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The regional challenges affecting Kuwait's national security

Kuwait's
national
security

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to scrutinize and analyze the regional challenges facing Kuwait and their impact on Kuwait's national security since the outbreak of Arab Spring revolutions in 2011. These challenges are as follows: the Iranian threat, the Arab Spring revolutions and the recent Gulf crisis with Qatar.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts national interest approach, which focuses on a state's economic, military and cultural objectives. According to this approach, a state seeks to achieve its own national interests. There are multiple national interests, but the ultimate goal is the survival and security of the state.

Findings – The study concludes that the Gulf countries, including Kuwait, are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the dire consequences of the Arab Spring revolutions, the control of Houthi group on Yemen's institutions and the repercussions of negotiations between 5 + 1 group (Russia, China, France, Britain, the USA + German) and Iran on the Iranian nuclear program. These developments are not in the interest of the Gulf countries in general and Kuwait in particular. The study recommends that Kuwait must adopt an external strategy based on achieving the regional balance with the countries of the region and dealing with different challenges according to its national interest.

Originality/value – The importance of the study stems from the fact that the Arab region witnessed many developments at the political, economic and social levels since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. These developments posed many threats to Arab countries such as the spread of terrorism, religious extremism, terrorist organizations and non-state actors. They also became a key determinant of foreign policy. Kuwait was affected by these developments. In addition, it faces threats affecting its national security such as the Iranian threat, the Arab Spring revolutions and the Gulf crisis with Qatar. The study addresses these threats and how Kuwait, as a small state, has dealt with such enormous ones.

Keywords Iran, Kuwait, National security, The Gulf crisis, The Gulf region, The Iranian challenge

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Recently, many serious global challenges have emerged. The emergence of ethnic sectarian conflicts is one of them, which replaced the ideological ones. The national and sectarian disputes became the main source of strife between states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, they have been described as new civil wars. In addition, international terrorism became one of the greatest threats facing humankind in recent decades (Swain, 2013, pp. 2-3).

Kuwait was not far from these global challenges. Kuwait is located in the northeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It shares borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It is one of



the smallest countries in the world in terms of land area. Its total area is 17,818 km² (Almnkory, 1991). According to the statistics issued by the General Authority for Civil Information in Kuwait, the population of Kuwait until the end of June 2018 was about 4,588,148. Out of 4,588,148, 1,385,960 are Kuwaitis, while the number of –non-Kuwaitis is 3,202,188. Expatriates in Kuwait are estimated to 70 per cent of Kuwait's total population. In all, 60 per cent of Kuwait's total population is Arabs (including Arab expats). Indian and Egyptians are the largest expat communities ([Alanba Newspaper, 2018 22 July 2018](#)). Kuwait has a petroleum-based economy. Petroleum is the main export product. The Kuwaiti dinar is the highest-valued unit of currency in the world. According to the World Bank, Kuwait is the seventh richest country in the world per capita. It is the second richest GCC country per capita after Qatar ([The World Bank Group, 2016](#)). Therefore, it has been exposed to a number of challenges stemming from the regional and international environments. Some of these challenges have been faced by Kuwait, and other challenges have come from being one of the Gulf countries. That is, Kuwait faced the same challenges of the Gulf countries.

In this context, the study deals with the regional challenges affecting Kuwait's national security. The importance of the study stems from the fact that the Arab region witnessed many developments at the political, economic and social levels since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. These developments posed many threats to Arab countries such as the spread of terrorism, religious extremism, terrorist organizations and non-state actors. They also became a key determinant of foreign policy. Kuwait was affected by these developments. In addition, it faces threats affecting its national security such as the Iranian threat, the Arab Spring revolutions and the Gulf crisis with Qatar. The study addresses these threats and how Kuwait, as a small state, has dealt with such enormous ones.

Accordingly, the research problem revolves around the main following question: What is the nature of the regional challenges facing Kuwait since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions? The study is divided into the following four sections: Iran's threat to Kuwait's national security, the impact of the Arab Spring revolutions on Kuwait's national security, the Gulf crisis and its impact on Kuwait's national security and research findings.

1.1 Iran's threat to Kuwait's national security

The Iranian–Kuwaiti relations have ups and downs where relations were positive at times and negative at other times. Iran acknowledged the independence of Kuwait in 1961. In January 1961, the Iranian embassy in Kuwait was inaugurated. This was in the context of the Iranian strategy that aims to form an alliance with the Gulf countries as much as possible ([Parveen, 2006](#), p. 213).

In 1973, Iran supported Kuwait in “Samita incident” where Kuwaiti territories have been assaulted by Iraq. Iran expressed its readiness to send military forces to Kuwait at the request of the Emir of Kuwait. During the 1970s, however, the disagreement between the two countries began. Kuwait had a strong position on the influence of Iran in the Gulf and the occupation of the three islands of United Arab Emirates (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa). Furthermore, it has had good relations with Yemen, which is not satisfied with Iran ([Yassen et al., 2006](#), p. 121).

With the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran's policy has dramatically changed, given its revolutionary ideological background. Iran adopted a foreign policy which has great plans. It sought to win the support of the Islamic masses in many countries, including the Gulf countries. It called upon masses to challenge the existing regimes in Islamic countries and emerged as the main sponsor of the Islamic religion. The Islamic revolution in Iran has a very serious impact on the security of the Gulf. The threat of the

Shah did not exceed the military limits, but the revolution has the two military and ideological dimensions. The danger of the ideological dimension is the Khomeinist tendency to revive Islam and the export of revolution to the Gulf's Shiites (Al-Bastaki, 2003, p. 60).

Kuwait maintained good relations with the revolutionary regime. In July 1979, then Kuwait foreign minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed visited new Islamic Republic of Iran. Similarly, in 1980, the Iranian foreign minister visited Kuwait (Crystal, 2016, p. 137). During Khomeini's era, Iran played a key role in provoking the Shiite-Sunni conflict in Kuwait through Kuwaitis from Iranian descent and Iranian workers working there (Report of Middle East Research Institute, 2015). Iran's policy from revolution to the first Gulf War is characterized by confrontation until Khomeini's departure. Two contradictory approaches of Iran's foreign policy emerged. The first approach was based on the traditional revolutionary theory advocated by the supporters of Khomeini. The second was based on diplomacy and relations between states. The supporters of the first approach were called conservatives while the supporters of the second one were called reformers (Al-Qazlan, 2015). The Gulf countries' concerns increased due to the outbreak of Iraqi-Iranian war. The Gulf may face security dangers because of its proximity to the theater of military operations. This is what has already happened where Kuwait has been attacked by Iran. In addition, the war threatened navigation in the Gulf (Mazloun and Attieh, 2011).

Broadly speaking, the position of the GCC countries including Kuwait has been evolving according to the evolution of the war. As the impact of this war on the security of the Gulf countries increased, the diplomatic reactions of them increased too (Wahib, 2011, p. 181). Initially, Kuwait adopted a neutral position toward both countries. A large segment of Kuwaitis hoped that the two sides would be exhaustive due to the war. Then, two parties will not have the ability to threaten the regional countries (Habeeb, 2014, p. 127). Kuwait was afraid of facing the anger of the victorious enemy. Seemingly, this vision was vulnerable to change when Iraq was subjected to aggression by the Iranian regime. Kuwaiti leaders were particularly concerned about the idea of the anti-monarchy Iranian revolutionary thought. Thus, they began to move toward Iraq and allowed the media to take a pro-Iraq position while the Kuwaiti officials were not allowed to confirm the same position in the media (Terri, 2007).

Iran carried out, at this stage, many acts of sabotage, especially after the attempt of assassination of Sadiq Qutbzadeh, the then Iranian foreign minister in April 1980. A few days later, a Kuwaiti diplomat was shot in Iran. However, the most serious threats occurred at the beginning of the summer of 1948 when the Iranian aircraft launched numerous attacks on fuel stores belonging to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Report of Middle East Research Institute, 2015). In 1986, the Iranian forces occupied Al-Faw Peninsula, leading to the proximity of Iranian forces to the Kuwaiti border (Crystal, 2016).

In the aftermath of the invasion of Kuwait, Iran adopted a policy of neutrality toward the war on Iraq to preserve its interests and avoid confronting with the anti-Iraq international coalition forces. In 1991, it adopted a policy of neutrality with all parties (Hamid, 2016, p. 49).

In the years following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, a great deal of effort has been made by Iran and Kuwait to improve relations between them. Iran emerged as a natural ally for Kuwaitis shocked by the Iraqi invasion. However, the Kuwaiti-Iranian relations, which flourished after the liberation of Kuwait, should not obscure the former role of Iran where Iran was a source of concern for Kuwait and it had a revolutionary ideology. In addition, Iran seeks to control the Gulf, which threatens the Kuwaiti interests (Terri, 2007, p. 59).

In 2003, the USA invaded Iraq, which resulted in curbing Iraq's military capability and regional influence. Consequently, Iran began to expand its regional ambitions, and to

increase its influence in the region taking advantage of the regional vacuum in the Middle East ([Mahmoud, 2015](#), p. 232).

The demands of the Shiites in Kuwait increased as a consequence of these developments. These demands are as follows: the increase of the proportion of Shiite representation in parliament to be 25-30 per cent, where the proportion was 12 per cent of the members of parliament. In addition, some Shiite sects openly and fearlessly performed the religious rituals and lifted the pictures of Khameni, the supreme leader, and Mohamed Hussein Fadallah, the spiritual leader of the Shiite Hezbollah of Lebanon. They also distributed anti-Sunni publications and propagated radical Shiite ideas ([Garghon, 2016](#), 251).

1.2 Kuwait's position on the Iranian threat

Iran is perceived as a source of threat to the security and stability of the region. The Gulf countries also believe that Iran has expansionist dreams and tendencies to dominate the Gulf region, based on the imbalance of power between the two parties. There is a huge disparity in the size of the distribution of capabilities, especially after the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the dominance of the Shiite Iraqi parties on power in Baghdad ([Al-Shimi, 2014](#), p. 37).

1.3 The source of the Iranian threat to Kuwait

The sources of Iran's threat to Kuwait stem from a set of basic elements, which are described next.

1.3.1 Iran's support for Shiite minority in Kuwait. Shia is part of social and political fabric of the Gulf countries, including Kuwait. Shia played a key role in Kuwait due to the spread of education among them. They came to Kuwait from the Arabian Peninsula or Iran. What attracted Iranians to Kuwait were the rapid development and available opportunities. They worked in the commercial and financial fields. Some Shiite families played a pivotal role in the private sector ([Rubin, 2013](#), p. 117).

According to Abdullah Al-Gharib, Shiite immigration was one of Iranian plans to control the Gulf. Furthermore, many of Iranian workforces came legally to Kuwait and other Gulf countries. Iranian merchants helped such workers to settle in the Gulf. They were agents and partners of members of the ruling families. Some Iranian workers came illegally to Kuwait by sea. They benefited from the vacuum of the Gulf after World War II and the collusion of foreign colonialism with Iran ([Ismail, 2010](#), p. 114).

Shiites in Kuwait are divided into secular and religious currents. Secular forces often tend to support the government and oppose the control of clerics over the Shiite activities, as in the case of the Jaafari Waqf. The Shiites have striven to establish a Shiite Jaafari Endowment Authority through which they prove their presence and doctrine, and develop their financial resources. They were keen to be independent from the Endowments Authority and governmental systems ([Ismail, 2010](#), p. 120). As for the religious forces, they are divided into three main currents ([Ismail, 2010](#), p. 115):

- (1) The Iranian current: it believes in Wilayat Al-Faqih and the Iranian reference. This stream emerged after the Iranian revolution in 1979. Persons who belong to this trend, for example, are Adnan Sayed Abdel Sama, a member of the current parliament, and Abdel Mohsen Gamal, a member of the former parliament.
- (2) The Shirazi current: the supporters of this current adopt the ideas of Mohamed Al-Shirazi, who lived in Kuwait for nine years (from 1971 to 1980). Al-Shirazi came from Iraq and established the Shiite institutions ([Ismail, 2014](#), p. 85).

- (3) Shaykhism: it is a group that separated from the general trend of the fundamentalist Shia in nineteenth century by Sheikh Ahmed Al-Ahsaie.

It can be said that Iran has always sought to exploit Shiite in Kuwait to cause unrest within the state. The tense relations between Iran and Kuwait, as a consequence to Kuwait's support for Iraq during its war in Iran, have had a negative effect on the internal situations in Kuwait. The period from 1980 to 1988 has witnessed the unusual actions of political violence such as the attempt of assassination of the Emir of Kuwait in 1986 and the occurrence of several bombings in 1987. Islamic Organizations supporting the Iranian regime were responsible for these operations (Al-Qazlan, 2015, pp. 122-123).

1.3.2 Iran's possession of strong military capabilities. Iran's military capability is great. The characteristics of the Iranian ground forces are numerical, with the lack of technological skills among most of the troops except for the revolutionary guard that is characterized by high combat skill, education and training. The Iranian navy is advanced and renewable. It can damage the export of oil of the Gulf. It is interested in the production of submarines and special teams of mines. The air forces are characterized by the industry of unmanned aerial vehicle and the advanced rocket capabilities (Mahmoud, 2015).

Table I shows the comparison between the military capabilities of Iran and the Gulf countries.

Table I clearly shows that the difference between the Iranian and Kuwaiti military capabilities, which makes the balance of power, is in favor of Iran. This is a key determinant of the state of Kuwait in dealing with the Iranian threat.

1.3.3 The threat of Iran's nuclear program to the security of Kuwait and the Gulf. The already strained relationship between Iran and the Gulf became worse by Iran's nuclear program, which first appeared in August 2002. This program raised the Arab concern, especially the Arab Gulf one (Al-Zuwairi, 2015, pp. 71-77).

Statement	Iran	Kuwait
Category worldwide (133 countries)	21	88
Population	82.801.633	2.875.422
Available manpower	47.000.000	1.620.000
Individuals are suitable for service	39.570.000	1.365.333
Individuals who reach the age of military service annually	1.400.000	34
Active personnel	534.000	15.500
Reserve forces	400.000	31.000
Total military personnel	934.000	46.500
The military budget in USD	6.300.000.000	5.200.000.000
Foreign reserve	135.500.000.000	33.130.000.000
Total aircraft	477	80
Fighters	137	27
The attacking aircraft	137	27
Transportation	203	13
Trained troops	79	7
Helicopter	126	41
Fighter helicopter	12	16
Airports in services	319	7
Total naval fleets	398	368
Submarines	33	38

Table I.
A Comparative
vision of the military
capabilities of Iran
and Kuwait
according to the
latest military
statistics in 2017

Source: Available at: www.globalfirepower.com/countries-comparison-detail.asp

This program was unveiled by the opposition, prompting Iran to open channels of dialogue and negotiations with world's major powers. These negotiations lasted nearly a decade and eventually an initial agreement has been reached in November 2013 and has been extended twice. At the beginning of April 2015, agreement between Iran and 5 + 1 group in Geneva has been reached for resolving the crisis ([Al-Salami, 2015](#), pp. 30- 36).

Despite the Gulf countries' objection to the Iranian nuclear agreement, Kuwait has taken a neutral position. Kuwait has indicated that such agreement will contribute to enhancing security and stability in the region in general although it recognizes that this agreement does not meet the demands and concerns of the countries of the region as a result of the negative Iranian behavior in dealing with these countries, which were committed to non-interference in the internal affairs of states and respect for their sovereignty in accordance with international conventions and norms. The Amir of Kuwait congratulated the General Guide Ali Khamani and President Hassan Rowhani on this agreement.

The former elements are major sources of tension between the two sides, but in general Kuwait is one of the less serve Gulf countries in dealing with Iranian actions. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and some Gulf countries severed diplomatic relations with Iran in the aftermath of the attack on the Saudi embassy in Iran. However, the Kuwaiti position was less acute where the Iranian ambassador has been recalled and was presented a memorandum of protest to him and the Kuwaiti ambassador has been recalled from Iran.

The Kuwaiti position was not limited to this only, but in early 2017 and after the arrival of the Iranian–Gulf relations to a clear state of apparent tension, Kuwait sought to calm the situation. Therefore, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister visited Iran where he delivered a message to the Iranian President from the Prince of Kuwait calling for calming down between the Iranian side and his Gulf counterpart. Then, the Iranian President visited Kuwait in February 2017 at the invitation of the Prince of the state of Kuwait. In addition, many statements were issued by Kuwaiti leaders calling for a settlement of the crisis of Iran's nuclear program. In this context, Mansour Al-Otabi, ambassador of the state of Kuwait to the UN Security Council, stressed that the Security Council should implement Resolution No. 2231 on the Iranian nuclear agreement. It ensures that Iran compiles with its international obligations in this regard. The vision of leaders stems from the fact that peace efforts should be supported and the wars of the region should be prevented.

Accordingly, it can be said that the Iranian threat to Kuwait's security is clear, but Kuwait has sought to adopt the policy of wisdom and prudence in dealing with such crises and it did not adopt hard political positions as other Gulf countries. Thus, Kuwait has relied on the principle of flexible diplomacy in its relation with Iran so that the conflict and dispute between them would not reach a deadlock and would not threaten its national security. Kuwait recognizes that its relations with Iran are unequal where Iran is a major regional state and Kuwait is a small one. The major state is usually trying to dominate the smaller state and prevent it from making alliance or relations with major countries from outside the region so that its interests, security and stability cannot be threatened. Therefore, Kuwait is trying to establish balanced natural relations at all levels with the major regional countries such as Iran, as well as Iraq in the period prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 ([Asiri, 2008](#), p. 55).

2. The impact of Arab spring revolutions on Kuwait's national security

The Arab Spring revolutions that took place since 2010 are considered the second independence of the Arab states. The first independence came after the separation from the colonial powers that colonized these peoples for many years. After independence, autocratic

forces controlled these countries until the Arab Spring revolutions. Some believed that these revolutions may have the second independence from the authoritarian rule.

The GCC countries were not immune to this mobilization. They were quickly influenced by the general Arab mood, especially in Bahrain and Oman. Paradoxically, both countries were among the first Arab countries to be affected by the revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt in spite of their isolation and tranquility. They witnessed radical changes at several constitutional, political, economic, social and cultural levels (Al-Balushi, 2016, pp. 50-67).

Therefore, the Arab Spring revolutions have raised concerns among the GCC countries because they are afraid of spreading these revolutions to their countries, which took place in Bahrain and Oman Sultanate. Thus, when the events of Bahrain occurred, Saudi Arabia saw these protests as an Iranian attempt to control the Gulf region, which means the threat to the Gulf's national security. This trend increased in Saudi Arabia after the arrival of the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt. The Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and to a lesser extent Kuwait, had a clear negative vision of the Arab Spring Revolutions. They believe that Iran and Muslim brotherhood's influence is extending, which affects negatively the monarchical regimes of the Gulf countries (El-Desouki, 2015, p. 69).

The Kuwaitis were divided into two groups. The first does not favor revolutionary changes. The members of this group had two visions. Some support changes in one country and some other oppose according to their sectarian identities. Consequently, Kuwaiti society has been divided on the revolutionary changes occurred in the region. For example, some support the Syrian uprising but oppose the Bahraini opposition movement. On the other hand, some agree with the Bahraini opposition, but do not agree with the Syrian uprising (Al-Bloshi, 2016, pp. 109-110).

As a direct consequence of the Arab protest movements, the Kuwaiti youth were calling for the amendment of the constitution to turn Kuwait into a constitutional emirate run by elected government and headed by a non-royal prime minister, which was met with a political and societal inaction.

The Arab Spring Revolutions were not only limited to these demands, but there were many statements which affirm that it is no longer acceptable after the Arab Spring revolutions that the mentality of the ruling regimes and elites remain reluctant to criticism, political participation and non-acceptance of the other opinion or dialogue. Therefore, some intellectuals in Kuwait demanded that these defects must be overcome and the essence of patriarchal regimes based on oneness should be changed and replaced by democratic ones. This elected democratic regime must be flexible to combine all political orientations that express themselves through legitimate channels at the official and popular levels with the availability of the spirit of initiative. Everyone in Kuwaiti society must feel a positive attitude toward the state that governs him so that he would not be waited to get things done from the top down. The state should not be viewed as patriarchal by citizens (Al-Zu'bi, 2013, p. 15).

This view has dominated the people of Kuwait in the early period of the Arab Spring revolutions. However, the track of these revolutions has been turned due to the continuity of civil war in Syria which led to one of the most difficult humanitarian crises in the world, the coup of the Ansar Al-Houthi in Yemen and the division of Libya and the outbreak of civil war there. Thus, many statements have been issued by the Kuwaiti leaders, who expressed their views about the dire consequences of the Arab Spring. In this regard, the Amir of Kuwait Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah stressed, at the Arab Summit in Amman on March 29, 2017, that "the illusion of the Arab Spring revolutions has overthrown the Security and stability of the region".

In general, the state of political instability in the Arab countries resulting from the Arab Spring revolutions led to the change of the nature of the political demands of the Kuwaiti elite. The Kuwaiti political elite and citizens supported the political leadership and the ruling regime more than ever.

3. The Gulf crisis and its impact on Kuwait's national security

The Gulf region, in particular, and the Arab region, in general, faces one of the most serious crises, which is the Gulf crisis. It is true that the region has been and continues to be engaged in a set of successive crises, whether due to the policies of internal and regional parties that have special agendas or due to the intervention of the international powers in the affairs of the region. However, it is also true that the current crisis, following the decision of three Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain), as well as a number of Arab countries led by Egypt, to sever all their relations with Qatar, represents a fundamental turning point not only in the policies and orientations of these countries but also in the affairs of the region and re-demarcation of its border again according to the interests of parties seeking to raise tension between the countries of the crisis. These parties seek to put the countries of the crisis in a very vulnerable position. They are trying to compel these countries to engage in a military war to achieve gains at the expense of the interests of the Arab countries and its peoples. This will lead to the end of the Gulf regional system. This has not been successful thanks to the Gulf countries' leaders. They made a great effort to preserve this unitary entity, which provides an important platform for the convergence of the Gulf's will to preserve its national and political stability. In particular, the Arab regional framework, which can deal effectively with the risks and threats of the region, is weak (Taher, 2017).

On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have served their relations with Qatar. They have imposed a land, sea and air blockade on Qatar, announcing their demands that Qatar stop supporting terrorist operations and not adopt a policy of destabilization in the Middle East. For its part, Qatar has rejected these accusations in full and claimed that they are incorrect (Sailer and Roll, 2017, p. 3).

The Gulf's decision is not a spur of the moment. However, this step came after continuous strained relations between the two sides. In fact, the roots of the Gulf crisis go beyond accusations that Qatar supports the terrorist groups. The crisis began after 1995 when Qatar adopted a more active foreign policy at the international level. In this context, substantial changes have been made in the sectors of education, diplomacy, mediation, culture, sports and the media. Qatar is able to build an active foreign policy based on two principles: independence and openness to the outside world. It can be said that Qatar's foreign policy is based on three core strategies. The first strategy is based on forming its own image derived from the diplomatic aspects, the media, education and sports. The second is to establish good reactions with neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. The third is to establish an alliance with major powers and players such as the United States and France (Abdullah, 2017).

This led to successive developments between Qatar and its neighbors from the Gulf countries and Egypt too. Egypt denounced Qatar more than once due to the interference of Qatar in Egypt's internal affairs, harboring the Muslim Brotherhood and the refusal to extradite a number of leaders who have been sentenced in Egypt.

3.1 Kuwait's position on the Gulf crisis

Kuwait did not participate in the Arab boycott of Qatar. Moreover, the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, sought to mediate between the Arab brothers to resolve

the crisis because Kuwait recognizes the dangers of this boycott on the Arab fabric. Both Kuwait and Oman fear that they will be boycotted in the future as happened to Qatar. In particular, the reason why Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates boycotted Qatar was to accuse it of maintaining good relations with Iran. This applies to Kuwait and Oman because both have good relations with Iran, unlike the other three countries, which have bad relations with Iran. Iran is constantly trying to intervene in internal affairs and to ignite crises within these three countries (Ahmed, 2017).

Therefore, leaders and intellectuals in Kuwait said that Kuwait may be boycotted also in the coming period by the other Gulf countries. In addition, some representatives of the Kuwaiti parliament stated that Kuwait must be ready to possible future boycott.

Although there are some other statements that exclude such possibilities, these concerns remain existing in the Kuwaiti political circles and widely among the intellectuals, in particular, some elites and activities in Saudi Arabia criticized Kuwait and accused it of not taking a decisive position against Qatar in the context of the recent Gulf crisis and accused it of not acting as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which supported Kuwait from the first moment of the Iraqi aggression on Kuwait.

Many regional powers have tried to mediate to resolve the existing crisis between Qatar and other Gulf countries, including Turkey. However, the Gulf countries preferred the Kuwaiti mediation because Kuwait is from within the Gulf house, is more familiar with the Gulf leaders and is closer to them than other regional powers. In addition, Kuwait faces the same challenges and political and economic circumstances.

Therefore, Kuwait has tried to mediate between the two sides of the crisis. In this regard, the Amir of Kuwait has warned of the dire consequences of the Gulf crisis, fearing the expansion and development of the crisis in undetermined directions. Kuwait's Prince also warned of the collapse of the Gulf Cooperation Council as a result of this crisis. Thus, the Amir of the state of Kuwait took a number of steps aimed at reunifying the Gulf countries by trying to narrow the divergences of views among the Gulf countries and trying to reconcile between them to heal the rift between the two parties. However, these attempts failed and Kuwait did not succeed in defusing the crisis despite the various attempts of the Kuwaiti leadership to settle the dispute.

It could be argued that Kuwait recognized, from the first moment of the crisis, that it could be the place of Qatar. Fears about the dire repercussions of this crisis increased in Kuwait. Therefore, Kuwait has sought to exert great efforts to defuse the crisis and prevent conflict between the Gulf countries. This explains why many statements were made by the Kuwaiti leaders, who are trying to calm things down and to stress that the crisis will be resolved soon. In this context, the president of the National Assembly of Kuwait, Marzouq Al-Ghanim stressed that the Gulf crisis is a short-time crisis and that it will be resolved by participating all parties of the crisis, the strong will of the Gulf countries and the strong efforts of the Amir of Kuwait.

4. Research findings

The study has reached several points of findings, the most important of which are:

- There are a number of challenges facing Kuwait at the regional and international levels, which threatens Kuwait's national security.
- The Gulf countries, including Kuwait, are facing unprecedented challenges which are the dire consequences of the Arab Spring revolutions, the control of Houthi group on Yemen's institutions, and the repercussions of negotiations between 5 + 1 group (Russia, China, France, Britain, USA + German) and Iran on the Iranian

nuclear program. These developments are not in the interest of the Gulf countries in general and Kuwait in particular.

- The Kuwaiti vision of national security is to adopt a balanced policy toward both global and regional powers to preserve its national security.

Based on the previous results, the study recommends the following:

- Kuwait should activate the mechanism of mediation and find alternative solutions in the recent Gulf crisis, which is the most important challenges facing the Gulf region in general.
- The Iranian threat is one of the most important challenges facing the countries of the Gulf region. Therefore, instead of fragmenting and disintegrating, the Gulf countries must unite to face this challenge.

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