

# Turkey and Qatar in the Tangled Geopolitics of the Middle East



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*To my late father, Şefik 'Baytar' Başkan*



## PREFACE

This book examines the foreign policies of Turkey and Qatar in the post-9/11 period. More specifically, it examines how Turkey and Qatar have swum through the tidal waves unleashed successively by the US invasion of Iraq, the intensification of the geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the promises and fallouts of the Arab Spring. The book contextualizes the experiences, successes, and failures of Turkey and Qatar in international politics within a broader discussion of the geopolitics of the region, as the latter has been shaped by the intensifying rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the same period. With the onset of the Arab Spring, this rivalry exploded into bloody conflicts that are still raging in Syria and Yemen.

I wished to write this book in order to fill a gap. That gap is ever growing, as scholarly treatments of Turkey's and Qatar's foreign policies before and after the Arab Spring by and large ignore one another. The few attempts addressing Turkey–Qatar relations are either Turkey- or Qatar-centric, and rarely contextualize the relationships between the two countries within the broader geopolitics of the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> This is what I aim to do in this book.

The challenge I have faced in writing the book is that the period under consideration has not yet passed into history. There are many unknowns and few archival sources. What follows is therefore mostly a structural analysis. This means the following. I assume that states/regimes pursue their self-interests, as they perceive them, at all times. In other words, they seek to maximize their security and power; yet, they do so in a fluid and often rapidly changing regional and international environment. In

order to explain state/regime behavior—or more specifically the behavior of Turkey and Qatar—one must thus look at the changing regional and international environment within which this behavior takes place.

Fortunately, Turkey's foreign policy makers speak often, and do so publicly. I have benefited from this and have incorporated and analyzed their perspectives in this book as much as possible. Unfortunately, however, as is typical of all Arab Gulf rulers,<sup>2</sup> Qatar's foreign policy makers do not often speak publicly; officials, be they in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in other ministries, avoid discussing their country's foreign policy choices, and if they do, they do so very defensively. As a result, this book necessarily discusses Turkish foreign policy in greater length and draws on a richer set of available material.

I am indebted to many friends and colleagues, especially from Turkey, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia, with whom I have conversed and exchanged views regarding regional and international developments. Without their input, I would not see the full picture in the way that I demonstrate in this book. I cannot name all of these people, they are simply too many, but I am most grateful to, in alphabetical order, Abdullah al Shammary, Afyare Elmi, Amira Sonbol, Ebtessam al Katbi, Emre İşeri, Fatih Okumuş, Gökhan Bacık, Husam Muhammed, Ibrahim Sharqieh, Mark Farha, Mazhar Al Zoby, Muhammed al Zayani, and Özgür Pala. I thank them all. I also thank Muhittin Ataman, editor of *Insight Turkey*, and Çınar Özen, editor of *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, for giving me permission to use some of the materials I previously published in their journals: "Turkey-GCC Relations: Is there a future?" and "Ankara Torn Apart: Arab Spring Turns into Turkey's Autumn," respectively.

I must also thank the anonymous reviewer from Palgrave Macmillan and of course Sara Doskow, my editor at Palgrave Macmillan, who not only put great trust in this project but also made excellent suggestions about the organization of the material.

Finally, I thank Feyza, herself an ardent follower of Gulf politics, for all the friendship, companionship, love, and of course color and joy, that she has brought to my life.

While writing this book, I lost my father, Şefik, from whom I have taken the best moral lessons of my life. I will always be grateful. I dedicate this book to his memory.

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## NOTES

1. To my knowledge, the most detailed treatment of Turkey–Qatar relations is an unpublished master’s thesis submitted by Özgür Pala to Qatar University’s Gulf Studies Program. I was an external reader of Özgür’s thesis.
2. The sea that separates the Arabian Peninsula and Iran is alternatively called the Persian Gulf or the Arabian Gulf or the Basra Gulf. I simply call it the Gulf. The Arab Gulf states or the Gulf states refer to six Arab states located on the Arabian Peninsula, which are Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE. The Arab Gulf rulers or the Gulf rulers refer to the rulers of these six states.



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