

***Disentangling the Qatari Identity Discourse: Social Engineering and the Dialectics of Identity Formation***

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'I, Maryam Tariq Marzouq Al-Shamlan confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

## **Abstract**

This study starts with the premise that a complex identity discourse is forming in Qatar, which must be traced and deconstructed to enable an understanding of the processes and the social and cultural formations that constituted this discourse. Over the past three decades, a number of social engineering endeavours have been implemented in the Qatari nationalism project to consolidate a national identity and establish a hegemonic national culture. These endeavours have contributed to shaping the 'question of identity' and the dialectics and social contentions within the Qatari identity discourse. The aim of this research is to explore and understand the emergence of the 'question of identity' and what turned the Qatari identity discourse into a contemporary debate.

The study is conducted through a Foucauldian genealogical inquiry, that involves the 'problematization' of the present Qatari reality, in order to approach the Qatari identity discourse and its dialectics and formation process outside and independently from the normative investigative parameters and theoretical lenses that currently define it. This is done using interviews with policy instigators and social influencers (of different age ranges and social and professional backgrounds), a set of two surveys conducted with the general public (pre and post blockade), as well as informal observations to understand the current socio-cultural capital, undercurrents and changes from the perspective of the local society. The multiple dimensions of the Qatari identity discourse are investigated in order to comprehend the society's perceptions, understandings and dialectics – about the identity - during an era of rapid nation-state building and modernization. The thesis contends that the endeavours of the Qatari nationalism project along with processes of globalization and modernity, as well as the blockade imposed on Qatar have played a role in both challenging and re-articulating the Qatari identity discourse, in addition to enabling the cultivation of a hegemonic national Qatari culture.

## **Impact Statement**

This study endeavoured to deconstruct the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience and understand the dynamics and dialectics shaping the discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process. The study focuses on the social engineering efforts of the Qatari nationalism project and the possible role they played in influencing the current discourse and local debates on the Qatari identity and its formation process amidst rapid modernization and nation-state building efforts. Through its theoretical framework and methodology, the thesis provides a new approach to studying the emergence of the question of identity in Qatar. This is done through tracing and deconstructing divergent local perceptions about the Qatari identity, its formation process and the efforts exerted to shape it. The research sought to map out local perceptions and socio-cultural discourses, dialectics and ideological struggles in order to understand what turned the Qatari identity into a contemporary problematic debate. Such a discursive outline of the Qatari present reality and cultural experience is beneficial for researchers and academics as its insights could provide useful points of departure for further research in the fields of social engineering, modernization and nation-state building within the context of Qatari identity formation. Outside academia, this research could be useful for general readers interested in learning more about the Qatari identity and its current socio-cultural dynamics through a local perspective and a different approach, away from the normative investigative parameters and theoretical lenses that currently define most literature on the topic. Moreover, the insights provided in this thesis of local perceptions, contentions and concerns can be beneficial both for social, educational and cultural institutions as well as for policy-makers as it outlines current issues in the local cultural experience which need to be addressed; and more importantly presents and deconstructs local perceptions of and reactions towards certain social engineering policies.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Disentangling the Qatari Identity Discourse: Social Engineering and the Dialectics of Identity Formation**

“What is present reality? What is the present field of our experiences? Here it is not a question of the analytic truth, but involves what could be called an ontology of the present, of present reality, an ontology of modernity, an ontology of ourselves” (Foucault 2010:21).

The present reality is a situation currently lived by an individual or a society as a whole. It is relative and thus complex in nature, and is shaped by myriad experiences and perceptions within a society. This thesis attempts to deconstruct the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience in order to understand the dynamics and socio-cultural dialectics shaping the discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process. In this context, ‘cultural experience’ is not understood as an individual’s experiences and cultural encounters, but rather refers to a collective experience of the society within the local lived reality – practicing culture as well as producing and consuming cultural discourses, products and representations. This research entails an unprecedented deconstruction of local socio-cultural debates, ideologies and perspectives that form the discourse on Qatari identity formation in relation to the social engineering dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project – a project that the State of Qatar has embarked on since its independence in 1971, and has strongly focused on during the past decade or so. Social engineering refers to state-led arranged and channelled efforts to shape and mobilize social action and behaviour to serve different national purposes (Podgorecki et al. 1996). This involves designing and implementing large-scale visions, strategies and projects to

foster the shaping of society. It is often associated with nation-state building and the construction of national cultures and identities. Accordingly, the Qatari nationalism project is a state-led social engineering project which involves administrating institutions, mechanisms and initiatives to instil a hegemonic national culture and consolidate a Qatari national identity.

This research has been driven by the presumption that the social engineering endeavours of the Qatari nationalism project over the past two to three decades – starting with the era of the Father Emir HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani (1995 – 2013) to the present reign of HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar - had a role in producing the socio-cultural dialectics and dynamics that induce the local question of identity. The nationalism project began at a time when “Qatar was a state stuck in the past, unable to rise, develop and invest its wealth” (GCO 2013). Ever since, the young and ambitious nation-state embarked on transforming itself into a knowledge-based self-sufficient economy “capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all its people for generations to come” (GSDP 2008).

The state-led progressive efforts to realize this vision have brought about drastic changes to the Qatari present reality. These changes include radical advances in the economy and an increased contact with the global community in different fields including education, media and culture, as well as a rapid population growth and an extreme imbalance between locals and expatriates in the country (Battaloglu 2018, Kamrava 2013, Fromherz 2012). Facing such changes, and their implications on the local socio-cultural fabric, necessitates the ‘cultivation’ of Qatari citizens (Maziad 2016:123, Al-Malki 2016:249). Hence, the state has sought to shape the Qatari society so that it is deeply rooted in its heritage, yet able to fit and participate in a modern cosmopolitan global setting (Tok et al. 2016). The divergent traditionalization and modernization efforts of the Qatari nationalism project to shape the society prompted cultural dialectics and social contestations that currently shape the local discourse and debates on Qatari identity. The aim of this research is to understand the socio-cultural dialectics within the discourse on

Qatari identity formation and the emergence of the question of identity; exploring what turned the Qatari identity discourse into a contemporary problematic debate.

Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1996:596), explains that the notion of 'identity' and its evolvment as a discourse – let alone the 'question of identity' - is “too complex, too underdeveloped, and too little understood in contemporary social science to be definitively tested” or boxed in and categorized in formal definitions or conclusive claims. Therefore, the Qatari identity is approached in this thesis as a developmental puzzle with myriad juxtaposing constituents – without attempting to define it anthropologically, but rather tackling it as a process that evolves and continues to discursively form throughout the Qatari present reality. It is also taken into consideration that it is insufficient to form conclusive judgements, claims and categorizations because there are historical and socio-cultural underlays and nuances within the society, as well as complexities of modernization and change, which broaden the perception of identity and what defines it at a specific time period. The tendency – of local scholarship and media - to pinpoint and formalize aspects of the Qatari identity as its core identifiable 'essence' is hence avoided in this research. This tendency perpetuates a mainstream narrative of local cultural hegemony and social cohesion. Therefore, it is explored and deconstructed to provide an insight on the power dynamics of the social engineering agents involved in the local identity formation process.

The research starts with the assumption that the 'issue of identity' (or 'question of identity') did not suddenly emerge in the past few years in Qatar, but is rather a process that has gradually unfolded with modernity and is experienced as part of Qataris' lived reality. HE Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attayah, former Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar (2007 – 2011), Minister of Energy and Industry (1999 – 2011), Former Chief of Amiri Diwan (2011) and President of the Qatar Administrative and Control Authority (2011), spoke during a semi-structured interview of a personal incident that clearly maps out the early dynamics and fractures in the Qatari society's cultural experience (personal communication, 2018). The anecdote he shared is referred to here as it elucidates the

identity dynamics this research is concerned with, setting the path for the dialectics and ideological struggles of the present lived reality.

In 1989, during his post as Director of the Office of the Minister of Interior, Al-Attiyah received a request for approval of two housemaids' visas. Paradoxically, just a few months before, he had read a book written by the same person who submitted this request about the dangers and threats of foreigners - from school teachers to household assistants to blue-collar workers - on the Qatari identity. The book included a dedicated chapter on the negative influences of housemaids on the formation of a child's identity. During the conducted interview, Al-Attiyah explained: "I had no reason to reject his request, I was going to approve it, but I had to challenge his ideas". The applicant was called in for a meeting at Al-Attiyah's office where he was informed: "your request is rejected!". Al-Attiyah adds "I told him that I read his book and that as the author he should be a role model to the rest of the society and actually implement in his own life the solutions he offered in his book". The man went on to explain that the increasing changes in social dynamics, as well as economic circumstances and concerns, can prevent one from living up to his own ideals. "I agree" Al-Attiyah stated, while signing his approval of the request:

"because those ideals are not pragmatic, they do not consider our lived reality, a reality in which we are inevitably changing and modernizing on the cusp of a new era – we need the other, firstly, to help us reach our future aspirations, and more importantly because we live with the other in this world" (personal communication, 2018).

This short interaction above between the two men emblematically reflects the experience of the Qatari individual torn between pragmatism and a will to modernize and thrive in a globalizing world, and on the other hand, conservatism and an idealistic desire to preserve a traditional cultural experience. This clash between mind-sets and visions appears to have progressively influenced both the Qatari identity (in terms of its development and formation), as well as the culture itself in today's Qatari lived reality. It

is the dynamics of the cultural experience and the circulation of the ideologies and discourses produced within a culture that form the constructing elements which shape an individual's identity (Hall 1996:412). The above dialogue usefully represents a contextual point of departure for this research. It sets the path for this research's objective to trace and reveal the inner layers and ideological struggles, relations and contentions between newly emerging discourses and processes along the dynamics of the nationalism project, and ones that are perceived as 'inherent' in the local mind-set and conceptually 'descending' from the past into the present. Essentially, the interaction between those processes and discourses create the social phenomena and cultural experiences lived as a reality today in Qatar.

The research derives its originality from an interdisciplinary view of the contemporary nationalism project in Qatar, attempting to provide a combined analysis of both its political (governmental) and socio-cultural dynamics and implications on the Qatari identity from the perspective of the local Qatari society. The literature published to date focuses either on the political or the socio-cultural dimensions of nationalism projects in the Gulf region, or in Qatar in particular, without paying sufficient attention to the local society as a main agent both involved in and influenced by the state-led social engineering initiatives. Many commentators approach the nationalism project from an international relations perspective, focusing mainly on top-down social engineering initiatives of nation-state building and branding processes and the outcomes of the state's global diplomacy – referring to political and economic roles (Kamrava 2013, Jones 2017, Miller 2018, Partrick 2009, Pym 2018). Others, focus on the cultural dimension of the project, depicting the state as a young, vibrant, active participant in the local, regional and global cultural scenes (Mitchell 2016, Pym 2018, Exell 2016b, Jones 2017). Such works, mainly looking at social engineering initiatives in the heritage or social development industries, briefly present synopses of local socio-cultural dynamics and implications to support broad evaluations of nationalism initiatives in Qatar. Very few, if any (Tok et. al 2016, Partrick 2009), capture the local debates, cultural dynamics and social changes emerging out of state-led social engineering initiatives to construct nationalism, while the majority –

particularly local works - follow an overly simplified ethnographic narrative of cultural cohesion and progression (Al-Hamadi 2017, Al-Janahi 2014).

Instead, this research project investigates and explores the process of Qatari identity formation parallel to processes of nation-state building. It captures the local perspectives of the present reality of the Qatari society amidst social engineering efforts, and attempts to outline the resulting identity formation dynamics. The research draws on the contemporary perceptions, cultural experiences and lived realities of Qataris; thus locating itself outside and independently from the normative investigative parameters and theoretical lenses that have defined the current academic debates and scholarship around Qatari identity. The discourse on Qatari identity - and its dialectics - is mapped out through a local lens of multiple divergent ideologies, perceptions and mind-sets that shape the present lived reality, in order to understand the local question of identity. The Qatari identity is tackled in this research as a discourse (a social 'fact'), rather than a set of characteristics attributed to the local Qatari individual or to the state as whole. Theoretically, it is contended that identity is discursively constructed by both the state and the society (Al- Zoby & Baskan 2014). The research explores local attitudes, reactions and socio-cultural manifestations resulting from societal and governmental interactions and efforts to shape the Qatari identity; looking at each as separate, yet intertwined and reciprocally informing discursive formations and systems of power and socio-cultural regulation.

The research is conducted through employing a Foucauldian genealogy investigative approach. Genealogy is concerned with historical constructs, discourses and discursive formations that shape and form a reality (Garland 2014:372). Essentially, it studies history - whether the far history or the near (i.e. the present reality). It is, specifically, a history of discourse formation. This analytical method involves the investigation of processes and discourses descending from the past and newly emerging ones in the present that contribute to the constitution and manifestation of a social phenomenon. According to Garland (2014:372), "genealogical analysis traces how contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts,

alliances, and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten”. In this case, the Qatari nationalism project and its associated discourses are investigated from local perspectives in order to understand the processes behind the current identity questions, dialectics and debates. This is achieved through conducting interviews with policy instigators and social influencers (of different age ranges and professional and social backgrounds), two online surveys conducted for the general public, as well as informal observations to understand the current socio-cultural capital, undercurrents and changes from the perspective of the local society. The theoretical frameworks and data gathering methods employed in this research are further outlined in the Methodology chapter.

This study starts with a literature review which sets the contextual background and general thematic parameters of the research project. The current relevant literature lacks specific content and empirical data that adequately address this research’s topics of inquiry with a focus on the case of Qatar, or even the Arabian Gulf in general. The Literature Review chapter surveys the relevant literature and academic discussions mainly on modernity, nationalism and social engineering strategies in local and global contexts - identifying those as significant themes in works on identity formation and nation-state building in Qatar and in the region. In order to enable this research to fill the gap in the literature on the socio-cultural nuances and ideological dialectics that make the Qatari identity complex and problematic today, the literature review attempts to present a historical account of the unfolding of the previously mentioned themes. This is done following an historicized exploration of key events, ideologies, discourses, normative lenses and conceptual frameworks that influence and shape the present reality of the Qatari identity.

Genealogy involves the ‘problematization’ of the present (Garland 2014:377). This is an investigative process which enables a reconceptualization of the phenomenon in question in an attempt to present and think of it differently. In other words, it enables a researcher to tackle the phenomenon in question from new and different angles. Throughout the data analysis chapters, questions and queries are raised sequentially so that the data analysis in each chapter leads to the next and, together, they disentangle

and unlock the paradoxes and perplexities within the Qatari identity discourse. The first data analysis chapter “The Qatari Identity: Crisis, Change and Transition” sets out to informatively outline key local debates and social perceptions emerging from the gathered data, which form the identity crisis discourse and the wider discourse on Qatari identity. This chapter reveals a resonating discourse in the local society on the persistence of cultural practices and traditions; yet, paradoxically a general social perception that such aspects have changed amidst rapid modernity and globalization is also identified.

The paradox of change and modernity, along with other social discourses and discursive formations within the Qatari identity discourse, are further explored and deconstructed in the following data analysis chapter “Qatari Collectivism: A Social Collective Identity of Juxtaposed Constituents”. This chapter delves into the dynamics and implications of the nationalism project, highlighting intricate socio-cultural underlays and perplexities that form the dimensions of the Qatari identity formation process. The chapter also seeks to disentangle the local confusion in the understanding and differentiation between the constructed national identity and the indigenous social collective Qatari identity, which seem to have compounded into a newly emerging juxtaposed Qatari identity complex. The data presented in this chapter reveal that this new – national - identity construct is progressively predominating the local imagination through state-led social engineering efforts. Nevertheless, it is perceived by many as problematic, and this is arguably prompting the local question of identity.

The chapter “The National Imagination and the Question of Identity: An Ideological Struggle” delves further into engineered cultural assimilation processes to nationalize the local imagination of Qataris into a civic-political mind-set in order to enable the establishment of a hegemonic Qatari national culture. It investigates local perceptions and reactions to the nationalism project’s efforts to establish a national culture through setting a national narrative and constructing a foundational myth. The data presented suggests that state efforts to bring about ideological hegemony are perceived locally to have intensified the identity question. The chapter also sheds light on ideological struggles in the local cultural experience from discourses of traditionalization vs.

modernization to conceptual tensions emerging from the diversity and generational gaps within the local Qatari society amidst national assimilation efforts. Moreover, the presented data in this chapter indicate the rise of a new social class in the Qatari lived reality – the national class – which embodies the traditional-modern images and representations of the national narrative constructed by the Qatari nationalism project.

The final data analysis chapter “On the Cusp of an Imagined Community?” focuses on the national class and explores how their divergent traditional-modern representations and images became less problematic and gained more social acceptance, particularly after the blockade imposed on Qatar on June 5<sup>th</sup> 2017 by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt. The chapter further expands the investigation of the dynamics and divergent processes of cultivating a Qatari national imagination through closely examining post-blockade survey data gathered and analysed in relation to the paradoxes and perplexities outlined earlier. This chapter highlights the re-articulation of socio-cultural frameworks and dialectics outlined in the earlier chapters activated by the shock brought about by the blockade, and how this situation has facilitated the emergence of broader social perspectives of collectivity, belonging and citizenship. These newly emerging ideologies and discursive formations manifested in the form of myriad traditional-modern episodes of socio-cultural aesthetic settings where different social segments and mind-sets of Qataris interacted and engaged conceptually. This new lived reality facilitated the establishment of a hegemonic national collective culture and imagination. The chapter concludes that a paradigm shift did not occur per se - where all Qataris embrace the constructed traditional-modern image of an ideal Qatari citizen. However, the constructed national identity is predominating, and the national culture has come to be acknowledged by society as a “regime of truth” (Foucault 2003:113) – a hegemonic ideological system of producing discourses, meanings and ideologies, which function as ‘truth’ in the Qatari cultural experience.

The conclusion chapter draws on the outlined discussions and articulations through taking a step backwards to look at the question of Qatari identity through a bigger picture. It presents a perceptive framework of local and global theoretical and contextual

notions and questions that are entangled within the local identity question and continue to induce the dialectics shaping the discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process. The following chapter reviews the relevant literature and sets the contextual background and thematic framework for this research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

*“We have to be there at the birth of ideas, the bursting outward of their force: not in books expressing them, but in events manifesting this force, in struggles carried on around ideas, for or against them.”*

(Foucault, Corriere della sera,  
November 1978).

This literature review draws the general thematic parameters of the research project. The aim of this chapter is to set a contextual background that enables a nuanced understanding and analysis of the Qatari identity formation process and its dialectics and dynamics amidst the Qatari nationalism project’s social engineering efforts. The available literature lacks specific content that directly addresses the local perceptions towards the Qatari nationalism project, and the discursively emerging dialectics and socio-cultural formations which prompt the local identity question and shape the political and socio-cultural underlays of the identity formation process. Hence, this literature review attempts ‘to be there at the birth’ of those ideas through outlining an ideological historicized account of the socio-cultural, economic and political settings of identity formation and nation-state building in Qatar. Accordingly, the unfolding and development of modernity and nationalism in Qatar are surveyed and deconstructed to trace and identify cultural formations, ideologies, conceptual frameworks, socio-political systems and collective memories which resonate with the local mind-set and shape both the local identity discourse and cultural experience.

This literature review is based on a range of primary and secondary Arabic and English sources including academic literature and theoretical frameworks in addition to historical documents and publications. The primary sources were used to complement the relevant literature and build context when needed. The first part of the chapter tackles the theme of modernity with a focus on the genesis of the question of identity in Qatar. The second part investigates the emergence of the Qatari nationalism project, surveying when and how the quest to construct a national identity began through an exploration of the contexts of Arab nationalism, the reality of British governance in the Arabian Gulf and the early phases of Qatari state-building as well as the contemporary social engineering state-led initiatives. The themes of modernity, nationalism and social engineering are explored in the next two parts of this chapter from a local context, as well as the wider regional and global contexts, to build an awareness of the dynamics that shape the local identity and nationalism project.

## **Literature Review**

### **Part One**

#### **Modernity**

This section of the literature review historicizes the unfolding of modernity through a local Qatari lens and explores it within the dynamics of Qatari identity; surveying the genesis of the local identity question. In order to understand the unfolding of modernity in Qatar, and the ways in which it influences local perceptions of the governmentally constructed processes to engineer society, one must look at it from a regional geographic context. Modernity is contextualized in this section within the framework of postcolonial Arabia. It is deconstructed through a local critical lens that draws on 'Western' theoretical frameworks, whilst also considering local scholarship and the particularity of the regional and local historical, political and socio-cultural contexts and circumstances. Such deconstruction enables an awareness of the discourses, ideologies, dynamics and cultural experiences that resonate with local collective memories and mind-sets, and thereby shape Qatari perceptions of the local lived reality and the on-going identity formation process in Qatar. This section aims to shed light on the dichotomy of tradition versus modernity in the region purported by 'Western' scholarship in the early and mid-twentieth century, which seem to have strongly influenced the local approach to both perceiving and understanding modernity, social change and identity formation in the Gulf, and in Qatar in particular.

The first question to be raised, in order to address the unfolding of modernity in Qatar and its relation to the dialectics of identity formation, concerns the very notion of modernity: what it is and how scholars define it. The French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour, for instance, argues:

Modernity comes in as many variations as there are thinkers or journalists, yet all its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time. The adjective 'modern' designates a new regime, an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time (1994:10).

Modernity can be described as an incessant historical experience throughout the subsequent times or, as German philosopher Edmund Husserl refers to it, an 'historical consciousness' that leads towards the fulfilment and realization of universal reason and progression (Moran & Cohen 2012). According to Harold Laski (1962:57-8), modernity, in terms of its historical context, as a term and a movement, has complex, myriad timeframes and is traced to the European expansions of the seventeenth century. The next sections build on the framework of the above understandings with particular consideration of the Qatari socio-historical narrative and the local experience of modernity.

### **The Modernization Paradigm Problematized**

Several scholars including Adas (1993), Belmessous (2015) and Gruzinski (2014) have argued that it was through European expansions that modernization and a reordering of the world were brought about: politically, geographically, economically and culturally. Headrick (1981:21) points that with technological advancements, European powers developed the means to achieve transnational power and, in turn the means themselves became symbols of modernity. In order to understand the evolution and unfolding of modernization and its relation to the issues of identity formations in the region, and in Qatar in particular, it is essential to historically explore the vacuum of knowledge and innovation in the region (Hay 1955:370), and the power imbalances which led to the creation of 'new' states in the Gulf under 'indirect' British Imperialist governance leading to recent independence and nation-state building efforts. This engenders an appreciation of the political, social and economic contexts that shaped the cultural capital in the local society – a sociological concept, introduced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1991),

representing and encompassing social assets, characteristics and concepts that frame and define an individual's identity and mind-set. Moreover, tracing and deconstructing the historical narrative is crucial in this context as it brings to the fore the role played by the maritime industry in the Gulf region as an early portal to modernization. This, hence, sheds light on the influence of such historical political settings on contemporary local perceptions of the 'modern' and the 'Western'.

Hall (1996:184) demonstrates that with the expansion of Europeans outside of Europe conquering lands across the rest of the world a paradox began to manifest in the concept of the 'modern'. Rodrigues (2001:15) argues that it is through the implementation and application of 'modern' European codes of conduct in colonised lands that the dichotomy in the concept of modernity manifested. Europeans began to identify a split in the concept of modernization - between modernity as a systematic structure on one side and modernism as a culture and a conceptual system on the other (Hall 1992:304). In other words, modernity came to be defined as material structures and systems of urban developments and technological and economic advancements, while modernism represents the conceptual meta-physical aspects of modernization exemplified by features such as social class, patriarchal and gender hierarchies and generally an attitude of non-conformity to the prevalent religious dogma (Rodrigues 2001:15). This paradox in the concept of modernization is applicable to the local context of the Arabian Gulf.

Potter (2009) and Hay (1955:368-370) contend that following the industrial economic slump of the 1920s and the oil concessions of the mid-twentieth century; Gulf societies became increasingly interested in exploiting new technologies and adapting to the changes of modernity in order to ensure better standards of living. Al-Ghanim (1997:53-7) outlines that advancements in the pearling industry reshaped the urbanity and dynamics of the local societies; thereby increasing their engagement and interest in further exposure to the modern world and the global economic circuit. However, in his study of the constraints on modernity in the Arabian Gulf, Al-Najjar (2018) explains that even with such modern advancements, the communal tribal system was not replaced by the steadily increasing domains of individualism and capitalism; thus limiting possible changes – associated with modernization - to the local social and cultural conceptual

frameworks. Indeed, Hay (1955:371) and Sonbol (2012) both stress that the social discipline system and cultural capital remained heavily based on religious and indigenous heritage and tribal ideals. Hence, it is gathered that modernization first unfolded materially and not conceptually in the region (Hay 1955:371-2).

Although the Arabian Gulf was far from catching up with the modern world's advancements, technologies and international relations, Hobbs (2015) maintains that the dynamics of world politics, economics and imperialism affected the region and its societies. Western rivalry and competition over oil concessions and other resources in the Gulf in the mid-twentieth century not only shaped the urbanity of the region but also the way it was perceived both globally and locally (Fromherz 2012:65). Al-Tamimi (2018) argues that such economic and political historical instances remain in the local collective memory and continue to discursively shape local attitudes and perceptions towards modernity and engagement with the West today; prompting notions of conspiracy theories and issues of Western superiority and dominance. Essentially, such attitudes and issues, as Zarman (2018) asserts, inevitably influence contemporary local discourses, debates and scholarship about identity formation, modernization and the modern cultural experience.

Potter (2009) claims that the difference between the modern experience in the West and in colonized or imperialized regions (the Arabian Gulf in this case), created a need for anthropological studies and explanations in Western academia. Accordingly, Europeans attempted to study and understand the 'orient': a term typically used by Edward Said to describe the way Europeans addressed the colonized Middle Easterns (including Arabs) in their works about the region. Such studies, thereby, led to constructing the discourse of Orientalism - one of the most predominant discourses that influenced the construction of Western-Middle Eastern perceptions and cultural representations in the modern world. Said (1985:73) defines Orientalism as "the discipline by which the orient was – and still is - approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice". He explains that even though Orientalism came about as a Eurocentric attempt to organize and construct knowledge for the imperialist European, it inevitably influenced the perception and image of the orient:

“in brief, because of orientalism, the orient was not and is not a free subject of thought and action. This is not to say that orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity ‘the orient’ is in question” (Said 1985:3).

In the context of the creation of an Arabian Gulf modern historical narrative, the documented records were mainly produced from the British perspective, thereby reinforcing an orientalist discourse on the history of the Gulf. John Gordon Lorimer (1870 – 1914) was commissioned by the British government to compile his encyclopaedia, *The Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* (Lorimer 1915), as an attempt to produce a written guide for British diplomats and agents in the Arabian Gulf region. The text includes surveyed data that is limited to political, economic and geographic structures compiled chronologically without a nuanced view and explanation of the dynamics of the social and cultural conditions in which those structures developed – of course, because this was not its purpose (Fuccaro 2015:18,31). This view (i.e. Lorimer’s colonial gaze), as Peterson (2014:245) explains, was then perpetuated by many historians and researchers (locals and non-locals) as they relied on Lorimer’s work - not only making use of it as a reliable informative source, but also as a model to follow when constructing their narratives.

As a result, this produced a narrow history consisting of chronological lists of facts and events organized around a simplistic cause-and-effect approach, hence creating a context vacuum (Peterson 2014:245). Determann (2014) raises another factor that shaped the local historiography and approach to understanding culture and society in the Gulf, pointing that during the second half of the twentieth century, Gulf states (including Qatar) commissioned writers and historians to write their histories in an effort of nation-state building. The commissioned authors, in the case of Qatar, included historians from Egypt and the Levant as well as a number of local academics and historians (who were mostly educated in Egypt or the Levant, and were heavily influenced by their historiographical approaches). Accordingly, a monarchist one-man history approach was

followed putting the ruler and the founding of the young state at the core of their accounts and narratives (Determann 2014:101). Establishing legitimacy and nation-state building are two themes that were heavily incorporated in such narratives; with a descriptive focus on political and economic milestones of change and development, while much of the socio-cultural history is left undocumented and unexplored (Peterson 2014: 260).

Butguoga (2016:663) observes that a majority of the current representations and studies of Arabian Gulf societies (including Qatar's) are products of such predominant 'orientalist' narratives and conceptual frameworks, which have established the setting of local societies and their cultures within the wider global narrative of modernity. Consequently, a prevalent collective memory developed out of such frameworks, depicting local societies in a basic 'periodized' time (Al-Najjar 2018). The contemporary questioning of identities in Gulf societies could have emerged out of this clash and contradiction between the basic narratives and the lived realities of a modernizing society's complex cultural capital and socio-political discourses. Commenting on the paucity of contextual content, Sonbol (2012) points out a clear dichotomy between the narrow documented accounts (and the collective memories and perceptions they have produced in local mind-sets) on one hand, and on the other hand, the socio-cultural richness and multiplicity found in undocumented material of primary oral and textual Gulf heritage.

Al-Sharekh and Springborg (2008:181) affirm that it is rather difficult to capture the essence of the local lived realities in the Gulf due to the prevalence of such rigid conceptual frameworks that have subjected the local society and culture to "caricature by others and to romantic notions in the minds of many natives themselves". This is particularly true when looking at descriptions of the social topography of Qatar. For example, in the Geographic and Statistical volumes of *The Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* (1915), Lorimer listed the tribes residing in Qatar in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and classified them generally into *Hadhar* (sedentary tribes) and *Badu* (nomads). This depiction of the Qatari social topography is perpetuated in many local and Western literature (for example, Zahlan 1979:16, Rahman

2005:6-7, Cooke 2013:60-1, Fromherz 2012:138-41, Al-Muhannadi 2011:6-8 and Al-Kubaisi 2010:42-45), and seems to - inadvertently - define who is Qatari today (Carter & Fletcher 2017:434-5). This limited and classified definition of who is Qatari does not recognize the expansion and complexity of the contemporary local social fabric. More importantly, it fails to acknowledge that the historic socio-cultural disjuncture between *Hadhar* and *Badu* have diminished - to certain extents – with increased modernity, inter-marriages and governmental efforts of creating social commonalities and cultural cohesion.

### **Qatar: Modernization or Westernization?**

As the world was exposed to modernization through the 'West', the term came to be synonymous with Westernization; simply assuming that the more modern you become, the more similar you are to the Western, whether as an individual, as a society or as a state (Hall 1992:276). Roberts (1985:41) maintains that modernization – which is inevitably framed by Westernization - became a necessity in the passage of time for a state to join the global community; and came about as a global discourse unfolding through various processes, developments and settings, each according to the circumstances of a state and its society. Accordingly, Sinclair and Jung (2015:23) claim that contemporary “scholarly literature about modernity is flooded by concepts such as alternative, entangled, multiple successive or variations of ‘modernities’. These ‘modernities’ in the plural are attempts to avoid previous assertions that modernization is synonymous with Westernization”.

Building on Roberts' (1985) notion that processes of modernity unfold according to particular circumstances, it is seen that the political circumstances of the Gulf, and Qatar in particular, inevitably left the region dependent on the West for both economic and knowledge development and production; with the inexorable result that it would be encompassed within the framework of Westernization (Hay 1955:369, Potter 2009). Consequently, over the past two decades Qatar has made tremendous cultural efforts to bring about a balance between modernization and Westernization as the state exerts efforts to localize the modern experience (Erskine-Loftus et al. 2016, Tok et al. 2016).

Mitchell (2013) and Cooke (2014) elaborate on such efforts of ‘tribalization’ and traditionalization policies, particularly in the Qatari heritage industry, which focus on the revival of culture and heritage with a modern touch. Nevertheless, it has been argued by Al-Malki (2016:245) and Pym (2018:5-6) that the divergent (local vs. global) efforts in the Qatari cultural scene to reconcile traditionalism and modernity are perplexing the local cultural experience and raising questions about the formation of the local identity and its ideological parameters.

Ross (2012), amongst others, claimed that the wealth of the oil and gas industry triggered major lifestyle changes, thereby leading the local society to embrace modernity – to certain extents. Yet, Hall (1992) describes the concept of modernity as a movement both physical and conceptual into a developed urban lifestyle, which does not fully align with the experience in Qatar. Essentially, it has been suggested by Al-Najjar (2018), Torstrick and Faier (2009:128) and Al-Tamimi (2018) that the changes in the early oil era were gradual, embracing material and structural modernity, but not conceptual meta-physical modernity (i.e. modernism) in its Western sense. It is contended that the changes in people’s ways of thinking, beliefs and socio-cultural practices began manifesting at a later stage “with the arrival of foreign workers, satellite and the internet, and Western education” (Al-Malki 2016:254). The discovery of oil has ultimately paved the way for modernity to unfold faster. However, Henry and Springborg (2010) argue that the gateway for the numerous modernization processes is with globalization and the increased interaction with the West in the twenty first century. Modernity in the Arabian Gulf has been described by Fakhro (2009:293) as a process of “adapt[ing] only some modern elements” of the Western models of developments and progression. Fakhro, hence, suggests that modernity is either ‘filtered’ or ‘resisted’ – to certain extents - by the local society as it unfolds in the region.

There have certainly been drastic changes as Qatar transformed from an indigenous community with a traditional lifestyle to a wealthy rentier state. This transformation involved whole-scale urbanity as modern Western models of developments were adopted (and still are) in governmental and non-governmental

institutions (Kamrava 2013). Adopting Western models necessitated foreign skill-force on a specialist consultation level as well as on the level of labour workforce, who arguably have their influences on the local culture (Al-Kuwari 2012). However, Colton (2011) argues that their role or influence was merely limited to infrastructural and economic progression. Hence, Colton (2011:12) suggests that the structural modern changes brought about due to the wealth and prosperity of the oil industry (in the mid to late twentieth century) are limited to the public spheres and have not been able to fully penetrate the socio-cultural fabric of the private spheres. It is through the 'filtering' and 'co-optation' of the local system that the influences of modernization on the cultural capital and social dynamics of the private spheres were – and still are to certain extents – contained (Fakhro 2009).

Al-Khalifa (2009) maintains that despite the urbanity and rapid changes, the traditional socio-cultural system – in the Gulf in general - have adapted in a way that allows it to stand on the verge of modernization, thereby, ensuring its regulation and influence on modern institutions. Some have argued that the prevalence of tradition inevitably stands as an obstacle to the unfolding of modernity in the Gulf (Al-Naama 2013), seeing the two as separate elements embraced and practiced by different people (Henderson & Rajakumar 2009). Whilst, Cooke (2013:9) asserts that "the tribal [also traditional] ... is integral to the modern [and] constitutes a crucial element in the Gulf's modernity". Al-Rasheed (2018) rejects such binary between tradition and modernity in Arabian Gulf societies, contending that it is "better to propose a continuum" between the two elements, and acknowledge that both can be embraced and practiced simultaneously. The contradictory discourses, practices and cultural orientations emerging from this simultaneity seem problematic and confusing to some in the Qatari society - such perceptions are further discussed in the data analysis chapters with particular reference to globalization, social change and local identity crisis debates.

Indeed, at the turn of the twenty first century those contradictions increasingly manifested in the Qatari cultural experience with the on-going influences of globalization and modernization (Maziad 2016:123-5). Davidson and Smith (2008) and Tok (2016:97-

100) argue that the influences of modernization and globalization manifested in the local private spheres with the introduction of interdisciplinary international education systems, exemplified by Qatar Foundation's Education City complex along with the major reformation efforts of the K-12 educational system in the state. Badry and Willoughby (2016) contend that education has been one of the major portals of modernization through which Qatar has interacted with the globalized world in its efforts to establish a unique national identity to support its anticipated global position. Local voices, such as Al-Kuwari (2012) and Al-Marzoqi (2014), argue that it is through the implementation of Western models of education and 'modern' knowledge capital that a new generation of youth in Qatar grew to begin seeing dialectics between long established traditional tribal structures and newly evolving modern models and conceptual frameworks in the public as well as the private spheres. Arguably, such dialectics lead to social assertions of identity crisis as individuals begin investigating, questioning and challenging both traditional and newly constructed discourse, beliefs and socio-cultural practices (Al-Malki 2016:256). The topic of regional and global discourses and changes along with the efforts exerted by the state of Qatar to shape the image and identity of Qatar and its society is explored in the data analysis chapters.

This part of the literature review has, thus far, briefly surveyed the historical, political and socio-cultural contexts and circumstances of the unfolding of modernity in Qatar. It explored varied discourses, conceptual frameworks and ideologies that have discursively formed with the coming of modernity, and continue to shape the Qatari present reality and cultural experience. The intermingle between descending discourses and ideologies from the past with the contemporary conceptual meta-physical unfolding of modernity parallel with globalization, is inevitably complicating the local cultural experience and identity formation process. The next part of the literature review focuses on the unfolding of nationalism in Qatar, and continues to historicize the ideological, socio-cultural and political processes and discourses associated with the formation of the Qatari identity and the emergence of the nationalism project.

## **Part Two:**

### **Nationalism**

The development of nationalism in Qatar is historicized in this part of the literature review within the context of Qatari identity formation and nation-state building. In order to comprehend the dialectics and dynamics that shape the Qatari identity discourse amidst the nationalism project's contemporary social engineering efforts, it is crucial to investigate the emergence of the Qatari nationalism project. Exploring when and how the project (and its quest to construct a national identity) emerged, involved an investigation of the local political, economic and socio-cultural settings. A set of primary and secondary sources are surveyed to trace and identify the cultural formations, ideologies, socio-political systems and collective memories associated with nationalism in the region. The scope of this exploration considers the wider regional and global dynamics of the development of nationalism; addressing their impacts on shaping local settings and cultural experiences. Primarily, the historical, socio-cultural, economic and political contexts of the unfolding of Arab nationalism, the reality of British governance in the Arabian Gulf and the early phases of Qatari state-building are briefly explored in search for the early strands of the Qatari nationalism project and the early efforts of consolidating a national identity. Then, the focus of the investigation turns to the present lived reality of the context and settings in which the contemporary Qatari nationalism project is operating. It is contended that the regional political settings, along with the neo-colonial processes and socio-cultural dynamics associated with the unfolding of globalization, as well as the collective memories of certain political and cultural historical settings, all play a role in shaping Qatari nationalism and the local identity formation process in the present reality.

## **What is Nationalism**

Before tackling the various factors that led to the development of nationalism as an embraced and applied concept, it would be useful to explore how political and social theorists have defined the concept and to outline a working definition to be applied in this research. Nationalism has been defined broadly as an ideology or a collective system that directs the behaviours, beliefs and wills of a community (Smith 1991, Greenfeld 1992). It has been also defined by Reicher and Hopkins (2001) and McCrone (1998) as an identity or a self-categorization system based on experiences, sentiments and feelings of belonging an individual develops towards a country and its people. The concept of nationalism has also been described by Gellner (1983) as a social movement in a historical process of time. It is also looked at as a historical trend and a movement with a territorial and contextual beginning in Europe during the Industrial Revolution onwards; and expanding into the rest of the world with modernization and increased global interaction (Mann 1992). At the core of this movement is social action to achieve nationalist goals (Hroch 2000). The above definitions are indeed all encompassing and considerate of various historical, cultural and political aspects.

Jonathan Hearn (2006) offers a definition that is broad and allows for the assumption that nationalism can be a feeling, an identity, an ideology and a historical process at the same time. He defines nationalism as the “making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to identity, to jurisdiction and to territory” (Hearn 2006:11). This definition is built on later in the data analysis chapters with a focus on the local socio-cultural context as well as the theoretical frameworks of Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ (1983) and Immanuel Wallerstein notion of ‘the nationalisms of the modern world’ (1984).

It is also crucial for this review to outline working definitions for a state, a nation and a nation-state in relation to nationalism. A state will be looked at as a self-governing political entity within a geographical territory (Donovan 1993:20). While, a nation will be tackled as a community that shares a culture and a set of homogenous ideologies but do not exercise political and territorial sovereignty (Gellner 1983:6-7). Hence, a nation-state

is a sovereign state with a homogenous community, sharing a common culture, language, heritage, and future aspirations (Renan 1996:52-54, Grotenhuis 2016).

Identity must also be defined in relation to nationalism in the context of this research. In its simplest form, identity is conceptually framed as a 'description' and a set of representations of an individual's or a group's existence and belonging (Jaspal et al. 2014, Jenkins 2014). One of the most general definitions of the concept of identity is outlined by Tilly (1996:7) as: "an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; [which] often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative". Political sociologist Montserrat Guibernau offers a similar definition of identity, framing it as "an interpretation of the self that established what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms. All identities emerge within a system of social relations and representations" (Guibernau 2007:10). A national identity would, hence, be described here as a collective sense of belonging to a nation-state based on a distinctive common language, culture and heritage (Kelman 1997:171-3, Unal & Inac 2013:223). This definition, assumes that a national identity has a fluid and dynamic reflexive nature to it; yet, simultaneously, has a legacy and a historical dimension. Both dimensions are features that allow it to persist and endure outer influences and changes (Geertz 1973:260). Those definitions and frameworks are conceptualized in the data analysis chapters with a particular focus on the Qatari socio-cultural fabric and dynamics of the local cultural experience.

### **The Birth of Nationalism in Arabia**

In his study of the birth of nationalism in Europe, Benedict Anderson (1983) argues that this phenomenon was coeval with several fundamental changes taking place in Europe with the start of the Industrial Revolution. Primarily, the decline of religious sovereignty parallel to the innovations and possibilities brought about by the enlightenment changed perceptions within societies in Europe (Hall 1996:45). Looking at the unfolding of nationalism from a wider global context, Kelly and Kaplan (2001:4-5) argue that the birth of nationalism outside Europe in the twentieth century was closely

linked to the colonial experience. They have interestingly stressed the pivotal role of nationalism in the development of post-colonial societies, contending that post-colonialism was the driving force behind the development of most Asian and Middle Eastern states in the twentieth century (Kelly & Kaplan 2001:4-5).

Gillen (2007) argues that the colonial powers' experimentations with methods of regulation and control in colonized regions to increase their imperial power, hegemony and exploitation of resources, led the colonized to revolt and develop a strong sense of indigenous and patriotic belonging to their countries. Hence, nationalism and a nationalistic discourse in some colonized communities could be conceived as a consequence of the revolt against the colonizer. Antonio Gramsci's (1971) analysis of the dual consciousness of the oppressed individual – a term with which he describes the working class - could be applied here in the context of the colonized. Accordingly, Gramsci's analysis could be understood to support the proposition that nationalism (in non-European context) is essentially a by-product of colonialism, like social revolutions are by-products of class struggle and oppression. Gramsci explains that the oppressed oscillates between two consciousnesses, the first dominated by enslavement and complicity with the hegemonic colonial/imperial culture, while the second aspires towards creating a reality of his own based on indigenous culture and communal perceptions (Gramsci 1971). This conflicting duality is potent in driving the individual into resistance and the pursuit of national identity. This duality is further elaborated in the data analysis chapters in the context of modern nationalism and the interaction of modernization and traditionalization processes.

Viewing Gramsci's analysis of the dual consciousness in the context of the Arab world, Albert Memmi (1968), the Tunisian revolutionary writer, forms an opinion that:

“the major goal of colonialism is economic exploitation rather than the civilizing mission. However, to maintain cultural hegemony, the colonizer has to justify his/her role by adducing the superiority of his/her culture and the backwardness of the native's culture: he endeavours to falsify history, he rewrites law, he would

extinguish memories. Anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy” (Memmi 1968:45).

Perceiving and articulating this colonial oppression, Memmi is part of an Arab political elite capable of voicing rebellion and mobilizing society (Dawn 1991:10-12).

In the context of the role of the political elite in the Arab rebellion against colonialism and the rise of nationalism in Arabia in the twentieth century, Edward Said (1993) describes the unfolding of nationalism as an elitist discourse, usurping colonial power and supplanting cultural hegemony; while assuming control of the infrastructure built by the colonizers. Thus, the new system

“required the political, economic, social and cultural framework of the structures of the colonial state, embedded in the form of educational systems, irrigation and agricultural improvements, hygiene, disease control and health measures, resource exploitation, legal and religious codification, transport infrastructures and political surveillance”. (Said 1993:xii).

Said’s description of the emergence of an Arab nationalism and shift of control from the hands of the colonizer to the rebellious elite appears to confirm that the oppression of the colonizer was the primary cause of the revolt, but the catalyst of the revolt would be the Arab nationalists. Ajami (1978:356) explains that the Arab world had entered a new age between World Wars One and Two, where the dynamic of Arab nationalism had taken hold, developing a discourse of ‘the Arabs vs. the West’. Egyptian President Gamal Abdelnasser (1918-1970), the exemplar of Arab nationalists, was able to voice his rebellion and ultimately rose to power by spreading his hybrid form of Arab Socialism (Nasserism). Ajami (1978:368) highlights that prior to Abdelnasser’s rise, intellectuals, publicists and military officials had already advocated the ideologies of Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism across the Arab world. Yet, Abdelnasser communicated their theories, opinions and emotions through charismatic speeches that excited Arabs, mobilizing them to attempt to nationalize their countries’ lands and resources and unite

under cohesive identities (Al-Azmeh 1995:1-3, Ajami 1978:368). With a message that resonated with the Arab masses (including some Arabian Gulf societies), Perthes (2004:1-6) maintains that Abdelnasser's appeal was near unanimous to a people who yearned for Arab unity and autonomous leadership from within their own grassroots.

A series of international political events and global power policies in the Arab world led to the establishment of Arab nationalism "as a culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion" (Renan 1996:52). Abdelnasser's successful nationalization of the Suez Canal, in 1956, further galvanized Pan-Arab identity, assuring the Arab masses that the world order of imperialism was changing, and that there was a chance for recognition of Arab sovereignty and autonomy (Smith 2008:165-166). It was after the loss of the Six Days War in 1967 (a war between Israel and a number of Arab states led by Egypt) that the concept of Arab Nationalism began to lose its appeal from an economic and political standpoint (Dawisha 2005:214-20). Henceforth, Arab nationalism fragmented, developing into myriad forms of smaller scale nation-state nationalisms, where each community prioritized its own local identity, resources and interests, thus establishing their own nationalism projects (Khalidi 1978, Abu-Rabi' 2004). This is elaborated in the following sections.

Reflecting on Said's earlier discussed assertion on the unfolding of nationalism and the usurpation of power to nationalists, this proposition seems applicable to Arab regions such as Egypt, the Levant and North Africa where the colonialist had full control of internal and external state affairs leaving little to no room for local leadership. Yet, Smith (2004:3-4) states that the nature of British rule in the Arabian Gulf was quite different than its nature in other regions, contending that it oscillated between colonialism and a double-sided imperialistic protectionist relationship. The national infrastructure, to which Said refers, was in fact developed through close collaboration between the Gulf States and the British (Onley 2009, Hay 1955:369). Hence, there was no significant form of resistance or revolt to facilitate a productive environment for a nationalist movement as a rebellious counter reaction to the colonizer (Davidson 2007:885-90). Al-Saraf (1980) points that British intervention in the Gulf was mainly restricted to economic and foreign

affairs, and did not seek to restructure the cultural and traditional fabric of the local society by imposing a hegemonic culture which could re-shape mind-sets and identities.

However, Yodfat (1977) and El-Rayyes (1988) maintain that Britain aimed to secure the empire's overseas investments in Gulf oil by limiting the spread of anti-colonialist movements and ideologies evolving in the region (such as communism and Arab nationalism) from taking hold in the Arabian Gulf. Even with such efforts to 'protect' the Gulf from new socio-political thought, Onley (2009:18) argues that such thoughts (particularly of Arab nationalism and unity and the discourse of Arabs vs. West) resonated and appealed to local Gulf societies, thereby adversely influencing local perceptions about British governance, yet did not lead to serious upheavals within Gulf societies – particularly in Qatar. Thus, British involvement was not hostile and arguably did not lead to refractory sentiments of hatred and rebellion, hence negating the assumption that colonialism is necessarily the driving force behind the nationalism project in Qatar. Such a unique situation might pose the plausible question of whether Arab nationalism was the main drive, which is addressed in the next section.

### **Did Arab Nationalism Initiate the Nationalism Project in Qatar?**

Looking at the development of knowledge capital about Arab Nationalism and its circulation within the socio-cultural and intellectual spheres in the Gulf, particularly in Qatar, is important as it enables one to assess the possible role of Arab nationalism in initiating the nationalism project in Qatar (and perhaps the question of identity). It is widely argued, particularly by Arab scholars (Al-Tamimi 2019, Al-Najjar 2018, and Rayyis 1987) that the era of Arab nationalism left a significant impression on the socio-cultural capital and collective memories of Arabian Gulf societies, even though it did not lead to significant political movements and reform. However, such scholarship does not document the conceptual nature of the unfolding and development of Arab nationalism (or even the wider concept of nationalism) within the local socio-cultural capital – which could enable an understanding of its role as an ideology in shaping mind-sets and influencing the local identity discourse. Therefore, this section of the literature review resorts to a primary

source – mainly extracts of Al-Hilal Publication from the early twentieth century to the mid 1970s - in search for references to keywords and concepts relating to Arab nationalism and its evolution as an ideology. Al-Hilal is an Egyptian publication which was widely distributed in the Arabian Gulf. It is particularly useful for this task as it presented lived realities of Gulf societies through tackling political, cultural and social dynamics in the region whilst documenting local voices and perspectives.

The focus of this survey is mainly on the correspondence sections of the publication where articles, essays and questions from the Gulf were published with responses and comments from the publisher. The survey stops at the mid 1970's as references to the Gulf began to decrease. Also, it is worth noting that this collection of articles is a purposive compilation from Saif Marzooq Al-Shamlan's Private Archive (a prominent historian of the Arabian Gulf), therefore specific publication dates for each article are not available.

In the early twentieth century, articles were published introducing the various Gulf sheikhdoms and their societies with keywords and themes including: '*Ummah*' (an Arabic term used to describe the Pan-Islamic community), descriptions of the patriarchal structures of rule and systems of socio-political interdependence. The Pan-Islamic identity was also a recurrent theme, as people were still influenced by the principles of the Ottoman Empire. This period also included questions and reflections on the revolts against the declining Ottoman Empire and the re-establishment of unity in the region.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, early traces of the development of Arab nationalism as a social reform concept emerged with references to the 'Arab Mission' (*AlWa'i AlArabi*) which is an ideology of Arab consciousness and awakening to powers threatening their social, cultural and political status quos (Dawisha 2005). There was a growing interest and curiosity about foreign political systems and interaction with the international community.

During the 1950s to the 1970s, which was the peak period of Arab nationalism with the rise of Abdelnasser, discussions shifted from addressing Arab nationalism at an

intellectual level to a level of foreign affairs (mainly revolving around the Arab-Israeli conflict). Local contributors to the correspondences section began questioning the possibility of the realization of the Charter of the Arab League - a treaty endorsed in 1945 by a number of Arab states acknowledging a Pan-Arab geographical territory whilst recognizing the sovereignty of each state (Toffolo 2008). Key themes in this period included: '*Al-Watan Al-Arabi*' (the Arab nation), *Al-Qawmiya Al-Arabiya* (Arab nationalism), Al-Nakba day - a day that commemorates the exodus of Palestinians due to Israeli declaration of independence in 1948 (Toffolo 2008:47).

The correspondences and articles during this period which described modern developments in Qatar (especially those written by Al-Hilal's – Egyptian - journalists about Qatar) consisted of keywords such as '*Ta'mim*' (nationalization) and *Qawmy* (national). Although such words were (and still are) considered specialized diction within the context of Abdelnasser's Arab nationalism discourse, no significant literature showed governmental adaption of Nasserist socialist politics in Qatar. Therefore, it can be presumed that this diction might have been employed within the Qatari context because it was in circulation during that era. In other words, perhaps the Egyptian media depicted Qatar through their lens of Arab nationalism (Determann 2014:103). Moreover, discussions during this period began to have a future outlook. On one hand, there were discussions about the future of Arab nationalism and unity after the death of Abdelnasser in 1970. And on the other hand, there were discussions about the rise of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia as a prominent Arab leader with a dynamic role in the international oil industry during the 1973 oil embargo.

There were also several references to Qatar's future as a young aspiring state after gaining its independence in September 1971. The discussions around Qatar's independence were double sided. There were anticipations that this young rich Arab state is now independent to utilize its resources in support of the Arab mission. The term '*moqata'a*' (embargo) was a keyword during this period, with many articles depicting the 1973 oil embargo as the first time that the Arabian Gulf masses react economically on a macro level to the cause of the Arab-West conflict. Another keyword that re-emerged was

the term '*Ummah*' (which first emerged in Al-Hilal in the early twentieth century) as well as the concept of the Pan-Islamic identity. Those keywords were referenced in Al-Hilal publications from King Faisal's speeches with discussions of how influential and popular he was in the Arabian Gulf. Simultaneously, 'modernity', 'urbanization' and 'foreign consultant' also appeared to be keywords during that period; hence referring to British involvement in the economic, urban and infrastructural modernization processes even after official independence.

Analysing the surveyed content of Al-Hilal, it is interesting to note that the seventies period showed the decline of Arab Nationalism, the revival of Pan-Islamic identity, the beginning of oil-states' interest in macroeconomic-political power dynamics, and more importantly the questioning of the unfolding of Arab Nationalism in the Gulf (with particular reference to the exploitation of oil resources). It was rather difficult to further investigate and understand Al-Hilal's documentation of the way Gulf societies embraced or practiced Arab Nationalism as after the mid 1970s there was less and less reportage of Arab Nationalism as a celebrated concept in the publication (possibly due to the death of Abdelnasser, and the rise of a new regime under President Anwar El-Sadat advocating for different doctrines), and there was also less coverage of Gulf states in general because a media industry began emerging in the Gulf.

Therefore, it was necessary to resort back to secondary sources of available literature to investigate the decline of Arab Nationalism and what ideologies, structures or processes were embraced and employed in the Gulf region to fill the vacuum of the fragmenting Pan-Arab identity. Lewis (2004:178-180) explains that the concept of Arab nationalism was understood by local Gulf societies as a matter of belonging (i.e. a greater geographically spread Arab identity). Gettleman and Schaar (2003: 283) contend that Arab nationalism only appealed to people in the Gulf due to Abdelnasser's charisma, yet, it was not practiced as per the doctrines of the Arab-socialist mission. It is also asserted that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia merely employed Arab Nationalism as an overarching political strategy to gain the support of the masses in the Gulf and the rest of the Arab world during the 1973 oil embargo. De Gaury (2007:74) argues that King Faisal reflected

the meaning and purpose of the ideology to the local society of the Arabian Gulf as a matter of foreign policy and war tactics rather than a matter of identity and belonging.

Moreover, the Pan-Islamic identity emerged and coincided with the decline of Arab Nationalism and possibly restricted its unfolding. Kechichian (2008:198-200) contends that King Faisal charismatically highlighted a discourse of 'Islam versus the West' which resonated with Arabian Gulf masses. Even after King Faisal's death in 1975, this Pan-Islamic concept prevailed in the Islamic world, overshadowing Arab Nationalism as an overarching concept of belonging (Vassiliev 2012:457-459, Lewis 2000:141). Ajami (1978:365) and Kinninmont (2013:49) claim that due to the continued fragmentation from the Arab-Israeli conflict and the geopolitical and economic turmoil on one hand, and on the other hand the wealth boom in the Gulf region after the oil embargo, Arabs (both states and societies) began to see that abiding to doctrines of trans-national unity and belonging required diplomatic compromises possibly entailing economic limitations and losses. Moreover, the Gulf Identity (*al-haweya al-khalijiya*), which developed with the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, overshadowed both Arab Nationalism and the Pan-Islamic identity; as the two identities were claimed and exploited by rising powers in the region such as Iran and Iraq (Al-Malki 2016:242-243, Partrick 2009:31). The rise of tribal identities in the GCC during the mid-1990's (Al-Kuwari 2018), also played a role reducing the significance of Arab nationalism (Partrick 2009:12).

Nevertheless, the concept of Arab Nationalism and Pan-Islamism remain as a cultural product which add to the layers and complexities of the identity construct in the region, and in Qatar in particular. The complexities of the identity construct stem from a number of cultural orientations that have for long prevailed in Arabia, and hence limited the centralization of belonging and affiliation of individuals, especially in the Gulf region, in the twentieth century (Hiro 1982). Lewis (2000-57,66) asserts that the meaning of belonging – geographical belonging to be precise - was not yet clearly defined in the Arabian Peninsula in the early twentieth century, suggesting that what makes belonging problematic in the region are the interrelated concepts of '*watan*' and patriotism '*wataniya*'. The term '*watan*' (وطن), according to the Arabic-English Lexicon, is derived

from '*wattan*' (وطن) and means "to dispose and subject one's mind or self to do something" (Lane & Lane-Poole 1984:3057). Hence, one understands from this definition that '*watan*' is a place that one disposes and accommodates himself conceptually to affiliate with and belong to – not necessarily one's country of origin (Lewis 1991:523-4). While, patriotism is defined as:

"a natural and morally appropriate expression of attachment to the land where we are born and raised, and of gratitude we owe it for the benefits of life on its soil, among its people and under its laws. It is also seen as an important, indeed, central constituent of the individual's identity" (Primortaz & Pavkovic 2008:1).

In the case of Arabia, the concept of '*watan*' differs from the classic or Western concept of patria (one's native homeland) (Farha 2007:3-7), and similarly '*wataniya*' has more complex and overarching trans-border elements to it than patriotism's affiliation between an individual and his forefather's land, where this affiliation is paternally inherited (Lewis 1991:524).

The concept of '*wataniya*' came about as a socio-cultural product that bolstered and facilitated the fluidity of life in Arabia's austere nature as people – individuals and groups - constantly roamed and travelled around the peninsula for survival; trading, herding and searching for resources (Al-Shallaq 2014). This socio-cultural product was built on a number of cultural orientations, which – as previously discussed - contributed to the complexity of the identity construct in the region. Primarily, it is built on commonalities between individuals such as Islamic religious beliefs, the Arabic language and that the majority of the people in the region were heavily connected through trade, exchange and kin (Al-Tamimi 2019). Such commonalities are quite similar to the constituents of Arab nationalism, and thus possibly played a role in enabling its appeal to locals. Secondly, the reciprocal tribal codes of '*murawa'a*' and '*assabiya*' further add to the layers of complexity of the local identity construct. '*Muruwa'a*' is understood as a tribal code of collectivism and social, political and economic interdependence between individuals and/or entities (Swartz 2008:51). While '*assabiya*' is defined by the Father of Sociology Ibn Khaldun

(1332 - 1406) as a tribal dogma of solidarity based on both kinship as well as social relations (Ibn Khaldun 2005). Jaber and Dawod (2003) explain how the two codes bring together individuals and entities of different backgrounds and geographical belongings through social networks and alliances. They are also interrelated with the earlier discussed system of fluidity and its derivative cultural orientations.

The ease of fluidity (both conceptually and physically) restricted the preservation of affiliation and belonging to a limited geographical entity; and allowed for multiple and ever-developing allegiances and affiliations. Indeed, these myriad cultural orientations and systems - which prevailed in Arabia - left the identity construct with multiple constituents (Al-Tamimi 2019, Al-Najjar 2018). However, as a whole, it could be seen as fragmented and lacks a holistic and defined framework. Hence, this section concludes without a clear indication of the initiation of the Qatari nationalism project as a result of, or a reaction to, the unfolding of Arab nationalism in the region. Yet, it concludes with an understanding of the footprints of Arab nationalism and its political and cultural settings on the identity complex. And, more importantly, one's attention is drawn to its possible influence on the emergence of the local question of identity, due to its resonance with collective memories of local generations. The concept of geographical belonging is further explored in the next section, raising the question as to whether the late pearling and early oil era was the beginning of the Qatari quest for a national identity and the establishment of a nationalism project.

### **Another View of the Early Strands of Nationalism in Qatar**

#### **Birth of Qatari Nationalism: State-building and Economic Centralization**

The trilogy of the social paradigms that shaped the concept of belonging in the Arabian Gulf region – i.e. fluidity, 'assabiya and *muruwa'a* - is further explored in this section in search for a clear strand of the Qatari nationalism project. This section investigates varied local narratives on the unfolding of nationalism in Qatar. There are very few, if any, relevant works that particularly discuss the local identity in terms of its formation within the historical context of nationalism and its socio-cultural dynamics (for

example, Al-Janahi 2014, Al-Malki 2016, Al-Attayah 2013); while the majority focus on narratives of progression and state-building. Nevertheless, relevant historical literature proved useful, as the topics of identity and belonging are indirectly touched upon in discussions of historical events. It is crucial to investigate and analyse the local historical narratives as they are being revived and promulgated today by the state through the Qatari nationalism project, and, hence, play a major role in forming collective historical memories and shaping local mind-sets.

Essentially, there are two main findings about local literature's application of the concept of nationalism. Primarily, there seems to be a confusing dichotomy between the Arabic words for patriotism and nationalism in local literature. Patriotism translates to '*wataniya*' (explained in the earlier section), while nationalism translates to '*qawmiya*'. Choueiri (2002) points that in Arab media and academia the two terms are mostly used interchangeably to convey meanings about belonging, even though they carry different meanings. It is worth noting that the term '*wataniya*' is used locally much more (this is the case in contemporary Qatari media). It is also interesting to note that the term '*qawmiya*' "first appears in Turkish (*kavmiyat*) not in Arabic, and is a term of abuse not praise, with a connotation of tribalism and factionalism" (Lewis 2004:157). De Gaury (2007) claims that with the decline of Arab Nationalism the term was frowned upon and considered a taboo term - to a certain extent - in the Arabian Gulf region, where it was perceived as a foreign doctrine that ignores the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* and prioritizes other principles. Hence, the term '*wataniya*' is now mostly used as nationalism (in local literature and media) and the same Arabic term is used in reference to patriotism too.

Secondly, most local<sup>1</sup> historians' (Al-Shallaq 2014, Al-Saraf 1980, Al-Ghanim 1997, Al-Mansur 1984, Al-Shaibani 1962) understandings and representations of the society in their works followed a traditional perception of a tribal patriarchal system, and depicted the concept of nationalism as a mechanism of centralizing economic capital. The narrative gathered from such works begins as the pearling industry reaches its peak,

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<sup>1</sup> By local I mean either this author is Qatari, from the GCC, or has lived in the region and was sponsored to write on local history.

during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. This period is described as a time when centralization was crucial for the newly founded Gulf states, as it would prevent resources from leaving the economy to ensure the development and progression of the state (Faraj 2014).

Al-Shallaq (2014) explains in his narrative that in order to reach state 'centralization', the fluidity of identities had to be restricted so that rich merchants felt obliged to treat their state and its economy with the same *muruwa'a* and 'assabiya they would invest in their tribes, social networks and allies. The focus of patriotism (inclusive of *muruwa'a* and 'assabiya) is transposed from a regional level to a more centralized national level. Faraj (2014:27-29) hints that when considering economic interests, those merchants had to leave the fluidity of their identities and their concentric circles of kin behind and focus on the local economy and its development. It is as if economic centralization (i.e. nationalism in this context) came to put limits on *muruwa'a* and 'assabiya, or in other words came to centralize (nationalize) the two ideologies for the prosperity of the state and its people.

According to Al-Shamlan's (1967:588) narrative, the process of state (economic) centralization in Qatar is evident during the reign of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani (1913-1949) as he was the first Qatari ruler to impose a tax on each pearling boat. Al-Shamlan (2000:71) explains that the year (1912-1913) was called *sinat al-tufha* (the year of superabundance) in the Arabian Gulf; and rulers had to exploit as well as manage the high profits in order to be able to centralize states and prevent wealth from leaving the economy due to local merchants' personal trans-border alliances and partnerships. Therefore, Sheikh Abdullah imposed a tax on every pearling ship (Al-Shamlan 1967:588). This system of taxation continued until the mid 1950s when the discovery of oil enabled rulers to further control and centralize the economy by overcoming rich merchants' financial power (Al-Shamlan 1967).

Al-Saraf (1980:23-27) argues that this state centralization policy was a part of the socio-economic 'accommodation' process that Sheikh Abdullah upheld in order to

maintain hegemony and cohesion. He had to 'centralize' the locals' *'assabiya* to ensure that the boons of their *murwa'a* remained within his geographical borders. Moreover, when discussing Sheikh Abdullah's state centralization policy such historians and authors took into consideration the regional as well as the international socio-political context of his reign. Al-Shallaq (2014:106), for instance, highlights that the outbreak of World War One had significant economic repercussions on the Gulf. The Ottoman Empire renounced its rights to Qatar, and thus Sheikh Abdullah no longer received the privileges of a *Qaimmaqam* (provincial sub-governor) that his father Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed (Founder of the State of Qatar) received (Al-Shallaq 2014:106). Al-Mannai & Al-Fayadh (2012) explain that the lack of income<sup>2</sup>, could consequently reduce the Sheikh's hegemony to rule his people through *murwa'a* and paternal chivalry; and therefore he had to re-establish his father's hegemonic system of consensus and reciprocal patriotism. Essentially, the 'superabundance' of wealth might have slightly distracted the hegemonic patriarchal hierarchy of subordination (in financial terms rather than political terms as *murwa'a* and *'assabiya* played a role in maintaining the ruler's status on top of the hierarchy) as prosperity enabled merchants to be less and less dependent on their Sheikh. Thus, imposing taxes, as Al-Mansur (1984:65) suggests, allowed Sheikh Abdullah to measure his people's subordination and acceptance of him as the legitimate ruler of Qatar.

Towards the end of the 1930s, Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim signed the first Oil Concession Agreement with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (17<sup>th</sup> of May 1935), and in return received an income from the company (Al-Mansur 1984:438). According to Al-Ghanim's (1997) account, during this period people in Qatar, and in the rest of the Arabian Gulf, suffered financially from the collapse of the pearling industry. Poverty reduced people's patriotism and *'assabiya*, yet there was more and more room for rulers to employ *murwa'a* in order to gain hegemony and administratively structure and centralize their states. Consequently, a clash arose between Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim and Sheikh Abdullah bin Eissa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain as each ruler sought the autonomy of his state

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<sup>2</sup> By lack of income I mean lack of state income not private income as sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim was a pearl merchant and thus had an income from trade.

through 'centralizing' loyalty, or in other words winning the affiliation of people within Qatar and Bahrain (Obaidan 1979:28).

Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim assigned monthly salaries (out of the privileges he received from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company) to the needy of Qatar and provided them with food and shelter. While, Sheikh Abdullah bin Eissa encouraged tribes to migrate to Bahrain where they could have better financial opportunities (Al-Mansur 1984:317-320). This financial crisis and the migration of many Qataris to Bahrain, and elsewhere in the Gulf, draw attention to a somewhat fragile link between an individual or a tribe and his/their *watan*; and more importantly to a need to turn this *watan* (which could be temporary) into a permanent state.

Essentially, this financial crisis, which resulted in the migration of many Qataris to Bahrain, and elsewhere in the region, highlight that even though there were efforts to centralize belonging through a system of state-society economic interdependence, trans-border fluidity weakened the link and affiliation between an individual or a tribe and the state they are in. It is evident that centralizing belonging was not only an economic imperative, as the narratives reveal that economic centralization did not consolidate the society and bring about a strong national identity (i.e. a civic-political link of affiliation between the individual, the society and the '*watan*'). Looking back at Hearn's (2006) definition of nationalism – mentioned in the first section of this literature review (see page 33) – it appears that at this stage the identity construct does not fully fit the definition. Indeed, the territory is defined, however, the migration of people indicates that the identity and the jurisdiction are not yet fully claimed and valued by the community. Here, Hearn's term of jurisdiction is used loosely so that it does not only fit governing laws and the authoritative rule of the sovereign, but also fit hegemonic cultural, social and historical norms and codes of conduct within a society. Hence, the combination of claims is not yet fully constructed and agreed upon by the population as a whole.

Al-Shallaq (2014:249-251) and Obaidan (1979:35) maintain that with the increased structuring and state formalities between borders the fluidity was limited, and the concept

of formally categorizing geo-belonging began to appear – later, gradually developing into citizenship. Hence, one realizes that towards the end of the twentieth century national identity was no longer a matter of geo-belonging. However, still today the definition of the boundaries of the identity, and the parameters of the national mind-set, are yet to be defined and fully embraced by individuals in an ever-developing contemporary era of globalization and inter-connections between states - where cultures and societies are continually changing and exchanging cultural products and ideologies. This is particularly the case in Qatar, and in the Arabian Gulf, where tribal and trans-national identities form a significant part of the local socio-cultural and political fabrics (Al-Rasheed 2005:6-7). The next section elaborates on the topic of Qatari nationalism by building on this section's conclusions and following the identified early strands of nationalism in Qatar to explore the complexities of the local identity construct within a framework of local and global imperatives that necessitate the initiation of a nationalism project.

### **Qatari Nationalism: A Contemporary Social Engineering Project**

#### **Reactions to Globalization and its Neo-Colonial Processes**

In its simplest sense, social engineering is the institutionalized effort to influence social and cultural mechanisms to achieve change in a society (Jones 2017:12-15). Such efforts mostly involve the designing and implementation of large-scale visions, strategies, projects, policies and programmes aimed at shaping the society and influencing social action and behaviours to serve national purposes (Podegorecki et al. 1996). This section starts by reviewing literature on social engineering in an effort to identify and understand how states generally embark on constructing and shaping national identities and cultures. The section starts with an exploration of the importance of social engineering as a tool of nation-state building in a globalized world. Key social engineering strategies are also surveyed to form an awareness of the various dimensions and identity constructing tactics of nationalism projects. Lastly, the literature review ends with a brief overview of the challenges Qatar is facing as a young state in the region, highlighting the importance of consolidating a modern nation-state of citizens with strong and distinct sense of nationalism to enable Qatar to face its challenges and realize its future aspirations.

Over the past century, governments have invested heavily in 'instrumentalizing' state-systems of social engineering. Foucault refers to such governmental systems as an ensemble of 'governmentality':

“an ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault 1991: 102).

Foucault's notion of this governmental ensemble is applied in the context of this research to explore and articulate the dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project and the social engineering efforts enacted to construct a distinct Qatari national identity and a hegemonic national culture.

One of the earliest works that explore and outline social engineering as a governmental method of civic influence and shaping is Charles Edward Merriam's "The Making of Citizens: A Comparative Study of Methods of Civic Training" (1931). Merriam (1931:10) expounds: "the state must make its case not once and for all but continuously for each new generation and each new period". Bendix (1964:51) and Hall (1996:77-78) argue that with the changing political settings of the international system, over the past century, the case of states has shifted. Primarily, it focused solely on instilling nationalism in order to mobilize masses to fight for the nation, then it transformed to shaping civic-political mind-sets that are willing and capable of succeeding in a global (political, economic and cultural) system to serve and benefit their countries (Jones 2017, Hobsbawm 1990). Wallerstein (1991) and Hall (1996:627) contend that the interrelated relationship between the unfolding of modernization and globalization challenge the conceptual constructs of national cultures and identities. Hence, in this era, states consider and attempt to tackle both the local and the global changes, discourses and

processes unfolding along globalization and modernization when engineering their nationalism projects (Jones 2017).

Boran and Cox (2007) maintain that globalization, being a complex phenomenon of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, is a dynamic enabler of neo-colonial/imperial discourses and processes which include Westernization, Americanization, cosmopolitanism, English as a lingua franca, Islamophobia and Terrorism, as well as issues of identity crises. It has been purported by Robins (1991:33-6) and McCrone and Bechhofer (2015) that globalization, and the so-called neo-colonial hegemonic processes and discourses it brings about, have a strong influence on cultures and identities; and consequently on nationalism as a state construct of cohesion and homogeneity. Indeed, Featherstone (1995:12) depicts globalization as a process that brings about “a crisis of identity, a postmodern blurring of boundaries, fragmentation, and decenteredness which undermines the integrity and unity of the nation-state”.

Arguably, globalization leads to the formation of a “global mélange” – through processes of cultural and ideological encounters (Nederveen 2009). Such encounters have been argued, by Nederveen (2009) and Norris and Ingelhart (2009), to lead to situations of hybridization and the mixing of cultures. While, others, such as Geertz (1977) and Robins (1991:25), argued that the encounter of foreign cultures and their cultural products plausibly witness a process of ‘acculturation’– where one hegemonic culture dominates and prevails over another - thereby disconcerting the hegemony of nationalism as a collective doctrine (Sathyamurthy 1998). Interestingly, social theorists, including Gran (2009) and Dingley (2008), have shown that such processes of hegemonic cultural domination existed even before the emergence of globalization as a studied phenomenon within the fields of cultural studies and identity politics.

### **Prevalence of Nationalism as an Ideology in a Globalized World**

Political sociologists, such as Durkheim (1973), Gellner (1997) and Anderson (1983), have developed works that look at the prevalence of nationalism as a hegemonic

doctrine of collectivity. For instance, Emile Durkheim (1973) contended that in order for nationalism to prevail as an ideology, it will have to transcend from its '*patrie*' focus to be more acknowledging and inclusive of the aims, requirements and thoughts of the people within the '*patrie*' (Dingley 2008:45). Karl Marx builds on Durkheim's focus on the individual and his/her needs (from the social particularities of an individual to the collective consciousness and socio-cultural codes of conduct), by envisaging the emergence of a global homogenous culture of solidarity as a result of international interactions between the working classes (Stuart 2006). Discussing nationalism from a post-colonial point of view, Edward Said (1994) argues that post-colonies – and similarly young nation-states - must move beyond the coming of the West paradigm. Said claims that this is achieved through reshaping nationalism (i.e. the national culture), so that its essence is not solely based on anti-colonial ideologies of victimization and suppression. Rather, Said (1994:176-7) contends it should be based on solidarity and tolerance that acknowledge the history and the collective memories of the people, yet also encourage an outward-looking collective ideology. Such an evolved ideology of nationalism would result in a 'modern' (Wallerstein 1984) and "globally relevant", yet deeply rooted national identity (Said 1994:176-7). This is further discussed in the data analysis chapters in the context of Qatar National Day and the construction of a modern Qatari national identity.

Nevertheless, more social and political theorists, including Ibrahim (2004), Shaw (2000) and Israel (2012), are leaning towards the contention that although globalization facilitates an individual's identification with a global cosmopolitan identity (through collective values, thoughts and experiences - introduced and popularized by various neo-colonial processes and the interactions they bring about), this process also challenges ideologies and social systems of belonging to and identifying with the national community. Essentially, it has been claimed that the more modern and globalized a state becomes, its citizens become less nationalistic (Croucher 2004, Ariely 2014, Kelman 1997).

It is, hence, crucial to acknowledge the profound impact of globalization, modernity and their neo-colonial/imperial processes on cultures and socio-political fabrics, ideologies and constructs - including identity constructs. Such neo-colonial/imperial

processes have been described by Rose (1999:52) as cultural technologies of power, since they are – to certain extents - “imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired ones”. Although those processes emerge and unfold discursively in societies, they are often ‘instrumentalized’ by entities (political, economic or social) as subtle techniques of dominance to shape the mind-sets of the masses mostly for political and economic purposes. Dirks (1992:3-5) and Germain and Kenny (2005) explain that in the beginning, such processes may seem foreign to a community and its culture, but societies steadily absorb them, and the impact is evident in ideological and cultural aspects such as: collective memories and imaginations, values and morals, language and knowledge, as well as perceptions and taste.

States play a significant and dynamic role in facilitating or counteracting the impact of such processes on the mind-sets, loyalty and homogeneity of their communities (Guibernau 2007:59-61). Weber (1978: 389) contends that it is the state “no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in a common ethnicity”. Moreover, Christie (2013) points that it is the state’s duty to recognize unfolding changes on one hand, and on the other hand, to guard and protect the essence and parameters of the community’s ideological and cultural fabric from changing.

Surveying a range of social, political and anthropological literature on constructing nationalism as well as case studies of various nationalism projects, four main strategies can be identified which states employ to engineer societies and set the parameters of their national identities. Political sociologist Montserrat Guibernau (1996) demonstrates that most social engineering strategies are built on five general dimensions to the nation: conceptual, political, geographical, historical and cultural. The dimensions are interlinked, and the four main strategies are versatile, hence targeting more than one dimension at a time.

The first and foremost strategy employed by states is the personification of the nation. Smith (1999:8-15) maintains that this personification is built upon the construction

of a national habitus of commonalities: a common land, a common history, a common culture, a common language and, most importantly, a common future. These commonalities are constructed and conveyed through the 'revival', and even the 'invention', of myths, symbols, rituals, glorified idols and cultural representations (Ryan 2012). Hobsbawm (1983) argues that the revived or invented mythical narratives and traditions are promulgated by governments as elements of a historical common indigenous heritage to serve the state's needs of consolidating a national culture.

Herbert (1997:171-173) explains that the commonality, comradeship and sense of communion resulting from the belief in national myths, and the practice of national traditions, enable the consolidation of a national identity and the maintenance of solidarity as well as social and cultural homogeneity. Moreover, it is argued that this construction of a national habitus also enables a state to "render its society governable" by narrating and containing the conceptual framework of local mind-sets (Legg 2007). Thereby, this plausibly limits acculturation and the influences of outer transnational and global ideologies and processes. The nation-state is hence imagined and personified through the creation of legacies that are reflected as culturally and historically deeply rooted, yet coalescing with aspirational and global future outlooks (Ryan 2012, Hudson 1977).

The second tactic involves "establishing a crucial distinction between those included and those excluded from the community of citizens" (Guibernau 2007:25). A political bond between the state and the individual is built by defining the terms, conditions and benefits of citizenship (Guibernau 2007:61). Legg (2007) asserts that the main focus of this strategy is to maintain contentment and stability in the state by enacting "political economy" (Foucault, Burchell, Gordon & Miller 1991). In this context the economy is not only concerned with wealth and resources but, more holistically, it is an

"economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods" (Foucault, Burchell, Gordon & Miller 1991:92).

Within its political economy, the state sets a civil system of state and citizenship through:

“The creation of permanent last names, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the invention of freehold tenure, the standardization of language and legal discourse, the design of cities, and the organization of transportation” (Scott 1998:2).

The system also defines rights, duties and regulations to serve as apparatuses of security that mobilize and shape the community’s “choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals” within the state’s framework of citizenship (Dean 1999:12). According to Weedon (2012), such a system develops a collective memory or imagination of contentment, gratitude and owe for the political, economic and cultural wellbeing of the community, thereby strengthening the bond between the individual and the state.

The third tactic employed by states to enhance the national identity and build upon the current imagination is to direct and nationalize the will and mobility of the public towards state purposes (Hobsbawm 1990:80-83, Jones 2017). Principally, “those sharing a distinct national identity regard themselves as forming ‘a demos’ with the capacity to reach and express a common will and to act upon it” (Guibernau 2007:174). Guibernau (2004) and Beck (1992) outline that this is an ongoing process through which the state identifies common threats defines a collective approach to prevent or alleviate the threat. It is also indicated that national identities are more salient when the state faces an enemy or a threat – be it external, internal or even a natural disaster. Moreover, it is proffered that wars – or even the threat of a war - have historically proven to consolidate national solidarity and establish a heightened sense of nationalism within the state (Rasmussen 2006, Christie 2008). This notion resonates with the findings of this study in relation to the blockade imposed on Qatar in June 2017.

In areas of the world where war is not conventional or even an imminent threat, states resort to identifying potential or even invented threats as a more modern mean to consolidating national identities and mobilizing common will (Guibernau 2007:30, Hall

1996:84-86). Such threats would range from local and global economic fluctuations, to stressing on environmental and sustainability issues and the need to build knowledge economies, to terrorism and religious radicalism, as well as the loss of language and cultural identity crises (Beck 1992, Jones 2017:16-20). The state would hence launch a number of national security and development plans, future visions as well as social programmes to serve as common aims for the community to devote its efforts towards (Chesterman et al. 2005).

The fourth tactic involves an overarching consolidation and 'instrumentalization' of all the above strategies through a national representational knowledge ensemble (see page 50 for Foucault's notion of governmental ensemble). This ensemble would act as a "key instrument in the dissemination of a particular image of the nation, with its symbols and rituals, values, principles, traditions and ways of life, and common enemies, and even more crucially, a clear-cut definition of a good citizen" (Guibernau 2007:25). The ensemble would include media, sports, the cultural industry and the educational system, all consolidated to form a power-knowledge national scheme (Cohen & Young 1973, Marjoribanks & Farquharson 2012, Bennet 2005, Gellner 1983). Power-knowledge is a term coined by Foucault to describe the process of knowledge production and consumption within a system of social discipline (Foucault & Gordon 1980). The national power-knowledge emerging from this ensemble would progressively draw into the local mind-sets, and create a cycle of cultural production within the set framework of nationalism and nation-state building (Hearn 2006:9-11). The Qatari nationalism project is explored in the data analysis chapters as a source of national power-knowledge production aimed towards realizing Qatar's anticipated future vision.

As a rising young state that is aspiring to have a leading role on the global map, Qatar is increasingly implementing elements of the earlier discussed social engineering strategies. The state is embracing globalization's cosmopolitanism and inter-cultural tolerance; and innovatively crafting them in a way to modernize the state and its people (Fromherz 2012:83-85). Yet, it is also exerting efforts to preserve the indigenusness and conservativeness of the local cultural fabric and identity (Tok et al. 2016:241, Exell & Rico

2014). Literature on nationalism projects in the Gulf highlight that Gulf states, such as Qatar, aim to bring about a balance between the efforts to modernize and the efforts to preserve the traditional and conservative elements (Exell & Rico 2014). Such efforts are exerted in order to prevent the weakening of local identities and cultural fabrics amidst rapid modernization and the on-going local and global cultural and political dynamics (Partrick 2009).

### **Social Engineering in Qatar: A Nationalism project of nation-State Building and Cohesion**

When exploring the context and background of the Qatari nationalism project, it is crucial not to focus solely on the initiatives and schemes of the project itself as if it operated in a vacuum. Rather, it is essential to consider Qatar's development in a globalized era, as well as the challenges of constructing nationalism amidst contemporary neo-colonial processes and local socio-cultural dynamics. There is a limited number of works that shed light on local, regional and global state initiatives aimed at shaping identities and mind-sets in the Arabian Gulf, and in Qatar in particular, whilst also identifying the macro political, economic and cultural dynamics and implications within the context of those projects (AlSharekh & Springborg 2008, Partrick 2009, Koch 2015, Jones 2017). Hence, it is imperative that this section provides a brief synopsis of the contextual background of the on-going nationalism construction in Qatar, in order to set the basis for further discussion and elaboration of the local dialectics and discourses arising with the state's social engineering efforts in the data analysis chapters.

Three interlinked themes have been identified and underlined from the surveyed literature about the background and setting of nationalism construction in Qatar: change, modernity and cultural hegemony. Here, cultural hegemony is not employed in its Marxist framework of the domination of the elites' culture over the rest of the society, but rather employed to describe a situation of communal conceptual commonality and general cohesion and consensus of visions, understandings, values beliefs, morals and future aspirations in all fields of life from culture and heritage to economics and politics. As Qatar

attempts to develop and establish a firm position on the global map, it also endeavours to bring about and maintain a balance between the above mentioned themes (Al-Mulla et al. 2014:120). There are two main challenges that Qatar faces as a young, ambitious and wealthy state in the Middle East region: primarily, individuality and differentiation from other larger neighbouring states, and secondly, maintaining social, cultural and political cohesion and consensus during a time of rapid growth, developments and turmoil where subnational and sectarian identities are evolving in the region (Miller 2016, Matthiesen 2015:13-14). Therefore, it is maintained that consolidating a modern nation-state of citizens with strong and distinct sense of nationalism will essentially enable Qatar to face its challenges and realize its future aspirations (Miller 2016, Partrick 2009:18-20, Erskine-Loftus 2016:27-29).

When looking at Qatar's efforts to face the first challenge, it can be noted that it is implementing a state-branding strategy on both the global and local levels. Mattern (2008) indicates that this challenge is a problematic issue of deeply rooted historical constructs and ideologies - from issues of belonging to ideologies of trans-national collectivity discussed earlier, as well as its utmost significance to the future and advancements of Qatar. Moreover, such efforts come in response to a confluence of factors and imperatives of political and economic interest to Qatar. Ulrichsen (2014), Miller (2018:89) and Davidson (2012:226) argue that on the global level, Qatar is striving to establish and differentiate itself from other states in the region by reflecting an autonomous presence. This is being achieved by showing an increasing interest in the global community through engagement in world politics and contributions to various matters of international concern (Battaloglu 2018:45-47). Simultaneously, Qatari is making efforts to represent itself as a deeply rooted, yet, a cosmopolitan and tolerant cultural philanthropist (Exell 2016, Exell 2018:19-21). On the regional and local levels, Qatar continues to involve itself as an agent of reformation and development, thus reflecting its belonging and dedication to pan Arab and Islamic ideologies and causes (Ulrichsen 2014:121, Fromherz 2012:88-89). In addition, Qatar is increasingly representing itself as a patron of local, Arab and Islamic culture and heritage; leading numerous missions to preserve heritage and revive traditions (Kamrava 2013, Exell & Rico 2014).

Secondly, Qatar is faced with a challenge of maintaining consensus and cohesion in the Qatari society amidst the political, religious and cultural turmoil and uprisings in the region on one hand (Davidson 2012), and on the other hand, fast paced developments and an increased need for interaction and exchange with 'the other' - whether the global community or expatriates in Qatar (Partrick 2009, Al-Misnad 2012). Although Qatar does not suffer from religious or ethnic sectarian conflicts as much as in neighbouring Gulf states, such as Bahrain, Achcar (2013:100) highlights that there is an existential concern of the far-reaching influences of extremist religious-political entities on individuals in Qatar (whether local Qataris or expatriates living in Qatar). Such external menaces inevitably threaten local cohesion and consensus. Another relatively 'external' menace on Qatari cohesion and consensus is the lived reality that Qataris are a minority in their homeland (Tok et al. 2016:7, Fromherz 2012:108). This is considered an external menace because the 'threat' comes from 'the other' penetrating the local society and its culture (Babar 2015:139, Al-Misnad 2012) – this topic is further explored in the data analysis chapters.

The state, hence, continues to exert increased efforts to prevent acculturation by preserving and enriching the Qatari culture as the predominant and prevailing culture (Al-Malki 2016:241-3, Exell 2016b:29-30); representing it as both traditional/tribal and modern (Cooke 2013). This, thus, prevents cultural anxiety amongst Qataris and ensures their support of, and participation in, the efforts to realize the state's future visions and aspirations (Tok et al. 2016, Al-Shamlan 2013:22). Yet, considering the vast foreign majority in Qatar's population, and the state's aspirations to become a global hub of culture and sports and a nexus between the East and the West, Qatar strives to maintain global tolerance and engagement locally within its population (Gray 2013, Maziad 2016:126-7). This topic is looked into in the data analysis chapters, exploring local perceptions of such contradictory efforts. The concept of belonging is re-conceptualized to define what it means to be an individual living in Qatar - whether local or foreigner. Al-Shamlan (2013) suggests that this is taking place in Qatar through the popularization of shared values and aspirations along with the revival of indigenous Qatari cultural products and representations.

Building upon its aim to differentiate itself and establish a firm position on the global map, Qatar is continuously exerting efforts to launch and implement sustainable development plans based on building a self-sufficient and independent knowledge economy (Fromherz 2012, Loumi 2012). Launching fast paced developmental schemes, such as Qatar National Vision 2030, various National Development Strategies and Qatar's 2022 FIFA World Cup preparation projects, inevitably raise local concern about the contradiction in the state's role - between the preservation of local culture, identity and lifestyle, and at the same time the initiation of drastic change, progression and continuous involvement with foreigners in order to realize the state's vision (Al-Kuwari 2012, Exell 2016b:30-2). Qatarization – a state-led scheme to increase the number of Qataris working in the public and private sectors in an effort to facilitate building a sustainable knowledge based economy - came as a response to locals' concerns about being excluded due to the tendency to recruit foreign workforce. Yet, Al-Kuwari (2012) and Gray (2013) argue that both Qatarization and the vision of developing a self-sustained knowledge-based economy seem to paradoxically necessitate the continuous involvement and dependency on foreigners (from consultants to blue collar labourers).

The state is hence left with a dilemma of continuing its modernization and development strategies whilst also establishing and maintaining cultural hegemony through soft power and social engineering efforts (Mitchell 2016:60, Kamrava 2013:7-9). Essentially, in order to ensure that the society is content and supportive of the state's mission, nationalism construction continues progressively in the form of a state mega-project in all fields of state and society (Pym 2018, Tok et al. 2016); thereby fostering and maintaining a strong bond between the society and the state (Al-Zoby & Baskan 2014:1-5).

This literature review has explored the unfolding of modernity and nationalism both from a historical and political setting, as well as an ideological and cultural formation perspective, in order to identify the discourses, systems, ideologies and collective memories that resonate with the local mind-set and form the contemporary socio-cultural

capital. This investigation has set the contextual background to enable a nuanced understanding of the Qatari identity formation process and its dialectics and dynamics amidst the nationalism project's social engineering efforts. The next chapter builds on those findings and understandings to outline the theoretical framework and data gathering methods employed in this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

This chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks and research methods employed in this study. It sets out the various dimensions of the conducted research strategy and explains the rationale behind the followed approach and data gathering methods. The current literature lacks specific research and empirical data that adequately address my topics of enquiry to build on. Therefore, this research strategy was designed to enable building context and forming adequate understanding through obtaining divergent local perceptions and insights, in order to interpret modern Qatari state-society dynamics (Gray 2009:171, Spinelli 2005:135).

This research was designed and conducted upon the approval of the University College London Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix One for Notification of Ethical Approval), and all data was gathered upon the formal consent of participants. Prior to engaging in the process of data gathering, the Risk Assessment requirement of the UCL Research Ethics Committee was fulfilled in order to anticipate potential risks or hazards and outline control measures that will ensure my safety as well as the safety of the involved research subjects. I have also completed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirement. In addition, written consent of participation was obtained from the semi-structured interview participants after providing them with details of the study and its purpose, how they were selected, their roles and rights and how the information they have shared would be collected, used, stored and presented in the research. Sample copies of Information Sheet for Participants and Informed Consent

Forms are provided in Appendix Two. Similarly, the online survey form clearly indicated that the survey was anonymous and no information that could expose the identity, or violate the anonymity, of the survey participants was required. It was also indicated that the collected data would be compiled and presented anonymously.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A research project's theoretical framework determines the philosophical context on which the study is conducted, and it ensures the uniformity between the methods and theories applied and "has implications for every decision made in the research process" (Mertens 1998:3). Theoretical frameworks consist of both ontological and epistemological positions. A researcher's ontological position determines his/her philosophical view of reality on how – social - matters come to be in the world; and it hence influences the way the data is approached and analysed (Bryman 2012:693). The ontological position adopted in this research project is that of constructivism. This position assumes that the social world is continuously created and recreated through social interactions (Creswell 2008) as well as through the production of thoughts and actions by people to construct realities, perceptions and meanings (Gray 2009:17). Representations and meanings, whether on a macro level as identity, culture and discourses or a micro level of cultural products and socio-cultural aesthetics, emerge as 'reality' after undergoing multiple processes of conceptual production, consumption and re-production within a society (Hall 2007). Crotty (1998:8) maintains that "truth or meaning come into existence in and out of engagement with the realities in the world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed".

An epistemological position determines a researcher's theoretical perspective of how he/she understands and approaches 'knowledge' in the world (Bryman 2012:690). The epistemological position of this research is based on two main theories of knowledge: interpretivism and postmodernism. Interpretivism as an epistemology "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social-life world"; it focuses on understanding processes behind social phenomena in a lived reality (Gray 2009:23). Social phenomena refer to the behavioural interactions between individuals or groups

within a society (Cacciattolo 2015:1). Essentially, such interactions, both physical (through participating in a social collective) and conceptual (through the production and exchange of knowledge and meanings), are influenced by culturally dominant conceptual maps and collective historical memories. Indeed, interpretivism suggests that the conceptual dynamics of the social world are based on the experiences, memories and expectations of individuals in a society (Smith 2009:3). Within interpretivism, this study applied symbolic interactionism as a perspective to examine and explore individuals' interactions and their construction of cultural experiences and lived realities. It has been suggested that symbolic interactionism enables the researcher to come very close to "capturing the essence of the human being as a social being – a creator, a product and a shaper of society" (Charon 2001:xi). Accordingly, symbolic interactionism seeks to trace "meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people's overall worldview or culture" (Crotty 1998:7). Moreover, this approach is particularly effective in this project since within the continuous processes of interaction and socio-cultural construction, identity is also continually influenced and discursively formed.

Crotty (1998:8) argues that within the context of the same phenomenon, meaning is constructed in different ways by different people. Following this view, postmodernism (or postmodern constructivism) was also applied as a theory of knowledge to allow for a richer and more bottom-up understanding of the context of my topics of inquiry. Postmodernism contends that meaning (or what is regarded as 'truth' within a culture) is partisan and partial, and, hence, when studied it should be explored from various perspectives to obtain a clearer and more encompassing understanding of it (Anderson 1995). It is an epistemology concerned with the deconstruction of data. Here, the researcher "rejects any notion of social emancipation, emphasizing instead, multiplicity, ambiguity, ambivalence and fragmentation" (Gray 2009:28) in order to reflect a lived reality. The focus, here, is not only on understanding the cultural capital and processes behind a social phenomenon (as in interpretivism), but also on exploring the conceptual elements or meanings constructed and produced within that context – which together form the current lived reality (Anderson 1995).

Hence, interpretivism and postmodernism were applied to complement each other in my theoretical framework in an attempt to understand processes and then to identify and explore multiple dialectic themes and discourses within the society which shape the identity formation process (Gray 2009:28). This was done through following a Foucauldian genealogy approach that involves the 'problematization' of the present. Problematization is "an endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of what is already known" (Foucault 1985:9). In other words, to approach the Qatari identity discourse, and its dialectics and formation process, outside and independently from the normative investigative parameters and theoretical lenses that currently define it. It is a critical process of deconstructing a reified phenomenon in a society by tracing its genealogy, emergence and cultural constructs (Garland 2014:377). The different social discourses, ideologies and cultural contestations associated with this phenomenon are mapped out to enable an understanding of the phenomenon in question from a re-conceptualized vantage point. This problematization, or in fact re-conceptualization, illuminates how and why the phenomenon in question was discursively constituted in the present reality – it is not a history of origins but a present history of discourse constitution. This is further elaborated in the Data Analysis Approach section towards the end of this chapter.

### **Main Investigation**

This study starts with a preamble or a point of departure, based on personal observations and understandings, that the Qatari identity is not in crisis. However, there is something problematic with the Qatari discourse of identity, which needs to be traced and deconstructed to fully understand the processes and the social and cultural formations that produced this discourse. The social engineering endeavours of the Qatari nationalism project over the past three decades appear to have contributed to prompting the local question of identity. This research aims to understand the social and ideological dialectics, debates and contestations that currently shape the identity formation process in Qatar.

As the research attempts to investigate the shapes and forms the Qatari identity discourse has taken today, it sought to comprehend the current socio-cultural capital, undercurrents and changes from the perspective of the local society - exploring the contextual settings and socio-cultural discourses and representations produced during an era of rapid change and nation-state building. State and community led factors, processes and initiatives that are socially engineering and influencing the Qatari identity formation process were studied. This was not to invoke cause-and-effect arguments, but rather to shed light on conceptual interactions and socio-cultural discursive formations in the present lived reality.

To study the unfolding of the Qatari nationalism project and local reactions to it (both ideological as well as physical and aesthetic manifestations and social phenomena in the public and private spheres), this research proposes about an earlier stage at which the 'national imagining process' – according to Benedict Anderson - forms in the unconscious minds of the individuals within a community (Anderson 1983). Building on Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) and Stuart Hall's (1997) propositions that it is cultural products (for example, languages, heritage and folklore, social, economic and political institutions) rather than cultures themselves that lead to conceptual changes in mind-sets, it is assumed in this research that identity formation (and re-formation) happens 'inside out'; starting from the individual's conceptual and ideological perceptions to manifesting through cultural aesthetics and social interactions. Accordingly, identity - and its formation process - is approached in this research as a complex, both objective and subjective, construct that is understood through the social context and the processes and discourses it develops within (Berger & Luckmann 1966:67-68).

### **Research Questions**

Below are a set of questions that have been developed to guide and focus my research inquiry. Although the questions are outlined separately here, they are addressed cumulatively throughout the data analysis chapters.

### Research Question A

A1) How is the local question of identity being articulated as a socio-cultural discourse?

A2) In what ways does the Qatari nationalism project aim to shape the local identity and society? Who are its agents? What are its implications on the local cultural experience?

A3) How is the local society understanding and receiving the nationalism project, its endeavours and its current implications on the Qatari society and identity?

### Justification

Such questions throw light on the dimensions of the local identity question and the ways in which the endeavours of the Qatari nationalism project are influencing it and shaping the Qatari identity formation process. Raising questions about society's reception of state-led efforts enabled me to understand how locals are consuming the messages, narratives, representations and meanings intended from those initiatives, and to what extent are they engaging with, and are influenced by such endeavours. This investigation enables a unique insight into the cultivation process of a distinctive and local construct of nationalism and belonging. Moreover, tracing and comparing local perceptions on different social engineering endeavours and asking in what ways they align, differ and influence the Qatari society's cultural experience allowed me to explore dialectics and ideological struggles existing between a multi-dimensional state discourse and other collective indigenous discourses - all interacting, both intertwining and conflicting, to shape the local mind-set and identity.

### Research Question B

B1) What shapes and forms is Qatari nationalism taking in the present lived reality, and how is the national culture being established?

B2) How do locals perceive the notions of identity and belonging?

B3) What role did the blockade play in cultivating Qatari nationalism? And what implications did it have on the local identity discourse?

### Justification

As I attempted to explore and deconstruct the Qatari identity discourse and the shapes and forms Qatari nationalism is taking in the present reality, it was crucial to

understand the narratives and frameworks that are shaping the Qatari identity. It was also important to distinguish between the local understanding of the collective identity that binds Qataris together, and the discursively forming national identity (and the socio-cultural changes unfolding with it). I investigated whether the currently evolving identity construct in Qatar is heading towards a modern national identity and culture with a systematized civic-political link between the citizen and the state within an imagined community; or, will it continue to evolve within traditional socio-political systems of collectiveness and cohesion. Such questions also allowed me to explore the relationship between constructing Qatar and constructing the Qatari - or in other words exploring the relationship between the Qatari identity formation process and the construction of nationalism and a hegemonic national culture alongside building the state's image and identity. Another reason that compels to raise such questions about changes in the identity formation process is the blockade imposed on Qatar on June 5<sup>th</sup> 2017. The series of events and cultural manifestations during this period reflected multiple distinctive and idiosyncratic demonstrations of nationalism and belonging. Such cultural aesthetics and national manifestations had to be investigated in order to understand and define Qatari nationalism within state-society socio-cultural and political dynamics.

#### Further sub-working Questions

One of the advantages of following multiple data gathering methods in social science research is that large amounts of data are collected inductively. Although some of this data might not be "part of the original research focus", Gray (2009:30) suggests that it could, yet, prove to be interesting and relevant to the project. Indeed, a set of sub-questions and sub-topics emerged incrementally, as I progressed through my research to supplement the main research investigation. This exercise enabled me not only to explore and investigate the research participants' viewpoints, but also to allow them to participate - though to a certain extent - in forming the dimensions of the inquiry (Bryman 2012:483-5). The two questions below are intertwined and linked and are addressed in conjunction with the broader research questions:

- How does the Qatari society perceive concepts and processes like culture, traditions, nationalism, modernity, globalization and social and cultural change?
- To what extent do descending discourses from the past and collective historical memories influence the present reality and shape the discourse on local identity today?

### **Sources and Data Gathering Approach**

This is a mixed method research utilizing diverse sources of data gathering. The sources ranged from primary sources such as semi-structured interviews and online surveys, to supplementary sources such as documents and archival records, as well as observational evidence. Such diverse primary and secondary sources together provided a rich set of qualitative and quantitative data to address my research questions. The methods implemented in this research underwent several modifications and improvements throughout the research period. The first round of modification and improvements happened during the pilot data gathering conducted in preparation for my Upgrade Viva. Also, closer to my Upgrade Viva, in June 2017, the blockade was imposed on Qatar. The occurrence of this event at an early stage of my research led me to receptively modify some of my methods and approaches in order to allow my research to respond to and address the current local context. I added a new dimension to my inquiry which is to trace and understand changes in social perceptions of the Qatari identity and the discourses and dynamics around it post-blockade – as indicated in Research Question B. All modifications are explained below.

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

The interview method is useful when employed in research inquiries concerned with society's understandings and attitudes towards a social phenomenon or issue (Gray 2009:370); "as it articulates their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings" (Arksey & Knight 1999:32). Therefore, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with 25 purposively selected Qatari policy-makers and social and cultural instigators of different

age ranges and social and professional backgrounds. The interviewees were selected because of their different capacities in influencing the local discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation, either through designing and implementing social engineering initiatives, or their capacity to influence local perceptions on social, academic or professional levels. Also, some were interviewed for their distinct perceptions, knowledge of and contribution to the fields of identity, social and cultural development in Qatar, and their insights on particular social engineering initiatives that would further inform my background knowledge of the topics of inquiry.

This selection of interviewees included ministers and ex-ministers, leaders and officials of educational, social and cultural institutions, authors as well as social media and traditional media figures and influencers. The ages of the selected interviewees ranged from 18 years to 55+ in order to ensure that I have a diverse representation of the perceptions of different groups within the Qatari society. Similarly, since this research inquiry traces divergent local perceptions and ideological dialectics and contentions, it was ensured that there was a balance in representation of mind-sets and perceptions (i.e. individuals with attitudes of modernization and pragmatism versus representatives of the more conservative or traditional voice in the local society). Accordingly, an extensive list of potential interview candidates was prepared before the pilot data gathering phase, and the list continued to expand and change as I learned more of potential participants that could add value to my data.

The reason I have opted for interviews to be my primary source of data is that such a method allows one to choose the interviewees and develop the interview questions to directly target the research's topics of inquiry (Yin 2014:110). Moreover, the interview method enabled me to generate two levels of data within the same session; namely, generating data, information and insights about Qatari identity formation and other state projects that the interviewee knew about or had contributed to; and on the second level the interviewee's own sense of reality and viewpoints on my topics of inquiry (Yin 2014:112, Mason 2002:68). Therefore, I approached my pre-prepared interview questions as points of discussion during the interview sessions so that they were semi-

structured in-depth discussions – of the interview questions and topics - rather than systematic questions and answers sessions. This allowed the interviewees to feel less intimidated and had more space to raise ideas and points of view during the session; hence giving the gathered data more depth and dimensions (Bryman 2016:467-8). This, thereby, prevented - as much as possible - conversation reflexivity: a concept employed by Robert Yin (2014:112) to describe situations when the interviewee is influenced by the interviewer and provides information that he/she thinks the interviewer wants to hear.

Moreover, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, compared to structured interviews, allowed me to indirectly put the interviewees' viewpoints in dialogue with each other (Bryman 2012:466). For example, an interviewee would raise an interesting question or issue that I would then include in my set of discussion points for other interview sessions to compare perceptions. This technique proved useful in enriching the discussions, and has successfully substituted the potential data that was initially thought to be gathered through conducting focus groups.

I initially planned to conduct several focus group sessions in an attempt to trace the multiplicity of thoughts and opinions in the community. This would be done by inviting, around the same discussion table, individuals (of different age ranges) from different institutional, professional and social backgrounds that may hold very distinctive perceptions. The goal of conducting focus groups was to see different opinions interacting in dialogue, and how they would possibly react to each other. Ideally, this would have resembled the 'real life' discussions that locals have within their social and professional circles. The advantage of such a method is that the diversity of opinions would ensure that conversation reflexivity (Yin 2014:112) is prevented. However, participants might influence each other's opinions within the discussion (Bryman 2012:514).

I have, therefore, chosen not to go ahead with this method, as I have noticed during the semi-structured interviews that some participants treated national identity and social change as sensitive topics, and were quite hesitant to express their opinions freely. Some even asked to stop the recording when answering certain questions, which have been

regarded as sensitive. Hence, I realized that even if I was to recruit a sufficient number of interested participants for a focus group, certain socio-cultural regulations, norms and taboos will prevent them from expressing their opinions openly; and they would instead engage in a somewhat cliché dialogue that might not add value to my data. Nevertheless, I attempted to mimic the potential data resulting from a focus group in an ideal situation by putting the comments and answers of participants in dialogue with each other. This was done by raising points mentioned by others - whether from previous interview sessions or comments from the conducted online survey (while maintaining participant anonymity) – during an interview with another participant in order to discuss and understand their perceptions on ideas and comments that are different than theirs.

Whilst this method of data generation provided me with an insight of the interviewees' understandings and viewpoints, I strived to remain aware of biased perceptions due to affiliations to certain social groups, institutions or projects. Therefore, as I continued to gather my data before analysing it, I took into consideration the background, social, educational and political contexts of each interviewee. Indeed, the interviewees' viewpoints and ways of thinking were also treated as material to be noted, analysed and deconstructed to produce meanings and understandings (Merton, Fiske & Kendall 1990).

In terms of conducting the semi-structured interview sessions, I was flexible while leading the discussions in switching between Arabic and English according to the interviewees' preferences. Interviewees were asked about their preferred language before the start of the interview session (data gathered in Arabic was translated to English while maintaining the same tone and style). Also, sessions were recorded depending on preference. Even during recorded sessions, I took close note of the interviewees' replies and asked them to explain or elaborate on significant and interesting points or particular phrases that they used. Most of the interviewees allowed recording, while others preferred that I only took notes. In some cases, interview participants asked to stop the recording for certain parts of the interview, or asked that certain comments would not be presented in association with their names. All their requirements were noted in the Informed Consent

document which each interviewee is provided with prior to the interview session (see Appendix Two for Informed Consent and Research Information Sheet). Since this research inquiry is concerned with current local thematic and theoretical perceptions rather than ethnographic details, full transcriptions of the interviews are not provided herein. Instead, sample data is presented through discussions of emerging themes. Some significant comments have been presented at length and deconstructed in relation to other comments, themes and ideas. I have included brief introductions about each interviewee before presenting his/her comments to give context to the discussion.

The interview questions and discussion points have been developed to be expansive, with an aim to broadly capture the Qatari socio-cultural dynamics, within the context of the research project, from the perspectives of the interviewees. The questions and discussion points prepared generally revolved around the themes of the earlier outlined research questions (see Appendix Three for sample interview questions). It is worth noting that most interviews (except for the three sessions conducted in preparation for the upgrade viva pre-blockade) were conducted post blockade. Although I raised some questions specifically about the identity formation dynamics and cultural experiences post blockade, the rest of the discussions focused on interviewees' overall thoughts and perceptions on my topics of inquiry, rather than engaging in 'before and after' discussions. Also, before the start of each interview session, I explained the general outline and theoretical framework of my research. Also, keywords and ideas used (such as social engineering, the Qatari nationalism project, imagined community etc.) were explained; although most interviewees were familiar with such concepts and indeed used them in their comments.

### **Surveys**

Online surveys were used as another primary source of data for my research. Surveys are generally considered a significant source of evidence and data gathering as they allow for a systematic collection of quantitative as well as descriptive data (Gray 2009: 218-219). The online survey conducted for this research was generally a descriptive survey: "designed to measure the characteristics of a particular population,

either at a fixed point in time, or comparatively over time” (Gray 2009:220). Such surveys are mainly designed to measure the ‘what’ element of a research topic - in this case, ‘what’ are the perceptions, attitudes and values of the society on the various topics of inquiry of my research project. The online survey was formulated in the form of bilingual (Arabic/English) set of qualitative and quantitative, closed-ended questions with multiple choice answers and sections to add comments – targeting Qatari respondents (responses of non-Qataris were disregarded in this research). The results of each survey were compiled to be analysed as one set of data. Arabic comments have been translated to English to be used in the analysis chapters, while attempting to keep the same style and tone. The survey questions have been formulated in a similar, but simplified, version of the semi-structured interview questions, in order to allow for richness and dimensions in the gathered data (De Vaus 2002). See Appendix Four for survey questions.

Initially, I intended to reach a sample of 400 Qatari participants (comprising three sets of age ranges: 18-35, 35-55 and 55+) through disseminating the surveys online using the support of various directories as well as social and professional networks that I work with. The number of total participants (400) has been set as a general target, but I allowed for it to fluctuate above or below what was set, as my main concern was to reach a balance in terms of the participants’ age ranges, so that I would have a representative sample of the society (below is a note on the samples). Prior to the blockade imposed on Qatar (in early June 2017), I collected nearly 300 responses to the online survey as part of my pilot study. The survey was opened for responses in April 2017. In an effort to reflexively respond to the unique political situation and its changing socio-cultural context and impact on the Qatari society, I decided to treat the rest of the received responses as a separate set of data - to be analysed along with the pre-blockade set. This decision was to ensure that it is a ‘fair test’ as the two sets of data were collected in very different circumstances. I kept the same questions in the survey pre and post blockade to be able to trace differences in perceptions, and gathered nearly 500 post-blockade responses in October 2018. See Appendix Five for pre and post blockade data.

I opted not to gather post blockade survey data during the very early stages of the blockade (directly after the upgrade viva) as the situation was sudden, and hence the responses might be overly influenced by the shock of the situation. It is also worth noting that when disseminating the post-blockade online survey, it was not indicated that its purpose was to gather post-blockade data. There are two main reasons for that. Firstly, to prevent leading participants into a before-and-after comparison mode when answering the questions. Also, this was done to avoid leading participants to think within a frame of mind which is either overly patriotic and possibly victimizing the local society, or overprotective of local debates and discourses. Moreover, it was expected that the perceptions, observations and comments that were gathered in the first set of survey data reflect thoughts and beliefs that have discursively developed in participants' mind-sets throughout time. Hence, it is uncritical to compile this set with another set of data that could have been influenced by sudden changing circumstances in the local cultural experience and lived reality. Results from both sets of data are presented in text format within the data analysis chapters and in the form of pie-charts.

Furthermore, I realized a limitation that I was facing in gathering responses to the online surveys which is that people locally tend to ignore online surveys, especially when they are sent through emails. Therefore, I also distributed the surveys through relevant social media platforms, where people tend to be more cooperative and willing to participate, particularly when a note is included indicating that this is conducted for academic research. Sending links to the survey through 'WhatsApp' with a note that asks participants to pass it forward to others, proved useful during my pilot data gathering stage, as it also allowed the recipients to re-send the links to their networks; thereby increasing the number of potential participants as well as expanding the diversity of the participants. It was particularly useful in reaching the older age groups of Qataris who tend not to use emails, and appear to be more active on social media. Hence, I continued using this approach throughout the research to gather data. Another approach that proved very useful was the distribution of the online survey through various platforms of a social media influencer, as those platforms have a wider reach to the society.

### **Note on Samples:**

In order to comprehensively understand and interpret the gathered data, the sample of participants must be considered and analysed. Ideally to have a 'fair' reflection of the Qatari society's opinions, perceptions and reactions, there should be an equal representation of the various age ranges targeted in the research (i.e. 18-35, 35-55, 55+). Although I aimed to have a balanced representation, this was a difficult factor to control in terms of the online survey, yet it was more manageable in terms of selecting participants for the semi-structured interviews. The majority of the online survey participants 64.88% were aged between 18 to 35 years of age. 32.14% of the participants fell under the age range of 35 to 55, and only 2.98% of the participants were above 55 years of age. Survey participants' age ranges accurately reflect the demographics of the Qatari population. As of July 2017, 70.59% of the Qatari population is between the ages of 25-54 (Planning and Statistics Authority 2017). Hence, having the majority of survey participants from within this age range provides access to the perceptions and opinion of the largest group and most active agents in the Qatari society. It is also worth noting that the sample representation of the post blockade online survey participants in terms of age ranges and occupations was very similar to that of the first survey conducted pre-blockade. Essentially, 65.42% of the participants were aged between 18 to 35 years, 31.78% were between the ages of 35 to 55 and 2.80% were 55+. It is therefore analytically possible to draw parallels and generalizations between the two sets of data. More information about data on age ranges and occupations of survey participants is provided in Appendix Five.

### **Observations**

Observational evidence is used in social science research to provide qualitative data and supplementary information that would support the main data gathered by the researcher (Yin 2014:113, Martin 2011). Observations can be documented either by recording and photography (when permitted) or by note-taking (Yin 2014:114). The aim of this investigation is to capture lived realities in order to understand modern state and identity dynamics from the perspective of the local Qatari society. Therefore, I approached observational evidences as cultural products, and used them as supplementary data to

support the analysis of data gathered from the conducted interviews and surveys (Yin 2014:113). Such observational evidence added more dimensions and context to my findings and discussions.

Noted observational evidence was particularly useful in the interpretation of post-blockade data. The event of the blockade made me realize that the use of visual representations can go beyond supplementary evidence and, rather, be used as possible points of departure in certain parts of my research (Miyahara 2014). During the early stages of the blockade, I observed several examples of social aesthetic lived realities that could be understood within the parameters and the outcomes of the Qatari nationalism project (which could not be disregarded as useful data). For instance, the Qatari flag and the famous '*Tamim Al-Majd*' mural could be found everywhere, in private and public spheres. Such observations appear to confirm that the Qatari nationalism project may have been effective over the years in setting the framework, values and symbols of nationalism within the Qatari society, so that in a crisis - such as the blockade - nationalism manifests as a bottom-up patriotic initiative rather than a top-down institutionally led phenomenon. It should be noted here, that I am not implying that Qataris are not nationalistic, but rather I am referring to the idea of conveying one's nationalism and love of country through visual representations which are usually seen during national day celebrations and are mostly sponsored by the state. This concept is further elaborated in chapter seven.

### **Documents and Archival Records:**

Secondary sources such as documents and archival records are generally used as supplementary evidence in social science research (Yin 2014:207). I used such sources as supporting evidence for my main data sources (semi-structured interviews and surveys), to check and validate names, dates and facts etc. Yet, at the same time, such documents and records can stand as sources on their own, used to construct data from, or as preliminary information that is used as points of departure to investigate and build upon (Mason 2002: 51-54). For example, studying and analysing visions, missions

and strategic national plans of various social, educational and cultural projects and initiatives enabled me to understand the purpose and rationales behind the work and efforts of various institutions to shape the Qatari identity. Some of the most important documents I have used include the Qatar National Vision 2030 and its associated National Development Strategies, along with visions and missions of smaller cultural initiatives. These documents were mentioned by interviewees, and when relevant, are addressed in the analysis chapters. Also, archival records, proved as useful primary sources to support the Literature Review's investigation of the unfolding of modernity and nationalism in Qatar.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

As explained earlier in the Theoretical Framework section, this research is concerned with problematizing the present reality of the Qatari identity discourse in the midst of the Qatari nationalism project and its social engineering dynamics. The sets of qualitative and quantitative data were approached as part of an intellectual puzzle, and were assembled to form a developmental reconceptualization (Mason 2002:31) of the issues and dialectics around the Qatari identity discourse from the perceptions of the local society. This approach involved a complex phase of analysis and interpretation of the results, where the sets of data were assembled in a triangulating manner. Data triangulation is defined as “the use of a variety of methods or data sources to examine a specific phenomenon, either simultaneously or sequentially in order to improve the reliability of data” (Gray 2009:582). I have triangulated the sets of qualitative and quantitative data to enable the corroboration of nuanced interpretations and findings based on the varied sources (Yin 2014:116-117). This method of assembling and compiling analysed data follows an inductive logic and “seeks the opinions and subjective accounts and interpretations of participants” (Gray 2009:30).

The first step of my data analysis approach involved the development of codes to assemble and organize the data accordingly. There were two main levels of coding: the first is ‘a priori’ level; where I have categorized the data (during the early stages of the

data gathering process) into pre-set codes or categories which constituted the general thematic framework of my semi-structured interviews and survey questions – i.e. ‘the Qatari identity and its constituents’, ‘change and the initiators of change’, ‘the identity crisis debate’ and ‘the Qatari nationalism project, its initiatives and socio-cultural impact’. This was an initial step to help me navigate through the data as it compiled. The second level was more inductive and involved more specificity in categorization. The data at this level required deeper exploration to identify and extract significant statistics, important quotes and comments (from interviews as well as survey comments), recurrent and even contradictory phrases, patterns, concepts and themes.

In terms of interpretation, I have attempted to develop the intellectual puzzle progressively through the perspectives of my research participants (Mason 2002:31). Throughout the data analysis chapters, questions and queries are raised sequentially so that the data analysis presented in each chapter led to the next in terms of unlocking the paradoxes and perplexities in the Qatari identity discourse. Though, it should be noted here, that the extensive process of setting ‘a priori’ codes, exploring their socio-cultural dimensions, identifying recurrent themes (second level coding) and then outlining the interpretive connections in a coherent narrative inevitably involves me as a researcher in the ‘creation of meaning’ along with the research participants. This is generally in accordance with the framework of interpretive research. Principally, “interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher” (Denzin 1986:12).

My research interest in the topics of identity formation and social engineering developed out of my own experience of growing up in an era of rapid change in Qatar. I have experienced – what could be described as - one turning-point after another in the Qatari lived reality, from changes in the social and political structures to transformations in the local cultural settings. Growing up as part of a new generation of Qataris, I have experienced first-hand a reality characterised by materializing questions and confusions about the ever-changing social and cultural dynamics of the Qatari present reality, amidst parallel processes of traditionalization and modernization. Those questions certainly

formed the impetus behind exploring the Qatari identity discourse and the questions, issues and debates around it.

As a researcher conducting a Foucauldian genealogical study - following a constructivist ontology and interpretivist and postmodernist epistemological positions - my role was to inquisitively deconstruct and outline the emerging meanings in a coherent narrative through constructing conceptual discussions and dialogues with the wider context of the Qatari present reality, as well as relevant theoretical literature. All in all, the quantitative and qualitative data inductively built on each other, so that internal logic of the subjects of inquiry would emerge (Mason 2002:32). This process allows the socio-cultural “phenomena to speak for themselves” and produce “new meaning, fuller meaning or renewed meaning” (Gray 2009:24) of the prevailing cultural discourses, norms and discursive formations. The aim of this study is not to draw generalizations or to box the Qatari society, identity and socio-cultural dynamics and changes in stereotypical frameworks, but rather to inductively indicate major dominant conceptual trends, themes and paradigms in the Qatari society and cultural experience within the context of identity formation and social engineering endeavours. The following chapter is the first data analysis chapter, which explores the local debate on identity crisis in Qatar, drawing primarily on interviews and (pre-blockade) survey data.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Qatari Identity: Crisis, Change and Transition**

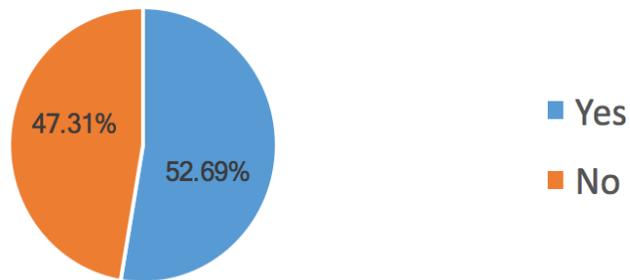
The question or the issue of identity has been raised and discussed quite widely in local media, academia, as well as the private and public social spheres, with some using terms such as identity crisis, the question of identity, the issue or problem of identity, while others disagree completely. This chapter presents a broad view of the local debates and perceptions on the question of identity in Qatar, drawing on gathered data from a conducted online survey and semi-structured interviews. The nature of the concepts of change and modernization in the local cultural experience are explored in this chapter to enable an understanding of their influences on shaping the dialectics, paradoxes and perplexities within the discourse on Qatari identity and its formation process. This aim of this chapter is to set the ground for the deconstruction of those dialectics and issues in the following data analysis chapters through outlining key social discourses and perceptions emerging from the gathered data.

#### **General Overview of Polarized Perceptions**

The local perception on identity crisis in Qatar is binary. When asked “Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?”, 52.69% of the participants to the anonymous online survey conducted in the context of this research project indicated that the Qatari identity is in crisis, while 47.31% of the participants disagreed. The lack of substantial disparity in the percentages of the agreeing and disagreeing participants complicates the process of interpretation and requires further exploration of the topic and the data gathered from

different angles to be able to reach a conclusion about social perceptions on the status and formation process of the Qatari identity.

### Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?



A close examination of the open comments provided by some of the anonymous respondents to this survey offers more nuance. The themes of globalization, modernization and Westernization are central in shaping the participants' responses – interestingly, both if they agree or disagree. The 52.69% of participants who indicated that the Qatari identity is in crisis based their responses mainly on the idea that change is ineluctable, while, others were less pessimistic, implying that change is natural.

On the extreme side, there were comments claiming that the Qatari identity is indeed in a predicament. Such comments reveal local concerns that some individuals in the society are “unaware”, “in denial” and not “cautious” enough to preserve the local identity and pull it out of crisis<sup>3</sup>. There is also a local perception, held by some of the older age range participants (mostly 55+), claiming that the Qatari identity has generally “disappeared”<sup>4</sup>, whereas the majority of participants focus on the “new generation”,

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<sup>3</sup> Sample comments:

A) “Of course it is. I think many are in denial or rather unaware that the changes we see in Qatar have a strong influence on our identity” (18-35).

B) “It is completely neglected in the new generation of the past two decades” (35-55).

<sup>4</sup> For example: “The Qatari identity has disappeared completely!” (55+).

affirming that the identity crisis is only apparent when looking at the younger generations of Qataris<sup>5</sup>. Essentially, the tone and use of terms such as “the new generation”, “the following generations” and “our children” indicate conceptual perplexities in the way the society perceives reflections and representations of the local identity. Indeed, most of the participants perceptively link the identity crisis to a cultural communication gap between generations in the Qatari society<sup>6</sup>. The topic of the generational gap and its conceptual implications on the Qatari identity discourse is further explored in the following chapters. Also, there is quite a predominant perception that links interaction with the increasing population of expatriates in the country to the identity crisis<sup>7</sup>. It should be noted that the term ‘expatriates’ in the comments was used variably, in reference to both Arabs and non-Arabs of different professions and interaction capacities with the local society - from individuals in professional industries (mostly ‘Westerners’ as indicated in the comments), to school teachers and even blue-collar workers.

Interestingly, participants with a more moderate view, mostly between the ages (35-55) and some of the age group (18-35), revealed concerns not only about the Qatari identity, but also the Arab and Islamic identities and cultures - considered by many as essential elements of ‘Qatariness’. Those participants claimed that young Qataris are “easily drawn to the West and its culture”, and are “losing the Islamic culture and Arabic

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<sup>5</sup> Below are two examples:

- A) “Only the new generation of young Qataris are undergoing an identity crisis” (55+).
- B) “I think it is a disappointment and a disaster right now. Yet, with the following generations it could be the real disaster. Change is something we can’t prevent, it is a must, but it should be controlled in the right way” (35-55).

<sup>6</sup> Below is a sample comment which directly implies the existence of a gap between generations:

“One of the most important factors that led to the loss of identity is the lack of bridges of communication between generations in our society” (18-35).

<sup>7</sup> Sample comments:

- A) “We are a minority in our own country so how do we expect our identity to prevail?! Although our population is growing it is also fracturing as familial and traditional social networks are becoming less significant in daily life and are replaced by smaller circles of friends and work colleagues, hence it is difficult to preserve culture and identity” (35-55).
- B) “The increasing number of expats is playing a huge role in creating the identity crisis. The issue is when those expats deal with children who are not aware of cultural and religious differences” (55+).

language”. Such comments looked at the issue of identity crisis as a global issue on one hand, whilst also focusing on the internal issues and changes in the Qatari society that came about with increased modernity, hence revealing the participants’ sophisticated and informed understandings of those issues. It is worth noting that this age group are considered the active participants in the local public sphere and are also typically more engaged in dialogues about identity formation, hence they are able to see the topic from different dimensions (as stated by several interviewees). Essentially, the unfolding of modernization appears to be a significant theme in those comments, closely related to the loss of traditions, languages and dialects. The internet is seen to have played an important role in engaging Qatari youth in globalization’s processes of cultural exchange by exposing them to “cultures, traditions, and values that are foreign”. Below is an interesting sample comment that reflects this perception:

“The Qatari identity has generally changed drastically over the course of the three decades that have passed. This is due to globalization and the economic boom of the oil and gas industry. The younger generation may be ‘Western’ in the eyes of the older generation in the current digital age. The older generation were not exposed to the internet which has exposed many young Qataris to cultures, traditions, and values that are foreign to Qatar. This may be an example of what we call an ‘identity crisis’ since many of the Qatari youth’s English is considerably stronger than their native language” (35-55).

Yet, other comments suggest that there is also a social perception that the internet’s influence has reached the society as a whole – not only youth, thus limiting individuals from being “aware and up to date with [their] own surroundings... [claiming that] when times were simple and the internet and social media were limited, we were able to focus more on what was around and in front of us”<sup>8</sup>. Such a perception believes

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<sup>8</sup> Full comment:

“Yes, to an extent ... because I think that not only the Qatari identity but other nations’ identities are as well are in some form of ‘crisis’. Languages and particular dialects are disappearing, traditions are practiced less, and more and more families are beginning to look alike - in a Western direction of nuclear families. We have the ability to read and be alerted of events all over the

that Qataris' 'lack of focus' on the dynamics of the local identity amidst the unfolding changes of modernity and globalization has led the identity to fall into crisis. This idea of blaming the whole society for not playing their part in preserving the Qatari identity is interesting as it only appeared very faintly, while most of the other comments distinctly blame the "younger generations" or the "Westernized/modernized Qataris".

The gathered data also reveal that there is a general perception that identity crisis is a global phenomenon rather than a mere local issue. This is a perception that is compellingly held by individuals of both the agreeing as well as the disagreeing groups of survey participants about the Qatari identity being in crisis (for example, see comment in footnote 9, page 88-89). Likewise, data gathered on this question from semi-structured interview participants highlight that there is a social perception that the local identity crisis discourse emerged out of an influence from a wider global post-modernist discourse. In this context, HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, former Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar (2007–2011), former Minister of Energy and Industry (1999–2011), former Chief of Amiri Diwan (2011) and President of the Qatar Administrative and Control Authority (2011), who disagreed that the Qatari identity is in crisis, asserted:

"There isn't currently an issue in the construction of our identity per se, but there is quite a loud voice in the Qatari society that claims that our identity is in crisis. I see that the baseline or the essentials - as some people call them - of the Qatari identity are there, even if those voices are claiming that they are not. It is not easy to lose touch with your roots - we see migrants, for example, all over the world holding on to their original identities and cultures even after decades of cultural exchange. To what extent they project their identity onto the hosting society is a different issue or question, but this is the question we need to focus on...We are in our country and amongst our people, so how would an individual lose his or her

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world but sometimes fail to be aware and up-to-date with our own surroundings. When times were simple and the internet and social media were limited, we were able to focus more on what was around and in front of us. There are so many more factors and things that could be credited as well but these are just a few" (35-55).

identity? We just need to set the boundaries of the extent to which we get influenced by the 'other' and how much we take or accept from other cultures... It is just a matter of balancing and clarifying the processes of cultural tolerance and exchange... And this is something we should not expect from the government, it is, in my opinion, a process of ideological reformation that will take time to evolve – away from conspiracy theories and issues of colonialism and Westernization, or even on the local level away from blaming the older generation or the younger generation for issues related to the Qatari identity – it will come with education, with a reformation of the local mind-sets, this of course means that it will come with more modernization and exchange with the rest of the world” (personal communication, 2018).

Al-Attayah’s notion that the dialectics on the Qatari identity will only be resolved through further progression and modernity is interesting as he acknowledges that the Qatari society exists in a modern time and space; hence there is a need to adapt to the dynamics of this age. Also, this quote points to the perception that the identity crisis discourse might have emerged out of a frame of mind in the Qatari society which has not yet come to be at ease with the socio-cultural dynamics and changes unfolding in the local lived reality. In other words, such frames of mind are possibly troubled with accumulated collective memories associated with issues of cultural cringe and power struggles (which can be traced back to the era of imperialism in the region) which resonate – to different extents - in the local mind-set. This perception is especially evident in survey participants’ comments that disagree with the identity crisis discourse. Moreover, the notion that the government should not be perceived as solely responsible for the dictation and preservation of Qatari culture, tradition and identity, but that these are conceptual elements that evolve progressively with the society’s cultural and intellectual development, has also been raised by younger participants of the online survey (mostly aged 18-35). For example, a survey comment hinted to the importance of bringing about “a paradigm shift in our view of identities and how we study them”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Full comment:

This idea of the need to bridge the gaps between people's conceptualizations of the Qatari identity and finding new methods and frameworks to better understand its formation process and its signifiers was also raised and stressed upon by semi-structured interview participants (especially those of the younger age range 18-35). Such perception possibly implies that the Qatari identity is perceived to be in crisis because there is generally a lack of understanding of the socio-cultural changes and 'complexities' that are discursively forming in the local cultural experience. Those cultural complexities of the Qatari lived reality – emerging due to rapid modernity and globalization - are then all conceptually categorized under the framework of 'identity' due to their intrinsic conceptual relation; hence leading to the emergence of an identity crisis discourse. This topic is further explored towards the end of this chapter in the context of change in the Qatari identity.

Furthermore, several individuals within the group of survey participants agreeing that the Qatari identity is in crisis delved deeper into the socio-cultural nuances of the Qatari society in light of the unfolding of modernity and globalization in Qatar. Below are three sample comments that include various local socio-cultural issues, which were also raised in other similar comments:

- A) "Our society is made up of different tribes and social segments – each with their own distinctive social and cultural particularities. Each of us should be knowledgeable and proud of their historical background and those particularities, and our identities should reflect that. The lack of knowledge and the shying away from particular backgrounds is confusing everyone and leading to the identity crisis. Increased modernity and wealth are playing a role in this too" (35-55).

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"Due to globalization it is very difficult to preserve any identity. The Qatari identity has undergone critical changes but so did many other national identities. I think the concept of an identity crisis has become a global issue, and actually this is a topic that is generally discussed in young nation-states like Qatar. I think that there needs to be a paradigm shift in our view of identities and how we study them. Only then will we stop seeing our identities in crises and instead get an insight into the complexities of identities in a globalized modern world" (18-35).

- B) “Qatari people are becoming less individual in their mentality and actions - this could be considered an identity crisis. But isn’t this national homogenization?!” (18-35).
- C) “Status anxiety has always existed amongst tribal and social hierarchies but not in acute a term as it is now, as it has been greatly affected with globalization being one of the catalysts. Rapid modernization is one of the main causes of identity crises. It seems that the Qatari individual is striving to catch up with regional and international communities and their trends. This of course is coupled with a loss of religious identity and in light of the fraught political climate demonizing Islam, the slack is being picked up by more secular inclined initiatives, and this only proves to compound the crisis of identity even further” (35-55).

The above three comments can be interpreted as falling under the perception that change is natural, depicting the identity crisis as a multifaceted issue which has developed as a result of compound phenomena. Some of those phenomena are unavoidable such as globalization, modernity and their associated neo-colonial processes, which typically influence not only the local identity, but also the culture, the social structures and the ways of life (Robins 1991:33-6). While, the “lack of knowledge”, “less individuality”, “loss of religious identity” and “secularization” – as stated in the above comments - are perceived as socio-cultural issues that emerged either as a result of social change or initiated social and cultural policies; which the society “can and needs to deal with in order to fix the identity issue” (survey participant, 35-55).

It is inferred that with the economic boom and the unfolding of globalization and modernization in Qatar, the social topography and local socio-cultural structures and frameworks witnessed a significant process of restructuring. According to this perception, the new social topography features more resemblance and similarities within the society regardless of tribal, ethnic or sectarian particularities, where many Qataris are reflecting

the same characteristics and identity signifiers. This is possibly due to the Qatari nationalism project's social engineering efforts to consolidate a unified Qatari identity; which is gradually taking over and assimilating other identities and tribal particularities as a social trend discursively emerged where locals – especially youth – are striving to fit in a certain national discourse and image.

Although the first comment (A) refers to socio-cultural differences and nuances within the local community's social segments and tribes, it seems to perceive the framework of tribalism as a societal glue and guard against the cultural alienation wrought by modernity and globalization. Similarly, the second comment (B) could be interpreted to confirm the demise of tribal communal cultures (as implied in comment A), due to local practices of socio-cultural homogenization. Yet, comment (B) could also be interpreted as hinting to confusions in the local perception of the state's anticipated vision of the Qatari identity, since the participant used the term 'national'. This confusion seems to have catalysed an identity struggle or a so-called "status anxiety" - as stated in the third comment (C) – where individuals are torn between national homogenization versus indigenous frameworks and cultural particularities of tribal collectivism. Interestingly, both are perceived by different people in the society as signifiers of individualism. In other words, some view the social and cultural particularities of different tribes and social segments as representations of the individuality of their belonging members. This application of the notion of individualism is rather interesting and paradoxical, as it seems to be strongly linked to tribal collectivism. Essentially, this perception is in contradiction to the normative understanding of individualism being a social phenomenon of modernity involving an individual's reflection of independence, originality and self-reliance (Hall 1996:242). Further analysis of data on the local phenomenon of individualism in chapter six reveals more dimensions and complexities in local perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon and the changing social structures.

### **Temporary Crisis**

Within the group of survey respondents who indicated that the Qatari identity is in crisis, some pointed that the identity is temporarily in crisis, asserting that it is “just a nation in transition [and that] this whole identity crisis is nothing but fear of eminent change!” (35-55). Those participants also touched upon socio-cultural matters in the context of the perceived identity crisis, giving agency and a sense of responsibility to both the state and society in influencing the dynamics of identity formation. Such comments generally reflect a broad confidence in the efforts initiated by the state to preserve the Qatari identity as well as the exerted grassroots community efforts. Below are two samples of those comments:

- A) “We are witnessing an identity crisis but the state is working on preserving the Qatari identity. I believe that reviving historical buildings and locations is enriching our culture and identity” (18-35).
  
- B) “I think that it is in crisis, but lately there are efforts to preserve the culture and identity through new school curriculums, local media and even within families” (55+).

Similar comments holding the perception of the Qatari identity being in a transitional phase also indicate that the general parameter, principles and values of the Qatari identity are perceived as still dominant in the local society, and that the issue is in the divergent efforts to put them in practice in a modern globalized world. For instance, a survey participant (35-55) implied in a comment that the society needs to ‘settle’ by culturally agreeing on how the Qatari identity is to be reflected to ‘the other’; balancing between the traditional and the modern newly emerging features of the local identity<sup>10</sup>. This idea is similar to the one raised earlier by Al-Attayah (see page 85-6). Essentially, participants holding this perception understand that this would require a gradual

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<sup>10</sup> Full comment:

“Yes, yet the issue is somehow contained within social circles. I noticed it particularly in social media platforms or when some Qataris are dealing with foreigners, we just need to settle and know who we are in a modern world” (35-55).

conceptual process before the Qatari society agrees on the representations and signifiers of the Qatari identity; and in turn the identity crisis discourse 'settles'.

Moreover, the comments reveal that there are factors that are beyond agency and are rather inherited such as family name, tribe and social class which have their unique particularities and cultural experiences, hence further complicating the issue and – to certain extents – dictate social perceptions. Following is an interesting example in which the participant argues that the Qatari identity is undergoing temporary crisis because it is on the verge between modernization and traditionalism where different identities are converging:

“Only because it is at a fragile tipping point now in the balance between modernization and traditionalism. This also varies from person to person, to family name, to tribe, to social class, and so there are many conflicting intra-national identities at the moment” (18-35).

Altering or limiting such factors - which could be beyond mere individual or institutional agency - would require paradigm shifts (as suggested earlier) and not only the emergence but hegemony of new socio-cultural discourses and perceptive lenses within the Qatari lived reality.

Interestingly, the above comment also enables an insight into the more pessimistic and possibly conservative perceptions about the Qatari identity being in crisis (rather than being in a transitional phase). It could be suggested that, according to this perspective, it is the change or difference in how individuals are reflecting their identities that is perceived to cause the Qatari identity crisis. This change in the local identity is seen by some participants through the increased conformity of mentalities and a lack of individuality, while according to others it manifests through the existence of differences between individuals, families, tribes and social classes. An anonymous participant (aged 18-35) raised an interesting point on this matter:

“Are we settling for one identity or accepting multiplicity? since it is part of our historical social structure and is increasing today as we are constantly exposed to other cultures and societies in a globalized world”.

This comment is quite similar to an earlier discussed comment about Qatari homogenization, hence confirming that there are multiple and divergent perceptions of notions of collectivism and individualism in the present Qatari social structure. Younger participants seem to be more open to notions of multiplicity and composite identities. This could be due to their exposure to more advanced and possibly liberal academic programmes – such as those taught in Qatar Foundation’s Education City - as well as the fact that they grew up in an era of globalization and constant experiences of inter-communication and constant change and progression in all fields of life. The question raised by this participant is expanded upon and further explored in the rest of the Qatari identity discourse ‘problematization’ endeavour.

### **Socio-Cultural Dislocation**

Going back to the more ‘conservative’ or to an extent ‘pessimistic’ social perceptions believing that the Qatari identity is in crisis, it could be argued that this particular perception has developed from individuals’ feelings of disorder and displacement as they see what they have previously considered immutable socio-cultural systems and cultural experiences being altered – or even replaced - in the Qatari lived reality. Political theorist Ernesto Laclau discusses such a situation of social displacement in the context of social space and struggle in late capitalism using the concept of “dislocation” (Laclau 1990). Applying Laclau’s notion of “dislocation” to the local Qatari context, it could be contended that the identity is perceived to be in crisis, by some in the society, as long as it is ‘dislocated’ and not centred within the traditionally organized and well-bounded socio-cultural system those individuals are familiar with (i.e. defined by the traditional social networks and cultural norms and settings they are used to).

Qatari nationals interviewed in this research project (who mostly disagreed that the Qatari identity is in crisis) suggest that there is a segment of the Qatari society (particularly individuals aged 55+) who are not involved in the on-going changes in the public sphere and the rapid modernization processes but are witnessing the results from afar<sup>11</sup>. The interviewees - of different age ranges - have asserted that this particular social segment's distance from the decision-making process and from involvement in the current dynamics and rapid progressions of the Qatari nationalism project alienates them. As a result, they struggle between contending cultural experiences – namely, their personal 'conventional' lived reality and an ever changing wider lived reality which unfolds ahead of them, transforming the time and space they are acquainted to. Such socio-cultural contention leads to a “disembedding of the social system” - a situation social theorist Anthony Giddens describes as: “the lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time [and] space” (Giddens 1990:21). Giddens explains that time and space are transformed by the ways of life brought about by modernity, as the society is:

“swept away from all traditional types of social order in quite unprecedented fashion. In both their extensionality [external aspects] and their 'intensionality' [sic] [internal aspects] the transformations involved in modernity are more profound than most sorts of change characteristic of prior periods. On the extensional plane they have served to establish forms of social inter-connection which span the globe; in 'intensional' [sic] terms they have come to alter some of the most intimate and personal features of our day-to-day existence” (Giddens 1990:21).

Applying Giddens' notion to the local context of the Qatari identity and society, it could be contended that survey participants who indicated that the Qatari identity is in

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<sup>11</sup> This perception appeared faintly in the gathered survey comments. Below is an example, in the context of the survey question “What aspect(s), if any, of the Qatari identity have/has changed over time?”, in which the participant directly implies the exclusion of this particular age group:

“The relationships between generations changed – particularly in the public sphere. We are proud to see young Qataris being empowered and given leadership positions, but sometimes this happens on the expense of an older well-qualified Qatari whose experience, opinions and knowledge should be appreciated” (55+).

crisis appear to have based their perception by considering both ‘extensional’ aspects as well as “intensional” aspects. Their comments point to globalization, Westernization, Islamophobia, loss of Arabic language and secularism as some of the extensional aspects that (directly or indirectly) led the Qatari identity to be in crisis. While, “intensional” aspects raised in the comments included: youth’s lack of interest and knowledge in local, Arab and Islamic heritage and traditions, loss of tribal/familial dialects and cultural particularities, diminishing of tribal identities, consumerism and status anxiety and class issues, as well as the spread of Western and cyber cultures.

HE Dr. Sheikha Abdullah Al-Misnad, former President of Qatar University (2003-2015) and Member of the Supreme Education Council, who played a significant role in educational reform in Qatar, implicitly refers to Giddens’ notion of modern transformation and social “disembedding” in a local context during a semi-structured interview. Her comment hints to major “extensional” and “intensional” aspects that Qataris have experienced during the concurrent unfolding of three very different layers of time:

“We have jumped from pre-modernity to modernity to post-modernity within a span of three to four decades. Yet, somehow, as a society, we are still practicing traditions and aspects of the three stages at the same time ... because of globalization and the rapid developments there was no time for gradual evolution to take place. This has not only confused some in the society, but also caused a fracture between the traditional systems they are used to and the current lived reality – which is shaping modern mind-sets and is simultaneously being shaped by them.” (personal communication, 2017).

Dr. Al-Misnad asserted that the Qatari identity is not in crisis per se, but is rather going through a transition phase that is led by a “new and different generation”. Her comment above serves as a conceptual link between the moderate perceptions that believe that the Qatari identity is in crisis only because it is at a transition phase, and the disagreeing perception of 47.31% of the online survey participants who also mostly commented that the Qatari identity is in a transition phase too.

A survey participant disagreeing that the Qatari identity is in crisis clearly stated: “It is not in crisis, but rather it is in a state of transition due to the changes that generally occurred in the society” (35-55). Participants holding this view mainly implied in their comments that the Qatari identity is undergoing “a natural process of change as a result of the society’s openness to other cultures – regardless of whether this change is positive or negative” (35-55)<sup>12</sup>. Also, a majority of those participants reflected their confidence in the general parameters and ‘authentic’ framework of the local identity and the efforts exerted to preserve it – both by the state and the society. Although, very few comments directly asserted that the state’s policies, openness and progression played a role in some youth’s ‘diversion’ from the normative social and cultural parameters and features of the Qatari identity<sup>13</sup>. Yet, the majority implied their appreciation of the state’s efforts to enrich and preserve the Qatari culture and identity<sup>14</sup>. Such conflicting perceptions hint to the divergent social engineering efforts of the Qatari nationalism project to preserve and transform the local identity, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Furthermore, the comments also reveal that there is a perception that the identity crisis discourse emerged as a result of the society’s perplexing understandings of the conceptualizations of the notion of identity. A survey participant (35-55) explains that “the issue is not in the identity itself but in the understanding of the concept and what it entails”<sup>15</sup>. In other words, the issue or confusion is in outlining the framework of the Qatari identity; more specifically what cultural manifestations, signifiers and social practices are

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<sup>12</sup> Another similar comment:

“I do agree that there are changes, and some may be bad, but I still wouldn’t call it a crisis. I think there are some people that are straying off, but the majority of the population still hold their identity” (35-55).

<sup>13</sup> Sample comment:

“The Qatari identity is still vivid in our country, but due to the state’s openness and progression, we can see that a small percentage of youth have neglected certain customs and traditions” (55+).

<sup>14</sup> Sample comment:

“The state is working on enriching the identity in various fields” (18-35).

<sup>15</sup> Full comment:

“Not precisely in crisis, the issue is not in the identity itself but in the understanding of the concept and what it entails” (35-55).

included or excluded within this framework in the present reality. Indeed, the gathered data indicated a vast difference in Qatari's conceptualizations of the local identity and its cultural manifestations. Some participants, mainly of the older age ranges (55+), consider cultural aesthetics and representations such as clothing and national festivals as manifestations of the Qatari identity<sup>16</sup>. While, others, mostly of a younger age range (18-35), consider common socio-cultural principles and ideologies as the elemental manifestations of the Qatari identity<sup>17</sup>.

The comments also suggest that there is a social tendency to use other regional identities as points of reference and compare them to the Qatari identity (see footnote 16 below). This is an issue that was raised and criticized during semi-structured interviews with four participants (aged between 18-35 and 35-55), pointing to the idea that the current Qatari identity is being constantly viewed with a lens of comparison. Accordingly, the interviewed participants explained that the local identity is either compared to other identities or to different versions of it (i.e. "different identities reflected by different Qatari people at different periods of time" anonymous interviewee 18-35). This perception is noticed in very few survey comments, mostly of the older age range (55+), who also have claimed that the identity question or issue is "a Western issue finding its way in the local debate", thus overlooking cultural complexities in the local identity discourse.

Such claims that the identity question or issue is a 'Western' issue have been raised by participants out of different perceptions and frames of minds. On one hand, these claims could have possibly formed out of naivety and a lack of observation of the current socio-cultural local dynamics and the social debates on the Qatari identity and the transformations in the local cultural experience. Such claims could have also formed out of a perspective that only focuses on the 'essential' and indigenous signifiers of the local

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<sup>16</sup> Sample comment:

"Qatari youth are still holding on to traditional clothes and celebrate and understand the significance of national events, unlike youth in other GCC countries" (55+).

<sup>17</sup> Sample comment:

"We should not expect all Qataris to dress the same, think the same, speak the same and have the same interests, this is against human nature! But there are cultural and conceptual aspects that we all conform to" (18-35).

identity, which, arguably, are still vivid in the Qatari society. Indeed, some survey participants (mostly aged 55+) argued that the notion of an identity crisis, or even a question of identity, is contextually 'forced' into the Qatari identity discourse through academics and young Qataris who are influenced by Western debates and theoretical lenses. On the other hand, several interviewees argued that there needs to be a critical consideration of the extent to which such a global debate (i.e. identity crisis debate) or frame of mind can be applied to the local debate without going beyond the local context and setting of the present lived reality in Qatar.

During a semi-structured interview discussion, Michaille Hassan Al-Nuaimi (35-55), Community Development President at Qatar Foundation and a member of the first cohort of graduates of Qatar Academy (the first educational institution established by Qatar Foundation in 1996), stressed the importance of establishing and enriching social and intellectual platforms that discuss the framework and components of the Qatari identity "before deciding whether or not it is in crisis" (personal communication, 2018). This idea about the importance of looking into and debating the local identity discourse appears to be held by many survey participants aged (18-35) holding the same perception that the Qatari identity is essentially not in crisis. One of those participants explains in a comment:

"Crisis implies that there is a problem and I don't see it that way. I simply believe that there is a shift in the way people express or view themselves as Qatari citizens, individually and as a whole. There's definitely a clash of ideas but I believe debating is always a good starting point" (18-35).

Such comments indicate that the identity is in a state of flux because of the different understandings, representations and reflections of it, as well as the multiple and divergent efforts to shape it. Local perceptions towards such efforts will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **Multiple Frames of Mind**

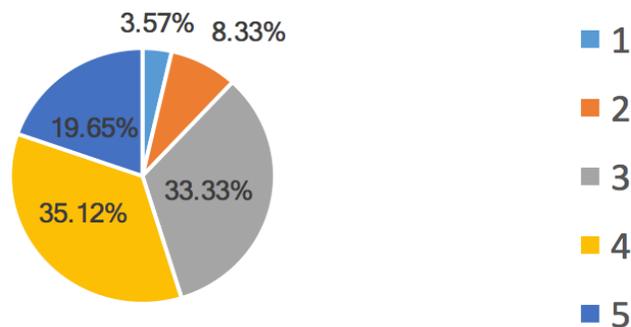
The responses to the earlier discussed online survey question “Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?” (Yes 52.69% vs. No 47.31%) are too close in percentage to form a definitive generalization on whether the Qatari public believe that the Qatari identity is in crisis or not. However, a close interpretation of the comments sheds light on a multiplicity of perceptions and frames of mind behind the survey participants’ answers, which mainly point to the emergence of two highly polarized discourses. Essentially, the comments of the participants indicating that the Qatari identity is in crisis follow a dualist frame of mind of a before-and-after perspective of the local lived reality. In this dualist perspective they compare the past and the cultural experiences they are acquainted with to the present lived reality and cultural experiences, while focusing on the elements of change. Such perspective is based on the conception that identity, culture and traditions are pre-established and fixed; with the individual having limited agency to shape them, but to work within them (Hall 1996:597). From this perspective, it is as if change unsettled the Qatari culture and society, therefore causing the identity crisis – where the Qatari individual no longer operates within the accustomed boundaries of the culture and traditions of the past.

The comments of disagreeing participants generally reflect a more pragmatic and adaptive mind-set to modernization that do not seem to connect change to causing an identity crisis, but rather to initiating a transitional conceptual phase in the identity formation process. Accordingly, change (drawing on Giddens’ ‘extensional’ and ‘intensional’ transformational aspects of modernity) is accepted as a normal and an expected phenomenon that had (and is still having) its act on the traditional lifestyle and social structure. However, the majority of those disagreeing participants appear to believe that the principles and general parameters of the local identity and culture are still vivid and are being enriched by social and governmental endeavours. It is hence inferred that change - and the multiplicities it brings about - is a key problematic element in the confluence of local social perceptions and dialectics about the Qatari identity.

### **Perceptions of Change and the Formation of the Identity Crisis Discourse**

The data outlined and discussed earlier in the context of the question about identity crisis in Qatar referred to various “extensional” and “intensional” (Giddens 1990:21) processes of change that unfolded in Qatar over the past two decades. The gathered data highlighted divergent social perceptions from cultural immutability to the post-modernist notion that the identity and its cultural constituents are in a state of flux and constant re-formation (Kupiainen et al. 2004). When asked “To what extent has identity changed within the past twenty years?”, given a choice from 1 (being minor change) to 5 (being major change) a majority of the online survey participants indicated that it underwent moderate change – mostly 3 out of 5 (33.33%) and 4 out of 5 (35.12%).

To what extent has identity in Qatar changed within the last 20 years? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being minor change and 5 being major change)



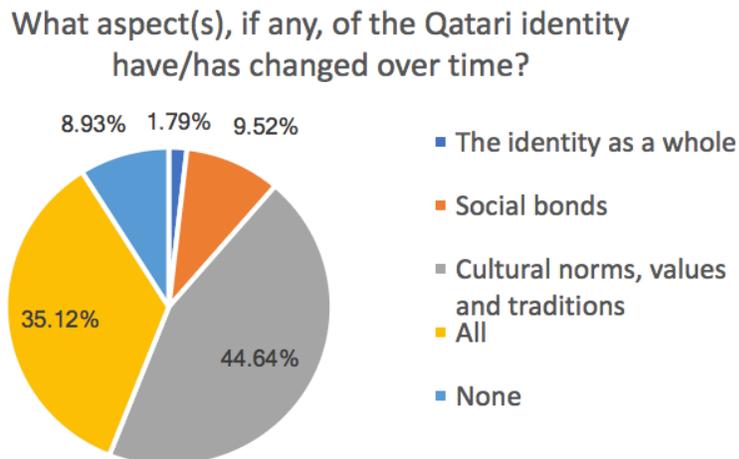
Such data, at first, could be interpreted as contradictory to the data from the earlier question on whether the Qatari identity is in crisis or not. One would have expected more participants indicating choices 1 or 2 (1 being minor change) in line with the 47.31% of survey participants disagreeing that the Qatari identity is in crisis. Similarly, choices 4 and 5 (5 being major change) should have had higher results to align with 52.69% of the survey participants who indicated that the Qatari identity is in crisis. This discrepancy draws one’s attention to question the conceptual formation of the identity crisis discourse and its circulation in the local society. This discourse could be based on an accumulation of collective conceptual maps of pessimistic conceptions, overgeneralizations and common historical memories associated with the unfolding of modernity and progression

in the region over the past century. Hence, it is linked in the comments to the Arab identity, language and religion as well as neo-colonial processes of acculturation. Yet, by looking closer at the comments of the identity crisis survey question alongside the data about change in the Qatari identity over the last two decades, some clarity about the above discrepancy can be achieved. Drawing on this, it is possible to shed light on one of the first paradoxes in the Qatari identity discourse.

Essentially, an identity crisis is a conceptual situation generally associated with confusion or doubt due to a shift or an uncertainty in the broad framework and fundamentals that guide an individual's socio-cultural being (Adams 2007:1). Arguably, the comments discussed in the earlier section mostly highlight changes in daily-life practices and cultural representations, howbeit not depicting a total shift or major doubts and uncertainties about the fundamental framework of 'Qatariness'. In other words, there is a prevalent perception that the general parameters of the principles and values of the Qatari identity are maintained and are fairly evident in the local cultural experience, yet some traditional practices and ways of life are losing significance. Thus, participants holding this perception pointed in their comments to interim changes in the local lived reality due to internal and external processes of social and cultural progression. As noted earlier, the perception that the Qatari identity is somewhat in a transitional phase is generally a common element across the agreeing and disagreeing perceptions. This, hence, conforms with the gathered data showing that the Qatari identity experienced moderate change over the past two decades; not a total transformation from one conceptual framework to another nor is it in a state of total doubt and uncertainty, but rather in a state of socio-ideological ambivalence with multiple perplexing constituents.

So far, this research suggests that there is a general social perception that key facets of the Qatari identity and socio-cultural practices are still persistent in the local lived reality, and that there are multiple preservation and revival efforts that are appreciated by the society. However, gathered responses to the online survey question: "What aspect(s), if any, of the Qatari identity have/has changed over time?" problematize this conclusion. The data point to a key paradoxical element that helps unlock the nature of the concepts

of change and modernization in the Qatari society and their influences on the Qatari identity discourse. Five choices were provided for participants to indicate their perceptions about the aspects that have changed in the Qatari identity overtime, including: 'the identity as a whole', 'social bonds', 'cultural norms, values and traditions', 'all', and 'none'.



Only 1.79% of the online survey participants responding to this question indicated that the whole identity has changed over time. This supports the earlier contention that the Qatari identity is not in crisis per se. The 'problematization' here is that 44.64% of the survey participants chose 'cultural norms, values and traditions' as the identity related aspects that have changed over time, and 35.12% of the participants indicated 'all' (i.e. 'the identity as a whole', 'social bonds' and 'cultural norms, values and traditions'). The paradox emerging in this situation is that on one hand there is a resonating discourse in the local society on the persistence of cultural practices and traditions, and on the other hand, there is also a social perception that such aspects have changed. This paradox, along with other social discourses and discursive formations within the Qatari identity discourse highlighted in this chapter, are further explored throughout the following data analysis chapters in the context of the Qatari nationalism project.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Qatari Collectivism:**

#### **A Social Collective Identity of Juxtaposed Constituents**

'Identity' and 'culture' are two of the most complex concepts in the English language (Bennett et al. 2005, Kupiainen et al. 2004) because of the compound meanings the terms have gained as they evolved conceptually and linguistically within the local, regional and global contexts (Lewis 2000:9). The two terms have now "come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought" (Williams 1976:87). This is also the case with the latter terms in the Arabic language. It is argued that the processes of globalization and intercultural exchange of knowledge have contributed to the complexity of the meanings and connotations the terms 'culture' (translates to the term '*thaqafa*' (ثقافة) in Modern Standard Arabic) and 'identity' (translates to the term '*haweya*' (هوية) in Modern Standard Arabic) carry today (Hall 1996:473, Butgouga 2016:664-5).

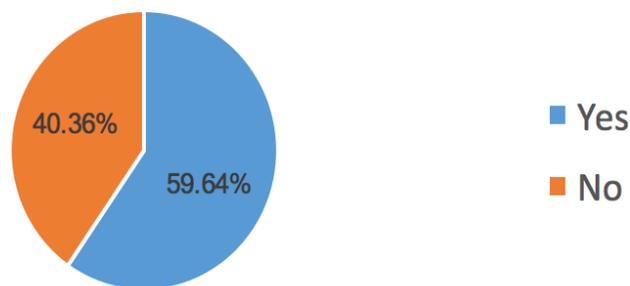
The lack of concreteness in the meanings and uses of the two concepts - and their derivative terminologies and ideas - makes it quite difficult to interpolate and propose accurate or agreed upon meaning, use or definition for each (Kupiainen et al. 2004). Also, the plurality of the 'systems of thought' of individuals and institutions in a society play a major role in shaping the meanings and usages of such terms within a cultural scene (Bennett 2013:24-5). Essentially, the conceptual agency, power and subjugation of the diverse and multiple social and political entities (whether in the private or public spheres) add further layers of complexity to the understandings of the concepts within their local contexts (Swartz 1997:118). The socio-cultural underlays that form local perceptions and understandings of these concepts in the Qatari present reality are investigated in this chapter. Intricate cultural discourses, social dialectics and indigenous ideologies are

explored and deconstructed in order to disentangle the paradoxes and layers of complexity within the Qatari identity discourse. This chapter delves into the dynamics and implications of the Qatari nationalism project on the formation process of the Qatari identity.

### **Qatari identity vs. National identity**

The results of the online survey conducted for this project revealed some of the layers of complexity in the local understanding and conceptualizations of 'identity' within the Qatari society. An analysis of the data clearly indicates a perplexing dichotomy in the local understanding of the collective identity in Qatar, and an interesting interplay between the use of the concepts of a national identity and a social collective identity. Both concepts are referred to as 'Qatari identity' at different times. When asked "In your opinion, is the 'Qatari identity' the same as the 'national identity' in Qatar?", more than half of the survey participants (59.64%) claimed that they are the same.

In your opinion, is 'Qatari identity' the same as 'national identity' in Qatar?



Correspondingly, data from the conducted semi-structured interviews also revealed similar results. This means that more than half of the participants believe that a collective identity exists in Qatar: a sui generis system of belongingness and comradeship within the Qatari society that is not per se related to nationalism. An interviewee (aged 18-35) working in a governmental media institution, who requested anonymity confirmed:

“We are a cohesive society, we are not fragmented, there are no publicly evident frictions and clashes between different segments of our society – we are stable, there is something that holds us together, I don’t know what is it ... but paradoxically we have also become a diverse and multi-cultural society today. This is something people don’t like to admit, but it is a reality” (personal communication, 2018).

It should be noted that this interviewee clearly explained during the conducted interview session that by using the term ‘multi-cultural’ s/he was not referring to ethnic pluralism within the society nor the interaction and exchange of social and cultural capital between Qataris and expatriates. Rather, s/he was referring to “a plurality of thoughts and mind-sets within different age ranges and social segments of the Qatari community” (personal communication 2018). It is interesting here that this participant did not recognize or refer to the historical diversity in the Qatari population (Carter & Fletcher 2017:435). In fact, this tendency was conspicuous in comments of several other interviewees – especially the younger ones, as well as policy-makers (of the older age ranges 35-55 and 55+). The tendency to disregard social and cultural differences (such as race, ethnicity, tribal backgrounds and descents) within the Qatari society, may be partly because the younger interviewees have been brought up – through institutionalized cultural and educational experiences - to view the society as a whole, without highlighting their nuanced differences.

Also, this understanding of Qatari society is supported by policy-makers and social engineers (of different capacities) to create and maintain homogeneity and social cohesion in the Qatari community; hence, re-imagining the Qatari population as wholesome and uni-cultural throughout history to the present day. An interviewee associated with the Ministry of Culture and Sports (35-55), who requested anonymity, remarked: “I really see no benefit from highlighting and discussing social and cultural differences in the public sphere, such matters only bring about social clashes and conflicts which we can avoid and protect ourselves from” (personal communication, 2017). Similarly, comments from three other government officials and policy instigators (involved

in educational, cultural and social development) reveal that the national discourse – officiated by the state’s nationalism project – disregards the socio-cultural nuances and differences. However, those participants stressed that there are efforts to engineer a hegemonic culture of homogeneity, consensus and cohesion in the public sphere in order to enable the construction of an overarching collective national identity for Qataris (personal communication, 2017). The phrase “which we can avoid and protect ourselves from” points one’s attention to another possible reason for the nationalism project’s disregard of social and cultural differences. This could be an effort to prevent potential clashes or uprisings which may emerge if differences - whether sectarian or cultural and socio-political - (Matthiesen 2013:117-18) were illuminated in the public sphere.

Looking at youth’s (18-35) comments from the conducted semi-structured interviews and online survey, it could also be suggested that Qatari youth do recognize the diversity and differences – since these are lived and felt in daily social interactions and cultural experiences. However, they also understand that there is a general predisposition to refrain from illuminating such differences in public. This general predisposition (which can also be sensed from the above remarks of policy instigators) was emphasized during several of the interview sessions.

A young interviewee (18-35) also claimed that the only difference that this particular discourse acknowledges is “the difference between the older generation and ‘some’ of the younger generation – a matter of differences in lifestyle, taste and visions” (personal communication, 2017). This difference is explained to be due to increased globalization, progressive modernity and a lack of knowledge in and connection to the local heritage and traditions. This interviewee used the term ‘some’ to indicate that not all Qatari youth experience a cultural difference between them and the older generations. S/he explained that this ‘difference’ is sensed to varied extents depending on how this young person has been brought up, their education and how closely-knitted they are to the family - or tribe - and its wider network.

Similarly, a respondent to the online survey commented: “As a young Qatari woman, I shouldn’t be expected to live the same way my mother or grandmother did, nor do the same things they did, but this does not mean that I hold a different identity or that I believe in different ideologies and values”. Her comment could be interpreted as an expression of a discourse or a social pressure that expects youth to represent themselves in a certain way that conforms with traditions. Also, this comment hints that such representations are generally perceived by the local society as matters that are closely related to the Qatari identity and culture. Those social pressures and local perceptions about their discursive formation in the Qatari cultural experience are elaborated on in the context of an ideological struggle in the next chapter. Moreover, it could be suggested that due to this expected conformity the Qatari society’s ‘multi-culturalism’ today was described as paradoxical (see page 104). This paradox is deconstructed in the next chapter, but prior to that, the source of Qatari cohesion needs to be explored. In this context, the key question now is whether the collectiveness of the local system of belongingness and comradeship refers to the Qatari nation-state and nationality or to the Qatari community and its socio-cultural fabric.

One of the most general definitions of the concept of identity, outlined in the literature review, suggests that it is: “an actor’s experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; [which] often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative” (Tilly 1996:7). Accordingly, in the simplest form, identity would be a ‘description’ and a set of representations of an individual’s or a group’s existence and belonging. Social identity (also referred to as social collective identity) is a self-reflection and a conceptualization derived from an individual’s membership and belonging to a certain social group (Turner & Reynolds 2010). Such groups or collectives can be based on religion, ethnicity, gender, nationality, language, or any form of distinct and shared cultural capital (Unal & Inac 2013:223). Hence, national identity can be understood as an identity that loosely describes an individual’s existence and belongingness to a nation-state and its people based on a national culture and narrative (i.e. nationalism). Yet, is nationalism the reservoir of the Qatari cohesion and collectiveness? The literature review, discussing the emergence of various formations

and dogmas of nationalism in the region, indicates that it is not per se the basis of the local collective system. However, the majority of the online survey participants, as well as the semi-structured interview participants, agreed that the Qatari identity is the same as the national identity; thereby posing a question about the historical and, more recent, contemporary frameworks that determine their perceptions.

Political philosopher Roger Scruton (1986:156) argues that:

“the condition of man [sic] requires that the individual, while he exists and acts as an autonomous being, does so only because he can first identify himself as something greater - as a member of a society, group, class, state or nation, of some arrangements to which he may not attach a name, but which he recognizes instinctively as home”.

In today's modern condition there is an international discourse that uncritically identifies one's country (nation-state) as his or her home. Indeed, this became a general discourse so that almost all national collectives are identified - by the 'other' or by themselves - in relation to a specific and contained geographic location, which is typically what circumscribes a nation-state (McCrone 2015:24). Accordingly, there became a naturalized and an accepted association between 'a people', 'a country' and their culture and identity (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:12-13). In line with this implicit geo-political definition of identity and belonging, Dr. Jassim Sultan, a prominent Qatari intellectual, author and consultant to the Ministry of Culture and Sports along with several other governmental and private institutions, explains that the Qatari society is generally referred to as Qataris in reference to citizens of the State of Qatar, and so their 'collective' identity is, by default, referred to by the general public as the Qatari identity (personal communication, 2018). Dr. Sultan further explicates: “hence there became a somewhat commonsensical reciprocity in the meaning or, more precisely, the usage of the concepts of nationality, national identity and a society's identity in a specific geographic location” (personal communication, 2018).

Nationalism theorists, mainly of liberal positions, such as Gellner (1983), Schwarz (1986), Unal and Inac (2013), explain that the modern condition compels individuals and societies to refer to their identities in terms of the nation-state in order to ensure that the authenticity of an individual's identity is both subjectively recognized, and objectively regulated through constitutional systems and policies. Philosopher and social anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1983) critically elaborates on the individual's sense of subjective loss if not associated with a national identification:

“The idea of man [sic] without a nation seems to impose a great strain on the modern imagination. A man [sic] must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obviously true is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such.” (Gellner 1983:6).

An anonymous interviewee (aged 18-35), who is a graduate of Education City and currently holds a leading position in a semi-governmental educational institution, most effectively outlines the existence of such regulated notions of belonging - referred to above by Gellner - in the Qatari society. S/he also reflected a strong awareness and an understanding of theoretical concepts relating to nationalism and social engineering (which is unsurprising due to his/her educational background):

“Nationalism – in its Western meanings - is a new concept to the region in general and to Qatar in particular ... don't get me wrong I am not saying Qataris are not nationalistic, they certainly are, but in different ways. I think the general public does not know the difference, or do not even see the difference between the two concepts, but deep down in their consciousness there is something other than pure nationalism - by that I mean a modern Western concept of nationalism, a concept of an imagined community and a feeling of comradeship between individuals based on nationality ... Even if they see the difference, they understand that it is not 'beneficial' for our society's cohesion and solidarity to point it out, or to use the

two concepts in the right manner of their meanings ... everything around us tells us not to point out the difference but to allow and enable the national identity to subsume the Qatari collective identity. In other words, to just allow it to become the collective identity of Qataris” (personal communication, 2017).

When asked how the Qatari collective identity is different than the national identity, this interviewee asserted that it would be difficult to highlight the difference without “tapping into problematic sensitivities which people tend to perceive as social taboos” (personal communication, 2017). This comment implicitly hints to status anxiety and issues of social class and tribal and ethnic hierarchies which emerged in the presented data of chapter four in the context of the local identity crisis debate. Also, the fact that this interviewee pointed that such socio-political debates are perceived as ‘sensitive’ and ‘problematic’, and chose to refrain from tapping into them, reveals that there is a discursively evolving self-regulatory conceptual mechanism which sets the framework of ‘power-knowledge’ in the Qatari present reality (Burchell 1991:88). Power-knowledge is a term coined by Foucault to describe a dominant conceptual regulatory mechanism of knowledge production and consumption processes within a wider discursive system of social discipline (Foucault & Gordon 1980). This conceptual regulatory mechanism acts as a “secret force that compels society ever towards its well-being” (Foucault 1995:104); hence fitting and conforming to the dominant norms and values of a socio-cultural fabric.

Another interviewee (35-55) – involved in Qatari media - also showed concerns about defining the Qatari identity and conformed with the local power-knowledge framework:

“Attempting to define the Qatari identity on a social personal level is surely problematic... it would involve setting representations that are subjective and most probably based on some tribal or familial historical imaginations which are obviously imagined differently by individuals or tribes within the Qatari community – this won’t serve the efforts to maintain a cohesive and unified society ... So I

would say that the Qatari identity is defined by whatever the state represents!” (personal communication, 2018).

The interviewees’ reticence reflects a dilemma faced by individuals, especially well-educated and knowledgeable Qataris, when thinking about the nuances and parameters of the Qatari identity and what can and cannot be said about it. The statement: “the Qatari identity is defined by whatever the state represents!” is rather interesting when considering local reactions to social engineering efforts. This statement does not necessarily mean that the changes are generically imposed from above and that there is a social disconnection from them. Rather, it could be interpreted as hinting to social understanding, and even an acknowledgement, of an ongoing engineered process to shape the Qatari society and identity. The connection between Qatari youth and this engineered process is explored in the following chapter in the context of the rising national class.

Moreover, the extract from the earlier quote: “everything around us tells us not to point out the difference but to allow and enable the national identity to subsume the Qatari collective identity...” (see page 109) and the statement: “this won’t serve the efforts to maintain a cohesive and unified society” (in the above quote) reveal that there is a local acknowledgement of a socially engineered process of national identity construction, and an understanding – to an extent - of its goal and rationale. In this context, Amal Al-Malki, the Founding Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad bin Khalifa University (member of Qatar Foundation), argues that “there aren’t enough agents that work on formulating the narrative of the Qatari identity, currently it is all engineered by governmental agents who are heading towards formulating one sort of identity which does not reflect the reality and richness of the Qatari identity today” (personal communication, 2017). In this situation, where the mainstream public rhetoric does not reflect the reality of peoples’ personal imaginations and perceptions, tacit tensions and inner layers of power struggles and complexities can be sensed in the conceptualizations and representations of the Qatari identity. This formation process of the Qatari national identity is understood by those interviewees to be governmentally

engineered through state schemes and policies. It is represented through Qatari media and public displays of tangible and intangible cultural aesthetics - ranging from particular dialects to traditional architecture as well as extravagant culture and heritage events. The following chapter looks into Qatar National Day as one of those cultural events.

### **Cultural Sensitivities and Social Regulations**

Returning to investigating the difference between the Qatari – collective - identity and the Qatari national identity, an interviewee (18-35) who stated earlier that it is difficult to elaborate on the difference between the two identities without tapping into social taboos (see page 109) continued to explain the difference using the United States as a reference, in an effort to avoid such social sensitivities:

“Let’s use another society as an example; the American society for instance. In countries such as the United States, where on one hand the national identity debates are vigorous and well-defined, on the other hand, there is also a populist movement of searching for origins. We also see this here in Qatar to an extent, though nothing about the identity debate is well defined, but the debate is nevertheless vigorous, and we see that tribal pride and affiliation are strongly evident too. Back to the American society example, there is room there for diversity. Americanism is built on pluralism, and the two discourses (I mean the American national discourse and the populist search for origins discourse) are parallel... the diversity is celebrated within the national discourse; it is accepted to be Arab-American, Irish-American, African-American etc. But in Qatar this sort of diversity is hushed! I do not mean here issues of dual citizenship and naturalization, I mean that the Qatari national discourse legitimizes and celebrates only one tribe - Bani Tamim - and other tribes and social sects are respected, but are not celebrated publicly”.

The above comment possibly hints to sentiments of status anxiety when raising the notion that the national discourse enables the dominance of the socio-historical

narrative and identity of Bani Tamim (the most predominant tribe in Qatar) as a supra-collective identity. Although it has been argued earlier that the Qatari nationalism project focuses on highlighting and establishing socio-cultural homogeneity, it should be noted that minor efforts and initiatives are officiated to address elements of different social segments and tribal and historical backgrounds of the Qatari socio-cultural fabric. For instance, there is lately an effort to create a balance between the celebration of the seafaring culture and the Bedouin culture to reduce such sentiments of status anxiety. However, those varied initiatives do not emphasize particular tribes or ethnicities historically associated with such cultures and their traditional practices. An interviewee (35-55) working at a semi-governmental cultural institution explained that the two cultures are rather represented “as inclusive for all Qataris to enable more individuals to identify with them” (personal communication, 2018). Similarly, the Qatar National Day event of ‘*Ardhat hal* Qatar’ (a type of men’s folkloric dance with swords), where all Qataris (of different ethnic and tribal backgrounds) are invited to participate is also claimed to play a role in reducing status anxiety, and increasing social collectivity and homogeneity. It is worth noting that in the past prominent tribes would have a separate ‘*Ardha*’ during national day celebrations, but the state decided a few years ago to combine those events into one state-sponsored event open to all Qataris.

Looking at the predominance of one culture and tribal narrative over others (and the engineered efforts to downplay tribal identities through various cultural initiatives) from another angle, it could be argued that this limits the interpretive capacity of such initiatives (Macdonald 1998). In other words, the nationalism project plays a role in regulating the meanings and possible interpretations potentially produced through the society’s engagement and conceptual interaction with such state-constructed narratives and initiatives of inclusiveness. In turn, this also regulates the process of cultural production and contributes to shaping the Qatari identity. Indeed, several interviewees (aged 18-35 and 35-55) pointed that they are sometimes unable to conceptually connect with the content presented in such ‘inclusive’ cultural initiatives and exhibits “due to the fact that they lack an element of reality – names of people or at least some sort of reference to

historical narratives and figures that individuals can identify with” (anonymous, personal communication 2018).

### **Indigenous vs. Newly Constructed**

It appears that the difference in the local conceptualizations of the Qatari social collective identity and the national identity is that one is indigenous and the other is a newly constructed identity on the national level. The indigenous identity is described by Dr. Rabea Sabah Al-Kuwari (55+), Professor of Media and Journalism - Qatar University, a journalist and author of several works on Qatari sociology and heritage, as a diverse identity that is “built on relations, connections and empathic understandings within the society” (personal communication, 2018). He explained that it is based on a socio-cultural harmonious structure that brings together the diverse families and tribes living in Qatar up to the present.

Maryam Al-Subaiey (18-35), a Creative Consultant, author, social media influencer and youth activist, describes the Qatari – indigenous - identity as “diverse in an exclusive Qatari way” (personal communication, 2017). She hinted to the internal diversity of the Qatari nationals and how individuals’ deference and understandings of the nuances (commonalities and differences) between Qataris enable them to create ‘Qatari exclusiveness’; living and operating harmoniously within the local socio-cultural structure. HE Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari, currently State Minister with rank of Deputy Prime Minister and a former Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage (2008-2016), former Ambassador of Qatar to France, the United States, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the UN, and a candidate in the 2017 election of the Director-General of UNESCO, provides an overview of the Qatari identity, showing how it expands to a Qatari national identity:

“The Qatari identity starts with the core of locality – the elements which make up who we are within Qatar and its society, how we think and interact with each other based on our collective values and conceptual heritage ... then the circle widens

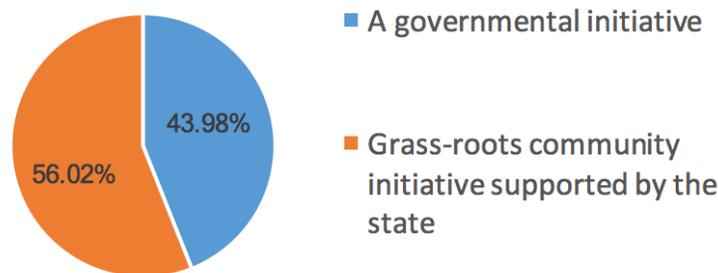
to our reality as Arabs ... and then it further widens to our reality as members of a bigger global community and where we fall in various international and professional networks ... this is when the Qatari national identity mostly operates and thrives” (personal communication, 2018).

It is hence understood that there is an element of fluidity and overlap in the construct of both identities. The two identities are fluid in the sense that they both operate along wide spectra of inclusiveness and classifications that a Qatari individual can represent and identify with within the framework of ‘Qatariness’. Grimson (2010:71) argues that throughout a society’s progression “social, historical, political, ideological, aesthetic, gender and generational classifications emerge, become more or less relevant, and stable” within the spectrum of a local identity. In the context of Qatar, such classifications vary in terms of their significance, compliance or incongruity with the core of Qatari locality and how the society accepts or reacts to them. The element of fluidity manifests through the interplay and dynamics of the myriad classifications and socio-cultural intricacies within the umbrella or broad spectrum of the Qatari identity (whether the indigenous social identity or the Qatari national identity). Yet, paradoxically, this fluidity, as Al-Kuwari explains, is contained and boxed within a constantly developing regulation process which signifies what makes up ‘Qatariness’, while allowing room for individualism and identification with other smaller or larger, local or global classifications (personal communication, 2018). Examples of those classifications provided by participants during the semi-structured interviews ranged from belonging to a certain tribe, being an Arab and a Muslim, to one’s alma mater and professional economic or cultural affiliations on the local and international levels. Essentially, this fluidity could be inducing confusions and possibly contributing to the local questioning of the Qatari identity and the construction of the identity crisis discourse.

The regulation process of the Qatari identity is described by 56.02% of the online survey participants as a grassroots community initiative that is supported by the Qatari government. On the other hand, 43.98% of the survey participants agreed with most of the interviewees who affirmed that the Qatari identity project - and its burgeoning national

discourse - is a governmental initiative that came about in the early 2000s at a time when it was needed for nation-state building purposes.

### The current efforts to foster Qatari identity started as:



Interestingly, it could be suggested that the 56.02% of survey participants who asserted that it was a grassroots community initiative supported by the state are part of the 59.64% of survey participants who agreed that the Qatari identity is the same as the national identity. Arguably, such an understanding that the two identities are the same could be found in other nation-states (McCrone & Bechhofer 2015:44). Typically, individuals, especially in small and closely connected societies of a fairly recent historical-political foundation, such as Qatar's, tend to 'describe' themselves simply and within typical given frameworks (Grimson 2010). Indeed, the drawing and theorization of identities normally does not occur outside of academia. The general public - who were the target respondents to this project's online survey - tend to continually live with their identities; creating, re-creating and negotiating them to adapt to changing conditions and circumstances (Wilson 2015). This is not necessarily done consciously, in a well-defined and standardized narrative, but is nonetheless part of subconscious cultural and political power dynamics that revolve around what the society accepts or rejects within the regulation process.

However, as stated above, 43.98% of the online survey participants indicated that this regulation process is a governmental initiative. This percentage of anonymous survey respondents conforms with the perceptions of most of the interviewees who described the regulation process of the Qatari identity as a governmental social engineering effort.

It should be reiterated though that the interviewed individuals - of different age ranges and backgrounds - are mostly policy instigators or socio-cultural influencers who are involved in various capacities in the development and realization of the state's visions – one of which is the consolidation of a Qatari national identity. Michaille Hassan Al-Nuaimi (35-55), Community Development President at Qatar Foundation and a member of the first cohort of graduates of Qatar Academy (the first educational institution established by Qatar Foundation in 1995) explains:

“The purpose of constructing a culture of nationalism or a Qatari national identity is to maintain consensus and cultural hegemony within our society amidst the influences of modernity, globalization and regional politics. I don't think it is a different identity than the so-called 'original' Qatari identity, I've never heard it officially described separately. There is always a link between the original and the modern. The aim is to preserve the identity so that individuals are deeply rooted and confident of who they originally are as Qataris, but at the same time this identity needs to be comfortable existing in a modern and ever-changing world. I would say the national identity is a 'glocalized' version of the Qatari identity – it is able to engage and participate in different fields with the rest of the world, but is still proud of and able to represent its origins – this is what Qatari institutions are aiming to achieve” (personal communication, 2018).

Al-Nuaimi's implicit reference to Richard Wilk's famous analogy: “globalizing the local and localizing the global” in her description of the national identity as 'glocalized' is rather interesting. This concept, has been first utilised locally by one of the key cultural policy-makers in Qatar, HE Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad Al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, Doha Film Institute and Reach Out to Asia, in her Tedx Talk (Ted Talks 2010). She constantly employs this notion in speeches and discussions about Qatar's cultural and educational policies. This term is closely related to other keywords and phrases that emerged from the conducted interviews' data referring to the national identity using connotations, such as: 'diverse', 'modern', 'all-inclusive', 'individualistic', 'tolerant and open to the world', 'tribal-modern', 'modern with a traditional representation', 'inherent

but futuristic' and 'of new characteristics that locals are culturally assimilating'. Accordingly, the national identity is generally perceived as a 'legitimized' state construct, that Qataris are gradually accepting, and to which they are adapting because it is a necessity in today's modern world, as indicated in the Qatar National Vision 2030 (GSDP 2008) and reiterated in the Emir's speeches (GCO 2013).

An interviewee (35-55) working at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) comments on the Qatari society's acceptance of this legitimized construct (i.e. the national identity): "this 'new' identity does not – so far - negate the value of the families and tribes and their traditional social networks on the private sphere, nor does it publicly negate any religious, traditional or tribal principles and values" (personal communication, 2018). S/he further addresses this point by discussing the narrative presented at the museum and how it intertwines the Qatari identity and the anticipated national identity without alienating one from the other. His/her comment implicitly hints to the element of fluidity previously discussed in the identity spectrum:

"The historical storyline of Qatar and the Qataris from the past to the present spreads over several exhibition halls with an aim to foster a cultural imagination that focuses on illuminating shared cultural elements and representations which bring people together – far from certain enigmatic socio-historical narratives that could disturb local cultural hegemony .... The storyline highlights a process of change and progression parallel to the preservation and upholding of local culture and heritage – to reflect the idea that although there are rapid changes happening around us, we are still maintaining the essence of our identity" (personal communication, 2018).

It is interesting that cultural particularities and tribal narratives are perceived as enigmatic. Also, it appears that the potential capacity of tribal socio-cultural particularities and narratives to disturb the Qatari society's cohesion and homogeneity have developed as a predominant notion in the local mind-set. Essentially, regional sectarian and tribal tensions (Matthiesen 2013, Al-Kuwari 2018) may have contributed to the formation of this

notion along with the Qatari nationalism project's efforts to establish homogeneity and a hegemonic national identity.

Even though there is 'fluidity' and a lack of clarity in terms of what distinguishes one identity from the other, and what is meant by individuals when they say 'Qatari identity' (i.e. the so-called original social collective identity or the new national identity), the national identity is, nevertheless, presented as an anticipated identity that is yet under formation. The data indicates that there is a broad consensus and an awareness from the respondents to the survey, as well as the interviewees, that the identity is being engineered and regulated by state-led institutions and policies, along with community's grassroots initiatives and dynamic conceptual processes of acceptance and rejection. It is generally understood that those efforts are exerted to preserve and consolidate the particularity and uniqueness of the Qatari identity, while enabling it to thrive in a modern world.

The national identity seems to be perceived as an extension of the Qatari – social collective – identity. It is perceived as a construct that supersedes the socio-cultural nuances and particularities which fall under the context of the 'original' Qatari identity (i.e. the social collective identity). A state-led cultural assimilation process is on-going to illuminate cultural and ideological commonalities and representations, which would signify and form the framework of the anticipated Qatari identity, whilst downplaying internal differences. This process of cultural assimilation is discussed in the next chapter focusing on the national imagination.

### **A Simple Issue or an Issue of Simplicity**

The observed perplexity in the understanding and usage of the two concepts - 'Qatari identity' and 'Qatari national identity' - mainly from the gathered data of the online survey, as well as general observations of discussions in social circles and in traditional and social media, could be due to a lack of robust local conceptualization of the concepts in both the local academia and the socio-cultural mainstream fields. The insubstantial

conceptualizations available for local individuals to consume and re-produce, possibly led to the discursive formation of the theme of simplicity within the discourse on the Qatari identity. Indeed, 'simplicity' emerged as a keyword; yet, in different contexts and forms in the data gathered from the online survey and the semi-structured interviews, for example: "a simple society", "a simple identity", "a simple young state", "a simple past" and "a simple culture".

The gathered data reveal two main paths of thought that discursively produced the theme of simplicity in the Qatari identity discourse. The first conceptual path is truly believing that the Qatari society and identity are simple. This path of thought is mostly traced in comments posted by respondents to various questions of the online survey, as well as personal observations of informal discussions in social circles. While the second path of thought is more complex; and is represented in the premise that the Qatari society and identity are not simple but rather a discourse of simplicity has been proclaimed, and is conformed to, in the Qatari society as a social 'fact'. Comments and discussions with interviewees show that the two conceptual paths are closely connected and have mainly emerged out of local academia and media as well as related institutions and agents involved in the production of knowledge in society.

For instance, HE Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, articulated the link existing between the two paths of thought around simplicity, which - in his opinion – concurrently built on each other to produce this discourse. It is worth quoting his perspective at length:

"The issue of modernization is not new to us – it is evident in informal discussions as well as in the public sphere in the form of academic literature or media content. But the topic of identity – identity as an issue, the question of identity, theorizing it and employing it in public discourses from research papers to governmental policies addressing identity and heritage – all this very recently appeared, less than a decade ago, at a time of change and progression. I don't think commentators on identity (including academics and media figures) have taken enough time to highlight and outline our identity as it is – with its details and complexities before

attempting to present it to the public. It is not an easy job, it is difficult to translate a reality with its dynamics and dimensions into content that the general public would understand and engage with ... And at the same time there is the state's emphasis on the preservation of identity and the return to traditions ... so the agents involved need to link the identity to the past ... Now, our past is always described as 'the simple times' – of course it is not, but a lot of the general public describe it as such because they are comparing the ways of life back then to the complexities of our modern lifestyles. So, to describe an identity that is long-standing and closely linked to this 'simple' past, one of its connotations would surely be the word 'simple' – even if it is not said, it is thought!" (personal communication, 2018).

This comment demonstrates the playout of the previously mentioned power-knowledge conceptual mechanism of social and cultural discipline. The knowledge production agents' (as Al-Attiyah refers to them) tendency to conform to society's common conceptual maps and social 'facts' in their efforts to produce knowledge about identity, inevitably leads them to build on and re-produce the discourse of simplicity. Al-Attiyah, also states that the issues and questioning of identity emerged very recently after appearing in governmental documents as well as local academic research. This statement, could be interpreted to imply that the Qatari nationalism project played a role in inducing the question of identity. Indeed, several local conferences and research funds, including Qatar National Research Fund (member of Qatar Foundation), invite and sponsor academics (Qatari and non-Qataris) to research the Qatari identity and culture.

A similar perspective is put forward by a young researcher and a graduate of Education City (anonymous 18-35), who, however, contends that both the state and the public played a role in creating a lens of simplicity:

"There are definitely social and cultural complexities today, and in the past, which continue to shape the Qatari identity and mind-set. The complexities of today are lived and are sensed in our daily lives (not necessarily in the negative sense of

social fragmentation) although they are not addressed as an issue publicly. Maybe sometimes glossed over briefly in media and academia but in superficial and idealistic ways ... those complexities are actually a part of our reality and you can see evidences of them in casual social discussions, especially in social media where individuals are mostly anonymized ... The complexities of the past are also glossed over. For example, compare historical records whether local Arabic ones – which a lot of local historians are holding on to and not representing in a constructive way – or The British Records, to the current literature and discourse on Qatari history, you'll see that what is represented to us today is again a simplistic non-dimensional life, which will obviously result in an image of a simple identity! I believe that this glossing over process is what simplified things or precisely imposed a lens of simplicity on our perspectives. There is an on-going process of nation-state building and governmental efforts to foster nationalism and create ideological hegemony – so keeping things simple would serve this purpose. But at the same time, academics and media figures haven't done their job in presenting a dimensional culture and identity. The role is on younger researchers and academics to deconstruct available primary sources so that we can change this false perception of simplicity which is constantly being reproduced" (personal communication, 2018).

The above quotes trace the development and discursive formation of the concept of simplicity in the representation of the Qatari identity and society from confusion and a lack of knowledge to an established statement of social truth, which regulates perceptions and knowledge in this context so that "even if it is not said, it is thought!" (see Al-Attiyah's comment page 121). Moreover, most of the interviewees, of different age ranges and professional backgrounds, provided perspectives that agree with Al-Attiyah and the anonymous researcher (18-35) that the local academia and media played a role in forming the Qatari perceptions and frame of mind in this context.

It must be noted that the local academic scholarship consisting of theoretical literature, debates and research on the Qatari identity and its constituents and dynamics

is still relatively simplistic, limited and immature. Therefore, this scholarship is insufficient to act as a reference or a basis that guides the perceptions and understandings of members of the public in conceptualizing the Qatari – social collective - identity and the national identity. This is also the case with content presented in media and cultural events (which the general public is more likely to engage with, hence possibly having a stronger role in shaping local perceptions). Moreover, there are very few voices in academia and media that publicly acknowledge the complexity of the Qatari socio-cultural fabric and the changing reality of the Qatari identity. Dr. Amal Al-Malki, the Founding Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hamad bin Khalifa University (member of Qatar Foundation), contends that the majority of commentators beyond academia tend to voice this ‘simplicity’ as an essential core of the Qatari society’s collectivity and homogeneity (personal communication, 2017). Further elaborating on this conception in her work on Qatari identity, Al-Malki asserts that:

“most discussions, whether private or public, refer to the Qatari national identity as a fixed form of reference that supersedes spatial and temporal changes. It is represented as a homogenous construction, one that reflects a social and cultural cohesion and a unified society, upon which the stability and continuity of the society is dependent” (Al-Malki 2016:241).

Considering Al-Malki’s statements as well as data from other interviewees, this notion of ‘simplicity’ is hence questionable.

Indeed, an interviewee working at Qatar Museums (18-35) - whose professional profile reflects his/her well-educated and cultured background – depicted the Qatari identity by saying that it is simple; thus conforming to the dominant discourse of simplicity. When asked in what ways this identity is simple, the participant replied:

“Coming to think about it, we are not simple, but we say that we are ... because ... how can we prove otherwise, especially that this is a dominant concept, I mean the Qatari identity – whether the social collective identity or the evolving national

identity – is generally depicted in a simple narrative. It is mainly that we are a well-connected society that is deeply rooted in our heritage ... that's it, there aren't much details provided – other than specific characteristics that are emphasized through governmental cultural agents such as the National Day Committee or the Ministry of Culture and Sports or Qatar Museums. So, I feel that saying otherwise in public – especially when communicating with non-academics - or attempting to consider factors such as the social, historical and cultural dynamics and even how globalization and modernization influenced our mind-sets and ways of life, would mean that I am going out of the mainstream general discourse. You would be surprised that some might find this offensive and consider me too Westernized or that I am up for trouble (you know ... controversial cultural and historical topics that people tend to avoid – I mean the state is currently all about solidarity and building a consolidated national identity). And others will just not even understand what I am trying to explain – I know that this is an issue that others in our generation also face” (personal communication, 2018).

The above comment reveals that not only has the notion of simplicity developed as a social 'truth', but it has been intensely proclaimed in the social regulation conceptual mechanism to the point that an individual would feel ostracized if he or she does not conform to it. This also reveals an underlying tension between the outcomes of the state's educational and intellectual reform push and other divergent efforts to maintain common conceptual maps and socio-cultural ideological frameworks. Moreover, similar comments, from participants of the same age range, also show that Qatari youth are aware of the nuances and complexities of the Qatari identity and society; yet they choose to conform with this dominant discourse. A comment from another interviewee - who is a graduate of Education City and currently working in a semi-governmental cultural institution - reflects a dichotomist attitude of frustration and empathy towards this issue:

“We had the chance to have the best education, so we don't see the simplicity they are talking about, we understand how a national identity develops - a process that we are undergoing today. We also know how rich the Qatari identity is as a

historical social collective ... it is far from simplicity ... you can sense this richness in informal discussions, once you attempt to formalize the discussion – maybe even record it for research and archival purposes – the tone changes and they go back to the simplicity mind-set. I've noticed this even with academics and well-known Qatari authors and historians and even governmental officials involved in the cultural sector ... I really don't know why, it is not that they were saying something controversial, or discussing social or historical topics that are known to be considered as taboo today. So how are we expected to preserve our identity, heritage and traditions when they are mirrored to us in an oversimplified way. It seems that this constructed simplicity makes everyone comfortable. I would say it is a good, and easier, alternative to the reality of our complex life today ... you know with all the cultural changes from globalization and modernity and the differences between generations this simplicity seems to keep people comfortable and happy – so we abide to it” (personal communication, 2018).

This choice to avoid illuminating complexities about the Qatari identity and society, even if they are perceived as a lived reality, comes from an awareness and a consideration of the on-going social engineering state-led efforts, as well as an appreciation of and a will to conform with the dominant conceptual social norms. It is almost as if this discourse of simplicity is conceptually reassuring amidst the complexities and transformations occurring with modernization (Gallois 2005:274); which the society has not yet come to be at ease with, as discussed in the previous chapter.

There are definitely multiple layers of complexity in the Qatari society as well as in the Qatari identity, which can be hardly conceived as ideologically simple and standardized homogenous constructions. Yet, this complexity is resisted, either in conformity with the conceptual social regulation mechanism, or possibly out of a naivety which disregards the tacit underlays and pluralities of the socio-cultural fabric that frames the local identity. This resistance is a factor that plays its role in reflecting the Qatari identity essentially as the national identity, blurring and marring the difference and overshadowing the nuances and particularities of different segments and identifications

within the Qatari society. HE Dr. Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad, former President of Qatar University (2003-2015), who played a major role in educational reform in Qatar, comments on this insistence on 'simplicity':

“Qatar is a young state, so many things about it are new, the nation-state construct is new to us, nationalism as a system is also new to us ... and everything is changing rapidly ... some conservative nostalgic people find it difficult and alienating to keep up with the rapid changes, so they prefer to look the other side, ignore the influences of modernity and other realities and insist that we are a simple society with a simple identity” (personal communication, 2017).

Although, those 'nostalgic' individuals – as Al-Misnad refers to them – choose to perceive the Qatari identity and society as simple constructs, the gathered data show that the influences of modernity are not ignored. Modernity - which is portrayed by many in the Qatari society as “a ruthless break with any or all proceeding conditions” (Harvey 1989:12) - is rather given a sufficient space in local formal and informal discussions to allow for the acknowledgement and addressing of the complexity and dimensions of its unfolding. Maryam Al-Subaiey, a Creative Consultant, author and social media influencer (18-35), comments on this matter during a semi-structured interview:

“Local newspapers and published academic works are full of content on the changes modernization and globalization have brought about in all fields of life. These can be traced back to the late seventies and early eighties up to recent governmental documents – modernity and its unfolding has been fully deconstructed but not addressed in terms of its dynamics and relation to our identity ... for some reason our identity is represented as a lifelong standard feature - as if it is a single socio-historical element that is static and unaffected by the processes around it” (personal communication, 2017).

The Qatari identity, accordingly, remains to be represented as a fixed and well-defined framework regardless of the ever-changing realities and implications of

modernization. Al-Subaiey points to an important issue that is yet another paradox in the Qatari identity discourse. On one hand, identity is understood by a majority of the general public in the Qatari society as a social behavioural aspect that does not change in its meaning or essence such as morals, ethical values and social codes of conduct that preserve the collectivity of the society. It is as if the Qatari identity is an inherited tradition or a structural way of life, rather than an evolving ideology. On the other hand, the younger generations of Qataris are beginning to represent the concept of the Qatari identity as having both a collective ideological side to it, and a construal idiosyncratic side that evolves with the development of their mind-sets and the processes around them. Such fluid conceptualization of the Qatari identity can be traced in anthological collections of socio-cultural reflective writings by young Qatari authors, including Maryam Al-Subaiey (see Henderson & Rajakumar 2008, 2009, 2010). This paradox refers one back to an earlier discussed dichotomy: where even though the data reveal that locals are acknowledging that the Qatari identity is changing and is no longer traditional, there is still a perception that it remains unchanged. Such modes of perception are a result of 'fear of change' - a refusal to face the reality of modernization unfolding its influences and leading to changes in the Qatari identity and the cultural experiences lived by the local society.

The nostalgic people – with conservative and idyllic perceptions - referred to earlier by Al-Misnad (see page 125), are part of a discourse that insists on living on the periphery between being a traditional society and a modern one. Anthony Giddens (1990) explains the difference between the two societies in terms of their implicit socio-cultural elements and dynamics. A modern society is characterized by individuals experiencing rapid and permanent change where “social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character” (Giddens 1990:37-8). Contrarily, Giddens describes traditional societies as collective entities where:

“the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations. Tradition is a means of handling time and space, which insets any particular activity or experience within the continuity

of the past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices” (Giddens 1990:37-8).

An interviewee (18-35), working in a social development institution, depicted this paradox of living on the periphery between traditionalization and modernization, giving two examples that show a contradiction between the social engineering efforts to modernize the state and society and the efforts exerted to preserve the Qatari heritage and traditions:

“There is a great push for the empowerment of young Qataris and they are excelling in all professional fields, especially young Qatari females ... We now have professional Qatari female athletes who represent the country at international sports events including swimmers, sprinters and shooters, while Al-Rayyan TV<sup>18</sup> – who claim to be the gatekeepers of Qatari culture and heritage – strangely insist on a traditional dress code when Qatari women appear on their cameras. They represent Qatari women with a full hijab – not showing any of their hair and only black *abayas*<sup>19</sup>. I must say I have no problem with that in terms of conforming with cultural and religious teachings; however, to me this dress code does not seem to be a matter of modesty as much as it is a subliminal message (of course along with the way the presenters speak – their dialects, their choice of words and even their range of programmes) aiming towards traditionalizing - if not beduinizing – the Qatari society ... So, I am thinking, what about those female athletes who are representing Qatar to the rest of the world, and what about all the other girls who are Qatari enough and modest enough, but chose – for one reason or another - not to conform with this particular dress code – should their achievements not be acknowledged and presented by a local channel to the local society? ... For us to realize the 2030 vision we really need to come at peace with modernization, and maybe reconsider this correlation between the practice of traditions and being a Qatari citizen” (personal communication, 2018).

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<sup>18</sup> See page 128 for more information on Al-Rayyan Television.

<sup>19</sup> As opposed to the trending coloured *abayas* that young Qatari females are wearing nowadays.

The correlation between the practice of traditions and being a Qatari citizen has been a central topic of discussion that emerged during five other interviews holding different viewpoints; some agreeing with the above perception, while others insisted that this correlation must be preserved in order to preserve the 'essence' and 'authenticity' of the Qatari identity. This discussion is further explored in the context of the traditional-modern image and the ideal citizen in the following chapter. Dr. Amal Al-Malki, however, agreed with the above quote calling into question the authority and significance of this correlation during an era of progression and nation-state building:

“National identity is not tribal identity ... everything needs to change; we need to change how we look at each other. We need to look at loyalty and comradeship, what it means to be Qatari, and what it means to be a member of the Qatari community ... all of these need to be understood for us to maintain social cohesion at a time of turbulence around us in the region ... We need a robust citizenship system in which multiple identities, narratives and cultural practices all fit in and fall under a bigger national identity. This should be embraced as a socio-cultural system of inclusiveness ... We currently have a citizenship system and the state has authority over it. However, it seems that dominant tribal and social ideologies somewhat have an authority over who fits in as a Qatari, what traditions are revived and practiced etc. ... Those ideologies need to be looked at too and need to be reformulated to enable us to develop as a modern society and a modern state” (personal communication, 2017).

Al-Malki's perceptions are typically described as examples of a progressive and liberal Qatari voice. Her perceptive comment above could be contrasted with Hissa Al-Suwaidi's (personal communication, 2017), one of the first female presenters on Al-Rayyan Television, a poet and a popular self-development mentor who is involved with the Ministry of Culture and Sports on several projects. Al-Rayyan Television is described by many in the Qatari society as the guardian of Qatari heritage and culture; it specifically targets the Qatari community as an audience and aims at raising cultural awareness and

enriching the Qatari identity and society through a variety of programmes that focus on reviving traditional dialects and cultural aesthetics (Al-Rayyan 2017). Al-Suwaidi contended that the correlation between traditional social practices and being a Qatari citizen must be stressed on and further emphasized by the state in order to preserve the Qatari identity from the influences of globalization and modernity (personal communication, 2017). Both viewpoints above look at the state to regulate the ongoing processes of hybridization between modernization and traditionalization, yet the ways in which they believe this regulation should happen are conflicting. This ultimately shows that there is a strong local belief – across different perceptions - in the centrality of the state’s social engineering efforts on the local society. However, this attitude of relying entirely on the state is opposed by some social engineers, such as HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, who argued that individuals in the society should also play their role in bringing about a process of ideological reformation to balance between modernization and traditionalization (see page 85-6).

### **Qatar National Vision: Between a Future Vision and a Social Discourse**

The State of Qatar has developed a dedicated policy document - the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 – to set out and balance the modernization and traditionalization processes. It serves as a road map to “transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all its people for generations to come” (GSDP 2008). This vision also serves as the basis of the national discourse on identity: it sets the framework for the recurrent practices that would structure the present and future (as described earlier by Giddens), as well as the relationship between the modern and the traditional. QNV 2030, along with the National Development Strategies, stress on the importance of preserving traditions in order to maintain and consolidate the Qatari identity. However, the document does not define what is meant or referred to when addressing the Qatari identity, national heritage, culture and traditions (Al-Malki 2016:250). Arguably, this lack of definition in official governmental documents could possibly be perceived as a way to maintain the fluidity of the Qatari identity and allow room for more inclusiveness and

possible change and evolvement in the future. Nevertheless, ‘modernization and the preservation of traditions’ is the first out of five main challenges identified for the state to face in its realization efforts of QNV 2030. The document states:

“Preservation of cultural tradition is a major challenge that confronts many societies in a rapidly globalizing and increasingly interconnected world. Qatar’s very rapid economic and population growth have created intense strains between the old and the new in almost every aspect of life ... Yet it is possible to combine modern life with values and culture. Other societies have successfully moulded modernization around local culture and traditions. Qatar’s National Vision responds to this challenge and seeks to connect and balance the old and the new” (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008:4).

It is understood from the above excerpt from QNV 2030 that modernization and its challenges are depicted as inevitable hurdles that the Qatari society should be able to pass successfully as other societies did, rather than being depicted as a progressively evolving historical process. Moreover, this outlined discourse does not directly tackle the effects of modernization on the Qatari identity. Nevertheless, the Qatari identity seems to be exhibited by the national discourse as an established constant which is not at stake through modernization processes. Essentially, what is proposed as ‘threatened’ are the traditions: the cultural products, representations and the socio-cultural practices that Qataris display (or should display) within their collective entity.

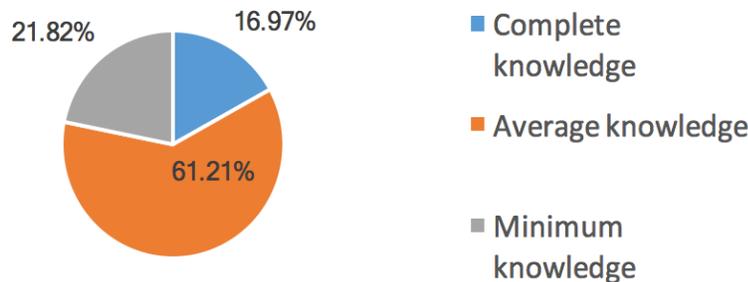
This illuminates another paradox; since everything is changing and modernizing, yet the local identity is generally imagined in relation to an idyllic past - a time and space that no longer exist in the Qatari present reality. This is a debate that emerged mostly in discussions with younger age range interviewees (18-35). Most of those interviewees were very familiar with the content of QNV and other national strategic documents within their professional careers or academic capacities. Some argued that the Qatari identity is represented in official and public discourses within a framework that is too deeply rooted in the past, which could limit its relevance and significance – especially for youth – in the

current Qatari cultural experience and lived reality. Others, affirmed that they do appreciate the social engineering efforts to officially maintain and stress the relation between the Qatari identity and the Qatari past in national documents. However, the efforts of translating and reflecting this relation into reality are arguably divergent. Thus, they fail to emphasize the significance and function of this relation in the Qatari cultural experience.

Such strategic national documents do not refer to the Qatari identity as a work in progress, but rather as something that already exists inherently and is not at stake amidst rapid modernization. It is such discursive practice of the national discourse that possibly shaped the local perception that the national identity is itself the collective Qatari identity. This perception may have formed from – conscious and unconscious - efforts to prevent cultural dislocation: a situation where individuals find themselves living a reality of new, and possibly alienating, cultural experiences while being nostalgic and sentimental to their previous socio-cultural practices and ways of living (Laclau 1990). The efforts are both conscious and unconscious because the national discourse under the ‘conscious’ auspices of the state and its social engineering agents is loudly heard by the Qatari society. As the interviews and survey data reveal, this discourse has also been ‘unconsciously’ internalized by some in the society.

When asked in the online survey “How well informed are you about the Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030 and the various state development strategies?” only 16.97% of the participants believed to have complete knowledge, while 61.21% indicated that they have average knowledge and 21.82% indicated that they have minimum knowledge about the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the various national development strategies.

### How well informed are you about the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the various state development strategies?



It makes sense that a relatively small segment of the participants has complete knowledge of QNV and the national developmental strategies as only 29.76% of the survey participants work in the public sector, and would thus be well-informed of the details and technicalities of QNV 2030. Moreover, it is worth noting that 38.10% of the survey participants are university students/graduates (above 18 years of age) who are taught about QNV 2030 and its pillars and strategies. It is presumable that this percentage of survey participants could possibly constitute of a fairly large segment of the 61.21% who indicated that they have average knowledge of QNV 2030 and the various state development strategies. This data does not seem to reflect the exaggerated image of society's insight on the QNV 2030 rhetoric represented in local traditional and social media, as well as in discussions within local social networks. Several interviewees commented on this exaggerated image, highlighting how integral the QNV 2030 rhetoric has become within the national discourse. Below are three interesting – anonymized – comments from the conducted interviews:

- A) "I think the term 'QNV' is overused in local media ... Actually, I have once counted the number of times 'QNV' is mentioned on a morning show on Qatar TV – 23 times! That's just way too much! It's a vision with strategies, you set them and work on implementing them, talking about them all day won't get us anywhere ... somehow the local mind-set has been conceptually programmed to refer to QNV and mention it – especially in media. I am not saying that the state has exerted

efforts to deliberately imprint it in our minds – QNV is a governmental document produced to guide leaders and policy-makers, I do not think it is a document for the general public. But, again, somehow the society created a discourse out of it and it became a must, let's say it's the topic or the theme of the era – surely not just in Qatar but the GCC in general” (55+).

B) “Knowledge based economy, road to 2022, and the realization of the 2030 national vision are the keywords if you want to sound nationalistic and sophisticated ... they are keywords in the modern Qatari diction” (35-55).

C) “Sometimes it just doesn't make sense! you would hear a young Qatari talking about a new café or restaurant that they just opened and for some reason he or she would mention the realization of the state's 2030 vision! ... I've had this discussion with a friend of mine after reading his media interview for the launch event of his start-up ... I remember asking him why did he have to go into such a huge topic and he replied that it gives his work 'more authenticity, relevance and Qatariness!' – what he said did not make sense to me at all, but I noticed that this is a trend followed by young Qataris in different fields ... it seems to me that this is what you have to say to fit in in the public sphere” (18-35).

Interestingly, most of the interviewees wanted their comments on this specific topic to be anonymized, even though such comments – as seen from the samples above – reflect highly educated and theoretical viewpoints and critiques of how the QNV rhetoric is employed by the society. The fact that those interviewees chose to anonymize their comments on this particular topic demonstrates that local individuals tend to conform with the social regulation conceptual mechanism, which is evolving with the constructed Qatari national discourse. Those interviewees seem to have acknowledged that 'QNV 2030' – as a term not as the detailed vision and its strategies – have discursively emerged as a concept of power-knowledge within the Qatari society (Foucault & Gordon 1980). The continuous discursive production and regulation of power-knowledge within the conceptual regulation mechanism both illuminates and blurs the perplexities and

dichotomies in the understanding of the Qatari identity and its development parallel to the national discourse.

### **'Wataniya' and Belonging**

A key concept that emerged from the interviews data was the Arabic idiom (“*Al-watan huwa al-muwaten wa al-muwaten huwa al-watan*” (الوطن هو المواطن و المواطن هو الوطن) which translates to: “the homeland is the citizen and the citizen is the homeland”. This classic Arabic idiom emerged as a recurrent theme during interview discussions about the difference between the two identities - a theme closely related to the previous theme of simplicity. It is crucial to understand and deconstruct the idiom, both linguistically and culturally, in order to understand its significance in the local collective memory. This deconstruction could unlock the paradoxical relationship between the national identity and Qatari identity, enabling an understanding of the locus of the Qatari society’s ontology of collectiveness, belonging and comradeship and the state-society relation.

Although, the former translation is a literal translation from classic Arabic (*fus’ha*), it does not entail local colloquial connotations. Considering the linguistic, cultural and historical contexts of the concept of ‘*watan*’ and its relationship to patriotism and the hegemonic structures of *murwa’a*<sup>20</sup> and ‘*assabiya*<sup>21</sup>’ discussed in the literature review (see page 43), this idiom could be translated more accurately in this context as: “the homeland is the local, and the local is the homeland”. To better fit the Qatari socio-cultural context, the Arabic term ‘*al-muwaten*’ is translated here to ‘the local’ rather than ‘the citizen’. This is firstly because the meaning of the term ‘*al-muwaten*’, in this context, is derived from the indigenous meanings of ‘*watan*’ and ‘*wataniya*’, which rely on the community that constitutes the ‘*watan*’ (Lewis 2000:57-8). And secondly, because there is a traditional element in the state’s conceptualization of citizenship which views the

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<sup>20</sup> ‘*Muruwa’a*’ is understood as a tribal code of collectivism and social, political and economic interdependence between individuals and/or entities (Swartz 2008:51).

<sup>21</sup> ‘*Assabiya*’ is defined by the Father of Sociology Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406) as a tribal dogma of solidarity based on both kinship as well as social relations (Ibn Khaldun 2005).

Qatari citizens through an indigenous lens of tribal *'assabiya*. Neil Partrick (2009:20) explains this concept in his discussion of citizenship in the Gulf; asserting that "holding the *'jinsia*' (passport/nationality) of a given country does not necessarily translate into being a full 'citizen' and, even where it does, there are concerns about equality in terms of political and economic [and cultural] opportunities".

Partrick's notion holds true when referring back to the earlier discussion of the juxtaposed processes of modernization versus traditionalization and the viewpoints on the shaping of citizenship and identity. The construct of the national narrative is essentially built on emphasizing the particularity of being a 'local' native Qatari. This is seen in the nationalism project's emphasis on cultural authenticity and deeply rooting the Qatari identity into an indigenous Qatari past. Hence, this indirectly highlights the difference between the native Qatari and the naturalized Qatari; as the naturalized individual struggles to identify with this narrative. In other words, the state does not exert direct efforts to differentiate between the two classifications, however, the framework of this narrative is typically exclusive to a 'native' collective memory. This of course poses a challenge on the Qatari nationalism project's identity construction efforts and creates a gap within the society between the native and the naturalized. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing that this situation could be faced by naturalized citizens in many other nation-states (Byrne 2014:33).

Partrick's previous quote is applicable in this context to highlight the dichotomy of the socio-cultural underlays that characterize the relationship between the Qatari social collective identity and the national identity. 'Qatariness' is inherently preserved by the state in its efforts to consolidate a national identity. Other than the distinction between the granted rights of a native Qatari and the naturalized Qatari, the state does not emphasize any social differences in the public sphere, but rather strives to elide those differences and overlooks them in the national discourse. Moreover, the state does not officially define what it means or entails to be a local, but indirectly enriches the concept of 'Qatariness' to be more cohesive and inclusive through varied cultural aesthetics (which are discussed in the following chapter). It is worth noting though that such issues of

differences - and the social challenges and complexities they pose - have surfaced in the online survey data, specifically in comments about the changes in the Qatari identity and the efforts to preserve it.

There was a perception that some naturalized citizens are benefitting from the state's resources but are not putting an effort to merge and integrate into the Qatari society and its cultural lifestyle. For instance, a survey participant commented:

“I don't mean to sound chauvinistic and intolerant but some naturalized individuals do not deserve nor appreciate their Qatari nationality. They have no consideration for our culture and show no interest or pride in it” (35-55).

However, other participants expressed a contention that the socio-cultural construct of Qataris is exclusive and very closely knit, therefore it is quite difficult for naturalized Qataris to understand the local socio-cultural dynamics and complexities to be able to fit in. Below is a comment that reflects this perception:

“There's always an issue of social status and class tensions when it comes to who reflects the Qatari identity and how it is reflected. I know for a fact that when naturalized Qataris or individuals who are born and raised in Qatar attempt to reflect traditional and cultural representations of the Qatari identity, they are looked at by some locals as outsiders. And when they don't, they are blamed for not attempting to be part of the local community” (18-35).

It is important to note that such perceptions and topics about naturalization are not commonly voiced within the local discourses and debates on the Qatari identity in the public sphere. Indeed, several interviewees argued that such issues do exist, but they tend to be hushed and overlooked in public discourse (see page 111) in an effort to maintain social equality and reflect an image of indigeneity in the Qatari identity and the local cultural experience. Moreover, there was also the argument that such topics are overlooked “to prevent social confrontation and conflict which may affect the society's

cohesion” (anonymous, personal communication, 2018). However, the interviews data indicate that what defines being a local is being a ‘member’ of the Qatari society. It was clear that being a local – according to the interviewees - was not a matter of ethnicity, origins or length of stay in the country, but a matter of integration and more importantly participation. Yet, it should be noted that most of the interviewees are involved – in different capacities – in the state’s social engineering projects and would thus focus on participation as a key pillar in the community.

Going back to the Arabic idiom discussed earlier. It is interesting to note that this idiom was mentioned by interviewees in close reference to the founding era of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed; even by interviewees of the younger age range. This shows that the national discourse and its representations are being effectively internalized by young Qataris. Dr. Jassim Sultan, a prominent Qatari intellectual, author and consultant to the Ministry of Culture and Sports along with several other governmental and private institutions, explains how this idiom appears as a social doctrine inherent through Qatari generations:

“Although it is a classic Arabic idiom - which might have emerged from Egypt or the Levant as a product of Arabism - here in Qatar it is ‘practiced’ as an ideology, as an essential part of our culture and mind-set. We grew up to embrace its meaning and the concept behind it as a traditional value that actually fits well with our socio-historical background” (personal communication, 2018).

This doctrine of collectivity is represented as an innate trait of a local Qatari; and it seems to be further cultivated by the society and the myriad social engineering efforts to maintain Qatari indigeneity as the individual grows up.

Moreover, a famous yet spurious, as many religious scholars claim, Hadith, attributed to the Prophet Mohammed, states that: “the love of the *watan* is an act of faith” (Beshara 2011:30). This Hadith was referred to by six interviewees of different age ranges and professional backgrounds, explaining that they had been brought up - at home and

school - to believe that identifying with and participating in the local collective community is a virtuous religious act and a fundamental practice of Islamic and Qatari traditional moral values. Indeed, an anonymous interviewee (35-55), working at semi-governmental social development institution, commented on this matter:

“...even if this isn’t a correct Hadith, the meanings or teachings that it carries are etched in our minds in different forms and wordings - and are all related to our understanding of belonging and nationhood. For example, there is the famous mantra ‘*Allah, al-Watan, al-Emir*’<sup>22</sup> which is – again - etched in local mind-sets – not as a political motto or patriotic media jargon but as a conceptual trilogy. Nowadays, they do teach children ‘wataniya’ and nationalism courses in schools - and of course during national military service - but back then they didn’t and we – and the generations before us - still grew up to have this trilogy in mind – kind of like a pact or a link between the citizen and the state that is based on Islamic values ... It is a patriotic concept that is continually produced and reproduced not just locally but on a regional level – one of the essential elements in an Arab mind-set I guess” (personal communication, 2018).

Another illuminating comment is by Ghanim Al-Sulaiti, a renowned Qatari actor and script writer and Consultant at the Ministry of Culture and Sports, who is known for producing popular comedy works that touch upon tacit controversial socio-cultural and political issues (focusing on themes of modernization, globalization, cultural and political changes) since the early eighties in Qatar. Al-Sulaiti’s comment highlights the entanglement between state-society relations and Islamic and traditional values:

“I think that the state was founded through the collectivity of the Qatari people, and this collectivity is maintained through the community’s practice of traditional social conducts which are principally built on longstanding religious values ... With the Ministry of Culture’s recent re-launch of the National Theatre we want to revive

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<sup>22</sup> Translating to: God, the nation/homeland and the Emir

those traditional social practices - especially in works aimed towards children - and emphasize concepts of nationalism, social collectivity, belonging and participation to show how deeply-rooted they are in our heritage” (personal communication, 2018).

Thus, one realizes that the concepts of *watan* and *wataniya* are understood to have an intrinsic existence in the Qatari socio-cultural fabric. The Qatari identity, accordingly, consists of a historic doctrine of collectivity and patriotism which is reflected by generations as a trait of ‘Qatariness’, and is traced back in the local imagination to the founding era of Qatar.

It is therefore gathered that what allows for the perseverance and continuity of the collectivity of the Qatari society amidst nation-state building and modernizing efforts is that some of the ideologies and representations of the national discourse are based on, and refer to, long-standing Islamic values and traditional practices. In his work on Middle Eastern identities and societies, Bernard Lewis (2000), maintains that religious beliefs and indigenous traditional practices form the basis of a community’s cultural fabric; they have a socially binding element which gives individuals a sense of identity and belonging within that community. Hence, it could be contended that the national discourse’s circulation of representations and ideologies that are rooted in the local culture and common consciousness is enabling the gradual nationalization of the Qatari cultural fabric.

This chapter attempted to disentangle the perplexities in the local understandings and perceptions of the constructed national identity and the indigenous social collective Qatari identity. The data analysis shed light on a discursively evolving self-regulatory conceptual mechanism shaping the socio-cultural dynamics of the Qatari present reality. This mechanism regulates the process of knowledge production and consumption within the local cultural experience. The gradual predominance of this mechanism seems to have compounded the two identity constructs into a newly emerging Qatari identity complex, which is increasingly embraced and reflected by locals. Although this identity

complex is progressively predominating the local socio-cultural fabric, it is yet full of juxtaposed constituents. It is also perceived locally as problematic and confusing; thereby inducing the issue and question of identity and hindering the Qatari nationalism project's efforts to establish a hegemonic national culture. The next chapter focuses on the state-led cultural assimilation processes to create a national imagination, further exploring the paradoxes and dialectics that continue to give rise to the issue and question of identity in Qatar.

## **Chapter Six**

### **National Imagination and the Question of Identity: An Ideological Struggle**

In 'What is a Nation?' Ernest Renan indicated three principal requisites that establish a national culture - hence fostering the formation of an imagined community - namely: "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories ... the desire to live together ... [and] the will to perpetuate the heritage that one has received in an undivided form" (Renan 1990:19). An imagined community, as described by Benedict Anderson (1983:7), is founded on a local civic-political imagination in which the basis of national communion and social collectivity is a "horizontal [framework] of comradeship". He adds that "the members [of a community] ... will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1983:6). Accordingly, for the Qatari nationalism project to establish a hegemonic national culture, the local imagination of Qataris must be nationalized into a civic-political mind-set. The nationalization of the local imagination is achieved when the community's heritage and memories of the past and their 'desire to live together' are homogenized and perpetuated in association with the state's anticipated 2030 National Vision. This would create a situation of social commonality and general cohesion, as well as an overarching understanding and acknowledgement of visions, values, representations and future aspirations in all fields of life - from culture and heritage to economics and politics. It is cognizant that a number of discourses and state agents contributed to the revival and maintenance of indigenous ideologies (both Islamic and traditional) as well as the production of modern representations, striving to amalgamate them into the local imagination and representing them as stemming from the local cultural fabric.

Essentially, Anderson's imagined community thrives when the confusion between those representations and ideologies is attenuated so that the juxtaposed and newly emerging representations of the national discourse are perceived to be 'natural' parts of the community's cultural fabric (Anderson 1983:143). Anderson's notion of "the halo of disinterestedness" could be applied in the context of Qatar to understand how the state-constructed traditional and modern representations set the framework of the national imagination and come to be accepted and perceived as 'unchosen' and 'natural' elements of the local cultural fabric:

"in everything 'natural' there is something always unchosen. In this way 'nationness' is assimilated to skin colour, gender, parentage and birth era – all those things one cannot help. And in these 'natural-ties' one senses what one might call 'the beauty of *Gemeinschaft*'<sup>23</sup>. To put it another way, precisely because those ties are not chosen, they have about them the halo of disinterestedness." (Anderson 1983:143).

Thus, it could be inferred that when the Qatari community no longer views the representations produced and instilled by the national discourse as dichotomies within the Qatari identity, such representations would have about them 'the halo of disinterestedness'. This means that they would come to be accepted as natural pluralities and ties that conceptually bind the national community together, through "senses of timelessness, disinterestedness and naturalness" (Hall 1996:414).

An extended quote excerpt from a semi-structured interview with Fahad Buzwair (35-45), interestingly puts Anderson's notion of the process by which the national culture comes to be imagined in the local context of the Qatari identity question. Buzwair is a widely influential public and social media figure, a graduate of the first cohort of Qatar

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<sup>23</sup> *Gemeinschaft*: a term employed by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies to refer to communal social relations between individuals.

Leadership Centre and an ex-member of the first Youth Consultants Committee at the Ministry of Culture and Sports, who is also involved in numerous (governmental, semi-governmental and private) initiatives related to youth and social development along with his work at the Consultative Assembly of Qatar, Although his comment is extensive, it is worth presenting at length as it combines several ideas presented by other interviewees; and perceptively outlines key issues and themes that emerge throughout the chapter:

“I would say that there is somewhat a cycle of complication and confusion when it comes to the source of the question of identity and the views on where we are heading with our collective culture and identity, and whether or not we will reach a point of national hegemony where we all agree and share a national imagination and accept our differences and changes ... Before going on to explaining my point of view on this matter, I want to note that it is clear that we’ve reached a point where everyone generally knows what is expected of them in terms of how to act and what to say in public because of the numerous efforts to shape the Qatari identity. Most of the initiatives of the nationalism project are aimed towards shaping youth and they are very different in terms of their approaches – some focus on modernizing the society and the young Qatari in particular, and the others focus on traditionalizing youth - all at the same time. And these initiatives are always linked to state-building efforts and our roles and responsibilities as citizens to contribute to these efforts. So what starts this cycle of confusion and the debates that question the local identity is firstly that youth are portraying very different and conflicting representations. They are under social pressure to be both traditional and modern in order to fit in with the current dynamics in the public sphere (I mean the dynamics of the nationalism project – or what you call the emerging national discourse). It really requires a lot of effort and trial and error to fit into this image of the ‘ideal Qatari citizen’ – and Qatari youth do give this a lot of importance ... So that’s one level of confusion that falls into the identity question debate. Secondly, the older generation - who are not specifically targeted by such initiatives – are wondering why are young individuals portraying themselves in ways that are – sometimes - not related at all to their known backgrounds and cultural fabrics.

That's a second level of confusion which leaves people wondering and even worrying about the authenticity of the image of the Qatari identity at this stage ... I think with time people will get used to this and it will no longer be confusing – this is when we might reach a state of Qatari nationalism” (personal communication, 2018).

Buzwair's perception supports the idea that the Qatari community is undergoing an assimilation process in terms of the national discourse's constructed representations. Yet, his observation also shows that those representations which currently make up the Qatari identity are somewhat dislocated from the local cultural fabric. He maintains that this dislocation is causing the confusion and debates around the development and formation of the Qatari identity. Two of his remarks are particularly interesting, and require further attention, specifically: “I want to note that it is clear that we've reached a point where everyone generally knows what is expected of them in terms of how to act and what to say in public....” and the remark: “It really requires a lot of effort and trial and error to fit into this image of the 'ideal Qatari citizen' – and Qatari youth do give this a lot of importance”. The two statements highlight that the framework of an imagined community has been set out, but it is not yet fully embraced by society. However, a demographic majority of the society, mostly young Qataris and policy-makers, understand the significance of being shaped into a traditional-modern<sup>24</sup> 'ideal' Qatari citizens. This is a notion that almost all interviewees - of different professional backgrounds and age ranges – alluded to in one way or another.

Furthermore, the earlier comment points to a general conceptual gap between youth and other individuals in the community (who are not immersed in the nationalism project) in terms of their perceptions towards the state's social engineering efforts as well as their self-representations. Although this gap has been raised earlier (in chapter four), it is viewed here through a social engineering lens to understand the ideological struggle emerging amidst state efforts to homogenize and nationalize the Qatari collective

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<sup>24</sup> The term Traditional-Modern is derived from Miriam Cooke's concept of “The Tribal Modern” (Cooke 2013).

imagination. Hall (1996:412) suggests that ideological struggles occur when new cultural systems or principles are articulated or imposed and put into effect in a society. This articulation process would “entail ‘disarticulation and re-articulation’ of cultural layers or discourses” (Hall 1996:412) which, at the time, could induce ideological struggles and confusions. In the Qatari context, the juxtaposed traditional and modern representations and narratives engineered by the nationalism project - along with the numerous changes and progressions in the present lived reality - have discursively formed an on-going ideological struggle within the local imagination. This ideological struggle is multi-dimensional with compound discursive clashes where ‘natural’ or normative common-sense notions of identity, culture, belonging and locality are constantly conflicting with new conceptual constructs.

The interviews and survey data suggest that the nationalism project’s efforts to shape the image of the nation and bring about ideological national hegemony are perceived locally to have intensified the identity question; even with the amalgamation of the social collective identity and national identity into one. This chapter presents local perceptions on the ‘confusing’ cycle of discourse ‘articulation’, ‘re-articulation’ and ‘disarticulation’. This ideological struggle, and the discourses and socio-cultural dynamics emerging around it, are deconstructed with a focus on the state’s efforts to establish an hegemonic national culture through setting a national narrative and constructing a foundational myth respectively.

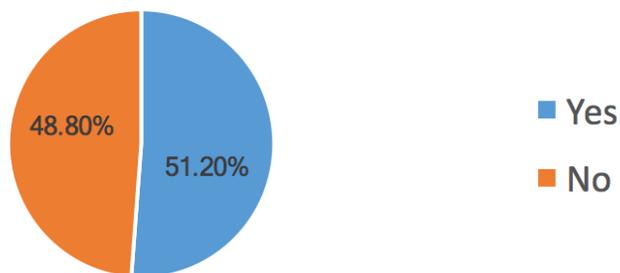
### ***Narrating the Nation: The Traditional-Modern State and the Ideal Citizen***

Political sociologist Montserrat Guibernau describes a national narrative as a “key instrument in the dissemination of a particular image of the nation, with its symbols and rituals, values, principles, traditions and ways of life, and common enemies, and even more crucially, a clear-cut definition of a good citizen” (Guibernau 2007:25). The national narrative is set and ‘instrumentalized’ in various state-policy areas to bring about an ideological hegemony within a community under a cohesive national identity and culture. In *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha (1990:1) states that nations “like narratives,

lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye". Bhabha, hence, suggests that the image of a nation, even when narrated by the state, only attains its full formation and signification in the minds and perceptions of the people – or simply when it is collectively imagined and embraced by the community. Data from the conducted online survey and semi-structured interviews indicate that the image of Qatar as a nation has not yet realized its full "horizon in the local minds' eye" (Bhabha 1990:1).

When asked "Do you think the global image of Qatar is in line with the reality of the Qatari people?", 51.20% of the online survey participants chose 'Yes', while 48.80% of the participants chose 'No'. The results of this question suggest that the image of the nation is debatable. Even though previous discussions suggest that the anticipated image of Qatar (in terms of the hybridization between the processes of traditionalization and modernization) is clear to the locals as a state-led social engineering strategy, it is still rather conceptually problematic and confusing for some.

Do you think the global image of Qatar is in line with the reality of the Qatari people?



Whether a participant's answer to this question is 'Yes' or 'No', both answers can be interpreted as implying that there is a local understanding and an anticipation of an ideal image to be realized. It could be inferred that the participants who indicated 'Yes' believe that the social engineering efforts exerted to shape the Qatari image and identity are as successful as the state-branding efforts that have set Qatar's image globally as a state. Whilst, the disagreement of survey participants could be interpreted in two different

ways. Those participants possibly see that there needs to be more efforts to realize the anticipated image, or even possibly that they disapprove of the current traditional-modern image of Qatar; and do not believe that the Qatari individual's image should be reflective of it. It should be noted that this question did not include a comment box in the online survey for the participants to justify their choices. However, the semi-structured interview participants provided thought-provoking answers to this question, shedding light on the emerging Qatari national narrative and its repercussions on the cultural experience and collective imagination. For instance, HE Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari, asserts that:

“There is still a gap ... the image of Qatar as a state is not yet reflective of the Qatari individual. However, we do have a benchmark against which citizens can measure their progression which is the successful reality of the state and its achievements locally and internationally. I truly see that Qatari individuals – especially the new generation of well-educated and hard-working young men and women – are concerned about working up to the state's expectation. At the same time, the state is very considerate and responsive to locals' perceptions – even the most conservative ones – that's why there are national efforts to balance between traditions and modernity” (personal communication, 2018)

This quote implicitly refers to a generational gap – emphasized in earlier comments and discussions – and the idea of a new and different generation of Qataris emerging. The state narrative and image according to Al-Kuwari are clear, balanced and should be the benchmark for a Qatari individual's identity and image. It is implied that as the state progresses, it provides a model of what Qataris are expected to do or become. The themes of the role of social engineering and the rise of a new generation are strongly evident in this comment, as well as in the responses of other interviewees. An anonymized interviewee challenges Al-Kuwari's perspective by asserting that the image of the state is anything but clear. S/he states:

“The image of the state is hybridized and I would understand if not all Qataris are able to embrace and reflect this image ... The state's image is problematic for

someone who does not understand state-branding, socio-politics and the dynamics of the region ... You would look around you and wonder about the conflicting representations reflected by the state, and embraced by a certain growing segment of the society ... The representations vary from traditionalism to cosmopolitanism and from a return to heritage and traditions to complete modernity ... The social segment I mentioned consists of young futuristic and individualistic Qataris who really see that ensuring their future is through participating in the state's modernizing efforts. The second part of this segment consists of the social engineers and leaders of the Qatari nationalism project – they are mostly leaders of governmental and semi-governmental institutions that are leading by example and youth look up to them. And lastly, naturalized citizens – most of them were actually naturalized to fit and represent the state's image” (anonymous 35-55, personal communication 2018).

The interviewee – who is involved in governmental and semi-governmental social and educational development initiatives - hints to the ideological gap and fracture within the society due to the national narrative. S/he implies that the traditional-modern image is too complex in terms of its conflicting constituents, and thus it is problematic for the general public's conception. S/he contends that it is only comprehensible to 'a certain segment' of the society. This comment echoes the idea of a 'new generation' of young Qataris referred to earlier in Al-Kuwari's comment. Yet, according to this interviewee, the growing social segment extends to include social engineers as agents that embrace and reflect the state's hybridized image along with individualistic youth. The link between futuristic youth (who are seeking progression through participation in the state's modernization efforts) and policy-makers is interesting as it alludes to the discursive formation of a new form of elitism being imagined in the local society. This is further discussed in the context of *'hasab'* and *'nasab'* within the discussion of social change later in this chapter.

It is also interesting that this interviewee mentioned naturalized citizens – a topic that is generally considered a social taboo - and included them in this new social segment. Earlier discussions revealed that there is a general local perception of a socio-cultural

dichotomy between the native Qatari and the naturalized Qatari. Seeing that naturalized individuals are also perceived in association with ‘native’ agents of the nationalism project indicates that there are clear and distinct cultural aesthetics and representations that distinguish this new social segment from others in the society.

Being part of this ‘elitist’ segment entails reflecting the complex traditional-modern image of the state and participating in national progression. This idea could also be traced in youths’ perceptions of the Qatari identity and its representations. For example, a comment by a survey participant (18-35) in the context of the aspects that changed in the Qatari identity over time claims that:

“higher education, participating in sports, speaking languages and civic engagement became essential elements in the modern Qatari identity, and there’s actually encouragement from governmental institutions to enter and excel in those fields”.

Youth are competitively working towards earning social significance within this segment. Yet, some interviewees have voiced that there is also an indirect social pressure to embrace this ideal traditional-modern image as discussed in the previous chapter. For example, the following anonymized comment looks at this elitist formation from a broader perspective as ‘as soft social movement’ that is arguably paradoxical to many in the Qatari society who are not within this particular social segment:

“In my opinion – aside from the state’s political image which is constructed by the government – the rest of the images (or what you call the national narrative that developed with the nationalism project) are constructed by mega-projects and major institutions like HIA<sup>25</sup>, Tourism<sup>26</sup>, Qatar Airways, QF<sup>27</sup> and QM<sup>28</sup>. These institutions don’t reflect an authentic reality of Qataris, instead they present an

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<sup>25</sup> Hamad International Airport

<sup>26</sup> Qatar Tourism Authority

<sup>27</sup> Qatar Foundation

<sup>28</sup> Qatar Museums

image that is formed from a Western Euro-centric lens. This could be for economic and state-branding purposes, or to support the ongoing 'glocalization' process (this is a concept that HE Sheikha Al-Mayassa reiterates in her speeches) ... Anyhow, youth today are smart and adaptive, they know when to reflect this 'glocalized' modern image and when to go with the traditional image. Conservative individuals who are looking from afar, and not participating in this 'soft' social movement, would believe that both the image of the state and that of the 'new' local are schizophrenic" (anonymous 35-55, personal communication 2018).

As in the previous comment, the national image is presented as problematic because of its divergent traditional and modern sides. This interviewee refers to the implemented process of 'glocalization' and the economic and state-branding sides of it (which are initiated by policy-makers and are understood and taken up by young Qataris) as a central causative factor of the identity questions, dialectics and contradictions emerging in the local cultural experience. The idea of 'new generation' is expressed here using the term 'new local'; and is presented in the context of a socio-cultural fracture between the 'adaptive' youth and the conservative or uninformed individuals 'who are looking from afar'. On one hand, youth are developing new frameworks and representations of individualism and collectivism through 'glocalization', by switching between the modern image and the traditional image. And on the other hand, conservative and uninformed individuals – who are not as adaptive as youth – see 'Qatariness' (whether the image of Qatar or the Qataris) being represented through 'schizophrenic' conflicting images. The idea of individualism also emerges as a strong theme in the remark of Maryam Al-Subaiey's (18-35) - a creative consultant, author and social media influencer – who claims that:

"Qatar's image as a state is all about individualism and sovereignty ... Internally it is reflecting multiple images and narratives to allow for more and more Qataris to fit in this constructed national image ... actually this multiplicity of narratives is to allow room for individualism in the society ... youth are being more individualistic and not sticking to the status quo" (personal communication, 2017).

Al-Subaiey challenges the earlier participant's perception that the multiplicity of the national image is socially problematic, claiming on the contrary that it enables more social inclusiveness. In other words, according to her, the multiplicity of the traditional-modern image allows more Qataris – of different social segments and backgrounds – to fit under a broader framework of legitimized narratives and representations of 'Qatariness'; whilst maintaining elements of socio-cultural individuality. This allows for not having to stick to the status quo of traditional and conservative socio-cultural perceptions. It is interesting that both youth – such as Al-Subaiey – and social engineers – such as HE Dr. Al-Kuwari – focus on individualism as a significant element of the modern Qatari identity. The similarity in their perceptions can be interpreted as an indicator of the forming elitist imagination where youth and social engineers are coming together to form a new social segment. Amal Al-Malki picks up on this theme of elitism by looking at it in the context of a leadership effect on the society (the Qatari youth in particular):

"I've always believed that there are multiple branding endeavours that took place in the past two decades or so, and it started with a brand and an image that has presented Qatar as a young nation which is going through a transition period trying to consolidate between heritage and modernity, and set itself apart from other GCC nations by setting its own narrative ... Also, there were very clear modernizing efforts during the rule of HH the Father Emir, and I would say with opening up Qatar internationally there was a very strong image that was built of us on that level – I think this image helped us win the 2022 FIFA bid – that image of a modern well-educated family – HH the Father Emir and HH Sheikha Moza being there, participating with their family members, speaking languages, showing their devotion to Qatar and its people. When you see this modern royal family, you would assume that the society as a whole looks like them – and on the local level you would assume that this is the ideal Qatari image you should work towards and embrace ... Internally, there were multiple images. There was the image of the newly educated generation – those who opted to go to Qatar Foundation whether for school or university – they opted to do that because of QF's convictions and

international approach, and they thought that was the way to the future – a modernization trend that took an educational aspect. I remember because of that very strong and evident trend there were clashes from the conservative pockets in the society, and this clash continues as more members of the society join the trend ... The criticism comes because there is something evident – something that has an impact - so there was that and there was the normal traditional status quo still going on in the society.” (personal communication, 2017).

Al-Malki appears to clarify and expand Al-Kuwari’s earlier notion that the state’s advancements serve as a benchmark for people’s expected image. She asserts that the ‘glocalized’ traditional-modern images reflected by the royal family and other social engineers not only set the image of Qatar and Qataris on the global level, but also indirectly define the ‘ideal’ images and representations locals ought to reflect. This notion of a leadership effect associates the state’s image with the local’s image globally and locally. In other words, the leadership stand as role models that reflect a nationalized modern framework of ‘Qatariness’ with multiple traditional-modern images that are adapted by youth.

Al-Malki acknowledges, as other interviewees did, that the individualism and adaptiveness of youth places them out of the traditional status quo, which is in turn problematic to certain segments in the society. Yet, this also places them at an advantage as they are ‘modernized’ and ‘prepped’ to fit the state’s image and be able to participate significantly in its progression.

### **Social Change**

The perceptions of interviewees presented in the earlier section draw attention to interesting discursive formations in the Qatari lived reality, which emerged along with the compound national image set by the state. The national image as gathered from the perspectives of interviewees could be summarized in three key complex dimensions: individualism and collectivism, excellence and progression, and cosmopolitanism and

authenticity. The three dimensions together form the traditional-modern Qatari narrative. As Hall (1996:613) maintains, national narratives are constructed to “lend significance to [the society’s] humdrum existence, connecting ... everyday lives with a national destiny”. This narrative – in its various dimensions and representations – is continually employed by the state and its agents (including institutions and individuals immersed in or formed within the nationalism project - i.e. youth) in state policies, local media, academic literature, as well as popular culture. The data reveals that the multi-dimensional national image is being conceptually consumed by a growing segment of the society who are reflecting and reproducing it; thereby, working towards nationalizing the Qatari imagination and connecting the Qatari identity to the modern state.

As the process of setting a national narrative and consolidating a reflective image of the nation gains momentum with time, several manifestations of social change are emerging; hence leading to an ideological struggle in the Qatari society. Jordan (2002:300) explains that “social change is both a specific and a multifaceted phenomenon”; therefore, the study of social change is both a complex and a contested endeavour. It is rather difficult to survey all manifestations and processes of social change in the Qatari society and to separate one from another. Yet, this section limits its focus on the themes and manifestations of social change that surfaced from the data. It is seen from the earlier presented commentaries on the interviewees’ quotes (in the context of the state’s image vs. the image of the Qatari people), that the emerging themes are very closely linked and intertwined. Therefore, attempting to deconstruct each theme separately will limit the reflection of a wider picture of the Qatari lived reality and cultural experience. Indeed, Adams (2007:1) maintains that “as soon as we pull [the manifestations of social change] apart, they snap back into a complex inter-related whole”. What brings them back together is the human element; the individual and his or her conceptual frameworks and cultural experiences within a society (Jordan 2002:300).

The first and foremost element of social change that has become evident from the data is a re-ordering of the social structure in Qatar. A social structure is the system of relationships, networks and bonds between individuals and institutional and social

groupings within a society (Lopez & Scott 2002). A shift in the dynamics or roles of any of these elements within the system eventually leads to a re-ordering of the whole social structure in the long term. It appears that the evolvement of the national narrative has led to a deeper integration between certain individuals and the state's institutional groupings, which in turn led to the emergence of a new social demographic. In other words, the increasing reflection of the traditional-modern image by social engineers, and youths' increasing adoption of this image, is discursively bringing them together to appear as members of a new social segment with particular homogenous perceptions and frames of mind that are mostly out of the normative status quo.

An interviewee (35-55) involved in Qatari media, explains about the demographics of the Qatari social structure before the progression of the nationalism project:

“Back in the 80's and 90's, the local social demographic was much easier to understand ... It simply consisted of the royal family and the upper class – that was a rich small segment of the society who were in close interaction with the government - and then the rest were middle class, this was the biggest segment of the society and was divided mainly into two: the *Hadhar* – who were more modern and the *Badu* – mostly conservative. And, of course, a small segment of expats consisting of Arabs and Westerners in professional industries, as well as blue and pink collar workers – locals rarely interacted with this segment back then because of language and cultural barriers. Each segment had its characteristics, and you would know where everyone belonged. But today, it seems like the segments merged into each other and interaction has significantly increased.”

It is inferred that the merge between segments came about with the rise of the 'new generation' of Qataris who understand the state's vision and the significance of the Qatari nationalism project; and are, thus, willing to step out of traditional frameworks of 'Qatariness' by adapting to, and participating in, forming the national narrative.

The perceptive comments of interviewees presented earlier in the context of the state image versus Qataris' image reflect that this segment of 'new generation' Qataris mainly consists of youth of different social segments and tribal backgrounds, governmental leadership and officials, as well as a newly emerging segment in the Qatari social demographic - the naturalized Qataris (see page 147-8). This somewhat diverse segment is labelled henceforth in this research as 'the national class'<sup>29</sup>. Individuals belonging to the national class - who are typically exemplars of the Qatari 'ideal citizen' - are progressively embracing and actively embodying the traditional-modern image and national narrative in their private and professional lives. This traditional-modern embodiment is perceived as a growing "trend" or a "soft social movement" (as stated by interviewees earlier), which is mainly influenced by a series of initiatives and social dynamics that could be viewed as tools of the nationalism project. This movement, when looked at solely – focusing only on the national class – without seeing the bigger picture of the undercurrents of the rest of the social structure, seems to be heading towards the formation of an imagined community. However, looking at the bigger picture, the data (specifically on local attitudes towards modernization and change) also reveal that the rise of this class pours into an ideological struggle as the national narrative unfolds in the Qatari lived reality and cultural experience.

The following remark by HE Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari, is helpful in understanding what makes the national class ideologically problematic. Al-Kuwari is currently State Minister with rank of Deputy Prime Minister and a former Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage (2008-2016), Ambassador of Qatar to France, the United States, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the UN, and a candidate in the 2017 election of the Director-General of UNESCO. He states:

"If in 92 I was asked when will our society transform and witness the changes we are in today I would say in a hundred years! The era of His Highness the Father Emir is definitely a turning point for Qatar and its people. The Qatari society today

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<sup>29</sup> This term is inspired by Neil Partrick's (2009) concept of "state class".

is not the same society it used to be in the nineties ... I would say the biggest achievement of His Highness the Father Emir's era is not the infrastructure, nor the skyscrapers and the numerous successful state projects and accomplishments, but the social changes: the empowerment of women, the inter-dialogue and exchange with other cultures and most importantly the individualization of the individual and the collectivity of the individual – a conceptual transformation that reshaped the Qatari identity and culture". (personal communication, 2018).

Drawing on the above statement, it appears that due to the rapid formation of the national class (and its soft social movement), it did not have the time to settle in, and find its place in the local social structure as an integrated evolving element within it. Rather, the formation of this class can be viewed as a sudden social phenomenon. Indeed, as Al-Kuwari suggests, the social changes expected to unfold in a hundred years in fact unfolded in nearly a time span of two to three decades. Moreover, it could be deduced from interviewees' comments (discussed earlier in this chapter) that as an outcome of the quick rise of the national class, an 'othering' attitude – to certain extents - emerged towards this group. As we shall see below, an 'othering' discourse could be traced from the gathered data at different levels and social manifestations. This discourse can be regarded as problematic as it causes a cycle of ideological struggle and confusion in the Qatari collective imagination.

Primarily, keywords and themes such as 'new Qataris', 'new generation', 'new locals' and the continuous juxtaposition between the older and the younger, and the conservative and traditional versus the modern, indicate the articulation of a discourse that links youth to the state in a special institutional relationship within the social structure. While, others who do not take part in the national narrative are not excluded per se, but are overlooked as they are less active in the national public sphere. Data reveal that some members of the society – particularly those who are not involved in the nationalism project - struggle to see themselves as significant actors in the state's narrative. It is as if the future of Qatar, as a young nation-state, is set for this particular national class. This

perception creates a fracture in the collectivity and commonalities of the society, and hinders the development of a unifying overarching imagined community.

The national class's embodiment and practice of social aesthetics and representations, in different and contested forms than what is known to the society as the norm, is also ideologically problematic - causing a 'cycle of confusion' in the Qatari society as suggested earlier in this chapter by Fahad Buzwair's remark (see page 143). Al-Kuwari's comment highlights how socio-cultural concepts such as 'individualism' and 'collectivity' have evolved as an outcome of the nationalism project and individuals' increasing reflection of the state's image and narrative. The "individualization of the individual" and the "collectivity of the individual" are two vivid social phenomena in the perceptions of several interviewees. In her comment, Maryam Al-Subaiey (18-35), young Qatari author, social media influencer and youth activist, speaks about the multiplicity of the state's image and narrative on the internal level, asserting that this "allows room for individualism ... youth are being more individualistic and not sticking to the status-quo". This comment indicates that individuals in the national class are broadening their self-reflection and identification – individually and collectively – beyond the normative framework of the concepts of individualism and collectivism in the traditional Qatari social structure. It is argued that youth are "smart and adaptive" (see page 150), and know when and how to apply individualism and collectivism in a way that supports and fits with the state's modernizing efforts in order to ensure their future (see page 148). Essentially, the composition of the national class by individuals from different social segments is an example of a new sort of collectivity, which is viewed as a confusing and conceptually problematic social phenomenon for some, as it does not conform with the norms and demographics of the precedent social structure.

Moreover, the oscillation of individuals of the national class between the different traditional-modern images is also perceived as ideologically problematic. In a comment presented earlier in the context of the global image of Qatar in relation to the image of the Qatari society (see page 150), the interviewee (35-55) argued that "conservative individuals ... would believe that both the image of the state and that of the 'new' local

are schizophrenic!” because of the oscillation in reflecting different and contested images. Hence, it can be inferred that the images of the national narrative – though embraced by a growing social segment – are yet struggling to settle ideologically in the local collective imagination.

Data about youth’s efforts to reflect the national image reveal that the youth themselves are also struggling amidst the multiplicity of the national narrative. Six of the interviewees (aged between 18-35 and 35-55) suggested that there is an “ideal citizen” discourse that discursively pressures them to embrace and reflect as many images and representations as possible from the national narrative, in order to fit in the constructed image of the “idealistic young Qatari national”. The interviewees explained that sometimes they would see themselves reflecting certain images or acting in certain ways – even if they are not fully convinced with these reflections. And they do so only because they know that such reflections would enable them to fit the newly constructed framework of the ‘ideal citizen’. Examples of this discourse- which emerged from the data - include the use of certain diction or dialects and mentioning keywords such as Qatar National Vision. This lack of belief – at times - in some of the images they reflect reveals that the representations of the national narrative are viewed to be somewhat socio-culturally artificial, rather than being perceived as intrinsic socio-cultural elements and ideologies in the local collective imagination.

Interestingly, even long-standing socio-cultural tribal ideologies that have been described as natural dispositions in Arab mind-sets in the region seem to be applied and practiced differently by the national class as part of the process of “the individualization of the individual” and the “collectivity of the individual”, referred to earlier by HE Dr. Hamad bin Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari. The double-sided tribal ideology of ‘*hasab*’ and ‘*nasab*’ is an example of how the embodiment of the national narrative by the national class is challenging the flow and practice of cultural ideologies within the Qatari lived reality. The Arabic term ‘*hasab*’ describes the social status, background and honour of an individual and his/her forefathers and tribe. While, the Arabic term ‘*nasab*’ describes the ethnicity and origins of one’s paternal and maternal families and tribes. The earlier discussion

about the national class being imagined as an elitist social segment, hints that young Qataris are being somewhat individualistic about their '*hasab*'. In other words, young Qataris are building their '*hasab*' in accordance with the national narrative and the image of an ideal citizen, rather than basing it solely on the attainments and reputation of the family and tribe - which is mostly collective rather than individualistic. Through participation in the national narrative and the dynamics of the nationalism project, youth are attaining a new form of social status and significance individually in the public sphere, beyond traditional and tribal social affiliations.

Similarly, the concept of '*nasab*' and the basing of collectivity on the tribe or on specific social segments is also in flux. The rise of the national class from different social segments is an example of collectivity that is not based on tribal and traditional social segmentation. Nevertheless, there is still an ideological struggle for hegemony between the normative intrinsic ideologies and the newly emerging ones. An example of this struggle could be traced in an earlier discussed comment about the members of the national class. In this particular comment, the interviewee - who is considered a social engineer and a member of the national class - states: "and lastly naturalized citizens who were actually naturalized to fit with and represent the state's image". This comment (as well as similar comments from the conducted online survey in which naturalization was mentioned – in the context of several other questions) highlights that '*nasab*' is still generally viewed as more significant in the local imagination than a collectivity based on national principles.

There seems to be a confused 'self-othering' perception amongst some members of the national class, who see that the 'constructed' 'Qatariness' of naturalized citizens has not yet been accepted as integral within the local socio-cultural fabric. Thus, it could also be inferred that there is a social fracture and an ideological struggle to understand this new framework of identity and belonging amongst the national class itself. Essentially, the images and representations of the national narrative – though increasingly embraced by members of the society – are viewed as 'chosen' representations, rather than being practiced as intrinsically natural 'unchosen' ones. As a result, they still do not have about

them the 'halo of disinterestedness' (Anderson 1991:143) necessary to create a homogenized local imagination. Therefore, the 'confusing' cycle of ideological 'articulation and disarticulation' continues in the Qatari identity discourse; hindering the hegemony of the national culture. The following sections focus on local perceptions on the nationalism project's efforts to establish a foundational myth; discussing the dialectics and socio-cultural dynamics and struggles emerging amidst those efforts.

### **The Foundational Myth: Reactions and Counter-Reactions**

In his equation of the national identity, Timothy Brennan (1990:45) describes the concept of a nation as "referring to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the '*natio*' – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging". According to Brennan's equation, the national identity is formed through a consolidation and balance between a political membership and sense of belonging to the nation-state, as well as an ideological association and identification with the national community and culture (Brennan, 1990). The earlier data analysis and discussions corroborate the Qatari society's political membership and sense of comradeship and belonging to the modern Qatari nation-state as a '*watan*'. Yet, this chapter holds that what is still striving to unfold ideologically is the national imagination. This section explores the socio-cultural dialectics and discourses that have, thus far, emerged along with the social engineering efforts to create a Qatari foundational myth in order to enable the hegemony of a national culture and imagination.

According to Hall (1996:614), a foundational myth is a legitimized historical narrative which personifies the nation by allocating its origin and, more importantly, depicting its people's origin and their national image and characteristics through time. It is expounded that states engineer the foundational myth so that it "borrows from history as well as from fiction, and treats the person as a character in a plot" (Unal 2013:224). Accordingly, a collective national imagination is fostered by states through the 'revival' and 'invention' of indigenous ideologies, symbols, traditions, glorified idols and cultural representations (Hobsbawm 1983, Ryan 2012). These are crafted together in narratives,

so that the nation-state is imagined and personified through the creation of common legacies and ideologies that are reflected as culturally and historically deeply rooted, yet coalescing with aspirational and global future outlooks (Ryan 2012, Hudson 1977). According to interviewees, the ‘revived’ and ‘invented’ historical and social discourses and ideologies of this ‘legitimized’ Qatari historical narrative have been closely knit together to form an ‘interesting’ and ‘inspiring’ foundational myth. However, it has been argued that some of its ideological elements and aesthetic components seem to have a counter-effect on society. In turn, this effect is challenging the consumption of the produced cultural capital, and thus the ideological struggle continues.

“The frenzy began in 2008! Suddenly it was all about culture and heritage! And everyone was interested in local history!” (personal communication, 2018). This is an interesting remark from an anonymized interviewee (50+), who points to the beginning of the establishment of a Qatari foundational myth. Indeed, several interviewees mentioned the year 2008 in the context of ‘national’ cultural production. This particular year could be looked at as a turning-point, or rather as a point of acceleration in the Qatari nationalism project’s social engineering efforts. The Qatar National Vision 2030 was produced in 2008, along with most of the developmental and modernization measures that it involved. Simultaneously, in the same year, several social engineering initiatives were endorsed to nationalize the cultural imagination through historical and traditional aesthetics.

Several interviewees highlight key cultural initiatives that are perceived to have induced distinctive discursive formations. The initiatives discussed by the interviewees mostly had a cultural aesthetic character, and were initiated around the year 2008 onwards. An example of a key cultural initiative that emerged from the gathered data is the restoration of Souq Waqif<sup>30</sup> using traditional building material (as discussed by Exell & Rico 2014, Cooke 2010 and others), along with a series of other urban projects which took a traditional architectural design. Such initiatives seem to be perceived with divergent viewpoints; suggesting that the representations and images produced by the nationalism

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<sup>30</sup> A traditional market in downtown Doha that has been recently renovated to become a cultural and urban landmark.

project are still undergoing ideological processes of articulation and disarticulation within the local cultural experience. For instance, a comment from an anonymized scholar (35-55) involved with Qatar University through his/her contribution to several research projects on Qatari identity, sociology and heritage, supports such restoration initiatives and claims that they enrich the national identity:

“I think that people are happy that historic buildings – such as Souq Waqif and Msheireb district - are being preserved ... This started a trend – there is more interest in learning about Qatari history and heritage and the state is putting a great effort to provide a range of sources to fill this knowledge gap – Those traditional visual representations provoked people’s interests to learn ... There is also this visual traditional historical touch which is incorporated in designs and concepts in various scopes ... This surely means that the society, specifically young Qataris, are embracing and reflecting the national culture and mind-set which the state is pushing for” (personal communication, 2018).

The above comment suggests that there is a local appreciation of the evolvement of a traditional-modern visual setting (i.e. architectural aesthetics with traditional and modern elements). Individuals holding this perception believe that this visual setting enables the formation of a Qatari national identity, and enriches the knowledge gap in Qatar’s history and heritage - as several other interviewees of middle and older age ranges (35-55 and 55+) claimed.

On the other hand, a younger interviewee (18-35) who is a graduate of Education City and currently holds a leading position in a semi-governmental educational institution, provided an insightful comment that highlights a conceptually problematic side of the foundational myth:

“I’m fine with restoring old buildings, and it is great that they’ve used old materials to preserve a building’s identity and authenticity, but what I just don’t understand is the construction of new buildings with traditional designs. It doesn’t seem to me

that it is a matter of creativity and that this is an architectural trend, but rather it is as if we are trying to relive the past, re-creating it in a modern setting! Why? I don't know. This phenomenon is confusing me – and others I'm sure – I truly don't understand the purpose of this. If we look at it from a nation-state building and a social engineering point of view, this idea of a traditional-modern image and narrative – which we've been discussing - is definitely working on a cultural and a conceptual level, but aesthetically it is confusing, and I'm sure it will confuse the coming generations ... Why don't we allow this era to have its own character and to reflect our identity and current lifestyle instead of trying hard to fit into a newly constructed framework of cultural representations ... Yet, coming to think about it, maybe this phenomenon is actually reflecting our confusion, maybe this is our lived reality!" (personal communication, 2017).

This comment is one of four other similar comments from interviewees (aged 18-35) who also expressed their confusion; and raised the identity question in the context of the foundational myth and its representations. Such comments point to the local debate on historical buildings versus invented heritage, where some claim that those buildings represent Qatar's history and heritage, while others think that this is an invented heritage engineered in an effort to revive an idyllic past (Scharfenort 2014:189-90). Although, Miriam Cooke (2014:142-3) describes a sense of harmony between the tribal (in this context the traditional) and the modern in the Arabian Gulf, comments like the above indicate that the supposedly harmonious juxtaposed aesthetics and settings hold within them a problematic confusing element. Moreover, such comments reveal that youth are aware of the Qatari nationalism project's efforts to shape the local identity and mind-set, and are critical of the efficiency of some of the project's social engineering tools, particularly the new historical architectural approach. This comment – above - will be deconstructed further in the context of the below discussion.

Drawing on the comments in the previous section on narrating the nation and the ideal citizen, it could be argued that Qatari youth are generally in line with the national narrative and are embracing the traditional-modern image. However, they seem to

struggle to conceptually appreciate some of the historical and traditional representations employed by the Qatari nationalism project to establish a foundational myth. This particular interviewee, who expressed his/her critical perception of the local trend of traditional-modern architecture, also spoke about a linguistic discourse that emerged with the construction of the foundational myth, which was produced to revive traditional diction and homogenize the local dialect. Examples of this discourse provided by several other interviewees – of the same age group - ranged from dictating the “correct Qatari” pronunciation of road names in Arabic and English, the naming of new establishments using ‘old Qatari words’ (for example ‘Aspetar’ the specialized orthopaedic and sports medicine hospital got its name from the Qatari colloquial pronunciation of the English word ‘hospital’), the ‘excessive’ use of colloquial dialect on local television and radio programmes, and the initiation of community programmes and activities that focus on the revival of heritage, language and traditions. Those interviewees argued that such a discourse reflects the local heritage in a “conflicting manner”. For instance, an interviewee (18-35) stated: “instead of preserving heritage and culture as a knowledge capital transmitted from older generations, it makes us feel that it is being constructed as we go! So, I find myself questioning some of those manifestations, and, of course, this takes us back to the identity question” (personal communication, 2018).

Maryam Al-Subaiey, a Creative Consultant, author and social media influencer (18-35), elaborates further on this emerging discourse, looking at its function within the ensemble of the national culture. She critically looks at the role of *Nomas*, a centre sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Sports (Nomas 2014). It is founded in 2014, with a mission to instill indigenous Qatari customs and traditions in young Qataris (8-14 year olds) within a framework of religious and cultural values. The centre also aims at enriching children’s responsibility and civic participation by equipping them with a range of practical skills in the Qatari private and public spheres. Although many appreciate the role of *Nomas* in enriching the identity of Qatari youth, others, such as Al-Subaiey, had different perceptions:

“There is a gap that needs to be bridged in terms of cultural and historical knowledge – this is an integral part of consolidating a nation-state and enriching its national culture; however, I also think that nationalism emerges and thrives through a balance between homogeneity and differences in a community, rather than striving to produce a generation of identical Qataris – *Nomas* Centre is an example of the efforts to overly homogenize ... we are not products that came out of a factory! We are different ‘products’ of our reality and experiences” (personal communication, 2017).

Although the Qatari nationalism project is influencing the articulation of discourses and ideologies that are in turn fostering the hegemony of a national identity and culture, it could be argued that this is also producing a conceptual boomerang-effect, especially in young Qatari mind-sets. A boomerang-effect is a counter reaction resulting from directly initiated attempts and measures to influence social perceptions and attitudes. In this context, the boomerang-effect is vividly seen through the interviewees’ questioning of some of the representations of the foundational myth. An excerpt from an earlier comment (see page 163) provides a relevant example:

“Why don’t we allow this era to have its own character and to reflect our identity and current lifestyle ... Yet, coming to think about it, maybe this phenomenon is actually reflecting our confusion, maybe this is our lived reality!” (personal communication, 2017).

This quote extract reveals that the ideological cycle of complication and confusion which is experienced by many individuals in the society of different perceptions and age ranges (as introduced in the beginning of this chapter) is in constant discursive formation; hence disarticulating the framework of the Qatari nationalism project as a conceptual ensemble of knowledge capital. In other words, the Qatari nationalism project appears to be fractured or conceptually dislocated in terms of youth’s (and progressive individuals’) consumption of the representations and discourses emerging out of the foundational myth, in comparison to their consumption of the traditional-modern discourse and national

image. Essentially, this confusion and ideological struggle further insinuate that the national identity - although assimilated with the social collective Qatari identity- is yet striving to have a 'halo of disinterestedness' upon it within the local cultural fabric and collective imagination. The next section sheds light on Qatar National Day as an element of the foundational myth, exploring its role within the ideological struggle and conceptual gap between Qatari generations.

### **Qatar National Day: Inculcating Nationalism through a Cultural Spectacle**

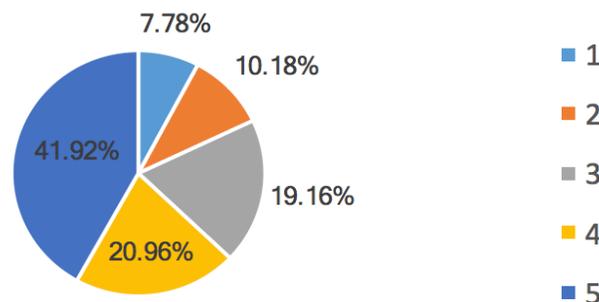
The most important cultural initiative, to which interviewees referred, was the establishment of the State National Day Celebrations Organizing Committee (SNDCCOC) led by HE Salah bin Ghanem Al-Ali, Minister of Culture and Sports, with the responsibility of "strengthening solidarity, loyalty and pride in national identity" (Qatar Events, 2018). The Qatar National Day (QND) celebrations are described by the committee as "an opportunity for all Qatari nationals and expatriates to recognize and celebrate what it means to live in modern day Qatar" (Qatar Events, 2018). Although the committee was founded in 2010, it was in 2007 when an official governmental decree was passed to change the date of Qatar National Day from the state's Independence Day on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1971 to the founding of the State of Qatar and the unification of its tribes under the rule of the Founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed on December 18<sup>th</sup> 1878. Since 2008, this day is celebrated annually in the form of a national festival starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of December; including a public parade of Qatari National Armed Forces as well as a range of festivities and cultural events and programmes that take place in different locations of the country; and in which almost all governmental and semi-governmental organizations participate to highlight the QND historical rhetoric and story-lines.

The narrative of QND is based on a newly constructed historical rhetoric of the era of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed. It centres on an emotive representation of December 18<sup>th</sup>, describing it as "the day we remember how our national unity was achieved and how we became a distinct, and respected nation out of a society torn apart by conflicting tribal loyalties, devoid of security and order, and overrun by invaders" (Qatar Events, 2018). The

most popular festivities of QND are held at ‘*Darb Al-Saa*’. It is a central location of the national day festivities, which is constructed to represent the route taken by the messengers sent by the Founder to different locations. This public location is a full size diorama that exhibits the QND narrative through representing varied dimensions of Qatari life in the past, as well as hosting pavilions of many governmental and semi-governmental institutions. Those institutions hold numerous public activities (for children and adults) which link their work to Qatari history and heritage, while also highlighting each institution’s role in realizing the state’s anticipated future vision.

It is noted from the gathered data through the conducted online survey and from the semi-structured interviews that the narrative of QND (and its accompanying story-lines and diverse exhibits) is conceptually appealing to the local society more than other cultural and linguistic discourses initiated within the nationalism project’s foundational myth. When asked: “To what extent is Qatar National Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity?” with a choice of 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 being extremely effective) 41.92% of the online survey participants chose 5, and 20.96% chose 4.

To what extent is Qatar National Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 extremely effective)



When discussing the appeal of the Qatar National Day narrative to the local society with interviewees, almost all of them had positive perceptions of it. Below are three examples of comments from interviewees - of different age ranges and professional backgrounds - highlighting their perceptions on how the QND narrative is effective in inducing the formation of a Qatari national identity:

- A) “The narrative is intriguing and flows well – although it has been represented in a ‘disneyfied’ way and translated visually into extravagant celebrations – for some reason it flows well in our minds and we can identify with it ... You can see the past and the present, the traditional and the modern brought together in an engaging way that enriches the sense of national pride and belonging. I think it actually made young Qataris more curious about Qatar’s history ... I also noticed that they are even more interested now in preserving and reviving local heritage and traditions, and they are much more eager to reflect their Qatari identity as a result of this narrative” (anonymous, 35-55).
- B) “Although the national day narrative is somewhat sudden and lacks transitional historical context, the programmes that come with it are motivating. They push you forward to be a better person and a better citizen ... It does lack pluralism and this sense of a popular culture sometimes, but the society generally appreciates it. It really touches on the feelings of collectiveness and solidarity as well as the cultural concepts that society wants to hold on to at a time of rapid change ... those concepts are brought to life in order to foster the national identity in a traditional framework – I mean the historical narrative ... and in a modern framework through the creativity of the programmes and activities of the different organizations participating in ‘*Darb al-Saai*’ ... They give meaning to the public sphere – a cultural touch that makes it more ‘Qatari’ and relevant to the society and its cultural fabric, but also relevant to the state’s present and future” (anonymous, 18-35).
- C) “What makes national day successful and more appealing than other cultural initiatives is its balance between spectacles and traditional ideologies. The display of spectacles (and the extravagance –as some view it) is an effective ‘modern’ alternative to the usual rigid and dogmatic ways employed previously (and still in some initiatives) to preserve and revive the ideologies that the state wants to instil in the Qatari society ... National spectacles enable the process of reforming and shaping national mind-sets ... National Day as a spectacle balances between what

the older generations want – the revival and preservation of Qatari culture – and what the younger generation wants, which is the local-global element – seeing how such culture and traditions are applicable in a modern day world” (anonymous, 35-55).

It could be contended from the above comments that the Qatar National Day narrative is actually perceived to have a ‘halo of disinterestedness’ about it, thus it is socially received with less of an ideological struggle. Surprisingly, the question and issue of identity are not raised in the context of QND’s narrative, ideologies and cultural aesthetics; rather, such national representations are perceived as state tools that foster and enrich the Qatari identity. Interestingly, interviewees of different age ranges appear to agree on this point. Also, the appeal of the QND narrative, and the similarity in perceptions and remarks raised in favour of QND and its role in cultivating a national culture, possibly suggest that QND as a discourse is reducing the conceptual gap between Qatari generations and various segments in the society. This conceptual gap is vividly noticed in local perceptions about other cultural aesthetic elements of the Qatari nationalism project.

Indeed, the aesthetic traditional element which was generally criticized by the interviewees – particularly by youth – when referring to other cultural initiatives is described as ‘relevant’, ‘effective’ and ‘modern’ when employed by the State National Day Celebrations Organizing Committee (SNDCOC) at ‘*Darb al-Saa*’. It could be inferred that QND, as a discourse, developed its ‘halo of disinterestedness’ from the intertwinement of the traditional elements (both aesthetic and ideological) with the modern elements represented at ‘*Darb al-Saa*’. This traditional-modern exhibit seems to balance out and reduce the perplexities and confusions mostly raised by youth, as well as the concerns of the older generations.

Essentially, the whole ensemble of ‘*Darb al-Saa*’ calls for the unification of the community’s efforts and contributions to both maintain as well as develop the Qatari lived reality. The ‘maintenance’ element appeases the older generations and the conservative

segments of society that want to preserve the Qatari culture and identity. While, the 'development' element appeases the younger generation and the national class in general. This, hence, articulates a cultural experience in which Qataris of different mind-sets, perceptions and age ranges can engage conceptually in a present lived reality. It is at this cultural level of conceptual exchange and engagement between Qatari individuals that one could see the Qatari national class not only manifesting, but also expanding to assimilate more segments of the society.

Moreover, data reveals that the issues that make the national class ideologically problematic are plausibly resolved through the ensemble of '*Darb al-Saa*'. Interestingly, its display of physical and conceptual representations that are viewed as perplexing dichotomies in local debates about the Qatari identity and the 'new generation' (such as younger generation vs. older generation, the modern vs. the traditional, preserving vs. re-creating, local vs. global etc.) somehow brings about a balance in the cultural elements and memories anticipated by different Qatari mind-sets and social segments. Essentially, such institutionally engineered cultural memories have the 'power' to conceptualize foundational myths in local mind-sets. Jan Assmann (2011) explains this in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilizations: Writing, Remembrance and Political Imagination*:

"Cultural memory transforms factual into remembered history, thus turning it into myth. Myth is foundational history that is narrated in order to illuminate the present from the standpoint of its origins ... Through memory, history becomes myth. This does not make it unreal –on the contrary, this is what makes it real, in the sense that it becomes a lasting, normative, and formative power" (Assmann 2011:38).

Assman's concept of memory becoming "a lasting, normative, and formative power" could be drawn upon in relation to Anderson's concept of the 'halo of disinterestedness' when reflecting on the formation process of the Qatari collective national imagination. This process plays out at *Darb al-Saa*i where a foundational myth of a present national lived reality unfolds. This national lived reality resembles an ultimate cultural setting for the ideal Qatari citizen of the national class. This setting witnesses the

homogenization of ideologies and discourses descending from the past, along with discourses forming in the present cultural experience, thus fostering the cultivation of a Qatari collective national imagination.

This chapter began by building on the notion that the Qatari community is undergoing an assimilation process in terms of the national discourse's constructed representations. Delving further into the nationalism project's efforts to establish a hegemonic national culture, it is evident that the juxtaposed newly constructed representations which currently make up the Qatari identity on the public sphere are somewhat dislocated from the local cultural fabric. With a particular focus on local perceptions and reactions to the national narrative and foundational myth, a close analysis of the gathered data highlighted an ideological struggle developing along the unfolding of numerous changes, progressions and discursive formations within the present reality and the local cultural experience. This on-going ideological struggle involves the encounter of divergent representations, processes and ideologies, where local perceptions about being a Qatari (i.e. identity, culture and belonging) are constantly in a state of flux. Hence, the dialectics and debates around the development and formation of the Qatari identity continue and the question of identity is yet unresolved.

This chapter hints to several manifestations of social change in the present lived reality; including the development of tacit social fractures and conceptual gaps within the Qatari society. Such fractures and gaps are particularly between individuals involved in the current progressions and dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project and those who are not. This hinders the nationalism project's efforts to develop a Qatari civic-political mind-set, and in turn establish a unified overarching national imagination. The most important manifestation of social change that surfaced from the data is the rise of the national class. What makes this class ideologically problematic is that its rise came with new concepts and manifestations of 'Qatariness' that seem to challenge the normative representations and signifiers of the Qatari identity as well as the frameworks of collectivity and commonality in the local imagination. Those concepts and manifestations are increasingly emerging and expanding in the local cultural experience with the rise of

the national class and are perceived as constituents of the new and modernized Qatari identity.

The on-going ideological struggle and the emerging perplexities and dialectics insinuate that the developing Qatari – national - identity is yet striving to settle and find its place in the local cultural fabric. In other words, the national discourse constructed by the nationalism project is not yet perceived with a 'halo of disinterestedness', and hence the national culture has not yet gained ideological hegemony in the local collective imagination. The next chapter presents post-blockade data and continues to explore the dialectics and struggles emerging along the Qatari nationalism project's efforts to establish a hegemonic national culture and imagination.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **On the Cusp of an Imagined Community?**

This chapter further expands the research project's investigation of the dynamics and processes of cultivating a Qatari national imagination through closely examining data collected after the blockade imposed on Qatar in June 2017. The aim of this chapter is not to merely compare and contrast pre and post blockade data, but rather to look at how such an unprecedented situation of national threat have affected local perceptions of the Qatari identity and its formation. This is examined in relation to the structure and framework of the paradoxes and perplexities outlined, thus far, in this genealogical study of the Qatari identity formation process. Although the blockade has brought about complex socio-political and cultural changes in the Qatari present reality, the focus of this chapter is limited to investigating the influence of the blockade (and particularly the socio-political dynamics unfolding with it) on the consolidation of a Qatari national identity and culture. The shapes and forms of Qatari nationalism amidst social engineering processes of cultivating a hegemonic national culture are central inquiries of this research. This chapter builds on those inquiries, as well as the earlier discussed ideological struggles and socio-cultural contentions that form the present discourse on Qatari identity, to investigate the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience and collective imagination.

It is worth noting that the post-blockade online survey did not specify that its purpose was to explore issues of collectivity and national identity in post-blockade context. There are two main reasons for that; firstly, to prevent leading the participants into a before-and-after approach when answering the questions; and secondly, to avoid leading them to think within overly patriotic or overprotective frames of mind, which could

affect the genuineness of their responses. Although I have resorted to distributing the post-blockade online survey through the help of a social media influencer to expand and diversify its reach beyond my social and professional circles, the social demographic representations of the survey participants in terms of age ranges and occupations were very similar to those of the first survey conducted pre-blockade (see Appendix Five). Hence, it is analytically possible to draw parallels and generalizations between the two sets of data. As shall be discussed later, the results in terms of perceptions were mostly very similar, with only a few generalizations that are critically different and are elaborated on in this chapter.

### **Qatari Modern Nationalism:**

The previous chapter has highlighted that the foundational myth and the socio-culturally appealing Qatar National Day (QND) discourse are based on a newly constructed historical rhetoric of the era of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed, the Founder of the State of Qatar. This rhetoric has been described by some interviewees as “lacking pluralism”, “imposing a great man theory”, “is somewhat sudden and lacks historical transitional context”<sup>31</sup>, and “needs deeper substantial content” (personal communication, 2018). Yet, it has also been argued by an anonymized interviewee (35-55) that “although Qatari history is problematic and involves tricky trans-national and social issues that are difficult to craft in a coherent narrative without causing social dispute, the national day committee managed to resolve this hurdle and crafted a narrative that appeals to all” (personal communication 2018). In an interview, HE Salah bin Ghanim Al-Ali, Minister of Culture and Sports, explains that the rhetoric was articulated as - what he describes - an authentic reflection of Qatar’s history, heritage and future outlooks:

“The narrative is framed by the committee through a modern lens that considers the preservation of the Qatari culture and identity, whilst ensuring that it is relevant

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<sup>31</sup> Refer back to comments in page 186

to the present and future of the nation and the nationals, in a wider global context” (personal communication, 2018).

It could be interpreted from this comment that such a rhetoric of a ‘glocalized’ lens is employed as a social engineering tool to construct a modern nationalism. Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (1984) describes modern nationalism (or as he puts it “the nationalisms of the modern world”) as:

“The ambiguous expression of the demand both for ... assimilation into the universal ... and simultaneously for ... adhering to the particular, the re-invention of differences ... It is a universalism through particularism and particularism through universalism” (Wallerstein 1984:166).

Wallerstein maintains that in the modern world, states – especially young nation-states, such as Qatar – gain universal reference and relevance on the global map through their involvement in processes of universalism parallel to reflecting the particularity of their cultural heritage to the global community. It appears that the elements of ‘particularism’ and of ‘universalism’ are increasingly manifesting and being acknowledged in the Qatari present reality, particularly by the emerging national class. Those elements of ‘particularism’ include the expression of local cultural, tribal and traditional representations as well as the reflection of an Arab-Islamic identity. While, the elements of ‘universalism’ include the increasing will of Qatari individuals (youth in particular) to engage and participate in a widely expressed global and modern community.

Dr. Jassim Sultan, a prominent Qatari intellectual, author and consultant to the Ministry of Culture and Sports along with his involvement in several other governmental and private institutions, comments on the National Day rhetoric’s ‘glocalized’ elements of a modern nationalism. Sultan’s comment takes the discussion forward to anticipations about the formation of a Qatari national culture and a local imagined community:

“Unlike many states that build their national narratives on identifying a national enemy or victimizing the forefathers of the nation through anti-colonialist frameworks, Qatar opted to shape its narrative through themes that revive local heritage and enable Qataris to first face the state’s challenges, and secondly to realize the national vision. And most importantly, to have an active role in the global community while maintaining social solidarity ... There is a strong focus on essentializing concepts such as social collectivity, integrity and other communal values - such as perseverance and hard work in the Qatari mind-set through the use of this historical narrative. Those concepts are, in turn, defining the relationship between the Qatari culture, its past and present, and how to ideologically deal with each in our lives. Defining this complex relationship - due to generational gaps and different mind-sets in the society - will help settle the issues and questions about the Qatari identity ... but the crystallization of the idea of an imagined community and a national culture will require a change in social attitudes” (personal communication, 2018).

It is interesting that Sultan refers to a process of reviving the local heritage - principally constructed and employed by Qatar National Day Committee. Yet, the rest of his comment, along with the earlier comment by the Minister of Culture and Sports, could be interpreted as an indirect hint to a reconstruction or even an ‘invention’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) of the local heritage and history within a social engineering framework. The reference to the national narrative’s focus on “essentializing concepts...” possibly indicates a process of rooting modern elements of constructing a national community and culture (such as “social collectivity, integrity and other communal values...”) back to the Qatari culture and history. Moreover, Sultan explicates that whilst the ‘revival’ process provides guidelines to navigate the relationship between the present and the past, this relationship, yet, needs to be clarified in order to settle the identity question. Building on this interpretation of Sultan’s comment, it could be argued that the perplexities and dialectics between the Qatari culture, past and present - which manifest in the ideological struggle within the Qatari identity discourse - are being discursively watered down and

attenuated through the articulation of the national discourse and its conceptual and aesthetic representations.

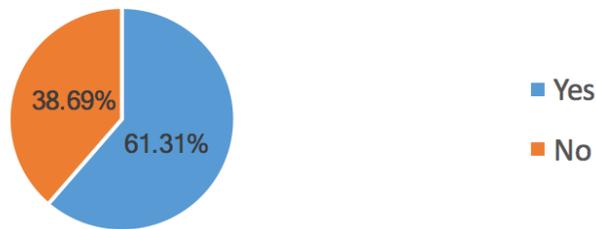
### **A New 'Assabiya**

As asserted in the previous chapter, the imagined community only thrives when the ideological struggle is profoundly reduced. Ideally, this is when the newly emerging representations and ideologies of the national discourse (which are discursively forming with the efforts of the nationalism project and the rise of the national class) are perceived and dealt with as 'natural' products of the local cultural fabric (i.e. with a 'halo of disinterestedness'). The spread of the national image and narrative played a substantial role in enabling the development of a national imagination by creating common social and cultural platforms (such as '*Darb Al-Saa'*') for the national class, and the rest of the Qatari society, to undergo a conceptual assimilation process of collective memories and cultural experiences. However, considering the ideological struggle and the socio-cultural contentions and dialectics that form the discourse on Qatari identity, it is inferred that the model of a modern civic-political nationalism – as Wallerstein (1984) and Anderson (1983) put it - has not yet played out with a 'halo of disinterestedness' in the Qatari present reality. In other words, the Qatari society still operates within the particularities of a traditional framework, and there is still hesitation towards the conceptual assimilation of the emerging modern and cosmopolitan (or universal – using Wallerstein's diction) cultural representations and social codes of conduct in the present reality.

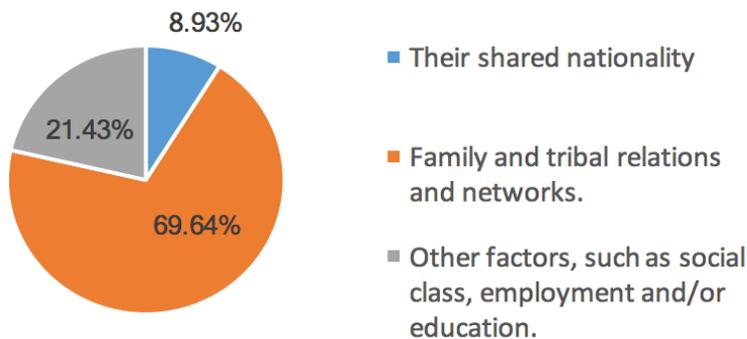
The analysis and interpretation of pre-blockade data reveal that the Qatari socio-cultural model is built on a traditional tribal indigenous doctrine of social collectivity. It is conceivable that this doctrine of social collectivity has led 61.31% of the pre-blockade survey participants to indicate that there is a unified identity across the Qatari society - transcending differences and social categorizations, including social class, age, and tribal and ethnic backgrounds. However, when asked about the terms through which people in Qatar generally relate to each other (pre-blockade), 69.64% of the participants chose 'family and tribal relations and networks' as the core bonding element, while, only 8.93%

chose the 'Qatari shared nationality', and 21.43% chose 'other factors such as social class, employment and/or education'. Interestingly, this 69.64% consisted of participants of different age ranges, hence suggesting that the society - including a majority of youth - still perceives the Qatari community and the nation-state construct through a traditional socio-tribal lens; as descendant and indigenous products of the local society traced back to the founding era.

**Is there a unified identity across Qatari society, regardless of age, tribe and social class?**



**People in Qatar generally relate to each other in terms of:**



It is worth noting that the number of participants who chose 'other factors such as social class, employment and/or education' (21.43%) is almost triple the number of participants who chose the 'Qatari shared nationality' (8.93%). This seems to indicate that there are very minimal traces of a sense of collectivism through the shared Qatari

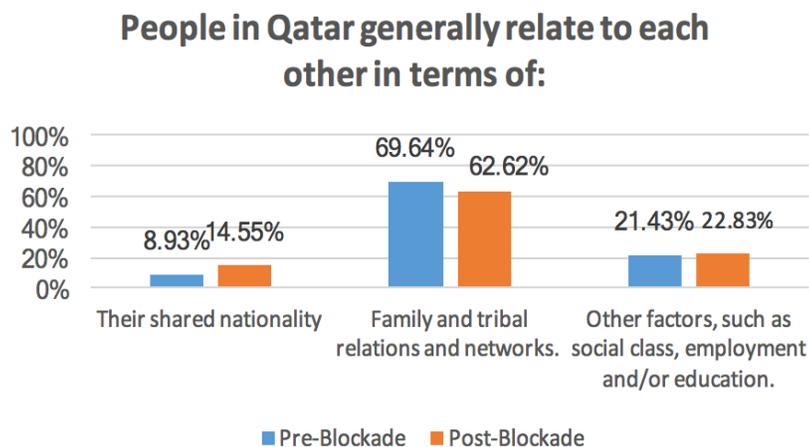
nationality within the local community. Yet, the 21.43% choosing 'other factors such as social class, employment and/or education' could be interpreted as an indication of the emergence of the national class. As explained earlier, members of the national class mainly consist of youth of different social segments and tribal backgrounds, governmental leadership and officials, as well as a newly emerging segment in the Qatari social demographic (naturalized Qataris). Individuals within this class are all involved in different capacities in the Qatari nationalism project, and are dedicated to embracing and reflecting the national discourse. They also appear to acknowledge collective and social identification factors beyond the normative familial and tribal frameworks. Interestingly, most of the survey participants who made this choice (of 'other factors') are between the ages of (18-35); hence, this is interpreted as a manifestation of the emergence of the national class. The fact that they did not choose the 'Qatari shared nationality', may imply that this emerging social segment does not fully perceive the current system of Qatari collectivism as a system based on the idea of a national community bound by citizenship and national membership.

Nonetheless, attention should be paid to the particular multiple choice survey question, which asked participants to choose whether "People in Qatar generally relate to each other in terms of: (A) 'Their shared nationality', (B) 'Family and tribal relations and networks' and (C) 'Other factors such as social class, employment and/or education'. The focus of this question is on perceptions of the 'reality' of communal relations and forms of identification, not on how Qatari nationals 'should' ideally relate to each other. Therefore, it is not improbable that those participants – of the national class - might believe in the collectivity of the national community. Yet, what they see in reality is that it is not per se the normative form of collectivity in the Qatari society.

Although numerous social engineering efforts are implemented through the Qatari nationalism project to construct a modern civic-political framework of Qatari nationalism, the requirements of a modern nation-state such as "the anonymity of the national membership, [and] the participation in the total nation unmediated by any other significant social groupings" (Gellner 1997:46) - including tribes or conventional social networks -

are not yet fully established and practiced as civic-political principles. The cohesion, assemblage and communion of the Qatari community is not principally based on modern civic-political imagination and membership, but rather on society-rooted politics as well as long-standing social networks and shared traditional values and cultural capital (Kamrava 2013:112-4).

As outlined in the Literature Review section discussing key social engineering strategies (see page 53-6), situations of war, or any form of national threat or crises, have historically proven to play a role in consolidating a national community; and establishing a heightened sense of nationalism, citizenship and communion within a state (Rasmussen 2006, Christie 2008). Accordingly, this study anticipates that a national threat, such as the blockade, would have a role in facilitating the formation of a modern civic-political imagination; and increasing local individuals' sense of national collectivity and membership. Survey data gathered post-blockade - presented below - about the terms and factors that allow Qataris to identify with each other reveal slight detectable changes. Thus, this could be interpreted as the beginning of both a modern nationalism trend and a gradual prevalence of a Qatari national culture developing towards cultural hegemony:



As the chart above shows, the number of survey participants choosing the ‘Qatari shared nationality’ slightly increased after the blockade (from 8.93% pre-blockade to 14.55% post-blockade). Yet, ‘family and tribal relations and networks’ remain as the

primary bonding framework in the local community (at 62.62% post-blockade). Considering the anticipation about the role of the blockade, ideally more survey participants would have chosen the 'shared Qatari nationality' option when answering this question, rather than 'family and tribal relations and networks'. Nevertheless, although the percentage increase of survey participants selecting the 'shared Qatari nationality' is very slight (5.62%) - from 8.93% pre-blockade to 14.55% post-blockade - it is important to consider this along with other gathered data from the conducted semi-structured interviews as well as observations. The following section provides qualitative counterpoint indications that support this slight increase; thus highlighting emerging traces of a civic-political national imagination and a more salient manifestation of the national class and the concept of national membership.

The fact that the 'family and tribal relations and networks' option remained as the primary form of social collectivity and communion even after the blockade, confirms the notion asserted earlier that local individuals perceive the Qatari community, its leadership and the whole nation-state construct through a traditional socio-tribal lens. This is seen in the widespread blockade motto "Our Tribe is Qatar" (in Arabic قبيلتنا قطر), which was produced and circulated (mostly on social media platforms) by the local society to highlight social solidarity and loyalty to Qatar. It emerged, in Qatar, at the very early stages of the blockade in response to the pledge of allegiance by Bedouin chiefs of tribes residing in Saudi Arabia to the Saudi government (Adam 2017). When looking at its contextual background, this motto could be seen as a tangible manifestation of the post-blockade Qatari national civic-political imagination.

According to the long-standing Bedouin authoritative tribal structure, those tribal chiefs normatively represent members of all branches of their tribes (which spread trans-nationally between Qatar and KSA) and the proclamation was made on behalf of the whole tribe. Arguably, this was done in an attempt to trigger political tribal disputes in Qatar (Al-Rasheed 2018). As a reaction, prominent individuals of the same tribes (mostly heads of tribe branches) residing in Qatar formally declared and published their allegiance and loyalty to Qatar and to the Emir in local Qatari newspapers (The Peninsula 2017, Al-

Arab 2017). This, thereby, cut off deliberate attempts of political tribal conflicts that could jeopardize Qatari social stability. Interestingly, the slight decrease in the percentage of survey participants choosing 'family and tribal relations and networks' post-blockade (from 69.64% pre-blockade to 62.62%) might have been a local reaction to such episodes of politicising tribal identities.

This nationalistic reaction exemplifies the emergence of a civic-political national imagination and a more vivid manifestation of a Qatari imagined community framework. Essentially, an imagined community, as described by Benedict Anderson (1983:7), is founded on a local civic-political imagination in which the basis of national communion and social collectivity is a "horizontal [framework] of comradeship". This is a situation where – according to Anderson - "the members...will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1983:6). Drawing on Anderson's definition of an imagined community, while considering this particular incident, one notices that national membership and communion are gaining more significance amongst Qataris. Here, we see that those local individuals (i.e. members of the Bedouin tribes) implicitly abandoned long-standing traditional frameworks of '*assabiya* (a tribal dogma of solidarity based on kinship and social relations) which normatively require the exaltation of the tribe above any other entity as well as socio-political subordination to the heads of tribes. Instead, they prioritized national membership and communion with the Qatari population.

When this socio-political incident – which left a strong patriotic footprint on the local community – is considered in relation to the post-blockade responses to the survey question: "People in Qatar generally relate to each other in terms of: ...", one would assert that the majority's choice of 'family and tribal relations and networks' as the core social bonding element could be understood as a manifestation of a new form of a 'national' '*assabiya*. The notion of new '*assabiya* is coined by Bassam Tibi (1990:132) in his writings on 'new '*assabiyas* in nation-state guises'. Tibi describes how some ruling families of modern Arab nation-states re-invent and represent tribal solidarity ('*assabiya*) to legitimize and reinforce their political authority through long-standing tribal frameworks

and codes of conduct<sup>32</sup>. This notion of ‘new ‘*assabiyas*’ could be applied to the local context of Qatar post-blockade. Albeit, the ‘new ‘*assabiya*’ in Qatar is a national one (referred to as national ‘*assabiya* henceforth) that emerged primarily from communal grassroots sentiments (rather than being initiated top-down) and have spread to influence the rest of the society as the motto “Our Tribe is Qatar” gained more and more popularity. It could also be argued that this social reaction came about as a result of the nationalism project’s cultivation of the local mind-sets and attitudes so far within a framework of Qatari nationalism. Essentially, the emergence of this new national ‘*assabiya* reflects a change in social attitudes towards notions of belonging in the Qatari socio-cultural construct of collectivity. As asserted earlier by Dr. Jassim Sultan, such a change in attitudes is a requirement for “the crystallization of the idea of an imagined community and a national culture” (see page 176).

Similarly, the motto “Our Tribe is Qatar” exemplifies the emergence of a modern Qatari nationalism post-blockade. The use of the concept of a tribe in this motto represents Wallerstein’s (1984:166) modern nationalism element of “adhering to the particular”. At a time when tribal ideologies were used by blockading countries to fracture the collectivity of the Qatari social fabric, instead of shifting away from tribal conceptualizations, Qataris appear to have responded by reformulating and broadening the notion of a tribe in a more modern and inclusive manner. The Qatari society chose to adhere to a normative and widely accepted social structure of collectivity (i.e. a tribe); yet this structure was extended to include all national members of the community (thus constructing – what I name - national ‘*assabiya*); importantly, this structure also comprised expatriates living in Qatar.

This expansion of inclusiveness (which was inexistent or not as socio-politically vivid pre-blockade) is seen both on a governmental level and on a societal level. On the

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<sup>32</sup> It should be noted though that the notion of ‘*assabiya* – which was first conceived by Ibn Khaldun – was explicitly a tribal ideology explicated in direct opposition to the construct of the state.

governmental level, it is best exemplified by HH the Emir's speech in the opening session of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, just three months after the blockade was imposed on Qatar. The Emir expressed his pride in Qatari people, as well as the multinational expatriate residents in Qatar, in terms of how they collectively responded to the blockade. This official gesture has left a social vibe of inclusiveness and collectivity in the population of Qatar including locals and expatriates. It is worth noting though that social gestures, reflecting the expansion of inclusiveness and collectivity in the Qatari lived reality, started appearing soon after the start of the blockade, before the Emir's speech in September 2017. Indeed, the earlier discussed incident - of tribal affiliations vs. national affiliation – resulted in an outburst of many socio-cultural aesthetics and representations of nationalism in which locals and expatriates collaborated as a community; hence reflecting modern nationalism elements of “assimilation into the universal” (Wallerstein 1984:166).

Representations of Qatari nationalism ranged from young Qatari individuals pledging their allegiance to HH the Emir (mostly through videos posted on social media) to different families and tribes hanging billboards of the *Tamim Al-Majd* (translates to Tamim the Glorious) mural outside their homes and *majlises*<sup>33</sup>, with their names and signatures on it to show their loyalty and allegiance to the state and to the Emir. This artistic image of the Emir, first posted by a young Qatari artist (Ahmed Al-Maadheed) on his own social media account, rapidly spread “throughout Doha on cars, buildings, billboards, t-shirts, mugs and even gelato” (Miller 2018:62) where the community signed and left supportive messages reflecting social communion and solidarity. The phenomenon of *Tamim Al-Majd* also reflects a change in social attitudes in terms of the formation of a modern Qatari nationalism, as well as the development and manifestation of a civic-political national imagination. This is especially seen in *Tamim Al-Majd* murals in governmental and private institutions and establishments where Qataris and expatriates signed on the same murals as part of myriad civic-groupings within the nation other than the tribe. This, hence, shows that although this trend started as a grass-roots

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<sup>33</sup> Men's traditional reception halls

initiative, the Qatari nationalism project has also built on it in its social engineering efforts to foster a national culture (Iervolino 2018:4-5).

This trend of expanding the framework of social identification beyond the normative familial and tribal networks has slightly surfaced in pre-blockade data, and actually continued to be seen in post-blockade data. While the increase of survey participants choosing “other factors such as social class, employment and/or education” as the way in which people generally relate to and identify with each other in Qatar, is slight (1.4% increase from 21.43% pre-blockade to 22.83% post-blockade), this trend, nevertheless, highlights the change in social attitudes as civic-political principles of commitment to the state and national membership are gaining more significance in the local mind-set. For instance, an interviewee - currently holding a leading position in a semi-governmental educational institution (anonymous 18-35) - explained what signing on murals of different institutions and establishments meant for him, and the significant implication of this trend on the Qatari identity formation process, as follows:

“When the *Tamim Al-Majd* image first went viral on social media I immediately posted it on my accounts – it seemed like a simple nationalistic gesture of pledging allegiance to the Emir. Then, the trend of signing billboards started, so I signed on the one in our *majlis* – it was a way of showing loyalty to the Emir and the state as part of my tribe ... And then they began signing murals in different public institutions. I think this trend is a game-changer in the national identity construct. Signing on a mural other than my tribe’s meant so much to me (I mean the ones at work, at the gym, in Katara, in the airport, everywhere!). It gave me significance as a Qatari individual – it was so empowering to sign and write those supportive messages to the Emir and to ourselves as a community ... It wasn’t a matter of pledging allegiance only, but it was a matter of showing your responsibility and dedication to the state and the different sectors and institutions in it. It’s about belonging – belonging to Qatar and belonging to different communities within the bigger community of locals and expats” (personal communication, 2018).

This particular interviewee had previously implied - when reflecting on the difference between the 'Qatari identity' and the 'national identity' (see page 108) – that the model of Qatari nationalism has not yet developed in the local mind-set as the “modern Western concept” of nationalism (personal communication, 2018). He described the modern 'Western' concept of nationalism as “a concept of an imagined community and a feeling of comradeship between individuals based on nationality” (personal communication, 2018). Interestingly, in the comment above, this interviewee describes the trend of signing on murals as “not just a simple nationalistic gesture of pledging allegiance to the Emir”, but also as a representation of one’s responsibility, dedication and more importantly a representation of one’s “belonging to Qatar and belonging to different communities within the bigger community of locals and expats”. It is noticed in this comment that the interviewee is implying that the framework of a national culture (or Qatari nationalism in the 'modern Western' sense) and an imagined community are discursively forming and developing in the local mind-set as a result of the blockade (and the emerging social aesthetics and national manifestations such as the *Tamim Al-Majd* phenomenon).

The use of the term “game-changer” confirms the earlier assertion that the blockade played a key role in highlighting the manifestation of a national culture and a civic-political national imagination in the local present reality. The role and influences of the blockade on the Qatari identity discourse, and the local debates and perceptions around its formation process, are discussed in the next section of this chapter. Yet, the question remains as to why “family and tribal relations and networks” persist as the general communal bonding framework between Qataris, even after the blockade and the increasing predominance of the national culture.

With the national culture’s increasing predominance and the changes in social attitudes post-blockade in the public sphere, the civic-political relationships between the state and the individual, and also between individuals within the state, have developed and became much more salient on local and international levels. However, the socio-political aesthetics of the cultural experience post-blockade – such as the motto “Our Tribe is Qatar” and the erection of *Tamim Al-Majd* billboards by different Qatari tribes -

suggest that the civic-political principles that shape the relationship between the local and the state in Qatar still follow a reciprocal system of traditional authority and collectivity. This system consists of paternalistic leadership and collective 'obedience' and loyalty, as Max Weber (1968) explicates in his description of the authoritative collective construct of tribalism:

“Obedience is owed to the person of the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is bound by tradition. But here the obligation of obedience is not based on the impersonal order, but is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligation” (Weber 1968:46).

Applying Weber's idea to the local Qatari context, it should be noted that the Qatari state-society relation is built on deeply-rooted tribal conformity. Considering Anderson's framework of a national imagination, this seems like a self-contradictory situation as this system of traditional authority and collectivity is formed through ideologies that are rooted in tribal conceptions of loyalty and belonging. Such traditional civic-political principles that shape the relationship between the local and the state continue to conceptually influence and bind the local mind-set, so that the state is imagined as a socio-historical construct of the Qatari traditional socio-political setting led by the Emir. Although the construct of the state existed as early as the founding of Qatar in 1878 and its independence in 1971, the Qatari nationalism project's foundational myth and later the socio-political dynamics of the blockade have enabled the image of the Qatari nation-state to start being perceived with a 'halo of disinterestedness' as a natural product of the Qatari cultural fabric.

Accordingly, it makes sense that the majority of survey participants, even post-blockade, would choose “family and tribal relations and networks” as the general communal bonding framework, since the structural ideology of tribalism is intrinsically accumulated in the local imagination and collective socio-political memory. It has been argued that tribalism in Qatar, and in the Arabian Gulf in general, is not just “an expression of nostalgia for the past in as much as it is a modern phenomenon that has to do with new and present needs and issues” (Al-Kuwari 2018). Essentially, earlier discussion of

the double-sided socio-traditional ideology of *'hasab'*<sup>34</sup> and *'nasab'*<sup>35</sup> (see page 158) highlight the conceptual 'need' and significance of the socio-tribal framework in the current cultural experience of the Qatari social structure. This conceptual significance could also be a reason why despite the increasing predominance of the national culture post-blockade, the survey participants still chose "family and tribal relations and networks" as the general communal bonding framework between Qataris.

Moreover, it should be noted that the Qatari society is relatively small in terms of its population size and mostly connected on familial, tribal and social-networking levels. In other words, everyone knows everyone – to an extent – or individuals are somehow connected to each other. Therefore, the connections between those Qatari individuals, as a community, are mostly perceived through a social lens, rather than a civic-political lens based on anonymity and shared nationality - as Anderson describes in the context of an imagined community (Anderson 1983:6). Hence, it could be inferred that the Qatari society is not yet socially structured in the form of an imagined community even after the blockade. The connections, terms and factors through which most people in Qatar generally belong and identify with each other are experienced as actual lived personal realities – because of the society's small size - rather than being anonymously imagined in the manner of Anderson's 'imagined community'. Belonging and indigenous social identification are mostly understood in the local mind-set not as matters of citizenship and anonymous comradeship, but rather as matters of shared memories, cultural experiences and social structures.

### **Broad-minded Perspectives of 'Qatariness'**

The blockade has substantially influenced the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience in terms of shared memories and social dynamics; thus enabling a broader

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<sup>34</sup> The Arabic term *'hasab'* describes the social status, background and honour of an individual and his/her forefathers and tribe.

<sup>35</sup> The Arabic term *'nasab'* describes the ethnicity and origins of one's paternal and maternal families and tribes.

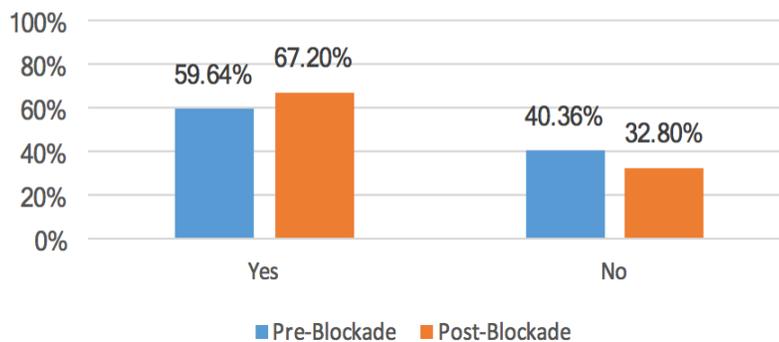
perspective of the socio-cultural composition of both the Qatari identity and community in the local collective imagination. A close analysis of the data gathered post-blockade (of the conducted online survey and of semi-structured interviews) demonstrates that this breadth in perception is evident in some aspects and dimensions of the Qatari identity discourse, and is yet to develop and manifest in others. Most of the gathered data from the online survey conducted post-blockade remained fairly similar; especially in terms of local perceptions towards the aspects of change and modernization unfolding within the Qatari identity construct (see Appendix Five). It could be argued that those – unchanged - perceptions have been built on common conceptual maps of socio-cultural ideologies and discourses, which have accumulated in the local collective imagination throughout years with shared memories and cultural experiences.

In their sociological anthology, Tim Jordan and Steve Pile (2002) argue that such accumulative common conceptual maps produce cultural elements and perceptions that become intrinsically inherent in mind-sets and lived realities, and would thus require a paradigm shift to be altered. Drawing on this assertion – as well as the data analysis outlined in the previous section - it is contended that the blockade has brought about a shock that produced new and reformulated discursive formations and socio-cultural practices in the Qatari present reality. Since a paradigm shift occurs slowly overtime, it is unlikely that the blockade - which was imposed on Qatar overnight - resulted in an immediate paradigm shift in the ideological construct of the Qatari society and state within the local imagination. Nevertheless, post-blockade data indicate that the shock brought about by the blockade stimulated particular trends of change that are gradually reshaping local perceptions around the formation and dynamics of the Qatari identity. Interestingly, the traced trends of change (outlined below) indicate that the ideological struggle – emerging amidst state efforts to establish a national culture - has been significantly reduced when looking at the social dynamics and cultural aesthetics of the current Qatari lived reality post-blockade. In other words, the blockade has provided the context within which the nationalism project could more closely achieve its goals.

Pre-blockade data analysis identified a confusion and a lack of clarity in terms of what differentiates the frameworks and constituents of the 'Qatari identity' and the

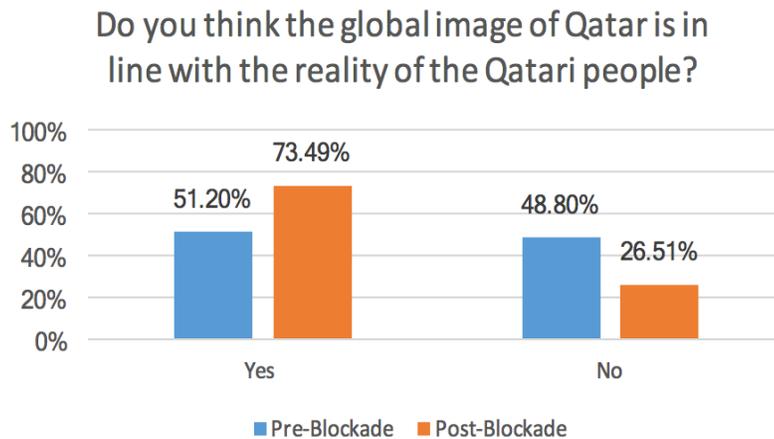
'national identity' in Qatar, even though 59.64% of the pre-blockade online survey participants indicated that the two identities are the same. The analysis revealed that even though the Qatari nationalism project (and its emergent discursive formations) prompted the assimilation of the two identities into one to foster the establishment of a Qatari national imagination, locals still perceive this newly emerging identity complex as ideologically problematic and confusing. Primarily, this ideological struggle developed due to the emergence of new identity representations and cultural aesthetics into the local cultural fabric – mainly constructed by the previously discussed national narrative and foundational myth. This, thereby, further induces the issue and question of identity; and hinders the establishment of a hegemonic Qatari national culture and imagination.

In your opinion, is 'Qatari identity' the same as 'national identity' in Qatar?



Post-blockade, the number of survey participants claiming that the 'Qatari identity' is the same as the 'national identity' increased from 59.64% to 67.20% (an increase of 7.56%). Although this is only a slight increase, data gathered from other survey questions, semi-structured interviews as well as conducted personal observations of the public and private spheres indicate that the ideological struggle has been profoundly reduced. For instance, the number of participants indicating 'yes' to the question: "Do you think that the global image of Qatar is in line with the reality of the Qatari people?" increased by 22.29% (from 51.20% pre-blockade to 73.49% post-blockade). This significant increase suggests that the image of the nation (and its multiple traditional-modern narratives) began to attain a fuller formation in the local imagination post-blockade, and is perceived with 'a halo of

disinterestedness'. In other words, this image and its multiple narratives and representations, which were perceived pre-blockade as somewhat socio-culturally artificial (see page 158), are now more accepted and acknowledged within the Qatari cultural experience than before the blockade.



It is worth noting though that since a paradigm shift did not occur (in the context of the Qatari identity discourse post-blockade), this fuller formed image of the nation in the local imagination does not mean that the whole community has embraced the socially engineered national image of the Qatari 'ideal citizen'. However, it has been observed from the online survey data that the divergent image of the traditional-modern 'ideal citizen' is being conceptually received by the society with a more accepting and broad-minded perspective of what falls under the ideological framework of 'Qatariness'. As Hall (1996:412) notes, ideological struggles are never resolved in totality but are reduced; and yet continue to discursively form and shift their focus according to the dynamics of the present reality. Thus, this acceptance of the divergent traditional-modern image could also be looked at from another perspective; considering the earlier discussions on the social regulation conceptual mechanism, which is discursively evolving with the constructed Qatari national discourse. Accordingly, it could be argued that the change in perceptions have possibly been influenced by this social mechanism. That is to say that certain concepts and images produced by the Qatari national discourse are being

acknowledged and dealt with as ‘social truths’ predominating the local cultural experience – even if some individuals or social segments still do not adopt them (ideologically).

Data about the aspects that have changed in the Qatari identity overtime remained fairly similar pre and post-blockade. However, the online survey data highlight less ‘othering’ towards the national class post-blockade. Members of this class were described, in pre-blockade survey comments, as the ‘new generation’, ‘Westernized Qataris’, ‘modern Qataris’ and were linked to issues of loss of identity and cultural change. More importantly, they were also perceived by some as unrepresentative of the Qatari culture and identity. Post-blockade, this perception has changed; members of the national class are perceived with less negativity and conservatism, as the quote below demonstrates. This is an extended comment from the post-blockade online survey responding to the question “What aspect(s), if any, of the Qatari identity have/has changed over time?”, in which the participant compellingly ties together several perceptions about Qatari youth that were generally highlighted and repeated in different forms in many other shorter comments in the same context:

“We have to be realistic and fair about the changes in the Qatari identity. There was a time in the late 60’s to early 80’s when we were overly influenced by modernity. The modern Western image was an obsession and even became the norm in some Gulf societies until today. Compared to us at their age, and to youth in other GCC countries, Qatari youth are balancing between modernity and the revival of traditions. I clearly see the effort from their side and the continuous support and encouragement from the government through many initiatives. That’s not to say that there aren’t any cultural issues, but these are expected during rapid development. And we have to accept that our youth will embrace characteristics that do not fit with our culture and might even have different ways of thinking in their views of the world, but this necessary to thrive in a globalized world. And we have seen, especially after the blockade, one success after another led by young Qataris for Qatar” (55+).

The above quote highlights an example of local acceptance of new representations and images of the national narrative, mainly manifested by members of the national class. Concerns about identity and cultural change can still be sensed in this comment – and also persisted in other similar comments - with a particular focus on Qatari youth. Yet, young Qataris – who do not fit the normative traditional image of a Qatari - are addressed with more empathy, and an understanding of the dynamics of Qatar’s modern lived reality which they are growing in. One senses that the ‘glocalized’ traditional-modern image – which is increasingly embraced by youth - is gradually perceived as a must for the prosperity of the state and society. Indeed, several interviewees – of different age ranges - pointed out (in the context of post-blockade changes in the local discourse about Qatar identity) that they have noticed that the multiplicity of representations reflected by youth is viewed now as a manifestation of how the Qatari identity is able to fit in on a global level without losing its authenticity (personal communication, 2018). Indeed, some of the younger age ranged interviewees (18-35) holding this perception asserted that this socio-cultural plurality is gradually being addressed as an element of richness in the Qatari identity, rather than being perceived as a dialectic in the identity formation process.

This change in social attitudes towards such images and representations (mainly of the national class) possibly occurred as more members of the society began to increasingly see Qatar post-blockade as a nation politically operating out of the GCC setting, and rather fitting and identifying more and more with the global community. This change in attitudes could also be interpreted as a result of a need to fit within a wider and more supportive geo-political setting than the GCC. Returning to HE Al-Attiyah’s anecdote in the introduction to this research, it could be argued that the shock of the blockade enabled the local society to finally realize and accept that they are living “a reality in which [they] are inevitably changing and modernizing on the cusp of a new era” (personal communication, 2018). Therefore, there seems to be more consideration of the macro needs of the Qatari present reality - in terms of change, progression and collaboration with others (both locally and internationally) when forming social and cultural perceptions and discernments in the context of the Qatari identity and cultural experience.

The social attitudes of inclusiveness and tolerance sensed in the earlier presented comment, as well as in most of the post-blockade survey comments, could be attributed to the national 'assabiya. As this national 'assabiya is ideologically emerging - in the form of a socio-cultural discourse - in the local present reality, it is evidently re-articulating local perceptions and framing them with more modern and pragmatic outlooks towards the Qatari cultural experience. Kenneth Thompson (1986) argues that at times of national threat or crisis there are internal ideological efforts - done both consciously and at times unconsciously - by a society to re-articulate collective conceptual maps and frameworks of its self-definition, its social perceptions and cultural memories as well as its general ideological structure of collectivity. This re-articulation process is argued to be framed by a social emotional appeal towards other individuals within the community (Thompson 1986). This emotional appeal is prompted by collective and interpersonal experiences which enhance feelings of social and cultural empathy and comradeship within a society under threat. Accordingly, this social emotional appeal towards other individuals - and their different representations – when applied in the context of the Qatari society is possibly what is limiting and regulating the 'othering' process. It is not only broadening the normative framework of 'Qatariness', but also discursively changing the formation dynamics of the public discourse on Qatari identity - as elaborated below in the context of the Qatari identity crisis debate.

### **Post-blockade Civic-Political Imagination**

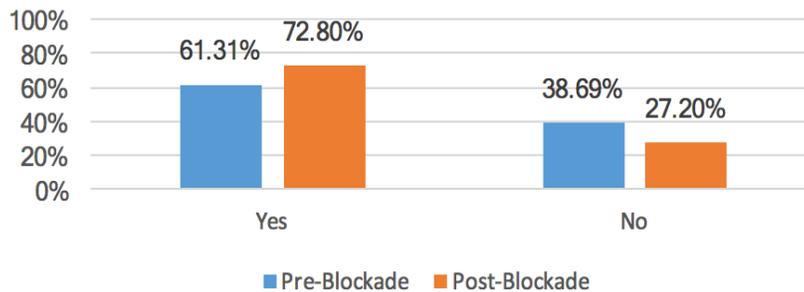
Stuart Hall (1996:415) affirms that “in periods of social tension public discourse becomes more like that of an intense social drama and that there is a shift away from the mundane concerns with means and ends that characterize the discourses of everyday life”. Drawing on Hall's position, the issues, perplexities and dichotomies in the Qatari identity discourse, which initially instigated the ideological struggle, are now perceived with more pragmatic perceptions - a notion that HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiah referred to earlier (in the introductory anecdote) as a requirement for social progression in Qatar (see page 13). This perception re-imagines the local cultural experience post-

blockade – whether consciously or unconsciously – drawing mind-sets to subjectively oversee those ‘mundane’ issues; and instead focus on social empathy and acceptance to maintain socio-cultural collectivity and cohesion in the Qatari community.

It is seen in the earlier survey participant’s comment that s/he is reflecting a more considerate and socially empathetic attitude by being “realistic and fair about the changes in the Qatari identity” (see page 192) and particularly the way Qatari youth’s identity is forming. This survey participant, similar to comments posted by the majority of other survey participants, focused on what is necessary for the state and society to thrive in a modern globalized world, instead of othering or blaming youth or other social segments within the Qatari community at a time of political crisis and threat. Moreover, such a comment still acknowledges the existence of changes and issues in the local cultural experience. This perception reflects the manifestation of the post-blockade civic-political imagination, and indicates that a modern national culture is prevailing – where social differences and cultural changes are no longer perceived as ideologically problematic; but rather perceived as pluralities that potentially enrich and conceptually bind the national community together.

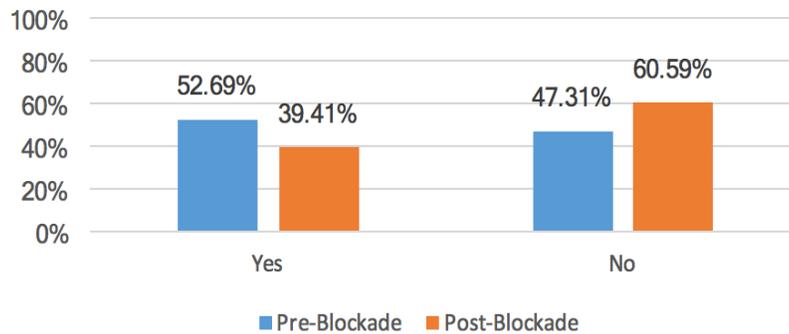
Moreover, Hall’s notion of the society shifting away from the day-to-day socio-cultural discourses and concerns during times of social tension (1996:415) could help interpret the shift in local perceptions about social homogeneity, as well as the identity crisis debate in post-blockade data. For instance, the percentage of survey respondents indicating ‘yes’ to the question “Is there a unified identity across Qatari society regardless of age, tribe and social class?” increased from 61.31% pre-blockade to 72.80% post-blockade (11.49% increase). This increase reflects a post-blockade social tendency to focus on and reflect unity and homogeneity whilst disregarding – to an extent – previous clashes and contentions within the discourse on Qatari identity.

### Is there a unified identity across Qatari society, regardless of age, tribe and social class?



Similarly, when responding to the pre-blockade survey question “Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?” 52.69% of the participants indicated ‘yes’ and 47.31% indicated ‘no’. While responses to the same survey question post-blockade changed considerably, resulting in only 39.41% of participants indicating that the Qatari identity is in crisis, and a majority of 60.59% indicating that it is not. It has been outlined earlier in chapter four that the highly polarized - pre-blockade - perceptions on the identity crisis debate were mainly shaped by participants’ perspectives of the socio-cultural outcomes of the unfolding of change and modernity in the Qatari cultural experience. Post-blockade data about the extent to which the Qatari identity has changed within the last twenty years and the aspects that have changed about it are fairly similar to pre-blockade data (see Appendix Five). Considering this similarity, while looking at post-blockade results about identity crisis, it could be argued that even though the “mundane concerns” about identity and culture remain, the local conceptual approach to those concerns seem to have changed post-blockade.

### Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?



Indeed, a close examination of survey participants' responses to the identity crisis question, as well as responses to the questions about change in the Qatari identity post-blockade, reveal that there is a shift away from delving into issues of the unfolding of modernity and the socio-cultural nuances and differences emerging in the Qatari society. Instead, there is a bigger focus on matters of solidarity and state-development in the current political circumstances of the blockade. Comments indicating that the Qatari identity is in crisis still highlighted the same pre-blockade concerns about the loss of the Arabic language and Qatari dialect, and the decreasing significance and practice of the local cultural and Islamic norms and traditions. Interestingly, however, the idea that the increasing population of expatriates in Qatar contribute to the loss of identity and language did not emerge as a significant theme in the gathered comments as it was pre-blockade. This could be due to the expanding state discourse that focuses on creating social cohesion between Qataris and expatriates.

Furthermore, a majority of comments holding the perception that the Qatari identity is in crisis addressed local identity issues from a wider global context. Those comments raised concerns and queries about the extent to which the Qatari society should interact with the other (both nationally with expatriates and internationally with the global community that Qatar and its people interact with on different levels), and how to regulate the cultural exchange and engagement processes in order to preserve the Qatari identity. In an interesting example, a survey participant (55+) explains that:

“Currently with the blockade, there is much more engagement and openness to the rest of the world. This will surely have its repercussions on the Qatari identity and society. We need to be careful and direct with this openness so that it benefits the state and society without influencing the local identity” (anonymous 55+).

Similarly, comments indicating that the Qatari identity is not in crisis also raised the concern about cultural exchange. Those survey participants argued that even though the Qatari identity is not in crisis, and is arguably much more consolidated due to the blockade, there still needs to be awareness of the socio-cultural limits and parameters of embracing modernity and engaging with other cultures. For instance, a participant (35-55) states that: “The question right now is not whether the Qatari identity is in crisis or not, but rather in what ways will the Qatari identity adapt with the global community without losing its essence”. Another survey participant (35-55) comments:

“I see much more solidarity and collectivity amongst us since the blockade, and even more awareness of the importance of preserving culture and heritage. Some of us need to accept that modernity and globalization will continue to unfold worldwide, and will definitely lead to some sort of cultural change with time.”

Another group of the survey participants, disagreeing that the Qatari identity is in crisis, proposed that there needs to be a higher awareness of the importance of socio-cultural progression and global engagement considering the current political situation of Qatar. Indeed, a participant (18-35) expounds:

“considering the false accusations directed at Qatar by the blockading countries, we need to be active on the global level and in fact increase global engagement – not only to build Qatar’s case, but also to find ourselves a prominent place within the global community politically, culturally and economically”.

Wallerstein’s (1984:166) modern nationalism notion of ‘assimilation into the universal’ and ‘adhering to the particular’ is generally evident in post-blockade

perceptions. Indeed, participants who agreed and those who disagreed that the Qatari identity is in crisis emphasized the preservation of the local elements alongside engaging with global elements. This can be interpreted as an indication that the model of modern nationalism is progressively developing in the local imagination post-blockade.

A close examination of the comments generally shows that the previously discussed tacit social tensions and inner cultural layers of power struggles and complexities that shaped the local debate about identity crisis – pre-blockade - are being overlooked by locals, to focus more on maintaining social solidarity and homogeneity. This traced perceptive change in the local conceptual approach to such socio-cultural concerns in the post-blockade Qatari cultural experience is discursively re-shaping the dynamics of the public discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process. Below is an in-depth example about naturalized Qatari citizens which illuminates this point. It shows how the blockade has not only prompted a change in social attitudes towards this social segment, but also changed local perceptions about their role and positioning within the construct of the Qatari identity.

Pre-blockade survey data analysis outlined two main social perceptions about naturalized citizens in the context of the Qatari identity discourse. On one hand, there were viewpoints that naturalized citizens are benefiting from the state's resources, and are not putting enough effort to merge and integrate into the local society and its cultural fabric. Their belonging and 'Qatariness' were regarded to be 'artificial'. On the other hand, there was also the contention that the – native - Qatari society is very closely-knit, and that it is difficult for naturalized Qataris (or even for any non-local) to fit in and fully understand its cultural dynamics. Not only have such perceptions diminished in post-blockade gathered data, but also, if one observes post-blockade socio-cultural aesthetics, it appears noticeable that long-standing collective conceptual maps of self-definition and communal imagination are being re-articulated. In other words, those conceptual maps and ideological frameworks have expanded to comprise more of the Qatari nationalism project's traditional-modern narratives, images and representations.

For instance, when Qatar won the 2019 Asian Football Cup which was held in the United Arab Emirates (January – February 2019), there was a social media campaign from – some – blockading countries mocking the Qatari national team for comprising naturalized members. Information about each of those team member's countries of origin was disseminated. As a reaction, Qatari nationals referred to those football players in social circles, traditional and social media, and during some of the conducted interviews as members of the Qatari society. Qataris emphasized their pride in those team members and expressed gratitude for each member's participation and dedication towards accomplishing a national achievement for Qatar. More importantly, locals expressed their pride and admiration of how the team ideally reflected the Qatari identity and mind-set when they were faced with disrespect during the tournaments - when booed by UAE spectators during the Qatari national anthem, and when hurled with water bottles and slippers after winning against the UAE team. Those team members were referred to as prime exemplars of Qatari manners and morals within informal social circles and local media in Qatar after the game.

It is remarkable that these naturalized citizens – generally perceived as outsiders and as unreflective of the Qatari identity pre-blockade by some in the society - are perceived post-blockade as role models and exemplar representatives of the Qatari identity and society. Hence, it could be argued that the national '*assabiya*' has not only broadened the framework of 'Qatariness', but also the normative collective conceptual maps of the representations and images employed to define 'Qatariness'. Yet, one should also take into consideration here that such individuals are not the average naturalized Qatari. Rather, they are considered 'stars' that contributed to Qatari success, and so part of their social 'status' and 'value' in society possibly comes from their ability to contribute to this success.

This change in attitude shows that the rising ideology of national '*assabiya*' is gradually expanding the exclusivity of the Qatari collective (from being exclusively built on blood and lineage as essential belonging factors), to include all Qatari citizens through national membership and social empathy within the Qatari population post-blockade. It also shows the assimilation of the national discourse - and the representations of the

national class - into the local collective imagination. Interviewees – of different age ranges and professional backgrounds who can be regarded as social engineers and members of the national class - implied that membership in the Qatari collective is not solely a matter of ethnicity, origins, or length of stay in the country. Rather, membership and belonging, according to those interviewees, are built on an individual's participation and dedication towards the betterment and advancement of the state and society. Seeing that Qataris considered those naturalized team members as part of the Qatari collective, and publicly acknowledged their reflection of the Qatari identity, indicates that the post-blockade ideology of national 'assabiya is indeed enabling the collective imagination of a hegemonic national culture.

Thus far, it can be concluded that the blockade has heralded a turning-point in the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience. The previous data analysis chapters outlined a genealogical problematization of the local debates and dialectics about the Qatari identity within the context, settings and dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project. This problematization process identified an intricate ideological struggle emerging amidst social engineering efforts to unify and nationalize the local collective imagination. Arguably, this ideological struggle hindered the hegemony of the national culture and the Qatari national identity, and exacerbated the question of identity. Yet, post-blockade data outlined in this chapter corroborate the notion that the blockade not only enhanced the process of assimilation between the Qatari identity and the national identity (previously instigated by the Qatari nationalism project), but also turned the national culture hitherto into a 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1995). The notion of a 'regime of truth' (also 'discursive regime') was first introduced by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault 1995) in the context of the social and ideological systems that framed the Western penal institutions during the modern age. Foucault explains that:

“Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and

procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault & Rabinow 1984:72-73).

Due to the shock brought about by the blockade, the socio-cultural dynamics and dialectics within the Qatari identity discourse were re-articulated alongside the emergence of national *'assabiya* and a broader local perspective of *'Qatariness'*. Those newly emerging discourses manifested in the form of myriad episodes of socio-cultural aesthetic settings, which seem to have cultivated a national collective imagination – through which different social segments and mind-sets of Qataris can conceptually engage in a present lived reality. This national imagination resembles a *'regime of truth'* as it discursively emerged as a “system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements” (Foucault 2003:113-114) within the post-blockade present reality.

Although a paradigm shift did not occur per se, nevertheless, the national culture (and its divergent constituents) has come to be acknowledged and recognized as the predominant ideological system of producing discourses and meanings, which function as *'truth'* in the Qatari cultural experience. Hence, it is seen that the contending perceptions and dialectics that shape the discourse on identity, and respectively the question of identity, are gradually changing post-blockade. The relatively minor statistical changes reflect a lag between the weakening of older cultural and socio-political ideologies and discourses, and the strengthening of the national discourse and its ideologies. It is inferred that the blockade has, so far, supported the emergence and gradual prevalence of a hegemonic national culture – which was initiated by the Qatari nationalism project – and enabled more and more of the aesthetic and ideological manifestations of the national discourse to have about them a *'halo of disinterestedness'*.

However, it should be considered that the current situation of the blockade might have influenced mind-sets to be overly patriotic and empathetic towards others in the Qatari community; therefore, the new and re-articulated post-blockade discursive

formations must be traced over time. This would potentially enable a better understanding of the ideological changes that intrinsically found their place in the Qatari imagination and socio-cultural fabric post-blockade. Also, this delineation would highlight and distinguish the other discursive formations that may have emerged as unconscious reactions to the blockade, which could be temporary and disappear with time. Following is the final concluding chapter which briefly outlines the key findings of this study, and identifies wider local and global perceptive frameworks that are entangled within - and therefore influence - the dialectics shaping the discourse on Qatari identity formation and the local question of identity.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

This study endeavoured to deconstruct the present reality of the Qatari cultural experience and understand the dynamics and dialectics shaping the discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process, in an attempt to problematize the local question of identity. Problematization, as a Foucauldian genealogical inquiry method, seeks to better understand reified social topics, phenomena or questions by viewing them from re-conceptualized vantage points (Garland 2014:377). Such re-conceptualization illustrates how and why the phenomenon in question was discursively constituted in the present reality. Hence, this study aimed to problematize and genealogically understand the constitution and emergence of the question of identity, and what turned the discourse on Qatari identity into a contemporary problematic debate. This problematization of the Qatari identity, its formation process and the general discourse around it began with a premise that – based on my own observations and understandings - there may not be an identity crisis in Qatar. As a point of departure, however, this study presumed that there is something problematic within the local cultural experience, which is, in turn, discursively inducing the contending perceptions and dialectics that currently form the local discourse on Qatari identity.

This study has examined the local question of identity and the social dialectics and ideological struggles unfolding in response to the Qatari nationalism project's social engineering endeavours to construct a Qatari national identity and establish a hegemonic national culture. Accordingly, the current social and cultural capitals, undercurrents and changes in the Qatari identity, in particular, and in the local cultural experience, in general, were traced and deconstructed from the perspective of the local society, in order to

understand the dynamics, processes and socio-cultural discursive formations emerging in the local present reality. This problematization endeavour identified key paradoxes and perplexities that shape the discourse on the Qatari identity and its formation process.

The perplexities in the local understandings and perceptions of the constructed national identity and the indigenous social collective Qatari identity were disentangled early in this research. This disentangling unlocked the paradoxical relationship between the two identities, and enabled an understanding of the Qatari society's ontology of collectiveness and belonging. Essentially, the cultural assimilation endeavours of the Qatari nationalism project have compounded the two identities into a newly emerging Qatari identity construct. Although this new complex identity construct is progressively predominating the local socio-cultural fabric, it is perceived locally as problematic and confusing.

The data analysis highlighted several manifestations of social change which are also perceived as problematic, and arguably inducing the local question of identity. Indeed, tacit social fractures and conceptual gaps have emerged within the Qatari society - particularly between individuals involved in the current progressions and dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project and those who are not. The rise of the national class is one of the most important manifestations of social change. This class appeared to challenge the normative representations of the Qatari identity as well as the frameworks of collectivity and commonality in the present reality. Deconstructing those fractures and gaps has mapped out an intricate multi-dimensional and on-going ideological struggle, developing alongside the nationalism project's efforts to establish an overarching national culture and a unified Qatari national identity. This on-going ideological struggle involves the articulation, disarticulation and re-articulation of ideologies, representations and discourses in the local collective imagination and cultural experience amidst the nationalism project's social engineering endeavours. The data gathered, from the conducted online survey and semi-structured interviews, suggest that those endeavours have intensified the question of identity. In turn, this has hindered the establishment of a hegemonic Qatari culture and a national imagination.

The unprecedented occurrence of the blockade, in June 2017, created a unique socio-cultural setting that enabled the national discourse to prevail as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault 2003:113-114); hence supporting the establishment of a hegemonic national culture. The debates and dialectics within the discourse on Qatari identity during the blockade have centred their focus on collectivity and reflecting a modern Qatari national identity; thus, so far, reducing the ideological struggles and contentions that form the local question of identity. In other words, post-blockade data indicate that the blockade succeeded in making the struggles and fractures – that were identified pre-blockade – less conspicuous in the Qatari present reality. However, the data interpretation also corroborates that the Qatari society still operates within the particularities of a traditional framework. Therefore, it is argued that although the unfolding of the blockade has heralded a turning-point in the Qatari present reality, and brought about key changes in local perceptions towards the Qatari identity (and the framework of 'Qatariness'), the national civic-political imagination is yet to gain full hegemony through a paradigm shift.

Drawing on the data analysis and discussions of the local debates, perceptions and discourses around Qatari identity, it is evident that the question of identity in Qatar essentially consists of several entangled questions of socio-cultural struggles and liminality. Those questions relate to issues of modernity, change and progression within the Qatari cultural experience and lived reality. What further complicates the Qatari identity discourse, and makes the identity formation process so problematic and dialectical in local perceptions, is that those questions are formulated and posed by Qataris holding different mind-sets, perceptions and visions of the current socio-cultural dynamics. In addition, those questions are all entangled within the framework of Qatari identity.

The multiplicity of those questions and the diversity of the individuals who pose them contribute to turning the Qatari identity itself into a debatable issue and a problematic conceptual phenomenon. In other words, the local debates (whether academic and formal discussions presented in media and in the public sphere or informal

social discussions) have discursively constructed the current discourse on Qatari identity, through the different questions and the contending positions they derive from. The issue is that those myriad questions and socio-cultural concerns and perplexities tend to be looked at and tackled all as one (i.e. within the framework of the question or issue of identity); without attempting to disentangle and deconstruct each within this wider socially constructed discourse.

The literature review chapter mapped out the general frameworks of the descending discourses and ideologies from the past and the newly emerging ones, which continue to shape the local mind-sets and collective memories, as well as the cultural experiences, systems and perceptions in the present reality. Accordingly, the data analysis chapters built on those frameworks and outlined the normative theoretical, historical and social lenses which form the local collective memory and define the political and socio-cultural settings of the Qatari lived reality. The data interpretation and discussions revealed traces and dimensions of some of the questions and issues that contribute to the formation of the wider identity question in Qatar. As discussed in chapter four, the current issues of identity formation are particularly linked to the unfolding of modernity, and the region's post-imperial realities and the contemporary neo-colonial processes as well as the unfolding of globalization.

One of the first questions of identity that becomes apparent is the question (or issue) of the association of modernization with the West in the mainstream local perception. On one hand, modernization is perceived locally to be somewhat brought about, or at least facilitated, by the West - mainly considered as the 'other' in the conventional local perception. On the other hand, however, data analysis – in chapters four and five – reveal that there are multiple societal and state-led efforts to resist and restrict it from influencing the Qatari cultural fabric. This association between modernization and Western domination (along with processes of globalization and acculturation) seems to persist as a descending discourse from the past into the present lived reality.

This association discourse has particularly framed the local identity crisis debate, and the paradoxes about the aspects of change in the Qatari identity. Hence, it is pertinent to disentangle the question of modernization from the wider local question of identity; and to ask how modernization (and its influences) is being imagined and dealt with in the local society. To shed light on this question's position within the discourse on Qatari identity, it is critical to consider that there is a resonating discourse in the local society on the persistence of cultural norms, practices and traditions. However, throughout the data analysis and discussions a discursive social perception also emerged highlighting that certain aspects, relating to cultural norms, practices and traditions are changing. Those on-going changes are due to processes and influences both intentionally instigated by the Qatari nationalism project, as well as those unintentionally unfolding due to modernization, Westernization and globalization. Therefore, disentangling this discourse from the question of identity, would potentially enable a clearer study of the Qatari identity and its formation. This could be done through a critical exploration of modernization in a local context, and the role it played in shaping the Qatari identity. Such an exploration should set its focus beyond the boundaries of collective historical memories and descending discourses about the unfolding of modernity and its association to Western domination and the prevalence of globalization in the local cultural experience.

Furthermore, in order for modernization and globalization to be critically approached in the context of Qatari identity formation, these factors need to be accepted and tackled locally as phenomena of the contemporary world. In other words, they should be understood as global realities that each society of this era needs to face, rather than Western processes and discourses imposed on the local cultural experience. For instance, such notions could be emphasized through local media as well as educational programmes and curricula. Another interesting and related question that also needs to be disentangled from the question of Qatari identity is how influenced local perceptions and mind-sets are by bigger global debates and questions associated with globalization. This question would consider issues such as nationalism and national identities in a global world, identity crisis debates and issues of cultural homogenization vs. processes of acculturation etc. It is important to evaluate the extent to which such global debates,

questions and Western-centric theoretical lenses are applicable in the local context, considering the nature of the local cultural fabric and the exerted state-policies to protect it. And, in turn, researchers need to ask how do these lenses fit, and what role do they play, within the construct of the local identity question and the general discourse on Qatari identity and its formation.

Looking back at the Qatari identity crisis debate conducted early in this study, the criticalness of such evaluation when approaching the Qatari identity discourse emerges clearly. For instance, local perceptions surfaced claiming that the whole identity crisis debate is a Western construct. Individuals holding this perception argued that it is not evident nor applicable in the local settings; and is uncritically interpolated by some individuals who are influenced by the spread and prevalence of such global theories and debates in the media and academic literature. This is a partially limited perception of the situation, yet it demonstrates that such 'Western' debates – as theoretical or conceptual frameworks - are indeed influencing perceptions about Qatari identity formation; and, simultaneously, shaping the local discourse on Qatari identity. This is also the case when it comes to disentangling the construct of nationalism as a notion from the local identity question. Although this study attempted to understand and distinguish between the local understandings of the Qatari collective identity and the Qatari national identity, and have identified an on-going assimilation process between them, the construct of nationalism remains a problematic one in the local identity debate. Therefore, it is critical to further investigate and understand the different local perceptions and understandings of nationalism within the local identity discourse (considering local and global identity politics from a non-Western context), and how those differences and confusions are entangled in the formation of the Qatari identity question.

It is also important to investigate and understand the nature of the unfolding of the global element in Qatar, how local individuals are receiving it, and in which ways has it influenced the Qatari identity formation process. The global element here refers to various processes and manifestations of globalization – such as notions of global homogeneity, cosmopolitanism as well as notions of individualization and diversity. This research has

shown that while social engineering efforts are exerted to 'glocalize' the Qatari individual and the local cultural experience, the relationship between the global and the local remains somewhat tense – as discussed in chapter six. Indeed, this also appears to be the case between local perceptions on the processes of modernization versus traditionalization. This tension is linked to the issues of the generational conceptual gaps, social fractures and ideological struggles, in addition to the differences in perceptions and future outlooks (from pragmatism to conservatism). Such issues were raised, in the earlier discussions, as parts of the ideological struggle and the local socio-cultural dialectics within the wider discourse on Qatari identity.

The data interpretation indicate that the cultural, ideological and social changes of a contemporary globalized world are just beginning to keep pace (as unfolding processes in the Qatari present reality) with the structural and economic developments, which have been unfolding for the past three to four decades in Qatar. In other words, structural and economic developments have been more easily integrated in the Qatari lived reality than the cultural, ideological and social changes. The tensions between the global and the local, and similarly between the modern and the traditional - resulting in ideological perplexities and dialectics - are essentially emerging along the unfolding of those processes and social changes. Such tensions are slightly settling with the Qatari nationalism project's cultural assimilation efforts and the re-articulation of local perspectives on 'Qatariness' amidst the prevalence of the traditional-modern aesthetics and discourses. However, as Hall (1996:163) contends, the nature of a cultural experience (and the struggles and conceptual interactions within it) is inevitably influenced by the changes and the dynamics of a society and its lived reality. Drawing on this idea, Qatar is on the cusp of more changes and transformations as it approaches hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, whilst continuing its fast paced launch of developmental schemes and projects to realize the 2030 Qatar National Vision. Thus, the Qatari lived reality, and the society itself (and its cultural experience), will continue to be at a liminal stage as more and more discourses, ideologies, cultural aesthetics and social norms will emerge and interact (and possibly diverge) with descendant discourses and

ideologies of the past – hence, manifesting more ideological struggles, dialectics and social fractures.

Elaborating on the notion that the society itself (and its cultural experience) will continue to be at a liminal stage, it is worth returning to the observation pointed out earlier by HE Dr. Sheikha Abdullah Al-Misnad, former President of Qatar University and Member of the Supreme Education Council (2003-2015), as discussed in chapter four. Al-Misnad applied Anthony Giddens' (1990:21) notions of modern transformation and social 'disembedding' in a local Qatari context. Her observation about the Qatari cultural experience witnessing the concurrent unfolding of three different layers of time is interesting, as it depicts the situation of multiple modernities unfolding in the Qatari present reality (see page 94). Indeed, the gathered data highlight that the Qatari society is experiencing rapid changes and multiple elements of 'pre-modernity', 'modernity' and 'post-modernity' all at the same time. The theory of multiple modernities holds that there are varied paths to the unfolding of modernity (that are not necessarily associated with 'Western' homogenization), contending that societies around the world experience modernities differently (Eisenstadt 2000). Applying this notion – in a smaller scale – to the Qatari society, it could be argued that different segments of the society are undergoing different experiences, changes and levels of modernity and progression. The differences in their experiences depend on their ages, cultural and educational backgrounds, their involvement in the state's modernizing efforts and their exposure to the rest of the world. This complex situation continues to induce social fractures, local concerns and ideological struggles, due to the juxtaposition of the local and the global (and similarly the modern and the traditional) in Qatar as more changes unfold. Yet, it also paradoxically challenges the concept that change is a natural element of social progression through time in the local Qatari setting.

This conceptual dichotomy (between the global vs. the local, modern vs. traditional, old vs. new) in the Qatari cultural experience plays a role in the discursive formation of the widespread perception that the local identity and culture are threatened by rapid change and progression. This perception is one of the key components within

the wider construct of the Qatari identity question. It is thus essential to, firstly, disentangle and distinguish the question of change from the question of identity. And, secondly, to deconstruct it in order to understand the effects of change and the acculturation processes accompanying it on Qatari identity formation. It is also pertinent to raise questions about the local understandings of and perceptions towards manifestations of change, differences and diversities in the local society. Such questions would also enable a clearer understanding of how identity, culture and society are conceptualized by Qatari individuals.

It should also be taken into consideration that history and the local approach to perceiving and tackling history, seem to form an integral part of the question of change in local perceptions. The ongoing processes of traditionalization and the state-led heavy emphasis on the 'revival' of Qatari history and heritage play a role in creating the conceptual tensions and ideological struggles which consequently accumulate within the framework of the wider Qatari identity question. Therefore, it is necessary to delve further into local perceptions of the aspects of change in the Qatari identity, culture and society as a gateway to understanding how elements of the past (i.e. history and heritage) are imagined and conceptually approached in the local cultural experience.

The discussions presented in this research have shown that there are generally two contending perceptions, or more broadly two conceptual approaches and attitudes towards change and elements of the past. Firstly, there is the traditional (modernist) approach which is concerned with fixation and stability within the construct of Qatari identity – where manifestations of change are problematic, and thus further accentuate the question of identity. This approach reflects a nostalgia for the past and a desire to maintain elements of it in the present reality. Whilst, there is also an opposing (post-modernist) perspective that is against the use of history and heritage as tools for fixing the Qatari identity; and instead is concerned with the evolvment of both the identity and the society. What is problematic for such a perspective is that the identity's fluidity and formation process are limited within a constantly evolving cultural experience; hence, also, accentuating the question of identity. The two perspectives need to be

deconstructed and problematized through an empirical study in order to re-conceptualize the roles of change, history and heritage (and the involved agents) in constructing the Qatari identity question.

The above posed questions are only some of many constantly evolving entangled questions and dialectics, which continue to shape the Qatari identity question and discursively form the social perplexities and ideological contestations within the Qatari identity discourse. This research has sought to problematize the Qatari identity question and the discourse of identity formation by tackling it from the perspective of the Qatari society, with a focus on the Qatari nationalism project. Essentially, the changes and the divergent discourses and processes emerging and descending in the local cultural experience - amidst the social engineering dynamics of the Qatari nationalism project – have converged to produce the current discourse on Qatari identity and the dialectics and questions within it. The constant changes and progressions in the Qatari present reality inevitably put the cultural experience in a state of liminality; and, in turn, impel the continuous discursive formation of the identity question and the dialectics of identity formation. Therefore, studying such discursive formations, processes and ideological struggles requires an awareness and a consideration of the social, political, cultural and economic contexts and settings of the Qatari present reality within the study.

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## Appendix One

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UCL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  
ACADEMIC SERVICES



28<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Professor Robert Carter  
UCL Qatar

Dear Professor Carter

**Notification of Ethical Approval**

**Re: Ethics Application 10333/001: Exploring the dialectic of the Qatari identity formation on the verge of modernization**

I am pleased to confirm in my capacity as Chair of the UCL Research Ethics Committee that I have ethically approved your study until **26<sup>th</sup> October 2019**.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

**Notification of Amendments to the Research**

You must seek Chair's approval for proposed amendments (to include extensions to the duration of the project) to the research for which this approval has been given. Ethical approval is specific to this project and must not be treated as applicable to research of a similar nature. Each research project is reviewed separately and if there are significant changes to the research protocol you should seek confirmation of continued ethical approval by completing the 'Amendment Approval Request Form':  
<http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/responsibilities.php>

**Adverse Event Reporting – Serious and Non-Serious**

It is your responsibility to report to the Committee any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to participants or others. The Ethics Committee should be notified of all serious adverse events via the Ethics Committee Administrator ([ethics@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@ucl.ac.uk)) immediately the incident occurs. Where the adverse incident is unexpected and serious, the Chair or Vice-Chair will decide whether the study should be terminated pending the opinion of an independent expert. For non-serious adverse events the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Ethics Committee should again be notified via the Ethics Committee Administrator within ten days of the incident occurring and provide a full written report that should include any amendments to the participant information sheet and study protocol. The Chair or Vice-Chair will confirm that the incident is non-serious and report to the Committee at the next meeting. The final view of the Committee will be communicated to you.

**Final Report**

At the end of the data collection element of your research we ask that you submit a very brief report (1-2 paragraphs will suffice) which includes in particular issues relating to the ethical implications of the research i.e. issues obtaining consent, participants withdrawing from the research, confidentiality, protection of participants from physical and mental harm etc.

Academic Services, 1-19 Torrington Place (9<sup>th</sup> Floor),  
University College London  
Tel: +44 (0)20 3108 8216  
Email: [ethics@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@ucl.ac.uk)  
<http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/>

Yours sincerely



**Dr Lynn Ang**  
Interim Chair, UCL Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Maryam Al-Shamian

**Appendix Two**

Note: Arabic forms available upon request

**Informed Consent Form for Participants**

**Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.**

Title of Project (working title): **Exploring the dialectic of the Qatari identity formation on the verge of modernization**

**This study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee (Project ID Number): 10333/001**

**Professor Robert Carter, Principal Investigator**

**Email: r.carter@ucl.ac.uk**

**Maryam Al-Shamlan, Mphil Researcher, UCL Qatar**

**Email: m.al-shamlan.12@ucl.ac.uk Tel: (974) 5587 0055**

**Postal address: Qatar Foundation**

**C/O UCL Qatar**

**Georgetown Building**

**Education City**

**Doha-Qatar**

Thank you for your interest in taking part in my research. Before you agree to take part, please read the information below about your participation in this research project.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask me before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

### **Participant's Statement**

I have read the notes written above and the Information Sheet, and understand what the study involves. I also understand that by agreeing to participate I am willing to:

Please tick the points that apply to you below

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be recorded
- Allow my words to be quoted directly
- Give permission for my name and institutional affiliation to be used in connection with any words I have said or information I have provided. Please note that in the case that you prefer to keep your identity anonymous when responding to specific questions this will be respected, and you just need to inform the researcher during the interview.
- I request that all my responses to be presented anonymously but I allow my words to be connected with my institutional affiliation (but not the title of my position).
- I understand that if I decide at any time that I wish to withdraw from participating in this research project, I can notify the researcher and withdraw immediately without being disadvantaged in any way and your responses will not be used in the

research. I understand also that I may choose to skip questions that I am uncomfortable answering.

- I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I approve and understand that the information provided during this interview will be used in the final report and in future academic publications.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

## Information Sheet for Participants

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for taking time to contribute to my research project. I wish to take this opportunity to tell you about the scope and purpose of my research, as well as your role and rights in participation.

### **Details of Study:**

This research project studies the concept of the Qatari identity: its forms, the changes and the manner in which it is being shaped in modern day Qatar. The study investigates whether Qatar is ultimately moving towards embracing nationalism in its Western sense or whether a unique sense of nationalism is being cultivated by the state. The question of identity in Qatar will be addressed through studying the emergence of Qatar Foundation as a possible agent of change having a role in shaping the Qatari society. The research aims to discover what role QF has played in the state's social engineering process and how much that role accords with social perceptions of Qataris.

### **How you were selected:**

You have been selected as a potential participant based on your work and the position you occupy within Qatar Foundation or other cultural and educational development institutions in Qatar, as well as your knowledge of and contribution to the fields of identity, social and cultural development in Qatar.

### **Your role and rights:**

Your participation in the interview session will last approximately one hour.

You will be asked several questions that:

- 1) Explore your viewpoints, knowledge and understandings about the formation of the Qatari identity.
- 2) Explore your perceptions about Qatar Foundation being a possible agent of change and development in society.

Your responses will be recorded to be compiled and analysed with responses provided by other participants.

Your participation in the interview session is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it at any time; moreover, choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. You may also choose to refrain from answering certain questions and choose to skip to the next question. If you are uncertain about any aspect of your participation, please do not hesitate to contact me for clarification.

Please be informed that any information you provide will be treated with confidentiality and will only be used with your approval. If you approve, your name and institutional affiliation will be connected to your responses when used in the research. If you request that certain information, comments or perceptions you provide during the interview session shall be kept confidential and not connected to your name or institutional affiliation, I guarantee that I shall respect your request. **All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.**

Please discuss the information above with others if you wish or ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in my research.**

### **Appendix Three**

Note: Arabic questions available upon request

#### Sample Semi-structured interview Questions

- 1- A large number of institutions in Qatar are contributing to the development and enrichment of the Qatari society.  
Are you involved in any projects that contribute to this effort? Please tell me about them.
  
- 2- The Qatari identity and the changes it has undergone have been a recurrent topic of discussion socially and in the media.
  - A) What do you understand by the expression 'Qatari identity', and what, in your opinion, are the characteristics of this identity?
  - B) In your opinion is 'Qatari identity' the same as 'national identity'?
  - C) In what ways do you think the Qatari national identity has changed during the last two decades?
  
- 3- The question of Qatari identity has been raised and discussed quite widely, with some people using the term 'identity crisis' while others disagree completely.
  - A) What is your opinion on the issue of identity in Qatar?
  - B) How and why do you think this discussion began?
  
- 4- The state is making tremendous efforts to create a sense of nationalism and nationhood. Similarly, efforts are put into branding Qatar with a unique image to give it a prominent place regionally and globally.
  - A) Do you think the image of Qatar is in line with the image and reality of the Qatari people?
  - B) To reach its anticipated image, Qatar is implementing several very different initiatives, some with global outlooks and others with a more internal focus

- (traditional). Do these efforts contradict or support each other when building the Qatari identity? How relevant are global project to the Qatari identity?
- C) In your opinion, is Qatar striving to recreate or preserve the Qatari identity and culture? Please explain why.
- D) Do you see the Qatari nationalism project as a state project or a grass-roots community initiative that the state supports? Please elaborate.
- 5- It has been argued that a number of strategies in the Qatari nationalism project have been proffered and franchised from the West, while others see these strategies as needs-driven characteristics of a modernizing state.
- A) What is your opinion on this issue?
- 6- Many of the government and private projects are keen to include the 2030 Qatar National Vision in their visions and strategies. Similarly, QNV became a crucial element in almost all dialogues relating to future aspirations, cultural, educational, economic and even infrastructural developments in the state.
- A) How aware and knowledgeable do you think Qataris are of the QNV and the strategies implemented to achieve it?
- B) To what extent do you think the implementation of QNV and its strategies play a role in shaping the national identity?
- 7- Art, culture, sports, health and higher education are sectors that Qatar has heavily invested in during the last two decades.
- A) Why do you think the state has prioritized these sectors?
- B) Do such sectors fit into the framework of building the national identity?

## **Appendix Four**

Note: Arabic questions available upon request

Survey questions to be distributed digitally

This survey is conducted to gather data for Mphil research project being currently carried out at UCL Qatar. The project investigates the Qatari identity, particularly its forms, and the ways in which it is being shaped by state policies and semi-governmental institutions in modern day Qatar.

The survey contains 11 multiple-choice questions (with space to add further comment or remarks if you wish to do so) that seek to explore your perspectives on this topic. It should take you about 10 minutes to complete the survey. Please note that your answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous and they will be compiled and analysed as part of the research.

I truly appreciate your time in answering this survey. Thank you!

I have read the information above about the questionnaire

- Yes
- No

1- Nationality:

- Qatari
- Resident

2-Age:

- 18-35
- 35- 55
- 55+

3- Occupation:

- Student
- Working in public sector
- Working in private sector
- Other

4- The Qatari identity and the changes it has undergone have been a recurrent topic of discussion, both socially and in the media.

A) People in Qatar generally relate to each other in terms of:

-Their shared nationality

-Family and tribal relations and networks.

-Other factors, such as social class, employment and/or education.

Comment box provided for this question

B) Is there a unified identity across Qatari society, regardless of age, tribe and social class?

-Yes

-No

C) In your opinion is 'Qatari identity' the same as 'national identity' in Qatar?

-Yes

-No

D) To what extent do you think Qatari nationals know about their country's history and heritage? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being Minimum knowledge, and 5 being Complete knowledge)

E) To what extent has identity in Qatar changed within the last 20 years?

Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being minor change and 5 being major change)

F) What aspect(s), if any, of the Qatari identity have/has changed over time?

- The identity as a whole

- Social bonds

- Cultural norms, values and traditions

- All

- None

Comment box provided for this question

5-The question of Qatari identity has been raised and discussed quite widely in media, academia and social circles, with some people using the term 'identity crisis' while others disagree completely.

A) Do you think the Qatari identity is in crisis?

-Yes

-No

Comment box provided for this question

6-The state is putting tremendous efforts into branding Qatar with a unique image to give it a prominent place, locally, regionally and globally.

A) Do you think the global image of Qatar is in line with the reality of the Qatari people?

-Yes

-No

7- The state is making great efforts to create a sense of nationalism and nationhood.

A) Do such state efforts recreate or preserve the Qatari identity and culture?

-Recreate

-Preserve

B) The current efforts to foster Qatari identity started as:

- A governmental initiative

- Grass-roots community initiative supported by the state

C) Some of the state's projects have a traditional outlook, while others have a cosmopolitan, global outlook. Do you think these projects work with each other or contradict each other when it comes to shaping identity?

-Work with each other

-Contradict each other

Comment box provided for this question

8- To what extent is Qatar National Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity?

Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 extremely effective)

9- To what extent is National Sports Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity?

Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 extremely effective)

10- How well informed are Qataris about the *Qatar National Vision 2030* and the various state development strategies?

1 Complete knowledge

2 average knowledge

3 Minimum knowledge

11- Do you think that the cultural and educational initiatives, strategies and events in Qatar have been franchised from the West, and overly influenced by an era of globalization?

-Yes

-No

Comment box provided for this question

## **Appendix Five**

Survey Responses from April 2017 (Pre-Blockade)

Total participants: 300

Survey Responses from October 2018 (Post-Blockade)

Total participants: 500

### **Age:**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
18-35	64.88%	65.42%
35-55	32.14%	31.78%
55+	2.98%	2.80%

### **Occupation:**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Student	38.10%	24.60%
Working in public sector	29.76%	48.94%
Working in private sector	11.31%	11.70%
Other	20.83%	14.76%

**1- The Qatari identity and the changes it has undergone have been a recurrent topic of discussion, both socially and in the media.**

**A) People in Qatar generally relate to each other in terms of:**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Their shared nationality	8.93%	14.55%
Family and tribal relations and networks.	69.64%	62.62%
Other factors, such as social class, employment and/or education.	21.43%	22.83%

**1B) Is there a unified identity across Qatari society, regardless of age, tribe and social class?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Yes	61.31%	72.80%
No	38.69%	27.20%

**1C) In your opinion, is 'Qatari identity' the same as 'national identity' in Qatar?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Yes	59.64%	67.20%
No	40.36%	32.80%

**1D) To what extent do you think Qataris know about their country's history and heritage? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being minimum knowledge and 5 being complete knowledge)**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
1	2.41%	3.99%
2	13.86%	10.39%
3	40.36%	39.81%
4	28.31%	30.63%
5	15.06%	15.18%

**1E) To what extent has identity in Qatar changed within the last 20 years? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being minor change and 5 being major change)**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
1	3.57%	2.93%
2	8.33%	9.45%
3	33.33%	30.76%
4	35.12%	28.76%
5	19.65%	28.10%

**1F) What aspect(s), if any, of the Qatari identity have/has changed over time?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
The identity as a whole	1.79%	3.35%
Social bonds	9.52%	10.86%
Cultural norms, values and traditions	44.64%	39.41%
All	35.12%	40.48%
None	8.93%	5.90%

Comment box provided for this question

**2- The question of identity in Qatar has been raised and discussed quite widely in media, academia and social circles, with some people using the term ‘identity crisis’ while others disagree completely. Do you think that the Qatari identity is in crisis?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Yes	52.69%	39.41%
No	47.31%	60.59%

Comment box provided for this question

**3- The state is putting tremendous effort into branding Qatar with a unique image to give it a prominent place, locally, regionally and globally. Do you think the global image of Qatar is in line with the reality of the Qatari people?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Yes	51.20%	73.49%
No	48.80%	26.51%

**4- The state is making great efforts to create a sense of nationalism and nationhood.**

**A) Do you think these state efforts recreate or preserve the Qatari identity and culture?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Recreate	35.76%	32.71%
Preserve	64.24%	67.29%

Comment box provided for this question

**4B) The current efforts to foster Qatari identity started as:**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
A governmental initiative	43.98%	34.97%
Grass-roots community initiative supported by the state	56.02%	65.03%

**4C) Some of the state's projects have a traditional outlook, while others have a cosmopolitan, global outlook. Do you think these projects work with each other or contradict each other when it comes to shaping identity?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Work with each other	63.64%	71.39%
Contradict each other	36.36%	28.61%

Comment box provided for this question

**5- To what extent is Qatar National Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 extremely effective)**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
1	7.78%	4.17%
2	10.18%	6.33%
3	19.16%	13.46%
4	20.96%	21.13%
5	41.92%	54.91%

**6- To what extent is National Sports Day effective in fostering a sense of national identity? Choose from 1 to 5 (1 being not effective at all and 5 extremely effective)**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
1	11.51%	10.28%
2	16.97%	12.72%
3	31.52%	25.98%
4	18.18%	19.62%
5	21.82%	31.39%

**7- How well informed are you about the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the various state development strategies?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Complete knowledge	16.97%	19.62%

Average knowledge	61.21%	60.49%
Minimum knowledge	21.82%	19.89%

**8- Do you think that the cultural and educational strategies, initiatives and events in Qatar have been franchised from the West and overly influenced by an era of globalization?**

	Pre-Blockade	Post-Blockade
Yes	41.21%	28.03%
No	58.79%	71.97%

Comment box provided for this question