

## CHAPTER II

# QATAR'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AND FOREIGN POLICY

This chapter discusses Qatar's political system and diplomatic relations including the general introduction about the State of Qatar, Qatar political system, the ruling family, Qatar's foreign policy, and the reformation of foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. This chapter also discusses the different of leadership between the two Emirs in defining their foreign policy strategy.

### A. Geography of Qatar



Picture 2.1.:Map of Qatar territory

Sources: Hunt, K. (2017, Juli 27). *The Middle East freezes out Qatar: What you need to know*. Retrieved March 28, 2018, from CNN: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/06/middleeast/qatar-middle-east-diplomatic-freeze/index.html>

The State of Qatar is the sovereign country that is located in the Middle East. This country occupied the small Qatar Peninsula on the north-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The state of Qatar is bordering with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and United Arab Emirates (UAE) to

the southeast. Some of Qatar's territories are bordering with the Persian Gulf and Bahrain. Qatar also has the similar language, culture, and also governmental system with other Gulf state.

The state of Qatar consists of eight municipalities that include Baladiyah, Ad Dawhah, Al Khawr was ad s-Dhakhirah, Al Wakrah, Ar Rayyan, Ash Shamal, Ash Shihaniyah, Az Za'ayin, and Umm Salal (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). In the other hand, Doha is one of the biggest and largest cities in Qatar. It is the Centre of government, politics, economy, and also a place for all of the embassies from all countries around the world that conduct diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Qatar is a monarchy state; the head of the states is Emir (*King*). The Emir of Qatar is the Head of State and represents the country internally, externally and in all international relations. The Emir of Qatar also become the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, which is supervised by the assistance of Defences council, and regulate under his power. Islam is one of the official religion that embraced by most of the people in the country. But, there are several religious minorities such as Jews, Christian, Hindu, Buddha, and other religion. Most of the religions are embraced by the expatriates, workers, and other community that already lived in Qatar since independent.

According to Qatari's constitution, Sharia law is the main source of the Qatari legislation and it has been implemented since this country was established in 1973. Oil and natural gas are the main source of Qatar which gives much more contribution to the economic sectors. However, the government of Qatar are currently developing other sectors such as banking and services. These new sectors are aimed to reduce the dependence of state revenue on oil and natural gas production. Therefore, the country can provide many

opportunities for citizens to get a job as well as fostering the investment within the country.

### **B. Qatari Political System**

Qatar is unitary constitutional monarchy states. The structure of government in Qatar is based on the collaboration and separation of powers. The Emir of Qatar is the Head of State and represents the country internally, externally and in all international relations. The Emir of Qatar also become the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, which is supervised by the assistance of Defences council, and regulate under his power. In the other hand, the judicial authority of the states of Qatar is implemented by the courts of law and the judgment is proclaimed in the name of the Emir.

The Council of Minister or Cabinet, Prime Minister, and Six Supreme councils are led by the Emir. The Prime Minister and Cabinet are appointed by the Emir. All activities and the states' policies that run by both Prime Minister and Cabinet are based on the Emir's decree. All resignations only happened if there is a command from the Emir.

The session of the Council of Ministers will be chaired and supervised by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has an obligation to maintain the coordination between different ministries in order to achieve unity and integration among all government branches. The Prime Minister will also sign the resolutions issued by the council.

The formation of the cabinet is formed by Emir's decree and contextualize onto the proposal of the Prime Minister. The ministers and government departments have specific responsibilities and authorities under the law of Qatar. The Council of Minister holds the mandate as the supreme executive authority in Qatar and has a specific objective to monitor all external and internal affairs within its jurisdiction in accordance to the law and the provision of the constitution. In addition, in order to run all the activities of government, all

the government bodies should act based on the command of the Emir. In the Qatari government system, Emir holds the highest position in governing the states.

### **C. The Leadership of Ruling Family**

Qatar is one of the most influential monarchy states in the Arabic Peninsula with a lot of natural resources including gas and oil. Otherwise, Qatar also emerges as one of the most influential states in politics and economics. This condition gave much more benefit to Qatar in order to expand its power as well as an influence to both Arab and other countries in the world.

The development of Qatar to be one of the richest countries in the world cannot be separated by the leadership skill of each emir. After gaining its independence on 1 September 1971, Qatar was transformed itself to be one of the faster-growing nations under the Al Thani ruling family. The house of Al Thani or Al Thani ruling family started to lead Qatar since 1878 with Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani as the first Emir, he led Qatar from 1878-1913. Under his leadership, there were many confrontations that happened in Qatar such as conflicts with the Ottoman Empire in April 1871, the movement against the British Empire in 1882, and the battle of Al Wajbah in October 1892. In addition, Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani is one of the first Emirs and also the founding father of the State of Qatar.

The continuation of the administration was led by the second Emir of Qatar, namely Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani. Emir Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani was started to lead Qatar from 1913-1949. Under his administration, the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain gave their recognition to Sheikh Abdullah and his successors' right to rule the whole Qatar Peninsula. On 3 November 1916, Qatar and Great Britain agreed to sign the treaty for protection which stated that

Britain would guarantee the protection of Qatari government from all aggression.

On 5 May 1935, Britain gave its protection towards Qatar from inside as well as any attacks from the external forces. Under his leadership, Qatar had massive development in infrastructure, there were many seaports built by the Emir in order to attract the international transaction of trade in the Gulf region. His administration also supported to the discovery of oil in the entire of Qatar Peninsula. This action was proven by the first Oil Concession Agreement that was signed by Emir and Anglo-Persian Oil Company on 17 May 1935. Under his administration, Qatar transformed to be the highest and richest production in terms of oil and gas.

The next administration was led by the third Emir, namely Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani. Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani ruled Qatar from 20 August to 24 October 1960. Under his administration, he was focused on the development of the country. There was the massive development that handled by his administration to establish airport, hospital, school, several road networks, water, electricity and port facilities.

On 1 September 1952, Sheikh Ali and the Iraq Petroleum Company signed the treaty to operate that company to do exploration in Qatar. This agreement gave much more benefit to Qatari economy with 50% of profits from oil exports. In line with the massive development of the economy in terms of oil production, Sheikh Ali also establishes the effective administrative system to manage the rising economy of oil. In addition, he also dedicated himself to the preservation of Islamic heritage such as books and other literature. His administration was collapsed because there were many protests from oil workers which impacted to a hostile attitude towards the emir. The largest protest happened in Doha with 2000 participants, most of them were oil workers

allied with Arab Nationalists. On May 1960, his position was replaced by his cousin Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani.

Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani was the fourth Emir of Qatar. He became the ruler of Qatar since 24 October 1996 until 22 February 1972. Under his leadership, there were many achievements that brought Qatar as one of the fastest growing economies in the region. Some of the achievements including the economic achievement, the discovery of oil, the establishment of Ministry of Finance, Department of General Financial and Administration, and also the Department of Civil Service. In addition, Sheikh Ahmad also took final shape to achieve the country's independence. His administration succeeded to liberate Qatar from colonialism and declared the independent on 3 September 1971. His administration was ended on 22 February 1972.

The fifth emir of Qatar was Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani. He was appointed as Emir to substitute the previous Emir to lead Qatar from 22 February 1972 until 27 June 1995. Sheikh Khalifa came to power after the bloodless coup accident between him and his cousin in 1972 (Chan, 2016)

In his leadership, Qatar transformed into one of the richest oil countries in the Gulf Peninsula (The Guardian, 2016). He did many transformations in economic, fostering the massive exploration of the oil sources in Qatar, and also control the exploration that done by the foreign company. Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani succeeds to bring Qatar into one of the most influential countries in economic. Under his administration, Qatar joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and started to export their natural gas and oil to both Arab and other countries from all over the world.

In 1981, it joined five Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) to form the Gulf Cooperation Council. This organization

aimed to bring those states to accelerate the transformation of economic, social, political, and also stabilization of the region. In addition, the rapid transformation to expand regional and international power was started when the case of Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Qatar tried to improve its political ability to reach into the regional stage by joining other Arab leaders to take action against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

In 1992, Qatar and the United States created a formal Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) which stated that the United States troop presence in Qatar, trading in military equipment, United States military training, and other defence cooperation. Under the DCA, Qatar hosts about 10,000 U.S. forces and the regional headquarters for United States Central Command (CENTCOM) in various military facilities, including the large United States military bases in Al Udeid (Katzman, 2018). This agreement opened the opportunity for Qatar to expand its influence and power both in Gulf and other regions in the world.

In his administration, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani created a progressive development in order to improve the economy from the oil and natural gas reserves. In 1974, the government of Qatar reached an agreement with foreign oil companies that gave the government control over 60% of revenues and subsequently announced plans to take over the remaining 40% (The Telegraph, 2016). This agreement gave full authority to Qatari government in controlling the oil and gas production within their country.

The administration of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani could not run smoothly in 1995. At that time, there was a bloodless coup against the emir that done by the crown prince, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. This coup happened when the emir was still in his holiday at Switzerland. This coup was caused due to the lack of trust in the ruling family member regarding sharing power which has

been implemented under the administration of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (Khatib, 2013). The coup was caused by the different view of defining foreign policy by both the emir and his crown prince. The Emir had very close relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and the Crown Prince had very tight relations with Iran and wanted to share the exploration of natural gas in the offshore North Field (Cockburn, 1995). These different views on defining foreign policy became one of the major factors of coup made by Crown Prince. In addition, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was one of the most powerful figures in Qatar after the Emir since the Eighties. This situation automatically gave full authority to Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah Al Thani to be a new emir of Qatar and substitute his father position as a leader.

After taking power, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani did many reformations in many aspects including politics, economic, security, diplomatic relations, and also foreign policy. His leadership started from 1995 until 2013 and gave many contribution and reformation towards Qatar's role as the emerging power in the Gulf region and even in the world. Under his administration, Qatar accepted the liberalization on economic, political, and also the socio-culture which bring Qatar to be one of the fastest growing states in the world.

#### **D. The reformation of Qatar's Foreign Policy**

Like the other Gulf States, Qatar's foreign policy was made based on the agreement with the foreign policy of the Saudi Arabia government until the mid-1990, but it changed when Doha was led by the leadership of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (Abdullah, 2014). The foreign policy since 1995 really changed because Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani adopted open foreign policy, which relied on soft power tools such as media, diplomacy, education, culture, sports, tourism, economy, and humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, Doha tried to enhance good relations with neighbours, these

good relations aimed to form a good strategy of alliances with major and medium powers and as part of nation branding.

Since Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power, there are several substantial changes that have impacted to the geopolitical landscape and regional power balances. The most significant changes on Arabic world are the ousting of Mohamed Morsi (Egyptian President), the expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the escalation of political conflict in Libya, and the Houthi occupation over major state institutions in Yemen.

Furthermore, the change of Qatar geopolitical landscape also brought many advantages to the new administration under Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. As a small state, Qatar tried to departure from the conservative nations to be modern nations in response to the domestic or even international issues (Pierini, 2013). In another side, these two emirs have the same objective in defining and formalizing Qatar's foreign policy. It was caused by the liberal idea in leading the country that has been embraced by both emirs since the transition happened from Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani to Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in 1995. This transition was one of the histories of a new type of foreign policy and leadership characteristic between the two emirs in leading a country. The different understanding and perspective of the geopolitical landscape that happened between both emirs also contribute to the policies that taken by the next emir in order to bring Qatar to be one of the emerging and influential states in both Arab nations and international stage. The development of Qatar in the administration of both Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani brought many tremendous advantages to Qatar's politics, economics, socio-culture, and even its image in the world. Both of them have the same vision and embrace the idea of liberalization in economics, politics, as well as defining the flow of Qatar's foreign policy.

## **1. Qatar's Foreign Policy under Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani**

Since Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power in 1995, Qatar has been expanding its foreign policy that aimed to increase country's regional and international profile (Khatib, 2013). Sheikh Hamad and his regime did several reformations in all fields including politics, economics, and also security. Under his administration, Qatar tried to embrace liberal values through non-liberal and non-democratic in order to cultivate Qatar's progressive and modern in the international image (Pulliam, 2013).

Like the other Gulf States, Qatar's foreign policy was generally in agreement with the Saudi government's policy until the mid-1990, when Doha carved an independent path. When Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani came to power (Abdullah, 2015). Qatar's international relations focused on the consolidation of peace and stability. According to the article 7 of the Qatari constitution stated that country's foreign policy is based on the principle of consolidating international peace and security and contained several objectives such as encourage the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means; supporting people's rights to self-determination; non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and cooperation with peaceful nations.

Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani played an important key in conducting Qatar's foreign policy. He adopted diplomacy that is focused on conflict resolution, in which Qatar took the main role as a mediator in each international or even regional dispute. Qatar also succeeds to mediate several conflicts that happened in several parts of the world such as in Sudan, Eritrea, Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, and Yemen. Through its involvement as a mediator in each peace settlement, Qatar succeeds to

increase its popularity and recognition from other countries on behalf of its role as a mediator for the peace settlement in both regional and international level.

Under his administration, Qatar tried to do an extensive programme on the reformation of politic by involving liberalization and steps towards democratization. Qatari leader, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani tried to prioritize his policy as one of the central planks of his rule in order to address Qatar's autonomy and distinctiveness from the GCC neighbours, especially the Saudi Arabia that always became one of the rivals in the Gulf region. Otherwise, there were three themes of Qatar's reform since the coup happened; they are the encouragement of the economy's private sector, freedom of expression and democratization (Rathmell & Schulze, 2000).

The economic reforms started soon after the incident of bloodless coup. In July 1995, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani established Doha Stock Market which had an intention to do privatization of the state assets and boosting the role of private investors. In 1996, Qatar became the first country in the Gulf region that opened the trade with Israel. It was proven by the opening of Qatari-Israel trade bureau in Doha and involved in several trades' activities. While, this decision also followed by the diplomatic visit of Israel president, Simon Peres to Doha. Saudi Arabia and other six Gulf states did protest to Qatar regarding its relations with Israel.

Despite its relations with Israel and ignored those protests which were delivered by Saudi and the other Gulf States. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani always tried to improve the economic sectors in all aspects and open the opportunities for the private investor to invest in Qatar. In February 1998, the Qatari government took further action

towards the privatization by transferring power and water desalination plants to the Qatar Electricity and Water Company. The high percentage status of the private sector happened in April 1998 Chamber of Commerce elections when 3,700 Qatari businessmen voted by secret ballot for a 17-member Chamber board. This election was one of the reformations of economic and politics since previously all members have been appointed to the board by Emir's Decree.

The transformation on defining foreign policy did not only happen in economics and politics. Qatari government always tried to develop another sector that can be seen potentially to help them to expand power and influence both in the Middle East and international level. The steps to enhance freedom of speech and expression were the key plank in the liberalization. In March 1998, Qatar took major steps forward in order to abolish the position of the Ministry of Information. Qatari government took great play in addressing the greater press freedom. This action was followed by the establishment of Aljazeera, a Doha-based satellite TV Channel that always voicing all taboos issues among Arab countries including political, social, and religious issues. The abolition of Ministry of information opened the space for Aljazeera to provide the massive public declaration of regime's commitment to the actualization of freedom of expression. Nonetheless, the Aljazeera exists to act as a visible declaration of Hamad regime's commitment to the liberalization

Furthermore, Aljazeera was established as one of Qatari private satellite station owned and operated by several business interests, including the member of royal family. The establishment of Aljazeera was followed by an editorial freedom that given by the government of Qatar. The editorial freedom that was given by the

government succeed to bring this media became one of the most credibility and popular in the Middle East. The ability of Aljazeera to address the critical and controversial issues brought it to be one of the most credibility networks in the region (Paul Salem and Huib de Zeeuw, 2012).

Aljazeera has a tremendous role that could be used by the government of Qatar in order to enlarge their power in both Gulf and international level. The vision of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani who wanted to put Qatar as one of the new emerging power in the Middle East brought Aljazeera into a very crucial role, especially in the publication and all news that created by this media. Since the establishment in 1996, Aljazeera has participated in several discussions of taboo topics across the entire Arab region. Human rights and political issues always became highlight topics that published by Aljazeera (Policy Analysis Unit, Arab Center, 2017). In the other hand, the publication of Al Jazeera TV station always produced the most pressing issues including several cases that happened in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and also participated in producing news which demonstrated the violation of human rights in several Arab countries.

The recognition to Aljazeera as a proof of Qatari government's commitment to the liberalization was also followed by democratization on Qatari political system. Qatari government initiated democratization for political representation and participation including the rights of women in politics. This political reformation was one of the greatest changes in the history of Qatar government. Even the initiative initiated by the Emir of Qatar was one of the first democratization ever implemented by the Gulf countries, and Qatar is the first country to launch a political right and participation for women.

In November 1995, Sheikh Hamad tried to hold public discussions to prepare the election for municipal councils and also the legislative body to replace the *Majlis*. This preparation of elections was delayed because new Emir spent two years of his reign to normalize the conflict between ruling families regarding his action towards his father. This different overview was reflected to one counter-coup attempt and involved considerable tension with other Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, all of these monarchies states tried to defend the position of previous Emir Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, and did not want to acknowledge the leadership of the current Emir (Andrew Rathmell and Kirsten Schulze, 2000).

However, in 1998 Emir Hamad declared his plans to bring Qatar to commit with the value of democracy in Kuwait News Agency. This statement was made by Emir as his commitment to liberalization, political reforms, and democracy. Emir's statement was followed by the implementation of his policy. In July 1998, his decree set out the formation for 29-member municipal council which would be elected by general by universal suffrage and all citizen over the age of 25, including women could also participate in this election. This council was designed in order to participate to oversee the application of laws and resolutions.

In March 1999, the election for the electoral level brought some 22,000 of the 74,000 into a strong electorate voted. Even though at this steps did not succeed to provide a place for six women who stand for this elections, but this election was succeeded and reported by the international press as one of the most innovation in the political reformation that ever existed in Gulf region. The municipal elections as one of the first steps that taken by

Qatari government towards a gradual process in order to reach the full-scale of democracy.

In September 1999, the emir established 32 member commissions in order to draw up the constitution providing for an elected parliament with legislative power. This commission was considered as Emir's tool to control the legislative power in Qatar's parliament. In addition, the establishment of this commission aimed a substance of evidence related to Qatar commitment to implement democratic functions in the country.

Furthermore, Qatar always tried to increase its influence in the region and seek for the potential opportunity to bring the country to be more independent in the foreign policy. This mission was implemented by providing a platform such as international conference, discussion, and debate in order to attract Arab political and intellectual. It aimed to destabilize Arab political and intellectual life. This action was followed by the controversial decision of Sheikh Hamad to host the *fourth annual the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Conference* and invites the representative of Israel to attend the conference (Rabi, 2009). This decision created a violation of consensus among the GCC states, particularly between Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Qatar also adopted a non-confrontational strategy with Iran, whereas Iran is one of the rivals of all GCC member states. Qatar believed that a good relationship with Iran is one of the most important things that can contribute to developing the national assets such as the North Field offshore gas reserves, which adjoin the Iranian South Pars deposit (Rabi, 2009). In an effort to get close to the Iranian leadership, Qatari government used its position as a member of the United Security Council in order to support Iran. Having stressed

the case for a political resolution, Qatar was the only Security Council member to vote against the resolution setting a deadline for Tehran to halt its uranium enrichment in June 2006.

In mid-January 2007, Qatar's Foreign Minister visited Tehran and called for a diplomatic solution regarding the Iranian nuclear cases. The Foreign Minister also stated that Iranian nuclear case should be solved through talks instead of using force. This effort was made in order to open the economic opportunity for the cooperation and exploration of natural gas. Qatar knows that Iran has a very prominent role and power in the region besides Saudi Arabia. This policy was taken by Qatar in order to keep a constructive dialogue with Iran and to expand its influence in the GCC member states.

The decision of Qatar to support Iran by using its position in *the United Nations Security Council* (UNSC) broke its relations with others GCC member states, particularly Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and also Bahrain. Those countries disagree with Qatar's policy in response to Iranian nuclear. This disagreement was followed by the efforts of these states to initiate a coup in order to overthrow Qatari's emir. Unfortunately, this effort was failed and Qatar was still under the power of Hamad Al Thani. This evidence made Qatari government increase its security and also powers by conducting strong relations with the opposition in the Gulf region including Iran, and other opposition groups that exist in Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

Qatar also utilizes Aljazeera to publish the issues that happened in the Arab world including in the Gulf region. Through Aljazeera, Qatar tried to criticize the ruling family and brought those cases to the surface. The effort of Aljazeera succeeds to attract international

attention on the political contestation among Arab states. The impact of this action, Qatar got many protests from its neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and even Egypt. Aljazeera was viewed as a threat to those countries because it could stimulate the Arab wave which can refer to rebellion and also political destabilization.

The momentum of political and power competition happened in 2011 where the Arab Spring began. Qatar clearly indicates its political view, especially in determining foreign policy towards countries affected by Arab Springs. Qatar and other GCC countries tried to back different side in the unrest that gripped the Arab world (Aljazeera, 2017). This action was followed by the competition and domination of power that done by those states towards the recipients' states that affected to the Arab Springs. The competition and domination of power between those GCC members are the roots of the destabilization of politics and diplomatic relations between Qatar and GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt.

The conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and also Egypt was followed by some accusations that made by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt regarding Qatar's role in the Arab Springs and also its support to the opposition group that become the source of conflict in Aljazair, Libya, Egypt, and Syria. In response to the situation, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah Al Thani did a transition of power to his son, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on 23 March 2013. This transition was recognition of Qatari's failure in Egypt and Syria, and it created the expectations of the different view in Qatari foreign policy away from the support of Islamist movements (Hammond, 2014).

This transition was officially given the opportunity to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to power. This transition was expected that Tamim could take the same step to continue and set Qatar's foreign policy as well as reorder domestic policy to more closely reflect ordinary Qatari concern over breakneck development preceding the 2022 World Cup. In addition, Tamim is expected to continue foreign policy approach that has been established by his father.

## **2. Qatar's Foreign Policy Under Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani**

Qatar entered a new political dimension when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani announced his abdication on 23 March 2013. This abdication was shocked many parties including both Qatar's regional allies and international allies. The decision of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani broke the mood of Gulf politics, where the rulers traditionally remain on the throne until they die (BBC, 2013). This abdication was officially given authority to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani to become the leader and emir of Qatar until now.

Since Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani came to power, the Arab region's geopolitical landscape has several substantial changes including regional power balances. The most significant changes that happened in this transition are: the ousting of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, the escalation of the conflict in Libya, the territorial expanding that done by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and the Houthi occupied major state institution in Yemen (Abdullah, 2014). Those events have impacted Qatar's foreign policy under Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

The impact of the *Arab Springs* in 2011 brought a significant changed of Qatar's foreign policy. Under

Sheikh Tamim, Qatar's style of diplomacy changed significantly, particularly in line with several recent developments that affected by the Arab Springs in some countries including Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. In his administration, Emir tried to shape Qatar's foreign policy tools based on the remarkable development in the region with respect to the conceptualization of soft and smart power. These developments forced Qatari government to reshape its policies in accordance with changing priorities.

The movement of diplomatic relations under new emir runs well when compared to the previous emir. Strategically, emir shapes his country's foreign policy by combining both soft and hard power approaches and maintaining the constitutional principle underpinning Qatar's foreign policy. A new leadership put its attention to improve internal affairs, especially since Qatar always become the target of Western media for a systematic campaign which supported by several organizations and countries that do not agree with its foreign policies towards various regional issues. Other hand, to fostering its soft power among Gulf states and the Arab world, Qatar used its position as the host of international tournaments such as the World Handball Championship in 2015 and the FIFA World Cup in 2022 as tools of economic and political diplomacy to create Qatar's brand to the international level, and also as a source of economic to increase foreign investment in this country.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani adopted an open-door policy in conducting its foreign policy. This foreign policy emphasizes the importance of dialogue with all parties but not exclude any groups from the political scene. This stance of foreign policy contradicted with the certain foreign policy of the neighboring countries which chose against some political Islam movement. This foreign policy got many rejections from others GCC member

states and led to the serious response from three members of the GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates which withdraw their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014. This foreign policy became one of the biggest challenges of Sheikh Tamim in his reign because Qatar tried to manage its foreign policies without creating a crisis between others states. But, the problem came up with the disagreement between intra-GCC member states.

The unprecedented crisis in intra-GCC relations forced Qatar to solve this crisis. Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani delivered his speech in Germany in response to the crisis, meanwhile the effort of Emir to solve this problem also bring him to the deliver a speech in the United Nations in September 2014, as well as in his interview with CNN. In addition, Emir of Qatar also called for a culture of dialogue and “*preventive diplomacy*” through pre-emptive peaceful methods rather than pre-emptive war, and has supported governments implementing gradual reforms. All things showed that Qatar tried to explore more flexible approaches than those adopted the outbreak of the Arab Springs, without doing a reformation for its foreign policy fundamentals.

The effort Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani gave a significant result in accordance with Qatar diplomatic relations with the other Gulf States. In November 2014, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates returned their ambassadors to Doha after eight months sever diplomatic relations with Qatar. In 2015, other challenges have to be faced by Qatar’s government regarding the clandestine movement that done by UAE government which paid the UK consultancy firm in order to create fabricated information about Qatar’s involvement of funding terrorism. This action was

captured by the *Daily Mail* and affected by the diplomatic tension between these two states.

The tension between UAE and Qatar became increased from time to time especially on 4 June 2017, where there was an incident that affected Yousef al-Otaiba, the UAE's ambassador to the United States. This incident emerged from his email account was hacked and providing information regarding its ties relations with a pro-Israel think-tank in Washington, along with his country's effort to undermine Qatar's image. The government of UAE requests to move the United States forward Central Command operations from the airbase in Qatar's al-Udeid to the UAE.

Qatar faced many pressures after the diplomatic tension happened with the UAE. On 5 June 2017, the diplomatic tension also happened with the massive protest from the neighboring states. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt sever their diplomatic relations with Qatar. This diplomatic relation was broken because those states accused that Qatar involved in the political destabilization in Egypt, Syria, and also Yemen. In addition, it also gives a protection and funding towards terrorist groups such as Ikhwanul Muslimin, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Al Qaeda. Qatar also alleged secret diplomatic contact with Iran which is the common rival of the Gulf countries. In response to the diplomatic crisis, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar tried to give a clarification regarding the accusations that stated Qatar involved in funding the terrorist group. As a result of the diplomatic crisis, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, and Egypt withdraw their ambassador from Doha and gave 1 x 48 hours to Qatar's ambassador to leave their countries.

Furthermore, those countries also allocate two weeks for all Qatari residents in their countries to leave.

This action also followed by blockade from land, air, and sea. This unilateral decision that made by these Arab states hampered the domestic situation. Qatar experienced a significant decline in the trading of shares slumped down to 7%. On the other hand, the scarcity of food became one of the problems that began to occur in the first week of crisis diplomacy. This then forced the Qatar Government to continue to improve the capacity of diplomacy as well as finding a solution in resolving the dispute happening between the Gulf countries. The termination of diplomatic relations in the year 2017 is one of the worst black notes in Qatar international relations with Gulf countries. This crisis will become one of the challenges for Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to set Qatar's foreign policy and tried to seek the best solution to solve this on-going problem.