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Turkish-Emirati Conflict The Argument of Power & Role

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Introduction

The Middle East is currently witnessing a complicated conflict between three central regional axes: the Iranian axis, the Turkish-Qatari axis, and the Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian axis. While Saudi Arabia gives priority to confrontation with Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) focuses on confrontation with Turkey.

Although the Turkish-Emirati conflict started with the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011, however it further deepened in the last three years. While Turkey is considered a major regional country, the UAE is considered a small country. However, there is an apparent contradiction in their regional roles, which developed into an inter-regional competition between them in the Middle East, in the broad sense of the term¹. Indeed, some believe that what is going on between Turkey and the UAE is a kind of struggle to a large extent, in light of their contradictory ideologies and conflicting political interests, as well as their geopolitical competition in the region.

Theoretical Framework

There is a big difference between the concepts of regional power and regional role. While the regional power is a country that possesses great material and moral potentials and capabilities compared to other countries in a particular region, qualifying it to be regionally active and influential; the regional role is the output of management of such potentials and capabilities and using them effectively within the region, whether in a political, diplomatic, economic, military or security form.

While the concept of regional power is almost static, being characterized by stability and permanence, the concept of the regional role is extremely dynamic, as it changes from one period to another according to several factors within the international unit or the region. Accordingly, a country that

¹ Based on the Middle East concept that brings the 22 Arab countries together with Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and "Israel".

does not have the elements of a real regional power can exercise a regional role by exploiting its relative advantage at a certain historical moment, as is the case for the UAE and Qatar.

A country can also possess the elements of regional power, but at the same time it does not play effective regional roles commensurate with this power as a result of preoccupation with its internal crises or due to the weakness of its political leadership, as in the case of Egypt at present. While Turkey is an example of a regional power that plays an effective regional role, Egypt is a regional power that does not play an effective regional role, or at best it is experiencing a decline in its regional role. On the other hand, although the UAE is a small country, not a regional power, it plays an effective regional role.

Based on the above argument, this study is divided into two main parts: the first part draws a comparison between Turkey and the UAE with respect to the sources of their power and their position in the regional structure. The second part of the study addresses the regional roles of the two countries in light of their ongoing competition. The study also attempts to foresee the future of relations between the two countries, concluding with suggestion of several recommendations for both sides.

I- Indicators of State Power and Position in Regional Order

This axis can be addressed through measuring the power of Turkey and the UAE according to specific indicators; their effectiveness in the regional and international organizations in which they are members; and values and orientations that determine their foreign policy and the resulting regional alliances and counter-alliances that affect the power of a state and its real regional weight.

First: Measuring the Power of a State

The study applies the power index set by Dr. Gamal Zahran in his book, "Methodology of Measuring State Power & Prospects for Development of Arab-Israeli Conflict", including material factors

manifested in economic ability, military ability, and vital ability; and moral factors, manifested in political ability, national will, and diplomatic ability².

1) Indicators of Turkey's Power

A- Indicators of vital capability:

Turkey has an area of 780,580 square kilometers³; and in 2019 its population reached 81 million⁴. Turkey enjoys a strategic location, as it is located at the meeting point of civilizations and cultures between East and West, which made it a geo-economic bridge between the North and the South, linking the continents of the ancient world, i.e. Asia, Africa and Europe.

The country's vital geostrategic location explains the role that Ankara had played in the Cold War as an advanced focal point for containing the Soviet Union, and also answers the question why Istanbul has historically been center for many empires, the last of which was the Ottoman Empire.

B- Indicators of military capability:

The Turkish army is ranked 11th. globally on the list of the strongest armies in the world, according to the rating of Global Fire Power-2020, with 735 thousand personnel, including 355 thousand working soldiers and 380 thousand reserve soldiers. The Turkish army has 1,055 varied warplanes, 2,622 tanks, 8,777 armored vehicles, 1,278 self-propelled guns, and 1,260 field artillery, in addition to 438 rocket launchers; and the Turkish navy fleet includes approximately 194 vessels. The defense budget of the Turkish army amounts to \$19 billion⁵.

² Gamal Zahran, Methodology for Measuring State Power and Prospects for Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1st. Edition, Dec. 2006, p 70.

³ Ranking countries by surface area, Sahel News, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴ Population Pyramid from 1950 to 2100, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁵ Turkey Military Strength(2020), global firepower, accessed 27 May 2020), ([URL](#)).

C- Indicators of economic capability:

According to the data of the World Bank for 2018, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Turkey amounts to \$771 billion⁶; and the average per capita income is \$7,646⁷. However, Turkey suffers from a deficit in the oil sector, which exposes its energy security to vital risks. The volume of Turkey's oil production is 245 thousand barrels per day, while its consumption reaches 845 thousand barrels per day, and the size of its proven reserves is 388 million barrels⁸. Turkish economy is considered one of the strong economies, especially at the level of diversity and production, including sectors of domestic and foreign investment, industry, tourism and shipping lanes, although it suffers from several crises, some with a structural dimension and others with a political dimension.

D- Indicators of moral capability:

According to the Fragile States Index (FSI), an annual ranking of 178 countries based on the different pressures they face that impact their levels of fragility, based on twelve key political, social and economic indicators and over 100 sub-indicators, Turkey ranked 59th with a score of 80.3, considered a negative indicator⁹. However, Turkey is seeking to play a leading role in the region based on its historical legitimacy and legacy of the Ottoman Empire, especially since the Justice and Development Party came to power. Turkey also has a strong soft power, based on the two pillars of historical legacy on the one hand, and media and drama on the other, as well as the role played by its charitable foundations.

⁶ GDP (current US\$) – Turkey, The World Bank, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷ Adjusted net national income per capita (current US\$) - Turkey, The World Bank, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸ Turkey Military Strength (2020), Op. Cit.

⁹ FRAGILE STATES INDEX ANNUAL REPORT 2019, The Fund for Peace, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

2) Indicators of UAE's Strength

A- Indicators of vital capability:

The area of the Emirates is 83,600 km²¹⁰; and in 2019 its population reached 9 million¹¹. The importance of its location lies in the fact that it overlooks the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, a region that is considered one of the most strained hotspots in the world.

B- Indicators of military capability:

The UAE army is ranked 45th globally on the list of strongest armies in the world, according to the rating of Global Fire Power-2020, with 64 thousand personnel, without reserve soldiers. It owns 538 warplanes, 434 tanks, 8,691 armored vehicles, 183 self-propelled guns, and 76 field artillery, in addition to 72 missile launchers: and the Emirati navy fleet includes approximately 75 vessels. The defense budget of the UAE amounts to \$22 billion¹².

C- Indicators of economic capability:

According to the data of the World Bank for 2018, the UAE GDP amounts to \$414 billion¹³, and the average per capita income is \$39,235¹⁴. The UAE economy in general, particularly the energy sector, is one of its key strengths as one of the pillars of its foreign policy. The UAE oil production volume amounts to 3 million barrels per day while its consumption amounts to 575 thousand, with proven reserves amounting to 97 billion barrels¹⁵.

The UAE is the only Gulf country that no longer relies on oil as a main source of its national income, as it moved its economy from a rentier economy to a productive and diversified economy, with a high foreign investment volume, a promising tourism sector, as well as real estate, construction, financial

¹⁰ Ranking countries by surface area, Op. Cit.

¹¹ Population Pyramid from 1950 to 2100, Op. Cit.

¹² United Arab Emirates Military Strength(2020), global firepower, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹³ GDP (current US\$) - United Arab Emirates, The World Bank, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁴ Adjusted net national income per capita (current US\$) - Turkey, The World Bank, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁵ United Arab Emirates Military Strength (2020), Op. Cit.

and commercial services. Among the most important sectors after oil, is the port sector, where Jebel Ali port in Dubai is considered the best in the Middle East, and Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi ranks first in the world in terms of rapid growth. Also, Fujairah port is the second largest port for the supply of oil tankers in the world.

The UAE ranked 13th globally on the Global Maritime Connectivity Index 2018, issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)¹⁶.

D- Indicators of moral capability:

According to the Fragile States Index, the UAE ranked 149th, with a score of 40.1, which is considered a positive indicator¹⁷. In the absence of historical legitimacy or legacy to the UAE, being a newly-established state, that can play as a kind of soft power and constitute a starting point for its regional activities, the UAE tries to create a positive mental image in the region through tools of soft power, relying on economy, media, culture and charitable institutions.

Table (1) Comparing vital power indicators between Turkey and UAE:

Comparison Items	Turkey	UAE
Area (Km ²)	780,580	83,600
Population-2019 (million)	81	9
Army global ranking	11	45
GDP-2018 (\$billion)	771	414
Average per capita income-2017	7,646	39,235
Ranking on vulnerability index	59	149

¹⁶ UAE Ports.. Economic Gates to the World, Alkhaleej Economics, 4 June 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁷ FRAGILE STATES INDEX ANNUAL REPORT 2019, Op. Cit.

Table (2) Comparing military power indicators between Turkey and the UAE

General index	Sub-indicator	Turkey	Sub-indicator	UAE
Global Ranking		11	45	45
Personnel (1,000)	total	735	total	64
	operative	355	operative	64
	reserve	380	reserve	00
Armament	planes	1,055	planes	538
	tanks	2,622	tanks	434
	armored vehicles	8,777	armored vehicles	8,691
	guns	2,538	guns	259
	missiles	438	missiles	72
	ships	194	ships	75
Budget (\$billion)	budget	19	budget	22

Table (3) Oil Sector Capacity

Statement	Turkey	UAE
Daily Production (barrels)	245,000	3m
Daily consumption (barrels)	845,000	575,000
Reserves (barrels)	388m	97b

Within the framework of the Middle East region, according to a classification based on the criterion of the position of states in the international arena according to their strategic ability¹⁸, Turkey is classified as a regional country, while the UAE is only a small country.

¹⁸ Ahmet Davutoglu, Strategic Depth: Turkey's Location and Role in International Arena, Arab House for Science - Publishers, 1st. Edition, 2010, p 96.

Second: Membership in International Organizations

International organizations can be used in regional conflicts as tools to adjust the balance of power for the benefit of various parties on the one hand, and as a way to play a regional role on the other, which maximizes the importance of a State in regional and global arenas.

1) Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

Turkey is one of the 25 founding members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The OIC's thirteenth summit, sixth emergency summit, and seventh emergency summit (at the invitation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan due to developments in Jerusalem at the time), were held in Istanbul in April 2016, in January 2017, and in May 2018 respectively.

Turkey is also home for the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), which was established in 1981, and is chaired by President Erdogan, where the last meeting of the committee was in November 2019¹⁹.

As for the UAE, it joined the OIC in 1972²⁰. Recently, the UAE role within the framework of the OIC has started to escalate. In March 2019, the UAE hosted the 46th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers²¹. In December 2019, the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, witnessed the official inauguration of the seventh session of OIC health ministers²². In April 2020, the emergency meeting of the WHO Steering Committee on the emerging coronavirus pandemic, was chaired by the UAE through the video conferencing technology²³.

¹⁹ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, accessed 27 April 2020, ([URL](#)).

²⁰ OIC Member States, official website, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²¹ Abu Dhabi Declaration, 46th session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Emirates News Agency, 2 March 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²² The UAE takes over presidency of OIC Health Ministers, Al-Bayan, 17 Dec. 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²³ UAE presides over emergency meeting of OIC Steering Committee, Emirates News Agency, 9 April 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

Consequently, Turkey is one of the key actors within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whether by hosting its regular and emergency summits, or through providing headquarters for some of its subsidiary bodies. However, the role of the UAE has recently escalated, in coincidence with the formation of a Saudi-Emirati alliance following access of Mohammed bin Salman to the position of Saudi crown prince, in the face of Turkey, whose relations with the two countries have been tense since then. It has become apparent that the balance of power within the OIC has started to change in favor of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and their allies at the expense of other actors, including Turkey and Iran.

Among indicators for this are:

- President Erdogan did not attend the OIC's last regular summit, which Saudi Arabia hosted in May 2019, as well as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani who did not attend the summit either²⁴.
- The Islamic "Kuala Lumpur Summit" was held in December 2019, in which Turkey, Qatar, Malaysia and Iran attended, without a Saudi presence, outside the framework of the OIC²⁵. This raised concerns that such summit could constitute an alternative platform for the OIC in the long term, which prompted the OIC to oppose it, under the pretext that it could weaken the Islamic world²⁶. Realizing that the OIC is no longer an appropriate umbrella to unite joint action towards issues of the Islamic world, in light of the contradicting orientations and priorities among member states, and in light of the imbalance of power within the OIC for the benefit of anti-Turkey parties, Turkey was prompted to ally with other parties to overcome the traditional frameworks of cooperation provided by the OIC through holding such a summit.

²⁴OIC Summit in Makkah affirms centrality of Palestine and Jerusalem, Al-Jazeera Net, 1 June 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²⁵ Malaysia hosts a summit of leaders of Islamic countries, France 24, 17 Dec. 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²⁶ OIC criticizes the Islamic Summit of Malaysia, euronews, 18 Dec. 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

2) Arab League (AL)

While the UAE is one of the member states of the Arab League, Turkey developed its relations with the Arab League, by signing a memorandum of understanding with the AL in 2004. The Arab League also took a decision in 2006 with the aim to strengthen cooperation with Turkey through the “Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum”, which was scheduled to be established at that time. The Arab states also unanimously agreed to support Turkey's candidacy for the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the period 2009-2010²⁷. However, since 2011, with the start of the Arab Spring revolutions, Turkey abandoned its policy of zero problems with countries of the region, which strained its relations with a number of Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in addition to Egypt, and the Arab League has since been used as a political tool in the hands of the three countries against Turkey.

The last two emergency meetings of the Arab League, the first held in October 2019 to discuss the Turkish military intervention in the eastern Euphrates, where it was condemned, with the reservation of Qatar²⁸; the second AL emergency meeting was held in December 2019, to discuss Turkish military intervention in Libya, where it condemned external interventions in Libya with the reservation of Libya, Tunisia, Qatar, and Somalia²⁹.

3) The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The UAE is one of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), while the institutional relationship between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council is based on the Framework Agreement for Economic Cooperation between Turkey and GCC, which was signed in May 2005, on the basis of which the Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation was established, and a Memorandum of Understanding establishing a Strategic Dialogue Mechanism between Turkey and the GCC was signed

²⁷ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Relations with the Middle East and North Africa Countries, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²⁸ The Arab League calls on Turkey to immediately withdraw from all Syrian territories, Asharq Al Awsat, 12 Oct. 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

²⁹ This is how Turkey responded to the Arab League statement ..., Al-Jazeera Net, 1 Jan. 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

in September 2008 in Jeddah. So far, five high-level strategic dialogue meetings have been held (Jeddah 2008, Istanbul 2009, Kuwait 2010, Istanbul 2012, Riyadh 2016)³⁰. Under the umbrella of the Framework Agreement for Economic Cooperation between Turkey and GCC, four rounds of negotiations have been held between Turkey and Gulf countries to establish a free trade zone³¹.

The gap of meetings and communication between the two parties between 2012 and 2015 is due to their strained relations during this period, with the exception of Qatar, as a result of the impact of the first wave of the Arab revolutions. Since 2017, no meetings have been monitored between Turkey and the GCC, as Turkey's relations with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been deteriorating since then.

After Turkey intervened in the Gulf crisis in favor of Qatar, the Gulf Cooperation Council divided into three directions; the first is Qatar; the second is the anti-Qatar states: Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Bahrain; and the third is the neutral countries: Kuwait and Oman. This division has affected the effectiveness of the GCC since 2017, and consequently affected the UAE's ability to use the organization as an effective tool in its foreign policy in general, and in facing Turkey in particular.

4) The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Turkey plays an effective role within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which it joined in 1952, where it is the second largest army in the alliance after the United States, and hosts a number of NATO headquarters, such as Incirlik Air Force Base in Malatya, and the Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) in Izmir. Ankara is also the eighth NATO member with respect to contributing to the alliance's budget, amounting to 90 million euros. In addition, Turkey provided contributions to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, the multinational peacekeeping force in Kosovo, and the NATO training mission in Iraq³².

³⁰ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Relations between Turkey and GCC, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

³¹ Economic relations with countries and international economic groups, GCC website, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

³² Turkey's membership in NATO.. 68 years of giving and contributions, AA, 19 Feb. 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

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The UAE's relationship with NATO began in June 2004, when the NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was launched at the Alliance's Summit in the Turkish city in June 2004, with the aim of contributing to long-term global and regional security by offering countries of the broader Middle East region practical bilateral security cooperation with NATO.³³, where the UAE is one of these countries. Hence, the alliance is considered one of the strengths that Turkey possesses in the context of its foreign policy towards the Middle East region in general, and in its conflict with the UAE in particular.

Among indicators for this are:

- While Turkey's military operations in Syria have found strong opposition from the European Union, NATO has emerged at least as a political backer, which appeared in Op. Peace Spring in the east of the Euphrates³⁴. On the one hand, it reflects the weight and importance of Turkey in the alliance, and shows how important the NATO is important to Turkey as a power card in its struggle in the region, on the other.
- Recently, Turkey took advantage of the growing Russian involvement in the Libyan file, and moved in an attempt to persuade NATO to support its ally the GNA³⁵, in the face of the militias of Khalifa Haftar who is backed by the United Arab Emirates. Accordingly, the NATO Secretary General has recently announced willingness to support the Government of National Accord, albeit just a political support, which achieves a balance of power in the face of a bloc of several Middle Eastern and European countries facing Turkey in Libya.

³³ Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), The official website of NATO, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

³⁴ With respect to Op. Peace Spring.. NATO announces its position on Turkish military operations in Syria, Al-Durar Al-Shamiya, 11 Oct. 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

³⁵ Has Turkey succeeded in persuading NATO to support GNA to prevent Libya from falling into the hands of Russia? Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 17 May 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

- During April 2020, the UAE's partnership in the NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was not renewed, where NATO member Turkey, whose relations with the UAE are very tense, is behind this decision³⁶.

II- Foreign Policy Determinants of Turkey, UAE:

There is a number of intellectual and political determinants that govern the foreign policy orientations of Turkey and the UAE and affect their relations and regional roles. These determinants, along with interests, control the formation and nature of alliances, which would in turn affect the structure of the region and the balance of powers within it, as well as the regional weight and position of states.

1) Determinants of Turkish foreign policy

A- Internal determinants:

Although the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has Islamic orientations since its inception, it has not been able to highlight such trends in its policies internally³⁷ or externally³⁸ due to the nature of the secularist system of governance that is deeply rooted in the structure of the Turkish state as well as the Turkish society.

In the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions that broke out in 2011, the AK Party experience was considered a successful model of governance, being able to combine Islamic values with the values of secularist democracy. The second leg came after the failed coup attempt in 2016, which enabled President Erdogan to control the joints of the state and limit the role of the military in political life.

The third stage came with the constitutional amendments in 2017 which changed the system of government from a parliamentary system to a presidential system, which had its impact on Turkey's

³⁶ Interview conducted by the researcher with Dr. Sayed Ghoneim, a visiting professor at NATO academies specialized in international security.

³⁷ 18 years after she was expelled from Parliament due to her veil.. Kavakçı is Turkey's ambassador to Malaysia, Turk Press, 27 July 2017, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

³⁸ Erdogan criticizes lack of UNSC permanent representation to Islamic countries, Al-Jazeera Net, 27 Nov. 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

foreign policy manifested in effectiveness and flexibility of the movement, and President Erdogan's intellectual orientations started to appear more clearly both internally and externally. This was reflected in Turkey's handling of regional issues, whether in opposing regional trends against Islamic movements, or in Turkey's presenting itself as a leader of the Islamic world and expressive of its issues.

Also among the internal determinants is economy, where Turkey constantly seeks to secure its energy needs, in light of the internal deficit in this sector, by gaining new allies from oil countries, participating in oil and gas exploration in these countries, and diversifying its energy sources.

B- External determinants:

There are three central issues that are determinant in governing the foreign policies of countries in the Middle East region, and accordingly in the dynamics of the Turkish-Emirati regional competition, namely: the Arab revolutions and political Islam, Israel, and Iran.

Regionally:

Turkey supported the Arab revolutions during the first wave of the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, and also supported the rise of political Islam movements to power, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood. As for Israel, despite the official Turkish relations with Tel Aviv, these relations have been strained since 2010, as a result of the attack on Turkey's Freedom Flotilla. These tense relations between the two countries have recently reached their climax with the mutual escalation between President Erdogan and Benjamin Netanyahu³⁹. Finally, with respect to Turkey's position on the escalation with Iran, Turkey opposes such confrontation, as Ankara maintains strong relations with Tehran on the economic level, which made it fail to adhere to the sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran in the pre-nuclear agreement phase⁴⁰. In the post-agreement phase,

³⁹ New escalation bet. Erdogan and Netanyahu: attacks and mutual insults, RT Arabic, 13 March 2019, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴⁰ Turkey refuses to abide by any sanctions against Iran that are not issued by the UN Security Council, KUNA, 12 Jan. 2012, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

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Turkey in May 2018 announced its rejection of the US decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran that led to the re-imposition of sanctions on Tehran⁴¹.

Internationally:

There is a historical strategic alliance that brings Turkey and the United States together since the Cold War, in addition to the fact that they are both members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, the alliance has recently been facing critical threats, most prominently the Kurdish dilemma and the continued American support for the Kurds in Syria against Turkey's interests; Turkey's demand to extradite Fethulla Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based fugitive, retired imam accused of masterminding the thwarted July 15, 2016 coup attempt, as well as the US attitude towards this attempt; and Turkey's acquisition of the Russian defense system S-400⁴². This manifested in Turkey's rapprochement with Russia, whether in political understandings in Syria, or in economic partnership. In addition to purchase of the S-400 defense system, there is the Turkish Akkuyu nuclear power plant (NPP) project that restarted after the Turkish Government signed a deal with the Russian Government in 2010; and the TurkStream gas pipeline that transfers gas from Europe via Turkey – all of which are projects with strategic dimensions. Meanwhile, Turkey has not been able so far to join the European Union, but rather there is a rift in the Turkish-European partnership.

In Turkey's regional and international contexts, there is a central determinant, which is the transition from a one-dimensional foreign policy, focusing only on its strategic ties with the West, aimed at joining the European Union, to a multi-dimensional foreign policy. In this context, Ahmed Davutoglu believes that in order for Turkey to open up to the international environment and be an international power at the global level, it must rely in its foreign policy strategy on tactical priorities within the arenas of geopolitical influence, including the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East⁴³, being a strategic depth for Turkey.

⁴¹ Turkey: American withdrawal from the nuclear agreement with Iran will lead to instability, KUNA, 9 May 2018, accessed 27 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴² Tarek Diab, Turkey between Moscow and Washington: Finding a Path, Egyptian Institute for Studies, 19 April 2019, accessed 29 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴³ Op. Cit., Turkey's Location and Role in International Arena, p. 144.

We can observe these trends in Turkey's foreign policy in the last decade, especially with regard to Ankara's significant interest in the Middle East region and its issues. In order to achieve this, Turkey adopted several foundations and principles governing this policy, most notably the zero-problem policy with neighboring countries, which led to focusing its foreign policy on soft power tools, most prominently the promotion of the idea of "Turkey as a model". But with the Arab Spring revolutions exposure to counter waves, to the extent that some of them turned to regional and international crises and civil wars, in addition to the growing Kurdish expansion on the southern borders of Turkey, along with the rise of the policy of axes and counter axes, Turkey was prompted to abandon the policy of zero problems with neighbors, where security approaches began to occupy a central part in its external policy.

Therefore, Ankara's foreign policy tools are no longer confined to soft power, as it has been replaced by what is known as smart power, which brings together soft and tough power in an integrated and harmonious foreign policy. While maintaining adoption of soft power tools, Turkey started to resort to military force, following an advanced defense strategy since 2014, including establishment of military alliances with a number of regional states, spreading advanced military bases in the Gulf, the Horn of Africa and the Mediterranean, and launching military operations aimed at combating terrorism and securing the country's vital interests in its regional surroundings⁴⁴.

2) Determinants of Emirati foreign policy

A- Internal determinants:

The UAE is adopting a secularist approach in its system of governance, after it had undermined and limited Islamic movements at home. Asked on the Charlie Rose political talk show in August 2017, how he saw the Middle East in 10 years' time, the UAE Ambassador to Washington, Yousef Al Otaiba said: "What we would like to see is more secular, ... government," expressing his country's desire for a more secular Middle East⁴⁵. The UAE political system is a federal monarchy. Since the establishment

⁴⁴ Ali Bakir, Turkey's messages to the region from Libya, the Qatari 'Al-Arab', 26 May 2020, accessed 29 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴⁵ Mohamed Al-Minshawi, Secularism: The case of UAE, Al-Shorouq, 31 August 2017, accessed 29 May 2020, ([URL](#)),

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of the federation, there has been an unwritten agreement that the president of the State shall be the Emir (prince) of Abu Dhabi, and the prime minister the Emir of Dubai⁴⁶. During the past few years, two shifts have occurred at the level of authority in the United Arab Emirates, which have had a clear impact on the level of the UAE political decision-making and foreign policy, as the influence shifted from the emirate of Dubai to the emirate of Abu Dhabi, and from the hands of the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and the president of the UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to the hands of the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed⁴⁷.

Also at the level of internal determinants, ownership of Dubai Ports World company was fully returned to the emirate of Dubai in a deal amounting to \$2.7 billion in February 2020. DP World has a market value of \$14 billion dollars, as it manages about 78 ports and stations in 40 countries around the world⁴⁸, where the port management policy is one of the central economic pillars in the UAE foreign policy.

B- External determinants:

Regionally:

The UAE has opposed and faced all Arab revolutions since 2011, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, as these revolutions coincided with the escalating role of the Islamic movements in the Middle East region, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, and their access to power in Egypt and to some extent in Tunisia. Due to the UAE fear that these new dynamics in the region may be reflected against it, its hostility to Islamic streams has gone far beyond being an intellectual dispute to being a political and existential conflict, and of course the Brotherhood got the largest share of this hostility, as a poll

⁴⁶ Türkiye - Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Ekonomik ve Siyasi İlişkilerimiz, Packworld Türkiye Dergisi, accessed 2 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴⁷ Kirsten Coast, United Arab Emirates: Power and Role Shifts, Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 6 August 2017, accessed 29 May 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁴⁸ DP World returns to full state ownership, takes on \$ 8.1 billion debt, Reuters, 16 Feb. 2018, accessed 2 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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conducted by the Washington Institute for Research at the end of 2014 showed that the Muslim Brotherhood enjoyed Positive rating by about a third of the population in the Gulf countries⁴⁹.

While the UAE started facing the Muslim Brotherhood within the Emirates in 2011, it transferred this battle outside the country after 2013 to become a regional war against the group and its branches⁵⁰. Accordingly, the UAE supported the overthrow of the MB government and considered the coup that took place in Egypt on July 3, 2013 as a 'revolution'. Meanwhile, Turkey considered the events of July 3 as a 'military coup' a military coup, which reflected in the UAE relations with Turkey, where this tension later developed into a kind of regional conflict between the two countries.

Although there is no official normalization in the UAE-Israeli relations, the recent period has witnessed many efforts and moves towards normalization of Israeli-Gulf relations, especially the UAE⁵¹, and it seems that achieving this end is a matter of time.

With regard to Iran, despite being a regional opponent of the UAE, whether from a geostrategic perspective and conflict in the Arab Gulf region, or because of the conflict between the two countries over the ownership of three Gulf islands, there are several factors that may mitigate this dispute. On the one hand, there are good economic relations between the two parties, as the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2019 amounted to \$13.5 billion⁵², and there are always mutual efforts to maintain calm, both on the part of the UAE, for fear of the impact of the conflict on tourism and investments, being one of the pillars of the UAE diversified economy, and on the part of Iran that seeks to cause a defect in the Saudi-Emirati coalition. In addition, the UAE gives priority to

⁴⁹ ÖMER ÖZKIZILCIK, Turkey and the UAE: Economic Allies but Regional Competitors, Politics Today, 5/12/2017, accessed 2 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁵⁰ Fehim Taştekin, Türkiye ve BAE'nin 'eksen savaşı'nın arka planında ne var? 5 May 2019, accessed 2 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁵¹ Israeli delegation in Washington to discuss a "non-aggression" agreement with Gulf countries, Al-Jazeera Net, 3 Dec. 2019, accessed 18 Dec. 2019, ([URL](#)).

⁵² UAE second after China.. Iran exports its products to 128 countries despite sanctions, Al-Jazeera Net, 25 April 2020, accessed 18 Dec. 2019), ([URL](#)).

confrontation of the currents of political Islam as its main regional opponent and a source of threat that comes ahead of Iran.

Internationally:

The United Arab Emirates, like other Gulf countries, has a strategic alliance with the United States. It appears that this alliance was never affected by the region's interrelated dynamics, compared to the US alliance with Turkey. The UAE has deepened its alliance with the United States depending on its lobby there, in addition to think tanks and public relations firms, that work to build a positive image of the Emirates in Washington⁵³.

With regard to Russia, the UAE does not have strong historical relations with Moscow, but it has recently been developing them, in light of their common position in the Syrian and Libyan crises, and the fact that the UAE wants to impose itself as a regional actor in the region, which requires establishment of balanced relations with various international parties.

In the UAE's regional and international context, there is a central determinant, namely the access of Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the position of Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in June 2017, after dismissal of Prince Mohammed bin Nayef⁵⁴, although the latter was close to traditional US circles such as the intelligence and the Pentagon. Hence, Bin Salman needed someone to promote him among the US decision makers in the face of Bin Nayef, a role that was voluntarily played by the United Arab Emirates, especially Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, through his former office manager and UAE Ambassador to Washington Yousef Al Otaiba. The UAE ambassador to the US promoted Bin Salman and introduced him to the new ruling elite of Republicans, and helped development of Bin Salman's relationship with President Trump's advisor Jared Kushner⁵⁵. Since then,

⁵³ The Emirati Lobby: How the UAE Wins in Washington, Center for International Policy, October 2019, accessed 2 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁵⁴ Mohammad bin Salman, Saudi Crown Prince: Broad powers and major challenges, BBC, 21 June 2017, accessed 17 Dec. 2019), ([URL](#)).

⁵⁵ The Great Predicament.. How has Saudi Arabia become the biggest loser from its coalition with the UAE? Sasa Post, 25 Dec. 2019, accessed 17 Dec. 2019), ([URL](#)).

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the UAE's influence on Saudi foreign policy have begun to surface, which has led to establishment of a strong alliance that brings the two countries together in many issues against Turkey.

In recent years, the security approach has begun to dominate the Emirati foreign policy. After focusing only on use of soft power, it has also become dependent on the so-called smart power as one of its most prominent foreign policy tools in the region. The established the "Soft Power Council of the Emirates" in April 2017, and announced that one of its goals is to "activate an integrated foreign policy that enhances the state's position regionally and globally⁵⁶, and increases its respect and love among the peoples of the world." In addition, the UAE in recent years has started to rely on tough power, most prominently use of the military tool, whether by establishing military bases abroad as in Eritrea, or in providing military financing for some of its affiliated regimes, as happened with the Sisi regime in Egypt, as well as the logistical and military support it has provided to Khalifa Haftar in Libya.

The rivalry between Turkey and the UAE was not only limited to areas of influence, but rather in the use of the same soft power tools, such as Turkey's 'Ertugrul Resurrection' and the UAE 'Kingdoms of Fire' in the field of drama.

Accordingly, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates stand on opposite sides, with respect to their intellectual and political orientations internally and externally, in all crises and issues of the region, which was reflected in the pattern of their regional alliances.

This can be addressed through several dimensions, including:

- The main alliances for each country: in the case of the UAE, there are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Greece and Cyprus; while in the case of Turkey, there is a declared alliance with Qatar and the Libyan Government of National Accord.

⁵⁶ Government and political system, the official portal of the UAE government, accessed 29 Dec. 2019), ([URL](#)).

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- While Israel, Sudan and Eritrea are siding with the UAE (without much involvement in its alliances), Iran, Somalia and Djibouti are siding with Turkey.
- The neutral (non-aligned) countries include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Mauritania and Pakistan.
- The regional geopolitical balance is based on three axes: the Iranian axis, the Turkish-Qatari axis, and the Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian axis. However, Iran seems to be Turkey's partner in some of the files, which brings it closer to Turkey.
- Alliances and counter-alliances: The Saudi-Emirati coalition against Arab revolutions since 2011 in the face of the Turkish-Qatari alliance supporting them; the Saudi-Emirati alliance supporting the Egyptian regime after the July 2013 coup, in the face of the Turkish-Qatari alliance opposing it; the Saudi-Emirati Bahraini-Egyptian alliance against the Turkey-Qatar alliance in the context of the Gulf crisis; the Emirati support for the Greek-Israeli-Egyptian alliance against Turkey and the Libyan GNA in the Eastern Mediterranean; the Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian-French alliance supporting Khalifa Haftar's forces in Libya in the face of the Turkish-Italian alliance supporting the Government of National Accord; the European-Saudi-Emirati alliance supporting the Syrian Kurdish forces, in the face of Turkey which is in a military confrontation with these forces; the Turkish and Qatari support for Hamas, in the face of the Saudi-Emirati coalition opposing the movement; and finally, the Islamic Alliance, which was recently established within the framework of the Kuala Lumpur Summit in December 2019, brought together Turkey, Qatar, Malaysia and Iran, amid opposition of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

To sum up, while Turkey overtakes the UAE by a large margin from the perspective of State power, the UAE regional alliances makes it appear relatively superior in this regard.

III- Regional Roles and Conflict Areas

The UAE has used the relative advantage it possesses in economy, in crafting tools for soft and tough power, as well as exploiting regional conditions in establishing regional and international alliances, in attempt to make for the shortcomings in the size of its power. This enabled Abu Dhabi to play many regional roles that may surpass the limits of its power as a small country. In this context, the strong

alliance that unites it with the United States and its exploitation of the vacuum in the region motivated the UAE to impose itself as a proxy for Washington capable of preserving the interests of the US and its allies in the region, especially in light of an American desire not to get involved too much in the issues of the Middle East region.

The UAE also realized that in light of Egypt's preoccupation with its internal crises, the situation of Syria and Iraq that have been destroyed by civil wars, and Saudi Arabia's preoccupation with its conflict with Iran and proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, the UAE volunteered to confront Turkey as an emerging regional power, driven by political and ideological calculations.

In another context, the UAE considers that the UAE-Saudi coalition is qualified to lead the Middle East region in the face of Turkey and Iran as non-Arab powers, in light of absence of traditional central Arab powers.

The intensity of Turkish-Emirati rivalry can be seen in several places that are geographically and geopolitically interrelated, within the framework of the Middle East region in its broad concept, including the Arab Maghreb, the Levant, and the Horn of Africa. In addition, both Turkey and the UAE seek to transfer their conflict to the strategic depth of each other, as happened in the Gulf crisis and the central role that Turkey played there, and the struggle over energy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the UAE's involvement in the file.

1) The Libyan Issue

Motives behind Turkish move towards the Libyan issue:

- For economic motives, as Libya has the largest oil reserves in Africa with about 48 billion barrels of oil, in addition to gas reserves estimated at 1.5 trillion cubic meters, which provides Turkey with a great opportunity to secure its internal demand for oil and gas, thus eliminating dependency on supplies from Russia and Iran. Moreover, it offers Ankara a great opportunity to get involved in supplying the European Union with this strategic energy, and boosting its

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position as a global hub for energy transfer⁵⁷. In addition, Turkey's move towards the Libyan issue enhances Turkish investments and commercial interests in Libya. At the present time, the outstanding Turkish commercial contracts in Libya exceed \$18 billion, which means that there are many construction projects, infrastructure and services that will not be applied and their cost be covered in the absence of the Government of National Accord⁵⁸.

- Gaining an ally in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- Supporting Islamic movements in the face of the UAE's counter campaign in the region.
- The Libyan file can be used as a pressure card in the face of European countries, in response to the latter's use of the card of the Syrian Kurds in the face of Turkey, especially France.
- And finally promotion of its defense and military industry.

Motives behind the UAE move towards the Libyan issue:

- The UAE seeks to control Libyan oil production and supplies, in line with the interests of its oil sector.
- Libya is one of the important stations of the Emirati regional confrontation with political Islam movements.
- Control of the Libyan ports, by managing them through the Dubai Ports World (DP World), to ensure securing a vital geo-economic transportation line between the north and the south.

⁵⁷ Bashar Narsh, Libya's Place in Turkish Strategic Realization, Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 15 January 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁵⁸ MICHAEL YOUNG, Into the Libya Vortex, Carnegie Middle East Center, 14 Jan. 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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- For the UAE, Libya is a strategic corridor in the Mediterranean and North African countries, where there are many Emirati geopolitical interests⁵⁹.

The conflicting Turkish and Emirati motives in the Libyan file have led them to support two opposite parties in this crisis. While Turkey, along with Qatar and Italy, support the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) led by Fayez al-Sarraj in the face of Khalifa Haftar, the UAE, along with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France and Russia, support Haftar's militias against the GNA forces.

Since 2019, the Turkish role in Libya has been on the rise, especially after it signed two memoranda of understanding with the GNA in November 2019, one of which relates to military cooperation⁶⁰, which Turkey later relied on in sending military support to Libya⁶¹ to prevent the fall of the capital Tripoli in the hands of the militias affiliated with Khalifa Haftar, including logistical and military support, particularly the drones known as "Bayrakdar" that appeared in the Tripoli sky for the first time in June 2019⁶².

On the other hand, since the beginning of the Libyan crisis, the UAE has been providing Haftar with American, Russian and Chinese-made weapons, including drones, air-to-surface missiles, air defense systems, artillery, armored vehicles, artillery and rapid-fire machine guns⁶³. In addition to provision of logistical support for Haftar's militias, the UAE depends on the Sudanese Rapid Support militias⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Rossi, why does UAE finance the war in Libya? Noon Post, 27 Dec. 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁰ Turkey signs maritime boundaries deal with Libya amid exploration row, Reuters, 28 Nov. 2019, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶¹ Erdogan announces start of gradual deployment of Turkish soldiers in Libya, France 24, 5 Jan. 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶² Shaul Shay, The Important Role of Turkish Drones in the Libyan War, Israel defense, 29 July 2019, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶³ The Emirati role in Libya: The hidden is greater, Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 6 July 2019, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁴ Arabic press review: UAE and Sudan to supply Libya's Haftar with fighters, Middle East Eye, 8 July 2019, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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in fighting for Haftar. Also, Wagner Group, a Russian company of mercenaries similar to the Blackwater, a US private military company⁶⁵, is one of the tributaries of human support for Khalifa Haftar. The UAE also has two military air bases in Libya, Al-Jafra and Al Khadim⁶⁶.

The most recent confrontation between the Haftar militias and the GNA forces has been the legitimate GNA forces' restoration of and taking control of several areas around Tripoli, including the Al-Watiya air base on 18 May 2020⁶⁷ and Tripoli International Airport on 3 June, 2020⁶⁸, which enabled it to control the entire administrative boundaries of the capital. Then, the GNA forces took control of Tarhuna on 5 June⁶⁹, the last strongholds of Khalifa Haftar in the Libyan West.

Turkey's role in these battles has emerged across several levels; first, militarily through the logistical and military support it provided to the GNA forces, most notably the drones which were greatly effective on the ground; second, politically, through Ankara's settlement of the situation in Idlib to focus on the intense battle of Tripoli, Syria, on the one hand, and by summoning the United States to play a role in the Libyan file on the other, in light of the increasing Russian military intervention in Libya⁷⁰. NATO also announced its willingness to support the Government of National Accord⁷¹, albeit politically.

⁶⁵ Lillo Montalto Monella, Who are the Russian mercenaries waging war in Libya?, euronews, , 8 July 2019, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁶ Libyan gov't: 3 airbases occupied by foreign forces, Anadolu Agency, 30 April 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁷ Anıl ŞAHİN, Vatiyye Hava Üssü'nde tamamen kontrol sağlandı, SavunmaSanayiST, 18 May 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁸ Libya Ordusu havalimanının kontrolünü ele aldı!, Sözcü, 3 June 2020, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁶⁹ UMH güçleri Tarhuna kentinde kontrolü sağladı, Şarkul Avsat, 5 June 2020, accessed 9 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁰ U.S. warns of Russian bid for Libya stronghold after warplane delivery, Reuters, , 29 May 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷¹ NATO declares readiness to support the Al-Sarraj government in Libya, AA, 14 May 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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The GNA victories have had military, political, and diplomatic ramifications. The forces of the legitimate GNA moved from defense to offense; and establishment of a Turkish air base in Libya has become a settled issue, which increases intensity of competition and tension between Turkey on the one hand and the UAE and Egypt on the other.

Although the growing Russian military intervention in the Libyan crisis in favor of Haftar supports the UAE interests in the short term, but in the medium and long terms it may have negative repercussions on the Emirati role there, similar to what happened with Iran in Syria after Russia's intervention in the Syrian crisis.

In light of the defeats suffered by Khalifa Haftar's militias, Aqilah Saleh, the speaker of Tobruk parliament started to rise at the expense of Haftar, with whom he is on open differences with⁷², which may make Saleh a likely alternative for Haftar in any future negotiation with the GNA. This variable is not also in favor of the UAE, which focuses its investment in Libya on the person of Haftar. Anyway, these victories may be a prelude to a political solution to the Libyan crisis.

2) The Palestinian Cause

Palestine is central to any party wishing to play an effective regional role and engage in any efforts to rearrange the region, its structure and its alliances. The Palestinian issue and its role as a variable in the Turkish-Emirati conflict, has not stopped at being subject of competition between the two countries with respect to exercise of influence and role play, but rather extended to their different approaches to the issue in its various dimensions.

This can be seen in three main files, namely, the position on the Islamic resistance movement "Hamas", the so-called "deal of the century" and finally "Mohamed Dahlan", the Palestinian leader who was expelled from the Fatah movement in 2011.

The Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" and Turkey have good relations since the Justice and Development Party's access to power in 2002. But the relations between them have deepened since 2011 following the tension in Turkish-Israeli relations in the wake of the Freedom Flotilla crisis in

⁷² Libya .. Aqila Saleh meets militia leaders except for Haftar, AA, 28 May 2020, accessed 3 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

2010, the exit of a large part of the movement's leaders from Syria in 2011⁷³, and their move to Turkey after their relations were strained with Egypt⁷⁴. Turkey hosted them supported them politically, which pushed Israel to claim that Hamas is using Turkey's lands to prepare for its strikes against Tel Aviv⁷⁵.

As for the UAE, its intellectual and political tendencies are mainly opposed to Hamas, under the pretext of the Islamic resistance's intellectual association with the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, and for receiving support from Iran on the other hand. Therefore, Abu Dhabi designated Hamas as a "terrorist" organization in 2016⁷⁶.

As for the position on the "deal of the century", President Erdogan vowed in May 2019 that he would not allow implementation of this deal,⁷⁷ and stressed in June 2019 that it is impossible for his country to accept it⁷⁸.

However, the UAE expressed its support for the "deal of the century" on two different occasions:

⁷³ Hamas leaves Syria under pressure from Turkey and Qatar, Al-Sahafa, 7 Dec. 2011, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁴ Mohsen Saleh, Determinants of Turkish Policy toward Hamas, Al-Jazeera Net, 21 April 2014, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁵ Israeli intelligence report behind strained relationship between Turkey and Hamas, Al Arabiya Net, 13 Sept. 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁶ The Arab League classifies Hezbollah as "terrorist" organization ... , Deutsche Welle, 11 March 2016, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁷ Erdogan talks about essence of the "deal of the century" and pledges to prevent its implementation, RT Arabic, 3 May 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁷⁸ Erdogan: It is impossible for Turkey to accept the "Deal of the Century", RT Arabic, 30 June 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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The first was during attending the Bahrain conference in June 2019, when Jared Kushner announced the economic aspect of the American peace plan, known as "deal of the century"⁷⁹;

The second was when the UAE ambassador to Washington Yousef Al Otaiba attended the press conference in which the US President Donald Trump officially announced the deal. After the conference, Al Otaiba announced in an official statement his country's support for the American plan⁸⁰.

This Emirati position comes in light of its strong strategic alliance with the United States, particularly with Trump, on the one hand, and its informal growing cooperation with Israel on the other.

With respect to Turkey and the UAE's position on the Palestinian leader, Mohamed Dahlan:

The UAE seeks to reach and carry out understandings between Dahlan, who is currently working as an advisor to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed, and Hamas, to enhance the UAE's influence in the Gaza Strip; and thus reduce the influence of Doha and Ankara gradually there⁸¹, in addition to supporting Dahlan for access to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority⁸².

As for the Turkish position on Mohamed Dahlan, Turkey put him on its list of wanted terrorists in November 2019, and even allocated \$700,000 as a prize for whoever provides any information that might lead to his arrest, accusing him of involvement in the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016⁸³. Ankara is also concerned about the understandings between Mohamed Dahlan and Hamas under the auspices of UAE, for fear that this would weaken its role in the Palestinian file. In this regard, the Palestinian ambassador to Ankara, Fayed Mustafa, has announced that Turkey is upset about the

⁷⁹ What are the Arab countries attending the Bahrain Conference on "Deal of the Century"?, France 24, 25 June 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸⁰ The UAE explains its position in support of the "Deal of the Century", RT Arabic, 28 Jan. 2020, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸¹ Youssef Sheiko, UAE: Turkey's New Rival, 16 Feb. 2018, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸² Confirmed by Turkey: Emirati plan to divide "Fatah" and pave the way for Dahlan for PA presidency, Gulf Online, 30 Oct. 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸³ Turkey announces a big prize for any information leading to the arrest of Mohamed Dahlan, Deutsche Welle, 22 Nov. 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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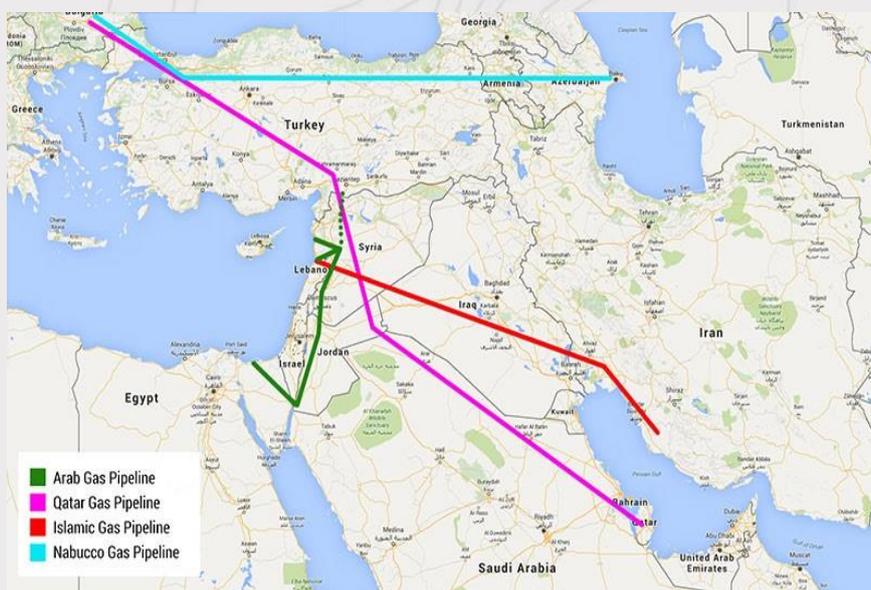
rapprochement between Hamas and Dahlan, as the latter is considered a “negative” character for the Turks⁸⁴.

3) The Syrian Issue

A- The geo-economic importance:

Syria is a major station in the “oil and gas” power transmission lines from the Gulf countries. In 2009, Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia laid the main outline for an agreement to extend a pipeline for transferring Qatari gas across Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria to Turkey, up to European countries. But Syria later thwarted the project to appease its Russian ally. In 2011, the Syrian regime signed a contract with Iran on an alternative project for building a pipeline extending from Iranian gas fields through Iraq and Syria, then Lebanon, up to Europe⁸⁵. But it was not implemented due to the war circumstances.

Map (2) Path of gas pipelines through Syria to Europe:



Source: Syrian Economic Forum

⁸⁴ Youssef Sheiko, UAE: Turkey’s New Rival, Op. Cit.

⁸⁵ Mohammad Jamil, Saudi-Turkish alliance in the Syrian war and struggle to build gas pipelines, Gulf House for Studies and Publishing, 25 Dec. 2015 accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

B- The geo-political importance:

Iran seeks to form a regional hub, known as the Shiite Crescent, extending from Tehran to Beirut, via Baghdad and Damascus. In light of the regional competition between Turkey, Iran and the UAE, Syria is considered a pivotal stage in this race, along with its importance for Turkey in thwarting the Kurdish geopolitical project.

Regarding the Turkish position on the Syrian file, Turkey earlier supported the revolution politically and then militarily in the face of Bashar Al-Assad. However, with the retreat of the opposition forces on the ground in favor of the regime forces in 2017 as a result of Russian military intervention in the crisis in September 2015, in addition to the Kurdish expansion along the Syrian northern border strip with Turkey, Turkey started to reformulate its priority matrix in the Syrian file. Since then, confrontation with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), has become a priority compared to confrontation with the Syrian regime⁸⁶. Although Turkey has abandoned the option of toppling Assad, yet it has not abandoned its opposition to it and still refuses to normalize its relations with it.

As for the UAE, it has undertaken a dramatic shift from supporting the revolution and revolutionaries to suspending this support, up to normalizing its relations with the Syrian regime, where in December 2018, Abu Dhabi reopened its embassy in Damascus⁸⁷. Two years later, specifically in March 2020, Mohamed bin Zayed made a phone call to Bashar al-Assad, under the pretext of efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic, the first public contact of its kind from a Gulf leader since the beginning of the Syrian crisis nine years ago⁸⁸. One of the motives for UAE pursuit to normalize its relations with the Syrian regime is to exploit this position in its confrontation with Turkey, along with the Kurds' card.

⁸⁶ Tariq Diab, Turkish-Saudi Relations 2011-2019, Egyptian Institute for Studies, 23 January 2020, accessed 4 April 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸⁷ UAE reopens Syria embassy in boost for Assad, Reuters, 27 Dec. 2018, accessed 4 April 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁸⁸ The first public contact between Mohammed bin Zayed and Bashar al-Assad since 2011, Teller Report, 27 March 2020, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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The Turkish-Emirati differences on the Syrian file are manifested in:

First, while Turkey is confronting the Kurdish forces in northern Syria, the UAE provides support to them;

Second, while Turkey is still opposing the Bashar Assad regime in Syria, the UAE reopened its embassy in Damascus and gradually normalizing its relations with the Syrian regime.

Therefore, the UAE was strongly opposed to the military operations carried out by Turkey in Syria, whether by issuing official statements⁸⁹, or through the Arab League⁹⁰. In January 2019, the UAE announced its support for the Kurds and opposition to the safe zone in northern Syria that Turkey is seeking to establish there⁹¹, in addition to the circulated reports about the UAE provision of military support to the Kurdish units⁹².

3) The Horn of Africa Issue

The Horn of Africa (HoA) that encompasses Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia – and in its widest sense could also include Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda – is of extreme geostrategic importance, both for being a vital port area due to overlooking the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, as well as the recent gas discoveries in this region, which made it home for the largest number of military bases over the world.

⁸⁹ Turkey's attack: pro-Syrian Arab stances, criticizing Ankara, ignites social media, BBC, 10 Oct. 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹⁰ The Arab League condemns the Turkish attack, and Qatar reserves, Deutsche Welle, 12/10/2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹¹ Gargash to Al-Hurra: We reject Turkish buffer zone in northern Syria, Al-Hurra, 30 Jan. 2019, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹² Ayman al-Amin, in northern Syria, why did Saudi Arabia and UAE resort to supporting the Kurds? Masr Alarabia, 4 Dec. 2018, accessed 4 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

Recently, features of two struggling regional axes appeared in the Horn of Africa, i.e. between Saudi Arabia and UAE on the one hand, and Turkey and Qatar on the other, where countries of each axis move in harmony in face of the other axis.

The tools of Turkish foreign policy in this region are focused on the diplomacy of providing services such as building places of worship and schools, charitable activities, and investments, in addition to establishment of military bases. The UAE policy is based on investments, port leasing, building military bases, and providing economic aid and grants. In this context, the paper will discuss the attitude of the Horn of Africa's major countries towards the issues of the Gulf crisis, the Iranian crisis, and the military bases, as follows:

A- Djibouti

Djibouti has maritime borders overlooking the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Bab al-Mandab strait, making it home for military bases for a number of international powers, such as the United States, China, France, Japan, and Italy. In January 2017, Saudi Arabia concluded an agreement with the government of Djibouti to establish a military base there, but it has not been established yet. Djibouti has stood by Riyadh and Abu Dhabi against Tehran, where it announced in 2016 severing its diplomatic ties with Iran and withdrawing its ambassador from Tehran, and soon rushed to provide logistical assistance to facilitate the military operations of the Arab coalition in Yemen⁹³.

In the Gulf crisis, Djibouti aligned with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, by reducing its diplomatic representation with Qatar. One of the consequences of this position was renewal of a border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti. In response to Djibouti's position, Qatar immediately withdraw its forces from the border area disputed by Eritrea and Djibouti, as Doha has been leading mediation between them in this regard for 10 years⁹⁴. However, Djibouti later abandoned this position and committed to adopting a policy of non-alignment⁹⁵ in the Gulf crisis.

⁹³ Djibouti.. Military base paradise and a nest for spies, Al-Alam TV, 6 July 2018, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹⁴ The Gulf Crisis Returns the Eritrean-Djiboutian Conflicts to Africans, AA, 3 July 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹⁵ Qatar wins and the siege camp disintegrates, Al-Sharq, 22 Nov. 2018, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

In December 2016, Turkey signed an agreement with Djibouti, to establish a free trade zone, amounting to 12 million square meters, with an expected economic capacity of \$1 trillion⁹⁶. In February 2018, Djibouti unilaterally terminated a concession contract awarded to DP World for operation of the Doraleh Container Terminal (DCT) for thirty years, on the pretext that the terms of the contract were unfair⁹⁷. In January 2020, the London Court of International Arbitration issued a ruling in favor of DP World and asked Djibouti to restore DP World's rights to run DCT for 25 years in line with a deal signed in 2004. However, Djibouti rejected the court ruling⁹⁸, saying that "This ruling comes as no surprise. It is the outcome of the iniquitous provisions of the concession, which could force a state to set aside and disregard its own law, to revive a concession that was terminated on the grounds of the higher interest of the Djiboutian nation.". All this makes Djibouti closer to Turkey than to the UAE.

B- Eritrea

Eritrea has a strategic location like all the countries of the Horn of Africa, as it overlooks the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. Therefore, there are military bases for a number of regional powers stationed there, including UAE, Israel, and Iran⁹⁹.

Eritrea is closer to the Saudi-Emirati alliance than to the Turkish-Qatari alliance in the Horn of Africa. In September 2018, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki signed a peace agreement in Jeddah, under the auspices of the UAE and Saudi Arabia¹⁰⁰. Then Saudi Arabia

⁹⁶ Sohaib Abdel Rahman, Turkey in the Horn of Africa and dangers of Red Sea militarization, Hafriyat, 4 Jan. 2020, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

⁹⁷ Djibouti Terminates DP World's Concession at Doraleh, The Maritime Executive, 22 Feb. 2018, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹⁸ Costas Paris, Djibouti Rejects Court Ruling to Hand Back Container Terminal, 17 Jan. 2020, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

⁹⁹ Kaaba Asmara.. How Eritrea brought Iran and Israel together on its soil? Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 20 March 2018, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁰ The United Arab Emirates in the Horn of Africa, International Crisis Group, 6 Nov. 2018, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

hosted direct talks between Eritrea and Djibouti after border disputes that have been going on for more than a decade¹⁰¹.

Eritrea has also sent about 400 soldiers to support the Saudi-led Arab coalition in Yemen, and the coalition operations are launched from the Emirati military base in the Eritrean port of Assab, along with logistical support provided to the coalition¹⁰². In the Gulf crisis, Eritrea sided with the Saudi-Emirati axis¹⁰³. In April 2019, Eritrea accused Turkey, Sudan and Qatar of supporting Eritrean Islamic opponents under the guise of the "Eritrean Ulam'a (scholars) League"¹⁰⁴.

Most recently, Saudi Arabia announced in January 2020 establishment of the "Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden", including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Jordan, where its headquarters will be in the Saudi capital Riyadh¹⁰⁵, which may affect the balance of power in the Horn of Africa, in favor of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

C- Somalia

With a sea border overlooking the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, Somalia has the longest coast on the African continent. Although Somalia announced severing its diplomatic ties with Iran in protest

¹⁰¹ Saudi Arabia hosts the "Horn of Africa" summit, Sputnik Arabic, 14 Sept. 2018, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁰² CAMILLE LONS, Saudi Arabia and the UAE Look to Africa, Carnegie, 23 Oct. 2018, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹⁰³ Eritrea: Severing ties with Qatar is a step to achieve peace in the region, Al-Wafd, 6 June 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁴ Turkey responds to Eritrea's statement accusing it, and renews its concern for the security of the Horn of Africa, Zajil Eritrean News Agency, 6 April 2019, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁵ Launch of the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, Asharq Al Awsat, 7 Jan. 2020, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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against the attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in January 2016¹⁰⁶, it remained neutral in the Gulf crisis¹⁰⁷.

In Somalia, Turkey inaugurated its largest military base abroad in September 2017, where it can accommodate about 1500 soldiers on an area of 4 km².¹⁰⁸ In response to the Turkish activity in Somalia, the UAE cemented its influence in the two provinces that announced separation from Somalia, i.e. Puntland and Somaliland, where Abu Dhabi established a military base in the city of Berbera, Somaliland, on the coast of the Gulf of Aden in February 2017¹⁰⁹. But later the Somali government rejected the agreement that the UAE signed with Somaliland, regarding establishment of a military base there¹¹⁰.

Also, there are proven gas reserves in Somaliland, which in turn granted licenses to international companies, including the UAE's Ras Al Khaimah Gas Company. At the same time, Turkey is seeking to activate a Turkish-Somali memorandum of understanding signed in 2016 on comprehensive cooperation in the field of energy and mining. President Erdogan announced in January 2020 that Somalia invited his country to carry out drilling and exploration operations in its territorial waters¹¹¹. Thus, while Turkey supports the central government in Somalia, the UAE supports the separatist province.

¹⁰⁶ Somalia received Saudi aid the day it cut ties with Iran: document, Reuters, 17 Jan. 2016, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁷ Somalia renews its neutral attitude towards the Gulf crisis, Al-Jazeera Net, 9/9/2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁸ Inauguration of largest Turkish military base abroad in this Arab country, Sputnik Arabic, 30 Sept. 2017, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹⁰⁹ Somaliland agrees to UAE military base in Berbera, BBC, 13 Feb. 2017, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁰ Mogadishu rejects an agreement between the UAE and Somaliland on the establishment of a military base, BBC, 14 Feb. 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹¹ Mohamed Abdel Karim, Theater of the South.. What is the role of the Horn of Africa gas in the Middle East regional interrelatedness? Early Warning Center, 7 June 2020, accessed 7 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

D- Sudan

Sudan is of great importance for both Turkey and the UAE in their strategy towards the Horn of Africa, as it has several ports on the Red Sea such as Port Sudan and Suakin, as well as for the presence of political Islam that is the basis of the Turkish-Emirati conflict in the region.

Former Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir pursued a flexible foreign policy in which he ranged between various axes. He moved from the Iranian axis to the axis of Saudi Arabia and its alliances, expelling the Iranian ambassador from Khartoum after the attack on Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran in January 2016¹¹². But al-Bashir maintained good relations with both Turkey and the UAE, though he was relatively more inclined towards Turkey.

One of the most important indicators of the rapprochement between Sudan and Turkey during the rule of Bashir, the signing of an agreement in 2017 to rebuild and restore the Suakin Island, on the western coast of the Red Sea in eastern Sudan¹¹³. With regard to Sudan's position on the Gulf crisis, Khartoum had committed to adopting a neutral policy towards it, and called for the need to resolve it¹¹⁴.

In the post-Al-Bashir phase, Saudi Arabia and the UAE emerged as the main backers of the new authority, especially through provision of grants and financial and economic aid¹¹⁵. Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan, who had been responsible for the Sudanese forces in Yemen under al-Bashir¹¹⁶, was appointed as the President of the Transitional Military Council in Sudan, which indicates that Sudan has become closer to the UAE alliances in the region. But at the same time, the new authority is seeking to maintain good relations with Turkey and Qatar. Therefore, the Suaken Island Agreement

¹¹² Sudan cuts diplomatic ties with Iran, Reuters, 4/1/2016, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹³ Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, Sevakin Adası'nda, Sabah, 25 Dec. 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁴ Khartoum is committed to neutrality and calls on the Gulf countries to overcome the crisis with Qatar, Sudan News, 6 June 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁵ Saudi Arabia, UAE to send \$3 billion in aid to Sudan, Reuters, 21 April 2019, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁶ General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan, al-Bashir's man in the Yemen war who has become head of the military council, Sputnik Arabic, 12 April 2019, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

with Turkey was not terminated, as was circulated after the fall of Bashir¹¹⁷, and Turkish investments and projects remained unchanged, with continued diplomatic contacts between Turkey and Sudan¹¹⁸. Qatar also provided economic support to Sudan under the new authority¹¹⁹. Most recently, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the commander of the Rapid Support Forces, also known as Hamidati, announced last May that Sudan has no dispute with Qatar. "We have no issues with Qatar or any other country," Hamidati said ¹²⁰. However, the fall of al-Bashir is considered a loss for Turkey and at the same time is in favor of UAE.

4) The Gulf Crisis Issue

The Gulf crisis started in June 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt severed their ties with Qatar¹²¹. As soon as the crisis erupted, talk started about the extent of its impact on the Turkish-Gulf partnership. Turkey has taken a step-by-step approach in dealing with this crisis. At first, Ankara adopted a neutral stance, when it called on the two parties to resort to dialogue to resolve the dispute between them¹²². Hoping for the success of Kuwaiti mediation efforts or its ability to undertake mediation efforts, Turkey did not line up behind Qatar at the beginning of the crisis. But as the crisis continued, the Turkish parliament in the same month passed a bill allowing the deployment of Turkish forces in Qatar¹²³. Hence, Turkey began to abandon its neutral policy and

¹¹⁷ Son dakika ... Dışişleri'nden Sevakın Adası açıklaması, hürriyet, 26 April 2019, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁸ Sudan: Al-Burhan and Turkish Ambassador discuss development of bilateral relations, AA, 26 Nov. 2019, accessed 5 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹¹⁹ Entry of a Qatari company to Sudan for investment in the energy and mineral sectors, AA, 15 Oct. 2019, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹²⁰ We have no dispute with Qatar, insists senior Sudan official, Middle East Monitor, 26 May 2020, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹²¹ Saudi, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt sever ties with Qatar over terrorism, Gulf News, 5 June 2017, accessed 5 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹²² International reactions to the decision to sever ties with Qatar, Al Arabiya Net, 5 June 2017, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹²³ Mehmetçik'e Katar görevi, Hürriyet, 8 June 2017, accessed 6 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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moved towards supporting Qatar, a position that President Erdogan stressed¹²⁴. Soon after that, Turkey established its first military base in Qatar, in the heart of the Gulf, only dozens of kilometers from its regional opponent (UAE).

Then, the removal of Turkish forces from Qatar has become one of the most important Saudi-Emirati conditions to resolve the Gulf crisis¹²⁵, which Doha flatly rejects. At the height of talk about an imminent settlement of the crisis in December 2019¹²⁶, Turkey opened a new military base in Qatar, where the Turkish presence in Qatar maintains a balance of power, being considered a deterrent in the event of occurrence of a similar crisis in the future.

One of the scenarios for resolving the Gulf crisis is the return of the Saudi-Qatari relations, not including other parties to the crisis, especially the UAE, which would then be the biggest loser, with likeliness of paving the way for another improvement in the Saudi-Turkish relations, and accordingly undermining the Saudi-Emirati alliance in the region. Another scenario expects a comprehensive solution to the crisis including all parties, including the UAE; and in this case, Turkey may be the loser, given the fact that the UAE is not likely to accept easing tensions with Turkey in the short and medium term; and in this case, Qatar may have to not engage too much in Ankara's regional alliances and policies, in exchange for resolving the crisis, which may negatively affect the Turkish-Qatari alliance.

5) The East-Med Issue

The geo-economic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region has increased with the discovery of Israel's first gas reserve there in 2009, then the Cyprus gas discoveries in 2011, and Egypt's

¹²⁴ Erdoğan: Kimse Kusura Bakmasın, Katar'a Destek Vermeye Devam Edeceğiz, haberler, 9 June 2017, accessed 6 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹²⁵ Erdoğan rejects Saudi demand to pull Turkish troops out of Qatar, The Guardian, 25 June 2017, accessed 6 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

¹²⁶ Türkiye'den Katar'da yeni askeri üs, 16 August 2017, accessed 6 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

discovery of the Zohr field in 2015¹²⁷. The energy reserves in the eastern Mediterranean amount to 1.7 billion barrels of oil and 122 trillion cubic feet of gas¹²⁸.

However, disputes over demarcation of maritime borders and economic waters in the eastern Mediterranean complicated things, in addition to the historical political differences over what is known as Greek Cyprus and Turkish Cyprus. Turkey is one of the eastern Mediterranean countries, where it has a long strip on its northern coast. Although the UAE is not among the East-Med riparian countries, yet it plays an active role in this file, driven by two things:

First, to use this issue in its confrontation with Turkey, given the intensified conflict between the two countries. Second, Turkey's close relations with Qatar and Iran, its geopolitical potentials, and the roles it can play in transferring energy reserves in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, may lead to marginalization of the UAE and Saudi Arabia in the global energy market¹²⁹.

With regard to disputes on maritime border demarcation:

This region has entered a more complicated stage amid escalation of tension between various parties, especially with the formation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum in 2018, which includes Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Israel, Jordan and Palestine¹³⁰, excluding Turkey and Libya. The UAE also got involved in this issue by rejecting the maritime border demarcation agreement between

¹²⁷ Eastern Mediterranean Gas ... The Full Story, Al-Hurra, 17 July 2019 accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹²⁸ 2 researchers: Ankara-Tripoli agreement seeks to build institutions of Libyan State, AA, 16 June 2020, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹²⁹ Necmettin Acar, BAE-Suudi ekseninin Doğu Akdeniz siyaseti gerilim üretiyor, Anadolu, 26 Dec. 2019, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³⁰ 2 researchers: Ankara-Tripoli agreement seeks to build institutions of Libyan State, Op. Cit.

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Turkey and Libya, and participating in an alliance including Cyprus, Greece, France and Egypt, which is also supported by Israel, against Turkey and Libya¹³¹ in the eastern Mediterranean¹³².

In the face of these moves, and in order to restore the geopolitical balance in the region, Turkey concluded an agreement to demarcate its maritime borders with the Libyan Government of National Accord in November 2019¹³³. The agreement drew a hypothetical maritime line between Dalaman, on the southwestern coast of Turkey, and Derna, on the northeastern coast of Libya, allowing the likely interception of the emerging maritime conglomerate between Cyprus, Egypt, Greece and Israel¹³⁴.

With regard to the Cyprus problem:

The Cyprus problem is an inter-ethnic political conflict, which manifested clearly when Turkey intervened militarily in 1974 in the northern part of Cyprus that includes the Turkish Cypriots, in order to support them against the Greek Cypriots in the south. This ended up with the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which gave the Turkish relations with Greek Cyprus and Greece a conflict form¹³⁵, where Turkey retains about 30,000 soldiers in the TRNC. The Turkish warships also escort the oil and gas exploration ships that are active in the territorial waters there¹³⁶.

The use of the Cyprus crisis in the face of Turkey is one of the usual tools used by its opponents, and the UAE is not an exception as it uses the Cyprus issue in the face of Turkey, Where Abu Dhabi is

¹³¹ Has Libya turned into an area of regional conflict between Turkey and Arab countries? BBC, 8 Dec. 2019, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³² Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece and UAE condemn Turkey's actions in eastern Mediterranean, The National, 12 May 2020, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³³ Libya hükümeti, Türkiye ile imzalanan anlaşmaların yürürlüğe girdiğini açıkladı, Euronews, 8 Dec. 2019, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³⁴ Ben Fishman, Turkey Pivots to Tripoli: Implications for Libya's Civil War and U.S. Policy, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 19 Dec. 2019, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³⁵ Cyprus problem: political conflict in ethnic clothing, Al-Jazeera Net, 12 Nov. 2016, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

¹³⁶ Turkish military bases abroad and their functions, BBC, 18 August 2019, accessed 6 June 2020), ([URL](#)).

always keen to show support for the Greek position regarding Cyprus in the face of Turkey which supports the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. In November 2019, the UAE hosted a strategic dialogue that brought the countries of Greece and south Cyprus together at the level of foreign ministers¹³⁷, for further escalation against Turkey.

Findings and Recommendations

1) Findings:

The study reached a number of findings as follows:

1- Turkey surpasses the UAE by a large difference from the perspective of the size and strength of the State. While Turkey is a central regional State, the UAE is only a tiny State. However, both parties have used their membership in international or regional organizations to effectively manage their conflict.

2- The orientations of Turkish and Emirati foreign policy are governed by a number of determinants, indicating the size of variation in the orientations of the two countries, which reflected on their regional alliances, where they both stand on opposite ends of all regional issues and crises.

3- Despite asymmetries between the two countries with respect to the size and power of the State, the regional roles played by Turkey and the UAE are almost similar, which has aroused a regional clash between the two parties in the entire Middle East region. The two parties relied on what is known as smart power, as a central tool in their foreign policy, combining soft and tough power at the same time within a coherent and integrated strategy.

4- The paper suggests that the tension between the two states' relations is likely to continue in the foreseeable and medium terms, and may be the long term as well, as the differences between them are not just a transient crisis, but rather a strategic rivalry, and therefore, the paper favors likeliness of a continued regional struggle between them as well.

¹³⁷ Tripartite meeting between the Emirates, Cyprus and Greece to discuss ways to enhance mutual cooperation, Asharq Al Awsat, 17 Nov. 2019 accessed 6 June 2020, ([URL](#)).

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In this regard, it is noteworthy that the UAE adopts the strictest position in resolving the Gulf crisis, where the latest endeavors for finding a solution to the crisis were carried out only between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The UAE also adopts a hardline approach in confrontation with political Islam movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. While Saudi Arabia has allied with the Yemeni Grouping for Reform Party, Known as Islah Party, which is counted on the Muslim Brotherhood, in the face of the Houthis, the UAE has supported the forces of the Southern Transitional Council in confronting the Islah Party forces despite its alliance with Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Therefore, the prospects of improvement of Turkish-Saudi relations in the future are much greater than those for improvement of Turkish-Emirati relations. The UAE role is considered one of the drivers of tension in Turkish-Saudi relations, in light of the relationship between Mohammed bin Zayed and Mohammed bin Salman. Therefore, it is noted that the tension in Turkish-Saudi relations has escalated since 2017 with the rise of Mohammed bin Salman's role in KSA governance.

2) Recommendations

A- Recommendations for both parties:

Both parties must realize that the intense struggle between regional axes exhausts everyone, while Israel waits and monitors from afar, and tries to exploit such conflicts and take advantage of them, to eventually become the dominant and strongest power in the region. Therefore, all powers must reach a formula for securing collective regional security, otherwise, it will only be in the interest of Israel.

B- Recommendations to Turkey:

Turkey should work to address its weaknesses, whether they are internal structural, or concerning its roles and alliances, including, for example, its economy that is going through a difficult period due to structural and political reasons, especially the declining exchange rate of lira, the inflation and unemployment rates, and the average per capita GDP. For Turkey to guarantee itself a strong regional role, it must ensure availability of financial liquidity and a strong economy that covers the expenses of such role. Otherwise, the problems that the Turkish economy is currently experiencing may hinder implementation of Ankara's regional agenda in the long run, or it may reflect negatively on the Turkish interior.

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Ankara should also exploit the structural differences among the UAE and its allies, whether with Saudi Arabia in Yemen or with Egypt in Sudan and Libya. Turkey can also focus on the Arab Maghreb region, considering that Arab Maghreb countries almost act neutrally towards this conflict, even if they appear closer to Turkey than the UAE; and therefore seeking to win the Arab Maghreb countries within Turkey's alliances would alter the balance of power in favor of Ankara in the Arab Mashreq.

If there is a serious American intention to stand in the way of Russian intervention in Libya, which might push towards an American-Turkish alliance in this file, then the US-Turkish understandings should include the Syria file as well, where any cooperation between the two parties in Libya is likely to be negatively reflected on the Turkish-Russian understandings in Syria. Accordingly, Turkey should ensure NATO support in Idlib, which would play as a deterrent for any Russian escalation there. Finally, Turkey should maintain good relations with Iran as a regional power, despite their differences, to control geopolitical balances in the region and boost Turkish regional alliances.

C- Recommendations to UAE:

The UAE also suffers from many weaknesses. Despite its strong economy and accordingly its ability to cover the expenses of its regional activities, but from the perspective of the state's strength, the UAE is a tiny country with respect to its potentials; and therefore there is an imbalance between the size and strength of the State on the one hand and its regional role on the other, where the latter overwhelms the former negatively. Abu Dhabi also suffers from disputes with its Saudi ally in Yemen: while Saudi Arabia focuses on supporting the legitimate government led by President Abdrabbu Mansur Hadi, the UAE supports the separatist Southern Transitional Council, which is in a military confrontation with the legitimate government backed by Saudi Arabia.

Also, there are undeclared Egyptian-Emirati differences in Sudan and Libya. As for Sudan, the UAE supports the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hamidati, for its desire to use these militias as a military tool in its regional roles. Meanwhile, Egypt supports the regular military institution, given its desire to maintain stability on its southern borders. As for Libya, Egypt is more likely to deal with Aqilah Saleh than to deal with Haftar, as an ally; and Cairo was not enthusiastic about the attack that Haftar launched on Tripoli. On the other hand, the UAE focuses its support on Haftar only, and was one of the main supporters of the latter's attack on Tripoli.

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Hence, the UAE must realize that despite its importance, the strong economy is not everything, and that it is a small country in view of its potentials. Therefore, achievement of balance between its regional roles and its power will be in favor of the roles it plays abroad and the future of the country at home, in light of its differences with Saudi Arabia in Yemen and with Egypt in Sudan and Libya, in addition to its strained relations with some Arab Maghreb countries such as Tunisia and Morocco.

