The Impact of Border Disputes on Fragile: Case Study of Bahrain and Qatar

El impacto de las disputas fronterizas en los países frágiles: estudio de caso de Bahréin y Qatar

O Impacto das Disputas de Fronteira em Países Frágeis: Estudo de Caso do Bahrein e do Catar

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ABSTRACT

When the borders between states are subject to dispute, building of good relations among the concerned states become a complicated issue. For decades, Bahrain and Qatar have been incompatible with each other over territorial waters, including sovereignty over the Hawar and Zubarah islands in the southern part of the Persian Gulf. Although, the two countries were satisfied with the final ruling of the International Court of Justice to end the disputes in 2001, the disputes between the two countries over the mentioned islands and areas resumed almost 20 years. Given these circumstances, this article seeks to examine the impact of border disputes on the relations between countries, particularly Bahrain and Qatar. This study employs a descriptive-analytical method to investigate the impact of this influence on the ties among Persian Gulf countries, specifically focusing on the interactions between Bahrain and Qatar. It was found that these countries have taken some significant steps in recent decades to resolve their issues. However, we conclude that these measures have proven ineffective in solving the exiting disputes and the emerging ones.

Keywords: Border, Border Disputes, Arabian Peninsula, Bahrain, Qatar.

RESUMEN

Cuando las fronteras entre los estados están sujetas a disputa, la construcción de buenas relaciones entre los estados involucrados se convierte en un asunto complicado. Durante décadas, Bahréin y Catar han sido incompatibles entre sí en cuanto a las aguas territoriales, incluida la soberanía sobre las islas Hawar y Zubarah en la parte sur del Golfo Pérsico. Aunque los dos países estaban satisfechos con el fallo final de la Corte Internacional de Justicia para poner fin a las disputas en 2001, las disputas entre los dos países sobre las mencionadas islas y áreas se reanudaron casi 20 años después. Dadas estas circunstancias, este artículo busca examinar el impacto de las disputas fronterizas en las relaciones

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entre países, en particular entre Baréin y Catar. Este estudio emplea un método descriptivo-analítico para investigar el impacto de esta influencia en los vínculos entre los países del Golfo Pérsico, centrándose específicamente en las interacciones entre Baréin y Catar. Se constató que estos países han adoptado medidas significativas en las últimas décadas para resolver sus problemas. Sin embargo, concluimos que estas medidas han resultado ineficaces para resolver las disputas existentes y las emergentes.

Palabras clave: Frontera, Disputas Fronterizas, Península Arábiga, Baréin, Catar.

RESUMO

Quando as fronteiras entre os estados estão sujeitas a disputas, a construção de boas relações entre os estados envolvidos torna-se uma questão complicada. Durante décadas, Bahrein e Catar têm sido incompatíveis entre si em relação às águas territoriais, incluindo a soberania sobre as ilhas Hawar e Zubarah na parte sul do Golfo Pérsico. Embora os dois países tenham ficado satisfeitos com a decisão final do Tribunal Internacional de Justiça para encerrar as disputas em 2001, as disputas entre os dois países sobre as ilhas e áreas mencionadas recomeçaram quase 20 anos depois. Diante dessas circunstâncias, este artigo busca examinar o impacto das disputas de fronteira nas relações entre os países, particularmente Bahrein e Catar. Este estudo emprega um método descritivo-analítico para investigar o impacto dessa influência nos laços entre os países do Golfo Pérsico, com foco específico nas interações entre Bahrein e Catar. Constatou-se que esses países tomaram medidas significativas nas últimas décadas para resolver seus problemas. No entanto, concluímos que essas medidas se mostraram ineficazes para solucionar as disputas existentes e as emergentes.

Palavras-chave: Fronteira, Disputas de Fronteira, Península Arábica, Baréin, Catar.

1 INTRODUCTION

A political border is a phenomenon that demonstrates a country's political sovereignty and prevents the movement of individuals, the exchange of goods, or the spread of ideas according to certain norms (Mirheydar, 2001, p. 114). There are several outstanding issues in this field of political geography. People, nations, countries, etc. Knowing such issues may be a very beneficial resource within the field of interplay given the characteristics of the world, as knowledge of nature, features, and unique types of restrictions plays an important role in defining the connections and interactions between them. Convenient, prepared, and free of violence and conflict between people, nations, and causes. Border zones and traces serve the purpose of separating political subdivisions. Border zones have distinct characteristics due to their interaction with a variety of interior and outdoor surroundings (Seyedi Asl, & Bahremani, 2021, p. 669).

Borders are defined as the heart of territorial sovereignty which means that anything related to a state border or crossing it is subject to potential politicization (Scott, 2020: 7). On the other hand, the conception of border security, travel and trade is one of the main axes of government policies in international relations, diplomacy and security circles which attracts the attention of social researchers (Maigari; Dantani, 2020, p. 2).

Borders are lines that define the outer limits of a political unit, or a country, and separate it from other neighboring units. The main function

of the borders is revealed in the interactions between the surrounding countries, and it evolves over time. It should be said that border lines determine the behavior of people and governments towards themselves. Which means governments and people influence the behavior and function of the border (Ezzati & Savarrakhsh, 2013, p. 48).

Border lines and areas are currently important issues that easily arouse national and patriotic feelings and, according to some scholars, carry inherent dangers. In terms of the consequences for the internal and external security of countries, they are considered important factors in determining peaceful or, conversely, hostile relations between them. There are always reasons for these disagreements to arise, and such confrontations are likely to have an impact on the global political-security landscape (Rabiee, 2012, p. 180). In the meantime, in this study the disputes between the mentioned borders, the management and decision-making procedures in the current complex world system will be studies from different aspects. It should be emphasized that recognizing and understanding the origins and causes of crises, types of crises and their consequences along with management and decision-making when face the crises, will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the environment of the international system and it will help to prevent the crises or at least minimize their negative effects (Janparvar & Salehabadi, 2019, p. 134).

The drawing of borders in the Middle East is a complex process that is relatively new and the result of colonial divisions and national claims. In the ongoing conflicts, like Iraq or Syria, the durability of the states in their current territories and the fear of new divisions are subjects for discussion (Doraï, 2014, p. 122).

Territorial (and border) disputes in the Arabian Peninsula are largely rooted in the legacy of colonialism, and foreign intervention. Except for Iran and Oman so-called the Persian Gulf states are outcomes of the 20th century where they are largely imposed by imperialism. It can be outlined that the foreign actor promoted the international concept of precise territorial boundaries. The delimitation of borders became a serious issue only after the granting of oil concessions, and Britain, international companies and local rulers moved to delimit the territorial boundaries of sovereignty (Okruhlik; Conge, 1999, p. 233). In the meantime, the study of border disputes, especially in areas that have high-value resources and prominent geopolitical and geostrategic positions, is a prominent subject of disputes. One of the most important and prominent areas is the borders of the Persian Gulf region, where the existing border disputes have caused many challenges and conflicts between the neighboring countries from time to time. This article, focusing specifically on the relationship between Bahrain and Qatar, argues that despite the two countries' efforts to resolve border disputes over the past decades, some unresolved issues persist and new political crises have emerged, causing these border disputes to remain a significant factor in bilateral relations and even in interactions among (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries This paper addresses this very important issue and offers insight from improving the affairs between these two countries and PGC as a whole.

This descriptive-analytical method research aims to examine the role and consequences of these disputes in shaping the political relations between Bahrain and Qatar.

The paper is structured in three sections. The first section introduces the study, its purpose and significance. The second section describes the concept of borders and border disputes and presents the conceptual framework of the study. This section describes the concept of border in the context of this study for the clarity of the readers. It also highlights the prevailing disputes and their impacts on the relationship between the two countries. The third section presents study findings and discussion in relationship to the prevailing scholarship and value addition of the study. The final and fourth section offers the conclusions of the study.

2 BORDERS AND BORDER DISPUTES

Borders that reflect the centrality of human social interaction and the exercise of power have become a current research topic in many disciplines. Instead of simple excuses for the barriers to conflict or mobility, border researchers have begun to consider the lines that separate human groups as key processes worthy of deeper and layered evaluation in multi-scalar geopolitics (Diener; Hagen, 2012, p. 13). The Treaty of Westphalia is a starting point in political geography (and Political) studies; credibly the geographical boundaries were legally recognized for the first time after the mentioned treaty. In addition, a consistent definition of country was made for the first time in this agreement. In modern administration, which is a product of the Westphalian system, borders, with all their features and functions, have had a special importance as a means of defending legitimacy, identity (individual and national) and sovereignty and territorial integrity (Ahmadi; Hafeznia, 2020; Seyedi Asl; Karaoğlu, 2023).

To have better understanding on the provided concept, the word "border" defines a political territory and a living space in English. The border exists not only between independent countries but also between other forms of political units (Guo, 2005). The border is conceptualized as a set of institutions, textual power dynamics, social discourses, everyday practices, population movement, and cross-border trade flows (Shahriar, 2022). On the other hand, borders are an integral part of human activity and organization. That is to say, we are forced to deepen our understanding of their role as zones of opportunity and insecurity, zones of contact and conflict, sites of cooperation and competition, sites of ambivalent identities and aggressive claims (Diener; Joshua Hagen, 2012, p. 17).

Borders are divided into areas called border zones and are shown as very thin lines on the map. But in reality, a border is not a line, but a vertical plane or surface that cuts space, soil, and the depths of the earth, which is a conical wedge to the center of the earth. It is visible on the surface of the earth in the form of a line, because it divides the surface and becomes a sign. Bearing in the mind that most countries are extremely careful about their space and its protection; the borders are effective and influential phenomena because they limit the scope of action of neighboring governments (Glassner; Chuck, 2004).

Border has been considered as a key category for social scientists since the 19th century, when the processes of modern state-building and nation-building intensified in Europe. To provide an example, we know well how Friedrich Ratzel emphasized the importance of borders for "political balance". One of the lesser-known pioneers in border studies is the famous sociologist Georg Simmel, for whom "the border is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological reality that shapes itself spatially". He discussed the role of borders in social life and consciousness and concluded: "Considering that we have borders everywhere and all the times, therefore we are borders" (Paasi, 2012). On the other hand, both material and metaphorical, the borders form areas of contact, cooperation and conflict between different political and cultural groups (Johnson, 2013).

During the first half of the 20th century, the first systematic studies of borders focused on natural and man-made borders. For example, Ellen Churchill Semple compared borders and boundaries, arguing that natural geographic borders, where humans cannot inhabit, are ideal borders. Later, Holdich and Lyde debated the virtues of borders. They highlighted that the borders good or bad depending on their inherent merit in enhancing or limiting tensions and possibly war between states (Brunet-Jailly, 2005). Basically, border scholars of the first half of the 20th century consider the borders just the physical and static result of a political decision-making process (Newman, 2006). According to Mingy, this leads to an overemphasis on differences and change in borders, in terms of physical demarcation or at the times of war and military occupation and an under emphasis on the interest in borders in "normal" times (Van Houtum, 2005).

After the war, scholars usually considered borders as physical lines to separate states or "artifacts on the ground" and studied border landscapes, their functional roles in social and economic interaction, and their perceptions. Therefore, they reflected broader philosophical and methodological developments in geography. These abstract lines became critical in understanding concepts such as state, territory, and sovereignty. At the local and regional level, borders were lines between jurisdictions or voting districts (Paasi, 2013).

The postmodern paradigm has been emerging and evolving since the late 1980s. Along with political geography in general, border studies was significantly influenced by, the first world systems theory, particularly the idea of interdependence and the role of processes occurring at different spatial scales. Second, the importance of structuralism theory related to Anthony Giddens, who proposed the idea of certain freedom of action for subjects of economic and political activity and public institutions at different territorial levels. Third, border studies now widely use the concepts of political discourse and its role in the construction of space, which were developed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault and his followers (Kolosov, 2015). Ashley suggested that this political practice—which takes place in a historically inscribed social space—has important effects such as the creation and reaffirmation of recognizable social boundaries that separate spheres of action on a global scale. Later, Ashley explicitly used poststructuralism and addressed the role of the

border that the state monitors and defines and separates the total "other" from the total "same" (Paasi, 2013).

In the first decade of the 21st century, instead of softening the borders between states and the borders between categories of group identity, they have been changed, reestablished and hardened as part of the "Global War on Terror". Instead of removing borders and opening borders, governments are reassessing immigration and border controls to prevent contact with dangerous "others" (Jones, 2009). Today, border lines and areas are important issues that easily arouse national and patriotic feelings, and according to some scholars, they carry inherent risks. Also, in terms of the consequences, they have for the internal and external security of countries, they are considered important factors that determine peaceful relations or, on the contrary, hostile relations between them (Razavi, 2015).

Border disputes and territorial expansionism have always existed between countries and local communities since ancient times and have been the main factor in creating wars and conflicts among them. Meanwhile, the first step to stabilize the borders in Europe was taken with the conclusion of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, during which the territorial borders between European countries were recognized. Knowing the fact that border disputes and conflicts did not disappear completely, the project of stabilizing borders and resolving border disputes in Europe was not completed even after World War II and continued until the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the opposite point is the Arab Middle East region, whose general political shape was drawn by the victorious countries after the First World War. In this region, we see countless conflicts in the field of territorial and border issues (Yari & Abdalipour, 2017). According to Martin Gloster, the number of major border disputes on the mainland alone is about 100, and if the concentration to be on the disputed islands, the number will be much higher. On the other hand, border disputes regarding maritime borders are a larger category and predominantly these disputes are mainly related to border disputes on land (Glassner; Fahrer, 2004).

The meaning of border dispute is the difference between two neighboring countries on the common border from different aspects of location, territory, function... and at different levels from micro to macro. Delimitation and marking procedures, which usually take place together with border agreements, do not protect any government from border disputes (Janparvar; Salehabadi, 2019).

According to Philip Kraus, border disputes are, as much as nationalism, a legacy of colonialism exacerbated by the Cold War. But it is also clear that these legacies are exploited by local politicians in populist rhetoric and domestic politics. In many cases, long-term border disputes are caused by the complex internal situation in these countries (Kraus, 2017).

Although the causes of border disputes and open conflict are many and diverse, they can be logically divided into four categories (Bjelland, 2015):

Positional disputes occur when states disagree on the interpretation of documents that define a border and/or how to determine the border.

Territorial disputes over ownership of an area often, though not always, simply arise when a border drawn over a landscape divides an ethnically homogeneous population.

Resource disputes are closely related to territorial conflicts. Neighboring countries are likely to covet the resources—whether valuable mineral deposits, fertile farmland, or rich fishing grounds—located in border areas and disagree over their use.

Functional disputes arise when neighboring countries disagree on policies that apply along a border. Such policies may relate to migration, displacement of traditional nomadic groups, customs regulations or land use. Historically, border disputes have been resolved by war. Borderlands at risk, and those with valuable economic or political assets contested between two or more countries, are also war zones.

World wars, regional wars, bilateral wars, the liberation of colonized lands and the collapse of empires are the most important dates of changing the political map and the emergence of territorial disputes. New borders that are imposed on a defeated country as a result of a war create territorial disputes. Disruption of the geopolitical balance between the two countries also creates territorial differences. Another factor is the spirit and personality of the country's leaders. Some leaders have a belligerent attitude towards others, which can use border issues as an excuse to trigger disputes (Rabiee, 2012).

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Each territory has unique traits that make it valuable. These features include natural resources, land productivity, population, and a key geopolitical and geostrategic position, among others. The importance and worth of lands have given rise to a number of disputes and conflicts between governments and nations over access to these regions. Disputes over land control and ownership are one of the most prevalent causes of conflicts and wars. Disputed territories are those over which two or more nations or groups of people claim sovereignty and possession along a shared border. These contested lands inside two nations' boundaries play a crucial role in the formation of conflicts and problems between the two countries, and countries are extremely sensitive to them. This sensitivity, when other countries draw these areas on maps for their own gain, heightens the risk of conflicts and other dissimilar concerns between the two countries (Nadafi; Mojtahedzadeh; Lotfi, 2022, p. 70).

Since ancient times, the Persian Gulf has held a unique position and importance, and as the political-economic conflict between European powers in the East intensified, the Persian Gulf was viewed as a commercial and trade highway, as well as an essential link in the worldwide strategic network. The Persian Gulf region has long been an important strategic region for trans-regional actors, particularly great powers, and as the economic importance of the Persian Gulf's oil resources has grown, so has the great powers' presence and intervention in the region (Ghorani Noshad, 2016, p. 448).

The geopolitical region of the Persian Gulf has extremely complex territorial patterns, each of which can ignite a full-scale war. Territorial and

border disputes between Persian Gulf countries are the most important factors that have brought the trust-building process to a standstill. These differences have played a prominent role in shaping the economic and political relations between the countries of the Persian Gulf and have repeatedly caused tension between the governments of the region throughout history. And in recent years, this issue has played a major role in disrupting the security of the region in an unprecedented way (Ibid, 457).

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the period between the end of the First World War in 1918 and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 is considered a very important period for the Middle East. After more than half a century, its consequences have cast a shadow on this region until now. What happened in these fateful decades changed the fate of all nations, created new countries, resulted in the clear govern of Europeans over the region, and caused the redraw and change of national borders and the emergence of new dynasties. European powers played the main role in proceeding this fact. In the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was so weakened which one of its inevitable consequences was the dismemberment of its land by the Europeans. Assuredly, the role of competing countries, especially the British government, in this context is undeniable (Yari; Abdalipour, 2017, p. 205). The mandates of the League of Nations, which were granted to France and Great Britain in 1920, caused the penetration of the Western territorial sovereignty state system and established the foundations of the implementation of this model in the Middle East through the production of elites and the political control of new states. Local people fought against these newly imposed state borders for years after the 1920 San Remo Conference. The only endogenous internal borders in the region were the Ottoman and Iranian borders, and only the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Turkey succeeded in negotiating their borders with European powers (Meier, 2018, p. 497). Before the southern Persian Gulf countries were shown on international maps, Iran, the Ottoman Empire, India, and other powerful countries had already set a lot of their borders and decided what land they would control. However, on the southern beaches of the Persian Gulf, where foreign nations had lived and governed for centuries, border determination remained hazy and uncertain (Nadafi; Mojtahedzadeh; Lotfi, 2022, p. 70). Therefore, the responsibility for creating 'modern nation-states' with defined borders, such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and the smaller kingdoms of the Persian Gulf, rests with the European colonial powers. In Maghreb, where there was no border, the governance was based on "tribal" loyalties, the French and Spanish colonial powers imposed borders, "without caring the pre-existing local historical factors and consulting the local people". Colonial policies towards different ethnic and religious groups significantly contributed to the friction between the legitimacy of state authority and its territorial control. While Middle Eastern borders did not usually demarcate ethnic or religious communities, colonial powers often exploited ethnic and religious divisions to their advantage through the old Roman strategy of "divide and rule" (Del Sarto, 2017, p. 772-773). According to John Wilkinson, borders are transplantations from European feudal society and oddities to an Arab political culture

characterized by tribalism and mobility. Moreover, they are "testimony to British imperial politics, triggered by the desire for oil and commercial control" (Polak-Springer, 2022, p. 1074).

Seemingly, the disputes over territorial demarcations persisted among the countries of the peninsula for decades, after the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1, challenges to the status quo intensified and competing territorial claims became prominently placed on the regional political agenda. At one extreme, the settlement of border disputes was followed by violence. For example, armed conflicts occurred in 1992 and 1994 along the border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and between Saudi Arabia and Yemen in 1995, 1997 and 1998. For example, after ten years of negotiations to determine their borders, Oman and Yemen finally reached a preliminary agreement in 1992 and a final agreement was signed in 1997 (Okruhlik; Conge, 1999, p. 230).

Providing that in 1913, Bahrain and Qatar were recognized as two independent territorial units during the Ottoman-British treaty, but Bahrain sought to restore its lost territories in Qatar because this treaty did not draw precise borders between the two countries. In other words, there was no clear demarcation between Bahrain and Qatar (Islamtimes, 2020).

The understanding of the Britain's role in the conflict is essential to identify the final judgment and its perceived resolution. Britain supported and recognized Al-Thani rule of Qatar over Zabarah and prevented the intervention of Al-Khalifa of Bahrain in 1868. Qatar had begun to align its loyalties with the Ottoman Empire since the 1870s and enjoyed imperial support in extending its authority over Zubarah. What makes Qatar's claim stronger is the fact that, despite Britain's opposition to Al-Thani's effort (as it was seen as an attempt by the Ottoman Empire to expand its authority), it did not allow Bahrain's Al-Khalifa ruler to intervene in Zubarah. This sacrifice to help al-Thani to secure sovereignty over the region that was enshrined in the 1913 of Anglo-Ottoman Treaty (Pandey, 2021). Even with the end of the Ottoman Empire, relations between Qatar and Bahrain were fraught with conflict, and in 1937, Abdullah bin Jassim al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar suppressed the tribes that considered themselves dependent on the Bahraini government. In 1971, Qatar challenged Bahrain over the Hawar Islands, which resulted in a naval conflict periodically. Especially in 1985, they were about to begin the war over borders. This year, after Bahrain started building fortifications on the island of Fasht ad Dubal, Qatar considered the construction to be a violation of the 1978 agreement. And in April 1986, Qatari forces entered the island via helicopter and declared it a "prohibited zone". They arrested several Bahraini officials and 29 Dutch contractors employed by Bahrain (Islamtimes, 2020).

In 1987, the two countries agreed to a frame an agreement proposed by Saudi Arabia. In this situation, it was stated that if Qatar and Bahrain cannot resolve the dispute through a comprehensive agreement, they will conduct the next negotiations within the framework of international laws. Bahrain and Qatar relied on international law to resolve their dispute. During the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in

1990, Bahrain agreed on Qatar's request to refer the border dispute to the International Court of Justice (Ebrahim, 2023).

With the inability of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council to resolve the territorial (and border) dispute between Qatar and Bahrain, Qatar unilaterally referred the case to the International Court of Justice in 1991. Both Qatar and Bahrain claim sovereignty over the oil-rich Hawar Islands (controlled by Bahrain since the 1930s), the mainland city of Zubarah (currently under Qatari control), Janan Island, and a series of uninhabitable reefs important for establishing the baseline for the maritime (Seddiq, 2001). On the other hand, in April 1992, Qatar increased the width of its coastal waters from three to two miles, which completely included the Hawar Islands, which widened the differences in this matter (Eghtesadsaramad, 2023).

After Sheikh Hamed bin Khalifa ascended to the throne in Qatar in 1995, he took prominent domestic and foreign policies, including a compromise-oriented approach with Bahrain. Nevertheless, Bahrain's proposal regarding Saudi mediation in this regard was not accepted. The dispute between the two countries continued for years until the conviction of two Qataris for espionage in Bahrain and participating in the 1999 coup in order to return the Emir to power. The mentioned incident led to the climax of mutual accusations. In the meantime, a Bahraini Air Force officer fled to Qatar with his helicopter. In 2000, the ambassadors of the two countries met based on the arrangements of the International Court of Justice in order to improve relations and discuss disputes (Mohammadi, 2015, p. 123). The International Court of Justice resolved these sovereignty disputes in 2001, at least from the perspective of international law. Court awarded Hawar Islands to Bahrain and Jenan and Zubarah Islands to Qatar (Giorgio, 2022).

While the tension between the two countries continued even after the agreement, in 2005, Qatar rejected Bahrain's request to extend the gas pipeline between the two countries, despite Bahrain's offer to buy gas from Qatar at standard prices. After the Arab Spring in 2011, tensions between Bahrain and Qatar turned into concerns about terrorism and regional stability, and Bahrain accused Qatar of sponsoring terrorism (Ebrahim, 2023). In 2011, despite Qatar conveyance of its military to work under a Saudi-led coalition to quell protests in Bahrain, Bahrain accused Qatar's Al Jazeera TV of bias in its coverage of the Bahraini uprising, which caused a diplomatic crisis in August of that year (Afsal, 2021).

In 2014, Bahrain accused Qatar of offering Qatari citizenship to some Bahraini families in exchange for renouncing Bahraini citizenship. Middle East Eye reported that Bahrain's foreign minister openly accused Qatar of participating in the "sectarian naturalization" of its citizens. The Qatari government facilitated the citizenship of Bahraini tribes by facilitating the legal procedures through which they can obtain Qatari citizenship (Galeeva, 2022).

In 2015, bilateral tensions flared over citizenship issues. Bahraini Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al-Khalifa warned that Manama may take action against Doha in response to "Qatar's unfriendly policies and its efforts to tempt Bahrainis to renounce their

nationality" (Langlois; Giorgio, 2023). The old conflicts over the border and political disputes between Qatar and Bahrain reframed in 2017. In fact, it can be said that Al-Khalifa used the opportunity of the decision of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt to sanction and punish Qatar for supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, to reopen the dispute case. On June 5, 2017, Bahrain, along with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, severed air and sea connections with Qatar by issuance of official statement arranged by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It accused Qatar of spreading chaos in Bahrain, destabilizing the region and inciting the public opinion of this country through Al Jazeera media. After the crisis in Qatar's foreign relations with its Arab neighbors, Bahrain tried to use this opportunity while establishing close relations with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (Tasnim News Agency, 2022).

On November 4, 2017, the state of Bahrain issued a statement in which it announced that Zubarah was forcibly cut off from Bahrainis who have "right" to claim the land and challenge the "legitimacy of Qatar's rule in the Northern Territory". Upon the statement "Bahrain has endured intolerable conditions and surrendered many of its internationally documented historical rights in order to distance the GCC from bilateral disputes". The statement refers to the establishment of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981, and confirms the leadership in Manama "it agreed to postpone the demand for their rights, accepted the damages and gave up what they were entitled to in order to guarantee the unity of the Persian Gulf" (Al-Jaber & Giorgio, 2017).

In continuation of the disputes between the two countries, in 2020, Bahraini fighters violated Qatar's airspace and Manama's commercial boats violated Qatar's territorial waters. Qatar also complained to the United Nations and the Security Council to prevent a repeat of such attempt from Bahrain (Student News Network, 2020). Despite the progress made at the Al-Ula meeting in January 2021, relations between Manama and Doha remained tense. Qatar went so far as to accuse Bahrain several times in December 2021 of violating its airspace and territorial waters (Galeeva, 2022).

In a new controversy about the dispute between Bahrain and Qatar over the border islands, the advisor of the king of Bahrain emphasized the sovereignty of his country over the island of "Hawar" and its sovereignty over the island of "Zubarah" in Qatar. Khalid bin Ahmed, the adviser to the king of Bahrain and the former foreign minister of the country, in a tweet in response to the widespread request of Qatari users that "Hawar" island is Qatari, and said: "Hawar" and "Zubarah" islands belong to the people of Bahrain and their rights will not be lost. He added: We have 83 fake documents that include such claims, but the International Court of Justice ruled that Hawar Islands are Bahraini. But "Zubarah" remains, whose people, whether the claimants want it or not, are Bahrainis, and no matter how much time passes, their rights will not be lost (Tasnim News Agency, 2022).

Recently in December of 2023, the bilateral relations between the two countries have been strained once again when Bahrain's foreign minister accused Qatar of not taking any initiative to resolve the differences

with Manama. These statements of the Bahraini minister were made following the arrest of a number of Qatari travelers who were entering Bahrain through the "King Fahd" bridge (between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain). The ministry also accused Doha of not responding to Manama's invitation to send an official delegation to Bahrain to start bilateral talks on outstanding issues as soon as possible (Mdeast News, 2022).

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study answered to the questions of the impact of border disputes on the relationships between Bahrain and Qatar. Our findings highlight the significance of mutual effects of border lines on the behavior of people and governments towards themselves, and on the behavior and functioning of the border. The governments on both sides of the border must exhibit a behavior of cooperation towards each other in order to maintain smooth functioning of the border. We conclude that it is Qatar and Bahrain to settle the existing border issues between themselves. The settlement will not only contribute the political stability in the two countries but across Persian Gulf region as a whole and far-reaching global effect. One of the key considerations is the formation of local governments on the shores of the Persian Gulf, caused by the migration of tribes from the peninsula and their settlement on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf. These tribes have always been in competition and enmity with each other that led to wars and clashes between them. It is also important to highlight the territorial importance of the deserts. Once considered of little value, their significance increased dramatically with the discovery of oil in the region. This, in turn, intensified efforts by countries to encroach upon disputed territories with their neighbors.

This strategic importance was further compounded by the presence of European colonialists, particularly the British, who took control of the region from the beginning of the 19th century. Focusing on the fact that all the borders of the region were determined by the British in line with their imperialist interests and ambitions, had a significant impact on the formation of disputes. It is unfortunate that these border disputes, between the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, still ongoing exists and causes political instability in the region. In other words, the border and territorial disputes between the Persian Gulf countries have not only remained as disputes, but have usually been related to border clashes. Border disputes between Arab countries are one of the biggest dangers fronting the Arab world and threaten the relations between different countries.

Although the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) verdict appeared to conclude the dispute between Qatar and Bahrain, it is still ongoing and plays an important role in both nations' foreign policies. In addition to the boundary problems between the two nations, the rulers of Qatar and Bahrain have opposing and sometimes incompatible ideological views, which have exacerbated the border tensions. For example, as the political crisis between Qatar and numerous Arab countries erupted in 2017, border disputes between Qatar and Bahrain became apparent.

Despite the fact that Qatar and Bahrain's relations were normalized following the 2017 crisis, it appears that the two countries reconciled in order to maintain the integrity of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council. The longstanding divisions between the Al Khalifa and Al Thani families, as well as the border and territorial issues, are unlikely to be forgotten. It should be noted that the factors behind the continuation of border conflicts in the Persian Gulf are complicated, involving problems of resources, identity, and security. Although the two neighbors' territorial expansionist tendencies toward each other's lands are obvious (Qatar in the Hawar slands and Bahrain in Zubarah), the strategic position of the Hawar tourist islands, which also have oil resources, is the most significant factor that has caused disputes between the two countries. We concluded that despite the deep-rooted differences and the issue of border and territorial disputes between the two countries, in the most optimistic case, they are two tactical partners in limited cases and the relationship between them will never become a strategic one.

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