youth 14 February Movement) rose up to represent the protestors. Two dangerous developments shocked the Bahraini regime and its allies in the Gulf – firstly, on the 7th of March, a new umbrella organization was founded called the “*Coalition for a Republic*”, which pushed not just for limited reforms but the abolishment of the monarchy, and secondly, on the 11th of March, demonstrations spread to the town of Riffa, which is usually inhabited by the Sunni middle class and elite.

Demonstrations in Bahrain also coincided with intra-regime struggles (see part 3.3.) [Gengler, 2013; Szalai, 2018]. After the death of Emir Isa Al Khalifa in 1999 and the rise of his son, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to the throne, the *Khawalid* branch of the ruling family – centred around Minister of Defense Khalifa bin Ahmed and his brother, the Minister of the Royal Court Khaled bin Ahmed – and their network constituted by their supporters strengthened considerably. The Khawalids are known to despise Shias movements and having a very strong Sunni identity, therefore their rise to power is one of the main reasons for the sectarian tools used by the Bahraini state.

The reaction of the small Gulf states to the protests had similar traits. They actually did not have to invent new tools in tackling the domestic political developments and were able to use the same kind of toolkit which basically consists of three mechanisms – the (re)distribution of decision-making power, economic resources and norms [Lucas, 2014, 202-210]. The main elements of the strategy included a quick rise in economic benefits with limited political reforms, usually enlarging the legislative powers of the

¹⁸⁵ Ironically, the Pearl Roundabout was built in 1982 to commemorate the third summit of the GCC. The six curves which circulate around a pearl represents the six member states of the integration [Khalaf, 2013, 267].

consultative bodies. These carrots were supplemented by sticks in the form of firm coercive actions taken by the security and armed forces [Okruhlik, 2016, 21-23].

Regarding the redistribution of norms, the Gulf states did not reinvent new forms of legitimacy, but rather they framed the events in discourses that would discredit the demonstrations on the one hand but also strengthen the role of the regimes on the other. Naturally, this reflex is nothing new – autocratic leaders usually set up narratives about why they use such authoritarian measures to legitimize their actions. In this regard, two distinct but interconnected discourses can be seen regarding the Gulf monarchies. First, many of the regimes implemented a sectarian narrative regarding the events [Matthiesen, 2013], proclaiming that it is the Iran-backed Shia communities which organize the protests in order to dismantle the Sunni rule in the Gulf countries. “*A key feature of the reaction of GCC states*”, argues Russel E. Lucas [2014, 209], “*has been an increasing of ‘securitization’ of sectarian identities in the Gulf in which identity claims are not seen as normal or acceptable political demands but rather an existential threats to peace and stability*”. By doing so, the Gulf governments wanted to dissociate Sunni and Shia protesters and incentivise the former to stay at home.

Second, several regimes used “geopolitical reasoning” to deflect domestic (and sometimes foreign) criticism about their actions [Aras – Falk, 2015], which means to rhetorically “*‘spatialise’ their foreign [and domestic] policies in order to counter the diffusion of the transformative impact of the Arab Spring, and ensure that regional geopolitics adheres to a trajectory that reflects their interests and perspectives*” [Aras – Falk, 2015, 328]. This strategy “*enables policy makers to legitimise or at least to rationalise their policies in the domestic sphere. Such a vision entails enemy and threat chains, balanced against the projected support of allies*” [op. cit. 329]. By blaming Iran for example as playing a prompter role in the demonstration, this narrative complements the sectarian framing. The creation of both narrative strategies can be attributed to Saudi Arabia and to Iran, and from this perspective, small Gulf states learned from their larger neighbours and mirrored their behaviour.

Nonetheless, there were substantial differences between the management of domestic developments among the small Gulf states. Having no major demonstrations, Qatar did not have to use tools to ease the non-existent domestic tensions. That being said, the Qatari government took pre-emptive measures by raising salaries and social

benefits of state employees [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 175]. The wages of public employees were raised by 60%, except for the military personnel, whose income was raised by 120% [Okruhlik, 2016, 22].¹⁸⁶

In Oman, Sultan Qaboos reacted very quickly to the protests [Matthiesen, 2013, 112-113; Okruhlik, 2016, 22-23]. After confrontations between the demonstrations and the police led to two civilian deaths in Sohar,¹⁸⁷ the Sultan gave order to the security forces that they should not harm the protesters. His strategy was to persuade the working class and the unemployed to stay home and do not go out on the streets by dismissing several members of the government,¹⁸⁸ announcing 50 thousand public sector jobs, and raising the minimum wage by 43%. By these measures, the Omani government was able to dismantle the alliance forged between the workers and the intellectuals as the latter continued to protest after these early ordinations were implemented. At this point, Sultan Qaboos cracked down on them, a move which he would not have dared to do with the working class.

Another difference in the Omani approach was the lack of a sectarian narrative in legitimising the actions [Matthiesen, 2013, 113-115]. Naturally, this is partly due to the Ibadi majority in the country, which does not define itself in terms of the sectarian divide. Inner Ibadi territories did not witness massive demonstrations, only some of the Ibadis living in Muscat participated in some social movements. While it would be misleading to say that demonstrations lacked any sectarian dimension, the fact is that the protesters did not have a sectarian narrative and were themselves divided. Poorer members of the Shia community protested in sympathy of the Bahraini Shias, while their economic elite organized demonstrations supporting the Sultan. Some Sunni opposition figures argued that religious minorities, meaning the Shia tradesmen, benefited more from the economic growth than the middle class. These mixed voices made in unnecessary for

¹⁸⁶ The government recommended salary raise in the private sector as well, though not all companies participated in this initiative [ibid].

¹⁸⁷ Sohar became the centre of the Omani unrest. The city, which serves as an industrial centre for the country, witnessed protestors breaking into the Lu Lu supermarket and put a blockade on the port. According to the most widespread narrative, the central role of Sohar in the demonstrations is due to high local unemployment rates (approx. 15% for the population and 19-20% for the youth on the eve of the Arab Uprisings²⁰) and the tensions of the local working class [Worrall, 2012].

¹⁸⁸ Reshuffles took place in three waves in February and March of 2011, and February of 2012. The primary victim of these measures was Abd al-Nabi Makki, the minister of national economy, who had occupied this position since 1995 [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 172].

the government to implement a sectarian narrative, which would have only made the position of the regime harder.

Oman was the only small Gulf state which held ordinary elections in 2011. The poll took place on the 15th of October to elect the members of the Consultative Council, the lower house of the Council of Oman [Zaccara, 2013, 87-92]. Out of the 655 thousand potential voters, 518 thousand registered, which represents a 52% growth in electoral inquiry since the last elections in 2007. High number of candidates were registered from Seeb – one of the main centres of demonstrations – and Niwza. Elections took place in a calm manner with a record participation of 76.6% of the registered voters.¹⁸⁹ Surprisingly, three organizers of the previous demonstrations won a seat in the Council, namely Talib al-Maamari, Salem al-Ufi and Salem al-Mashani, who was also jailed for fifty-two days [ibid]. After the elections took place, Sultan Qaboos announced new initiatives to strengthen the Consultative Council to a limited extent with the right to review the annual budget, question ministers and initiate legislative action [Bank – Richter – Sunik, 2014, 173].

The Kuwaiti government, having gone through more serious domestic pressure, had to do lot more [Okruhlik, 2016, 23; Barany, 2012, 24]. In early 2011, the government announced a direct transfer of almost 3,600 USD to each citizen of the state, born and unborn and basically provided free commodities for 14 months, including sugar, chicken, rice and oil. The government erased many families' debts as well. Interestingly enough, the Kuwaiti state framed these actions as unrelated to the Arab Spring but connected to the "50/20" celebrations, which were to commemorate the independence of the country (1971) and the end of the Iraqi occupation (1991) – nonetheless, bidoon tribes were excluded from the program. In the same year, the government introduced the biggest budget in its history – with the whole expenditure side measuring up to 70 billion USD – which included increased subsidies and public employee salaries.

Despite the general atmosphere of the Arab Uprisings, the political reforms of the Kuwaiti regime did not strengthen democratic tendencies but rather represented autocratic ones. Besides dissolving the National Assembly multiple times, the Emir issued a "decree of urgency" in October 2012, by which he enabled himself to unilaterally

¹⁸⁹ Though low level of participation was recorded in the Dhofar region [ibid].

change the electoral system in order to narrow the leverage of the opposition.¹⁹⁰ The courts also sentenced a couple of hundred people indicted with storming the parliamentary building, criticising the Emir or the judiciary, and calling for unlicensed demonstrations [Gharba, 2013, 15]. On the other hand – possibly due to the fragile political situation – authorities refrained from excessive use of force.

In the case of Bahrain, the government initially tried to appease the protesters (very much like Sultan Qaboos in Oman). The regime promised 2,700 USD to each family [Barany, 2012, 23] and during February, it showed openness to engage in negotiations with the opposition parties and other movements [Matthiesen, 2013, 48]. Nonetheless, after the cries for the abolishment of the monarchy, the Bahrain government started to react more aggressively. On the 14th of March, 2011, it invited Saudi, Emirati and Kuwaiti forces to help restore stability and order in the country. Officially, such forces were referred to as the Peninsula Shield Force of the GCC, but practically they consisted of 2,000 Saudi troops and 600 Emirati policemen [Joyce, 2012, 118] and a fraction of Qatari military personnel [Ulrichsen, 2014, 115].

After the arrival of foreign troops, the King announced a state of emergency, which gave security forces wide legal authority to conduct raids. Altogether, between February and April, at least 35 deaths were linked to the escalating violence between the security forces and the protesters [BICI, 2011, 419]. After that, the authorities systemically raided the houses of mostly Shia inhabitants to arrest individuals in thousands (though many of them were later released), at least 4,500 protesters were fired from their public or private jobs for participating in the demonstrations, at least 500 students were expelled from universities [BICI, 2011, 420-421].

The Saudi-led intervention increased the reliance of Bahrain on Saudi Arabia (which was already substantial, see Chapter 3) but also regionalised the conflict and exposed the country to the political discourse of its neighbours [Wehrey, 2013, 111-113]. The action was debated alongside sectarian lines in the Gulf countries. Prominent leaders of both Sunni and Shia communities spoke up supporting or condemning the intervention, including Hezbollah-leader Hassan Nasrallah, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani from Nejef,

¹⁹⁰ Since 2005, the elections laws divided the country into five districts, each sending ten representatives to the National Assembly. All voters had four votes to choose between the candidates. This system helped the opposition groups enormously, but the Emir decided to amend it so that each voter would have only one vote. This lowered the threshold for individual candidates, making it easier for pro-government candidates to get in [Gharba, 2013, 14-15].

Iraqi cleric and political leader Muqtdada al-Sadr, or from the Sunni side, the Qatari-based intellectual and religious leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In Kuwait [Wehrey, 2013, 236-238], the National Assembly hosted a debate about the participation of Kuwait with Shia MPs voicing strong opposition to the whole idea. One of them, namely Saleh Ashur, threatened to interpellate the prime minister if the government decided to contribute to the GCC forces. On the other hand, Sunni politicians considered the Kuwaiti support as obligatory, comparing the events to the Bahraini solidarity in the crisis of 1990-1991. As a result, the government hesitated at first and eventually offered only medical convoys and small naval forces.

State media tried to depict the whole protest movement as triggered by Iran and started to delegitimize opposition groups such as the Wifaq party. On the 2nd of April, 2011, the Bahraini government closed down *al-Wasat*, the only newspaper critical of the regime. Later, the Bahraini government tried to seem to open up for dialogue. In May, 2011, the regime announced the so-called National Dialogue initiative, which was supposed to bring together pro-regime and opposition forces [Wehrey, 2013, 120]. Nonetheless, the attempt was seen as corrupt as only about 8% of the 320 participants was critical of the government. Realising that the dialogue is not sincere, the existing opposition parties pulled out of the process during the summer of 2011. On the 1st of June the state of emergency expired [Joyce, 2013, 120], and one month later, the King issued a decree which set up the so-called Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate the events in February and March of 2011 and their implication [BICI, 2011, 1]. The report, published in November, shared the responsibility between the opposition and the government regarding the escalation of the events, concluding that “*security forces violated the principles of necessity and proportionality*” [BICI, 2011, 413-420].

Both Kuwait and Bahrain accused Iran of interfering in their domestic affairs. In March 2011, the Kuwaiti authorities arrested and convicted an Iranian spying network [Roberts, 2011a, 111]. Despite the report published by the Independent Commission of Inquiry, which does not see “*a discernible link between specific incidents that occurred in Bahrain (...) and the Islamic Republic of Iran*” [BICI, 2011, 421], the government many times proclaimed that it sees Iran behind the demonstrations of 2011.

Besides these individual actions, it is worth mentioning that two collective measures were initiated on the GCC level. First, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia initiated

a Gulf Union on the annual GCC summit in December, 2011 [Guzansky, 2015, 25-28]. The proposal only served to deepen domestic cleavages in Bahrain¹⁹¹ and Kuwait.¹⁹² At the next GCC meeting in May, 2012, the leaders decided to postpone the decision about the unity, but soon the idea was rejected publicly by Oman [Arab News, 2013]. Qatar also feared that the proposal would lead to a Saudi hegemony [Berger, 2014, 262]. After that, the proposal was soon forgotten.

Second, the GCC also provided financial help two of its members, namely Bahrain and Oman worth 10 billion USD each, to be disbursed in the next decade [Guzansky, 2015, 90]. This sum is approximately half of the yearly gross domestic product of Bahrain and more than a fifth of that of Oman [Reuters, 2018]. The initiative shows the perception by the GCC that the unrest in Oman and Bahrain is more economically motivated, which, especially in Bahrain, is not true [Kinninmont, 2016, 120]. This financial aid raises the question whether Saudi Arabia wants to pressure the two small states, especially Oman, to align its foreign policy according to Saudi interests.

As we can see, the Arab Uprisings manifested differently in the four small Gulf states (see Chart 44). Qatar did not witness any demonstrations, though the government had to take pre-emptive economic measures. In Oman, a mixture of economic benefits and limited political reforms managed to appease the working class base of the demonstrations. Tackling the crisis was much more difficult in the case of Kuwait, where the events of 2011 and 2012 increased the pressure on the regime. In this case, emphasis was put on economic reforms with limited political changes (many of which were not liberalizing). Bahrain witnessed the most severe challenges in the years of the Arab Uprisings, which led to a military intervention of some GCC states on the request of the Bahraini government.

In all these situations, the smallness played different roles in the countries. Demographic smallness was beneficial in all cases, since – in connection with the tribal-neopatriarchic social structure – it helped the efficiency of economic measures. Due to the huge hydrocarbon resources and the high oil price, economic smallness did not worsen the management of the protests, though the measures taken put a fiscal pressure on state

¹⁹¹ The Khawalid branch of the ruling family became the firmest supporter of the initiative, while Shia parties and the youth movements rejected it [Wehrey, 2013, 135-136].

¹⁹² In February 2012, the idea was rejected publicly by House Speaker Ahmed al-Saadoon [Al Arabiya, 2013] but the government voiced its support [Arab News 2013].

budgets. Regarding the need to request a foreign intervention, the events of 2011 proved that Bahrain is militarily small in absolute terms, as it was not able to stabilize its own internal affairs. Therefore, inviting the Gulf military forces can be seen as a compensatory policy.

Chart 44: The comparison of the Arab Uprising events and governmental reactions in the small Gulf states, 2011-2013

	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar
Demonstrations and related violence	X	X	X	
Economic demands	X	X	X	
Severe political demands	X	X		
Economic measures by the government	X	X	X	X
Political institutional reforms		X	X	
Security measures leading to large number of deaths	X			
Intra-regime competition	X	X		

The domestic situation in Bahrain and Kuwait are tense since 2011, without any clear sign of sustainable stabilization [Goldburt, 2015; Smith, 2016; Szalai, 2018; Katzman, 2018c]. This development is partly due to the sectarian narrative put forward by the GCC governments which, on the one hand, managed to discourage Sunnis to participate in the protests and thus contributed to the survival of the regimes, but, on the other, pushed the Shia organizations and movements further away from the state.

In line with the description of the systemic environment of small Gulf states in part 2.2.2 and the regime attributes in part 3.3., we can say that two variables differentiated between Bahrain and Kuwait on the one hand and Oman and Qatar on the

other. First, the mismanagement of internal heterogeneity posed the gravest danger to the Gulf regimes, not their smallness. By implementing a sectarian narrative, both governments undermined their efforts to stabilize domestic politics. The most important advantage of Qatar is its social homogeneity [Ulrichsen, 2104c, 72], while in the case of Oman, the government did not engage in narratives which could have strengthened already existing cleavages. Second, intra-regime strife did not help the stabilizing efforts of the rulers. The internal affairs of the ruling families in Kuwait and Bahrain deepened the problems of the society to a great extent.

These developments prevented both Bahrain and Kuwait¹⁹³ from exerting influence to other parts of the region, as they were preoccupied with their internal affairs. The possibility of enlarging their presence in other, weakened states in the Middle East was not an available option for them – but it was for Qatar and Oman, though the two country engaged in markedly different foreign policies.

While both countries were successful in conducting mediation in the region in the 2000s, the Thani regime in Qatar decided to change its usual neutral stance and become much more active than that. This activism during the years of the Arab Uprisings was allowed by three phenomena [Ulrichsen, 2014, 110]. First, due to the reforms implemented by Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, decision-making was highly concentrated by 2011, which enabled the regime to make quick decisions in an era of uncertainty. Regarding foreign policy decisions, Hamad bin Jassim al Thani (HBJ) had a very strong role besides the Emir. “*Qatar’s small size*”, argues Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “*was also a factor that played to its advantage as it meant there were fewer vested interests or competing factions within policy-making circles than in larger polities such as Saudi Arabia*”. Second, the lack of domestic opposition and the sustainable domestic order enabled the government to concentrate its efforts and resources on international developments. Third, the toolkit which had been consciously built up since 1995 (see parts 3.3. and 4.3.) enabled the government to exert influence to other parts of the region with the necessary instruments.

¹⁹³ The two countries basically followed the Saudi foreign policy in the years of the Arab Spring. Bahrain and Kuwait broke diplomatic ties with the Assad government in 2012, and did not intervene in the conflict by any other means. In Yemen, they supported the transition of the presidency from Ali Abdallah Saleh to Mansour Hadi, which was done in the framework of a GCC initiative. In Egypt, both states sided with the Saudi-supported government and Kuwait provided aid for the Sisi government as well [Katzman, 2016; Katzman 2018c].

Qatari involvement in the domestic developments of Libya, Syria and Egypt manifested in material support of arms and financial assistance, network-building, and media support primarily through the al-Jazeera network¹⁹⁴ [Sultan, 2013]. Qatar also used international organizations, including the GCC and the Arab League, to frame developments according to its own goals. Qatar used its military only once,¹⁹⁵ but it rather used non-state actors to pursue its interests. Such non-state allies include the local branches of the Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist political and armed groups.

On many battlefields of the Arab Uprisings – for example in Libya – Qatar had no direct interest except for the general strengthening of the MB-networks in the region. This *prima facie* contradicts the basic theoretical expectations of most small state theories (see part 1.3.). According to Babak Mohammadzadeh [2017, 27-31], the Qatari strategy during the Arab Uprisings can be interpreted as a status-seeking behaviour as “*Qatar’s active foreign policy is usually understood as an outgrowth of its aggressive campaign for state branding*”. Its steps were “*motivated by the goal of appealing to and exercising leverage on the international community, (...)*” [Khatib, 2013, 419] and “*to boost the country’s image and standing among other Arab countries and its Western allies*” [Khatib, 2013, 429].

In other words, the aim of Qatar was to enlarge its normative size. This intention can be explained in the framework of the complex model of size in two ways. First, one can make the argument that the growth of the absolute and relative economic size of the country in the 2000s made the regime want more influence in regional affairs. Second, Qatar could have felt that increasing normative size can contribute to its security from its larger neighbours.

The most important fields of activities for Qatar were Libya, Syria and Egypt. The Thani regime was the first to recognize the National Transitional Council as the representative of the Libyan people, the opposition of Moammar al-Qaddafi. In April 2011, it pushed for the endorsement of the Western-led intervention in Libya aimed to create a no-fly zone and also contributed to the military action with six fighters. Though they did not participate in any strikes, but the Qatari (and Emirati) participation in the

¹⁹⁴ In 2002, Saudi Arabia recalled its ambassador from Doha due to a strongly anti-Saudi piece airin in the network [Zafirov, 2017,195]. Actually, several members of the staff of Al-Jazeera previously worked at the Arabic BBC, which was known for having a pro-Muslim Brotherhood interpretation of the events unfolding in the Middle East [ibid].

¹⁹⁵ By contributing to the implementation of the UN Security Council 1973 in Libya.

campaign “was significant in watering down any regional suspicion that the intervention might constitute another example of Western military incursion into the affairs of an Arab state” [Ulrichsen 2014c, 123]. It started to support the local MB network – which did not have huge social base before 2011 in Libya – and the so-called Tripoli Brigade headed by Abdelhakim Belhadj. Qatar also helped to set up an opposition-led TV network, the Libya al-Ahrar [Khatib, 2013, 421, Ulrichsen, 2014c, 123-129]. In Syria [Ulrichsen, 2014c, 131-144; Nuruzzaman, 2015, 229-230], Qatar severed ties with the Assad regime in July 2011 after an attack on the Qatari embassy in Damascus. Since the MB had historical presence in the country, the Thani regime had more leverage than in Libya to build up its network. Qatar weighed in on behalf of the local Brotherhood organization and wanted to dominate the Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army through them. Later, Hamad Emir was the first to publicly support a possible multilateral military intervention against the Assad regime. As the political opposition started to lose ground, Qatar gave more support for militias including the Faylaq as-Sham or the Ahrar as-Sham.

Initially it was not clear whether the Qatari activities actively contradicted the interests of Saudi Arabia or other GCC states. Despite conducting its foreign policy independently, Qatar contributed willingly to the Bahrain intervention and the overthrow of Assad and Qaddafi was perceived as a common goal for the Western-oriented Gulf monarchies. Eventually, it was the Egyptian Spring where the incompatibility of Qatari and Saudi security interests started to manifest [Szalai, 2014]. In the presidential elections of 2012, the winner turned out to be Mohammed Morsi the candidate of the Justice and Development Party – the political force connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. While Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which considered the MB to be a political threat to their rule, saw the rise of Morsi as a threat, Qatar welcomed it and gave financial support to Egypt during his presidency worth 7.5 billion USD through aid, loan and investments [Harb, 2017, 81].

While at first, it seemed that Qatar managed to become one of the main actors in the Arab Uprisings, its star started to fade in 2012. In July 2012, the Qatari-supported Libyan party called *al-Watan* (Homeland) failed to succeed in the elections [Ulrichsen, 2014c, 130]. The newly created Islamist networks did not manage to harvest considerable social support, and the aggressive Qatar support to them was perceived more and more harmful and divisive after the death of Qaddafi. Despite the Qatari efforts, neither Western countries nor Arab states intervened in the Syrian conflict directly, which

eventually led to the shrinking space of Qatari-linked opposition forces. In Egypt, Mohammad Morsi was ousted in 2013 and the armed forces initiated a brutal crackdown on the local MB networks [Berger, 2014, 263]. While the growth in normative size was successful (see part 2.2.2.), other regional actors felt that Qatar “grew too much” normatively and the negative narrative regarding the “*oversized role*” of the country [Nuruzzaman, 2015, 277] or Qatar “*punching above its weight*” [Roberts, 2011b] was quickly born.¹⁹⁶

In contrast, Oman continued its tradition of being neutral in most conflicts and remained somewhat isolated during the Arab Uprisings [Aras – Falk, 2015, 325]. In the case of Syria, it did not intervene in domestic affairs and its contribution was only diplomatic by pushing for a conflict settlement in the Arab League. It kept connections open with the Assad regime, which, later in 2015, were used to offer mediation between the government and opposition forces. According to some sources, the Omani government negotiated with Russia about the future of Assad and his family, offering the possibility to relocate to Oman [Neubauer, 2016, 1]. Actually, Sultan Qaboos offered the same to members of the Libyan Qaddafi family as well [Katzman, 2018b, 15] who entered the country in October, 2012. In Egypt, Oman did not side with either the Morsi government or the armed forces, but it criticised the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 2014 [Katzman, 2018b, 15]. In Yemen, the Omani government built up connection with all parties and served as an intermediary between the international community and the Houthi rebels [Colombo, 2017, 63-66]. Sultan Qaboos also wanted to ease the tensions between Iran and the Gulf or the West in smaller issues [Guzansky, 2015, 102] during the years of the Arab Uprisings and contributed to the diplomatic preparations of the signing of the Joint Plan of Action in 2013 between the P5+1 and Iran about the Iranian nuclear program.¹⁹⁷

All in all, we can see that during the years of the Arab Uprisings between 2011 and 2013, Qatar and Oman were able to exert their influence on the international level. This ability was due to their internal stability, while their relative smallness did not deprive them of foreign policy leverage. Nonetheless, the two states chose different

¹⁹⁶ According to David Roberts [2017, 5-6], Qatar made two mistakes, which then led to many of its foreign policy mistakes. First, it underestimated the difficulties in controlling its non-state allies distant from Doha. Second, it also failed to recognize that while Qatar was stable domestically, their neighbours are not – and this makes them suspicious of Qatari activities.

¹⁹⁷ The 2013 Joint Plan of Action was the predecessor of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which came to be known as the “Iranian nuclear deal”.

strategies – while the Thani regime conducted an active, high-profile foreign policy, Sultan Qaboos preferred to stay under the radar and continued its behind-the-door mediation activities. This means practically, that Oman chose normative smallness, while Qatar preferred to enlarge its normative size as described above. This discrepancy can be explained by a number of factors. First, the Omani stability was more fragile in 2011, which made the government follow a more careful foreign policy. Second, the Qatari economic growth in the 2000s encouraged the Qatari leadership, while the Omani economy is in a worse shape. Third, due to their distinct geopolitical position and different military size, the Qatari leadership might feel itself less secure vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia, which might work as an incentive to enlarge its normative size, so that recognition in the international environment might better its defence position.

4.5. The Gulf rift and the Qatari survival strategy (2017-2018)¹⁹⁸

The last case study focuses on the Gulf rift erupted on the 5th of June, 2017, when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (the “Quartet”) alongside other states, announced that they would break diplomatic ties with Qatar, shut down their airspace and borders with the country and thus put it under an effective embargo. Qatari diplomats had 48 hours to leave the four countries, while Qatari citizens had 14 days to do so. In the following pages, I will focus on how Qatar managed to withstand the effects of the Gulf rift and what role its size played in the survival of the country.

The decision of the Quartet to stand up against Qatar started to formulate in the 2010s. The active role of Qatar during the Arab Uprisings led to severe debates inside the GCC. By supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and framing the public discourse with the Al-Jazeera network in line with its own interests – oftentimes providing platform for voices critical of the Saudi, Bahraini or Emirati regimes –, the foreign policy of the Thani regime became a source of threat for its neighbours. In 2013, as the failures of the Qatari foreign policy proliferated (see part 4.4.) Emir Hamad decided to abdicate to his son, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, while the infamous Qatari foreign minister, HBJ also resigned from his position. As the two symbolic figures of the Qatari foreign policy disappeared from the government, it seemed that Doha was on a retreat and became open to changing its foreign policy course.

¹⁹⁸ Parts of the text in section 4.5. were used in two manuscripts of articles about the Qatari crisis, none of which was published by the time of the submission of the thesis.

Nonetheless, Emir Tamim did not change the Qatari foreign policy in substance, therefore the country's neighbours wanted to give him a strong signal. In February, 2014 – only eight months after his rise to power – Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdraw their ambassadors from Doha [Roberts, 2017, 7]. At that time, both sides were willing to engage in a negotiation process, which resulted in the so-called Riyadh Agreement¹⁹⁹ [Martini et al, 2016, 18]. The document has never been made public officially, and there are conflicting narratives about its content [Ibish, 2017] – Qatar interpreted it as a general refusal of interfering in each others' internal affairs, while the Saudi-Emirati-Bahraini side expected Qatar to stop funding the MB network, to expel opposition leaders from its country and to silence critical voices on its media networks.

Despite unresolved issues, the rift between Qatar and three of its neighbours did not manifest until May 2017. During these two and a half years, domestic developments and the emergence of common threats emerged or intensified in the region. First of all, the death of King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia, the coronation of King Salman in January 2015, and the subsequent rise of Mohammad bin Salman (MbS), the new king's son, through the ranks of the Saudi regime caught the attention of the Saudi leadership and in general the Gulf regimes. Second, as the Muslim Brotherhood lost its momentum, the main source of tension between Qatar and its neighbours during the years of the Arab Spring was not the top priority anymore – at least for Saudi Arabia, as the UAE remained focused on the MB [Al-Akhbar, 2017]. Its position was overtaken by Iran and the questions surrounding the Iranian nuclear deal. While the GCC was not on the same platform in the issue, the position of Qatar and its neighbours was much closer to each other. Third, the Gulf regimes cooperated in different forms of crisis management between 2015 and 2017. One of the main primary foreign policy tools of the new Saudi leadership was coalition-building, which they used in the case of organizing a Yemeni intervention in 2015 against the Houthi rebellion, or at the end of that year, MbS also set up the so-called Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition. Qatar participated in both institutions, moreover, each GCC state participated in the global coalition to defeat the Islamic State [USDOS, 2018a].

¹⁹⁹ Actually, two different documents are called the "Riyadh Agreement" – one signed in 2013, and a supplementary agreement attached to it in 2014. Both documents were signed by the GCC states and both made a change in Qatari foreign policy.

Nonetheless, the election of Donald Trump in 2016 “*created the right environment*” for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates “*to relaunch their attack on Qatar*” [Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2017, 9]. According to Kristian Coates Ulrichsen [2017], the “*Trump administration signalled its intent to follow a set of regional policies – toward Iran and Islamist groups – that appeared to align far more closely to those of Abu Dhabi and Riyadh than Doha*”. Therefore, the members of the Quartet, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, thought that the best way to put pressure on Qatar is through securing American support for their actions – an idea which is well-rooted in the international relations of the Gulf region (see part 2.2.1.).

In the first half of 2017, the crown princes and the effective leading foreign policy decision makers of the UAE and Saudi Arabia – Mohammad bin Zayed (MbZ) and Mohammad bin Salman – visited Trump in Washington personally to discuss enhanced cooperation with the United States [The National, 2017]. On the 20-21 of May, 2017, President Trump visited Riyadh, where he managed to speak with the leaders of all countries of the Quartet.²⁰⁰ The perception of the key role which the US President played in formulating the decision about the four states breaking ties with Qatar was also strengthened by the series of tweets President Trump published after the announcement of the blockade supporting the action. The American role in the events building up to the Gulf rift posteriorly justifies the Qatari ambition to diversify its security relations after 2003 (see part 4.3.).

In parallel with securing the support of the American President, the Quartet also initiated a media campaign against the Qatari regime in May 2017. Using articles and other media products, the Saudi and Emirati leadership wanted to frame the public discourse regarding Qatar in their societies and on the international level as well.²⁰¹ Regarding these attempts, two notions have to be cleared. First of all, these pieces of articles directly attacked the Thani regime and the Thani family members using *identity taqfir* (see part 2.2.2.). For example, the grandchildren of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab disowned the affiliation to the former Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani [Al-Hayat, 2017]. The pro-government Saudi Okaz news portal declared that Qatar sides with

²⁰⁰ Officially, the event comprised of three different summits – a bilateral one between Saudi Arabia and the United States and two multilateral ones between the GCC and the US on the one hand, and between Arab and Islamic countries and the US (the “Arab Islamic American Summit”) on the other.

²⁰¹ According to the Qatari foreign minister, thirteen pieces of articles were published in the American media in the five weeks preceding the announcement of the blockade with the intention to damage the image of Qatar [Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2017, 9].

the enemies of the Saudi nation [Okaz, 2017]. Reports aired on Al-Arabiya also connected Emir Tamim and his father to Moammar Qaddafi and Ali Abdullah Saleh [Ray al-Yaoum, 2017a]. The Ray al-Yaoum media website proclaimed that Qatar left the Gulf flock and is possibly leaving the GCC as well [Ray al-Yaoum, 2017b].

Second, “fake news” played an important role in the escalation of the crisis. The website of the Qatar News Agency was hacked on the 23th of May, and an article appeared about a speech of Emir Tamim, in which he reportedly voiced support for Iran, the Hezbollah and Hamas [Ulrichsen, 2017]. Many suspected that the operation was conducted by Emirati hackers. The media of the Quartet quickly disseminated the fake news [e.g. Okaz, 2017], which was followed by the publication of further incriminating “information” about, for example, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards protecting the Qatari Royal Palace [Al Arabiya, 2017]. While these pieces of articles did not bear huge importance, they nevertheless framed the debate in the domestic public discourse considerably – which is why we can say that the Qatari crisis “*may well be remembered as the first international crisis of the ‘alternative facts’ era*” [Ulrichsen, 2017].

The announcements of the Quartet took place in this discursive environment. Shortly, on the 21st of June, the four states proclaimed 13 demands for Qatar to meet [Arab Center Washington DC, 2017,113-115], three of which concerned alleged support of terrorism, two concerned the interference in domestic affairs, two referred to the media network of Qatar and three were connected to Qatari foreign policy in general.²⁰² The latter three pushed the Thani regime to close its diplomatic ties with Iran and engage only in economic relations with the Islamic Republic; to terminate the Turkish military presence in Qatar; and to align its foreign policy in accordance with the Riyadh Agreement. The ten demands were later replaced by six principles [ibid], two of which concerned the combat against terrorism and extremism; one was about the prohibition of any act which might incite hatred or violence; two was about full commitment to the Riyadh Agreement and the outcome of the May 2017 meeting in Riyadh; and lastly one referred to refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

Although several regional and global actors proclaimed that they support a peaceful resolution of the dispute, nobody was able to persuade the two sides to work out

²⁰² The remaining three points were general remarks about compensation for the aforementioned allegations, the desire to put Qatar under financial control, and the deadline of 10 days for the demands.

their differences. The Kuwaiti Emir Sabah al-Sabah immediately stood up as the mediator in the debate [Schanzer – Koduvayur, 2018]. The role of facilitator came naturally for Kuwait, which engaged in the same activity during the debate between Qatar and the Quartet in 2013-2014 [Rubin, 2017]. Both sides trusted the Kuwaiti Emir and due to the passive behaviour of Kuwait during the Arab Uprisings (see part 4.4.), it did not alienate either sides. While Kuwait has its own issues with Qatar (especially regarding the coverage of Al-Jazeera), it did not join the Quartet due to mistrust of any intension of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to force domestic political change in a neighbouring country [Martin – Cafiero, 2017].²⁰³

Despite the efforts of Emir Sabah al-Sabah, he did not manage to build a bridge between Qatar and the Quartet this time. In September 2017, a phone call took place between the Saudi Crown Prince Mohamad bin Salman and Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, but due to the different interpretation of the conversation in the media, the process terminated before it could really begin. In December 2017, the annual summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council barely took place as Saudi Arabia and the UAE announced that they set up a bilateral consultative council, which symbolically replaced the GCC on their part. The tension got even more serious during the first anniversary of the blockade, when both sides emphasized their narrative in the international public discourse to a much greater extent.

The motivation of small Gulf states in the Gulf rift reflected their previously identified security policy priorities. Bahrain found its place in the Quartet mainly due to historical tensions between the two regimes [Ulrichsen, 2017c, 181], the island state's growing security reliance on Saudi Arabia, the critical coverage of Al Jazeera about Bahraini domestic developments²⁰⁴ and the displeasure regarding the Iranian-Qatari (or Iranian-Omani) relations. Kuwait and Oman on the other hand, were not interested in the rift [Cafiero – Karasik, 2017], since the instability in the Peninsula caused by the disunity in the GCC could have negative effects on their international environment. Less relied on Saudi Arabia than Bahrain, they also feared the formulating Saudi-Emirati alliance as a

²⁰³ A state with such unique domestic political system and with a fragile balance between Shia parties, Islamists and other political powers, Kuwait does not want to expose its domestic affairs to the activities of the Saudi or Emirati government.

²⁰⁴ Before the eruption of the GCC rift, Bahraini authorities denied access of the Al Jazeera staff to GCC summits held in Manama, the last time at the end of 2016 [Al Jazeera, 2016].

hegemonic attempt in the GCC, something which they already refused to accept in 2012 in the form of the Gulf Union initiative by Saudi Arabia.

It is therefore not surprising that Sultan Qaboos remained officially neutral, and tried to diplomatically contribute to the Kuwaiti mediation efforts [Pradhan, 2018, 438] and played the role of a “humanitarian facilitator” by contributing to the safe transport of Qatari citizens stuck in the Quartet after the announcement of the embargo [Al-Muslimi, 2017]. Due to the foreign policy decisions made by the Omani government, the country is more closer to the Qatari side – its relations with Iran is much warmer than the Saudis want them to be [Baabood, 2018]. Another source of tension between Oman and the Quartet is Yemen, where Sultan Qaboos continued its historical role as a mediator in the different domestic crises of Yemen and thus did not take part in the Saudi-led intervention.²⁰⁵ This puts more pressure on the Omani-Emirati relations, given the UAE’s expansionist policy in Yemen, especially in the island of Socotra [Al-Muslimi, 2017].

. The Omani government on the other hand tried to capitalise on the crisis by deepening ties with Qatar [Schanzer – Koduvayur, 2018]. In 2017, the volume of bilateral trade grew by 144%, with Oman becoming the number one destination for the exports of the non-oil sector. The Oman Air also tried to take over the logistical role of Qatar Airways in the peninsula.

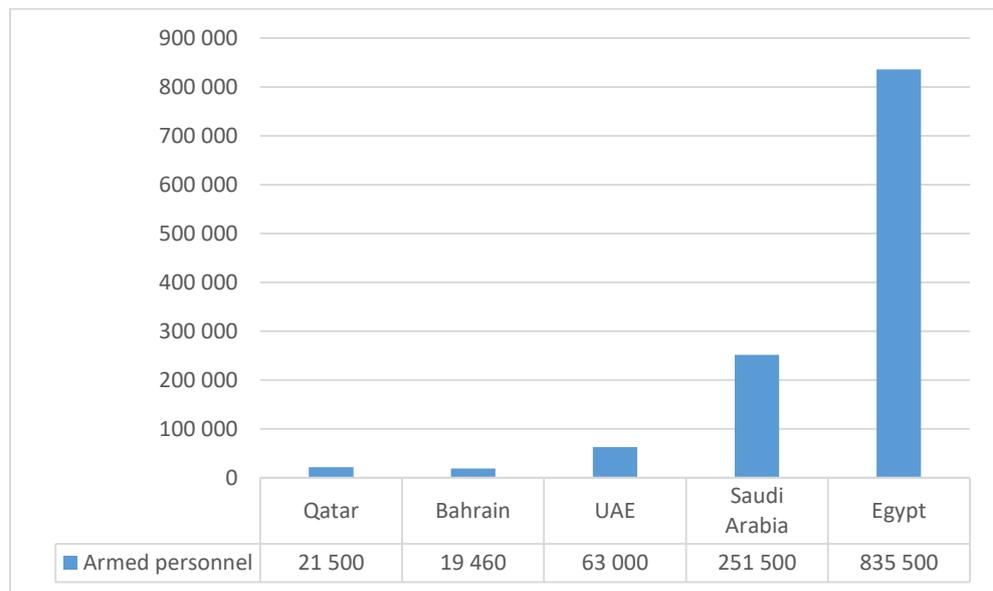
If the outcome of the Gulf rift was dependent on hard power capabilities, Qatar would have no chance to win (or even to survive) the dispute. The difference between the military capabilities between the two sides is striking (see Chart 45). The army of Qatar is slightly larger than that of the smallest Quartet country, Bahrain. Even if we exclude Egypt, the Saudi-Emirati partnership alone would have been able to militarily defeat Qatar, especially due to its highly vulnerable geopolitical position (see part 3.1).

According to a report published by *The Intercept*, the Saudi and Emirati leadership did actually start to plan a military attack on Qatar in the first months of 2017. This was not the first time that such idea surfaced – in 2014, similar rumours spread about a possible invasion [Hearst, 2014]. The plan – which never got implemented – supposedly included a ground campaign by the Saudis from the south (with military air support from the UAE), which would have circumvented the American military bases and would have

²⁰⁵ The Saudis are not against the Omani neutral stance, since it allows Oman to mediate between the Saudis and the Houthis in 2017-2018 [Lons, 2018].

occupied the capital quickly. Nevertheless, American Secretary of State Rex Tillerson intervened in the process and discouraged the Saudi leadership – Mohammad bin Salman and foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir – about any military solution. While MbS was “concerned that the invasion would damage Saudi Arabia’s long-term relationship with the U.S.”, the Emirati crown prince Mohammad bin Zayed was “enraged” [Emmons, 2018].

Chart 45: Size of armed forces in the Quartet states and Qatar (size of personnel)²⁰⁶



The Qatari leadership was aware of the fact that it would not be able to withhold such attack, therefore – prior to the rift – it implemented compensatory policies to defend itself. Since these have already been mentioned in Parts 3.1.4. and 3.3., here I just highlight the two most important measures [Roberts, 2017, 8]. First, the presence of the military forces of third parties was crucial in obtaining a certain level of security. Qatar did not only rely on American or Western presence, but also welcomed a Turkish base set up in 2016, according to a defence agreement between the two states in 2014 [Quamar, 2017]. After the announcement of the embargo, the Turkish National Assembly decided to enlarge the number of deployed military personnel to Qatar. While the presence of Turkish armed forces did contribute to the survival of Qatar, it also served as a cause of the debate as it was enlisted among the initial thirteen demands. In this respect, the

²⁰⁶ Source: World Bank Database, 2018.

invitation of external forces can be seen as a continuation of the traditional security dilemma.

Second, Qatar tried to capitalize on its enlarged normative size and turn its position in the international political and economic system into a security guarantee. “*The aim was to ensure that under such circumstance [like the GCC rift] the main members of the international community would come to Doha’s defence based on their interests in maintaining relations with an independent Qatar*” [Ulrichsen – Karasik, 2018]. Prior to the crisis, Qatar managed to build interdependences with both of the major players in the international arena in different ways – through LNG-deals (with East Asia), migration cooperation (South Asia) and investments (Europe) [Ulrichsen – Karsik, 2018]. As a result, when Saudi Arabia and the Quartet urged “*all brotherly countries and companies*” to cut ties with the country [The Quint, 2017], only a handful of states responded.²⁰⁷

These preliminary measures enabled Qatar to move the GCC rift from the realm of hard power and military confrontation to that of soft power and convincing the international community.²⁰⁸ In this field, the relative military smallness did not pose a disadvantage – quite the opposite, one can argue that the relative smallness of Qatar vis-à-vis the economic and military giants of the Quartet was vantage for the Thani leadership, as it was able to frame the events as “*David versus Goliath*” [e.g. Jha, 2018, Cole, 2018] and thus evoke the positive cognitive perception attached to smallness [see part 1.2.4.]

As a military intervention was off the table, the Quartet wanted to undermine the rule of the Qatari regime domestically. Economically, they calculated that the small state is not strong enough to withstand the effects of the embargo. The Quartet were responsible for approx. 20% of the Qatari imports directly, and at least for another 40% in terms of transit trade [Szalai, 2017, 8]. Moreover, according to leaked emails from the Emirati ambassador to the United States, the measures also aimed to drive down the value of the Qatari riyal, which would have led to a currency crisis [Middle East Monitor, 2017]. At the same time, the Quartet tried to build up a network of opposition figures in Qatar,

²⁰⁷ After one year of the eruption of the crisis, only Chad, the Comoros, the Maldives, Mauritania, Senegal and Yemen cut diplomatic ties with Qatar besides the Quartet, while Jordan, Niger and Djibouti downgraded their relations. In August, Chad re-established relations [Middle East Eye, 2018b].

²⁰⁸ On the other hand, it would be an over-simplification to say that the Quartet only had a hard power strategy. As it was already described, their initial steps also included soft power tools (like framing the public discourse).

mostly from the lineage closer to Khalifa Al Thani, who ruled until 1995 and who had a strong relationship with the Saudi regime.²⁰⁹

While it was not beyond rationality to expect mounting domestic pressure on the Thani regime, the strategy of the Quartet is yet to produce any tangible results. The embargo had considerable effects on foreign trade, the financial sphere and tourism [Moody's 2017], however, the Qatari government managed to tackle the economic consequences of the crisis through restructuring, fiscal stimulus and building up the manufacturing and producing industry. By March, 2018, the IMF concluded that “*the direct economic and financial impact of the diplomatic rift between Qatar and some countries in the region is fading*”, while “*macroeconomic performance remains resilient*” [IMF, 2018]. The infrastructural developments to host the 2022 World Cup also continued. On the political side, no opposition forces rose to threaten the rule of the Thani regime, moreover, the Qatari society engaged in a series of public display of loyalty towards Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.²¹⁰ Therefore, the Quartet's strategy to undermine the Qatari regime did not produce any substantial results.

In contrast, the Qatari strategy aimed to form the perception of the outside world about the crisis (and Qatar) using different forums on different levels with different types of actors.²¹¹ To do so, Qatari diplomatic activities were based on a “*multiple track approach*”,²¹² which refers to the usage of different communication channels and different actors. Broadly, this strategy included five types of interactions.

1) State-level negotiations through diplomatic channels with governments.

Usually, this form of communication is aimed to either inform other members of the interstate community about the narrative of Qatar or to deepen existing cooperation with them in order to increase the value of the bilateral relationship. Such attempts were made with global powers – Russia about military equipment deals [Ramani 2018] or with the

²⁰⁹ Such figures include Abdullah bin Ali Al Thani (the brother of Ahmed bin Ali Al Thani, the emir of Qatar between 1960 and 1971), Sultan bin Suheim Al Thani (the cousin of Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, the emir of Qatar between 1971 and 1995), Fawaz al-Attiya (a Qatari businessmen with British citizenship, who was famous to criticize HBJ, the former minister of foreign affairs) and Khalid al-Hail (the leader of the so-called Qatari National Democratic Party) [Szalai, 2017, 6-7].

²¹⁰ The only major break in the Qatari society was observable in the case of the al-Murra tribe, which supported Khalifa bin Hamad before 1995 and this time they sided with the Saudi leadership. As a response, the Qatari government striped the citizenship from at least fifty members of the tribe [Szalai, 2017, 7].

²¹¹ Naturally, the Quartet also aimed to do the same, but with much lower efficiency.

²¹² A term which was used by Lolwah Al-Khater, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar during an interview I conducted with her in Doha on the 8th of July, 2018.

United States about setting up a formal strategic dialogue format [USDOS, 2018b] – and regional ones as well. Deepening economic ties with Iran was crucial for Qatar in order to survive the economic hardships deriving from the embargo. In August, 2017, the two countries re-establish diplomatic relations which were cut in January 2016, as a result of an act of solidarity from the side of Qatar to Saudi Arabia as its embassy was attacked in Tehran [DW, 2018]. Under the embargo, the Iranian airspace and national waters represented a gateway to connect Qatar with the rest of the world, therefore the reliance of the emirate on the Islamic Republic has grown considerably. Economic ties also deepened with Iran – by October 2017, non-oil imports grew by 117% from Iran [Financial Tribune, 2017]. Trade ties also strengthened with Turkey and Oman – cooperation with the three countries enabled the foreign economic relations of Qatar to be restructured and the goods which were usually imported from Saudi Arabia and the UAE (metals, minerals, animal and vegetable products, machinery and chemicals) to be obtained [Abu-Siriyya, 2017].

2) *Negotiating with supra-national organizations.* Besides state-level diplomatic ties, Qatar also aimed to strengthen cooperation with international organizations basically with the same goals. This includes negotiating with the Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization about “*enhancing cooperation*” [QMFA, 2017], or signing a military cooperation agreement with the NATO in January, 2018 [NATO, 218]. The latter was important also due to the fact that the Secretary-General of the organizations publicly “thanked the Emir for Qatar’s role and its efforts in the fight against terrorism”, a clear stand against the Quartet’s narrative about Qatar’s affiliation with terrorist states.

3) *Turning to supra-national judicial bodies to solve the dispute.* In the last year, Qatar voluntarily submitted legal applications against the members of the Quartet at supra-national judicial bodies. The country filed complaints individually against Bahrain [WTO, 2017a], Saudi Arabia [WTO, 2017b] and the United Arab Emirates [WTO, 2017c] at the World Trade Organization (WTO) which state that the measures undertaken by the Quartet are unlawful coercive attempts at economic isolation in terms of the flow of goods and services and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights. On the other hand, Qatar also submitted an application against the United Arab Emirates at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) claiming that the UAE violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination [ICJ, 2018]. Submitting applications to such international bodies will not end the dispute by itself, but they keep

the legal perspectives of the embargo in the international discourse while also project a commitment of Qatar towards peaceful means of disputing settlement.

4) *Influencing the perception of the members of the international community through non-state actors.* Qatar used several non-state actors to shape the perception of the members of the international community about the crisis. In the United States, Qatar works with about two dozen PR and lobbying firms (including Blueprint Advisors, Ogilvy Government Relations, Lexington Strategies and Debevoise & Plimpton) [The Hill 2018].²¹³ In early 2018, Qatar created a new D.C. based research institution called the Gulf International Forum [Allen-Ebrahimian and Dubin 2018].

The aim of the Qatari PR strategy in D.C. was to persuade the White House to change its initial reaction to the crisis, which was more inclined to the Quartet. The effort was successful, at least the aim was reached to some extent – on April 10, 2018, President Trump welcomed Emir Tamim Al Thani in Washington, and called Qatar an “advocate” of the fight against terrorism [Brookings 2018].²¹⁴

5) *Using foreign human rights NGOs to support the case of Qatar.* Besides funding foreign non-state actors, Doha also changed the relationship it had with foreign NGOs. Before the crisis of 2017, Qatar had a negative relationship with international human rights (HR) organizations, mostly due to the bad living conditions and the limited rights of migrant workers employed in the tiny emirate. Such institutions frequently criticised the Qatari government for the inhumane treatment of guest workers [e.g. Amnesty International, 2013]. Nonetheless, Qatar realised that in the debate with the Quartet, such human right NGOs could be its natural allies, since the embargo led to measures against Qatari citizens in the four countries which were at least questionable from a human rights perspective.

Consequently, Qatari state institutions cooperated with such HR NGOs to uncover the abuses caused by the measures of the Quartet. In the first six months of the

²¹³ The particularity of these efforts was that Doha understood the importance of personal relations, which is why they hired those companies which had personal relations with the key figures of the American government. This included, among others, the aforementioned Blueprint Advisors, which was connected to Rudy Giuliani, Nicolas D. Muzin, a former close ally of Ted Cruz [The New York Times, 2018], or the lobbying company Ballard Partners which supported the Trump campaign in 2016 [Harris, 2018].

²¹⁴ Another usage of non-state actors by the Qatari government was to enlarge the visibility of those state-controlled NGOs which work in international humanitarian affairs. Qatar Charity (QC) formalised its cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in October 2017 [UNHCR 2017].

embargo, the team of Amnesty International visited Qatar two times, received by the National Human Rights Committee [Qatar Living, 2017]. On the other hand, to ease the pressure on the country about the maltreatment of migrant workers, Qatar joined a few international agreements and made temperate reforms to better the living standards of foreign labourers, many hailed by HR organizations [HRW, 2018a and 2018b; Amnesty International, 2017a]. At the end of the day, both Amnesty International [2017b] and Human Rights Watch [HRW, 2017] issued several reports and proclamations about the Qatari crisis, which all criticised the measures of the Quartet extensively.

All in all, Qatar managed to transform the Gulf rift into a soft power competition, in which it had advantages vis-à-vis the Quartet. First of all, Qatar has already engaged in such strategies much more extensively than its neighbours since the late 1990s. Second, its relative smallness played a role in the evolution of the public discourse related to the crisis. Using state-level diplomacy and cooperation with transnational actors – international organizations, domestic and foreign NGOs – enabled Qatar to sustain its survival in the rift without any major repercussion.

Moreover, the Quartet has not managed to change the Qatari foreign policy considerably since the eruption of the crisis. It is true that the behaviour of Qatar has a lower profile than in the years of the Arab Uprisings, but this change took place before 2017. Since the diplomatic break, Qatari foreign activities changed in two relatively important ways. First, the country tuned down its involvement in two civil wars [Hassan, 2018]. After the rift erupted, the country was thrown out of the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen, and since then, Qatari activity is not visible in the country. At the same time, Qatar also lowered the amount of support given to Syrian opposition groups, like the Ahrar as-Sham. Nonetheless, this development was not a result of the blockade, but rather of the huge losses suffered by the Syrian opposition after the fall of Aleppo at the end of 2016. This development may be the most tangible victory for the Quartet, more precisely for the UAE, which never appreciated the Qatari policy to subsidize radical Islamist groups in Syria.

Second, the Qatari dependence on Iran grew considerably. So far the exposure only manifested itself in economic terms, but there is no guarantee that Tehran would not capitalise on this weakness. For example, recently there were some rumours that the Thani regime, under Iranian pressure, might re-establish relations with the Assad-regime. Such

scenarios would undermine even further any attempt for reconciliation between Qatar and the Quartet.

4.6. Concluding remarks - how smallness effects foreign and security policy

The examined case studies showed that smallness effects foreign policy behaviour in different and not automatic ways. The debates about Gulf unity in the 1970s indicated that when discussing a possible federation between them, the attitudes of the small Gulf states were shaped more by their relative size to each other than by their relative size compared to Saudi Arabia and Iran. This notion underlines the point in the CMS that relative size is a regionally determined attribute, therefore its effects are dependent on how the state identifies its position in a more narrow or larger region. Qatar for example is small in the Middle East, but in the 1970s – due to the constellation of small absolute demographic size, large absolute economic size and relatively high level of state-building – it behaved and was perceived as a dominant actor among the small Gulf states.

The second case study showed how size effects threat perceptions. Due to relative military smallness, the small Gulf states tended to overemphasize military threats over political or domestic threats, which can lead to sub-optimal decisions and miscalculations in foreign policy. Siding with Iraq in the Iraqi-Iranian war can be seen retrospectively as a bad decision from Kuwait (and also from Bahrain), which did not better their security environment. Coupled with domestic pressure on the Shia networks, this strategy actually led to less safety. On the other hand, Oman and Qatar tried to be as neutral as possible, generally due to their more remote location, better relations with pre-revolutionary Iran, and less domestic turbulence caused by the war.

Analysing the alliance-making policy with superpowers in the third case study, one can come to the conclusion that both systemic changes and domestic developments effect the strategic decisions in the small Gulf states. The effects of the second and third Gulf crisis showed that the level of cooperation with the US was dependent on the evaluation of the American defence capabilities in terms of both military and political threats. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, small Gulf states were willing to sacrifice their autonomy for security, while after 2003, their priorities diverged, which was in line with systemic changes and the emergence of comparative heterogeneity. Kuwait and Bahrain, whose perceptual size was smaller than that of Qatar and Oman, prioritised security over influence or autonomy, while the Thani regime chose an active strategy, whereas the Bu

Said regime preferred active neutrality. Even though previously, theoretical literature argued that the presence of the hegemon creates the highest level of security for small states, Qatar decided to diversify its security relations.

The fourth case study about the leverage of small Gulf states during the years of the Arab Uprisings showed that by the 2010s, the foreign policy possibilities were not primarily limited by the size of the states but more by the level of social heterogeneity. Mismanaged diversity in Bahrain and Kuwait severely decreased their leverage, while Oman and Qatar enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to political outcomes in the region. Nonetheless, their different strategies – in line with their different alliance policies after 2003 – led to different normative sizes, which shows that small states can actually shape their perceptions in the international community. On the other hand, the case of Oman and Qatar shows that smaller or larger normative size does not automatically translate into more or less security, as both have their negative and positive effects.

The Gulf rift of 2017 supports the assumption that large normative size can be beneficial and disadvantageous for small states. The active foreign policy of Qatar turned its neighbours against it. On the other hand, it also secured Qatari survival by the previous diversification of security relations. The Gulf rift also shows that by the 2010s, if a small state is able to bring a rivalry to the dimension of soft power, its vulnerability can be reduced significantly – even in the case of Qatar, which was absolutely exposed geopolitically to Saudi Arabia, and its relative military size is tiny compared to the Quartet.

All in all, the case studies show that neorealism, neoliberalism and constructivism individually cannot interpret the small Gulf states' foreign and security policy. Structural variables are deemed highly important for decision-making (especially in alliance-making) but as many examples show, they do not determine the behaviour of small states. Neoliberalism is right to point out the importance of state-building and the role of domestic politics as well as interdependences, but its applicability is only partial in a region as under-institutionalised as the Middle East. Constructivism, emphasizing the role of identity and other normative elements, cannot be neglected either, though it is insufficient to take into account only such variables in order to understand the foreign policy of small Gulf states – for example, Ibadism is not the only determinant of Omani foreign policy.

CONCLUSION

“The whole war is a battle between those two systems, between the Empire and the Foundation; between the big and the little. (...) [The latter] is a world the size of a handkerchief, of a fingernail; with resources so petty, power so minute, a population so microscopic as would never suffice the most backward worlds (...). Yet with that, a people so proud and ambitious as to dream quietly and methodically of Galactic rule. (...) And they succeed. There is no one to stop them.”²¹⁵

In Isaac Asimov’s *The Foundation*, the science fiction author presents a world in which social sciences are so developed that they can actually predict the future. Foreseeing the inevitable fall of the “Empire”, the protagonist creates a “Foundation” which would, according to the plans, replace the Empire as the new hegemon. Nonetheless, he develops the Foundation purposefully with limited resources, based on the idea that smallness would eventually incentivise ingenuity and innovation, a “resource” much more valuable than tangible materials.

Size can effect a state’s behaviour in this way, though not automatically. Besides innovation, smallness can lead to weakness, vulnerability, subjection to others or even the inability to survive. But it can also result in efficiency, strategic advantages or additional foreign policy leverage.

The dissertation aimed to prove that in international relations, size does not necessarily operate in the way in which we expect it to. In order to properly understand how smallness and largeness work, one has to analyse the bigger picture and the context of size. In other words, by the 21st century, it is not enough to refer to smallness as either a beneficial or noxious trait.

The complex model of size, outlined in the dissertation, helps us understand how size works in international relations, based on two general ideas. First of all, as outlined in Chapter 1, the CMS differentiates between four different kinds of size – relative size as a materialist structuralist concept; absolute size as a materialist individualist concept; perceptual size as an idealist individualist concept and normative size as an individualist

²¹⁵ From Asimov, 1982.

structuralist concept. Moreover, when it comes to the two materialist types of size, the model differentiates between the territorial, demographic, economic and military dimensions.

A state can be small in terms of one dimension of size and large in another. The best example is Qatar, a relative complex small state, which is also small in absolute territorial, demographic and military terms but large in absolute economic terms. On the other hand, smallness does not play a substantive role in the projected identity of Qatar, while normatively it started to grow considerably in the 2000s. In order to understand or to contextualise the foreign policy behaviour of Qatar, one has to take into consideration all these aspects. These points prove that relative size and systemic position are not the only aspects which determines foreign policy behaviour.

Second, the CMS does not interpret size – any kind of size – by itself. Connecting to the idea of Katzenstein, we should not consider size as a master variable whose importance outgrows the relevance of any other aspects. Size interacts with other variables, let that be the extreme scarcity or multitude of a given resource (in the case of the Gulf states, water and oil can be good examples), social homogeneity, aspects of regime security, the political system, etc. In order to understand how size effects political outcomes, one has to analyse these interactions between these variables.

These two statements served as the cornerstone of the complex model of size, on the basis of which I was able to build up a methodological framework in part 1.3. In this framework, I used different method to determine the relative (part 2.1.), normative (part 2.2.2.), absolute (part 3.1.) and perceptual size (part 3.2.) of states:

- to determine relative size, statistical comparison was conducted to see which Middle East states have lower than the average size in the four general aggregate resources;
- to investigate normative size, the GDELT database was used to determine the intensity of interstate relations in different relations, building on the assumption that if a state is considered to be larger, the interactions with that state will be more intense;
- to analyse absolute size, I turned to the interactions between territorial, demographic, economic and military smallness and other variables to see whether the state compensates for negative consequences of small size or not;

- to set the perceptual size, speech acts made by the representatives of the small states were analysed in the United Nations Security Council, and a few reliable surveys were presented as well.

The most important challenge in this regard was to find a suitable method to determine normative and perceptual size. Due to the small size of the related literature, there are no widely used tools to investigate the self-perception and interstate perception of a state's size and importance. The methods chosen have their limits, and further research should be made in this field.

Apart from identifying the different types of small states, the complex model of size suggest to investigate the international material and immaterial environment of small states. Based on the distribution of general aggregate resources in the Middle East as a security complex, I was able to characterise the region as a whole and typify the Middle Eastern states in five categories purely in materialist terms. According to this set-up, the region contains six complex small states, which can be divided into two clusters based on their geopolitical location: the Mashreq cluster (Jordan and Lebanon) and the Gulf cluster (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar).

From the systemic perspective, I came to the conclusion that in general, the Middle East is not as unfavourable for small states as one could assume at first glance. It is true that under-institutionalisation and lacking integration into the global political and economic system deprives shelter for small states, but other aspects can compensate for this loss to some extent. The main material and immaterial features of the Middle East which shapes the leverage and security of small states include

- the nature of the “Middle Eastern state”, the emergence of the regime-based institutional framework, which turns the focus of states to domestic and not foreign threats;
- the dominance of intra-state and transnational conflicts over traditional inter-state ones and the strategy of omni-balancing, which makes it harder for larger states to engage in an armed conflicts;
- the weakness of states and the diffusion of NGOs which do not necessarily contribute to security but enlarge the leverage of small states;
- the changing balance of power in the region which, in general, was beneficial for small states in the Mashreq over time and harmful for the Gulf ones until 2011, after which unpredictability effected small and large state in a similar way,

creating a situation in which lower level of security is coupled with wider potential leverage;

- the normative dichotomy in Middle Eastern political culture which creates supra-state group identities (Arabism, Islam, etc.). These can serve as a security shelter for smaller states (if they are accepted into the club like the Arab League) but also as a tool in interstate rivalry;
- the normative prohibition of interstate conflicts in the Arab family which, until 1990, deprived larger states of their most effective coercive tool against smaller and weaker entities;
- the practice of intervening in each other's domestic affairs which made social cohesion as the primary line of defence for small states, while also contributed to the securitisation of social heterogeneity which seemed to be the most vulnerable point for each state;
- normative fragmentation and sub-regionalism since the 1980s which was beneficial for small Gulf states but – due to the lack of a common geopolitical identity – disenfranchised the small Mashreq states.

In Chapter 3, the investigation turned to the interpretation of absolute size, perceptual size and regime security in the Gulf cluster. To determine the consequences of absolute size, I identified the main variables with which territorial, demographic, economic and military smallness interacts with and thusly creates the need for compensatory policies:

- territorial size interacts with the climatic environment and geopolitical circumstances which deprives small Gulf states from arable land and exposes them to Saudi, Iranian and/or Iraqi influence;
- demographic size interacts with small territory, the imbalance between the demand and supply in the domestic labour market and social heterogeneity. Interestingly enough, demographic size also interacts with a compensatory policy to tackle demographic smallness, namely labour import. The interplay of these variables results in, among others, high level of population density and urbanization, the need for external labour, the perception of cultural invasion, the emergence of ethnocracies;
- economic size interacts with large amount of hydrocarbon resources and demographic smallness. These led to rentierism and huge fiscal leverage for many of the small Gulf states;

- military smallness interacts with huge hydrocarbon resources (depriving small Gulf states of the ability to relative deterrence), systemic developments (urging small Gulf states to build up their own military defence capabilities), and also with the alliance-policy of small Gulf states as a compensatory policy (creating new kinds of alliance dilemmas).

The most important conclusion in this regard is twofold. First of all, the investigation pointed out that small Gulf states (especially Qatar and Kuwait) are not small in terms of absolute economic size as it does not interact with many variables creating negative consequences. Second, small size interacts with not just already existing variables but also the compensatory policies conducted in order to tackle the problems arising from smallness. Both in the case of labour import and demographic smallness and alliance policies and military smallness, these consequences are not systematically tackled by the Gulf regimes.

The investigation of absolute and perceptual size, as well as regime security, pointed out to very important differences between the small Gulf states, in spite of their similar systemic situation. Tackling the negative consequences of small territorial, demographic and military size, Bahrain exposed itself to Saudi influence and managed its domestic problems arising from social heterogeneity by forceful measures and neutralizing Sunni migrant workers. Oman was able to develop its agricultural policy, build up the larger army among the small Gulf states and chose to deepen security relations with Great Britain and was a front-runner in cooperating with the United States. Due to its particular domestic politics, Kuwait turned inside and was forced to institutionalise power sharing among the rival elite groups; while Qatar specialised on natural gas and invited the Muslim Brotherhood to help in state-building.

When it comes to perceptual size, the investigation showed that despite the logical assumption that all small Gulf states perceive themselves small (due to their large neighbours and the minority status of the national community), this is not unequivocally seen in the diplomatic discourse of these states. Kuwait showed the most visible presence of smallness in the national identity, partly (but not completely) triggered by the Iraqi invasion. While projecting smallness can also be seen as a foreign policy tool, it also shows that smallness is an aspect which does not contradict the self-perception of the Kuwaiti government.

In the case of other three states, fewer evidences point to size playing an important role in the identity – moreover, in the case of Qatar, scarce resources are not

even seen as an interpretative framework to understand international developments. The fact that Qatar has conducted the most active foreign policy since the 1990s shows that in the absence of the cognitive connection between size and international power, the Thani regime was able to outgrow its material size and exert its influence in the region.

The case of the small Gulf states also showed that perceptual and normative smallness do not necessarily coincide with each other. Kuwait proclaimed its smallness the most often during a time in which its normative size rose significantly. Oman and Bahrain do not project their perceptual smallness, whereas their normative size is definitely small.

Regime security concerns also separates small Gulf states from each other. Qatar has very limited threats from the domestic sphere which enabled the regime to conduct an active foreign policy. The most important challenge for Qatar could be possible intra-regime strife. The Omani leading elite is also relatively safe since the defeat of the rebel movements in the 1970s, though the security apparatus cracked down on opposition networks many times. The weak point of the Omani regime is its highly personalised nature which could backfire after the death of Sultan Qaboos, the only leader of modern Oman since its independence.

The situation of the Bahraini and Kuwaiti regime is more complicated. In both cases, we can clearly see intra-regime competition (regarding the rise of the Khawalid in the former case and the tensions between the two main parts of the Sabah family in the latter), and also the domestic heterogeneity in the two countries is many times mismanaged by the governments. This creates constant need for the regimes to concentrate on domestic politics (especially since 2011). In these cases, it is not smallness but mismanaged heterogeneity that creates more problems.

The fourth chapter examined the foreign and security policy behaviour of small Gulf states through five case studies. The investigation showed that the behaviour of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar differed to a greater extent than it is usually perceived, and this process did not start in the 2010s but has been observable since the 1980s. In the debates of a possible union in the 1970s, the policies of the small Gulf states were determined by the level of state-building and the relative size vis-à-vis each other. Later, in the reactions to the Iranian revolution and the three Gulf crises, the main decisive point for small Gulf states (besides domestic and regime security concerns) was the altering perception of both the Iranian threat and the value of American alliance which led to different foreign policy strategies. After 2011, reactions to the Arab Uprisings were

shaped by domestic political developments and regime security concerns – in the context of competitive heteropolarity, it was Qatar (and to some extent Oman) which was able to capitalise on the events. This wider leverage was coupled with lower level of security, which paralised the Bahraini and Kuwaiti ambitions in most of the cases.

Besides the conclusions described in part 4.6, there is an additional theoretically relevant notion which came up in this part, namely the assumption that smallness can be used as a foreign policy tool, especially in immaterial terms. Oman chose to remain normatively small in order to maximize its security, while Qatar acted otherwise. Moreover, during the Gulf rift, the size of Qatar also favoured the Thani regime in a way that the positive cognitive pictures attached to smallness would help its case in the international community.

At the beginning of the dissertation, I set up two hypotheses to structure my investigation. The first one stated that “*a single model (i.e. the complex model of size - CMS) can be set up on the basis of previous theories related to size and smallness which excludes the researcher bias towards largeness*”. By separating the four types of size and by analysing the interaction of size with other variables, one can understand the complex way in which smallness and largeness effect domestic and foreign policies. Interpreting size in both a material and immaterial, and an individualist and structuralist context, one can exceed research bias in either ways.

This structure also enabled the categorization of the existing literature on small states. That being said, the complex model of size does not exist in a theoretical vacuum and is necessarily connected to some traditions of small state studies. I believe that due to the interpretation of both material and immaterial variables and the reliance on regional framing, the CMS is the most connected to the regional discourse of the English School and structuralist constructivism.

The second hypothesis aimed to avoid the repetition of already existing novelties by stating that the CMS “*provides a widely applicable methodology which leads us to scientific novelties in the research of international relations*”. I believe that applying the notions of the model on the domestic (Chapter 3) and foreign policies (Chapter 4) of the small Gulf states provided us with novelties, most of which was summarised in the Conclusion. In this regard, most of the conclusions of the dissertation constitute new interpretation novelties, since they interpret the behaviour of small Gulf states in more realistic and accurate ways than by simply referring to “smallness” as an absolute interpretative variable. On the other hand, the inclusion of normative and perceptual size

in the investigation with a methodology resulted in tangible results, new facts were discovered regarding the perception of the size and importance of small Gulf states both in the international community and the national communities.

Naturally, as any other models, the complex model of size also has its limitations. First, the two criteria for application (availability of data and the existence of modern states) proved to be more problematic than previously thought as even for the period 1970-2017, data was not available for several years. Moreover, the existence of modern states can also put to question – as it was mentioned several times, the state-building process has been ongoing in the Middle East (and in other regions as well). The proper effects of the different stages of this process is very hard to take into consideration, even if we discuss contemporary cases. Second, the CMS enables us with a specific set of toolkit to understand the different types of size, though this framework is still flexible enough to choose different methods – especially in the perceptual and normative dimensions. Therefore, methodological confusion in small state studies can only be reduced by the CMS but not completely eliminated. Third, the investigation of the interactions between different variables and observing the state's reaction to these interactions (especially in relations with absolute size) bears explanatory value but has its weaknesses as well – it presumes some levels of rationality and consciousness from decision-makers, which, as the investigation showed, does not necessarily leads to truthful conclusions.

When it comes to the different types of size, further research should be made in relations with perceptual and normative size, the two newest concepts in small state studies. These investigations should focus on possible methodologies and even new conceptual frameworks if necessary to develop the related research program. Besides the process of state-building, the foreign policy history of small Gulf states has not been completely and thoroughly investigated either – the Qatari case being the exemption. More emphasis should be put on especially the Omani foreign policy, as well as the way in which Gulf regimes constitute threats in their domestic environment.

In international relations, size is a complex phenomenon. In order to keep our imagination alive, as E. M. Forster predicted, we need a complex model to interpret its importance in a thorough manner. The elimination of this blind spot would benefit not just the students of small states but also scholars of IR in general. Moreover, foreign policy decision-makers could also deepen their understanding of international relations of the 21st century by going beyond their cognitive bias towards size. Large states should

not neglect small ones but rather learn from them. On the other hand, small states should not deprive themselves of the possibilities which they could enjoy despite of their smallness – or because of it.

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