

**T.C
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE**

**THE MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL SYSTEM AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EGYPTIAN-TURKISH
RELATIONS
(2013-2021)**

MASTER'S THESIS

Tarek DEYAB

Department: Middle Eastern Studies

Thesis Advisor: Doç. Dr. Ismail Numan TELCI

JANUARY – 2023

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THESIS APPROVAL

This work headed “The Middle East Regional System and its Implications for the Egyptian-Turkish Relations 2013-2021” which has been prepared by Tarek Deyab, is approved as a M.A thesis by our jury in majority vote.

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Approval

I approve that the signatures above belong to the aforementioned teaching fellows.

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Prof. Dr. Tuncay KARDAŞ
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this thesis complies with scientific ethics. The utilization of others' work in form of references has been undertaken only in compliance with scientific standards. This thesis is my original work, and any part of this thesis has never been presented as another thesis in this university or any other university.

Tarek DEYAB

24/1/2023

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<p>The thesis examines the extent to which the Middle East regional system (MERS) contributed to influencing the path of Egyptian-Turkish relations during the period from 2013 to 2021, based on systems approach in international relations. The thesis starts with an introduction includes the methodology and the nature of the Middle East as a regional system, in addition to the development of the bilateral relations between the two countries during 2013 and 2021, while the four main chapters address how MERS contributed to influencing these relations, depending on the four components of regional system, the structure, actors, institutions, and interactions. The thesis concludes that while the internal factor represented in the overthrow of Morsi's rule in Egypt was the reason of the outbreak of the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations in July 2013, the external factor, represented in MERS has contributed to, first, prolonging and deepening this tension during the period from 2013 to 2020, second, to calming this tension during 2021, and third to preventing the restoration of their diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level until the end of 2021. Finally, due to the two countries' position in the structure of the MERS as competitor regional powers, the regional factor pushes towards straining their relations. In this context, the researcher suggests some recommendations for the two countries to overcome the tension stemming from the regional environment, which can lead to maximizing the cooperation between them at the bilateral and regional levels.</p>	
Keywords: Middle East, Egypt, Turkey, Regional System, Relations	

Tezin Başlığı: Ortadoğu Bölgesel Sistemi ve 2013-2021 Arasında Mısır-Türk İlişkilerine Etkileri

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Anabilim Dalı: Ortadoğu Çalışmaları

Bu tez ile uluslararası ilişkilerdeki sistemler yaklaşıma da dayalı olarak Ortadoğu bölgesel sisteminin, 2013'ten 2021'e kadar olan dönemde Mısır-Türkiye ilişkilerinin gidişatını etkilemeye ne ölçüde katkıda bulunduğu incelenmektedir. Tez, iki ülke arasında 2013-2021 arasındaki ikili ilişkilerin gelişimine ek olarak, metodolojiyi ve bölgesel bir sistem olarak OrtaDoğu'yu içeren bir giriş ile başlamaktadır. Dört ana bölüm ise, bölgesel sistemin dört bileşenine (yapı, aktörler, kurumlar ve etkileşimler) bağlı olarak Ortadoğu Bölgesel Sistemin (MERS) bu ikili ilişkileri etkilemeye nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu incelemektedir. Temmuz 2013'te Türk ve Mısır ilişkilerindeki kopuşun nedeni olarak iç faktör rol oynarken, bu tez, Ortadoğu bölgesel sisteminde temsil edilen dış faktörün ilk olarak bu gerilimin 2013-2020 arasında uzaması ve derinleşmesine, ikinci olarak bu gerilimin 2021'de dinmesine, üçüncü olarak ise 2021 sonuna kadar diplomatik ilişkileri büyükelçi seviyesine dönüşünü engellemeye katkı sağladığı sonucuna ulaşır. Son olarak, iki ülkenin bölgesel sistemdeki bölgesel güçler olarak konumu nedeniyle, bölgesel faktör genellikle ilişkilerini gerginleştirmeye zorlar; Bu bağlamda araştırmacı, iki ülkenin bölgesel iklimden kaynaklanan gerilimi nasıl aşabilecekleri konusunda önerilerde bulunmaktadır. Bu da iki ülkenin bölgesel ve ikili ilişkiler çerçevesinde işbirliğini büyütmesi çerçevesinde gerçekleşecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ortadoğu, Bölgesel Sistemi, Mısır, Türkiye, İlişkiler

CONTENT

ABSTRACT	i
ÖZET	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTIONS	1
CHAPTER I: THE IMPACT OF MERS' STRUCTURE ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS	24
1.1. The Distribution of Capabilities and Resources (Power)	24
1.1.1. The Concept of Regional Power	24
1.1.2. The Regional Powers in the Middle East	27
1.1.3. Conclusion.....	33
1.2. The Distribution of Orientations and Alliances	34
1.2.1. The Orientations	35
1.2.2. The Regional Roles	36
1.2.3. The Regional Alliances	40
1.2.4. Conclusion.....	43
CHAPTER II: THE IMPACT OF ACTORS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS	44
2.1. The United Arab Emirates.....	44
2.1.1. The Alliance Between the UAE and Egypt	45
2.1.2. The Regional Conflict Between the UAE and Turkey	50
2.1.3. Conclusion.....	54
2.2. Qatar	55
2.2.1. The Alliance Between Qatar and Turkey	57
2.2.2. The Tension in Qatari-Egyptian Relations	61
2.2.3. Conclusion.....	65
CHAPTER III: IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS	66
3.1. The League of Arab States (LAS).....	66
3.1.1. LAS: Structure and Effectiveness	66
3.1.2. Egypt and LAS	70
3.1.3. Conclusion.....	75

3.2. The 2014 Turkish- Qatari Military Cooperation Agreement	76
3.2.1. Content of the Agreement and its Motives	76
3.2.2. The Gulf Crisis (June 2017)	78
3.2.3. Conclusion.....	83
CHAPTER IV: IMPACT OF INTERACTIONS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS	85
4.1. The Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean.....	85
4.1.1. An Overview of the Eastern Mediterranean	85
4.1.2. Egypt's Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean	87
4.1.3. Turkey's Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean	92
4.1.4. Conclusion.....	96
4.2. The Libyan Crisis	97
4.2.1. An Overview on the Libyan Crisis	97
4.2.2. The Motives of Egypt and Turkey Towards the Crisis	98
4.2.3. Policies of Egypt and Turkey Towards the Crisis.....	101
4.2.4. Conclusion.....	107
CONCLUSION.....	109
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	145

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The Volume of Trade Between Egypt and Turkey 2013-2021.....	23
Table 2: The ranking of state power in the Middle East	28
Table 3: The distribution of regional roles in the Middle East.....	36
Table 4: The Nature of Relations Between Regional Powers	40

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Middle East Regional System (MERS) (Designed by the Researcher) ..	12
Figure 2: The Core and Periphery States in MERS After 2011 (Designed by the Researcher)	15
Figure 3: Potential Pipeline Gas to European Market	87
Figure 4: Egypt-Greece EZZ Partial Delimitation Agreement	91
Figure 5: Turkey-Libya EZZ Delimitation Agreement	94
Figure 6: The Area of Control Between April 2020 and June 2020.....	104

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AKP** : Justice and Development Party
ARS : Arab Regional System
EMGF : Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum
EZZ : Exclusive Economic Zone
GCC : Gulf Cooperation Council
GNA : Government of National Accord
GNC : General National Congress
HOR : House of Representatives
LAS : League of Arab States
MB : Muslim Brotherhood
MERS : Middle East regional system
OIC : Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PKK : Kurdistan Workers' Party
SSC : Supreme Strategic Committee
TRNC : Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
YPG : Kurdish People's Defense Units

INTRODUCTIONS

The Egyptian Turkish relationships which started at the level of charge d'affaires in 1925, and raised to the ambassadorial level in 1948, have historically oscillated between friendly and strained periods (Taha, 2012, p. 6). The relations were extremely strained in the 1950s and 1960s during the era of Nasser in Egypt and Adnan Menderes in Turkey due to the active foreign policy of both leaders in the Middle East. The collision clearly began with Britain's formation of Baghdad Pact in 1955, including Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan. Nasser's refusal to join this alliance led to a clash with Menderes on the one hand, and the failure of the Pact on the other (Maziad, 2021, p. 2). The general context of the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations in this period was the Cold War during which the two countries lined up in two opposing blocs: Turkey joined the U.S.-led Western Bloc whereas Egypt sided with the Soviet-led Eastern Bloc. Moreover, Turkey's early recognition of Israel and their resulting strong relationship, at a time when Israel was the main strategic enemy for the Arabs led by Nasser, was an additional reason for more tension between the two countries.

During Sadat's era, the decrease of tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations was driven by three factors. First, Egypt's moving to the Western bloc, abandoning its strategic alliance with the Soviet Union. Second, the normalization of Egyptian-Israeli relations by the signing of the 1979 peace treaty (Elhamy, 2017, p. 30). Third, the decline of the two countries' regional role, preoccupied by their internal situation, ceasing the regional clash between them.

The relations were reinforced under Mubarak in 1990s, with Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's establishment of the Eight countries Group (G8) in 1997, in which Egypt was one. (Robins, 1997, p. 93). Then, the relation moved from halting the tensions towards maximizing the economic cooperation due to the rise of Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in Turkey in 2002. AKP directed its foreign policy towards the Middle East, and in the light of the policy of "Zero Problems", it built strong relations with Arab countries, especially at the economic level. This policy was reflected positively on its relations with Egypt, which led to the signing of a free trade agreement between the two countries in 2005, entered into force in March 2007,

contributing to increasing the volume of trade between them (Rep. of Turkey - Ministry of Trade).

The eruption of Arab spring in 2011, ousting Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, pushed Turkey for more active approach in the region by presenting itself to the region countries as a model to emulate. This model represented a secular, democratic, Muslim country, committed to Western standards, and applies the free-market policies (Tziarras, 2013, p. 5). The improvement in Turkish-Egyptian relations reached its peak with electing the Muslim Brotherhood (MB)-affiliated former President Mohammed Morsi as a president of Egypt in June 2012. During this period, the two countries have started establishing a strategic alliance, yet the overthrow of Morsi in July 2013 prevented that.

Since then, the policy of "Zero Problems" was no longer appropriate in an environment dominated by conflict between its regional actors, while the Middle East regional system (MERS) was being reshaping, starting from outbreak of the Arab Spring, at the level of structure, interactions, and actors. While the efforts of reshaping MERS were going since 2011, in favor of the powers that supported the political change (i.e., Turkey and Qatar), the overthrow of their ally Morsi in 2013 shifted the balance of power in favor of the status quo power (i.e., The UAE and Saudi Arabia) which took the lead, while Turkey became in a reaction position. In this context, the thesis studies how MERS and the shifts it witnessed affected the Egyptian-Turkish relations from 2013 to 2021.

Significance and Objectives

Egypt and Turkey possess a great geo-strategic importance, whether in terms of their strategic location or their regional weight. The Middle East is also considered one of the most important geographical regions in the world due to its richness in oil and gas and having the most important waterways in the world. Thus, it is important to study the relations between two countries possess this significance, in a more significant geographical framework and in a period of strategic shifts. In this context, the researcher suggests some recommendations on how to push the relations between Egypt and Turkey towards more positive and cooperative paths that may benefit the decision makers in both countries.

The thesis also examines whether the Middle East is a regional system or not, the limits of the influence of regional systems in international relations, and the nature of the relations between regional powers besides the limits of cooperation and conflict between these powers.

The thesis's main objective is to reveal the role of the regional factor in influencing Egyptian-Turkish relations. Therefore, it studies whether MERS is a trigger for tension or cooperation between the two countries and their limits.

The Problem and Hypotheses

The main problem is that if the two countries overcome the crisis of their bilateral relations resulted from the overthrow of Morsi, does this lead to the inevitability of improving their relations, or does the regional factor have an influential role in this regard? Accordingly, the main question is: How far did MERS along its various components contribute to affecting the Egyptian-Turkish relations during the period from 2013 to 2021? In this context, there are several sub-questions:

- What is the impact of MERS structure on Egyptian-Turkish relations?
- What is the impact of the actors in MERS on Egyptian-Turkish relations?
- What is the impact of the institutions in MERS on Egyptian-Turkish relations?
- What is the impact of the interactions in MERS on Egyptian-Turkish relations?

The researcher adopts the hypothesis that while the internal factor represented in the overthrow of Morsi's rule in Egypt was the reason of the outbreak of the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations in July 2013, the external factor, represented by MERS, contributed to prolonging and deepening this tension during the period from 2013 to 2020, then it also contributed to easing of this tension during 2021.

The Scope and Delimitations

First, the thesis's thematic frame includes the political, economic, security and military aspects. Second, the timeframe begins from July 2013 with the overthrow of Morsi that led to radical shift in the Egyptian-Turkish relations from a likely strategic alliance to a long-term crisis, leaving marks not only on the two countries but also on the entire Middle east region. The timeframe extends until the end of 2021.

Third, the geographic frame represented in the Greater Middle East, which includes: 21 Arab countries - after excluding Comoros¹-, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This geographic frame is the most appropriate for analyzing Egyptian-Turkish relations, as the Greater Middle East term is the most comprehensive term of this region that brings the two countries together within one geographical frame and contains all the states and subregions to which their regional influence extended and in which their strained relations reflected.

The Main Concepts

There are three main concepts in this thesis: "Middle East", "Regional System", and "International Relations". The first and second concepts will be discussed in the theoretical framework.

As for International relations term, it was defined in 1979 by Trevor Taylor as “a discipline, which tries to explain political activities across state boundaries.” In 1988, Symon Brown coined it as “the investigating & study of patterns of action and reactions among sovereign states as represented by their governing entities.” In 1999, Ola Joseph considered that “International relations are the study of all forms of interactions that exist between members of separate entities or nations within the international system.” (kumar, 2016, p. 1_2).

The thesis will depend on the concept that defines international relations as patterns of interaction, whether conflict or cooperation, between various state or non-state actors across many levels of interaction, whether regional or international; formal or informal; bilateral or multilateral; political, economic, military or social (Abdel Shafi, 2016). In studying Egyptian-Turkish relations, the thesis includes the following interactions: conflictual and cooperative; bilateral and multilateral; and political, diplomatic, economic, and military. It will be limited to states as actors, to the regional level of interactions, and to the official level by governments.

¹ The exclusion of Comoros from the geographic framework of the thesis is based on its being far from the region in terms of the interactions and geography.

Literature Review

Many academic works tangled the subject of this thesis. However, the thesis provided an added contribution to the literature, as this section shows.

The first work is titled “Egyptian-Turkish Political Relations under Ataturk”. It is a historical study limited to the political aspects and dealt with Egypt’s position on Turkish national struggle in this period, as well as the repercussions of Ataturk’s rise on the situation in Egypt, and finally the relations that brought together Ataturk and King Farouk. The thesis concluded that the relations between Turkey and Egypt during Ataturk's period has not developed well, given that the Republic and Monarchy have been against each other most of the time (Pürmüşlü , 2015).

The second one is “The economic dimension in Turkish-Egyptian Relations (2002-2014)”. It addressed the relations from an economic perspective, focusing on the high volume of trade exchanges and investments between the two countries, especially on the sectors of banking, energy, tourism, industry, agriculture, and construction. The thesis concluded that after signing a free trade agreement between the two countries, the number of Turkish investors in Egypt increased, especially with cheap labor force and investment incentives in Egypt (Kaya, 2019).

The third is “The identity in international relations: Turkey-Egypt relations during Mursi’s period”. It relied on the social constructivist approach to understand the perceptions and policies of the two countries towards each other. The thesis concluded that the relations between Egypt and Turkey during Morsi's period were based on the harmony of their identities. Therefore, the identity and social values shaped their policy, which led to a better relationship between the two countries than the previous periods (Çelikcan, 2020)

The fourth is titled “Turkey-Egypt relations: the changing Dynamics after the Arab spring”. It dealt with the topic based on domestic and regional analytical level. It examined Turkey's position on the Arab Spring, in addition to the reflection of MB's arrival to power on Egyptian-Turkish relations, then the impact of its departure on these relations. It also investigated regional interactions such as the Libyan and Eastern Mediterranean crises. The thesis concluded that Biden arriving to the White House and

the Gulf states reforming their relations with Turkey could improve Egyptian-Turkish relations (Açıkdeniz, 2021).

The fifth thesis about the subject is “The Justice and development party's arrival to power in Turkey and their impact on the Egyptian Turkish relations from 2002 to 2013”. It investigated the development of the political, economic, security and cultural relations between the two countries during AKP 's rule. The thesis concluded that Egypt and Turkey need each other; Turkey needs Egypt to restore its position in the Arab region and as a trade gateway to Africa whereas Egypt needs Turkey to reach Balkans, Central Asia, and Europe (Abudia, 2016).

The sixth is titled “The development of Egyptian-Turkish relations in light of the Egyptian variables (2011-2015)”, which depended on the systems and role approaches to analyze the impact of internal, regional, and international variables on Egyptian-Turkish relations. The researcher traced the development of the relations since the era of Mubarak to Sisi, referring to the determinants that affected the relations in these different periods. The thesis recommended the need to stay away from hegemony efforts, focus on common interests, and try to establish a regional system on the model of the European Union (Abu Nahl, 2015).

The last thesis is “The impact of regional variables on Egyptian-Turkish relations (2011- 2017)”. It addressed the impact of regional variables such as the Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis on Egyptian-Turkish relations, relying on both systems and role approaches. However, it was not limited to the regional variables but also dealt with the local and international variables. The thesis concluded that the regional environment played a prominent role in influencing the foreign policies of Egypt and Turkey and consequently their inter-relations (Al-Sarhan, 2019)

In light of the previous literature, the new of this thesis is expanding the timeframe to include the relation until the end of 2021, thus covering the period which witnessed an easing of the tension between the two countries in 2021. Also, its methodology, systems approach, which will be applied in different way, focusing just on the regional variable in a systemic framework (MERS) as an independent variable, with excluding the domestic and international variables, to measure the accuracy of contribution of the regional factor in influencing Egyptian-Turkish relations.

Theoretical Framework

This Framework includes the discussion of systems approach in international relations on which the thesis will depend, and the nature of the Middle East as a regional system.

Methodology

The thesis depends on Systems Approach in international relations. The common definition of a *system* is as a set of units that interact with each other in a typical and regular manner, so, any changes in one part of the system lead to a change in the rest. At the same time, it has boundaries that distinguish it from the external environment and other systems (Cashman, 1996, p. 107). According to Kenneth Waltz, the system consists mainly of a set of interacting units and a structure which distinguishes these units (Waltz, 1979, p. 40).

The systems approach was applied, for the first time, in biology in 1920s. Thereafter, sociologists Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons applied this approach to develop the concept of *social system*. Based on the contributions of sociology, political scientists, such as David Easton, Gabriel Almond, Morton Kaplan, managed to develop and use this approach in political sciences in 1950s (Sen, p. 1). The main hypothesis of this approach is that the interactions that occur in the political, regional or international, system, can be analyzed through these systems and its different components.

A) Political System

David Easton's model of political system is the most prominent contribution to this approach. Easton assumed that the interactions in the political life can be framed in a systemic frame called "political system", which he considered a branch of the social system and defined as "authoritative allocation of values." (Weltman, 1972, p. 306). According to Easton, the political system consists of "inputs" represented in demands and support, where pressures on the system increase if demands exceeds support, prompting authorities to respond by formal decisions; "outputs", and then "feedback", which shows the extent of society's satisfaction with the decisions, to turn into new inputs (Kriek, 1995, p. 33). Easton's model of political systems has not been appropriate to analyze the international system or understand the international relations. Hence, several models that apply systems approach in the international relations have

emerged, including two levels: international systems and international subsystems (regional systems).

B) International System

By dint of behaviorists, the analyses of international system have emerged in 1960s as a response to the traditional approaches that assumed that the state is the main determinant of relations between states (Yüce & Karaca, 2017, p. 161_162). Kenneth Waltz called these traditional approaches as “reductionist theories” because they depend, in explaining the international relations, on factors within the unit (state), such as decision-making, personality traits of leaders and other local variables, versus “systemic theories” which focus on the structure of international system in the explanation (Wendt, 1999, p. 11_12). These theories assume that the arrangement of actors and their position within the structure of international system according to the power criterion is the decisive variable in explaining the international relations (Goodman, 1965, p. 257).

The international system is a set of actors (units), organized within a certain arrangement according to the distribution of power (structure), involved in regular patterns of interaction (processes) and distinguished from outside by clear boundaries (environment) (Yehuda & Brecher, 1985, p. 17_18). Among the most important theoretical models of international systems are Kaplan and Waltz's models.

Kaplan suggested six different models of international systems: balance of power, loose bipolar, tight bipolar, universal international system, hierarchical international system, and unit veto system (Boulding, 1958, p. 329_330). On the other hand, Waltz presented a model of an anarchy international system in which there is no supreme central authority to impose rules on states. In other words, there is no global government. Therefore, states act individually based on self-help to survive. Waltz distinguished between two types of systems: bipolar which is more stable, and multipolar in which suspicions and threats increase among the actors (Pashakhanlou, 2014, p. 299). However, this thesis depends on the regional system of Middle East which requires a reference to the approach of international subsystems (regional systems).

C) International Subsystems (Regional Systems)

According to Buzan Barry and Richard Little, international subsystems “are groups of units within an international system that can be distinguished from the whole system by the particular nature or intensity of their interactions/ interdependence with each other. Subsystems may be either territorially coherent, in which they are regional (ASEAN, the OAU), or not (OECD, OPEC), in which they are not regions, but simply subsystems.” (Özdemir, 2015, p. 15).

The approach of international subsystems assumes that in international relations there is not only an international system, but also a group of sub-systems, and that the relation between the two kinds of systems is dependency, as the changes that occur in the international system are reflected on subsystems (Binder, 1958, p. 409_410). It also assumes that to understand the international system, the elements of this system, including subsystems, their inter-interactions, and their internal differentiation must be addressed (Özdemir, 2015, p. 16). This differentiation raises the issue of the classification of regional systems.

There are two criteria of this classification. First, according to its emergence, there are systems that arise as a result of common interactions between their members in a regular and intense manner, making any change in one part of the system lead to a change in the rest (Middle East). On the other hand, there are systems that are intentionally formed by a group of states, in which member states give up part of their sovereignty in favor of one authority and identity (EU). Second criterion, according to its nature, there are institutional regional systems that depend in performing their functions on bureaucratic structures and including the system owning a regional organization (EU), functional regional systems that its main objective is performing a specific function or managing a common issue (OPEC), and finally national regional systems which include one national loyalty that brings together member states (Arab Regional System) (Idris, 2001, p. 26_30).

The first academic work that examined regional systems was a 1958 study titled “The Middle East as a Subordinate International System” by Leonard Binder (Binder, 1958). Later, in early 1970s, new theoretical efforts emerged. The most prominent of which

was Louis Cantoria and Steven Spiegel's 1970 study "The international politics of regions". They concluded that this approach matters due to (Idris, 2001, p. 20_21):

- Its contribution in more specialization of analyzing the international relations, as it is an intermediate analytical level between state and international system.
- The attention to the regional singularity of different regions and their interactions.
- The determination of the common features of same region's states and the characteristics of different regions.
- Providing a horizontal analysis comparatively between different regions, and a vertical analysis through studying one region across different periods.
- Understanding the relation between the international system and subsystems, in addition to the extent of major powers' penetration into the regions.

For the emergence of regional systems, there are some conditions(Hilal & Matar , 2001, p. 16_17):

- The system is related to a specific geographic region.
- It includes at least three countries.
- There is no superpower among the member states, as in this case it turns into an international system. These powers affect the interactions of regional systems, but they do not become members.
- System's members intensely and regularly involve in the political, economic, and social interactions of the system.
- These interactions have relatively their own dynamics independently of the international system; however, this does not mean or require a full independence.

Within the framework of any regional system, there are two main levels of actors, according to the criterion of the involvement in interactions: core states and periphery states. The core states represent the center of the interactions in the system or engage heavily in these interactions. Also, their influence extends to most parts of the system and determine the balance of powers in it. On contrast, the periphery states are members in the system, however, their interactions are limited compared to core states, due to

geographic or political considerations. It is worth noting that there is a changing dynamic relationship between these two levels, as some core states may become periphery states and vice versa (Hilal & Matar , 2001, p. 19_20). Thus, the crucial factor that determine these levels is the extent to which actors contribute to the regional interactions. Indeed, the geographical factor is not a sufficient reason in itself unless it is a reason for the decline in state's involvement in the interactions. Thus, a country located geographically at the far fringes of a certain region can be among core states.

The Middle East as a Regional System

The independent variable in this thesis is the MERS, therefore, there is a need for showing that the Middle East is a regional system.

A) The Middle East term

The Middle East term was coined in 1902 by the United States naval officer Alfred Mahan, to refer to the region between the Mediterranean Sea from the west and India from the east (Afsaruddin, 2006, p. 1). In fact, this region does not have certain objective characteristics with respect to its geographical boundaries, so, there is not a single geographic criterion in the determination of these boundaries, but rather, several criteria according to the cultural, political, strategic, and economic frameworks within which the term is coined (Davutoğu, 2001, p. 87). In other words, it does not express a specific fixed region, unlike Balkans or Caucasus , thus, the research centers rarely agree on the actors which constitute the Middle East.

For instance, the “Middle East Institute” in Washington set an identical definition to the Islamic world, from Morocco to Indonesia and from Sudan to Uzbekistan. While the definition of “Royal British Institute of International affairs” included Iran, Turkey, the Arabian Peninsula, the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Sudan, and Cyprus. whereas the “Israeli association for Oriental Studies” defines it to combine the region that extends from Turkey in the north to Ethiopia in the south, and from Iran in the east to Cyprus and Libya in the west (Hilal & Matar , 2001, p. 23_24).

The dynamic nature of the Middle East concept is a result of the overlapping between geographical factors and political motives during defining the term. So, several different definitions of this region have emerged in order to serve the geopolitical objectives of some actors. For example, Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres presented the term of

"New Middle East" in 1993, aiming to lay out a vision for the future of the region, based on economic cooperation, peace and democracy between the Arab states and Israel (Ben-Porat, 2005, p. 39). Presenting this term coincided with the signing of the "Oslo Accords", therefore, Breeze was looking forward to paving the way for the implementation of the accords, by softly integrating Israel within the Arab region.

Additionally, during the G-8 summit meeting in June 2004, Bush administration launched "Greater Middle East" initiative, to include the Arab states, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, aiming to help reform this region politically and economically (Carothers & Ottaway , 2004). This initiative came after the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent American War on Terror in the Middle East. Thus, the U.S. through this initiative sought to reshape the region geopolitically to ensure the success of this war and its hegemony over the international system.

Based on the above, there is no specific and decisive definition for the Middle East. This gave researchers a flexibility to set or adopt partially different concepts. Therefore, the researcher will rely on the "Greater Middle East" term.



Figure 1: The Middle East Regional System (MERS) (Designed by the Researcher)

The Middle East, according to this concept, meets the conditions of regional systems:

- It is a coherent specific geographic region extending from Turkey in the north to Somalia in the south, and from Pakistan in the east to Morocco in the west. Thus, it includes several subregions which are geographically contiguous and

connected whether by land or sea, and geopolitically coherent as any change in one of these subregions affects the other regions. These subregions include: North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), Arab Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, and Tunisia), Eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Israel, and Turkey), Levant or Sham (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine), Gulf region (The UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran), Central Asia (Afghanistan, and Pakistan), Horn of Africa (Djibouti and Somalia), and Arab region, which is the largest subregion within the MERS.

- There is no superpower among the member states. Although some of these powers affect the interactions of this system, such as USA and Russia, they are not members.
- The members of MERS are interrelatedly and intensely interacting in this system, through engaging in the regional crises and conflicts, such as the Libyan, Syrian, Yemeni, Afghan, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, Kurdish and Gulf crises, in addition to the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean and Horn of Africa, all of these crises and conflicts occurred in the context of the conflict of regional axes, which its repercussions extended to the entire Middle East region, including all its subregions during the period 2013_2021.
- Despite the major influence of international powers on the interactions in MERS, it is not an absolute influence, as the regional interactions have their own dynamics relatively independent of the influence of these powers especially after 2011, as a result of former U.S. President Barack Obama's adopting of the "Leading from behind" doctrine, leaving the regional actors to partially control the dynamics of the interactions in the Middle East (Krauthammer, 2011). This margin increased more with the arrival of Donald Trump to power at the end of 2016, as he did not pay attention to the U.S. role as a superpower. This is not to say that the American influence got absent, but rather it was no longer overwhelming as it had been after the Gulf War in 1990 then after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Based on the above, the classification of MERS, according to the criterion of its

emergence, is one of the systems that has emerged by the mutual interactions between the members in a regular, interrelated, and intense manner. It is considered one of the least coherent regional systems, unlike the institutional regional systems such as European Union.

B) The core and periphery states in MERS

After World War II the Arab region was the core of MERS, while the non-Arab states (Iran, Turkey, and Israel) were periphery states (Hinnebusch, 2003, p. 159). This situation became more entrenched during 1950s and 1960s, when the Arab region had its particularity and independence in its interactions, distinguishing it as a coherent Arab Regional System (ARS) within MERS, due to the rising of the former Egyptian President Nasser as a leader of this system, through the adoption of the Arab pan-nationalism to unite the Arabs, which was reflected in the cohesion and strength of the Arab League. Accordingly, this cohesion has not allowed non-Arab states to penetrate or to involve heavily in the interactions of the Arab region, so these states were periphery states.

With Nasser's death, Egypt lost its hegemony over the ARS, which became multipolar (Hinnebusch, 2003, p. 173). Since then, ARS gradually began to weaken and lose its singularity and independence through several phases, which enabled the non-Arab States to penetrate the Arab region and effectively involve in its interactions: Israel with the signing of Camp David Accords 1979 and the invasion of Lebanon 1982; Iran with the first Gulf war 1980- 1988 and the rising role of its proxies and allies in the region since 1980s such as Hizballah in Lebanon; and Turkey with its active role in the second Gulf war 1990, then the arrival of AK Party to power in 2002. Moreover, after the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011, Israel, Iran, and Turkey became among the most influential regional actors in the region. Therefore, and given the dynamic nature of the classification of core and periphery states; Israel, Turkey, and Iran shifted from periphery to core states in MERS.

The countries of Somalia, Djibouti, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Arab Maghreb countries (Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria) are considered periphery states since the volume of their interactions in the MERS has been limited compared to the core states.

However, the other two countries of Arab Maghreb (Tunisia and Libya) are considered within the core states, as they became in the center of the interactions in MERS since 2011, due to the wave of Arab Spring - which reshaped MERS - that extended to them, and they thereafter heavily involved in the conflict of regional axes after 2013. The countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Levant countries, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, and Iraq are also considered within the core states.

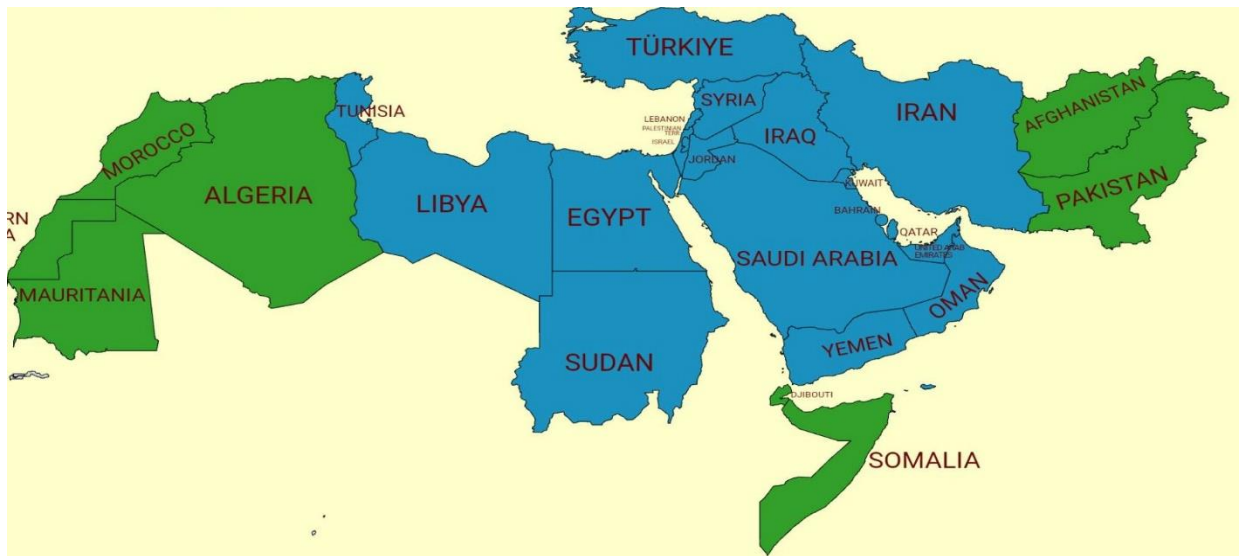


Figure 2: The Core and Periphery States in MERS After 2011 (Designed by the Researcher)

Based on the above, the core and periphery states of MERS after 2011 are as follows:

- The core states include the states of GCC (the UAE, Saudi Arabia, , Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain), Levant states (Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon), Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Sudan, Turkey, Iran, and Israel.
- The periphery states include Somalia, Djibouti, Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Finally, the researcher, in addressing thesis topic, will rely on the following hypothesis of systems approach: the international relations arise and develop within the framework of a particular international or regional system and affected by this system and its various components, which include international units (actors), system structure, institutions, and processes (interactions) (Sleem, 2002, p. 11_12). Therefore, the thesis

will address the impact of MERS on Egyptian-Turkish relations through these four elements represent the four main chapters.

Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of four main chapters, and each chapter contains two sections as follow:

The first chapter addresses the impact of MERS' structure through the distribution of power between the actors, and the distribution of orientations and alliances. The second chapter examines the impact of actors represented in the UAE and Qatar which have been the two most influential states on Egyptian-Turkish relations. The third chapter investigates the institutions, which include two parts: an organizational aspect (the League of Arab States) and a legal aspect (the 2014 military cooperation agreement between Qatar and Turkey). The fourth chapter deals with the processes including regional interactions with its conflictual and cooperative aspects, represented in the Libyan crisis and the conflict in Eastern Mediterranean.

Before starting with the thesis main chapters, the researcher traced the development of Egyptian-Turkish bilateral relations at the political and economic levels from 2013 to 2021, then the thesis examined how MERS influenced these relations.

The Egyptian-Turkish Bilateral Relations (2013- 2021)

The Egyptian-Turkish bilateral relations during the period from 2013 to 2021 can be examined through two dimensions: the political and diplomatic relations, as well as the economic and commercial relations.

The Political and Diplomatic Relations

The Turkish-Egyptian relations reached its peak with the election of MB-affiliated former President Mohammed Morsi as a president of Egypt in June 2012. In September 2012, Morsi visited Turkey, just to be followed by a similar visit by the then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Egypt in November 2012 to attend the second meeting of the “Strategic Cooperation Council” between the two countries (Açıkdeniz, 2021, p. 128). During the last visit, Erdogan announced the possibility of establishing a strategic alliance between Egypt and Turkey (Cagaptay & Sievers, 2015).

The relations between the two countries during Morsi's era has reached an advanced stage to the extent that the then-Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu announced that the Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan met with Morsi in June 2013 and gave him a list of recommendations to overcome the internal political impasse (Kuru, 2015, p. 105). Thus, the two countries would have established a strategic alliance, based on their similarity in terms of ideological backgrounds. However, the overthrow of Morsi, as a first elected civilian president in Egypt, on July 3, 2013, hindered that. With the arrival of a new regime in Egypt, Egyptian-Turkish relations have radically shifted, which can be addressed through two main phases.

A) From July 2013 to 2019

Turkey has opposed Morsi's overthrow, considering it a "military coup" whereas its opponents called it a "popular revolution" (Peterson, 2013). Thus, Turkey has not recognized the new regime in Egypt, and even it moved its confrontation to Security Council, calling on the Council, in August 2013, for imposing sanctions on the Egyptian regime. Egypt responded in the next year, when it lobbied to prevent Turkey from obtaining a seat at the Security Council (Cagaptay & Sievers, 2015). The Egyptian-Turkish crisis deepened when Egypt asked the Turkish ambassador to leave the country as a "persona non grata" in November 2013, for the third time in the history of their relations – after two times during Nasser's era- and Turkey reacted in the same way (Monitor, 2014). Thus, their diplomatic relations level has been downgraded from ambassadors to the Charge d'affaires level.

President Erdogan has played the fundamental role in his country's opposition to the new Egyptian regime, even he has participated in popular protests in some Turkish cities supporting Morsi. After the Egyptian security forces dispersed Rabaa and al-Nahda sit-ins on August 14, 2013, Erdogan accused the then-Egyptian Defense Minister Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of killing thousands of MB's supporters (Magued, 2016, p. 286). He also called on the Security Council for convening to discuss this incident (Burch, 2013). Moreover, Erdogan criticized Western countries, on August 15, 2013, for not taking a decisive and opposed position against the overthrow of Morsi (Hurriyet, 2013).

In the same context, On August 20, 2013, Erdogan stated that he has documents at his dispense that proves proving Israel's involvement in the overthrow of Morsi, though the

Egyptian and Israeli governments denied these accusations (Yackley, 2013). On June 8, 2014, Field Marshal El-Sisi became the president of Egypt. In the following month, Erdogan called him an "illegitimate tyrant", considering Morsi the legitimate president of Egypt (DailyNews, 2014). In response to the repeated Turkish statements in this regard, the Egyptian Foreign Minister has always condemned these statements considering them "an unacceptable intervention in the Egyptian domestic affairs " (Aljazeera, 2013).

In its confrontation with the Egyptian regime, Ankara has used several tools. First, while Egypt officially designated MB as a "terrorist group" in December 2013 (BBC, 2013), Erdogan announced, in September 2014, the sheltering of MB leaders, after Qatar asked them to leave the country. Turkey continued receiving Egyptian opponents in Turkey up to estimates of tens of thousands. Second, Turkey allowed MB and its allies to establish media channels that adopted an editorial policy opposing the Egyptian regime, such as "Mekameleen" in February 2014, "Al-Sharq" in April 2014, and "Watan" in March 2016 (BBC, 2021). Third, Turkey also allowed the Egyptian opposition to establish several political entities, such as the "Egyptian Revolutionary Council" in August 2014, and the "Parallel Egyptian Parliament" in December 2014 (Al-Hajj, 2016, p. 12).

In response to Turkey's support to MB, Egypt supported Fethullah Gulen movement, which Turkey designated a "terrorist movement" in May 2016 (Reuters, 2016). Gulen movement is active in Egypt, by having private schools, housing, magazines, and newspapers. In 2013, a cultural center affiliated with the movement was opened in Egypt near to Yunus Emre Institute. On the other hand, Egypt imposed restrictions on the employees of Turkish Anadolu Agency (Açıkdeniz, 2021, p. 137).

Based on the above, the tension dominated Egyptian-Turkish relations, reflecting on Egypt handing over the presidency of Organization of Islamic Cooperation to Turkey in the summit, held in Istanbul, on April 14, 2016, as Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry headed the Egyptian delegation, on behalf of Sisi (Kotan, 2017). Although this was the first high-level Egyptian visit to Turkey since July 2013, it showed the extent of tension between the two countries, as the head of state, not the foreign minister, usually hands over the presidency of the Organization.

On July 15, 2016, Egypt and Turkey went through a new phase that deepened the tension between them, as Turkey witnessed a failed coup attempt. In response to this attempt, with the exception of Egypt and Syria, Arab states announced their support for the Turkish government (Barq, 2016). The Turkish Foreign Ministry also stated that Egypt obstructed a statement of Security Council supporting the Turkish government in this crisis, though Egypt denied that (RTarabic, 2016). Additionally, Egyptian media has adopted a clear position supporting the coup attempt (Youssef, 2016).

With the stability of the Egyptian regime at the end of 2016 and MB's failure to overthrow it, Turkey's position shifted from calling for the return of legitimacy represented in Morsi's return to power, to demand releasing him along other detainees, as a condition for normalizing relations with Egypt (Al-Jazeera, 2016). However, their relations have not witnessed any positive development and the tension continued to be the dominant.

Thus, on February 10, 2018, Cairo hosted the third Conference of Arab Parliament Speakers, and one of the outcomes of the conference was their condemnation of Turkey for "its intervention in Egyptian internal affairs" (Saraslan, 2019, p. 543). On the other hand, on February 25, 2019, Erdogan announced that he will never meet with Sisi, and that as long as the detainees are not released, such a meeting could not take place (Monitor, 2019). The tension escalated more on June 17, 2019, when Morsi died, as Erdogan accused Egyptian authorities of killing him. The Egyptian Foreign Minister condemned these accusations (The-Guardian, 2019).

While it seemed that Morsi's death would further complicate the crisis of Egyptian Turkish relations, it has later, on the contrary, contributed to the relative calming of this crisis, due to the end of the conflict of legitimacy between Sisi and Morsi.

B) The relations Since 2020 until the end of 2021

With the beginning of 2020, there were more serious calls for calming the tension and restoring the relation between Egypt and Turkey. On January 13, 2020, Yasin Aktay, President Erdogan's advisor, called for the restoration of the relations, cooperation and solidarity between the two countries (Aktay, 2020). Moreover, the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu announced on June 11, that the dialogue is the most appropriate way to normalize the relations between the two countries (Anadolu, 2020).

He also announced, on December 30, that there is an ongoing dialogue with Egypt to improve relations (TRTWorld, 2020). However, these calls have not been succeeded in calming the tension.

Finally, 2021 has been the most positive year for Egyptian-Turkish relations, whether at the level of statements or by actions on the ground, as the calls for calming and improving these relations began to enter into force. On March 8, 2021, Turkish Presidency's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin announced the possibility of starting a new phase in the relations with Egypt, which he described as "the brain and heart of the Arab world" (Aly, 2021). On March 12, President Erdogan confirmed for the first time that there are contacts with Egypt at the diplomatic and intelligence levels, and that there are efforts to develop them (Reuters, 2021). In response to these statements, Egyptian Foreign Minister stated that what concerns Egypt is the actions on the ground, not just the statements (Essam El-Din, 2021).

In the same context, On April 29, the Turkish parliament unanimously approved a motion to establish a parliamentary friendship group with Egypt (Abdul-Razzak, 2021). As for Turkish government, it has pressured Egyptian opposition's channels, which broadcast from Istanbul, to mitigate their criticism of Egyptian regime, while the most influential programs have been banned (Tastekin, 2021). Egyptian Foreign Minister described this step as a "positive development", calling for more positive steps for the normalization of the relations (Ali, 2021).

These efforts have been culminated by launching declared reciprocal diplomatic visits between the two countries, at the level of deputy foreign ministers, for the first time since July 2013. It began with a visit by Turkish delegation to Cairo in May 2021 (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs), followed by an Egyptian visit to Ankara in September 2021 (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs). After these two visits, the Egyptian Foreign Minister announced in October 2021, that there is some progress in the relations with Turkey, hoping to build on it (Mahmoud, 2021).

Finally, while Egypt and Turkey have succeeded to calm the tension during 2021, they have failed to restore their diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors or utilize the calm to improve their bilateral and regional relations until the end of 2021.

The Economic and Commercial Relations

The improvement of the political relations between Egypt and Turkey during Morsi's era was reflected on their economic relations which witnessed high levels of cooperation. After Morsi's arrival to power, Turkey granted Egypt \$2 billion in aid, to support its foreign currency reserves and contribute to infrastructure projects (Bradley, 2012). During President Erdogan's visit to Cairo in November 2012, the Egyptian-Turkish Economic Forum was held, and the two countries signed 27 mutual cooperation agreements (Mihaila , 2012). It's also worth noting that, in 2012, Turkish businessmen invested two billion dollars in Egypt (1.5 billion in 2011), and the volume of trade between the two countries in the same year amounted to \$5 billion (4 billion in 2011). Additionally, it was planned to peak \$10 billion by 2015 (Salmani, 2016, p. 88). However, Morsi was overthrown, and these plans have gone to waste. Thus, what are the limits of the impact of the political tension between Egypt and Turkey on their economic relations?

A) The Path of the Economic Relations

After the overthrow of Morsi, there has been a mutual desire to prevent impacting the tense political relations on their economic ties. This was confirmed in 2013, by the then-Egyptian Minister of Industry and Trade Mounir Fakhri Abdel Nour, and the head of Egyptian-Turkish Business Council, Adel Al-Lama'i (Bakeer, 2013, p. 5). Despite these re-assurances, Egypt decided, in October 2014, to not renew the "Ro-Ro agreement" with Turkey, which would have ended in April 2015, and was signed in March 2012, to exploit the Egyptian ports to transport the Turkish exports to the Gulf countries and Africa (Abaza, 2014). In an attempt to dissuade Egypt from this decision, there was an official visit to Egypt by President of the "Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges" of Turkey Rifat Hisarcıklioglu, from 7 to 9 November 2015 (Ergan, 2015). However, his task wasn't successful.

Moreover, in May 2014, the Turkish Ministry of Economy announced increasing pressures on the Turkish businessmen and their investments in Egypt, such as canceling business licenses and hindering entry visas. The ministry also announced the departure of 30 Turkish companies from Egypt (Salmani, 2016, p. 117). In the same context, there are a number of bilateral cooperation mechanisms between the two countries at the

economic level, such as "Joint Committee", "High Level Commercial Negotiations Committee", "Business Council", and "Business Forum". However, these committees and forums have not held any joint meetings since July 2013 (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs), save the Business Council, whose fifteenth meeting was held in Cairo, on March 12, 2017 (DEIK, 2017).

Additionally, Turkey and Egypt signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on December 27, 2005, and it entered into force on March 1, 2007. Since then, all customs duties restrictions on trade between the two countries have been abolished. According to the agreement terms, it should have expired by the end of 2020. However, until the end of 2021, no decision has been taken from the two sides, to renew or freeze it (Hosny, 2021).

The previous negative developments have not seriously affected the volume of trade between the two countries during the period from 2013 to 2021. It slightly decreased in 2013 to \$4.8 billion, after it had reached \$5 billion in 2012, and remained in this way in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, recording \$4.7, 4.3, 4.2, 4.3 billion, respectively. However, it exceeded in 2018 and 2019 the volume which recorded in 2012, recording \$5.2 and 5.1 billion, respectively. Then it declined again to \$4.62 billion in 2020 (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs) Finally, motivated by easing tensions during 2021, the volume of trade witnessed a qualitative leap in this year, recording \$6.7 billion as the highest number in the history of their trade relations (Sondakika, .2022).

While Turkey's main exports to Egypt are crude petroleum-derived products, textile fiber and textile products, iron and steel, metal products and road transport vehicles, the main imports from Egypt are plastics and its products, fertilizers, textile fiber and textile products, crude petroleum-derived products, and organic chemicals (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Finally, regarding the investments, in 2021, the volume of direct Turkish investments in Egypt amounted to nearly \$2 billion, with about 540 Turkish companies operating in Egypt, employing about 25,000 Egyptian workers (Al-Maziki, 2021).

Table 1
The Volume of Trade Between Egypt and Turkey 2013-2021

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Trade	4.8	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.3	5.2	5.1	4.6	6.7

Source: (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

B) Assessing the economic relations

Based on the foregoing scene, it can be concluded that there has been a relative reflection of the political tension between Egypt and Turkey on their economic ties for these reasons:

- Although the volumes of trade and investments in the years that followed Morsi's overthrow were not seriously affected compared to the numbers that had been already recorded during Morsi's era, they were significantly affected compared to the numbers that the two countries had planned to reach under Morsi. For example, in September 2011, Davutoglu predicted that Turkish investments in Egypt would increase to \$5 billion in 2013 and that the trade volume would reach \$10 billion in 2015 (Abdel Fattah, 2014, p. 117).
- Given Egypt and Turkey's populations which are approximately 105 and 85 million respectively (Population, 2021), both countries are considered a promising market for each other's products. Moreover, thanks to their geostrategic location, Egypt is a trade gateway for Turkey to Africa and the Gulf region. Similarly, Turkey is a trade gateway for Egypt to Europe. In addition, the Eastern Mediterranean gas plays a pivotal role in this regard. Under the previous facts, the numbers of trade and investments recorded between 2013- 2021, are very weak.
- The common market could have represented a proposed integral model for implementation between the two countries, by signing the Four Freedoms Agreement (the free movement of capital, workers, goods and services). This is emphasized by the fact that the human and economic capabilities of the two countries and their geostrategic location would have allowed such a step.

CHAPTER I: THE IMPACT OF MERS' STRUCTURE ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

The structure of the regional system is related to the arrangement of system's units (actors), based on two main factors: first, the distribution of the capabilities and resources (power) among the actors, which determines their ability to act towards the others within the system besides the nature and limits of this action, and, second, the distribution of the values and orientations, which determines the nature of each actor's vision of the other actors, thus the nature of the alliances within the system (Sleem, 2002, p. 14).

Therefore, the structure of the regional systems is not just determined based on the self-power that each actor possesses, but also based on the regional alliances, in which the actors are involved.

1.1. The Distribution of Capabilities and Resources (Power)

The regional powers possess the largest share of the power and resources in the regional system; therefore, they have the greatest contribution to determining the structure of this system.

1.1.1. The Concept of Regional Power

The regional power is a modern concept that emerged after the end of the Cold War, as the path of the regional interactions and balances in the subregions after the World War II was being determined based on the competition between the two superpowers, ignoring the regional actors in these regions. With the decline of American hegemony over the international system in the early twenty-first century, a prominent scholarly boom emerged focusing on developing the concept of regional power (Beck, 2014, p. 1_2).

Detlef Nolte defined regional power as “an actor - normally a state - whose power capabilities in a region significantly outweigh those of other actors within the same region and whose power is, to a high degree, based on its leadership role within the region.” (Beck, 2014, p. 4). According to Maxi Schoeman, there are conditions that the state must meet to be a regional power: possessing internal capabilities and resources that enable it to lead the region, demonstrating its willingness and capacity for the

regional leadership, and obtaining an acceptance from region countries as a leader responsible for the security and peacemaking. While the extra-regional acceptance, especially from the major powers, is significant, it's more important to obtain the internal approval (Notle , 2010, p. 890).

The researcher adopts a perspective distinguishing between the concepts of regional power and regional role for several reasons:

- The exercise of regional roles is not limited to regional powers. There are a few states that are not considered regional powers with their weak or medium resources and capabilities; however, they play effective roles, such as Israel, UAE, and Qatar. The roles of these actors are usually limited, especially in the absence of a regional alliance or support from a major power. It is difficult for them to maximize the effectiveness of their regional roles individually based on their self-strength.
- Sometimes, some regional powers lose their regional roles as a result of casual political and economic internal factors, such as political turmoil after revolution or coup, transition of power, or weakness of political leadership. In these cases, they are still considered regional powers as long as the strategic resources and capabilities of their power are not heavily affected, which enable them, if the internal conditions permit, to restore their regional roles. Hence, the weakness of regional role in this case is a temporary matter. They can be called "inactive regional powers", Such as Egypt whose regional role declined after 2011 January 25 Revolution due to its preoccupation with the political transition, then it partly succeeded in restoring its role since 2019, as a result of restoring its internal political stability, transforming to an "active regional power". Also, Turkey moved from inactive regional power in 1970s , to active one in 1990s, and became more active after 2002. In other words, in these periods Egypt and Turkey have temporarily lost their roles, not their regional power.

But if the role's weakness is due to the collapse of the strategic elements and resources of its power, such as the transition into a failed state as a result of losing partial or full control over its territory, the collapse of army, the disintegration of state structures, or its exposure to a devastating war or occupation; the state is no longer considered a

regional power. Therefore, restoring its power and role is a very difficult and complex issue. For example, Iraq since the 2003 war has not yet restored its status as a regional power or its role. In this case, the state's crisis is a power's crisis with a strategic and structural dimension, whereas in the Egyptian case after 2011 and Turkish case in 1970s, it is a role's crisis with a casual and temporary dimension.

- The status of regional power tends relatively to the continuity as it is not easily acquired or lost, because it is gradually consolidated through the accumulation of several factors over many years, during which the state acquires a regional identity that it does not lose just by a temporary decline in the role, unless there is a radical change in its strategic power structure. The regional role is very dynamic, constantly changing from period to other depending on internal or external factors. Finally, the regional power is a relative concept, as it is compared only to other countries in the same region, so what is considered a regional power in the Middle East may not necessarily be regional power in Europe region.

Accordingly, the regional power, according to the researcher relying on the indicators of state's comprehensive power, possesses great resources and capabilities of material and moral power, compared to the other states in the same region. Additionally, it owns a specific regional identity and prestige which is cumulatively acquires over decades through a historical legacy of regional leadership in the region, and a civilizational or cultural legacy. This leading and civilizational legacy grants it acceptance and recognition by the region countries as a regional power capable of leading the region. These factors together enable regional power to be influential in the regional interactions and balances, contribution to shaping or reshaping the regional system, and qualifying it for the regional leadership or hegemony in the regional system. The exercise of these roles by the regional powers depends on the extent of their internal stability and the readiness of the political leaderships for these roles.

As for the regional role, Karl Holsti defines role as "policymakers' conceptions of their nation's orientations and tasks in the international system or in subordinate regional systems" (Holsti, 1970, p. 246). Thus, the regional role refers to decision-maker's perception of his state's regional status, ambitions and obligations towards the region in

the light of the resources of its power. In other words, the regional role is the output of state's effective management and exploitation of the material and moral elements of its power within the regional system.

1.1.2. The Regional Powers in the Middle East

According to the researcher conceptualization, the regional powers in the Middle East can be defined through two main determinants: first, by measuring the state power based on the indicators of the comprehensive power of state, and second, by the regional identity and prestige.

A) Measuring state's comprehensive power

In this context, the researcher will depend on the results of “Global State Power Index 1991-2017”, prepared by Piot Arak and Greg Grzegorz, for European Commission. As a measure of the state’s power; this ranking stroke a balance between the hard and soft power, as it took into account the sum of cultural, geographic, and diplomatic factors of power, as well as economic and military factors (Lewicki & Arak , 2017):

Table2
The ranking of state power in the Middle East

Country	Place	State Power Index	Capital Index	Militarization Index	Land Index	Population Index	Culture Index	Natural Resources Index	Diplomacy Index
Saudi Arabia	1	1.44	1.32	2.28	1.67	0.41	0.80	3.16	0.12
Turkey	2	0.96	1.43	0.97	0.60	1.02	0.20	0.19	0.12
Egypt	3	0.92	0.84	0.48	0.78	1.17	0.20	0.62	4.82
Iran	4	0.85	0.99	0.54	1.27	1.01	0.40	1.56	0.06
Pakistan	5	0.85	0.72	1.19	0.60	2.37	0.00	0.48	0.09
Israel	6	0.63	0.43	1.64	0.02	0.19	1.00	0.13	0.09
Algeria	7	0.58	0.42	0.47	1.85	0.53	0.00	1.37	0.12
UAE	8	0.48	0.61	0.67	0.07	0.12	0.00	1.60	0.12
Iraq	9	0.44	0.46	0.44	0.34	0.48	0.00	1.60	0.09
Sudan	10	0.33	0.12	0.10	1.85	0.52	0.00	0.39	0.12
Oman	11	0.30	0.21	0.58	0.24	0.07	0.00	1.21	0.12
Kuwait	12	0.30	0.32	0.23	0.01	0.06	0.00	2.11	0.12
Qatar	13	0.29	0.35	0.09	0.01	0.03	0.00	2.33	0.12
Libya	14	0.26	0.06	0.23	1.37	0.11	0.00	0.75	0.12

Morocco	15	0.26	0.29	0.26	0.35	0.47	0.00	0.03	0.12
Yemen	16	0.16	0.05	0.13	0.41	0.35	0.00	0.72	0.09
Afghanistan	17	0.14	0.04	0.14	0.51	0.42	0.00	0.00	0.06
Jordan	18	0.13	0.12	0.28	0.07	0.12	0.00	0.01	0.12
Tunisia	19	0.13	0.15	0.08	0.12	0.19	0.00	0.22	0.16
Lebanon	20	0.11	0.16	0.16	0.01	0.13	0.00	0.01	0.09
Syria	21	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.14	0.26	0.00	0.18	0.09
Mauritania	22	0.11	0.01	0.06	0.80	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.16
Bahrain	23	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.58	0.12
Djibouti	24	0.03	0.00	0.07	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.16

Source: (Lewicki & Arak , 2017).

The ranking did not include the states of Palestine and Somalia, however it doesn't represent a problem in this issue, as the purpose of this ranking is defining the regional powers in MERS and both countries are not qualified to be regional powers.

B) Regional identity and prestige

Since this issue is related to regional powers and systems, there is a need to add another determinant in addition to the comprehensive power of state, which is regional identity and prestige.

State's regional identity consolidates over long periods of time, through accumulation of several factors, especially state's historical legacy of regional leadership in the region, and its civilizational or cultural legacy. This identity grants the regional powers a

special prestige, a legitimacy of leadership in the region, and a regional acceptance which is considered one of the most important soft power tools in these systems.

The regional powers have to possess well-established tools of soft power that express its model and identity. It is not enough for these powers to depend only on hard power, but rather combine hard and soft power in the framework of so-called smart power (Kappel, 2014, p. 145). Given the regional privacy, the regional powers belong to the regions that they seek to lead, they are not imperial powers that come from abroad, therefore, they have to address the peoples, such as the governments, through the soft power tools.

According to this determinant, there are four states that own a prominent regional identity and prestige: Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Egypt is one of the most well-established states in the region as a nation-state with clear and stable borders for thousands of years, helping it to build one of the oldest civilizations, i.e., Pharaonic civilization. Moreover, due to its geostrategic location, Egypt has been the capital and center of many successive Islamic states, such as the Tulunid, Ikhshidid, Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk, and finally Muhammad Ali dynasty, which reinforced Egypt's material and moral capabilities as a central state in the region. Egypt also enhanced its role as a historical leader of Arabs, especially during Nasser's era, in addition to hosting the headquarters of the LAS on its territory, and its role in building the political, economic and constitutional systems of a number of Arab countries after independence. Egypt's soft power is based on a well-established civilizational and cultural legacy represented in the Pharaonic civilization and Al-Azhar Al-Sharif as a global Islamic university, in addition to the dominant role of Egyptian drama and cinema in the Arab region. Consequently, Egypt gained a historical legitimacy of leadership as a regional power in the Middle East, with a two-dimensional regional identity: Arab and Islamic.

On the other hand, Turkey was the capital of the Ottoman empire, whose control extended to most of the Middle East countries, including the Arab states, granting Turkey a historical legitimacy for the leadership in the region and reinforcing its capabilities as a nation state since 1923. However, since the dissolution of the Ottoman state, the successive governments couldn't have benefited from the historical legacy of Ottoman state, as a result of their abandonment of the religious identity in the domestic

and foreign policy. The AKP who came to power in 2002 redefined Turkey's domestic and foreign identity by reasserting the religion's role and restoring its ties with the Middle East (Altunışık, 2014, p. 138). Thus, AKP government was able to exploit the Ottoman historical legacy in reinforcing Turkey as a regional power, with two-dimensional regional identity that combine Turkish Nationalism and Islam. Turkey's soft power is based on the historical factor represented in the Ottoman state which granted Turkey cultural ties with the people of the region, Turkish drama and cinema, and the humanitarian and economic aid.

For its part, Saudi Arabia has a historical and religious peculiarity, given it is the cradle of Arabism in an Arab-dominated region, the cradle of Islam in a Muslim-dominated region, and the stronghold of Sunnis in a Sunni-majority region. Thus, it emerges as a regional power due to a unification process between the Arab nationalism and Islam (Al Tamamy, 2014, p. 205). Saudi Arabia hosts the headquarters of two regional organizations, the GCC and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which indicates its centrality in the Islamic and Arab world. Moreover, it has the Two Holy Mosques which are the most important sacred sites in the Islamic world, and the most prominent tools of its soft power. Consequently, Saudi Arabia has acquired a two-dimensional regional identity combining Islam and Arabism.

Finally, Iran was the capital of the Persian state, whose control extended to swathes of the Middle East countries, providing Iran historical legitimacy for the leadership in the region as a central state. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran redefined its domestic and foreign identity, enabling it to revive its regional power relying on an Islamic perspective on the grounds that it is the axis of revolutionary Islam and that the Supreme leader is the leader of the Islamic nation (Fürting, 2014, p. 25). Iran as a Shiite state is the only non-Sunni regional power in a Sunni-majority region, which weakens the capabilities of its soft power, focusing on exporting the revolution and spreading Shi'ism through media tools, drama, and economic aid. Thus, Iran as a regional power in the Middle East is based on two-dimensional regional identity combining Persian nationalism and Shiite Islam.

Consequently, these four states having a regional identity and prestige are the same states that occupy the first four places in the ranking of state power in the Middle East,

according to the “Global State Power Index”, as shown in table (2). Therefore, the regional powers in MERS, according to the two main determinants mentioned above, are Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia, making MERS’ structure a multi-polar one. Although there are weakness points in their power structure, they remain the only regional powers in the region compared to the other states, as determining regional powers is a relative process.

It is worth noting that there are two other countries, Syria and Iraq, have a regional identity by possessing a civilizational and historical legacy qualify them to be regional powers, however, both countries have fought wars that have destroyed the country's military, economic, geographical and social structure. They have not only lost their capabilities as regional powers but even their independence as national States, therefore, they have become an arena for interaction and competition among other regional powers.

In this context, what is the position of the UAE, Israel, Sudan, Pakistan, Morocco and Algeria within MERS’ structure? All of these countries aren’t considered regional powers in MERS, since their power is ranked lower than the four regional powers in “Global State Power Index”, and they don’t have a regional identity or historical legacy of leadership in the Middle East. Additionally, there are other reasons:

- The capabilities, historical legacy and geographic location of Pakistan, Morocco and Algeria qualify them to be regional powers in other regions: Pakistan in Central Asia, Morocco in Arab Maghreb and Algeria in the region of African Sahel and Arab Maghreb.
- Sudan lacks the national and social integration due to the nature of its tribal society and the division between Arabism and Africanism, which made it a torn state, not only socially, but even militarily, where the state lacks central control over its entire territory, which represents a strategic and structural weakness.
- The UAE and Israel lack some elements of the comprehensive power, and they have a strategic weakness in their power structure, represented in country’s surface area, population, and the strategic exposure to their opponents. Israel is against the Arab states and the UAE is against Iran. Therefore, they always need special support from other regional or international powers, such as the United State. In this context, the

Israeli expert at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Mark Heller, believes that Israel has enough power to defend its security and prevent the emergence of any other power that could harm it, though this power is not enough to make Israel a regional power, specially it doesn't have soft power (Kappel, 2014, p. 145). Israel cannot possess soft power - which is necessary for regional powers - due to its nature as an occupying country. Finally, although the UAE and Israel are not regional powers, they managed to play effective regional roles, relying on American support, building broad alliances, huge economic capabilities, and their existence within the core region in MERS.

1.1.3. Conclusion

Egypt and Turkey are two central regional powers in the Middle East, which is in itself a cause of the tension between them, due to the nature of competition between regional powers on the regional influence and leadership. However, this tension is not inevitable, as regional powers can cooperate, but often within certain limits.

Therefore, the success of strategic alliances between regional powers is unlikely and often fails as a result of their rivalry over the role of leadership within the alliance on the one hand, and in the region, on the other. So, the period from 2013 to 2021 has not witnessed a permanent and continuous improvement in the relations between any two of the four regional powers, including between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This is in contrast to the strategic alliances between two parties that are not equal in power, whose opportunities of success and continuity increase, such as the alliance between Turkey and Qatar.

Moreover, regional powers' awareness of each other's regional weight pushes them to set limits for any conflict or escalation between them, as what happened in the Libyan crisis, when there were indications of a military confrontation between Egypt and Turkey in 2020. However, the military balance between the two countries as two regional powers has been one of the reasons that pushed them to opt de-escalation (218News, 2020).

There are two Turkish visions in dealing with Egypt: the first prefers Egypt to be an inactive regional power because it is a strong competitor to Turkey (Bekaroğlu, 2016, p. 12), especially that Egypt is the most prominent Arab state that can limit the Turkish

influence in the region. This may explain the expansion of the great Turkish influence in the region since 2011, coinciding with the decline of the Egyptian regional influence.

The second vision prefers Egypt to be an active regional power, given that maximizing a power at the expense of the others is an outdated Cold War mentality. Also, the effectiveness of Egypt and other regional powers is the only way to achieve fruitful regional integration (Bekaroğlu, 2016, p. 12_13). Moreover, Egypt's weakness clears the scene to other regional actors that do not have a legacy of regional leadership, thus lacks the rationality in its foreign policy and ignore the limits that traditional regional powers take into account in their dealings with each other, which makes Turkey's dealing with them extremely complicated. So, in September 2011, the then-Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu stated that "For the regional balance of power, we want to have a strong, very strong Egypt" (Kessler, 2011).

Finally, Davutoglu considered, in his book *The Strategic Depth: International Turkey's position*, that the geopolitical balance in the Middle East is determined by the strategic triangle "Egypt, Turkey, and Iran", which is based on the fact that the major international powers are always keen on preventing any alliance between two states of this triangle, out of their control, which poses a threat to them (Davutoğlu, 2001, p. 226). Consequently, the nature of the two states as regional powers imposes external additional restrictions on the rapprochement between them and its limits.

Based on the above, the two states' position in the structure of MERS as two traditional regional powers stimulates the competition between them and does not prevent their cooperation, but it makes it within certain limits. Thus, the political tensions resulting from the MB's crisis has other structural regional reasons.

1.2. The Distribution of Orientations and Alliances

The structure of the regional system is not just determined based on the self-power that each actor possesses, but also on the regional alliances which result from the interaction of a set of regional roles, determined by the orientations and values of the decision-maker, as well as the state's capabilities and resources. While the distribution of power and resources in MERS as well as the self-power of Turkey and Egypt as regional powers were discussed in the previous section, this section discusses their orientations, then addressing their roles and alliances.

1.2.1. The Orientations

There are many aspects of the values and orientations that affect the regional roles and alliances, but the central determinant in the Egyptian and Turkish cases since 2013 was their position of the political Islam movements, especially the MB, which has not been a variable that just affected their regional roles, but also contributed to the formation of the regional alliances and axes conflict in the Middle East.

A) Egypt's Orientations

As the two most powerful organized actors in Egypt, there has been a historical conflict between the MB and the military and have clashed almost continuously since 1952 (Ashour, 2015, p. 4). Thus, the overthrow of Morsi has been a new phase in this conflict. The Egyptian regime after July 2013 classified the MB a "terrorist organization" considering it the original source of the "extremist Islamic movements" around the world and calling for taking an action against it in the context of counterterrorism (Sievers, 2014, p. 2). Sisi's hostility to the MB does not stem from a fundamentalist secular vision or a hostile attitude to the religion role in life, rather he adopts a vision "for religious revival to centralize power in its hands by creating a top-down version of state sponsored Islam anchored in conservative social values" (Mandour, 2021). It is purely political hostility regarding the historical conflict between the MB and the military bureaucracy. Thus, the essential determinant of Egyptian domestic and foreign policy after July 2013 was the hostile stance towards MB and its branches in the region.

B) Turkey 's Orientations

The AKP belongs to the traditions of political Islam in Turkey. However, the Islamism in Turkey has a peculiarity that tolerates secularism and Western values. The political Islam in Turkey emerged in the early 1970s under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan through the establishment of the Welfare Party, from which Erdogan defected to establish the AKP. It seems that Erdogan inherited Erbakan's strong relationship with MB. Thus, the AKP strengthened its relations with the MB since 2005, as Istanbul became a center of MB political activity, which hosted, from 2006 to 2010, more than ten international conferences in which MB participated (Başkan, 2016, p. 61_64).

In 2011, in the light of their similar ideological backgrounds, there has been a strategic alliance between the MB and AKP. The MB aimed to emulate the "Turkish model" that achieved a successful coexistence between Islamism and democracy. (Bekaroğlu, 2016, p. 1). Moreover, the two sides aimed to establishing a new regional axis and reshape MERS (Jameel, 2016, p. 133). However, the overthrow of Morsi in July 2013 put an end to that project. The relationship between Turkey and MB wasn't halted, as Turkey continued supporting the MB in Egypt and its branches in the other Arab countries. This came in the context of a regional conflict since 2013 between the power supporting the political change (Turkey and Qatar) and the status quo power that sought to contain the effects of the Arab Spring and prevent its expansion (the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt).

The foregoing is sufficient to illustrate the clash extent in the Egyptian and Turkish orientations and then in their regional roles and alliances.

1.2.2. The Regional Roles

Every state should determine its proper role, proportionally with its power, otherwise, there will be a gap between the power and role. If the role exceeds the state's power and capabilities, this may cause a negative impact not only on the role, but also on the power and its strategic elements. On the other hand, if the state's power exceeds its role, it will waste the opportunity to maximize its strategic interests (Al-Ghunaimi, 2017).

During the period from 2013 to 2021, many regional actors have competed for the influence and role in the Middle East, some of which are regional powers and others are not. Hence, there has been many actors that played regional roles in MERS.

Table 3
The Distribution of Regional Roles in the Middle East

Actors	Classification	Roles
Turkey	Regional Power	Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Libya, Eastern Mediterranean, Gulf region, Horn of Africa.
Egypt	Regional Power	Libya, Palestine, Sudan and Eastern Mediterranean.
Iran	Regional Power	Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, and Horn of Africa
Saudi Arabia	Regional Power	Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and

		Bahrain.
Israel	Not a regional power	Horn of Africa, Eastern Mediterranean and Syria.
The UAE	Not a regional power	Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Syria, Eastern Mediterranean, and Horn of Africa.
Qatar	Not a regional power	Libya, Syria, Palestine and Tunisia, besides the mediation in the Lebanese, Iranian and Afghan issues.
Oman	Not a regional power	The mediation in the crises of Iranian nuclear program, the Gulf and Yemen, in addition to the Iranian-Saudi conflict.

Source: Designed by the researcher

A) Egyptian regional role

After July 2013, during the first six years, the deteriorating economic, security, and political conditions weakened the legitimacy of the new regime in Egypt. The economy witnessed a severe decline with the collapse of the Egyptian pound vis-à-vis US dollar besides the rise of the inflation and unemployment rates. On the security level, ISIS attacks did not limit to North Sinai, but extended to the Nile Valley and Cairo in 2017. On the political level, the regime suffered from internal divisions, which appeared in the candidacy of Anan and Shafiq, who were affiliated to the Military establishment, in the 2018 presidential elections (Soliman, 2018, p. 1_2). The internal conditions have been reflected on Egyptian regional role, whether by turning the focus just on the regional confrontation with the MB and its allies in the region, or through the decline of its effectiveness to a large extent. In other words, Egypt became an inactive regional power in this period.

To confront the economic situation, the Egyptian regime resorted to the Gulf support. During the first three years since 2013, Egypt received \$9 billion from Saudi Arabia, \$7 billion from the UAE, Kuwait \$7 billion from Kuwait, as an aid, including oil products, loans, and cash injections to the Central Bank (Young, 2016). However, when Egypt decided to rely on the funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and signed the \$12 billion loan in mid-2016, it was no longer dependent on the Gulf financial support, especially with the completion of the IMF program in 2019. In spite its negative implications on the poor classes, the Egyptian economy became in better shape than it had been in the early period of Sisi's rule (Butter, 2020, p. 1).

Politically, Morsi's death in June 2019 reflected positively on the Egyptian regime regarding the legitimacy issue and political stability (BBC, 2019). Moreover, Sisi's strict control over the security and military institutions allowed him to impose a kind of political stability, even Egypt has not witnessed any public protests since September 2019 (BBC, 2019). Finally, at the security level, the Sinai Peninsula has become more stable, as Egypt announced in June 2021, the expansion of the development projects in Sinai with the aim of resettling 3 million Egyptians in the north And South Sinai in the near term (Al-Monitor, 2021). As a result of the internal stability that Egypt witnessed at the political, economic and security levels, whose features began to emerge since 2016 and became well-established in 2019; Egypt started to restore part of its regional roles by 2019 gradually, to become an active regional power. However, it needs more time to fully restore its role fitting with its power.

The Egyptian regional roles have mainly emerged in the Palestine, Libya, Sudan, and Eastern Mediterranean, and secondarily in Tunisia and Lebanon. In order to implement these roles, Egypt has focused more on the soft power tools, with less reliance on hard power, which has not exceeded the limits of logistical support and military deterrence.

B) Turkish Regional Role

After AKP came to power in 2002, Turkey has been able to play an effective regional role in the Middle East, which reached its peak in the period from 2011 to 2021. There have been two main variables that enabled Turkey in this context.

The first was an internal variable, represented in the political, social, and economic stability that Turkey witnessed under the rule of AKP (Karagöl, 2013, p. 115). The second was an external variable, as AKP achieved a strategic change in Turkey's one-dimensional foreign policy, through which the previous governments had focused just on its ties with the West, to adopt a multi-dimensional policy, through which AKP achieved a balance between its strategic ties with the West and its historical ties with its strategic depth, the Middle East is one of its main pillars. Reviving these ties enabled Turkey to play more effective roles in the region after 2011, during which it depended on the soft power's tools.

Since 2013, three variables contributed to influencing the Turkish regional role in terms of the effectiveness and the tools. First, the overthrow of its Egyptian ally, in July 2013,

regionally weakened Turkey, creating a major rift in its regional ambition (Barel, 2013). The second variable was the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, which the Turkish government managed to thwart in a way that eventually led to the government's tight control over the state's institutions, limiting the role of the army in the domestic and foreign policy (Fox News, 2016). Turkey considered it an attempt by its regional opponents to transfer the confrontation inside Turkey. The third was the amendment of the Turkish Constitution in April 2017, which transformed Turkey's political system from a parliamentary to a presidential one (Göztepe , 2018). Thus, the President of the Republic has become the owner of the strongest powers in the domestic and foreign policies, giving President Erdogan greater flexibility and freedom to move effectively to implement his regional vision.

The first and second variables prompted Turkey to abandon its dependence just on soft power tools in implementing its regional role to rely on hard and soft power tools together, that is "smart power". It has recognized the nature of this phase, on which the regional conflicts dominated. Thus, the tools of Arab Spring phase are no longer appropriate with this phase. At the same time, the second and third variables enabled Turkey to increase the effectiveness of its regional role. These regional roles have mainly emerged in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Libya, Eastern Mediterranean, Gulf region, Horn of Africa, and secondarily in Sudan, Tunisia and Lebanon.

The escalation of hard power, as a tool of Turkey's regional role, enabled it to surround the Middle East with several military bases from four directions, Turkish Cyprus (TRNC) in the north, Somalia in the south, Syria, Iraq and Qatar in the east, and Libya in the west. So, Turkey has been one of the most active regional powers in the region during the period 2013- 2021. Thus, while Egypt and Turkey at the level of the self-power are almost equal, Turkey at the level of the role was much more effective than Egypt, as Turkey entrenched its role since 2011, whereas Egypt, due to its preoccupation with domestic conditions since 2011, was only able to restore the effectiveness of its role by 2019.

Finally, due to the competition on the regional influence and leadership, there is a direct relationship between the nature of the bilateral relations between regional powers and the effectiveness of their regional roles. Thus, there are three paths:

- If the regional roles of the two powers are effective, their inter-relations are more vulnerable to tension, such as Egypt and Turkey in the 1950s.
- If the regional roles of both powers decline (inactive regional powers), calming the relations at least, or improving them, is more likely, such as Egypt and Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s.
- If one of the two powers is active and the other is inactive, both options (calm or tension) are possible, such as Egypt and Turkey 2011- 2013.

Table 4
The Nature of Relations Between Regional Powers

The nature of Roles	The nature of Relations
Both of them active	More tense
Both of them inactive	More calm
One active and other inactive	calm or tense

Source: Designed by the researcher

Regarding the period covered by the thesis, first, during the period from 2013 to 2018, Turkey was regionally active whereas Egypt was inactive, and their relations were strained. Second, during the period from 2019 to 2021, Egypt partially regained its regional role, and thus the two countries became active regional powers, that is, the possibility of straining their relations increases, which has already happened during the two years 2019 and 2020. However, during 2021, there was a calmness between the two countries, which can be explained through the policy of regional alliances. Thus, the relationship between the nature of relations and the effectiveness of roles is relative, as there are other factors participating in influencing the relations between regional powers, such as the alliances.

1.2.3. The Regional Alliances

Alliances are tools through which the states coordinate their policies in order to achieve common goals that no state can achieve alone. They allow states to increase their military capabilities by supporting their allies in the case of war or deterring the potential aggressor (Sleem, 2002, p. 18). The importance of these alliances increases in a region such as the Middle East, where there is a risk of being alone in the face of numerous blocs. For example, Egypt has lost its regional effectiveness after it was

excluded from the Arab bloc due to the Camp David Accords. This requires the regional actors to take into account the balance of the power in the region during formulating their regional strategy (Davutoğu, 2001, p. 406).

The main determinant in forming the alliances is the orientations of states. Within this frame, the Middle East witnessed a complex conflict over the influence, between three main regional axes or alliances from 2013 to 2021:

1. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
2. Iran and its allies and proxies in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon.
3. Turkey and Qatar.

There was therefore pluralism at the level of regional alliances, as there was at the level of regional powers.

The first alliance has been in a confrontation with the other two alliances. However, Saudi Arabia gave priority to the confrontation with Iran, whereas the UAE focused on the confrontation with Turkey.

Egypt and Turkey have not been parties in the Iranian-Saudi conflict, and therefore this conflict has not had a direct impact on their relations. As for the Turkish-Emirati conflict, it had a great and direct impact on these relations, as Egypt sided with the UAE in this conflict.

The conflict between the Turkish-Qatari axis and the Emirati-Saudi-Egyptian axis on reshaping the regional system was prompted by their contradictory positions on the political change and MB. There have been several phases of this conflict:

- The Arab Spring in 2011, including Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and Libya.
- Overthrowing Turkey's strongest ally in Egypt (Morsi) in July 2013, with Saudi-Emirati support.
- The proxy war in Libya between the forces of Eastern Libya backed by Egypt and the UAE, and the Western Libya backed by Turkey and Qatar, in 2014, and the escalation of the war in 2019.
- The Gulf crisis in June 2017, which deepened the conflict between the two axes.

- The escalation of the competition between the two sides on the influence in the Horn of Africa as a result of the Gulf crisis.
- The murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in his country's consulate of Istanbul in October 2018.
- The escalation of competition in the Eastern Mediterranean after the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), in 2019, by Egypt, with the exclusion of Turkey.

Thus, although there has been no effective Egyptian regional role during the period of 2013- 2018, the regional factor has been a cause of the tension in the Egyptian-Turkish relations, due to the conflict of the regional axes in which Egypt became involved against Turkey. As for Turkey, it has suffered from a weakness in the structure of its alliance, in which Qatar has been its only strategic ally. So, Turkey has resorted to build a huge regional political and military influence individually to address this weakness in the face of a bloc of many regional actors on the one hand, and to reinforce its position in any possible regional settlement. Consequently, while Turkey has exceeded Egypt in terms of the regional role's effectiveness, Egypt has surpassed it regarding the strength of the alliance.

While the two countries could have overcome the crisis of their bilateral relations resulting from the overthrow of Morsi's rule in shorter period, the conflict of the regional axes had the potential of new motivations for the continuation of their tension. However, during 2021, these relations became calmer, and the two countries started negotiations to restore their diplomatic relation.

This relative positive shift may be attributed to the geopolitical developments represented in calming some of regional crisis such as the Gulf crisis in January 2021 and Libyan crisis in August 2020, which led to calming the conflict of regional axes. Despite the continuity and survival of the alliances during 2021, they are no longer in the same degree of cohesion and solidarity that they were in during the escalation of the axes conflict, providing actors, such as Egypt and Turkey, a more flexibility to get rid of some of restrictions and obligations that these alliances impose on them.

1.2.4. Conclusion

MERS structure is a fragile multipolarity or even a chaotic structure due to the following reasons:

- The pluralism in the system structure at the level of regional powers (four central powers), and at the level of regional roles (eight actors play regional roles), and at the level of alliances (three regional alliances), these alliances are flexible and unstable which hinders the stability of MERS structure.
- The Middle East does not have a clear balance of power, with significant external intervention from the international powers, especially the United States and Russia (Ryan, 2020).
- The absence of a regional organization with an institutional apparatus to govern MERS. In other words, the lack of institutionalization.
- Since 1980s non-state actors began emerging for the first time in the Middle East, including Hezbollah (1982), Hamas (1987), and Al-Qaeda (1988), causing more chaos in the regional balances.

The chaotic or fragile structure of MERS creates a state of uncertainty and suspicion among the actors, as there is no stable and agreed regional balance that sets limits for states' policies towards each other and for their regional roles. This makes the Middle East a conflictual environment which is not suitable for constant cooperative relations between actors. Consequently, the nature of this structure contributes to increasing the intensity of competition and conflict between states, especially such as Egypt and Turkey due to their position in this structure as central regional powers.

CHAPTER II: THE IMPACT OF ACTORS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

In any regional or international system, there are two types of actors: state actors, the basic and dominant units in the system, and non-state actors, having a secondary role in the system, such as international organizations, multinational enterprises, political movements, and individuals. This chapter will be limited to state actors within MERS.

This chapter will be limited to examining the UAE and Qatar, which have been the most influential, compared to the other state actors, on the Egyptian Turkish relations. The UAE has established a strategic alliance with Egypt whereas Qatar has established its alliance with Turkey. On the other hand, there have been a severe tension in Qatari-Egyptian relations, and a regional conflict between the UAE and Turkey.

2.1. The United Arab Emirates

During the second decade of the 21st century, there were two shifts at the level of the power in the UAE, as the influence within the seven emirates transferred from the Emirate of Dubai to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, and from the Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (Ulrichsen , 2017, p. 4). Since then, Abu Dhabi has played the most prominent role in decision-making at the level of foreign policy, with less role for the other six emirates, due to its limited political and economic power. Therefore, the effectiveness of the UAE's foreign policy is attributed to the regional ambition of this Emirate and its Crown Prince bin Zayed (Telci İ. N., 2020).

During this period, the priorities of the UAE's foreign policy gradually shifted from the commitment to Arab and Islamic issues under the founding father Zayed, to the involvement in the regional and international security interactions (Ulrichsen , 2017, p. 3). So, the hostility to the Islamic movements has begun to emerge in the UAE's domestic and foreign policy.

The Official Emirati recognition of the threat posed by the MB started in 1994, when the external activities of Al-Islah group, the local branch of the MB in the UAE, were suspended, its board of directors dissolved, and all of its branches were placed under the state's supervision (Hassan H. , 2018, p. 9). Thereafter, the 9/11 attacks in the United

States, in which two Emirati citizens were accused of the involvement, have been a crucial factor in intensifying the state's opposition to Islamic movements including the MB (Hellyer, 2014). Bin Zayed has adopted the most stringent position in this regard. So, he sought to develop a national security agency with the help of Fouad Allam, a former senior official in the Egyptian intelligence, who has security experience in dealing with the MB (Butter, 2020, p. 21). Thus, Abu Dhabi's hostile position towards the MB, has been one of the major security determinants of its foreign policy since 2011.

Arab Spring in 2011 got the UAE by surprise, fearing that the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak would lead to reinforcing Islamism in Egypt and in the Arab world (Filkins, 2018). So, the subsequent rise of the MB to power in Egypt in 2012, according to bin Zayed's vision, has been a threat to Abu Dhabi, due to his fears of its influence on its Emirati branch, Al-Islah, which he described as the most dangerous opposition group in the UAE. So, the Emirati authorities began taking tougher actions against Al-Islah in 2012 (Steinberg, 2020, p. 19). In early 2013, the UAE arrested Emirati members of the MB in charges of collecting secret information related to the Emirati defense and security apparatus (Hassan H. , 2018, p. 9) Based on the above, the UAE supported the overthrow of former Egyptian President Morsi in July 2013 (Filkins, 2018).

The previous developments have led to the establishment of a strategic alliance between the UAE and Egypt on the one hand, and the eruption of a regional conflict between the UAE and Turkey on the other. Thus, the UAE has had a major role in influencing the Egyptian-Turkish relations since 2013.

2.1.1. The Alliance Between the UAE and Egypt

The strategic alliance between the UAE and Egypt has emerged since July 2013, through two levels: the bilateral relations and regional cooperation.

A) Bilateral Relations

The bilateral relations between the UAE and Egypt have included political, security, and economic aspects. Politically, the UAE has been the most supporter of the new regime in Egypt. It has been the first state to recognize this regime, making international efforts to obtain international recognition of it through the speech delivered by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah bin Zayed, at the UN General Assembly in September 2013.

Abdullah bin Zayed was also the first Arab official to visit Egypt after the overthrow of Morsi, in August 2013 (Ismail, 2021). In the following month, September 2013, there was another visit by a high-level Emirati delegation led by Mohammed bin Zayed, followed by a similar visit by President Sisi in March 2014. It is worth noting that the meetings that brought together Sisi and bin Zayed, from 2014 to 2021, amounted to 25 meetings (Naseer, 2022). This is a huge figure showing the nature of the alliance between the two leaders and the depth of the political relations between the two countries during this period.

Regarding the security aspects, the security cooperation and coordination between the Egyptian and Emirati authorities has stemmed from their common hostility to the MB, designated by the two countries as a terrorist group, Egypt in December 2013 and the UAE in November 2014 (Reuters, 2014). In addition, some reports have indicated that the UAE has directly supported Egypt in the fight against ISIS in Sinai since 2014, by sending special forces to train and support their Egyptian counterpart (Steinberg, 2020, p. 20). There were several reciprocal visits between the security officials of the two countries. For instance, Egypt's interior minister Magdy Abdel Ghaffar met with his Emirati counterpart Saif bin Zayed in the UAE, in January 2015. On a follow-up visit, the two ministers met again in Cairo in December 2015 (Hassan H. , 2018, p. 12). Finally, although there is no official source of direct Emirati funding of Egyptian military procurement, its financial support has contributed to allocating resources for these procurements (Butter, 2020, p. 16). This security determinant has not only contributed to enhancing Egyptian-Emirati relations, but also pushed them to overcome their contradictory positions on some regional issues that emerged thereafter.

Economically, immediately after the overthrow of Morsi, the UAE provided Egypt with \$3 billion in aid (Worth, 2013). The volume of this financial aid between 2013 and 2019 amounted to more than \$20 billion, thus, it became the biggest foreign donor to Egypt under Sisi (Steinberg, 2020, p. 19). In 2021, the UAE was the biggest contributor to the Central Bank of Egypt deposits with \$5.7 billion, representing 14% of Egypt's total cash reserve of \$40.3 billion in March 2021. In addition, 19.4% of Egypt's total foreign debt of \$125.3 billion was a debt to UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, amounted to \$24.3 dollars (Fayed , 2021, p. 9).

After Egypt ended the IMF program in 2019, there was no longer an urgent need for Emirati direct financial support, but Egypt continued to depend on the UAE through trade, investment, tourism and remittances (Butter, 2020, p. 2). The volume of Egyptian workforce in the UAE estimated at 935,000, forming the second largest foreign community in the country (Harb, 2017, p. 4). They remitted \$3.4 billion to Egypt during the 2019/2020 fiscal year (Moamar, 2022).

Moreover, the UAE was the largest foreign investor in Egypt with a cumulative investment peaked about \$15 billion in 2019, through 900 Emirati companies operating in the Egyptian market (Amwal Al Ghad , 2019). These investments included many vital sectors such as telecommunications, maritime transport, ports, energy, real estate, food security, education, and health (Khalaf, 2020, p. 1). Finally, the volume of non-oil trade exchange between the two countries during 2020, amounted to 7 billion dollars, and the UAE represented Egypt's second largest trading partner at the Arab level, while Egypt was the fifth largest Arab trading partner for the UAE (Teller Report, 2021).

The balance of economic relations between the two countries has tilted in favor of the UAE, whether through its financial aid to Egypt since July 2013 and the subsequent debts on Egypt, the huge involvement of Emirati investments in vital sectors in the Egyptian economy, or the remittances of Egyptians worker in the UAE. So, although the decline of Egypt's need for Emirati financial support since 2019, the UAE continued to have the upper hand in its economic relationship with Egypt. This has been one of the reasons that helped the coherence and continuation of the alliance between the two countries, despite the differences between them on some regional issue in the last two years, 2020 and 2021.

B) Regional Cooperation

Within the framework of the regional cooperation between the UAE and Egypt, there were two distinguished phases: From July 2013 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2021. Regarding the first phase, and driven by the flaws in its power structure as a small state, exploiting the decline in Egyptian regional role, the UAE has aimed to depend on Egypt's capabilities as a regional power, in implementing its regional ambition. This objective was demonstrated through the talks that took place in 2014, in which the UAE

and Egypt participated, in addition to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and were focused on establishing a joint force for rapid reaction (Hendawi, 2014).

In its relation with Gulf allies, President Sisi has pursued the regional leadership's model of Mubarak, which was not a project of Arab unity as adopted by Nasser, but rather concentrated on Egypt's role as a guarantor of the regional stability and a defender of the sovereignty of Arab countries against non-Arab regional actors (Ranko & Monier , 2014, p. 62_63). In this context, Sisi presented Egypt to the Gulf states as a military deterrent power and a contributor to the regional balance in the face of the Iranian and Turkish influence in the region.

The strategic alliance between the UAE and Egypt was primarily a security alliance that dealt with MB, Turkey, and Qatar as sources of threat. Thus, this alliance emerged in Tunisia, Syria, Palestine, and more strongly in the Gulf, Libyan and the eastern Mediterranean crises.

As for the confrontation with Iran, Sisi adopted Mubarak's policy in dealing with Iran by emphasizing that Egypt's relations with Iran goes through the Gulf and that Egypt's security is closely linked to the security of the Gulf (Hassan H. , 2018, p. 5). However, Egypt did not involve in direct confrontation with Iran which was not considered a priority. So, there was no real Egyptian military contribution with its Saudi and Emirati allies in the Yemeni war, limited to sending a naval power to secure Bab al-Mandab strait (Butter, 2020, p. 19). Moreover, in April 2019, Cairo withdrew from the "Middle East Strategic Alliance" that Trump, under Emirati and Saudi pressure, formed, in order to avoid confrontation with Iran. (Karam, 2019). The previous stances showed that despite the great Emirati and Saudi support for Egypt, it was not willing to be a mere dependent, considering itself the most important regional power in the region (Steinberg, 2020, p. 20). This was emphasized since 2019 when Egypt restored its internal stability and thus its regional role.

Despite the dispute between Egypt and the UAE on some regional issue, and unlike Saudi Arabia, this has not negatively reflected on their relations. Egypt's relations under Sisi with the UAE have been more stable than its relations with Saudi Arabia, due to the Egyptian and Emirati agreement to prioritize confrontation with political Islam, in contrast to Saudi Arabia, that gave priority to Iran.

As for the period between 2020 and 2021, there were some geopolitical developments that disturbed Egypt from its Emirati ally. The most important of which were the Emirati normalization with Israel and the Emirati alliance with Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa.

Trump's announcement, in August 2020, that the UAE and Israel agreed to normalize their relations shocked most of the regional actors in the Middle East, as it was not just a political agreement, but rather a strategic alliance motivated by their geopolitical concerns (Telci, 2020). So, this alliance represented a threat to the regional balance which worried the regional powers in the region, including Egypt. Additionally, the UAE exceeded the limits of the cold peace as applied by Egypt and Jordan with Israel, for a warm peace that targeted to integrate Israel into the Arab social fabric, creating a rift in the traditional Arab view of this conflict.

Moreover, the 1979 peace treaty with Israel gave Egypt a significant regional influence, by being the main guarantor of the Middle East peace process and an appropriate mediator between Israelis and Palestinians for decades. However, the UAE's normalization with Israel presented it a competitor to Egypt in this issue, which enhanced the shift in the center of power in the Arab world from Egypt to the Gulf (Hassanein, 2020). In addition, the Israeli-Emirati plan to activate "Eilat-Ashkelon" pipeline represented a competitor to the Suez Canal, which prompted Egyptian officials to publicly express their concern (Hassan K. , 2021). There was another Israeli-Emirati plan to establish a joint naval force centered in the Red Sea, especially in Sudan, on the southern border of Egypt (Barak, 2021). According to this plan, the UAE would work as a gateway to Israeli expansion and involvement in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, which represents a threat to Egyptian national security.

As for the Emirati alliance with Ethiopia, Egypt considered that the UAE has not played its role as an ally in the crisis with Ethiopia on the Renaissance Dam, especially in the years of 2020 and 2021, which witnessed an escalation of this crisis. Rather, the UAE was the lifeblood of the Ethiopian side, whether through supporting it economically by billions of dollars (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or militarily by providing it with drones, enabling the Ethiopian authorities to regain control of the large part of the territories from the Tigrayan forces, by December 2021 (Walsh, 2021).

Finally, the Gulf and Libyan crises have been among the most regional issues that deepened the Egyptian-Emirati alliance. so, the cease of war in Libya in August 2020, the resolution of the Gulf crisis in January 2021, and the subsequent calming of the regional axes conflict had its impact on the two countries. Despite the continuity and survival of their alliance during 2021, driven by their solid security alliance in the face of the MB and the strategic economic partnerships in which they were engaged, it was no longer in the same degree of cohesion and solidarity that it had been in during the escalation of the axes conflict.

2.1.2. The Regional Conflict Between the UAE and Turkey

The Middle East has witnessed, since 2013 to 2021, a regional conflict between Turkey and the UAE. This section discusses its origins, tools, and scope.

A) The Origins of the Conflict

The UAE has realized, due to the Egyptian preoccupation with its internal conditions, and the Saudi focusing on the confrontation with Iran, that Turkey's regional influence was rising without resistance, thus, the UAE took the lead in the confrontation with it since 2013.

Despite the asymmetry between the UAE and Turkey at the level of power, as Turkey represents a regional power, whereas the UAE is a small state, there has been a balance between them at the level of regional roles. The UAE has exploited the regional conditions, since 2013, to establish a broad regional alliance, in addition to using the relative advantage it possesses in economy, to build soft and hard power. In this context, it has relied on a huge military budget to maximize its arms imports, establish military bases in various regions, and lobbying on Western capitals, endeavoring to gain their support by adopting “moderate Islamic discourse” (Telci İ. N., 2020). This has relatively enabled it to overcome and fix the shortcomings in its power, and then to play effective regional roles that surpassed the limits of this power.

The contrasting and competing narratives ideologically for Abu Dhabi represented in “moderation versus Islamism” and politically for Ankara represented in “competitive democracy versus authoritarian monarchy” has formed the basis of the conflict between them (Bianco & Aydıntaşbaş, 2021, p. 2). Thus, driven by political and ideological motives, a regional conflict has erupted between the two countries centered on the

regional leadership and influence in the Middle East, coinciding with relative decline of the international system's domination over the regional systems. Therefore, the opportunities of reshaping MERS by the regional actors have increased.

The initial motives of this conflict date back to the Arab spring which Turkey considered an opportunity to lead the region. With the arrival of its Islamist allies to power in Egypt and Tunisia, Turkey aimed to reshape the regional system, which worried the UAE, especially with its belief that the United States, at that time, was reluctant to interfere in the processes of the regional transformation, so Abu Dhabi presented itself as the leader of the moderation axis against the Islamist axis (Bianco & Aydıntaşbaş, 2021, p. 2_4).

The Emirati efforts paid off, for the first time, with its support of the overthrow of Morsi "Turkey's ally in Egypt", in July 2013 (Filkins, 2018). As a result, due to the regional weight of Egypt, the regional balance of power shifted in favor of the UAE, and Turkey became in a reaction position, after it had taken the lead in 2011. President Erdogan considered the overthrow of Morsi a warning that he might be next, and indeed in July 2016, Turkey witnessed a failed coup attempt, in which Turkey accused the UAE of involvement (England , Pitel, & Kerr, 2020). These developments made the regional conflict between the UAE and Turkey more serious, which its extent can be realized in the Turkish Defense Minister's threat to the UAE, in July 2020, to hold it accountable for its policy in the region, especially in Syria and Libya, which harms Turkish interests (Soylu , 2020).

B) Areas of the Conflict

The UAE and Turkey, relying on hard and soft power, have involved in a conflict included virtually the whole Middle East, from the Gulf in the east to the Arab Maghreb in the west, and from the Eastern Mediterranean in the north to the Horn of Africa in the south. The Emirati axis mainly included Saudi Arabia and Egypt, supported by Cyprus, Greece and Israel, whereas the Turkish axis only included Qatar. Thus, the UAE was able to compensate the gap between it and Turkey at the level of power through its broad regional alliance, while Turkey, as a regional power, depended on its self-capabilities and resources. This can show the difference between the regional role's tools of the regional powers and the other actors.

In the Libyan crisis, Turkey supported the Government of National Accord (GNA) and its forces in Western Libya against the UAE's allies in Eastern Libya led by General Khalifa Haftar. While Haftar was about to take control of Tripoli with military and logistical Emirati support, Turkey managed to hinder him in June 2020, by its direct military intervention supporting GNA's forces (Kekkili & Öztürk, 2020, p. 54). This enabled Turkey to strike a military balance between the East and the West, limiting Abu Dhabi's regional ambitions in Libya and in north Africa in general. In this crisis, Egypt allied with the UAE, however only in a limited and indirect fashion. Therefore, the UAE has emerged since 2014 as the most prominent supporter of Eastern Libya's forces (Butter, 2020, p. 18). Given the geography factor, Egypt was cautious, not to fully lose its ties with Western Libya.

In Tunisia, after the departure of Tunisian President Ben Ali, Turkey supported MB-leaning "Ennahda party", while the UAE supported Ennahda's opponents, particularly, the "Liberal Constitutional Movement". The last incident of the competition between the two countries in Tunisia, was in August 2021, when Tunisian President Kaiis Saied decided to assume executive power and freeze the Parliament in which Ennahda has the majority. While the UAE supported these decisions (Reuters, 2021), Turkey opposed them and considered them a coup and illegitimate (Sevencan, 2021). In this issue, Egypt shared the UAE in the hostility to Ennahda party, so it supported Kaiis Saied's last decisions (Ouanes , 2021).

In the Eastern Mediterranean, the UAE supported Cyprus and Greece in their disputes with Turkey. Although the UAE is not of the riparian countries in this region, it joined, as an observer, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), formed in 2019, by Egypt, with the aim of isolating Turkey, which was excluded (Sabry, 2020). As for the Gulf crisis, which erupted on June 5, 2017, by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain cutting their diplomatic ties with Qatar; Egypt supported Emirati side by cutting its relations with Qatar, while Turkey supported Qatar, politically, militarily and logistically, enabling it to withstand the crisis (Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2017).

In the Palestinian cause, Turkey has established a strategic relationship with " Hamas", through supporting it politically and hosting its members since 2013, after their departure from Syria and Egypt (Saleh, 2014). On the other hand, the UAE is hostile to

Hamas, and called on Western countries to classify Hamas as a terrorist group (The New Arab , 2021). Moreover, while the tension dominated Turkish-Israeli relations from 2010 to 2021, the UAE resorted to normalizing its relations with Israel in August 2020, through which the UAE aimed, within other objectives, to confront Turkey regionally. So, in response to this normalization, President Erdogan threatened to withdraw Turkey's ambassador to the UAE (England , Pitel, & Kerr, 2020). The Turkish-Emirati rivalry also emerged in the position on Donald Trump's peace plan in the Middle East, the so-called "Deal of the Century". Turkey strongly opposed the deal, considering it a waste of the rights of Palestinians (Daily Sabah, 2020). In contrast, the UAE supported the Deal and attended the conference during which the deal was announced in January 2020 (Tuncay & Can , 2020).

In this issue, Egypt shared the UAE its hostility to Hamas. It classified Hamas a terrorist movement in 2015, though it canceled this designation later and improved its relations with the movement in 2017 (Aljazeera, 2017). Also, Sisi, motivated by his desire to build strategic ties with Trump, reluctantly supported the "Deal of the Century" (Amin, 2020). Finally, Egyptian relations with Israel under Sisi improved, exceeding the level of cooperation that had brought the two countries together during Mubarak's era (Soliman M. , 2016).

In the Syrian crisis, Turkey supported the Syrian opposition in defending themselves and overthrowing the Syrian regime, providing them a safe political haven. With the expansion of the control of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in the northern Syria, Turkey's priority shifted to focus on creating a safe zone, clear of ISIS and YPG, through a number of military operations (Özdemir & Ataman, 2018, p. 20_30). As for the UAE, it was slightly supporter of the Syrian opposition before 2015, but after 2015, it started to gradually change its bias towards full support of the Syrian regime, until it reopened its embassy in Damascus in December 2018 (Amer , 2020, p. 4). One of the motivations of this shift was the UAE's desire to support the Syrian regime in the face of Turkey. Moreover, the UAE condemned the Turkish military operations launched in northern Syria. In this context, some estimates indicated that the UAE supported the YPG politically, economically, and logistically against Turkey (Ramani, 2019).

In this crisis, Egypt under Sisi announced its support for the Syrian regime (El-Kholy, 2016). It also opposed the Turkish military operations in northern Syria, providing support for the YPG politically and diplomatically (Abdel Zaher, 2019).

Finally, in the Horn of Africa, Turkey has supported the central government in Somalia, through the rehabilitation of the Somali army and building the largest Turkish military base abroad in 2017 (Coskun & Hussein, 2017). On contrast, the UAE has supported Somaliland, which seeks independence from Somalia. It trained the police and army there, in addition to building a military base at Berbera in 2017 (Cornwell, 2018). Additionally, the economic competition between The UAE and Turkey extended to Eritrea and Djibouti (Diab, 2020, p. 36_38). In this region, the disputes have dominated Egyptian Emirati relation. In addition to the Ethiopian issue, Egypt, unlike the UAE, has supported the unity of Somalia refusing the division of its territories (State Information Service). Moreover, there were Emirati efforts to find a seaport for Ethiopia in Somaliland directly near the Bab al-Mandab Strait (Arab News, 2018).

During the two years 2020 and 2021, the Middle East witnessed several geopolitical developments driven by the departure of Trump. The most important of which was the cease of war in Libya in August 2020, which has been the most dangerous area of conflict between Turkey and the UAE. It was followed by the resolution of the Gulf crisis in January 2021 and the subsequent restoration of the relations between several regional opponents. These developments have been inputs of the most important regional outputs, represented in calming the tension in Turkish-Emirati relations and halting their regional conflict by the end of 2021. Thus, Prince Mohammed bin Zayed visited Turkey in November 2021, for the first time in ten years (Soylu , 2021). During this visit, the UAE announced establishing a \$10 billion fund to support strategic investments in health and energy in Turkey (Yeni Şafak, 2022). This visit has indicated the intention of the two countries to put an end to the conflict that brought them against each other for nearly a decade.

2.1.3. Conclusion

From 2013 until 2021, the UAE has been the most prominent strategic ally for Egypt. During the same period, there has been a regional conflict between the UAE and Turkey, in which Egypt sided with the UAE. Although the Egyptian regime had its own

motives for the hostility with its Turkish counterpart, the regional conflict in which the UAE took the lead, deepened and prolonged the tension between Egypt and Turkey. Without such a conflict, the two countries could have overcome the crisis of tension in their bilateral relations resulting from the overthrow of Morsi in a shorter period. Indeed, due to its preoccupation with the internal situation after July 2013, Egypt was not capable alone to confront Turkey regionally, but rather it would have probably preferred calmness with Turkey to focus on achieving internal stability and building self-strength. However, the UAE provided Egypt with opportunity and resources for the confrontation with Turkey.

During the years 2020 and 2021, there have been several developments that contributed to the decline of the UAE's influence on Egyptian-Turkish relations. First, the decline of Egypt's need for Emirati direct financial support. Second, the Emirati regional policies that disturbed its Egyptian ally. Third, calming the regional conflicts as a result of stopping the war in Libya and resolving the Gulf crisis. These developments led to calming the tension between Egypt and Turkey, besides launching the negotiations to restore their diplomatic relations in 2021. Thus, Egypt preceded the UAE - and almost without coordination with it - in reforming its relations with Turkey, which may have prompted the UAE to precede Egypt by the actual and direct improvement of its relations with Turkey without any prior negotiation, to avoid being isolated regionally or being in a reaction situation.

There was no positive impact of the improvement in Turkish-Emirati relations on the relations between Egypt and Turkey, where they failed to restore their full diplomatic relations until the end of 2021, especially that this step was not taken within the framework of coordination between the Egyptians and Emiratis. On the contrary, it seems that the UAE's restoration of the relations with Turkey disturbed its Egyptian ally, because Turkey, through this step, reinforced its negotiating position in the face of Egypt on restoring the relations, which also include the negotiations on the disputed regional issues.

2.2. Qatar

Since Qatar gained its independence in 1971 under Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad, to 1995, it faced - as a small country - a security dilemma due to its location neighboring two

powerful countries: Saudi Arabia and Iran. During this period, Qatar remained inactive in regional and international affairs, focusing on its internal affairs (Polat, 2020, p. 682). When Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa became Emir of Qatar in 1995, he began developing an effective foreign policy. For this reason, he established Al-Jazeera channel to be the main tool of Qatari soft power. Then, to get rid of Saudi security guardianship, he struck a balance between it and Iran, as well as formed a strategic alliance with US, that was more consolidated after September 11 attacks, by building the most important US military base in the region in Al Udeid by 2002 (Bakir, 2019, p. 198_199).

Qatar's relation with the MB dates back to the early 1950s, as it welcomed them due to its need for human capital, especially in the modern and religious educational sector. Thus, the MB's scholars, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, have been very influential in the educational system and all bureaucratic institutions in Qatar throughout the period of state formation (Çavuşoğlu, 2020, p. 93). Since then, Qatar is considered the only Gulf country that has maintained constant friendly relations with the MB without any damage. There has been an implicit agreement between the two sides that MB would not engage in any activity that could destabilize the Qatari political system (Başkan, 2016, p. 58_68).

While Qatar's regional role before 2011 was only focused on mediation in regional conflicts, promoting positive neutrality policy, it shifted, under the 2011 Arab Spring, to the intervention into regional interactions, by supporting the wave of political change in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, depending on its strategic relation with MB, in which it had invested for decades.

When Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad assumed power from his father in June 2013, he reconsidered Qatar's foreign policy, stressing the continuation of its regional role, albeit in a calm and less confrontational manner than under his father. He has aimed to reform Qatar's relations with the Gulf states and restore its traditional role in regional and international mediation (Ulrichsen K. C., 2014, p. 19_20). However, a month after Tamim assuming the power, Qatar's ally in Egypt (MB) was overthrown in July 2013. This has been a real test for the new Emir.

Based on the above, during the period from 2013 to 2021, there has been a strategic alliance between Qatar and Turkey, whereas Qatar's relations with Egypt worsened as the tension dominated these relations during the same period, with the exception of 2021.

2.2.1. The Alliance Between Qatar and Turkey

The alliance between Qatar and Turkey has been primarily formed since 2011, then it became well-established and strategic since 2014, through two levels: bilateral relations and regional cooperation.

A) Bilateral Relations

The bilateral relations between Qatar and Turkey have included political, security and economic aspects. For political aspects, the political relations between the two countries have been further reinforced through the strong relationship that brought together President Erdogan and Emir Tamim, who met nearly thirty times between 2013 and 2021 (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 4_5). In 2013, Erdogan inaugurated the new headquarters of the Turkish Embassy in Doha, and when he assumed the presidency in 2014, Qatar was his first visit in the Arab region (Youssef A. , 2021).

Moreover, in the face of a hostile geopolitical environment after 2013, Turkey and Qatar resorted to reinforcing their relations by establishing the Supreme Strategic Committee (SSC) in December 2014. In the following year, December 2015, Erdogan and Tamim, met to attend the first meeting of SSC. (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 4_5). The last meeting between the two leaders was in December 2021, as Erdogan visited Qatar to attend the seventh meeting of the SSC (Duran , 2021), which came after Bin Zayed's visit to Turkey in November 2021. Thus, it represented an opportunity for Erdogan to emphasize the continuity and importance of the strategic alliance with Qatar, regardless of any geopolitical developments.

As for the security aspects, in 2014, a military cooperation agreement was signed, paving the way for Turkey and Qatar to engage into a comprehensive strategic alliance, and to strengthen their military relations, whether at the level of military training, defense industries, joint exercises, or the deployment of military forces between the two countries (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 5). This led, in October 2015, to Turkey's deployment of combat group including 300 soldiers in Qatar, in order to support the two countries'

geopolitical ambitions in the Middle East, and to balance the influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Gulf region (Polat, 2020, p. 683). This was already applied in the Gulf crisis, during which Turkey reinforced its military presence in Qatar, to deter any possible military action against it.

Moreover, since 2017, Qatar purchased modern military equipment from Turkey, including modern tanks, armored combat vehicles and modern self-propelled howitzers, until Qatar became the fourth biggest importer of Turkish military equipment, with a worth of \$139 million. And in 2018, Qatar purchased 49.9 percent stake in BMC, a Turkish armored vehicle manufacturer (Yüksel & Tekineş, 2021, p. 19). Finally, Turkey is set to secure the 2022 World Cup, which will be held in Qatar, to ensure its success (Al-Rantisi, 2021, p. 2). Qatar's choice of Turkey for this task instead of any other Arab country indicates the extent of trust between the two countries which stems from the strength of their strategic alliance throughout the second decade of the 21s century.

Economically, the SSC has contributed to enhancing the economic cooperation between the two countries. During the seven meetings of SSC, from 2014 to 2021, 67 cooperation agreements were signed in military, industrial, commercial, cultural, religious, and social fields (Al-Rantisi, 2021, p. 2_3). Thanks to the strength of alliance between the two countries, Qatar played a significant role in the economic crisis that Turkey experienced during the period from January to November 2018, as a result of US sanctions. In this context, Emir of Qatar visited Turkey in August 2018, to meet President Erdogan and pledged a package of investments and deposits totaling \$15 billion, as well as a \$3 billion credit line to support the Turkish economy (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 2_3).

The volume of trade between the two countries amounted to two billion dollars in 2021. Additionally, according to 2021 data, there were more than 179 Qatari companies in Turkey that invest more than \$33 billion while more than 600 Turkish companies operated in Qatar, specifically in the fields of construction and infrastructure (Al-Rantisi, 2021, p. 2). The volume of trade between the two countries is very large given the small size of Qatar.

B) Regional Cooperation

Qatar has been the only country which lined up with Turkey in a regional alliance facing the alliance of UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, since 2013. However, the indications of this alliance began before that, in 2011, when the two countries supported the political change in the region. In this context, Turkey and Qatar have considered the rise of MB in Egypt and Tunisia as an opportunity to reap the profits of their investment in the relationship with them throughout the previous decades and to consolidate their geopolitical positioning in the Middle East (Başkan, 2016, p. 99). Thus, the two countries have been the main ally for Egypt during Morsi's era, and when Morsi was overthrown in July 2013, both countries condemned it, and supported MB in the face of the new Egyptian regime (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 4). Since then, the regional alliance between Turkey and Qatar has gained a significant boost, which emerged in the Syrian, Libyan, Afghan, Gulf, Failed Coup in Turkey, and Khashoggi's murder crises, as well as in the Palestinian cause and in the Horn of Africa.

In the Syrian crisis, Qatar agreed with Turkey that Bashar al-Assad must leave, then the two countries provided logistical, military, financial and diplomatic support to the opposition, in order to topple al-Assad (Başkan, 2016, p. 93). After the Turkish priority shifted to the confrontation with the YPD in northern Syria, Qatar announced its support for Turkey in this confrontation (Daily Sabah, 2019). When the Arab League issued its resolution, in October 2019, condemning the Turkish military intervention in Syria, Qatar had reservations about it (Nasr, 2019). As for the Libyan crisis, there has been a total understandings in the Qatari-Turkish positions on the Libyan crisis. They have been the main supporter of the Tripoli-based GNA since its formation in 2015, and provided it military, logistical, and political support against the forces of Eastern Libya (Yüksel & Tekineş, 2021, p. 21_24).

The failed coup attempt and the Gulf crisis have been existential threats for Turkey and Qatar, leading them to reinforcing their strategic alliance on one hand and deepening the regional axes conflict on the other. On July 15, 2016, Turkey witnessed a military coup attempt that was quickly thwarted. Qatar condemned this attempt, and Emir of Qatar was the first leader to call President Erdogan in the coup night, offering his country's support. At the end of July, Qatari Foreign Minister was the first foreign official to visit

Turkey after the coup attempt (Bakir, 2019, p. 207). On the other hand, On June 5, 2017, the Gulf crisis erupted with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt announcing severing the diplomatic and economic relations with Qatar. In response to this crisis, Turkey deployed forces at its military base in Doha, and sent shipments of food, water, and medicine by air and sea (Al-Sharqawi , 2019, p. 5). Therefore, Turkey's support for Qatar in this crisis, has been decisive in the path of the crisis and Qatar's steadfastness until it ended in January 2021.

Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder in October 2018, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, caused a tension in Turkish-Saudi relations. Despite the Saudi insistence that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was unaware of this incident, this narrative was not persuasive for Turkey (Khazar , 2019, p. 104). This incident coincided with the rise of the regional conflict due to the impact of the Gulf crisis. Therefore, Qatar took advantage of Khashoggi's murder to support its ally Turkey and its narrative in this crisis, in addition to confront its Saudi regional opponent. In this context, Al-Jazeera and its coverage of the incident has been the main Qatari tool in this crisis. By intensifying this coverage, Al-Jazeera sought to direct public opinion against Saudi Arabia in general and Mohammed bin Salman in particular, pointing to Bin Salman's role in masterminding the incident (Salameh, 2019, p. 73_74).

In the Palestinian cause, Qatar has shared Turkey the same position through four points. First, it has established a strategic relation with Hamas, as Doha was the main financial and economic supporter of Gaza Strip (Jesner, 2021). Second, Qatar did not support Trump's peace plan in the Middle East that serves the Israeli vision (Yellinek, 2019). Third, it did engage in the wave of Gulf normalization with Israel, ruling out the possibility of taking this step in the absence of commitment to a two-state solution (i24NEWS, 2021). Four, during the Israeli attack on Gaza in July 2014, Qatar rejected the ceasefire initiative proposed by Egypt which was supported by the Arab League and Security Council, launching a counter initiative in cooperation with Turkey (Afify, 2015).

In the Horn of Africa, Qatar and Turkey have supported the Somali central government in Mogadishu, by Doha focusing on the economic support whereas Ankara focused on security support, in contrast to the UAE's support of the separatist region of Somaliland

(Yüce & Karaca, 2017, p. 22). Finally, the regional coordination and cooperation between Qatar and Turkey extended in the Middle East to Afghanistan. After Taliban movement took control of the capital Kabul, Doha and Ankara worked together to arrange the internal situation in Afghanistan in order to achieve stability and security, especially by providing humanitarian aid, mediation between the movement and the United States, and rehabilitating Kabul International Airport (Najjar, 2021).

Based on the above, it can be said that the strategic alliance between Turkey and Qatar, whether at the level of bilateral relations or the regional cooperation, has been unique. Throughout the period from 2011 to 2021, the Turkish-Qatari relations hasn't experienced any inter-crisis, as the levels of their political, security and economic relations remained high. They have also maintained their coordination in the regional policies. This is rare in a volatile geopolitical environment such as the Middle East.

2.2.2. The Tension in Qatari-Egyptian Relations

As a result of the historical strategic relations between Qatar and MB, Qatari-Egyptian relations reached its peak of improvement during Morsi's era. Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa was the first Gulf leader to visit Egypt in August 2012, since Morsi's election, providing two billion dollars in aid. Qatar has become the largest donor to Egypt under Morsi, with a total aid of \$8 billion. In September 2012, Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jasim visited Egypt, announcing Qatar's plan to invest \$18 billion in tourism and industrial projects (Başkan, 2016, p. 99_104).

Thus, it was expected that Qatari-Egyptian relations would worsen after the overthrow of former president Morsi. In this context, the bilateral relations between the two countries can be tracked through two phases: From July 2013 to December 2020 during which the tension has dominated, and from January 2021 to December 2021, which witnessed a calming of the tension and an improvement in the relations.

A) Domination of Tension (July 2013- December 2020)

Regarding the political relations, the first official Qatari statement after the overthrow of Morsi confirmed that its support was for Egypt, not for a particular group (Ulrichsen C. C., 2017, p. 21). However, this was not reflected on the ground, since Morsi's

overthrow has not been an internal issue, but rather an issue related to the regional balances between the Qatari-Turkish alliance in the face of the UAE-Saudi alliance.

Therefore, Qatar continued its support to MB's members, whether by hosting them on its territory or providing them a media platform (Al Jazeera) as an instrument to confront the new regime in Egypt (Ulrichsen C. C., 2017, p. 22). Al Jazeera's coverage of the events in Egypt has been a major reason for tension between Qatar and Egypt. So, Egyptian security in July 2013, raided Al Jazeera's office and suspended the channel's broadcasting from Egypt (Reuters, 2013). In September 2013, the authorities expelled a number of the channel's crew from Egypt (Reuters , 2013). Then, it arrested another group of them in December 2013 (King, 2015). As a result, in January 2016, Al Jazeera lodged a claim with the World Bank's arbitration body, against the Egyptian government for causing damages, no less than 150 million dollars (Al-jazeera, 2016).

In another sign of worsening the relations, Egypt decided, in September 2013, to return \$2bn deposited by Qatar in its central bank after the failure of negotiations to convert it into a three-year bond (Saleh H. , 2013). Moreover, In December 2013, the Egyptian government classified MB as a terrorist group. Qatar condemned this decision, promoting Egypt to summon the Qatari ambassador in Cairo in January 2014 (Alarabiya, 2014). The crisis exacerbated when the countries of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar in March 2014, due to the continuation of its support for MB (Kirkpatrick, 2014).

At the end of that year, there was a partial reconciliation after the departure of the prominent MB leaders from Qatar in September 2014 (Mourad, 2014). Then, in December 2014, President Sisi received Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman the Assistant Minister of Qatari Foreign Affairs. Two days after this visit, Al Jazeera announced the suspension of its Egypt-dedicated channel, Al Jazeera Mubashir Misr. However, this reconciliation was halted by the death of King Abdullah in January 2015 (Butter, 2020, p. 21_22).

Thus, the tension between the two countries escalated again, which its primary indications emerged in February 2015, when Qatar recalled its ambassador from Egypt, after Egypt's representative to the Arab League accused Qatar of supporting terrorism, because of Qatar's reservations about military strikes carried out by Egypt in Libya

(BBC, 2015). Despite the return of Qatari ambassador to Egypt in April 2015, Egypt announced that it is still considering the return of its ambassador to Doha (Afify, 2015). It is worth noting that during this phase from July 2013 to December 2020, there was no official meeting between Sisi and Tamim, except for three meetings, all of which came on the sidelines of other occasions, the first was in March 2015 when Sisi received Tamim to attend the Arab Summit in Cairo, the second was in November 2015 on the sidelines of the climate conference in Paris, and the third was in March 2016, at the conclusion of military exercises in Saudi Arabia (Dalloul, 2016, p. 121_122).

The decisive phase in the tension of Qatari-Egyptian relations was during the Gulf crisis. Since then, the tension between the two countries escalated, acquiring more obvious regional dimension than before. The tension did not end until the end of this crisis in January 2021.

As for the economic relations, it can be addressed in this phase through two sub-periods: from July 2013 to June 2017 and from June 2017 to December 2020. In the first period, except the deposits Qatar got back, the other aspects of economic cooperation have not been significantly affected by the political tension. The volume of Qatari cumulative investments in Egypt in 2016 reached \$5 billion, through 200 companies operating in Egypt (Arabi21, 2017). The volume of non-oil trade between the two countries increased from 277 million dollars in 2013 to 395 million dollars in 2014 (Planning and Statistics Authority).

In the second period, after the Gulf crisis erupted in June 2017, Qatar provided reassurances regarding the situation of 250,000 Egyptian workers, who contribute a large share of remittances to Egypt, while the governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, stated that the Qatari investments in Egypt would not be affected (Butter, 2020, p. 22). So, during this period, Qatar's investments in Egypt, estimated \$5 billion, has continued. It also maintained major Egyptian projects totaling \$3 billion, and Qatar Petroleum contributed with major stake (\$4.4 billion) to the Egyptian Refining Company, launched in 2019 (Nour, 2021). However, the volume of trade has been heavily affected, as it amounted to only \$23.7 million in 2019 while Egyptian exports to Qatar decreased from \$300 million in 2014 to just two hundred thousand dollars in

2019 (Al-Wali , 2021). This is attributed to the fact that the Gulf crisis has included cutting the economic relations, such as the diplomatic one.

B) Restoration of Relations (January 2021- December 2021)

On January 5, 2021, the Gulf countries and Egypt signed Al-Ula Declaration at the conclusion of the GCC Summit, to put an end to the Gulf crisis (Khalid, 2021). Since then, the Egyptian-Qatari relations has gradually began to return and improve.

Regarding the political relations, two weeks after the Al-Ula summit, Egypt and Qatar agreed on January 21, to resume diplomatic relations by early March. The countries' foreign ministers met in Cairo on the sidelines of an Arab League meeting (Nour, 2021). After agreeing on resuming diplomatic relations, the two countries formed the Egyptian-Qatari Follow-up Committee to improve and enhance cooperation between them. Throughout 2021, the committee held seven official meetings, the last of which was on September 14 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Qatar, 2021). The relations reached an advanced level, with the visit of Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman to Cairo on May 25, to meet President Sisi and his Foreign Minister. Three days after the visit, bin Abdul Rahman stated, "Al-Sisi represents the elected legitimacy in Egypt". On July 13, the Egyptian Foreign Minister made a similar visit to Qatar, where he met Emir Tamim and his foreign minister (Sabry, 2021).

The improvement of Egyptian- Qatari relations culminated with the mutual appointment of ambassadors. Egypt appointed Amr El-Sherbini as Extraordinary Ambassador to Qatar on June 23, then Qatar appointed Salem bin Mubarak Al Shafi as Extraordinary Ambassador to Egypt on July 23 (Shalhoub , 2021). Then, on August 28, Tamim met Sisi in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, on the sidelines of the Baghdad Conference on Cooperation and Partnership (Ahram, 2021). In this positive atmosphere, the Egyptian Foreign Minister stated on October 5 that the relations with Qatar are progressing well (Egypt Independent, 2021).

The improvement of Egyptian- Qatari bilateral relations reflected on the regional coordination between the two countries. For instance, there was clear coordination between Cairo and Doha during the Israeli war on Gaza in May 2021, as the two countries cooperated to reach a ceasefire that ended the war. In the following month, Qatar intensified its efforts to mediate in the crisis of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam,

then the Arab League held a meeting in Qatar in June 2021, to discuss this crisis, during which, Qatari Foreign Minister affirmed that there is a united Arab position, calling for a just settlement for all parties (Cafiero , 2021).

As for the economic relations, during Al-Ula summit, an official Qatari delegation, led by the Qatar's Finance Minister arrived at Egypt to open a \$1.3 billion luxury hotel in Cairo (Nour, 2021). Then, On January 19, 2021, Egypt and Qatar resumed flights to the two countries' capitals after suspending more than three years (Ahram, 2021). Moreover, in December 2021, Shell Exploration and Production corporation signed an agreement with the state-owned Qatar Energy Company, according to which Qatar Energy would acquire a 17% stake in each of the two concessions (Block 3 and Block 4), which are operated by Shell in the Egyptian Red Sea region (Sabry, 2021). Finally, the volume of non-oil trade between the two countries during the year 2021 reached approximately 66 million dollars (Planning and Statistics Authority). Consequently, the restoration of political and diplomatic relations was not reflected much on the volume of trade between the two countries until the end of 2021.

2.2.3. Conclusion

During the period from 2013 to 2021, there has been a strategic alliance bringing Qatar and Turkey together, whereas the tension has dominated Qatar- Egyptian relations except for 2021. Therefore, Qatar's influence on Egyptian- Turkish relations has generally emerged through its alliance with Turkey in all conflict areas in the Middle East, in the face of the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia since 2013. This influence has in particular and heavily emerged through the Gulf crisis, as Turkey, based on its strategic alliance with Qatar, involved in this crisis against Egypt which sided with its Emirati and Saudi allies, motivated by its strained relations with Qatar. So, with resolving the Gulf crisis and the subsequent return of Qatari- Egyptian relations, the regional environment, during 2021, became more conducive for Egypt and Turkey to calming the tension between them.

CHAPTER III: IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

Institutionalization refers to a set of rules, norms, and procedures that actors accept as a legitimate framework for their interactions within the regional system. The institutional level includes an organizational aspect represented in (global or regional) international organizations and a legal aspect related to treaties and agreements (Sleem, 2002, p. 21). In this context, the League of Arab States (LAS) as an organizational aspect and the 2014 Military Cooperation Agreement between Turkey and Qatar as a legal aspect will be addressed, and, then, how they impacted Egyptian-Turkish relations.

3.1. The League of Arab States (LAS)

Although the weakness of international organizations as a result of its limited authority and resources compared to states, they are considered platforms for political dialogue through which states present their visions on international and regional issues, seeking to reach agreement on them. States also resort to these organizations to implement their foreign policy, whether to legitimize their demands, to mobilize member states on their side, or to put pressure on their opponent (Sleem, 2002, p. 22). In the context of the organizational aspect of institutionalization, the Middle East region lacks a regional international organization that includes all its members to regulate and govern their behavior, as the basis on which MERS has arisen is the intensity of the regular and interrelated interaction between its members, not on a national level or a regional organization.

However, within MERS there are several regional organizations that consist of some of Middle East states such as the League of Arab States (LAS) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Under the absence of a comprehensive regional organization for MERS, the thesis will depend on LAS as a regional sub-organization within MERS, which include most of the MERS member (Arab countries) and had influence on Egyptian-Turkish relations.

3.1.1. LAS: Structure and Effectiveness

In October 1944, the Alexandria Protocol was signed by Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Transjordan, and Lebanon, paving the way for the formation of the League of Arab

States (LAS) in March 1945, through signing the League Charter by the five countries in addition to North Yemen and Saudi Arabia (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 45). Over time, the League's membership increased until it reached 22 members by November 2011 (Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait , Oman, Djibouti, Mauritania, and Comoros) (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 5). Whereas Turkey and Eritrea obtained non-voting observer status in the organization (Pinfari, 2016, p. 5), Arab identity of the state, not geography, was the determinant of joining or excluding of membership (Al Sharq Starategic Research , 2020, p. 57).

A) Structure of LAS

The Charter of LAS consists of twenty articles related to the objectives of the League, its institutions, and the relations among its member states. It can be amended with the approval of two thirds of the Member States (State Information Service). The charter set three main objectives: reinforcing the relations between member states, coordinating the policies to maximize cooperation, and promoting the welfare and interests of the Arab states (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 45).

LAS includes three main bodies: the League Council, Secretariat-General and the permanent councils. The League Council consists of the presidents, foreign ministers and permanent delegates of the member states. The Council is convened regularly at the level of Summit (Presidents) once a year in March and it can hold extraordinary sessions in urgent events. While it is convened at the ministerial level in two ordinary sessions in March and September of each year, it can also hold extraordinary sessions in urgent events. The ordinary sessions at the level of ministers begin with a meeting at the level of delegates (LAS_Official Website, p. 95_104). As for the Secretariat-General, it is headed by the Secretary-General, who, according to Article 12 of the Charter, is appointed with the approval of two-thirds of the members, and he is the official representative of the League in all international forums (State Information Service).

Regarding the permanent councils, there are several councils, such as the Joint Defense Council, Economic and Social Council, Council of Arab Economic Unity, Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, and the Arab Parliament. (Pinfari, 2016, p. 4). Finally, LAS is the oldest regional international organizations, and despite

its weakness in the recent years, it still maintains its institutional structures and periodic meetings.

B) Effectiveness of LAS

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been the central issue on which the LAS concentrated its efforts since its establishment in 1945. However, in 1949, Paul Seabury criticized the League for its failure to support the Palestinian cause during the 1948-1949 war, noting that most of the League's tasks have been abandoned due to lack of resources (Pinfari, 2016, p. 7). In this context, the League permanently adopts the two-state solution for the Palestinian cause, and rejects any proposal undermines this solution. So, in February 2020, it condemned and rejected Trump's Middle East peace plan (Time of Israel , 2020).

Since international organizations' major purpose is ensuring peace and cooperation between states, their effectiveness can be measured by the extent to which they contribute to mediating and resolving regional and international conflicts. In this context, according to a study conducted in 2009, on 56 regional conflicts and crises between 1945 and 2008 in the Arab region, LAS mediated only in 19 conflicts and succeeded to resolve five of them, while it was the main reason for the resolution in only one conflict: the Lebanese presidential crisis from 2007 to 2008. Moreover, LAS has intervened just in 5 of 22 major civil wars since 1945, which could be attributed to the nature of the League Charter, giving a priority to the principle of sovereignty and non-interference (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 48). The previous figures are obviously weak, reflecting the weakness of the League's effectiveness.

The Arab Spring in 2011 represented a turning point in the role of LAS. While the League had tended to a traditional vision preferring the policies of status quo and ignoring the demands of the citizens for the democratic changes, this vision, at least ostensibly, relatively changed with the Syrian and Libyan revolutions in 2011 (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 3). In Libya, the League condemned the Gaddafi regime confronting the protestors with military instrument, issuing a decision to suspend Libya's membership in February 2011, and calling on the Security Council to impose a no-fly zone on Libya to protect civilians (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 4).

The Syrian and Libyan revolutions in 2011 represented the peak of LAS' intervention in the Arab Spring. Regarding the Syrian revolution, 18 of the 22 Arab countries voted to suspend Syria from the League and impose economic and political sanctions on it, in addition to appealing to the member states to withdraw their ambassadors from Damascus (Shenker & Batty , 2011). As a result of Syria's refusal to comply with the LAS' calls to stop the violence against the protesters, the League submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council in January 2012, calling on Al-Assad to step down and transfer power. However, it hadn't proceeded due to a Russian and Chinese veto (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 49). The League also recognized the Syrian opposition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, giving it the country's official seat during the summit meeting in Doha, in March 2013 (BBC, 2013). Due to the failure of the opposition to overthrow Al-Assad's regime, starting to partially regain its power since 2015, there have been calls since 2018, to readmit Syria in the League, but such a step has not been taken place yet (Sergie & Masters , 2020).

There have been some motivations for the relative shift in the League's role at this phase. First, the Arab Spring has destabilized the balance of powers in the region, becoming more vulnerable to external intervention. Thus, the League's intervention became an urgent need. Second, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan have caused problems for Western countries at the level of legitimacy and credibility. Under these circumstances, the existence of a regional organization, with which Western countries could coordinate their regional policies, has become important (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 4). Finally, the rising Gulf influence on the League's decisions under Egyptian preoccupation with its internal affairs after the departure of Mubarak. Therefore, the League's position on the Syrian and Libyan revolutions could be seen as an extension of the Gulf position.

The main reason for the ineffectiveness or weakness of LAS is attributed to the nature of its emergence, as Ali al-Din Hilal and Jamil Matar argue. The League was established with the encouragement of Britain, not to achieve the Arab nationalist ambition, but rather to transfer the nationalist initiative from the popular level to Arab governments, to be under control, enabling European powers to contain the aspirations of the nationalists without achieving it (Hilal & Matar , 2001, p. 167_168).

So, the League's charter insisted on the principles of respect the independence and sovereignty of the member states and the freedom of each state to pursue its own foreign policy, while it ignored any mention for the Arab unity or the collective security system (Al Sharq Starategic Research , 2020, p. 55). Within the twenty articles of the charter, the state's sovereignty is explicitly mentioned 22 times (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 46). Moreover, The League does not have the power to force member states to comply with its resolutions, as the Charter states that resolutions are issued unanimously, while resolutions adopted by a majority of votes are just binding for states that voted in favor of them (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 5). The principle of sovereignty has weakened the League, as the relationship between the regional integration and state-building since the establishment of the League coincided with the early phases of building the Arab nation-state after independence. So, the political elites of these countries have been torn between the need to assert their independence and the desire to rely on Arab nationalism as a collective identity. (Pinfari, 2016, p. 2).

Accordingly, the League has emerged bearing three contradictions: Arab nationalist orientation, logic of nation-state and sovereignty, and prominent international intervention. Since its establishment, the League has been in a struggle between these three wills. Hence, its resolutions must not contradict with the doctrine of Arab nationalism, must not exceed the sovereignty of member states, and it is always exposed to interference from the international environment to influence Arab balances (Hilal & Matar , 2001, p. 168).

3.1.2. Egypt and LAS

Egypt's relationship with LAS is so strong to the extent that it has been able to use the League in the crisis of its relations with Turkey during the period from 2013 to 2021.

A) Egypt's Influence in LAS

Egypt has special influence in LAS for several factors. First, the relationship between Egypt and the League dates back before its establishing. The "Alexandria Protocol" constituted the basic document on which the League Charter was coined as well as the charter was approved at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry headquarters in March 1945. Second, the first Secretary-General of the League was the Egyptian diplomat Abdel Rahman Azam, and seven of the eight who took over the position of Secretary-General

were Egyptian citizens (Abdul Rahman Azzam, 1945 – 1952; Mohamed Abdel Khaleq Hassouna, 1952 – 1972; Mahmoud Riad, 1972 – 1979; Ahmed Esmat Abdel Majid, 1991 – 2001; Amr Moussa, 2001 – 2011; Nabil El Arabi, 2011 – 2016; and Ahmed Abou Gheit, 2016 until now) (State Information Service).

Third, the Egyptian capital Cairo is the permanent headquarters of the League, which reveals Egypt's sociopolitical weight in the Arab region (Hedstrom, 2020, p. 46). Fourth, each member was contributing to the League's budget based on the number of its citizens working at the League, so Egypt was paying 65% of the League's \$64 million budget, representing the percentage of Egyptian employees at the League (Megahid, 2017). However, a new system has been set, as six Arab countries with the largest national income, including Egypt, pay most of the budget (Al-Amin , 2020). The budget is one of the most important instruments for countries to gain influence in such organizations.

Accordingly, Egypt played its first dominant role in LAS under Nasser's rule in the 1950s and 1960s, to the extent the League was an extension or tool of Egyptian government, which worried some Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia. With Nasser's death, then the 1973 war and the following oil crisis, Egypt lost its dominant position in the League with the rising influence of the Gulf countries (Al Sharq Starategic Research , 2020, p. 56). Due to Egypt's signing of the Camp David Accord with Israel, its membership in the League was suspended, and the League's headquarters was transferred to Tunisia in 1979. However, as a result of its anti-Iraq stance and support of the Gulf countries during the second Gulf War, Egypt was readmitted to the League and the headquarters returned to Cairo in October 1990 (Küçükkeleş, 2012, p. 3). Consequently, under the recent developments, the Gulf influence in LAS, especially Saudi Arabia, became a competitor to Egypt.

Finally, the effectiveness of Egyptian regional role affects its influence in the League. So, due to the decline of Egypt's regional role after 2011, the Gulf influence in the League escalated more at the expense of Egypt, which explains the League's positions on the Syrian and Libyan revolutions in 2011, which were in line with the Gulf positions. With Egypt partially restoring its regional role since 2019, it also started to regain its active role in the League.

B) LAS' Role in the Egyptian-Turkish Crisis

Egypt has used LAS as a tool in its crisis with Turkey, especially since 2019, whether through the meetings of the League Council at the level of ministers and delegates, Ministerial Committee's concern with following up on the Turkish policy, or the Arab Parliament focusing on Turkish military interventions in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

- The meetings of the League Council

First comes the extraordinary meeting sessions. In this context, there have been four extraordinary meetings held on Turkey during the period from 2013 to 2021. In December 2015, there was a meeting, at the level of foreign ministers, chaired by the UAE, responding to an Iraqi call, regarding Turkey's deployment of military troops near Mosul. The meeting condemned this step, considering it a "violation of Iraq's sovereignty and a threat to its national security", and demanded Turkey to withdraw its forces (LAS_Official Website , 2015, p. 3).

In October 2019, a new meeting was held at the level of foreign ministers, responding to Egyptian call, chaired by Iraq, regarding the Turkish military operation in Syria: Peace Spring. The outcomes of its resolution included the following: condemning the military operation and considering it a "hostility against Syria and a threat to Arab national security", calling on Turkey for stopping the operation and the Security Council for taking the necessary measures to end this operation, considering taking economic and diplomatic punitive measures against Turkey, and forming a ministerial committee to follow up on the Turkish policy in the Arab region (LAS_Official Website, 2019, p. 2_3). Qatar and Somalia had reservations about this resolution, prompting Egypt's Foreign Minister to state that "The Qatari reservation puts Qatar in one trench with the aggressor..." (Alarabiya, 2019). Turkey strongly condemned this resolution, stressing that it does not express the Arab peoples (Ataman, 2019).

In December 2019, the Council was convened at the level of permanent delegates, chaired by Iraq, at the request of Egypt, in response to Turkey's deployment of military forces in Libya supporting the Tripoli-based GNA. The meeting resulted in emphasizing the unity and sovereignty of Libya, rejecting of any sort of external intervention, and emphasizing support of the political process through the full implementation of Al Skhirat Agreement (LAS_Official Website, 2019, p. 2).

The last extraordinary meeting related to Turkey was in June 2020, which held at the level of foreign ministers, chaired by Oman, also at the request of Egypt, to discuss the situation in Libya. The meeting emphasized the same outcomes of the previous meeting, in addition to welcoming all international and regional initiatives, aimed to stopping the military operations and resuming the political process in Libya (LAS_Official Website, 2020, p. 2_3). This meeting coincided with the forces of GNA regaining control of large parts of western Libya by Turkish support (Aljazeera, 2020). This explains the statement's call for halting the military operations, fearing of extending GNA's control to the East including the city of Sirte, which Egyptian side considered a "red line".

Second, regarding the ordinary sessions, which are periodic meetings, held twice a year, in March and September, at the ministerial level, with a semi-fixed agenda, in which the Palestinian cause places a priority, with a probable addition of any critical and strategic development to the agenda. For Turkey, it has become continuously included within the agenda of ordinary sessions since September 2016, in the 146th ordinary session, under the item of "The Arab Stand towards Turkish Forces Violation of Iraq's Sovereignty" (LAS_Official Website, 2016, p. 70) as a result of Turkey's deployment of military troops in Iraq in December 2015. During the 154th Ordinary Session in September 2020, a new item related to Turkey was added to the agenda, which is "Turkish Interference in the Internal Affairs of Arab States" (LAS_Official Website, 2020, p. 57) due to Turkey's rising military influence in Syria and Libya.

- The Ministerial Committee on following up on Turkey

The Ministerial follow up Committees are one of the mechanisms which LAS resorts to deal with a critical issue that acquires a long-term strategic character. With the rise of Iranian influence in the Arab region, the League formed a committee to follow up on Iran, and when Turkish influence escalated, it formed another similar committee. The meetings of these committees are always held on the sidelines of the ordinary sessions of the League Council at the level of Ministers, i.e., twice a year.

In September 2020, the League Council in its 154th ordinary session, at the level of foreign ministers, approved the formation of the "Arab Ministerial Committee concerned with following up on the Turkish interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries." It is comprised of Egypt (Chair of the Committee), Iraq, UAE, Bahrain,

Saudi Arabia, and the Secretary General. Qatar, Libya, Somalia and Djibouti had reservations about the resolution (Anadolu Agency, 2020). The committee convened its first meeting on the sidelines of the same session announcing that it "condemns all forms of Turkish interference in the Arab region, especially in Iraq, Libya and Syria" and considering it a "violation of international law and the sovereignty of these countries" (LAS_Official Website, 2020, p. 1_2).

The committee held its second meeting in March 2021 on the sidelines of the 155th ordinary session (LAS_Official Website, 2021) while the third meeting was in September 2021, on the sidelines of the 156th session (LAS_Official Website, 2021). During these two meetings the committee emphasized the same outcomes of the first meeting. In response to the last meeting in September 2021, Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected its resolution, considering its outcomes "baseless and void", noting that some Arab states oppose such rhetoric. It also emphasized its efforts to ensure the protection of the sovereignty of Arab countries (Daily Sabah, 2021).

- The Arab Parliament

The Arab Parliament was established by a resolution of the League Council at the level of the summit in Algeria in March 2005, to hold its first session in December 2005 (LAS_Official Website). In February 2018, the third conference of the Arab Parliament announced that it "condemns Turkish interference in the affairs of some Arab countries especially Egypt and Libya" stressing its support for Egypt in "its war against terrorism" (Egypt Today, 2018). In October 2019, the Parliament condemned the military operation launched by Turkey in northeastern Syria, stressing that it is "an unacceptable act that represents a serious threat to Arab national security", calling on the international community to halt Turkey's operation and withdraw its forces from all the Syrian territory (Alanbat News, 2019). In January 2020, the Parliament condemned Turkey's decision to send troops to Libya, describing it as a "fragrant violation of international law" (Alarabiya, 2020). In June 2020, the Parliament approved a unified strategy against Iran and Turkey, announcing that its purpose is "stopping all their interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries" (Iran News Daily, 2020).

Finally, it should be noted that Turkey launched a military operation in Syria in August 2016, "Euphrates Shield", yet there has not been any reaction by the League, unlike

what happened with the operation of "Peace Spring" in October 2019. This is due to some reasons. During this period, Egypt's regional role was not active, the conflict of regional axes did not reach its peak, especially before the 2017 Gulf crisis, and there was a relative agreement between Saudi Arabia and Turkey on the Syrian crisis. These reasons show the plurality of the influence within the League, as there is no longer Egyptian hegemony, thus mobilizing the League towards a specific resolution, requires Egyptian- Gulf consensus.

3.1.3. Conclusion

The activity of LAS against Turkey has been carried through three mechanisms, the League Council, Arab Parliament, and the Follow-up Committee on Turkey. This activity increased when Egypt restored its regional role since 2019, hence its influence in the League. This can be illustrated by the following points:

- During the period from 2013 to 2021, there were four extraordinary meetings of the League to deal with the Turkish policy. Save the 2015 meeting, the other three meetings were convened during the period from 2019 to 2020, at the request of Egypt.
- The Ministerial follow-up Committee on Turkey was formed in 2020, chaired by Egypt.
- Most of the statements of Arab Parliament against Turkey were between 2019 and 2020.

This indicates the extent of Egyptian influence in the League and shows how Egypt used the League as an instrument to confront Turkey, and, by such, it contributed to deepening the crisis of Egyptian Turkish relations.

Because of the easing of tension between Egypt and Turkey and calming of axes conflict in 2021, there was no extraordinary meetings of the League Council that dealt with Turkish policy during 2021 as the last one was in June 2020. Since these meetings deal with emergency events, in contrast to the ordinary meetings. Given that agenda in ordinary meetings is semi-fixed and routine, thus its items are not set or removed easily, but rather need a strategic shift; the ordinary meetings continued to discuss Turkish policy on its agenda until the last meeting of 2021. This is due to two reasons: first,

there were no strategic shifts in Egyptian-Turkish relations until the end of 2021, although easing of the tension, they failed to restore their diplomatic relations, and, second, Turkey's military presence in Libya, Iraq and Syria - the main items related to Turkey on the agenda of ordinary session - has not ended.

Due to the decline of the League's effectiveness with the deterioration of the Arab regional system, the adoption of the sovereignty principles instead of Arab unity, and the absence of a mandatory mechanism for its members to implement its decisions; the League has not had a crucial influence in the confrontation with Turkish regional influence, as it was unable to prompt its members to take economic or diplomatic joint punitive measures against Turkey. Also, its resolutions against Turkey have not been passed unanimously. Nevertheless, the League is still an Egyptian tool to mobilize the Arab political support in its vital issues and highlights its leading role in the region.

3.2. The 2014 Turkish- Qatari Military Cooperation Agreement

International laws, agreements, and treaties affect the foreign policies of states through determining the general framework of acceptable behavior regionally or internationally and creating restrictions on states by imposing obligations on them. Moreover, these agreements express the existing international and regional balances in the system (Sleem, 2002, p. 22). The Middle East is not considered an institutional regional system, as it does not have a regional organization that bring all its members together. It also does not have comprehensive regional treaties and agreements that control the behavior of its members.

So, the thesis will depend on the "2014 Military Cooperation Agreement" between Turkey and Qatar, which has paved the way for the Turkish- Qatari relations to move to the strategic level on one hand, and for Turkey to involve in the Gulf crisis through its hard power on the other. This has ultimately led to affecting Egyptian- Turkish relations. Thus, this agreement imposed obligations on Turkey towards its ally, and it was also a reflection of the regional balances between the status quo powers and the powers that supported the political change.

3.2.1. Content of the Agreement and its Motives

There have been specific motives for signing this agreement and the subsequent building of a Turkish military base in Qatar. For Qatar, as a small country in a turbulent

security environment, it is necessary to have a reliable ally like Turkey to provide it a security protection as a military deterrent against its opponents. This is relied on two variables: first, the initial signing of the agreement in December 2014 was shortly after the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain announced cutting their diplomatic relations with Qatar in March 2014 (Kirkpatrick, 2014), and, second, the decline of the American interest of the Middle East and the abandonment of protecting its allies which coincided with the signing of a nuclear agreement with Iran in July 2015 (Aras & Akpınar, 2017, p. 4).

As for Turkey, it has realized that it is no longer appropriate to rely just on soft power while most of the regional actors resorted to hard power, such as Iran and Russia in Syria, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia in Yemen and Libya (Alrantisi, 2020, p. 288). Moreover, Turkey aimed to strengthen its regional alliance with Qatar and demonstrate its power to contribute to reshaping the Middle East at the geopolitical and geo-security levels (Bakir, 2019, p. 212). It also targeted utilizing its military deployment in the Gulf as a balancing power in the face of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the previous motivations, in December 2014, Turkey and Qatar signed a comprehensive military cooperation agreement, concentrated on formation of a mechanism to enhance the cooperation between the two countries in the fields of military training, defense industries, joint military exercises, and deployment of troops between the two countries. The agreement stated that the host country allows the other to use its seaports, aircraft and airspace, station its military forces on its territory, and benefit from its camps and military installations (Aljazeera, 2017).

In June 2015, Turkey ratified the agreement (Anadolu agency, 2015), after it included detailed and additional items in March 2015, allowing Turkey to build a military base and deploy forces on Qatari territory, by a maximum number of five thousand soldiers, with main task to train the Qatari military forces as well as contribute to solving crises of the region (Aljazeera, 2017). In implementation of the agreement, about 500 to 600 troops of Turkish forces were deployed in October 2015, as part of an initial plan to build a military base in Qatar, the “Tariq bin Ziyad base”. The Turkish deployment has been limited to 100 soldiers, as the Emir of Qatar did not want to provoke his Gulf

neighbors, in line with his conciliatory approach towards Saudi Arabia in the approach he has adopted since his arrival to the throne in 2013 (Yüksel & Tekineş, 2021, p. 18).

In April 2016, amendments were made to the agreement, though submitting it to the Turkish parliament was delayed until the eruption of the Gulf crisis in June 2017, which expedited ratifying it by Parliament (Pala & Başkan, 2020, p. 73). Within this framework, the Gulf crisis will be addressed to reveal the extent of its impact on Egyptian-Turkish relations, as a result of Turkey's involvement in the crisis, driven by its 2014 military cooperation agreement with Qatar.

3.2.2. The Gulf Crisis (June 2017)

With the arrival of a new US administration led by Donald Trump in January 2017, who reinforced his partnership with the UAE and Saudi Arabia under his hostile policy towards Iran and MB; the indications of shaping a new regional system, in which the balance of power tilts in favor of the status quo powers, began to emerge (Çavuşoğlu, 2020, p. 99). So, Trump's first foreign trip in the Middle East was to Saudi Arabia on May 21, 2017, where he held a summit with Saudi King Salman bin Abdelaziz, Egyptian President Sisi, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Bin Zayed, and other representatives from about 50 Arab and Islamic countries, with the aim of confronting terrorism and containing Iran (Kablan, 2021, p. 53). This summit has been considered an American green light for the Quartet (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt) to repeat the scenario of the 2014 crisis with Qatar. Two days after the summit, on May 23, sensational statements attributed to Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad were published in the official website of the Qatar News Agency (QNA), regarding the relationship with Iran and Islamic movements, though Doha denied these statements, noting that the agency's website had been hacked (Khazar , 2019, p. 96).

These statements caused an increasing tension in Qatar's relations with the Quartet, until the crisis officially erupted and reached its peak on June 5, 2017, when the Quartet cut their diplomatic relations with Qatar, in addition to closing land, sea, and air borders with it (Polat, 2020, p. 684). On June 23, the Quartet presented 13 demands as a condition for resolving the crisis, which included limiting diplomatic relations with Iran, severing ties with MB, suspending Al Jazeera channel, and closing the Turkish military base. However, Emir of Qatar rejected these demands, considering them a violation of

Qatar's sovereignty (Çavuşoğlu, 2020, p. 100). The Gulf crisis has lasted three and a half years until it was resolved in the 41st GCC Summit, held on January 5, 2021, in the Saudi city of Al-Ula (Fakhro, 2021).

A) Turkey's Stance and Motives

Turkey has not adopted a single policy in the Gulf crisis. Before the escalation of the crisis on June 5, it adopted a positive neutrality policy, focusing on calling for dialogue and announcing its readiness to mediate between the two parties. So, President Erdogan, in early June 2017, sent a delegation led by his Special Adviser Ibrahim Kalin, to pay a visit to Saudi Arabia, with the aim of exploring the dimensions of the crisis and contributing to its solution, but the delegation got back without a satisfactory result (Bakir, 2019, p. 209). Thus, Turkish endeavors to prevent the exacerbation of the crisis have not succeeded, and it was even surprised on June 5 by the Quartet severing diplomatic relations with Qatar (Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2017, p. 7). At this phase, Turkey has adopted two parallel paths, in which it brought together between the tools of soft and hard power, represented in its continued efforts and calls for dialogue and calming the crisis on the one hand, and supporting Qatar logistically and militarily on the other.

Turkey has exerted diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis via phone calls and shuttle diplomacy. One day after the crisis erupted, President Erdogan spoke by telephone on June 6, with the leaders of Qatar, Russia, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, to put an end to the crisis (Pala & Başkan, 2020, p. 67). Moreover, on June 14, Cavusoglu paid an official tour to Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, followed by another tour on July 23, which Erdogan made to the three countries as part of his efforts to reach a political settlement (Bakir, 2019, p. 209).

On the other hand, Turkey has taken several measures resulted in Turkish direct involvement in the crisis in support of Qatar. First, it sent cargo planes loaded with huge amounts of food and water supplies. According to Turkish Customs and Trade Minister Bulent Tufenkci, by the second week of the crisis, Turkey sent more than 100 cargo planes to Qatar, in addition to a cargo ship carrying 4,000 Tons of food (Pala & Başkan, 2020, p. 67_68). Second, in the frame of activating the 2014 Military Cooperation Agreement between Turkey and Qatar, the Parliament and President

Erdogan accelerated, on June 7, to ratify a draft law allowing for the deployment of Turkish armed forces in Qatar, just to be followed by Turkey sending several batches of troops to Tariq bin Ziyad base, to join the 83 soldiers already deployed at the base, to a total of 300 Turkish troops (Alrantisi, 2020, p. 288).

The significance of Turkish military deployment emerged when the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad announced on September 7, 2017, during a joint press conference with Trump, that mediation efforts succeeded in preventing a military action against Qatar, despite the Quartet's denial of any intention to use force against Qatar (Bakir, 2019, p. 213). In this context, the Turkish military presence has concerned the Quartet, so Turkey sought to reassure them, especially Saudi Arabia, stressing that the military base in Qatar is to protect the security of the entire Gulf and it is not directed against anyone (Alrantisi, 2020, p. 288). However, Turkey could not reassure the Quartet, and its support for Qatar has continued.

By Activating the 2014 Agreement, Turkey and Qatar's armies conducted land and sea military exercises in the Arab Gulf, in August 2017, and in November 2017, Erdogan visited the Turkish military base in Qatar (Polat, 2020, p. 684_685) emphasizing Ankara's supporting to Qatar. This big support prompted the Emir of Qatar in his first speech after the crisis, on 21 July 2017, to praise Turkey for its activating the Military Cooperation Agreement and meeting the needs of Qatari market (Gurcan, 2017). Thus, it can be said that Turkey was the main supporter of Qatar in the Gulf crisis. But what are the motives of this stance?

At the beginning, Turkey adopted the policy of positive neutrality motivated by many reasons. First, the security deterioration in the Gulf region would create more threats to Turkey in Syria and Iraq which may extend to Turkish interior. Second, Turkey possesses strong economic relations with the UAE and Saudi Arabia that exceed its relations with Qatar. Third, Turkey wants to maintain stability of the GCC on which it depends to balance Iranian influence (Alrantisi, 2020, p. 286_288).

Thereafter, Turkey supported Qatar in the crisis, driven by several factors. First, its desire to be the major actor in the balances of power and security of Gulf region, providing it the opportunity to participate in any possible political and security arrangements for the region (Bakir, 2019, p. 214_215). Second, the crisis erupted under

the conflict of regional axes during which Turkey allied with Qatar in the face of the Quartet. Therefore, it has not been just an internal crisis between Gulf states. Hence, there was a Turkish belief that if the Quartet could achieve its objectives in this crisis, Turkey would be the next, and some even believed that Turkey was the real target (Bakir, 2019, p. 210). Third, what concerned Turkey more is that the structure of its regional alliance since July 2013 was just limited to Qatar as a strategic ally in the region, so it has not been willing to accept the loss of Qatar, after losing Egypt.

B) Regional Implications of the Crisis

The Gulf crisis has been the crises that had the hugest regional repercussions on the Middle East region and all its sub-regions, and therefore on the conflict of the axes in the region through the following points.

First, it has reinforced the cohesion of the regional axes. Indeed, the Gulf crisis has strengthened the strategic alliance between Turkey and Qatar, which moved to a more solid level. Politically, Turkey was the first stop within the Emir of Qatar's first foreign tour during the crisis in September 2017 (Bakir, 2019, p. 213). Militarily, the Turkish military presence in Qatar has become a guarantee of Qatar's national security, which reflects the highest levels of alliance between countries. Economically, due to the developments of the crisis, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, the volume of trade between Turkey and Qatar by the end of 2018, increased by 57% compared to 2017, reaching \$1.4 billion. Moreover, 180 Turkish companies operating in Qatar undertook projects in various sectors in a total worth of about \$18 billion (Pala & Başkan, 2020, p. 72). On the other hand, during the crisis, the UAE and Saudi Arabia's relations with Egypt have become stronger, especially Saudi Arabia, whose relations with Egypt declined before the crisis, following Egypt's refusal to actively participate in the Yemen war (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2017, p. 5). Therefore, the outbreak of the Gulf crisis has prompted the two countries to overcome their disputes under the confrontation with a joint opponent.

Second, it weakened the GCC. The Gulf crisis has caused a deep rift in the GCC, which was split into three main camps: two conflicting camps, and a neutral third camp represented in Kuwait and Oman. During the crisis, the Saudi and Emirati crown princes concluded a bilateral cooperation agreement, declaring that they would develop

a new political and military alliance, which meant a deepening of the inter-Gulf division. On the other hand, Qatar improved its relations with regional allies such as Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan (Çavuşoğlu, 2020, p. 101). Additionally, Kuwait enhanced its relations with Turkey by concluding a number of security and military cooperation agreements during the Kuwaiti Prime Minister's visit to Ankara in mid-September 2017, to ensure its regional security by finding new allies under the collapse of the collective Gulf security system and the lack of confidence between its countries (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2017, p. 8). Consequently, the crisis damaged the unity and solidarity that had been achieved through social and economic integration among the Gulf states over the past decades. The GCC has lost its strength and importance as an institution capable of resolving conflicts and as a platform for common interests (Çavuşoğlu, 2020, p. 101). Although the crisis has been resolved, it left insurmountable effects, especially in the decline of the trust among Gulf states, which will constantly push them to take their precautions of security guarantees beyond the GCC.

Third, it affected the main interactions in the Middle East. The Gulf crisis affected most of the main interactions in the Middle East, as to be seen below.

In Syria, just five days after the crisis erupted, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE held a meeting with the YPG, the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) designated as a terrorist group by Turkey. In October 2017, Saudi Minister of Gulf Affairs Thamer al-Sabhan visited Raqqa (under YPG control) to discuss the reconstruction of the city, and in October 2018 Saudi Arabia provided them with \$100 million (Pala & Başkan, 2020, p. 66). Moreover, Saudi Arabia began to reduce its support for the Syrian opposition, while the Emirati position significantly shifted towards supporting the Syrian regime to defy Turkey, so it reopened its embassy in Damascus in December 2018 (Aljazeera, 2018). Thus, the Gulf crisis has prompted the Quartet to strength their relations with Ankara's opponents in Syria, namely the YPG and Syrian regime.

For the Palestinian cause, a month before the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, Trump described Hamas as a "terrorist organization" during a summit held in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Immediately after the outbreak of the crisis, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir described Hamas as a "terrorist movement", calling for an end to Qatar's support

for this movement (Bseiso, 2017). Under these hostile positions towards Hamas, Israel has sought to exploit the Gulf crisis to weaken Hamas, undermine its influence in the Gaza Strip, and redraw regional policies in line with its regional vision (Aljazeera, 2017). The crisis and its subsequent developments provided Trump with a suitable regional environment to present his peace plan in the Middle East in January 2020. The UAE and Bahrain were the main supporters of this plan, whereas Turkey and Qatar opposed it. (Abdelaziz, 2020).

In Libya, the two sides of the Gulf crisis have maximized their support for their local allies, militarily and logistically. The UAE prompted its ally Haftar to launch a military attack on Tripoli in April 2019, which led to the escalation of Turkish military support for the GNA in December 2019. As such, the Libyan crisis turned into a proxy war between the two parties of the Gulf crisis (Fakhro, 2021).

Finally, in the Eastern Mediterranean, and because of the Turkish position on the Gulf crisis, the regional axis the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia has reinforced its relations with Greece and Cyprus, based on their common hostility to Turkey. Accordingly, the reciprocal visits between the Quartet countries and Cyprus increased, accompanied by statements supporting Cyprus in its disputes with Turkey, including the border dispute or the conflict between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Moreover, Athena signed a maritime agreement with Egypt in August 2020, and a military cooperation agreement with Abu Dhabi in November 2020 (Koulouriotis, 2021). In August 2019, Saudi Arabia strengthened its diplomatic relationship with Cyprus by sending the first resident Saudi ambassador to Nicosia (Middle East Online, 2019). The most important step in this context was the establishment of the EMGF in January 2019, by Emirati support, to include Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece, and excluding Turkey (Surkes, 2020).

3.2.3. Conclusion

The 2014 Military Cooperation Agreement paved the way for Turkey's intervention in the Gulf crisis in June 2017, in support of Qatar against the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. If the Gulf crisis had not erupted or Turkey had remained neutral, the Turkish-Egyptian relations might have been restored in the short term, due to the following reasons.

First, the relative improvement in Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia before the Gulf crisis - and in a lower extent with the UAE - especially since King Salman's arrival to power, which enabled President Erdogan and his foreign minister to pay official visits to Saudi Arabia after the eruption of the crisis to resolve it (Bakir, 2019, p. 209). Second, July 2017 witnessed the first phone call between the foreign ministers of Egypt and Turkey since July 2013, in which they discussed the Palestinian cause (Sputnik Arabic, 2017).

This relatively calm regional environment before the outbreak of the Gulf crisis could have allowed Egypt and Turkey to restore their relations in shorter time. However, this crisis has provided a conflictual environment that deepened the conflict between the regional axes and thus prolonged the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations. So, resolving the Gulf crisis in 2021 was one of the factors that contributed to calming the axes conflict, as well as easing of the tension between the two countries during the same year.

CHAPTER IV: IMPACT OF INTERACTIONS IN MERS ON EGYPTIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS

The interactions or processes represent the kinetic side of the regional system, which express a set of successive, continued, and interrelated activities carried out by the actors to achieve their objectives within the framework of certain rules (Sleem, 2002, p. 22).

In this context, this chapter discusses two central and vital interactions for the Middle East region in general and Egyptian-Turkish relations in particular: the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan crisis. These two issues are related to each other on one hand and are directly related to the interests of Egypt and Turkey on the other. Hence, the two countries had a prominent influence in these two issues, which significantly affected their relations.

4.1. The Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean

First, this section firstly presents an overview on the Eastern Mediterranean, then it addresses the Egyptian and Turkish strategies in this conflict.

4.1.1. An Overview of the Eastern Mediterranean

The Mediterranean Sea is an intercontinental sea, located between Europe, Asia and Africa, with a total area of 2,500,000 sq. km. The Mediterranean is connected to the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar and connected to the Red Sea through the Suez Canal. Its eastern part, the Eastern Mediterranean, includes Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria (Sayed, 2020, p. 31).

The Eastern Mediterranean contains huge hydrocarbon wealth. The US Geological Survey estimated the existence of around 122 or 227tcf of gas in addition to 1.7 billion barrels of oil in this region (Shama, 2019, p. 3). What maximizes the region's significance is that “natural gas is considered the primary fuel of the near future in light of the fact that the global consumption of natural gas tripled during the period from 1980 to 2010 and that demand on gas is expected to grow by 50% by 2030” (Fouad , 2019, p. 1).

The Eastern Mediterranean countries started, in the first decade of the 20s century, to explore for natural gas, resulted in a group of gas discoveries, the most important of

which are: the two fields Tamar (2009) and Leviathan (2010) in Israel , the Aphrodite field (2011) in Cyprus, and the Zohr field (2015) in Egypt (Sayed, 2020, p. 32). These discoveries have aggravated the conflict in the region and revived the disputes between its countries, especially the disputes on the demarcation of the maritime borders between Turkey and Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, in addition to the Lebanese and Palestinian border disputes with Israel (Bakir A. H., 2018, p. 6).

Within the Eastern Mediterranean region, there are three countries that have not signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS): Turkey, Israel, and Syria (Bakir A. H., 2018, p. 5). Additionally, four demarcation agreement based on UNCLOS have been concluded: between Cyprus and Egypt in 2003, Cyprus and Lebanon in 2007, Cyprus and Israel in 2010, and finally between Egypt and Greece in 2020, In addition to another agreement between Turkey and Libya in 2019, though not based on UNCLOS.

The demarcation of border in the Eastern Mediterranean aims to accelerate gas exploration to turn the region into an international energy center. In this context, there are three potential pipelines to export gas to European markets: the Israel-Cyprus-Greece pipeline, which requires a high cost to build the pipelines; the Israel-Cyprus-Turkey pipeline, which is partly ready depending on the existing Turkish pipelines; and the Israel-Egypt pipeline, which is already ready depending on the existing pipeline Al-Arish-Ashkelon, as the gas flowing from Israel to Egypt can be exported to foreign markets after being liquefied at the gas liquefaction plants in Damietta and Idku (Fouad , 2019, p. 11_12).



Figure 3: Potential Pipeline Gas to European Market (Marketos, 2018, p. 6)

However, the Eastern Mediterranean faces obstacles hindering its capacity to export the natural gas. It witnesses geopolitical conflicts as part of the Middle East. Also, the disputes of border demarcation makes the region an unsuitable environment for building gas pipelines, the transportation to markets is expensive, the infrastructure facilities, especially liquefaction plants, are not available except for Egypt, and it can't compete major gas suppliers such as Russia, Norway, and Qatar (Shama, 2019, p. 3).

Therefore, it seems that transforming the region into a global energy center in the short or medium term is unlikely, unless geostrategic shifts occur that would enhance the importance and competitiveness of the Eastern Mediterranean gas and prompt the region countries to resolve their maritime disputes.

4.1.2. Egypt's Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean

Egypt has sought to achieve several objectives within the framework of its strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean, relying on political, economic, and military tools.

A) Egyptian Strategy's Objectives

The Egyptian objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean have included political and economic dimensions, which are as follows.

First, the transformation into a regional energy center, based on its natural gas reserves, liquefaction plants, and pipelines. The first decade of the 21st century witnessed a major shift in the production of natural gas in Egypt, enabling it to shift from a consumer to an

exporter of gas since 2005. After the production declined, reaching 4.4bcf per day in 2015, Egypt returned again to importing gas to meet its local market needs (Sayed, 2020, p. 33). In August 2015, Egypt announced the discovery of Zohr field, the largest gas field in the Eastern Mediterranean, with reserves estimated at 30tcf, enabling Egypt to announce in September 2018 the achieving of self-sufficiency in gas after its production reached 6.6bcf per day before increasing to 8bcf in 2021. Thus, Egypt managed to export gas to Jordan in 2019 as a first export agreement after a period of halt since 2014 (Fouad , 2019, p. 8_9). In addition to its natural gas reserves, Egypt owns the only two LNG plants in the Eastern Mediterranean, in Damietta and Idku. It also has two gas pipelines, the Arab Gas Pipeline that extends from the Sinai Peninsula through Jordan to Lebanon and Syria, and the Arish-Ashkelon Pipeline between Egypt and Israel (Sayed, 2020, p. 34_35).

Second, the alliance with Cyprus and Greece in the framework of its regional confrontation with Turkey, with the aim of isolating it in the Eastern Mediterranean and weakening its influence in the Middle East.

Third, Reviving the Egyptian regional role in the Middle East, especially since 2019 after the stability of its internal situation, by strengthening its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and playing a central role in the balances of this region.

B) Egyptian Strategy's Tools

To achieve the previous objectives, Egypt has resorted to build a broad regional alliance, which brought together Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus, backed by the UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia and France. The alliance has technically aimed to achieve partnership and integration on the production and export of natural gas, while it has politically targeted weakening Turkey's influence in the region. In the context of this alliance, Egypt has depended on political, economic and military tools:

- Political tools

Since the tension of Egyptian-Turkish relations in July 2013, the Egyptian regime has resorted to reinforce its relations with Turkey's opponents in the Eastern Mediterranean, namely Cyprus and Greece. Thus, a tripartite alliance brought together Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus over common interests in the field of economy and security has emerged, with a permanent secretariat in Nicosia (Winter & Lindenstrauss, 2019). The first

meeting between the three countries at the level of presidents was in November 2014, in Cairo, during which they announced the launch of a tripartite cooperation mechanism (The official website of the Presidency, 2014). Since then, there were periodic summits of this alliance at the level of presidents.

The second summit was held in Nicosia in April 2015, the third in Athens in December 2015, the fourth in Cairo in October 2016, the fifth in Nicosia in November 2017, the sixth in Athens in October 2018, the seventh in Cairo in October 2019, the eighth in Nicosia in October 2020, and the ninth in Athens in October 2021 (Al Shami, 2021). These meetings have dealt with coordination in several issues, including maritime borders and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the Eastern Mediterranean, gas pipelines, connection of the electrical networks, developing the tourism, and joint military exercises with the participation of naval and air forces (Winter & Lindenstrauss, 2019). Thus, the Egyptian political relations with Cyprus and Greece have been reinforced, to reflect positively on the aspects of economic and military cooperation between the three countries.

- Military tools

Egypt has conducted several military drills with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean since 2014, one of which was held just twelve miles from the Turkey's coast. Also, Cyprus has begun to participate in these exercises since 2018 (Shama, 2019, p. 8) while the UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and France participated in the following years (Yolcu, 2021).

In this context, Egypt has developed its military capabilities, making a major shift in the armament process since 2014, and diversifying its sources from France, Russia, the United States, Germany, and Italy. Thus, Egypt became the third largest arms importer in the world between 2015 and 2019, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The report referred that one of the reasons of the rise in Egypt's arms imports is to secure the gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean (Alrajal, 2014, p. 12). As a result of modernizing its military, Egypt, according to the latest ranking of "Global Fire Power", was ranked 12th globally and 2nd in the Middle East in terms of the overall military power. In particular, the total assets of its naval power amounted to 245, including two helicopter carriers, 13 frigates, seven corvettes, eight

submarines, 48 Patrol Vessels, and 23 Mine Warfare (Global Fire Power, 2021). Consequently, Egypt has not limited to building a cohesive regional alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean but has also resorted to reinforcing its military power, especially its naval forces, as a supporter for its regional role.

- Economic tools

The first indication of Egyptian-Turkish confrontation in the Eastern Mediterranean, since July 2013, emerged when Egypt and Cyprus signed an agreement to define their EEZ in December 2013, which is a supplement to their agreement in 2003. The Turkish Foreign Minister announced his country's non-recognition of the agreement (Gamil, 2018). Since Cyprus does not have the infrastructure that enables it to transport gas to foreign markets, it signed an agreement with Egypt, in September 2018, to build a pipeline to export natural gas from the Cypriot Aphrodite field to liquefaction plants in Egypt, then re-exporting it again (Farouk, 2018). Such projects remain elusive without settling the border disputes between the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Moreover, Egypt signed an agreement with Israel, in February 2018, to import gas from the Israeli fields of Tamar and Leviathan, worth \$19.5 billion (Shama, 2019, p. 5). Due to the agreement, Egypt received its first gas shipment from Israel in mid-January 2020 (Lewis, 2020). This deal aims not only to feed the Egyptian local market, but also to export Israeli gas to foreign markets, especially with Egypt achieving self-sufficiency of gas at this time.

In January 2019, the Cairo-based Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) was established, which included Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, and Italy, while Jordan, Palestine, and the UAE were invited as observers (Aljazeera Center Studies, 2022, p. 6). In the third meeting of the EMGF which was held in January 2020 in Cairo, the Forum was transformed into a regional governmental international organization (Sayed, 2020, p. 44). The joint factor among the main countries in the EMGF, except for Italy, is that they are regional opponents of Turkey. So, Turkey was not invited to the forum, in addition to Lebanon, Syria and Libya. Therefore, the motives of establishing this forum are not only economic motives, but also geopolitical ones related to the regional confrontation with Turkey.

Finally, in August 2020, Egypt and Greece signed an agreement on the delimitation of their maritime borders. As an initial reaction, Turkey slammed the agreement and retracted the suspension decision of drilling in the disputed areas in the eastern Mediterranean (Aljazeera Center Studies, 2022, p. 7). Despite the tension of Egyptian-Turkish relations, Egypt did not fully demarcate its maritime borders with Greece, as the demarcation did not extend to the disputed EEZ between Turkey and Greece, especially the EEZ of the island of Meis / Kastellorizo². This meant that Egypt is unwilling to get involved directly in the border dispute between Ankara and Athens, and it has willingness to sign a complementary maritime agreement with Turkey (Fayed , 2021, p. 16_17), especially as the agreement stipulated clauses stating that the agreement could be amended and other parties - in reference to Turkey- could join it, and that demarcating the borders according to this agreement is not final (Hussein, 2021).

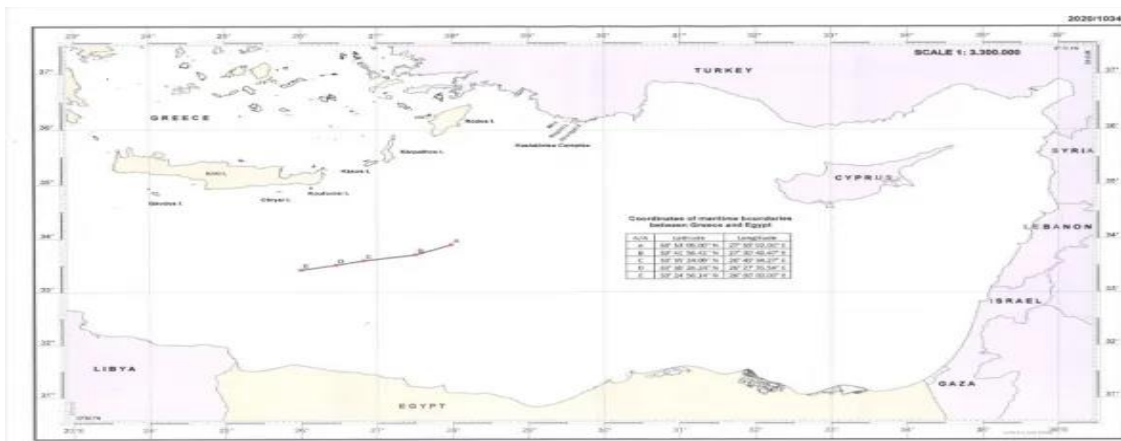


Figure 4: Egypt-Greece EZZ Partial Delimitation Agreement (Yiallourides, 2020)

Thus, this partial demarcation is also in favor of Egypt, as of Turkey, so that it does not lose a large part of its EEZ based on the Greek vision, leaving the decision of demarcating the rest of the coasts to other collective negotiations in which Turkey will join.

² There is a legal dispute between Turkey and Greece on the extent of the entitlement of the Greek islands which close to the Turkish coast to possess EEZ. The 1982 UNCLS gives the islands this right, so Turkey has not signed this convention which deprives it of a large part of EEZ to Greece (Fouad , 2019, p. 5).

4.1.3. Turkey's Strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey has built its strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the level of objectives and tools, based on its confrontation with a broad regional alliance.

A) Turkish Strategy's Objectives

In this context, Turkey has sought to achieve several main objectives, as follows.

First, it has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, so it reinforces its influence in this region in order to ensure its internal security and to maximize its regional influence in the entire Middle East.

Second, Turkey is a major route for transporting gas from Central Asia to Europe, and it also aims to be a route for transporting Eastern Mediterranean gas, which will contribute to reducing its dependence on Russian and Iranian gas imports, as well as shifting it to a regional energy center (Shama, 2019, p. 5).

Third, Turkey has a huge deficit in the energy sector. It imported 72.4 % of its energy needs as of 2018, and energy represented 16.8 % of its imports as of June 2020. In the last five years, Turkey's total budget deficit amounted to \$220 billion, during the same period, its imports of energy amounted to \$213 billion (Dalay, 2021, p. 3). Therefore, Turkey accelerates gas exploration to counter its deficit in this sector.

Fourth, overcoming the isolation imposed on it by its opponents. Thus, Turkey aimed in this regard to convince them that they cannot benefit from the wealth of the Eastern Mediterranean as long as Turkey remains isolated, and its interests are not taken into account.

B) Turkish Strategy's Tools

To achieve the previous objectives in the face of a broad alliance, Turkey has resorted to three main tools depending on its self-power:

- Demarcating its maritime borders on the basis of longitudes

Turkey's policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya is generally defined by the so-called "blue homeland" doctrine, coined by retired Admiral Cem Gürdeniz. The doctrine is motivated by the perceived threat that Turkey is besieged in Anatolia, and it therefore needs to ensure influence and access to the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and the

Mediterranean. The doctrine is based on three main ideas. First, adopting an expanded vision of Turkey's maritime borders in the Eastern Mediterranean. Second, re-imagining the country's position as a maritime power. Third, re-imagining Turkey's position in the world by adopting orientations closer to Russia and China (Dalay, 2021, p. 6_7).

The former Chief of Staff of the Turkish Navy, Rear Admiral Cihat Yayci has always promoted the doctrine of "Blue Homeland", and he is also the architect of the agreement of demarcating maritime border between Turkey and Libya, which is considered one of the outputs of this doctrine (Dalay, 2021, p. 6). In 2009, Yayci proposed demarcating Turkey's maritime borders based on longitude, which can be implemented through the demarcation with Egypt or Libya, but the region has gone through geopolitical developments that hindered this step (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2020, p. 3).

The opportunity emerged in November 2019, when Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding with U.N.- recognized Libya's GNA, to demarcate their EEZ, ignoring the Greek islands between the Turkish and Libyan coasts, and considering Greek EZZ limited to its main coast (Dalay, 2021, p. 5). The agreement grants an additional area to both of Libya, estimated at about 39,000 square kilometers, and Turkey, estimated at about 30% of that Greece considers within its EEZ (Bakir A. H., 2020, p. 5) The agreement also provides Egypt an additional EEZ estimated at about 15,000 km² (the orange area in figure 7), unlike the Greek vision that gives this area for itself. Finally, according to this agreement, the proposed Israeli-Greek-Cypriot gas pipeline will have to pass through either Turkish or Egyptian waters, enabling Turkey to disrupt any gas transportation projects that ignore its interests and rights (Fouad, 2020)

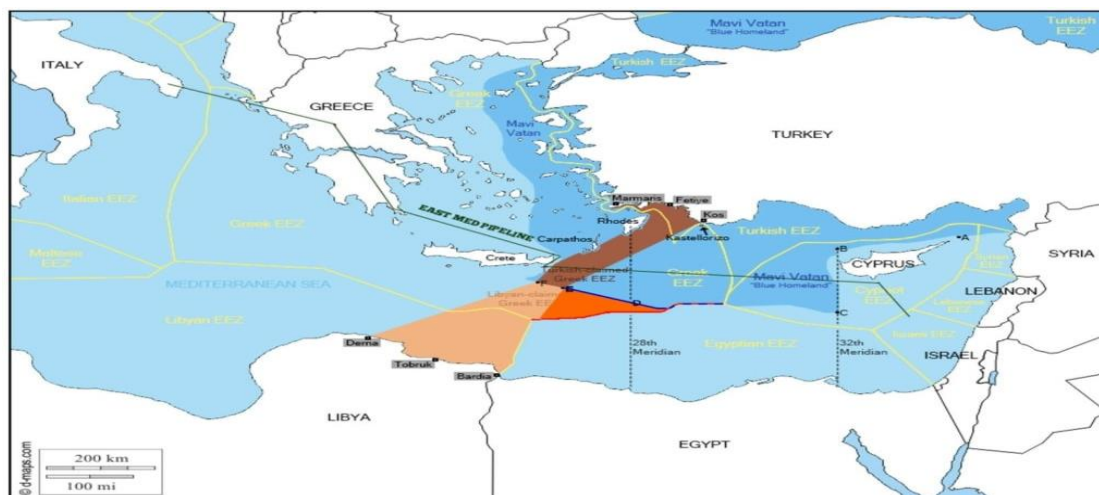


Figure 5: Turkey-Libya EZZ Delimitation Agreement (Fouad, 2020)

Based on the previous variables, it was expected that Greece would adopt the most aggressive stance against the agreement. It expelled GNA ambassador to Athens and strengthened its relations with the forces of Eastern Libya led by General Khalifa Haftar whose control of Tripoli was the only way for Greece to cancel this agreement (Dalay, 2021, p. 5). Although Egypt initially objected the agreement, its Foreign Minister announced on December 8, 2020, that the agreement does not affect Egypt's interests, and on 29 December, Turkey's presidential spokesman stated that he has "official and unofficial information that Cairo is happy with the agreement." (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2020, p. 4). This is due to the additional EEZ that the agreement adds to Egypt. However, Egypt has not recognized this agreement, because of two factors. First, this recognition would have meant a recognition of the security and military agreement between Turkey and the GNA, which allowed Turkey to play an active role in Libya. Second, it would have threatened the continuity of its alliance with Greece and Cyprus, and negatively affect the EMGF (Bakir A. H., 2020, p. 5_6).

In short, Turkey, by its agreement with the GNA, has caused a geopolitical rift in the region, moving from a reaction position to take the lead, and has partially adjusted the balance of power which had been in favor of its opponents. Thus, the agreement has been the most prominent step that Turkey took to break the isolation imposed on it in the Eastern Mediterranean.

- Intensifying the explorations activities

Turkey's activities of gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean increased after the Cypriot government signed an agreement with the American company Noble Energy to start gas exploration in August 2011 and the subsequent discovery of the Cypriot Aphrodite field in December 2011 (France24, 2011). A month after the Cyprus's agreement with the Nobel company, Turkey signed an agreement with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in September 2011, to delimitate their maritime borders. In November 2011, Turkey signed another agreement with TRNC, to conduct exploration in the EEZ defined by their maritime agreement (Grigoriadis, 2014, p. 128_129). Accordingly, Turkish vessels started, between 2011 and 2021, to explore gas in its EEZ in addition to the disputed zones with Greece and Cyprus and the disputed zones between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

As a result, the tension has escalated between the two parties, to the extent that in February 2018, Turkish military ships intercepted Italian company Eni's vessel in the disputed regions. Moreover, in response to Turkey's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the European Union imposed sanctions on Turkey and suspended high-level talks with it in November 2019 (Shama, 2019, p. 5_6). However, Turkey did not attach importance to these sanctions and continued exploring gas, depending on its drilling ships "Fatih" and "Yavuz" and seismic ship "Barbarous Hayrettin Pasha".

Turkey doubled its exploration activities in the years of 2019 and 2020 (Alhurra, 2020) witnessing an escalation of conflict between Turkey and its opponents in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially with the formation of EMGF in 2019 and East Med project in 2020.

- Reinforcing and demonstrating its military capabilities

The Eastern Mediterranean has witnessed militarizing of its interactions between all parties, whether through huge purchases of weapons or exercises and military maneuvers. For Turkey, its exploratory ships were usually accompanied by a flotilla of naval vessels, submarines, drones, and patrol crafts (Shama, 2019, p. 8). Moreover, it conducted several military drills, the most important of which was in February 2019, when it conducted the largest naval exercise in its history, using frigates, corvettes, and submarines in the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean. It lasted

nine days with the aim of testing the readiness of its naval forces throughout its territorial waters (Usta, 2019).

Finally, according to the latest ranking of "Global Fire Power", Turkey is ranked 13th globally and 3rd in the Middle East in terms of overall military power. In particular, the total assets of its naval forces amount to 156, includes 16 frigates, ten corvettes, 12 submarines, 35 patrol vessels, and 11 mine warfare (Global Fire Power, 2021). Thus, Turkey, by enhancing and demonstrating its military power in the Eastern Mediterranean, has sought to show its opponents that it would not allow any arrangements in the region to ignore its interests.

4.1.4. Conclusion

The tension of Egyptian-Turkish relations since 2013 has reflected on the Eastern Mediterranean. Egypt has allied with Turkey's opponents, Cyprus and Greece, since 2013, with support of the UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and France, aiming to isolate Turkey in this region. Turkey's strategic objective, from its part, focused on overcoming this isolation and ensure its interests in the face of a broad regional alliance. Thus, the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean has directly contributed to deepening the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations.

However, the Eastern Mediterranean witnessed some positive developments, which have been among the reasons of easing the tension between Egypt and Turkey in 2021:

- The Maritime agreement between Turkey and Libya's GNA provided Egypt's EEZ an additional area estimated at about 15,000 km², unlike the Greek-Cypriot vision. On this basis, the Turkish Foreign Minister called Egypt, in September 2021, for demarcating their maritime borders (Turkey Now, 2021).
- In its maritime agreement with Greece, Egypt avoided extending the demarcation to the disputed regions between Greece and Turkey, which paves the way for Egypt and Turkey to demarcate their maritime borders in the future.
- In January 2020, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel signed an initial agreement to extend a gas pipeline from the Israeli fields in the Eastern Mediterranean, passing through Cyprus and Greece to Italy, named East-Med (Hosny, 2020). If the East Med project -from which Egypt and Turkey have been excluded- is

implemented, it will negatively affect the ambition of Turkey and Egypt to be regional energy centers. Thus, the Egyptian cooperation with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean has been necessary, whether strategically, since the Maritime agreement between Turkey and Libya hinders the implementation of the East Med project (Fouad , 2019, p. 7), or even tactically to push Greece and Israel to integrate Egypt into any regional gas projects.

4.2. The Libyan Crisis

This section presents, first, an overview on the Libyan crisis, then examines the Egyptian and Turkish motives and policies in this crisis.

4.2.1. An Overview on the Libyan Crisis

The Libyan revolution erupted in February 2011 to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi's regime and achieved its objective in October 2011, with the killing of Gaddafi. In July 2012, the General National Congress (GNC) was elected, with an Islamic majority, as a temporary legislature (Tawil, 2014). In July 2014, Libyans elected the House of Representatives (HOR), with a liberal majority, to succeed GNC which did not recognize the election result and refused to disband itself after mandate expires (BBC, 2021).

As a result, the tension between the Islamists and Liberals, or between GNC and HOR, has escalated, in which the ideological backgrounds overlapped with tribal ones. Meanwhile, GNC-backed Dawn of Libya forces (Fajr Libya) took over the capital, Tripoli, after defeating UAE-backed Zintan forces, and formed the National Salvation Government in August 2014, pushing HOR back to Tobruk. As a response, it mandated the forces of Eastern Libya, led by General Khalifa Haftar, to fight Islamist militants in Benghazi (Quamar, 2020, p. 597) which Haftar could not fully control until November 2017 (Steinberg, 2020, p. 23). In December 2015, the fighting parties signed the Skhirat Agreement between representatives of GNC and HOR, under the auspices of UN, from which the Government of National Accord (GNA) emerged, led by Fayeze al-Sarraj. However, due to the dispute over the oil sector, HOR and its ally Haftar refused to recognize the government and formed a Tobruk-based parallel government in the East (Quamar, 2020, p. 597).

The previous developments have entrenched a Libyan division, accompanied by intermittent battles between the forces of Eastern Libya, based in Benghazi, led by General Haftar, and the forces of Western Libya, based in Tripoli, led by the Prime Minister of the GNA, Fayeze al-Sarraj. While the East was supported mainly by the UAE and Egypt; the West was supported by Turkey and Qatar.

During these battles, the Libyan crisis witnessed conferences and meetings to find a political settlement to the crisis, such as Paris meetings in July 2017 and Palermo conference in November 2018 (Al Hafian, 2020, p. 5_7). However, these efforts failed to put an end to the war. Thus, Haftar announced a new military operation in April 2019 to take over Tripoli, followed by holding new conferences and meetings to stop the war, such as Moscow meeting in January 2020, and Berlin conference in January 2020, which also failed (Al Hafian, 2020, p. 5_7). While Haftar was about to take over Tripoli, Turkey militarily intervened in support of GNA, thwarting Haftar's attack and striking a balance between the East and the West that led to a ceasefire in August 2020, based on American initiative that paved the way for a formal ceasefire after UN-led mediation with the 5+5 Joint Military Commission representing the East and West of Libya (United Nation, 2020). As a continuation of the political path, Libya's national unity government, that included ministers from the East and the West, led by prime minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, was sworn, in March 2021, as a successor to GNA (The National, 2021).

4.2.2. The Motives of Egypt and Turkey Towards the Crisis

The contradiction in the motives of the two countries has led them to adopt opposing policies in the Libyan crisis.

A) Egypt's Motives

Egypt's policy towards the Libyan crisis has been motivated by a number of factors.

First, the security factor poses the main determinant since Egypt focuses on securing its 1200 km western border with Libya against the infiltration of any militias. The Egyptian security concerns have escalated with the massive proliferation of weapons and weakness of the Libyan state. Consequently, for Egypt, the Libyan arena is not only a field for exercising regional influence, but also an issue of national security related to its Western strategic depth. So, motivated by his military background, President Sisi has

dealt with the Libyan crisis as a purely security issue and the General Intelligence Service took over the management of the crisis, ignoring the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Second, economically, Eastern Libya contains the oil crescent, which accounts for 60% of Libya's oil reserves, including the four most important oil ports and fields (Sidra, Ras la Nuve, Zweitina, and Brega) (Aydemir , 2020). This helps Egypt to meet the needs of its local market and to be a regional energy center. Moreover, according to International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were between 330,000 and 1.5 million Egyptians worker in Libya before 2011, and they were sending home between 19.5 and 33 million dollars in remittances every year. The IOM also estimated that 147,800 Egyptians lost their jobs in Libya after 2011 ((IOM), 2011, p. 1). In addition, due to the repercussions of the civil war, the Joint Libyan-Egyptian Economic Chamber estimated the cost of reconstruction of Libya at about \$100 billion, besides the need for about 2 million workers (Mikhail, 2021). In this context, many Egyptian companies prepared to contribute to the first phase of the reconstruction, which requires about \$20 billion (Alahram, 2019). Thus, energy, Egyptian workers in Libya, and reconstruction contracts are economic variables pushing Egypt to move towards the Libyan crisis.

Third, politically, since July 2013, the Egyptian regime has given priority to the confrontation with MB in Egypt and its regional branches. In this framework, Egypt has dealt with General Haftar as a military man not only to defeat MB, but also to lead Libya, as Sisi was not willing to deal with a MB-led government in his western neighbor.

In short, according to the official Egyptian vision, Eastern Libya poses a greater importance whether in terms of geo-security factors due to its contiguity with Egyptian western borders, geo-economics factors due to its possession most of the Libyan oil fields, or geopolitical factors due to the dominance of Islamic orientations in Western Libya and Libya's involvement into the conflict of regional axes. Based on these variables, Egypt supported the forces of Eastern Libya since 2014 until August 2020 before modifying its position to adopt a policy of positive neutrality between the East and the West.

B) Turkey's Motives

As for Turkey's motives towards the Libyan crisis, it included the following.

First, there is a close relation between the Libyan crisis and the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. The regional isolation imposed on Turkey by its opponents in the Eastern Mediterranean has prompted it to find a strategic ally in the region to overcome this isolation and to obtain a pressure tool enhancing its position in the face of its opponents in any possible settlement in the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, the maritime memorandum between Turkey and Libyan GNA was accompanied by a military memorandum that pushed Turkey to protect its ally (GNA) whose fall would have led to cancel the maritime agreement.

Second, it seems that Turkey, through its military intervention in Libya, targeted rapprochement with Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, as positioning militarily in its most important strategic depth (Libya), as a pressure or negotiation tool that may push it towards signing an agreement with Turkey on demarcating their maritime borders, or at least push it to be neutral in Turkey's conflict with Greece. So, since Turkey's direct intervention in Libya, its calls for restoring the relations with Egypt have increased. The first call was in January 2020, coincided with Turkey's activation of the military cooperation agreement with the GNA and sending military troops to Tripoli. The second call was in June 2020, after GNA's forces took control of all western Libya by Turkish support (Diab, 2020, p. 18_19).

Third, Turkey has considered the Libyan crisis an opportunity to support its Islamist allies in Libya, curb Abu Dhabi's growing regional influence in North Africa, and build military influence in the Arab Maghreb.

Fourth, economically, Libya has the largest oil reserves in Africa with about 48 billion barrels, in addition to gas reserves estimated at about 1.5 tcm (Narsh, 2020) which enables Turkey, such as Egypt, to meet the needs of its local market and to be a regional energy center. Moreover, before 2011, about 25 % of Turkish citizens in Arab countries were living and working in Libya. Finally, when Turkey announced its military intervention in Libya in 2020, the amount of its outstanding contracts in Libya exceeded \$18 billion, including the construction, infrastructure, and services sectors. Thus, if GNA had been overthrown, Turkey would have lost these contracts (Young M., 2020).

Based on the previous determinants and motives, Turkey has dealt with Haftar as a major opponent since the escalation of his role in 2014 and supported MB and GNA since its formation in 2015. However, this support was limited, until the opportunity came to Turkey to maximize its influence in Libya through the direct military intervention in 2020, in support of GNA. since then, Turkey has become one of the main actors in the Libyan crisis.

4.2.3. Policies of Egypt and Turkey Towards the Crisis

The policies of Egypt and Turkey towards the Libyan crisis can be addressed through three main phases:

A) From May 2014 to April 2019

Haftar announced his first military operations against the Islamist in Benghazi, in May 2014 (Tawil, 2014), the same month in which Sisi was elected president of Egypt. This has not been a random coincidence. With the departure of former President Mohamed Morsi and the rise of army's role in ruling Egypt, Haftar received a strong moral boost, reflected on the escalation of his military role in Libya, with Egyptian support at several levels to defeat the Islamists and enable him to take over all of Libya.

Politically, in spite of Egypt's recognition of GNA when it gained international recognition in 2016 (Abbas , 2016), it strongly supported GNA's opponent, Haftar, considering his forces in the East to be the official Libyan army, and supported HOR in Tobruk as the Legislature of Libya. In this context, there were many reciprocal visits between Egypt and the leaders of Eastern Libya. For instance, in May 2017, Sisi, during his meeting with Haftar, called for lifting arms embargo on Libya in order to "combat terrorism" (Bahgat , 2017). This meeting was followed by the visit of Egyptian Army Chief-of-Staff Mahmoud Hegazi in the same month to Benghazi, to meet Haftar. It was the first visit of an Egyptian military official to Libya since the start of the military operation in 2014 (Nasr J. , 2017).

Militarily, Egypt has not sent military forces to Libya, focusing mainly on the logistical and intelligence support for Eastern Libya's forces in coordination with the UAE, which, based on unofficial reports, varied between training the fighters in Mohammed Najib military base, supplying weapons, and launching intermittent air strikes (Gamal , 2020). The only two declared strikes by Egyptian Air Forces were on Darna, the first

was in February 2015 in response to killing of Egyptian Copts in Libya by a local franchise of ISIS (Kirkpatrick, 2015) and the second in May 2017, after an attack on a group of Coptic Christians in southern Egypt, killing 29 (Aboulenein, 2017). Given the geography factor, the Egyptian support has been cautious, not to fully lose its ties with Western Libya, so the UAE has emerged since 2014 as the most prominent supporter of the forces of Eastern Libya. It provided them with attack helicopters, armored vehicles, and combat drones. Moreover, in June 2016, the UAE established an air base in eastern Libya, Al-Khadim Base, in addition to its control over Al-Wattia base, from which the most of Emirati air attacks were launched (Steinberg, 2020, p. 22).

As for Turkey, it recognized and supported GNA politically, avoiding the direct military intervention in the crisis (Quamar, 2020, p. 3). In this period, Turkey adopted the mediation and dialogue approach, which was evident in the first visit of Turkey's Special Envoy, Emrullah İşler, to Libya, in October 2014, during which he met both Prime Ministers of Libya, one in Tripoli and the other in Tobruk (Kekilli & Öztüt, 2020, p. 55_56). Due to Turkey's non-involvement in the Libyan crisis during this period, this crisis has not affected Egyptian-Turkish relations much. However, this situation has not lasted long, when Turkey directly intervened in Libya, for the first time, in January 2020.

B) From April 2019 to August 2020

In April 2019, Haftar announced a new military operation to take control of Tripoli. While Eastern Libya's forces advanced south of Tripoli and took control of the strategic city of Sirte in January 2020 (DW, 2020), they were unable to take over the capital.

Politically, during this period, there were several meetings that brought together Egyptian officials with Haftar, including two meetings between Sisi and Haftar in Cairo, in April and May 2019 (Arab News, 2019), in addition to a meeting between Abbas Kamel, after he took over General Intelligence Service, with Haftar, in May 2019 (Anadolu agency, 2019). However, the Egyptian military support has clearly declined in this period, as there were Egyptian reservations about the attack announced by Haftar on Tripoli in April 2019 while the UAE has been the most prominent supporter of Haftar in this attack.

The Egyptian reservation is attributed to its concern about the instability in its western neighbor, which poses a threat to its national security, under its doubts about Haftar's ability to take control of the capital. The UAE hasn't considered these security risks, as its military support for Haftar maximized in this period. According to UN report, since April 2019 to January 2020, the forces of Eastern Libya, which do not possess any drones in their air forces, carried out about 850 drone strikes. It is likely that most of these strikes were implemented by the UAE (Mada Masr, 2020) whereas the Egyptian military support in this period focused on providing logistical support for the Emirati attacks, such as allowing its warplanes to refuel (Butter, 2020, p. 18).

As for Turkey, it has provided support for GNA since Haftar began his attack on Tripoli in April 2019 (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2020). So, this period witnessed an escalation of tension between Turkey and Haftar, as the latter announced in June 2019 a ban on commercial flights to Turkey and ordered his forces to attack Turkish ships and interests in Libya (Aljazeera, 2020).

The Turkish military intervention in the Libyan crisis became direct and reached its peak with the signing of the military cooperation agreement with the GNA in November 2019, which was ratified by Turkey's parliament in December 2019 (Reuters, 2019). This was immediately followed by Turkey's deployment of troops in Libya as well as dispatch of air defense systems and armed drones in January 2020, which enabled GNA to overcome the air superiority of the Eastern Libya's forces (Kekkili & Öztürk, 2020, p. 59). Thanks to Turkish support, GNA was able to restore control over all of western Libya's areas after taking over the strategic city of Tarhuna by June 2020 (Anadolu agency, 2020). Figure 8 shows the impact of the Turkish intervention on the areas under GNA control.

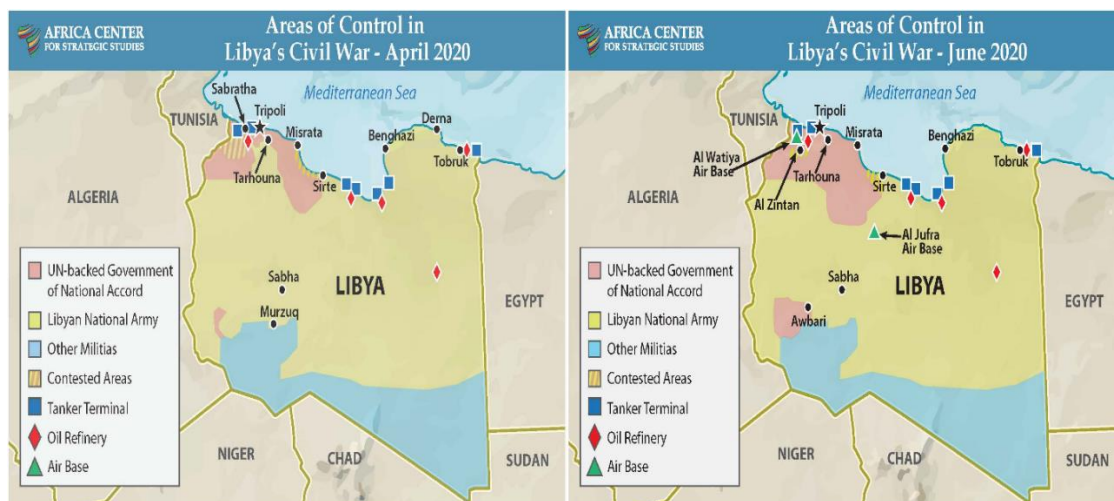


Figure 6: The Area of Control Between April 2020 and June 2020 (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020)

Thus, after Haftar was about to take control of Tripoli, Turkey, by its intervention, prevented him from achieving his goal and created a military balance between the East and the West.

Egypt has faced these developments through two paths. The first was a political path, represented in the "Cairo Declaration", on 6 June 2020, which was an Egyptian initiative to resolve the Libyan crisis politically (State Information Service, 2020). Through this initiative, Egypt aimed to stop the military advance of GNA's forces and preventing them from taking control of Sirte. Moreover, the initiative included indicators of a decline in the Egyptian support of Haftar in favor of Aguila Saleh, the Speaker of HOR.

The second was a military path, which emerged with President Sisi announcing, on June 20, that Egypt has a legitimate right to intervene in Libya and ordered the army to prepare to carry out any mission outside the country, stressing that the frontline "Sirte and Al-Jafra is a red line". This meant that crossing this line by GNA's forces would push Egypt to intervene. In the same context, on July 20, 2020, the Egyptian parliament approved the deployment of forces in Libya (DW, 2020). Through these measures, Egypt targeted, depending on the policy of brinkmanship and military deterrence, preventing the advance of GNA's forces towards Sirte, in addition to stressing that any agreement or understandings between Turkey and Russia on Libya, without Egyptian participation, will not be allowed, especially after the two countries met in Moscow to

discuss a ceasefire in January 2020. Egypt feared that the bilateral understandings between Ankara and Moscow might extend from Syria to Libya, in a way that would marginalize its role in its strategic depth.

Under the rising indicators of a military confrontation between Egypt and Turkey in Libya, the two countries reinforced their contacts through their intelligence services, which started since Turkey signing of the two memorandums of understanding with GNA in November 2019. This was confirmed by statements of Turkey's Foreign Minister on June 11, 2020, and President Erdogan on August 14 of the same year. Moreover, Turkey took Egypt's concerns related to its national security in Libya into consideration and did not allow GNA's forces to launch their attack on Sirte (Aljazeera Center for Studies, 2020).

Turkey's prevention of its allies to attack Sirte is not only attributed to the military deterrence policy that Egypt adopted in this issue, but also to the assumption that the desire of the rapprochement with Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean has been one of Turkey's motives of intervention in Libya, which motivated it to not confront Egypt directly. Thus, while the Libyan crisis was about to push the two countries to a military confrontation, it was a reason for enhancing the contacts between them.

During this phase, there were two meetings to discuss the ceasefire. The first was Russian-Turkish meeting in Moscow on January 13, 2020, and the second was Berlin conference on January 19, 2020. However, such as the previous meetings, they failed to put an end to the war, because there was no military balance on the ground, which prompted Haftar to refuse these initiatives (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2020, p. 6). Therefore, when Turkey was able to achieve a military balance between the West and the East, it paved the way for a ceasefire in August 2020.

C) From August 2020 to December 2021

The two sides of the conflict, through Prime Minister of GNA and the Speaker of HOR, announced, on August 21, 2020, a nationwide cease-fire, in two simultaneous statements, representing the end of the civil war that lasted since 2014 (DW, 2020). This agreement, which was an American initiative led by the American ambassador to Libya, Richard Norland, succeeded as a result of an Egyptian-Turkish agreement, especially since it would not have succeeded without Egypt's approval to exclude Haftar and

escalate the role of Aqila Saleh as a representative of the Eastern Libya as well as Turkey's approval to halt the attack on Sirte (Aljazeera Center for Studies, 2020, p. 6).

In this context, some interpreted the visit of the head of Egyptian Military Intelligence, to Benghazi, and his meeting with Haftar, two days before the announcement of the ceasefire, to urge Haftar not to object this agreement (Al-Qaryatli, 2020, p. 3_4). On the other hand, the defense ministers of Turkey and Qatar paid a joint visit to Tripoli, four days before the announcement of the cease-fire, aiming to confirm their continued support for GNA and urge it to agree to the cease-fire (Aljazeera Center for Studies, 2020, p. 6).

During this phase, Turkish position has witnessed a slight change. As in addition to focusing on ending completely the political role of Haftar and maintaining its strategic alliance with Western Libya, it sought to build positive ties with Eastern Libya, though without tangible developments, as there was a single meeting between the two parties until the end of 2021, represented in the visit of a delegation of HOR to Turkey in December 2021, during which they met with President Erdogan (Daily Sabah, 2021).

Moreover, Turkey announced its support for the Government of National Unity that succeeded GNA in March 2021. Within this framework, there were many meetings between the two parties, the most important of was a visit by a large and high-level Turkish delegation to Tripoli in June 2021, which included the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Interior, besides Chief of General Staff of Turkish Armed Forces and Director of National Intelligence Organization, during which they met with the Libyan prime minister Abdel Hamid Dabaiba (Rep. of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). These visits revealed the extent of Turkey's influence in Libya on one hand, and the importance of Libya to Turkey's regional vision since its military intervention in the crisis in January 2020, on the other.

On the other hand, the Egyptian position on the crisis has shifted from bias towards the Eastern Libya to the positive neutrality between the East and the West, which required Egypt to take several measures to reform its relations with western Libya and GNA. So, this period witnessed several reciprocal visits between Egypt and GNA as well as the Government of National Unity after its formation in March 2021.

The first visit was in September 2020, when a GNA delegation visited Cairo for the first time while in December 2020, a high-level Egyptian delegation, included diplomats and intelligence officials, visited Tripoli for the first time since 2014, and met with senior officials of GNA. They agreed to reopen the Egyptian Embassy in Tripoli as soon as possible and develop urgent solutions for the resumption of flights between Tripoli and Cairo (DW, 2020). Moreover, after forming the Government of National Unity, there were many meeting between the two sides. For instance, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli met his counterpart Abdel Hamid Dbeibah in the capital Tripoli, in April 2021, to sign memorandums of understanding on electricity and communications (France24, 2021). The last meeting between the two sides was in December 2021, when President Sisi received the President of Libyan Presidency Council, Mohamed El-Manfi, in Cairo (Egyptian presidency website, 2021).

While Egypt strengthened its relations with Western Libya, it maintained its strategic relations with Eastern. Therefore, the meetings between Egypt and the leaders of the Eastern Libya, including Haftar, has not stoped. For example, in September 2021, Sisi met with Aguila Saleh and Haftar, in Cairo, in the presence of the Chief of Egyptian General Intelligence (Al-Khazen, 2021). Despite the decline of Egyptian support for Haftar in favor of Aqila Saleh, it has not completely abandoned him, as Haftar and his influence on a large part of the forces in Eastern Libya represent an important tool that cannot easily be abandoned under the continuation of the political instability and uncertainty in Libya.

4.2.4. Conclusion

Turkey's intervention in the Libyan crisis since 2014 until December 2019 was limited and indirect, so this crisis was not a major cause of tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations during this period. With the direct Turkish military intervention in support of GNA against Egypt's allies, Eastern Libya's forces, in January 2020; Libya has become the most regional factor causing tension between Egypt and Turkey.

It seems that Turkey has aimed to use its military presence in Libya as a pressure or negotiation tool to push its relations with Egypt towards cooperative paths in the Eastern Mediterranean. While this military presence led to pushing the two countries to conduct political and intelligence contacts and contributed to the success of the ceasefire

agreement in August 2020; the Libyan crisis - due to the continuation of Turkey's military presence in Libya after the ceasefire - has been one of the main reasons of the two countries' failure to restore their diplomatic relations at the level of ambassadors, until the end of 2021. So, Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly announced in September 2021, in the context of his talk about restoring relations with Turkey, the main outstanding issue between the two countries is "Turkey's involvement in Libya" (Middle East Eye, 2021). This attitude can be understood given that the official Egyptian perception considering Turkey's military presence in Libya a threat to its national security as Libya represents its strategic depth, and a threat to its regional influence, based on the fact that Turkey is a competitor regional power.

CONCLUSION

While the internal factor represented in the overthrow of Morsi's rule in Egypt was the reason of the outbreak of the tension in Egyptian-Turkish relations in July 2013, the external factor, represented in MERS has contributed to, firstly, prolonging and deepening this tension during the period from 2013 to 2020; second, to calming of this tension during 2021; third, to preventing the restoration of their diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level until the end of 2021. The impact of MERS on Egyptian-Turkish relations can be seen through the four components of the system: structure, actors, institutions, and interactions.

First, the chaotic or fragile structure of MERS creates a state of uncertainty and suspicion among the actors, as there is no stable and agreed regional balance that sets limits for states' policies towards each other and for their regional roles. This makes the Middle East a conflictual environment which is not suitable for constant cooperative relations between actors. Consequently, the nature of this structure contributes to increasing the intensity of competition and conflict between states, especially such as Egypt and Turkey due to their position in this structure as central regional powers.

Second, regarding actors, the UAE and Qatar have been the most influential on Egyptian-Turkish relations. The UAE established a strategic alliance with Egypt whereas Qatar established its alliance with Turkey. On the other hand, there was a severe tension in Qatari- Egyptian relations, and a regional conflict between the UAE and Turkey. Due to Egypt's preoccupation with its internal situation after July 2013, it wasn't capable alone to confront Turkey regionally, so it would have probably preferred calmness with Turkey to focus on achieving the internal stability and building its self-power. However, the regional conflict, in which the UAE has taken the lead, provided Egypt with opportunity and resources for the confrontation with Turkey. During the years 2020 and 2021, there have been several developments that contributed to the decline of the UAE's negative influence on Egyptian-Turkish relations: first, the decline of Egypt's need for Emirati direct financial support; second, the Emirati regional policies that disturbed its Egyptian ally; and, third, calming the conflict of axes as a result of stopping the war in Libya and resolving the Gulf crisis.

Qatar's influence on Egyptian-Turkish relations has emerged generally through its alliance with Turkey in all conflict areas in the Middle East, against the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and in particular through the Gulf crisis, in which Turkey became involved, based on its strategic alliance with Qatar, in the face of Egypt, which, motivated by its tension with Qatar, sided with its allies, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Qatar's negative impact on Egyptian-Turkish relations ended during the year 2021, which witnessed the return of its relations with Egypt as a result of resolving the Gulf crisis.

Third, in the context of institutions, the thesis examined the impact of LAS as an organizational aspect and the 2014 Military Cooperation Agreement between Turkey and Qatar as a legal one. The activity of LAS against Turkey was done through three mechanisms: the League Council, Arab Parliament, and the Follow-up Committee on Turkey. This activity increased when Egypt restored its regional role since 2019, and by such its influence in the League. This can be seen by the following. First, During the period from 2013 to 2021, there were four extraordinary meetings of the League that dealt with Turkish Policy. With the exception of the 2015 meeting, the other three meetings were convened during 2019 and 2020, at the request of Egypt. Second, the Ministerial follow-up Committee on Turkey was formed in 2020, chaired by Egypt. Third, most of the statements of Arab Parliament against Turkey were between 2019 and 2020. This indicates the extent of Egyptian influence in the League and shows how Egypt used the League as a tool in confronting Turkey, therefore the contribution of the League to deepening the crisis of Egyptian- Turkish relations.

The 2014 Turkey-Qatar Military Cooperation Agreement paved the way for Turkey's intervention in the Gulf crisis in June 2017, in support of Qatar against the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. If the Gulf crisis had not erupted, or Turkey had remained neutral, the Turkish-Egyptian relations might have returned in shorter term, given the following reasons. First, the relative improvement in Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia - and to a lower degree with the UAE - before the Gulf crisis, especially since King Salman's arrival to power. Second, July 2017 witnessed the first phone call between the foreign ministers of Egypt and Turkey since July 2013. Consequently, the calm regional environment under the previous developments could have allowed Egypt and Turkey to restore their relations in a shorter time, however the Gulf crisis provided a conflictual

environment that severely deepened the regional axes conflict, and thus prolonged the tension in their relations. So, with resolving the Gulf crisis in January 2021, the intensity of axes conflict has significantly decreased, providing a positive environment for Egyptian-Turkish relations.

Fourth, regarding the interactions, the conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan crisis have been the two most important regional interactions related to Egyptian and Turkish interests. During the period from 2013 to 2021, Egypt allied with Turkey's opponents in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and Greece, backed by the UAE, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and France, aiming to isolate Turkey in this region. Turkey's strategic objective focused on overcoming this isolation and ensure its interests in the face of a broad regional alliance. However, the Eastern Mediterranean witnessed some positive developments, which have been among the reasons of easing the tension between Egypt and Turkey in 2021. First, the maritime agreement between Turkey and Libya's GNA in November 2019 provided Egypt's EEZ an additional area. Second, Egypt, in its maritime agreement with Greece in August 2020, avoided extending the demarcation to the disputed regions between Greece and Turkey, which paves the way for Egypt and Turkey to demarcate their maritime borders in the future. Third, East Med project launched in January 2020, from which Egypt and Turkey were excluded, negatively affects their ambition to be regional energy center. Thus, the Egyptian cooperation with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean has been necessary, whether strategically, since the Maritime agreement between Turkey and Libya hinders the implementation of this project, or even tactically to push Greece and Israel to integrate Egypt into any gas regional projects.

Turkey's intervention in the Libyan crisis since 2014 to December 2019 was limited and indirect, so this crisis was not a major cause of the tension of Egyptian-Turkish relations during this period. With the direct Turkish military intervention against Egypt's allies in Libya, in January 2020, Libya became the most regional factor causing tension between Egypt and Turkey. The researcher thinks that Turkey aimed to use its military presence in Libya as a pressure or negotiation tool to push its relations with Egypt towards cooperative paths in the Eastern Mediterranean. While this military presence led to pushing the two countries to conduct political and intelligence contacts, and contributed to the success of the ceasefire agreement in Libya in August 2020; the Libyan crisis -

due to the continuation of Turkey's military presence after the ceasefire - has been one of the main reasons of the two countries' failure to reform their relations and restore their diplomatic representation at the level of ambassadors, until the end of 2021, given that the official Egyptian perception considers Turkey's military presence in Libya a threat to its national security as Libya represents its strategic depth, and a threat to its regional influence, based on the fact that Turkey is a regional power competitor.

Accordingly, MERS has affected Egyptian-Turkish relations negatively during the period from 2013 to 2020, through its four elements: the chaotic structure of the system and the two countries' position in it as regional powers, the actors (the UAE and Qatar), the institutions, whether organizational (LAS) or legal (Military Cooperation Agreement between Turkey and Qatar), and finally the interactions (conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Libyan Crisis).

MERS has also contributed to calming this tension during the year 2021 through the following factors: first, the decline of the UAE and Qatar's negative influence on these relations with the emergence of some Egyptian-Emirati differences, and the reform of Egyptian-Qatari relations; second, easing of the conflict of regional axes after resolving the Gulf crisis and stopping the war in Libya; third, each country's consideration of the interests of the other and the emergence of common interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Finally, MERS has contributed to the two countries' failure to improve their relations and restore full diplomatic representation until the end of 2021, through two main factors: the first is direct, related to the Libyan crisis and the continuation of the Turkish military presence in Libya, and the second is indirect, related to the two countries' position in the structure of MERS as competitor regional powers, which in general negatively affect the path of their relations, in terms of stimulating the tension or limiting the cooperation. Accordingly, the researcher suggests several recommendations to limit tension and maximize cooperation between Egypt and Turkey:

- The four regional powers Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran can establish a "Forum for Regional Dialogue", with allowing other regional actors to join as observers. The forum's role is coordinating the regional policies and maximizing the comprehensive cooperation, with the aim of avoiding the clash between

these powers, reducing the intensity of conflicts, and curb the interventions of international powers in the region, which are always keen on creating divisions between the regional powers. This forum can be a prelude to an institutional regional system for the Middle East. In light of the decline in the hegemony of the international system over the regional systems and the regional powers launching talks to reform their relations, Egypt and Turkey on one hand, and Iran and Saudi Arabia on the other; the opportunities of establishing this forum seem more realistic than ever.

- The tension between regional powers is not inevitable, as they can overcome this tension and improve their relations by relying on the equation of “Realization and Coordination”, which is a suitable equation, in general, for regional powers. First, their realization that the regional competition and even conflict is normal, due to their position in the structure of the regional system, may prompt them to accept the continuation of the relations and cooperation under these disputes, preventing any sudden crisis in their bilateral relations. Moreover, the separation between the path of bilateral relations and the regional rivalry can contribute to calming the tensions resulting from the regional environment. Second, the coordination in the different regional issues limits the level of conflict and clash between the regional powers, especially through distribution of the regional roles, reaching a compromise for conflictual issues, and focusing on issues that represent common interest for the two parties. This equation could eventually lead to improving Egyptian-Turkish bilateral relations.
- The maximum benefit from the Eastern Mediterranean gas, especially turning the region into a global energy center, will not completely success until the border disputes are settled. Given the potential of most parties to thwart any gas projects that do not take their rights and interests into account, it is not likely that there will be a final and complete demarcation between Egypt and Turkey without ending the Turkish-Greek disputes. If these disputes are resolved, the conditions will be more suitable for Egypt and Turkey to demarcate their maritime borders within collective framework without raising any tensions. Even if Egyptian-Turkish relations improve, the Egyptian regime will often resort to Egypt's traditional policy in this issue, which is the neutrality and not

signing any maritime agreement, with any party, that includes disputed zones without resolving these disputes. The continuation of these disputes is not in favor of the USA and EU, which are seeking to reduce their dependence on Russian gas. Therefore, they should play a more serious mediation role between Turkey and Greece, as Eastern Mediterranean gas can partly contribute to compensating for Russian gas. Qatar also can play the role of mediation in light of its historical and current experience in the mediation in many regional and international crises, and its involvement in the region through its companies signing contracts with Egypt and Cyprus to explore for gas and oil in the Eastern Mediterranean.

- The current main problem in the Egyptian-Turkish relations crisis is that Turkey is unlikely to abandon its military presence in Libya without ensuring the continuation of its maritime agreement with Libya as a minimum or ensuring its rights in the Eastern Mediterranean as a maximum, while Egypt refuses to restore the relations without ending the military presence Turkey in Libya, and it is unlikely to sign a demarcation agreement with Turkey without resolving the Turkish-Greek disputes. These variables may hinder efforts to improve Egyptian-Turkish relations and the return of the ambassadors. So, restoring the diplomatic relations should not be conditioned to resolving the regional issues, as it will not only impede the improvement of bilateral relations, but also may contribute to deepening regional tensions, whereas restoring the relations and building the trust may contribute to resolving these issues thereafter.

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