

IRAQI PRESS COVERAGE OF THE GULF–QATAR CRISIS A CASE STUDY OF AL-MADA AND AL-SABAH AL-JADID NEWSPAPERS

Abdulsamea Yaseen Jaloub¹

¹Beirut Arab University, Faculty of Human Sciences, Department of Media

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the performance of Iraqi journalism in covering the 2017 Gulf–Qatar crisis, using a descriptive-analytical approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the mechanisms of media coverage of regional crises. The study’s significance lies in the scarcity of Iraqi research critically addressing Gulf crises, as well as its contribution to filling a knowledge gap in media and crisis studies within the Iraqi context.

The study analyzed 84 press materials published in *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* newspapers between June 5 and July 5, 2017, focusing on journalistic sources, editorial formats, highlighting tools, and coverage trends. It relied on the theories of agenda-setting and media framing, and employed critical analysis tools to understand the relationship between language, power, and culture.

The findings showed the dominance of the political dimension in coverage and a prevalence of negative framing at 53.57%, with a heavy reliance on correspondents as primary information sources. The news format exceeded 60%, revealing limited professional diversity and weak analytical depth.

The study concludes that Iraqi journalistic discourse was characterized by superficial treatment and susceptibility to the political environment, highlighting the necessity of reinforcing professional standards in crisis coverage and integrating theoretical frameworks to interpret future patterns of media treatment.

Keywords: Press coverage, Iraqi journalism, Gulf–Qatar crisis, agenda-setting, media framing, media and crises.

Introduction

On June 5, 2017, the Gulf states experienced a diplomatic crisis known as the Gulf–Qatar crisis, when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, along with other Arab countries such as Egypt, followed by the governments of Yemen, Libya, Comoros, and Djibouti, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar. These countries reduced diplomatic representation, revoked permits granted to Al Jazeera’s offices, and imposed political and economic sanctions (BBC, June 5, 2017; accessed July 22, 2025).

The crisis was triggered by the publication of a statement attributed to the Emir of Qatar by the Qatar News Agency, which contained positions considered supportive of regional organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and Hamas, as well as defending relations with Iran. Despite Doha denying the authenticity of the statements and accusing the agency of being hacked, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt promptly severed diplomatic ties, turning the political disagreement into a multidimensional regional crisis.

This crisis highlighted the role of both traditional and digital media in shaping public perceptions and framing political discourse around the “Gulf Other,” serving as a tool to redefine stances and guide public opinion within differing cultural and political frameworks. In this context, Iraqi media presents a unique case worth studying, as it operates in a relatively open media environment but is influenced by sectarian, political, and regional structures, reflecting the interactions of the Gulf scene in Iraqi public consciousness.

Despite numerous political and historical studies on the crisis, Iraqi media analyses remain limited and largely descriptive rather than critically analytical. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by analyzing the coverage of *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* newspapers of

the 2017 Gulf–Qatar crisis, aiming to uncover mechanisms of coverage, prevailing discourse patterns, and the extent to which they adhere to objectivity or are influenced by regional political alignments, relying on agenda-setting and media framing theories to explain and guide Iraqi journalism in shaping public opinion.

The primary causes of the Gulf–Qatar diplomatic crisis include Qatar’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Libya, classified as “terrorist” by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, as well as accusations that Qatar supported various terrorist and sectarian groups aiming to destabilize the region, including the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, and al-Qaeda. Additional contributing factors included Qatar’s stance on Iran, reflected in statements attributed to Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani criticizing U.S. hostility toward Iran, accusations from Saudi Arabia and the UAE of supporting Saudi opposition in Al-Qatif, a majority-Shiite province, and support for the Houthis in Yemen.

This diplomatic crisis was not unprecedented. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE had previously withdrawn their ambassadors from Qatar in March 2014, citing Qatar’s non-compliance with GCC agreements, particularly regarding the 2013 Egyptian coup, support for the Arab Spring revolutions, its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, and Al Jazeera’s coverage of certain events. In November 2014, the ambassadors returned following Kuwaiti mediation, Qatar’s agreement to limit Al Jazeera’s operations in some countries, and a reduction in support for the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 50).

These events posed challenges to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), established in 1981 to foster regional integration among six member states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was designed to promote unity and cooperation among member states, which share similar political systems based on hereditary monarchy, as well as comparable social, economic, and military structures (Al-Ajmi, 2011, p. 459).

The Gulf–Qatar crisis renewed debates on the GCC’s effectiveness in resolving intra-member disputes. Gulf states have experienced multiple disagreements, such as the Qatar–Bahrain dispute over islands in the 1990s and the Saudi–UAE border closure in 2009 following a security incident, highlighting limitations in regional conflict resolution mechanisms (DePress News, March 17, 2010; accessed July 22, 2025). The recent crisis exposed shortcomings in GCC rules, particularly Article 10 on establishing a “Dispute Settlement Authority,” as three states independently severed relations with Qatar.

Qatar is a high-income country with the third-largest natural gas reserves in the world and significant oil reserves. It is classified by the UN as having very high human development and is the most advanced Arab country in human development, with the highest per capita income globally. Qatar is also the first Arab country to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022 (Al-Sharq, August 27, 2018; accessed August 24, 2025).

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Analyze the trends in Iraqi newspaper coverage of the Gulf–Qatar crisis in *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*.
2. Examine the journalistic formats and editorial methods used in covering the crisis.
3. Identify the types of sources and highlighting techniques employed in the coverage.
4. Explore the political and regional influences on the content and orientation of the coverage.

5. Provide an analytical framework to advance media and crisis studies in the Iraqi context.

Significance of the Study

1. Examining coverage in *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* reflects the orientations of Iraqi journalism.
2. The study analyzes media coverage trends and journalistic approaches to crisis reporting.
3. It provides a scientific basis for future research on media influence in crisis management and public opinion shaping.
4. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis to enhance result accuracy and depth of interpretation.

Research Problem

The study focuses on the role played by *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* during the 2017 Gulf-Qatar crisis. This central problem generates the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What were the main topics covered by Iraqi newspapers regarding the Gulf-Qatar crisis?
2. What types of information sources did the newspapers rely on?
3. What were the primary editorial trends in the coverage?
4. Which journalistic formats and visual elements were used in the coverage?
5. Was the coverage characterized by objectivity and neutrality?

Research Hypotheses

1. *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* differ in the topics covered during the Gulf-Qatar crisis.
2. The newspapers differ in their editorial approaches to the crisis.
3. Differences exist in the use of journalistic sources between the two newspapers.
4. The newspapers differ in their use of journalistic formats and visual elements in coverage.
5. The newspapers vary in the degree of objectivity and neutrality in reporting the crisis.

Research Methodology

Answering the research problem requires employing several scientific methods, primarily the analytical method to assess political positions and official and unofficial statements related to the Gulf-Qatar crisis. Additionally, the statistical method is used, as the study involves data analysis and tables related to the research topic.

Based on this framework, the study is divided into two main sections:

1. The first section addresses the role of *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* in highlighting the causes of the Gulf crisis.
2. The second section examines the consequences of the Gulf-Qatar crisis from the perspective of the two newspapers.

Section One: The Role of Al-Mada and Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed Newspapers in Highlighting the Causes of the Gulf Crisis

Al-Mada and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* newspapers shed light on the extent of the disputes among the Gulf states, which were not a new phenomenon. These disputes are linked to the history of Arabian Peninsula tribes, characterized by competition and conflict among them. The current disagreements are merely a modern version of tribal rivalry, but at the level of independent states. The issue of border disputes among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is as

old as the states themselves, emerging at the very moment of their formation. Despite efforts by various Gulf and international parties to resolve these disputes and delineate borders definitively, such attempts often end in postponement until further notice. Some disputes, however, have been resolved either by mutual agreement or through recourse to the International Court of Justice (Gulf Online, April 11, 2016; accessed August 9, 2025).

In addition to the border disputes among them, conflicts later emerged on the level of strategic action and the positions of Gulf countries regarding what became known as the "Arab Spring."

1. Shedding Light on Historical Border Disputes

Although the Gulf states are integrated within a regional organization for cooperation, its members have faced numerous problems and disputes that have threatened the effectiveness of the organization. Among the most significant of these issues are border disputes, some of which were resolved by the International Court of Justice rather than through the GCC.

1.1 The Qatari–Bahraini Dispute

The origins of this dispute date back to the British colonial period in the nineteenth century. The disagreement between the two states became particularly pronounced over the Zubarah area and the Hawar Islands, starting in 1937. The dispute went through several phases, at times nearly escalating into armed conflict. In 1987, both parties provisionally agreed to a framework for resolution proposed by Saudi Arabia, which stipulated that if negotiations failed to reach a comprehensive agreement, subsequent negotiations would be conducted to determine the best means of settlement under international law.

However, over the course of approximately four years, the two parties failed to resolve their border dispute. In 1991, Saudi mediation was declared unsuccessful, leading both states to refer the case to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. In 2001, the ICJ issued its final ruling, which affirmed Bahrain's sovereignty over Hawar Island and the Jiradah islet, and Qatar's sovereignty over the Zubarah area, Janan Island, and Fasht Al-Dibal, in addition to redrawing the maritime boundaries between the two states (Karam, 2002).

2. The Saudi–Kuwaiti Dispute

The dispute between GCC members was not limited to territorial issues but also involved oil fields. This is evident in the Saudi–Kuwaiti disagreement over the Khafji offshore and Al-Wafra onshore fields in the Neutral Zone. In 2014, both countries halted production from their shared oil fields, reducing global oil supplies by approximately 500,000 barrels per day, or 0.5%. The dispute continued until July 2020, when crude production resumed at the Al-Wafra shared oil field after a five-year halt. Production also resumed at the Khafji shared field following a one-month suspension (CNN Arabic, 6 July 2020).

3. The Omani–Emirati Dispute

A border dispute also arose over the waterways between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. In 1977, a conflict emerged when Oman announced a disagreement with the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah over a 16-kilometer maritime stretch near the Strait of Hormuz, where significant oil reserves had been discovered. Oman deployed infantry forces and a naval vessel, demanding that Ras Al Khaimah cease oil production in the area.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait proposed solutions that included joint control of the area and a partnership in oil profits, similar to the arrangement between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the Neutral Zone at Khafji. The dispute was ultimately resolved in 1996 when Oman and the UAE signed an agreement delineating a significant portion of the contested area, covering approximately 330 square kilometers of their shared border. In 2008, the two countries signed a

further agreement to demarcate the remaining 272 kilometers of their border (CNN Arabic, 6 July 2020).

4. The Saudi–Emirati Disputes

The disputes between Saudi Arabia and the UAE are longstanding and deeply rooted, beginning with the founding of the UAE in 1971. A territorial conflict arose over Khawr al-Naqd and the Al-Shaibah oil field, located southeast of Saudi Arabia and approximately 10 kilometers from the southern border of Abu Dhabi, with a production capacity of 500,000 barrels per day (Al-Khaleej Online, 1 September 2019, accessed 7 July 2025).

The most prominent aspect of the dispute concerns the delineation of oil sources. Saudi Arabia controls the majority of the Al-Shaibah field, while the UAE asserts its ownership based on official maps and documents. According to the agreement concluded between the two countries, “the state within whose territory 80% of the Al-Shaibah oil field lies shall have the right to develop the field and fully benefit from its production.” The UAE claimed sovereignty over the field after revising its official boundary maps with Saudi Arabia, presenting new imagery confirming that Al-Shaibah belongs to the UAE. This dispute continues, alongside unresolved border demarcation issues, despite the strong bilateral relationship and their alliance in the Yemen conflict (Tamam Abu Al-Khair, Noon Post, 31 December 2019, accessed 8 July 2025).

5. Historical Saudi–Qatari Disputes

The roots of the disputes between Qatar and Saudi Arabia date back to 1913, when Saudi Arabia sought to annex Qatar as part of the Al-Ahsa region. Britain, however, insisted on recognizing Qatar’s borders, and tensions persisted, especially after the discovery of oil in the Arabian Gulf. A dispute arose over Qatar’s right to engage in oil exploration with the assistance of foreign companies, which Britain supported. The two countries eventually concluded a border demarcation agreement in 1965.

In 1992, a border clash occurred between the two countries, resulting in two deaths. This confrontation became known as the “Al-Khafous Battle,” which led to the death of a Saudi officer and two Qatari soldiers, with Saudi Arabia gaining control of the Al-Khafous area. The dispute resurfaced in 1995, when Qatar accused Saudi Arabia of exploiting members of the Al Murrah tribe and Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani in a failed coup attempt against the Qatari government.

The Saudi–Qatari crises reached their peak in 2014, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar, claiming that the decision followed Qatar’s failure to adhere to principles ensuring non-interference in the internal affairs of any GCC state, directly or indirectly, and to refrain from supporting individuals or organizations that threaten the security and stability of GCC countries (Ahmed Jalal, Al-Watan, accessed 12 July 2025).

Additionally, the case of the three Emirati islands—**Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa**—since 1971, represents one of the most prominent territorial disputes involving the UAE in particular and the Gulf region in general, with Iran. These islands remain under Iranian control.

Although this dispute is not between Gulf states but rather between **Iran and the United Arab Emirates**, the islands’ significance lies in their strategic location at the entrance to the Arabian Gulf. Control over them has allowed Iran to project its power over the Strait of Hormuz. The islands also contain crude oil deposits, significant quantities of iron oxide in Abu Musa, and serve as a resting area for ships entering and exiting the Gulf. Consequently, to this day, the Gulf states collectively have been unable to resolve this dispute.

Second: Highlighting the Causes Related to the Arab Spring

The disputes among the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) evolved from mere territorial disagreements into broader regional issues, most notably their differing perspectives on the Arab Spring, particularly the situation in Syria. Gulf states played active roles in these events due to their financial, media, and political capabilities. The nature and extent of these roles varied from state to state, reflecting the lack of a unified Gulf position; instead, member states held divergent stances toward what became known as the “Arab Spring.”

In late 2010 and early 2011, a wave of widespread “revolutions and protests” erupted across the Arab world, beginning with Mohamed Bouazizi and the Tunisian revolution, which ignited similar uprisings in many Arab countries. This period became known as the Arab Spring of revolutions. The main causes behind these sudden protests included the prevalence of corruption, economic stagnation, poor living conditions, political repression, and general socio-political malaise across the Arab world.

Gulf states’ positions toward the Arab Spring varied significantly. Qatar supported all of these “revolutions,” providing political and media backing, while Oman adopted a quasi-neutral stance toward foreign uprisings and acted quickly to contain domestic popular movements in 2011. The remaining Gulf states—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait—generally opposed the Arab Spring, though their responses were not uniform and varied depending on their bilateral relations with the regimes where protests erupted. For instance, these four states opposed popular movements demanding change in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen—countries with which they maintained strong ties—but adopted a contrasting approach in Syria and Libya by supporting popular movements and later armed revolutions aiming to overthrow the regimes of President Bashar al-Assad and Muammar Gaddafi, respectively (Research Group, 2015).

In subsequent developments, the Gulf states’ stance toward the Arab Spring had a direct impact on the structure of the GCC and its internal relations, leading to the emergence of disputes among its members. Three countries—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain—withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar in protest of the latter’s policies regarding the Arab Spring and its political forces, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Qatar pursued a distinct path aligned with Turkey, one of the key regional actors, by supporting these groups and backing them politically. This stance angered Saudi Arabia, given Turkey’s significant role as a regional competitor to Saudi leadership. Consequently, in March 2013, Saudi Arabia designated the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization (Reuters Arabic, March 8, 2014, visited on 23/3/2025). These developments collectively escalated tensions between Qatar and the other Gulf states, giving rise to what later became known as the Gulf-Qatar crisis.

1. The Outbreak of the 2014 Gulf-Qatar Crisis

As previously mentioned, intra-Gulf disputes are not a new phenomenon. However, the Gulf crisis that erupted between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain on one side, and the State of Qatar on the other, represents one of the most significant disputes that negatively affected the GCC system and its cohesion.

On March 5, 2014, a major event occurred in the history of the Gulf Cooperation Council, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar. This marked the first escalation of its kind since the establishment of the GCC. The three states took this step in response to Qatari policies, which, according to the joint statement regarding the withdrawal of ambassadors, violated the security agreement signed by the leaders of the six member states in January 2014. The agreement guaranteed non-interference in the internal affairs of any GCC

state, whether directly or indirectly, and prohibited support for any entity or individual that threatens the security and stability of the member states, whether through direct security action, political influence, or hostile media. The three states justified their withdrawal of ambassadors on the grounds of Qatar's non-compliance with the Riyadh Agreement, which was signed by the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

On November 23, 2013, the leaders of the GCC member states met in Riyadh and signed what became known as the "First Riyadh Agreement," aimed at eliminating causes that could affect the security and stability of the member states, and endorsing the measures agreed upon in the agreement (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 52). Moreover, the Gulf states intervened militarily in Bahrain and provided financial and economic support to both Oman and Bahrain to prevent the impact of popular movements and to maintain their stability.

Despite this, the trajectory leaned toward the rise of political Islam in several Arab Spring countries, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, which benefited from these "revolutions" through the organizational and mobilization capacities it possessed, winning elections that followed the overthrow of authoritarian regimes. While the Gulf states embarked on efforts to counter these revolutions and the resulting changes in the Arab political landscape—perceived as a threat to the legitimacy of ruling regimes in the Gulf—Qatar continued to support these uprisings and the political, financial, economic, and media changes they produced. Qatari support for these revolutions conflicted with the policies and attempts of other Gulf states to suppress them and to support the stability of Egypt, given Egypt's regional weight and influence. The Riyadh meeting and agreement thus emerged as an attempt by the Gulf states to dissuade Qatar from supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Qatar chose to continue backing popular movements, and the withdrawal of ambassadors was employed as a political pressure measure to compel Qatar to reconsider this policy, which these states viewed as contrary to their interests.

The crisis lasted for approximately eight months, marked by extensive official-level boycotts. During this period, Kuwait made intense efforts to reconcile the Gulf rift internally among GCC member states. The situation remained unchanged until November 16, 2014, when the three countries announced the return of their ambassadors to Doha following the Riyadh Summit, where the Riyadh Agreement was reached. This agreement, later leaked as a confidential document (Appendix 5), aimed to complement the previous agreement and was signed by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar. It reaffirmed the necessity of adhering to the terms of the previous agreement and stipulated that any breach would grant GCC states the freedom to take measures to protect their security and stability.

The key provisions of the 2014 Riyadh Agreement included: adherence to the 2013 Riyadh Agreement, considering non-compliance as a violation of all its terms—most importantly, refraining from supporting media outlets with negative agendas that harm GCC countries. Legal, judicial, and regulatory measures were to be taken against any media that disparages the GCC states. Furthermore, all GCC countries committed to economically supporting Egypt and maintaining its security and stability. Finally, the agreement called for the cessation of media activities by Al Jazeera and Misr Broadcast that were harmful to Egypt (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 53).

Despite this agreement, Qatar did not alter any of the principles of its foreign policy nor did it abandon its allies. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani stated (Sheikh Tamim Statement, CNN, September 2014) that the State of Qatar would continue its policy trajectory and maintain its relations with its regional allies, referring specifically to the Muslim Brotherhood.

Qatari Foreign Minister Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah also declared that Qatar “chose not to remain on the sidelines of history and decided to play a major role in global affairs, engaging with other countries, mediating conflicts, resolving violent disputes, and supporting refugees.” He added that Qatar adheres to two principles: first, the independence of its foreign policy, and second, the commitment to supporting the right of peoples to self-determination.

Although the crisis ended and the ambassadors returned, the conflict of interests and trust issues persisted despite the decisions resulting from the GCC summit held in Doha in December 2014. The divergence in each party’s perception of threats and approaches to confronting them remained evident. This was further reflected in the lack of a unified position regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, the relationship with Iran, and its nuclear program.

On June 5, 2017, four years after the ambassadors’ return, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, followed by the governments of Yemen, the Maldives, and the Comoros, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar. Jordan announced a reduction in its diplomatic representation with Qatar and revoked the accreditation of Al Jazeera’s office there. Subsequently, Mauritania also officially cut diplomatic ties with the State of Qatar.

In light of these developments, the newspapers *Al-Mada* and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* played a prominent role in highlighting the causes of the Gulf-Qatari crisis, which had taken a new turn in Gulf politics, particularly since the Arab Spring, and continued to escalate until early 2017.

Third: Emergence of the Gulf-Qatari Crisis in 2017

The Gulf crisis began on May 24, 2017, when a statement attributed to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, was circulated widely across Gulf social media platforms through the official Qatari News Agency (QNA). The statement reportedly praised Islamic groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood, and also expressed commendation for the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, Qatar later confirmed that the agency had been hacked and that the breaches were deliberately designed to spread false news about the Emir and the country’s foreign policy. Nevertheless, the statement attributed to Sheikh Tamim sparked intense media coverage and widespread discussion on social media, leading to accusations and counter-claims.

On May 25, 2017, Egypt blocked 21 media websites within its territory, citing their alleged support for terrorism and extremism. Prominent among these sites were *Al Jazeera Net*, *Misr Al-Arabiya*, *Al-Shaab*, *Arabi21*, *Rassd*, and *Hamas Online*. Egyptian newspapers, alongside certain Gulf press outlets and audiovisual media, escalated their campaign, culminating in the decision of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt to sever diplomatic relations with Qatar on June 5, 2017.

Following these measures, Saudi authorities closed the offices of *Al Jazeera* in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi General Authority for Tourism and National Heritage prohibited viewing *Al Jazeera* channels in tourist facilities, warning that violations could incur fines of up to 100,000 Saudi riyals. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, considered these measures a “clear violation of freedom of expression.”

The media escalation continued, with Egypt and the boycotting Gulf states on one side and Qatar on the other. The UAE also declared that even expressing sympathy for Qatar or opposing the boycott could be criminalized, imposing temporary imprisonment of three to fifteen years and fines of no less than 500,000 dirhams. On the Qatari side, officials and media outlets, including *CNN* and *Al Jazeera*, consistently emphasized that the QNA website had been hacked and that

Qatar's media platforms were subject to systematic cyberattacks. The website of Qatar Television also reportedly experienced similar breaches.

Shortly thereafter, another cyberattack targeted the UAE, involving the hacking of the email account of the UAE ambassador to Washington, Yousef Al Otaiba. The emails were subsequently leaked to the press. According to *The Daily Beast*, the hackers communicated with the newspaper and presented samples of these emails, which revealed how a wealthy company had allegedly used lobbying groups and millions of dollars to tarnish the reputation of U.S. allies. It was not only the print and broadcast media that contributed to inflaming the crisis; new media, represented by social networking platforms, also played a prominent role in igniting the conflict, particularly Twitter, which has become a quasi-official platform for leaders and politicians.

All of these developments turned Arab media into a tool in the hands of the conflicting states, shifting its fundamental role from reporting and informing to engaging directly in political action, acting as an instigator and spokesperson for the disputing parties rather than as a neutral intermediary. Media thus functioned as a political platform rather than a channel of information. Moreover, the absence of media freedoms had a clear negative impact on the orientation and discourse of the media (Imad Nasif, *Ru'ya for Research and Studies*, September 7, 2017, accessed June 6, 2025).

Accordingly, the causes of the Gulf-Qatari crisis varied according to the perspectives of the parties involved. Each party had its own reasons, interpretations of the background, and understanding of the consequences of the crisis. Among the most significant positions were the Qatari stance, as the primary party involved, followed by the stance of the Gulf states that imposed isolation on Qatar, and then other regional and international positions.

A. The Qatari Position

On October 30, 2017, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, stated (Emir of Qatar Statement, *60 Minutes*, CBS / CNN Arabic) that the sovereignty of his country is a "red line," emphasizing that any interference in Qatar's sovereignty would not be accepted and noting that some countries sought to change the Qatari regime. He added: "History shows us that they tried to do this before in 1996, after my father became Emir, and they clearly demonstrated this in recent weeks." He further stated: "They dislike our independence, the way we think, and our vision for the region. We want freedom of expression for the peoples of the region, and they are not satisfied with that; they see it as a threat" (Al Jazeera, *Al-Mawsu'ah*, July 21, 2017, accessed February 15, 2025).

In another statement on February 17, 2018, at the Munich Security Conference (Emir of Qatar Statement, Munich Security Conference), Sheikh Tamim commented on the Gulf crisis, stating: "Those imposing the blockade are adventurers who undermined the security and economic horizon of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This failed blockade demonstrates how small states can use diplomacy and strategic economic planning to withstand storms of aggression from larger and covetous neighbors" (Al Jazeera, *Al-Akhbar*, February 17, 2018, accessed February 14, 2025).

Furthermore, in a televised statement, the Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, sought to clarify the underlying motivations behind the crisis. He stated that the blockade against Qatar served as a cover for internal transformations in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, though he did not specify the nature of these changes. He also revealed that a minor dispute existed with the UAE a month and a half prior to the crisis, as the UAE had requested the extradition of the wife of an opposition

figure, which Qatar refused. He added: “Qatar always welcomes dialogue, but this does not mean signing on a blank check, and we will not accept any infringement on our national sovereignty under any circumstances. The blockading countries obstruct any efforts at Kuwaiti mediation, noting that the continued existence of the GCC is thanks to the Emir of Kuwait” (Al-Shayji, 2018, pp. 60–61).

B. Other Positions Regarding the Crisis

In contrast to the Qatari position, the countries opposing Qatar held it primarily responsible for the escalation of events. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain perceived that Qatar was attempting to influence and change ruling systems not only within the GCC but also in countries not directly involved in the crisis. This view was emphasized by the Emir of Kuwait during a press conference with President Trump at the White House: “We have been the most targeted by media campaigns from our brothers in Qatar” (Al-Riyadh, September 7, 2017, accessed February 22, 2025).

A major factor in the Gulf crisis was the divergent stance on the Muslim Brotherhood, which Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain designated as a terrorist organization in 2014. In contrast, Qatar strongly supported the Brotherhood, providing political, media, and even logistical backing to its leadership. Qatar also supported the organization’s demands following the removal of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, and previously granted the Brotherhood a platform through Al Jazeera to express its positions and criticize the administration of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, which ignited the first Gulf crisis in 2014, when the GCC countries withdrew their ambassadors from Doha.

Additionally, Qatar supported Hamas in Gaza—both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas being classified as terrorist movements by the Gulf countries—and provided them with media resources, which caused further dissatisfaction among the other states.

The primary objective of isolating Qatar was to compel it to modify its behavior, cease interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and halt its support, hosting, and funding of organizations deemed terrorist, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. The UAE, for instance, regarded the policy of isolation implemented by the Gulf states as having forced Qatar to curb its involvement in regional conflicts, especially in Libya and Syria, to refrain from interfering in neighboring countries’ internal affairs, and to focus on its own domestic issues, particularly economic matters (Asharq Al-Awsat, July 5, 2017, accessed February 22, 2025).

C. Strategic Developments of the Crisis

Following the closure of the sole land border linking Qatar to the outside world, the imposition of restrictions on ships flying the Qatari flag in Gulf ports, and the closure of a significant portion of the regional airspace to Qatari aircraft and foreign airlines traveling to and from Doha, Qatar had little choice but to enhance trade and integration with other countries, such as Kuwait, Oman, Turkey, and Iran. Notably, Iran refused to isolate Qatar, opening its airspace and ports to new shipping routes. Qatar capitalized on the crisis to increase its strategic gains amid its disputes with Saudi Arabia and its allies. The Gulf states’ policies towards Qatar consequently pushed an active member of the GCC to pursue options contrary to the principles of the Council, resulting in enhanced engagement with Iran, viewed by many as a regional adversary.

The Qatar-Iran relationship is rooted in geopolitical realities dictated by geographical proximity and the shared exploitation of the world’s largest natural gas field—the North Field on the Qatari side and South Pars on the Iranian side. Accordingly, relations between the two countries began to improve. In June 2017, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani publicly supported the strengthening

of ties with Qatar, stating that “Iranian policy is to further develop relations with Qatar.” This rapprochement enabled Qatar to disregard Saudi demands and fully restore diplomatic relations with Iran. It should be noted that Qatar had previously severed ties with Iran in January 2016, in solidarity with Saudi Arabia and in protest against attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the consulate in Mashhad following Saudi Arabia’s execution of Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 253).

From the onset of the Gulf crisis, the primary aim of the blockade was to pressure Qatar to conform to the regional policies and demands, particularly those of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. However, Qatar’s response was resolute, refusing to yield to the demands of the blockading states and maintaining resilience in the face of economic, political, and security challenges imposed by the blockade, thereby successfully managing the crisis despite its adverse impacts.

The Qatar-Gulf confrontation went through multiple phases of restraint and assertiveness. During the initial phase of the diplomatic boycott, Qatar was taken by surprise and sought an immediate reconciliation to ease tensions. Accordingly, most of its statements at this stage were cautious, aiming to address the crisis while emphasizing that Qatar bore no responsibility for the remarks attributed to its Emir and stressing that the Qatari News Agency had been subjected to a cyberattack.

However, this cautious approach did not last long. Qatar shifted to a more assertive stance once it became clear that the crisis would be prolonged and complex. While remaining open to dialogue, Qatar sought to overcome challenges and demonstrate its capability to manage its affairs. This strategy led Qatar to establish new strategic partnerships and alliances, including opening new air and maritime routes with Oman, enhancing cooperation with Iran in its airspace, developing military collaboration with Turkey through a Turkish military base, and engaging in strategic dialogue with the United States (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 74).

Efforts to Resolve the Qatar-Gulf Crisis

Several efforts were made to resolve the Gulf-Qatar crisis, with Kuwaiti mediation led by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, Emir of Kuwait, playing the most prominent role in attempting to end the Gulf dispute. Since the outset of the crisis, the Emir of Kuwait held numerous Arab and international meetings. In January 2017, Kuwait hosted the 38th Gulf Summit, which included delegations from Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Despite welcoming the heads of delegations, the level of representation of these countries was significantly downgraded: King Salman of Saudi Arabia apologized for attending personally, and the Saudi delegation was led by Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir; Bahrain’s delegation was headed by Deputy Prime Minister Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, while the UAE delegation was led by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash.

Among the key initiatives proposed by the Emir of Kuwait during the summit was the establishment of a new committee to resolve disputes: “I call for the appointment of a committee to amend the Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) Charter to ensure an effective mechanism for resolving conflicts, stressing that the GCC must remain free from disputes among its member states” (Al Jazeera, December 5, 2017, accessed February 17, 2025).

As part of Kuwaiti mediation efforts, Kuwait also organized the 23rd Gulf Cup, which had been relocated from Qatar to ensure the participation of all national teams. The Emir personally covered the costs to ensure the tournament’s success. However, this initiative did not ease diplomatic tensions after a Saudi sports official publicly insulted the Kuwaiti Minister of Youth. Despite this setback, Kuwaiti initiatives continued: in January 2018, Kuwait hosted the 11th

Conference of Gulf National and Shura Council Chairpersons with the participation of all Gulf council heads. Since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the Emir of Kuwait exchanged 42 telegrams with Gulf leaders, held 36 negotiation sessions with the crisis parties, and delivered six speeches calling for the restoration of Gulf unity and the continued existence of the GCC (Nadeeb Qatar, June 3, 2018, accessed February 18, 2025).

The Emir's mediation efforts extended to a meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump; however, the Trump administration did not play the leading role expected to support Kuwaiti mediation and maintain neutrality among the disputing parties. Although President Trump later moderated his initial adversarial stance toward Qatar, publicly acknowledging Qatar's role in U.S. interests and its hosting of the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East—Al Udeid Air Base—the U.S. maintained a neutral position and encouraged the parties to return to the negotiating table. Retired General Anthony Zinni was appointed as a U.S. envoy to resolve the dispute but eventually resigned in early 2019 due to the inability to achieve a solution (Mohammed Al-Menshawī, Al Jazeera, accessed July 1, 2025).

Chapter Two: The Repercussions of the Qatar-Gulf Crisis from the Perspective of Al-Mada and Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed Newspapers

I. Repercussions Related to the Nature of the Qatar-Gulf Crisis

1. Economic Impact of the Crisis on Qatar

At the onset of the Gulf-Qatar crisis, Qatar faced deficits across multiple sectors and incurred high costs in various areas, particularly shipping, food supply, aviation, and banking stocks. Regarding the shipping sector, Qatar imported approximately 40% of its food needs through the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, mostly via shipping routes passing through the ports of Dubai and Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates for refueling. Similarly, the UAE receives one-third of its natural gas from Qatar through the Dolphin Gas Pipeline.

A 2017 United Nations report noted that Saudi ports and several other Gulf states received official orders not to allow any Qatari ships—or ships owned by Qatari companies—to dock in their ports. This contrasted with Qatar's policy, which declared the opening of its ports, airspace, and land borders for trade with all countries without exception, emphasizing that Qatari authorities would not penalize citizens of the “blockading” states for any reason arising from the crisis (Al-Shayji, 2018, pp. 214–215).

In terms of food supplies, approximately 800 trucks crossed the Saudi-Qatari land border daily, carrying food, medicine, and other goods. With the closure of the land border, trade halted entirely. However, Qatar managed the crisis by finding alternative routes and partners. One of its most significant initiatives was the construction of a new port, Hamad Port, replacing the heavily congested Jebel Ali Port in southern Dubai, which previously handled over one-third of Gulf shipments and 85% of cargo destined for Qatar before the crisis. The construction of Hamad Port cost \$4 billion and became one of the largest and most strategic infrastructure projects in the Middle East. It served as a maritime gateway for Qatar's foreign trade, capable of accommodating vessels of all sizes and weights. The port played a crucial role in breaking the imposed blockade and provided a vital alternative to Jebel Ali. Subsequently, Qatar relocated its national shipping company's regional operations from the UAE to Oman (Al Jazeera, September 5, 2017, accessed October 22, 2025).

2. Impact on the Aviation, Financial, and Tourism Sectors

In the early days of the crisis, Qatar Airways experienced significant negative effects due to airspace restrictions. The airline was forced to reroute flights to Europe and the United States through Iranian airspace. Additionally, Qatar Airways adjusted its operational model, which led to increased costs for certain imported goods. The inability to access Saudi airspace forced the airline to undertake costly detours for flights to Africa, while the closure of Bahraini airspace further encircled Qatar (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 218).

The blockade also affected the banking sector and stock market. The Qatari stock market lost 7% on the first day of the crisis, with subsequent declines reaching 15%. The crisis disrupted imports, causing a 40% decrease in the volume of imported goods during the first month, halted economic growth, drove up food prices, lowered real estate values, and negatively impacted the tourism and travel sectors (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 219).

These economic challenges also influenced Qatar's credit rating. Standard & Poor's downgraded Qatar's sovereign rating from AA to AA- following the severing of diplomatic ties by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain. Statistics show that Qatar's total trade volume with the world in 2016 was approximately \$89 billion, of which 13.8% was with Arab countries and 11.7% with Gulf states. These figures highlight the costly economic losses experienced by Qatar and other regional countries during the crisis (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 220).

The tourism and travel sectors were similarly affected. Before the crisis, there were at least 70 daily flights between Qatar and its three Gulf neighbors. However, tourist arrivals to Qatar decreased by 23% in 2017, reducing hotel occupancy rates and undermining plans to expand capacity by 75% ahead of the FIFA World Cup. By early 2018, tourism began to recover as confidence returned, with Qatar receiving approximately 535,000 visitors (Al-Shayji, 2018, pp. 222–223).

2. Economic Impact of the Crisis on the Blockading Countries

Since the onset of the 2017 Gulf crisis, Qatar relied heavily on imports from Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain. Approximately 75% of Qatar's sugar, 67% of oil, 59% of dairy products, 93% of construction materials, 47% of wood and gravel, and 51% of construction ropes were imported from these countries. These statistics demonstrate Qatar's near-total dependence on its Gulf neighbors. The value of this trade exchange during the month prior to the crisis was approximately QAR 11 billion (USD 3 billion). However, from the beginning of the crisis until the end of September, the trade value fell to QAR 392 million (USD 103 million), resulting in losses for the blockading countries totaling approximately USD 2.9 billion over a few months. The losses affected multiple sectors, including the iron and livestock industries (Foreign Policy Journal, 2015).

3. Social Impact of the Gulf Crisis

Although there are no official figures on the number of Gulf citizens residing in Qatar, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) statistics indicate that Qatar hosted approximately 1.3 million GCC nationals. Hundreds of citizens from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman worked in both the governmental and private sectors in Qatar, and hundreds of Gulf students pursued their studies in Qatar and vice versa. Among married Qataris, 6,474 had spouses from Gulf countries. The Gulf governments requested these families to leave Qatar within 14 days of the crisis's outbreak, warning that those who failed to comply would face legal consequences.

A report by the United Nations Human Rights Commission noted that some individuals refused to leave, bearing the consequences of their decision to avoid family separation. However, they faced difficulties in renewing their passports. Those who complied and left faced numerous

challenges, including loss of employment, abandonment of their residence, and family separation. The crisis also caused social rifts and alienation between Qataris and some Gulf nationals, exacerbated by media campaigns against Qatar (Al-Shayji, 2018, p. 229).

4. Impact of the Gulf Crisis on the Sports Sector

The sports sector was not immune to the Gulf crisis, as it was affected like other sectors. The first signs of impact appeared just two months after the crisis began, when an unknown channel called "Out Q" broadcasted content from the Qatar-based BeIN Sports network, which holds exclusive broadcasting rights for sports tournaments. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia banned Qatari sports channels, such as BeIN Sports and Al-Kass, confiscated broadcasting equipment, and prohibited its sale, while overlooking the distribution of the pirated channel and preventing BeIN Sports from pursuing legal action in its courts.

An investigative report aired by Al Jazeera in late September 2019 revealed that the headquarters of "Be Out Q" was located inside a media company in the Al-Qirawan district of Riyadh. The report concluded that the piracy operation was carried out under official cover and with financial support from Saudi authorities.

By the end of 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain refused to participate in the Gulf Cup of Nations football tournament, originally scheduled in Qatar. Qatar eventually relinquished its hosting rights, granting them to Kuwait. During the 2019 AFC Asian Cup, the UAE prevented Qatari fans from entering its territory to support their national team, citing the boycott of Doha, and barred the accompanying media delegation from covering the tournament. Only after intervention by the Asian Football Confederation did Abu Dhabi allow coverage. When Qatar and the UAE faced each other, Qatari players' goals prompted UAE fans to throw shoes and water bottles at the Qatari team, leading to dual financial and administrative penalties imposed on the UAE by the Asian Football Confederation (Saif Ibrahim, Gulf Online, June 5, 2025).

5. Impact of the Crisis on the Geopolitical and Regional Neighborhood

The Gulf crisis contributed to an unprecedented rapprochement between Qatar, Iran, and Turkey, aimed at circumventing the blockade imposed during the early phase of the crisis, enhancing Qatar's deterrence capabilities, and diversifying its security options. This occurred despite the blockading countries' demands to reduce Qatar's diplomatic ties with Iran and to immediately close the Turkish military base in Doha, inaugurated in 2015 as the first airbase in the Gulf since the Ottoman era. Consequently, the repercussions of the Qatar–Gulf crisis extended beyond the Gulf States, affecting the larger regional neighborhood, including Iran and Turkey.

6. Impact of the Crisis on Qatar–Iran Relations

The relationship between Qatar and Iran is governed by geopolitical realities and their shared partnership in the world's largest gas field, namely the North Gas Field on the Qatari side and South Pars on the Iranian side, which contains approximately 50.97 trillion cubic meters of gas. The total area of the North Gas Field is about 9,700 km², with 6,000 km² within Qatari territorial waters and 3,700 km² within Iranian waters.

Although Qatar and Iran maintained generally good economic relations, the deterioration of Qatar's relations with the Gulf States prompted Doha to strengthen its economic, political, and military ties with Tehran as a means of exerting pressure on the blockading countries. Previously, Qatar had responded to Gulf pressures by cutting diplomatic ties with Iran in July 2016 and recalling its ambassador in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, following the attack on the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and the Saudi Consulate in Mashhad after the execution of Shiite cleric

Nimr al-Nimr. However, Qatar avoided fully severing relations with Iran due to their joint ownership of the North Gas Field, a primary source of Qatari wealth.

In response, Iran provided economic support to Qatar during the blockade, sending food supplies by sea, operating flights from Iran to Qatar, and deploying personnel to protect the Qatari regime against potential military intervention by the blockading states. Consequently, Qatar fully restored diplomatic relations with Iran and hosted elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, building upon a 2015 security and military agreement between the two countries.

Iran leveraged the Gulf blockade to increase its exports to Qatar, resulting in a 2.5% increase in bilateral trade volume. Furthermore, Doha signed a trilateral transport agreement with Tehran and Ankara to facilitate joint trade between the three countries, positioning Iran as a geographic intermediary between Turkey and Qatar.

Therefore, the economic and military relations between Qatar and Iran witnessed notable development. Contrary to the blockade's intended purpose of pressuring Qatar to sever ties with Iran, the crisis ultimately reinforced the Qatar–Iran partnership (Ahmed Amin Abdel Aal, Arab Democratic Center, accessed July 27, 2025).

7. Highlighting Qatar–Turkey Relations

Following the Gulf-Qatari crisis, Turkey–Qatar relations developed rapidly since 2014. In 2015, the two countries established a joint cooperation council. Turkey promptly activated the security agreement, sending the first contingent of Turkish forces within days of the crisis onset. Turkey also responded to Qatar's requests to supply food, cheese, and dairy products as substitutes for Saudi and other Gulf exports. Subsequently, Turkey advanced plans to deploy additional forces at its military base in Qatar.

This Qatar–Turkey rapprochement resulted in the signing of 52 agreements aimed at enhancing cooperation across key sectors. During the fifth session of the High Strategic Committee held in Doha on November 25, 2019, chaired by Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, seven agreements were signed covering economy, urban development, trade, industry, technology, health, strategic planning, scientific cooperation, and intellectual property, all to strengthen bilateral relations (Al-Raya, July 2, 2020, accessed August 22, 2025).

Economic relations between Qatar and Turkey witnessed accelerated growth following the unjust blockade of Qatar. Bilateral trade increased from 3.3 billion Qatari riyals in 2016 to 7.83 billion Qatari riyals in 2019, reflecting a growth rate of 135%. Exports amounted to 3.31 billion Qatari riyals, imports to 4.52 billion Qatari riyals, and the trade surplus between the two countries reached 1.21 billion Qatari riyals.

Additionally, Qatar, Iran, and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate international transport and transit movement. Qatari investments in Turkey are estimated at approximately \$22 billion, primarily in tourism and real estate sectors, while more than 450 Turkish companies operate in partnership with local Qatari firms across various economic sectors (Daily Sabah, November 21, 2019, accessed September 11, 2025).

II. Analysis of Al-Mada and Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed Newspapers' Positions on the Gulf–Qatari Crisis

The analysis encompassed all issues of the two newspapers during the period from June 5 to July 5, 2017, aiming to track the frequency of predefined categories according to the study's questions and hypotheses. The study adopted the unit of subject or news sentence as the unit of analysis and counting, as it represents the core idea of the content and forms a quantitative and procedural basis for measuring media messages (Ali Youdeh Salman, 2012, p. 178).

The analysis included the following categories:

1. **Source Category:** This refers to the origin of the information, such as reporters, news agencies, Arab or foreign newspapers, official sources, etc.
2. **Journalistic Format Category (Artistic Forms):** This covers the forms used in reporting, including news, report, analysis, article, etc.
3. **Emphasis Elements Category:** Includes elements such as headlines, images, and leads, which serve to highlight the significance of the content.
4. **Coverage Direction Category:** This indicates the orientation adopted by the newspaper in addressing the issue or event. It is inferred from the content and linguistic-semantic formulations to determine whether the orientation is positive (supportive), negative (oppositional), or neutral, according to the stance reflected toward the parties or policies discussed.
5. **Sources Category:** This category identifies the sources relied upon by the newspaper in constructing its news content, including correspondents, local and international news agencies, Arab and foreign newspapers, websites, as well as writers and analysts providing specialized interpretive opinions.
6. **Journalistic Formats Category:** Refers to the artistic and formal forms used by newspapers in presenting their topics. These include the news report, feature, article, column, investigative report, interview, and political analysis. This variable is measured according to the type of format used, as it affects the depth and nature of the coverage.
7. **Emphasis Elements Category:** This category refers to the visual and editorial tools used to highlight the importance of the news content and attract the reader's attention. It includes main and sub-headlines, images, colors, font size, infographics, and maps, as these elements shape general impressions and guide audience focus.
8. **Coverage Direction Category:** This reflects the editorial stance of the newspaper toward the presented issues. Coverage is classified into three main directions:
 1. **Positive:** Highlighting supportive or favorable aspects.
 2. **Negative:** Presenting critical or opposing views focusing on shortcomings.
 3. **Neutral:** Objective treatment without bias. This classification relies on linguistic and contextual indicators that reveal the publisher's stance (Mohamed Hussein, 2006, p. 266).

III. Nature of the Actual Analysis of Al-Mada and Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed Newspapers

The analysis of the news coverage sources regarding the Gulf-Qatari crisis during the period from June 5 to July 5, 2017, revealed variations in the patterns of source reliance between Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed and Al-Mada newspapers. Out of a total of 84 news items, Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed published 46 items (54.76%), while Al-Mada published 38 items (45.24%).

The category “**correspondent**” ranked first among the sources used, with 37 occurrences, representing 44.04% of the total sample. These were distributed between Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed with 20 occurrences (43.48%) and Al-Mada with 17 occurrences (44.73%), reflecting a significant reliance on office-based coverage.

The category “**Arab and foreign newspapers**” came second with 16 occurrences (19.04% of the total sample), distributed as 10 occurrences in Al-Mada (26.32%) and 6 occurrences in Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed (13.04%), indicating a greater openness of Al-Mada to external analyses.

International news agencies were cited in 15 news items, representing 17.86% of the sample, including 10 in *Al-Mada* (26.32%) and 5 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (10.87%), reflecting a stronger tendency of *Al-Mada* toward official and neutral sources.

In contrast, *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* relied on **specialized writers and journalists** in 10 news items (21.74%), while this category was entirely absent in *Al-Mada*, highlighting a clear analytical orientation in the former.

Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed also cited **local news agencies** in 4 news items (8.70%), whereas *Al-Mada* recorded none, indicating underutilization of this source in both newspapers.

The category “**field reporter**” appeared once in each newspaper, accounting for 2.17% in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and 2.63% in *Al-Mada*, with a total of 2.40%, reflecting weak field coverage.

Electronic sources were not recorded at all in either newspaper (0.00%), indicating a total absence of digital sources.

The results show the continued dominance of traditional sources, with a clear difference in editorial orientation between the two newspapers.

Table 2: Distribution of Coverage Sources in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* Newspapers during the Study Period

No.	Source	<i>Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed</i>	<i>Al-Mada</i>	Total
		Frequency	%	Frequency
1	Correspondent	20	43.48%	17
2	Arab and Foreign Newspapers	6	13.04%	10
3	International News Agencies	5	10.87%	10
4	Specialized Writers and Journalists	10	21.74%	0
5	Local News Agency	4	8.70%	0
6	Field Reporter	1	2.17%	1
7	Electronic Sources	0	0.00%	0
Total		46	100.00%	38

Journalistic Formats (Media Forms):

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of journalistic formats used in covering the Qatar–Gulf crisis during the period from June 5 to July 5, 2017, revealed a strong reliance on the traditional news format, with relative variation between *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* in the diversity of journalistic forms. A total of 84 items were analyzed, including 47 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (55.95%) and 37 in *Al-Mada* (44.05%).

Direct news reporting dominated the formats with 52 occurrences (61.91%), comprising 29 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (61.70%) and 23 in *Al-Mada* (62.17%), indicating the prevalence of straightforward news narration, often without analytical treatment. This was followed by analytical news reports with 18 occurrences (21.43%), distributed as 8 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (17.02%) and 10 in *Al-Mada* (27.03%), reflecting a stronger tendency in *Al-Mada* toward interpretation and analysis.

Opinion columns appeared only in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*, with 7 occurrences (14.90%), representing 8.33% of the total coverage, while they were entirely absent in *Al-Mada*, indicating

limited presence of local opinion in the former. Political analyses or specialized articles were recorded in both newspapers, with 2 occurrences each (totaling 4.76%), distributed as 4.25% in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and 5.40% in *Al-Mada*, often translated or reprinted materials.

Investigative journalism appeared exclusively in *Al-Mada*, with 2 occurrences (5.40%), and was absent in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*, reflecting a general weakness in investigative coverage. Finally, a special supplement or dossier was used only once in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (2.13%), representing 1.19% overall. These results indicate a clear focus on news formats at the expense of artistic diversity and in-depth journalistic treatment.

Emphasis Elements (Editorial and Visual Highlights):

Emphasis elements, encompassing both editorial and visual tools, play a significant role in enhancing the presence of journalistic content and capturing the reader’s attention. The total number of emphasis elements observed in the coverage of the Qatar–Gulf crisis by *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* newspapers amounted to 89 occurrences, exceeding the total number of news items (84), due to some materials including more than one emphasis element.

Photographs topped the list of emphasis elements, with 33 occurrences (37.08%), including 21 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (35.02%) and 12 in *Al-Mada* (41.38%), predominantly featuring traditional archival images. *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* demonstrated relatively greater diversity in its use of images, whereas *Al-Mada* relied mainly on formal and protocol-based photographs.

Table 3

No. Journalistic Form Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed Al-Mada Total

	Frequency	%	Frequency
1 Straight News	29	61.70%	23
2 News-Analytical Report	8	17.02%	10
3 Opinion Column	7	14.90%	0
4 Political Analysis or Specialized Article	2	4.25%	2
5 Investigative Report	0	0.00%	2
6 Special File / Supplement	1	2.13%	0
Total	47	100.00%	37

The use of headline color or word emphasis ranked second, appearing in 20 instances, accounting for 22.47% of the total, with 14 occurrences in **Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed** (23.33%) and 6 in **Al-Mada** (20.68%). Prominent colors such as black and red were used to highlight terms like “crisis” and “Qatar.” Analysis indicated that the placement of news on the front pages ranked third, with 19 instances (21.37%), including 12 in **Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed** (20.00%) and 7 in **Al-Mada** (24.17%), reflecting differences in news emphasis.

The use of frames or boxes appeared in 9 cases (10.11%), distributed as 7 in **Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed** (11.67%) and 2 in **Al-Mada** (6.90%), mostly for highlighting subheadings. Variations in font size or weight were observed in 7 items (7.87%), mostly in **Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed** (8.33%). Infographics or maps appeared only once (1.12%), highlighting the limited use of advanced visual tools in the coverage.

Table 4: News Emphasis Elements in Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed and Al-Mada Newspapers

No.	Emphasis Element	Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed	Al-Mada	Total
-----	------------------	--------------------	---------	-------

No.	Emphasis Element	Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed	Al-Mada	Total
		Frequency	%	Frequency
1	Photo	21	35.02%	12
2	Headline color / Word emphasis	14	23.33%	6
3	News placement	12	20.00%	7
4	Frame / Box	7	11.66%	2
5	Font size / weight	5	8.33%	2
6	Infographic / Map	1	1.66%	0
Total		60	100.00%	29

Note: Table 4 shows the distribution of visual and editorial emphasis elements in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* newspapers during the coverage of the Gulf–Qatar crisis.

Coverage Trends: Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

The analysis of media coverage of the Gulf–Qatar crisis in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* newspapers during the period from June 5 to July 5, 2017, revealed a total of 84 news items distributed across three main trends:

The dominant trend was the **critical/anti-Qatar coverage**, accounting for 53.57% with 45 news items. *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* published 26 critical reports (56.52%), followed by *Al-Mada* with 19 reports (50%). This trend featured critical reporting focusing on political and security accusations, such as *Al-Mada*'s report dated June 7, 2017, titled “*The Qatari Fishermen Deal Sparks Saudi Discontent with Doha*”, and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*'s report on June 6, 2017, “*Earthquake Shakes Gulf and Arab Relations*”. These reports portrayed Qatar as a supporter of armed groups and a sponsor of terrorism, with a lack of balance and heavy reliance on Western sources.

The **neutral trend** ranked second, representing 32.14% with 27 news items: 14 in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* (30.43%) and 13 in *Al-Mada* (34.21%). Neutral coverage was characterized by objective analytical reporting, including reports such as *Al-Mada*'s June 6, 2017, piece on the crisis's impact on oil and gas prices, and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*'s June 22, 2017, report on energy markets, relying primarily on international news agencies.

The **positive/supportive trend** ranked third, accounting for 14.29% with 12 news items, equally distributed between the two newspapers (6 items each). These reports highlighted regional support, such as *Al-Mada*'s July 2, 2017, coverage of the Qatari Defense Minister's meeting with President Erdoğan, and *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed*'s June 14, 2017, report criticizing the blockade and expressing sympathy for Qatar.

The analysis indicates a clear dominance of anti-Qatar coverage, moderate presence of neutral reporting, and weak supportive coverage. This reflects the influence of the political environment and source selection on media framing. The findings suggest the need to enhance balance and avoid bias in journalistic reporting. The data also demonstrate that Iraqi press coverage of the Gulf–Qatar crisis tends toward a negative stance against Qatar, with limited neutral or positive reporting. These results support the applicability of **Agenda-Setting Theory** and **Media Framing Theory** in explaining how journalistic perspectives are constructed regarding regional issues.

Table 5 illustrates the coverage trends in *Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Mada* newspapers during the period from June 5 to July 5, 2017, showing the distribution of news items according to positive, neutral, and critical/anti-Qatar orientations.

No.	Coverage Orientation	Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed	Al-Mada	Total
		Frequency	%	Frequency
1	Negative	26	56.52%	19
2	Neutral	14	30.43%	13
3	Positive	6	13.05%	6
Total		46	100.00%	38

Conclusion

The media plays a prominent role in covering crises and presenting facts to the public by reporting news as soon as it occurs. However, some media outlets adopt a balanced approach between conveying the truth and safeguarding certain interests, limiting the extent to which they can exercise their voice. This was evident in the media coverage provided by the newspapers **Al-Mada** and **Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed**, where each newspaper followed a different approach from the other, not in every aspect, but in most areas, as reflected clearly in the tables included in this study.

Based on this, the study reached a set of conclusions, which in turn led to some recommendations, as presented below:

Findings

The results of the study revealed a series of indicators reflecting the orientations of the Iraqi press in covering the Gulf-Qatar crisis (2017), while simultaneously showing clear alignment with the two theoretical frameworks (**Agenda-Setting Theory** and **Framing Theory**) and corresponding with findings from previous studies, as follows:

1. Topic prioritization:

Coverage focused primarily on the political dimension of the crisis, while attention to economic and humanitarian aspects was limited. This confirms the effectiveness of **Agenda-Setting Theory** in explaining why certain issues are emphasized while others receive less attention. The results show that approximately **58.03%** of the coverage of security-related crises revolved around the political aspect.

2. Coverage orientation:

The results indicate the dominance of a negative stance toward Qatar, accounting for **53.57%** of the news, compared with **32.14%** for neutral coverage and **14.29%** for positive coverage. This reflects a critical orientation toward one party in the crisis. These findings support **Framing Theory**, which explains how meaning is constructed through the choice of narrative angle and the identification of key actors (as adversary or victim).

3. News sources:

"Correspondents" topped the list of sources at **29.76%**, followed by regional news agencies at **22.61%**, indicating a reliance on official or indirect sources, with limited use of independent and analytical sources. This reflects part of the media framing process and its influence on the overall orientation of coverage.

4. Journalistic formats:

The **straight news format** dominated with more than **60%** of the published materials, highlighting the preference for rapid reporting over interpretive or analytical treatment.

5. Emphasis elements:

The results showed a clear reliance on **prominent headlines and photographic images**, with images constituting a primary emphasis element at **36.9%**, alongside striking or attention-grabbing headlines that help attract readers and guide their interpretation of the event. This aligns with the concept of **Framing Devices**, which demonstrates that media meaning is constructed through textual, visual, and organizational elements that shape the audience's perception of the issue.

In conclusion, the study confirms the effectiveness of integrating **Agenda-Setting Theory** and **Framing Theory** in explaining patterns of journalistic coverage of regional crises, while highlighting the need to improve editorial performance by achieving balance, expanding source diversity, and adopting deeper analytical and interpretive approaches.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance editorial balance** among parties in regional crises to ensure the presentation of multiple perspectives and reduce political bias.
2. **Expand the diversity of news sources** by relying on experts, analysts, and independent sources to provide deeper and more objective coverage.
3. **Shift from superficial news reporting to analytical coverage** by adopting interpretive formats that clarify the backgrounds and dimensions of crises.
4. **Activate positive framing tools** by using headlines and images responsibly to support objective understanding, avoiding sensationalism or exaggeration.
5. **Develop journalists' skills** in discourse analysis and crisis media management to strengthen professionalism in covering sensitive issues.
6. **Integrate Agenda-Setting and Framing Theories** into academic and professional training to understand influence mechanisms and guide news agendas with critical awareness.

Arabic Books

1. Hussein, Muhammad. *Tahlil al-Mudmun fi al-Buhuth al-I'lamiyya* [Content Analysis in Media Research]. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 2006.
2. Al-Shayji, Abdullah Khalifa. *Azamat Majlis al-Taa'awun li-Duwal al-Khaleej al-Arabiya* [Crises of the Gulf Cooperation Council]. 1st ed. Beirut: Al-Dar al-Arabiya lil-Ulum, 2018.
3. Al-Ajmi, Dhafer Muhammad. *Amn al-Khaleej al-Arabi: Tatwuruhu wa Ishkaliyatuh min Manzur al-Alaqaq al-Iqlimiya wal-Duwaliya* [Gulf Security: Development and Challenges from the Perspective of Regional and International Relations]. 2nd ed. Beirut: Arab Unity Studies Center, 2011.

Articles

1. CBS & CNN Arabic. "Muqabala Amir Qatar fi Barnamaj 60 Daqiqa" [Interview with the Emir of Qatar on 60 Minutes].

2. CNN Arabic. "Al-Kuwait wa al-Saudia Tasta'nafi'na Intaj al-Naft fi Haqlay al-Wafra wal-Khafji al-Mushtarakayn" [Kuwait and Saudi Arabia Resume Oil Production in the Wafra and Khafji Fields]. July 6, 2020.
3. CNN. "Tasreeh Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani fi Hiwar Tilvizyuni" [Statement of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in a TV Interview]. September 2014.
4. Karam, Jasim Muhammad. "Al-Niza' al-Hududi bayn Dawlatay Qatar wal-Bahrain" [The Border Dispute between Qatar and Bahrain]. *Majallat al-Ulum al-Ijtima'iyya* 30, no. 2 (2002). Kuwait.
5. Group of Researchers. "Azmat Duwal Majlis al-Taa'awun al-Khaleej fi Ta'amul ma' al-Rabee' al-Arabi" [GCC Crisis in Dealing with the Arab Spring]. Jordan: Middle East Studies Center, Issue 8, March 2015.

Websites

1. BBC Arabic. "Duwal 'Arabiya Taqta' al-'Alaqt ma' Qatar" [Arab Countries Cut Relations with Qatar]. June 5, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast-40155690>
2. DP News. "Al-Imarat Tutliq al-Nar 'ala Zawraq Saudi" [UAE Fires on Saudi Boat]. March 17, 2010. <http://www.dpnews.com/pages/detail.aspx?articleid=32264>
3. Al-Sharq. "Al-Bank al-Duwal: Dakhl al-Fard fi Qatar al-A'la fi al-'Alam" [World Bank: Qatar's Per Capita Income is the Highest in the World]. August 27, 2018. www.al-sharq.com
4. Al-Khaleej Online. "Ba'ad Tiran wa Sanafir... Abriz al-Khilafat al-Hududiya fi al-Khaleej" [After Tiran and Sanafir... Key Border Disputes in the Gulf]. April 11, 2016. www.alkhaleejonline.net
5. Al-Khaleej Online. "57 Ma'raka bayn al-Saudia wal-Imarat" [57 Battles between Saudi Arabia and UAE]. September 1, 2019. www.alkhaleejonline.net
6. Abu al-Khair, Tamam. "Khilafat al-Saudia ma' Jiiraha fi al-Khaleej" [Saudi Arabia's Disputes with its Gulf Neighbors]. Noon Post. December 31, 2019. www.noonpost.com
7. Jalal, Ahmad. "Al-Saudia wa Qatar: Tarikh min al-Khilafat al-Diblumasiiyya" [Saudi Arabia and Qatar: A History of Diplomatic Disputes]. www.alwatanvoice.com
8. Nasif, Emad. "Al-Ma'raka al-I'lamiyya wa Azmat al-Khaleej: Bidaya Sadima wa Nihaya Majhula" [Media Battle and the Gulf Crisis: A Shocking Beginning and an Unknown End]. Ruyaa Research and Studies, September 7, 2017. <https://ruyaa.cc/Page/351>
9. Reuters Arabic. "Al-Saudia Tu'lin al-Ikhwana al-Muslimin Jama'a Irhabiyya" [Saudi Arabia Declares the Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group]. March 8, 2014. <http://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk>
10. Al-Jazeera Encyclopedia. "Awal Khitab li-Amir Qatar Yata'allaq bi-Azmat al-Khaleej" [The Emir of Qatar's First Speech on the Gulf Crisis]. July 21, 2017. <http://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/event>
11. Al-Riyadh Newspaper. "Qatar Musta'ida li-Talabi al-Matalib al-13" [Qatar Ready to Meet the 13 Demands]. September 7, 2017. <https://bit.ly/3mpTdy4>
12. Asharq Al-Awsat. "Tasalsul Ahdat Azmat Qatar" [Chronology of the Qatar Crisis]. July 5, 2017. <https://cnn.it/2HF448z>
13. Nadeeb Qatar. "Hasad al-Wasata al-Kuwaitiyya" [Outcome of Kuwaiti Mediation]. June 3, 2018. <https://twitter.com/nadeebqa>

14. Al-Menshawi, Muhammad. “Aman ‘ala Hasar Qatar: Kayfa Kan Dawr Washington?” [Two Years Since the Qatar Blockade: What Was Washington’s Role?]. www.aljazeera.net
15. Al-Raya Newspaper. “Qatar wa Turkey Yu’azzizan al-Sharaka al-Istrategiyya” [Qatar and Turkey Strengthen Strategic Partnership]. July 2, 2020. <https://bit.ly/2TzGkFA>

Foreign References

1. Study. “Qatar’s Lost Imports from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Yemen (2010–2015).” *Foreign Policy Journal*, 2015.