Habibi Come to Doha: Evaluating the Modernisation Process of Qatar from the Perspective of Multiple Modernities Paradigm

Habibi Doha'ya Gel: Katar'ın Modernleşme Sürecinin Çoklu Moderniteler Paradigması Perspektifinden Değerlendirilmesi

Ayşe Nur KANLI

(Res. Asst. at İstanbul Ticaret University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Political Science and International Relations, ORCID: 0000-0002-6995-8976, e-mail: aysenurkanli@gmail.com)

Abstract

The aim of this research is to shed light on the modernisation process of Qatar as the research question has been formulated as "is it possible to evaluate the modernising path of Qatar from the viewpoint of a theory?". The importance of the study lies in its potential to address an important gap in the literature as there is a lack of research relating to Qatar's modernisation process from a theoretical perspective, particularly from the lenses of multiple modernities paradigm (MMP). For conducting this case study, a disciplined configurative approach has been the underlying strategy as the aim was to differentiate it from a pure narrative. The basic assumption prevalent throughout the article has been the idea that religion should not be seen as a hindrance to following a path towards modernity.

Keywords: Development, Qatar, Modernisation, MMP

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, araştırma sorusu "Katar'ın modernleşme sürecini bir teorinin bakış açısından değerlendirmek mümkün müdür?" şeklinde formüle edildiği için Katar'ın modernleşme sürecine ışık tutmaktır. Çalışmanın önemi, Katar'ın modernleşme sürecine ilişkin teorik bir perspektiften, özellikle de çoklu moderniteler paradigması (ÇMP) merceğinden yapılmış araştırma eksikliği nedeniyle literatürdeki önemli bir boşluğu doldurma potansiyelinde yatmaktadır. Çalışma, disiplinli konfigüratif yaklaşım benimseyen bir vaka çalışmasıdır. Makale boyunca hakim olan temel varsayım, dinin moderniteye doğru bir yol izlemenin önünde bir engel olarak görülmemesi gerektiği fikridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kalkınma, Katar, Modernleşme, ÇMP

Introduction

The politics of development has come to define a crucial aspect of the modern world. The reason for its prevalence can be attributed to the global fight against poverty eradication, and social and economic backwardness that have their roots in the 19th century. Such endeavour has come to be regarded as the process of modernisation and the state of being modern. These notions of modernisation and modernity have become fundamental themes of research in the social sciences (Isaac, 2015). The underlying notion forming the basis of these two concepts has been deemed to be "development". Without development one cannot expect to complete its modernisation route. What is meant by development here is simply not the increase in production but rather "the nature of that production and the range of social facilities that accompany it" (Calvert and Calvert, 2007: 3). Thus, modernisation must not be equated with economic growth alone but should be seen as a multidimensional process that involves changes and improvement in the totality of the social system (Todaro, 1994). Political entities all around the world have strived or, at the very least, have tried to reach a better status through the implementation of social and economic reforms.

While certain countries have fared better in their struggle for economic and social prosperity, and improvement in the quality of life, others have not been so fortunate in achieving such a status. Thus, only a handful of states are accepted as "developed or modern" whereas the majority of the remaining nations are lumped under the category of "developing" or "underdeveloped". Yet, it is crucial to note that there are differences between developing countries as they do not share similar "developing" characteristics. For instance, oil producing countries of the Gulf region are often regarded as high-income states as the wealth derived from rents are accrued to the state (Calvert and Calvert, 2007). Such wealth may contribute to high living standards for the people, but these countries often lack sustainable policies in the spheres of economy, social welfare, and politics. These wealthy countries have also been criticised for harbouring anti-western claims, which may, according to classical modernisation theory, affect their relationship with modernisation. However, it must be questioned as to whether if there is one single path to modernity which is epitomised by the Western experience.

In order to understand the persistence towards modernity in certain parts of the world, the widening gap between the developed and developing nations, and the success of highly industrialised countries, many have turned to deeper analyses of historical legacies and the impact of contemporary political governances. Such analyses paved the way for the emergence of different theoretical frameworks that have aimed to enhance the understanding towards a country's development or modernisation process. While some were born out of orthodox approaches, some of them emerged as reactionary theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, all have come to be a part of "modernisation paradigms" or known as "theories of development"; to exemplify, classical modernisation theory, dependency theory, world-systems analysis, imperialist industrialisation thesis, neo-modernisation theory, multiple modernities paradigm, and uneven and combined development. While most of these theories have been utilised for different country cases (e.g. So, 1986; Göksel, 2016; Popp, 2008) there seems to be a dearth of research concerning the status of Gulf monarchies; in particular, the State of Qatar.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to shed light on the aforementioned topic by breaking through the superficialness that has been detected. This superficialness refers to the stereotypical approach to an Arab Muslim country. The importance of the study lies in its potential to address an important gap in the literature as there is a lack of research relating to Qatar's modernisation process from a theoretical perspective, particularly from the lenses of multiple modernities paradigm (MMP). The reason behind the employment of MMP can be attributed to not only its divergence from orthodox approach but also its capacity to analyse a state that has a symbiotic relation with the religion of Islam. Islam is incorporated into the spheres of economy, politics, and culture; however, it acts in unity with the country's endeavour to modernisation, not as an impediment. Qatar is not a theocracy but rather a constitutional monarchy which takes the Sharia as bases for its legal system and everyday life. Lastly, a qualitative research strategy will be utilised in which the research will be a single case study as the objective is to conduct an in-depth one-case analysis. For conducting this case study, a disciplined configurative approach has been the underlying strategy as the aim was to differentiate it from a pure narrative.

The article is organised as follows. The first section will provide an explanation as to the essence and arguments of MMP. It will try to put forward a clear picture regarding its main principles. The second section will offer an insight into the historical development of Qatar. The third section will expand upon the economic, political, and cultural aspects of its modernisation process. The fourth section will try to establish a relationship between the case of Qatar and the arguments of MMP and observe two points: what can be said for the modernisation of Qatar, and is the theory sufficient enough to capture the development story of the country. The article will end with a summary of all arguments put forward in the conclusion part.

Understanding the Multiple Modernities Paradigm

The emergence of the theory of multiple modernities can be traced back to the 1990s as it was developed by sociologist Schmuel Eisenstadt (Fourie, 2012: 54). He has come to be regarded as the pioneering figure behind the formulation and introduction of the paradigm into the social sciences. When Daedalus, in 2000, published an issue on multiple modernities, the term spread like wildfire (Eisenstadt et al., 2002). From this period onwards, many studies and research projects had been conducted regarding the idea on the existence of several modernities. The introduction of the theory resulted in numerous debates as to what should constitute as the principles of this paradigm. Nonetheless, despite different interpretations, followers of the theory seem to converge on several points with the first one being the outright rejection of orthodox theories of modernisation (Fourie, 2012). It separates itself from these theories because they not only tend to be either evolutionist or teleological (Eisenstadt, 1976-1977) but also adhere to a "convergence thesis" which often overlooks religious and idiosyncratic factors (Laniel, 2017: 2). Therefore, the core assumption of MMP is that modernity cannot have a singular form born out of a homogenising and unifying process.

This rupture from orthodox approaches was hence due to their tendency to equate the idea of modernisation with the experiences of the West (Eisenstadt et al., 2002). The notion that there are different modernising practices outside of the Occident is crucial for MMP; due to the fact that, proponents claim that it would not be logical to use the terms and

categories invented to comprehend Western modernity and apply them to understand non-western modernities (Schmidt, 2006: 80). Such an approach challenges Eurocentric and deterministic perspectives concerning modernity by arguing that secularisation and economic growth may not necessarily result in the establishment of western type regimes; such as, liberal democracies. The rejection of the convergence thesis denoted the procurement of the concepts of culture, religion, and tradition at the very core of MMP (Laniel, 2017). It postulated "the existence of culturally specific forms of modernity shaped by distinct cultural heritages and socio-political conditions" (Eisenstadt et al., 2002). Thus, all notions that were seen (by orthodox approaches) to be anti-thesis to modernisation, were prioritised by MMP.

Furthermore, according to (Fourie, 2012: 55) this paradigm "…argues that all modernisation should be seen in the light of its historical context…the impact of modernity around the world is and always has been highly contingent on the cultural backgrounds of individual societies…" hence ideological and political institutionalisation were bound to obtain different appearances and show variation. This aforementioned cultural background derives its basis from the major human civilisations; to exemplify, Western, Latin American, Japanese, Hindu, Chinese, and Islamic civilisations (Schmidt, 2006). It can be observed that in some of these cases religion and culture are interwoven with one another. These "civilisational religious cores remain cultural sources of differing programs of modernity and as such have a continual impact…they materialise in varying cultural orientations, political institutional settings and societal configurations in modernising non-western and western modern societies alike" (Spohn, 2001: 500). With respect to this, it would not be wrong to state that religious traditions play a pivotal role in a country's modernisation process.

	Multiple Modernities Paradigm
Core Arguments	The convergence thesis should be rejected because there are multiple modernities in which they are continuously influenced by cultural and traditional forces
Features of a Modern Society	Industrialisation, rationality, urbanisation, legality and legitimacy, centralised political organisation, use of technology, mechanisation
Stance Towards Religion	Secularisation should not be seen as indispensable for achieving modernity when in fact religion (of any kind) could/may play a pivotal role in and act as a driving force for the development of a state

Table 1: A summary of MMP (prepared by the author)

The acknowledgement given to religion by MMP basically confronts the arguments advocating the need for secularisation and seeing religion (often Islam) as a hindrance to modernity when in fact religion can have a central role in this process as can be seen from the case of Iran (Berger, 1980). It is due to this stance of MMP that this article has resorted

to its application on a Muslim Arab state. However, while MMP may seem rather too inclusive and broad, there are certain parameters for modernity against the backdrop of culture, religion, and tradition; for instance, industrialisation, rationality, urbanisation, legality and legitimacy, centralised political organisation, use of technology, and mechanisation (Offutt, 2014). The paradigm (table 1) incorporates these notions with the underlying claim that modernity should be seen as more than a mere imitation of the West. This section introduced and explained the ideas around MMP, the following part will provide an insight into the history of the State of Qatar.

A Brief Look into the History of Qatar

Unfortunately, there seemed to be a dearth of literature concerning the history of Qatar as it was nearly impossible to find information regarding the period before the 18th century. Perhaps, this can be attributed to the fact that before the 18th century, today's Qatar was no more than dry lands composed of Bedouin tribes and small families of fishermen. There are few things known and recorded as to the period of 18th century which is the existence of several tribes that were migrating or had migrated towards the Qatar peninsula and were controlling certain areas of settlement (Zahlan, [1989]2016). At that time, there was no evidence that one of these families would come to establish and rule a Qatari nation-state. However, the evolution of Qatar as a modern state or modern political entity cannot be read with reference to tribes alone but must be situated in a broader context. In addition to the position of the ruler or ruling family, it is important to acknowledge external factors impact on the evolution of the sheikhdom; such as, relations with Great Britain and the discovery of oil (Zahlan, [1989]2016). Thus, it would not be wrong to claim that the history of the country is the amalgamation of the interaction between the ruling family, the interests of Britain, and oil resources.

Muhammad bin Thani al-Wadhiri r. 1868-1876
Qasim bin Muhammad Al-Thani r. 1876-1913
Abdullah bin Qasim Al-Thani r. 1913-1949
Ali bin Abdullah Al-Thani r. 1949-1960
Ahmad bin Ali Al-Thani r. 1960-1972
Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani r. 1972-1995
Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani r. 1995-2013
Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani r. 2013-

Figure 1: Al-Thani Dynasty

Its modern history, in which the rule of the Al-Thani family becomes effective in parallel with the development of a Qatari state and its institutions, dates back to the 1860s (Gray, 2013: 23). Prior to the 1860s, there were no traces of an independent political entity nor an official sheikhdom. The situation underwent a drastic change when a dispute between Bahrain and the residents of Qatar broke out in 1867 which led to British interference. This interference resulted in the signing of a treaty in 1868 between Britain and the Al-

Thani family patriarch Muhammad bin Thani al-Wadhiri (Fromherz, 2012). Such treaty did not only recognise Muhammad as the formal sheikh of Qatar and lead him to establish a dynastic rule (figure 1) but also set in motion the step towards Qatar's independence. While the agreement did not particularly grant it a true independent status, it recognised it as a separate political unit from Bahrain (Gray, 2013: 26). Muhammad's shrewdness and diplomatic capabilities (carried out towards Britain) ensured the country's separateness, brought a measure of stability to the Gulf basin, induced consolidation amongst factions, paved the way for development, and led to the establishment of urban areas.

Muhammad's role in shaping the modernisation process of Qatar will always be part of the country's history as the nation will remember him as their forefather. However, another important figure that was central to the development and consolidation of the sheikhdom was his successor Qasim bin Muhammad Al-Thani, and the way he had handled the Ottoman question made him an irrevocable part of its history (Gray, 2013). He had managed to balance the Ottoman Empire against the Brits and contribute to the stabilisation of early Qatari economy and politics in 1871 by accepting the stationing of Ottoman troops (Zahlan, 1979: 93). Despite Muhammad's objection to such acceptance, his son Qasim embarked on a game of strategic manipulation as he capitalised on the rivalry between the two empires (Fromherz, 2012: 58). In 1876 Muhammad abdicated his throne to his son Qasim which thus gave him more room to manoeuvre and carry out his policies. He was truly a remarkable figure as he played a key role in solidifying the power basis of the Al-Thani dynasty.

The Sheikh became discontented with Ottoman interference and the Empire's demands for tribute which led to a direct conflict in 1893 where he managed to repel the attacks carried out by the Ottoman forces; thus, contributing to his leadership profile and reputation (Gray, 2013: 28). In addition to his military prowess, Qasim came to be viewed and accepted as a political leader as he delegated powers to his family members. The most crucial aspect during his period of rule however was the glaringly obvious attempts for modernising Qatar; for instance, the endeavour to establish a centralised political organisation, and encourage the notion of urbanisation by developing infrastructure, constructing roads, and building schools (Zahlan, [1989]2016). When he died in 1913, he left his son Abdullah bin Qasim a strong dynasty with a modest economy. It was most natural for him to be reluctant to rule (Zahlan, 1979: 93) as he had big shoes to fill in but his father no doubt saw potential in his son for he had announced him as heir before his death.

The rule of Abdullah has significance due to several reasons. Firstly, after the First World War, the Ottoman Empire renounced its claim over Qatar which led to the forging of a treaty in 1916. Britain and Qatar forged the Anglo-Qatari Treaty which gave the former the authority to oversee the foreign policy of the latter and provided the latter with British naval protection (Gray, 2013). This quid pro quo relationship offered certain advantages for the sheikhdom; to exemplify, the building of communication services (postal and telegraph lines), and the improvement of infrastructure. Secondly, Abdullah handled the negotiations for oil concessions in a wise manner which facilitated his bid to strengthen his power (Zahlan, 1979). In 1935, Qatar signed a concession agreement with the Iraq Petroleum Company, and oil was discovered shortly after. However, it was not towards

the end of the rule of Abdullah that commercial-scale oil extraction began. The substantial increase in oil revenues, managed first by the Petroleum Development Qatar Ltd and later the Qatar Petroleum Company, triggered internal unrest within the Thani dynasty. British intervention in the 1949 succession and a subsequent coup in 1972 ultimately led to Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani taking control (Fromherz, 2012: 76).

Unfortunately, the picture painted by the pre-oil era was rather bleak. Pearling, fishing, and trade were the dominant sources of income. The economic outlook of Qatar improved only with the discovery of oil, which began to be exploited in 1938. However, it was not until the late 1940s that oil became a crucial driver of the economy, prior to which it faced poverty, and its business sector was weak (Gray, 2013: 29). After 1949, the rapid economic transformation in Qatar primarily focused on the expansion of the petroleum sector, with financial benefits allowing for parallel diversification into various social services (Zahlan, 1979). Notwithstanding these changes, the tenacity and mobility of the Qatari people had not been disturbed. With the revenues from oil, the sheikhdom sped up its modernising efforts. Throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s it is possible to observe the construction of hospitals, telecommunication services, a local power plant, government buildings, and airport (Gray, 2013). Moreover, in line with this economic development was the shift in the socioeconomic sphere in which the outline of social classes began to emerge. The number of merchants increased, and the seeds of a working class were planted.

After the orchestration of the coup and the establishment of Qatar's statehood via independence, Sharia law, and the promulgation of the constitution, Khalifa called for immediate action to take place in order to enhance the capabilities and influence of the state. With respect to this, he strengthened the armed forces, and implemented social welfare acts (such as pensions, public housing, and cooperatives) (Fromherz, 2012). Furthermore, in addition to bureaucratisation, and the process of Qatarisation, he focused on the industry by ordering the formation of a cement factory and a national fishing company (Herb, 1999). Education experienced significant expansion, with Qatar having only one school with 240 students in 1951 growing to over more than 50,000 students by 1985, and the establishment of Qatar University contributed to the formation of Qatari graduates who were immediately appointed to prominent government positions (Crystal, 1990). Health services also experienced significant levels of improvement throughout his term. Khalifa showed himself to be a competent manager of state affairs and his successor proved to be the same (Gray, 2013).

The era of Hamad bin Khalifa cannot be deemed anything other than rapid and spectacular development. Developments that take place under his reign can be summed up as follows: "encouragement of the economy's private sector, freedom of expression, and democratisation" all of which are in harmony with the Sharia (Rathmell and Schulze, 2000: 53). In accordance with these three notions, oil has been a major facilitator behind the government of Qatar's ability to offer a comprehensive array of social benefits to its citizens; such as, secure employment in a sizable bureaucracy, free education and healthcare, as well as direct financial benefits and subsidized utilities (Graz, 1992). Additionally, the state's oil wealth has created an advantageous setting for entrepreneurial Qataris to thrive and achieve financial success in business. For freedom of expression and democratisation, Hamad quickly supported and established Al-Jazeera, a news network

that rapidly gained popularity among over 35 million Arabic speakers, and initiated a gradual process of electoral reform as can be seen from the 1999 Doha Municipal Council (Fromherz, 2012). Further steps were taken in the sphere of education in which the wife of the Emir played a leading a role in the advancement of Education City. This "city" can be seen as a research and education hub aiming to convert the community to a knowledge-based economy. It is comprised of numerous prestigious universities and institutions. A similar path of modernisation has been taken by his successor Tamim as well.

Economic, Political, and Cultural Dimensions

It would not be wrong to declare that this small state has undergone a profound transformation in which the country has transitioned from a pearl-dependent pseudo political entity to an oil and gas producing independent nation with a high living standard. Perhaps, one could even make the claim that the culmination of the modernisation path of Qatar has led to the implementation of the 2030 National Vision, which basically endorses the continuation of social and economic policies that aim to ensure sustainability and development while staying true to Sharia law. The previous section provided a brief insight into the history of Qatar by specifically focusing on its development process. It gave reference to certain policies and actions that were concerned with the areas of economy, politics, and culture. The aim of this section is to expand these dimensions and provide an insight to specific dynamics.

Though many consider the production of oil to be a "resource curse" (Shaxson, 2007), it is quite important to make the distinction in how it is used and accrued. The economic development of Qatar cannot be understood without situating it within the pre-oil and post-oil paradigm. Afore the discovery of oil, as mentioned above, the sheikhdom's economy was predominantly characterised by traditional forms of activity; for instance, pearling and fishing. The country's barren lands and limited resources were the dominant factors for its small-scale economy. Particularly, the pearling industry was the driving force and the cornerstone as it formed a huge part of its income. Pearling referred to the collection of pearls from the sea via methods of diving and then their trade with merchants from Asia (Fromherz, 2012). The downside was that it was highly vulnerable to foreign and sudden developments. Thus, the Great Depression and the rise of the Japanese pearling industry negatively affected the situation in Qatar. Furthermore, beside pearling, fishing was not only another channel of income but also a source for food consumption for sustaining the locals.

The economy of the pre-oil era had an impact on the scenery of Qatar in which it reflected the dearth of infrastructure. This lack of networks and setups forced the sheikhdom to remain as a small political entity with a heavy reliance on the sea (Crystal, 1990). However, the discovery of oil changed the trajectory as it offered a momentous breakthrough for the economic modernisation of the country. Starting from the 1940s with Abdullah and up until Tamim's policies of today, the revenues derived from hydrocarbon fuels have played a major role in transforming it. The commercial production of oil in the late 1940s and, later on, the major discovery of gas reserves stationed the small country as a big vital player in the global political and economic scene. During the 1970s and 80s, oil and gas revenues had become the chief sources for the nation's modernisation process as they contributed to the development of infrastructure,

healthcare, and education (Kamrava, 2013). Doha has undergone a magnificent transformation as the capital city has made the transition into a modern metropolis which can be regarded as a testament to economic growth (Zahlan, [1989]2016). The construction of Hamad International Airport can be given as another example.

Heavy reliance on hydrocarbon fuels would have led to the inevitable end of the resource curse. Thus, to avert from such disaster, Qatar has formulated a strategy, known as the Qatar National Vision 2030, that focuses on economic diversification and sustainability. Moreover, the leap in the modernisation process of the state also meant an improvement in the labour market. The expansion in Qatari economy enticed foreign workers; hence, an influx of migrants entered the country to support and be part of the growing sectors of oil and gas. For the improvement of the condition of workers and the formulation of a more humane working environment, Qatar has terminated the Kafala system of sponsorship and implemented a Minimum Wage Law (International Labour Organization, 2021). The state's adherence to Islamic principles of ethical governance and communal responsibility can also be seen in its banking sector in which the practices of Islamic finance have led to the promotion of just financial activities; thus, managing to attract foreign investors. In addition, the country has also resorted to strengthening it institutions, bodies, and structures. For instance, the Qatar Investment Authority has been established which acts as a "sovereign wealth fund" with the aim to diversify the economy and invest in a variety of sectors around the globe (Ulrichsen, 2014). It can be stated that the economic modernisation of Qatar has developed in a rational manner where the means have been utilised to achieve the most beneficial ends.

Political modernisation has always been a tricky issue; in particular, for the countries of the Middle East. Nonetheless, this small Gulf monarchy has achieved a considerable amount of success throughout the years despite its endeavour to maintain an intricate and delicate balance between the maintenance of traditional structures of governance and modern values and reforms. Though the modus operandi of Qatari political governance has been subject to piecemeal reformations and modifications, the most significant attempts had been taken by Hamad from the late 1990s onwards. To exemplify, a national referendum took place in 2003 for the implementation of a new constitution which focused on equality, political liberties, and democratic rule (Amiri Diwan, 2024). The constitution came into effect a year later and established a Shura Council which was composed of partially elected members and aimed to ensure the separation of powers (Herb, 2014). Similar to his predecessor, Tamim has focused on the political modernisation of the country and has utilised the revenues accrued to the state for the maintenance of administrative efficiency and reforms in the legislative body; however, despite these progresses, it is important to note that the state remains as an absolute monarchy (Roberts, 2017).

The cultural modernisation of Qatar has mainly focused on social development with a special focus on living standards, education, and healthcare. 2001 marked the launching of an initiative called "Education for a New Era" which intended to encourage critical thinking in educational institutions and ameliorate the quality of the education system (Brewer et al., 2007). In addition, the Qatar Foundation established Education City and brought well renowned universities to the country; such as, Georgetown University. Emir Hamad's wife Moza bint Nasser played a leading role in the advancement of the City.

The healthcare system has also showed considerable improvement with the formulation of National Health Strategies which centre on increased health services and digitalisation (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022). There have also been certain advancements in women's rights through the advocacy of gender equality. The social inclusion of women to everyday life has been, to a certain extent, prioritised by the formulation of reforms; for instance, the government not only has encouraged participation to the labour force but has also supported involvement in higher education by promoting the idea of women in STEM (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). However, when speaking about cultural modernisation it would be wrong to not mention the role of Bedouin culture.

The Bedouin and Islamic heritage have been a vital source of content and discontent of Qatari history. Bedouin culture reflected itself in the nomadic lifestyle of the community. Activities such as the herding of camels and fishing, and values of hospitality and honour came from the Bedouin way of life and embedded themselves into the collective memory of today's Qatar (Fromherz, 2012). Music and poetry were important forms of expression as they served as channels for the communication of social values and the construction of history. Before the advent of oil, these traditions were the main characteristics of cultural identity. Alas, the rapid modernisation and urbanisation experienced in the small state led to a decline of Bedouin culture. The building of urban areas and increased sedentarisation drew Bedouin families in and resulted in the settlement of these communities (Koch, 2018). Tribal values and identity began to lose influence against the rise of the state and the promotion of a broader national identity (Zahlan, [1989]2016). Nevertheless, to preserve the Bedouin heritage, the state has taken certain measures. To exemplify, the Qatar Museums Authority has been tasked with the responsibility to archive, protect, and show parts of Bedouin culture. All is done to ensure a modicum of balance between tradition and modernity.

In sum, Islam – both as Sharia law and as a matter of personal faith – has been applied in a way that reconciles religious norms with the practical needs of the monarchy. This flexible approach has contributed to the development of economic, social, and political goals while also managing to maintain religious authenticity. Sharia has never been rigidly imposed but rather has been integrated in a very selective manner. With regards to what has been put forward thus far, the following part will provide an evaluation concerning the extent of Qatar's modernisation and MMP's resourcefulness as an analytical tool.

The Modernisation of Qatar and What MMP Can Say About It

Qatar's historical development process is a testament to a certain form of development that is idiosyncratic in itself. With its historical and geographical complex background and non-linear path of modernisation, it goes against theories such as classical modernisation theory. While one cannot claim Qatar's modernisation process to be complete, the process can be -to a certain extent- evaluated from the frame of multiple modernities paradigm. For instance, the Gulf region has inherited a civilisational legacy which is the religion of Islam, and it is no secret that the country adheres to the Wahhabi school of Sunni Islam which is known for its rigidity and limited political-religious innovation (Rathmell and Schulze, 2000). However, religion has been rarely mentioned in the making of Qatar which thus exposed the flaw in orthodox approaches as the religion

itself had never acted as a hindrance to the modernisation of the sheikhdom even though Islam had always been a pivotal part of the state. Though the state had embarked on a quest for modernisation from its very inception, it would be best to see whether it fulfills the elements needed for a "modern" state.

Centralised Political Organisation: This feature can be found in all stages of Qatar's history. From the very first Al-Thani to the very last, attempts for establishing a centralised state had been prioritised by the majority of the sheikhs. The sustainability and length of their reign, the continuity of the line of succession, the persistence of settlement in the region of Doha, the lack of competition for authority, the British and Ottoman influence and intervention, and the presence of traditional forms of allegiance have contributed to the solidification a centralised state (Fromherz, 2012). The implementation of a constitution contributed to the centralisation of the state as it ensured the establishment of a Council of Ministers, and the enunciation of an oath of allegiance, coupled with the homogeneity in the ruling family, formed the basis for political stability in the country (Zahlan, 1979).

Legality and Legitimacy: The meaning of legitimacy has been defined as "conformity to the law, to rules, or to some recognized principle; lawfulness, justification" and legality has been defined as "the quality or state of being legal or in conformity with the law; lawfulness" by the Oxford English Dictionary (2024). In contrast to the Western imposition regarding the meanings of the terms, legality and legitimacy do not necessarily have to derive their basis from rational sources. Lisa Anderson (1991) notes that prior to the imposition of European-style monarchy in the Middle East driven by imperial interests, political authority in the region was historically justified on religious grounds, rather than familial or property considerations. Centuries of tradition dictated that legitimate rule was established on the basis of Islamic principles and adapted to local conditions (Anderson, 1991). Hence, Islam (Sharia law) and, to a certain degree, the Bedouin heritage have been a source for the legality and legitimacy of the ruling family.

Rationality: The notion of rationality or rationalisation had been defined by Weber rather ambiguously and thus resulted in many interpretations; such as, 'means-end mentality', 'bureaucratisation', 'secularisation through the help of disenchantment' and 'carrying out a task in the most efficient way' (Kalberg, 1980). Because secularisation implies the separation of religion and politics, this particular meaning cannot be applied to a state that has claimed Islam as its official religion and derives a part of its legal system from Islamic law. However, the amalgamation of power and its distribution towards family members by sheikhs, and the efforts for bureaucratic expansion after Qatar's independence display certain levels of bureaucratisation. Furthermore, the neo-patrimonial rentier structure (Gray, 2013: 54) also harbours a means-end rationality in which state resources are used not only for securing fidelity but also the desired ends.

Urbanisation: Endeavours to encourage urbanisation had been a significant part of most of the sheikhs' policies as can be seen from the sedentarisation of Bedouin communities, settlement patterns, and the efforts for transforming Doha in a capital city. In the latter half of the 20th century, Qatar experienced its initial phase of urbanisation driven by a surge in the production and exploitation of oil. In contemporary times, efforts to diversify the economy have sparked a second wave of urban transformation which has propelled

Doha, once a modest fishing village in the mid-20th century (Wiedmann et al., 2012), into a burgeoning regional urban centre boasting a population exceeding 2 million. According to the World Bank (2022), 99% of Qatar's population is comprised of the urban population; thus, indicating that only a small amount of people lives in rural areas. The construction of roads, airport, and telecommunication lines (that had been developed throughout the reign of Khalifa, Hamad, and Tamim) have contributed to the urbanisation of the country.

Industrialisation: This concept can be defined simply as the development of industries which requires the reorganisation of the economy to adapt from an agriculture-based system to an industrial society. Such adaptation often implies a transformation in the socio-economic sphere. With regards to this, it would not be wrong to claim that a similar transformation took place in Qatar throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. Before the exploration of oil, the country's economy was based on rudimentary agriculture (Sastry, 1993). However, the post-oil economy transformed the state not only in economic but also in socio-political terms. Qatar made the transition towards an energy-based system which facilitated industrial development, policies, and institutions; such as, the establishment of the Ministries of Finance & Petroleum, of Industry & Agriculture, and of Economy & Commerce (Al-Kubaisi, 1984). Such transformation also contributed to the manufacturing industries.

Mechanisation & Use of Technology: These two notions go hand in hand as the former refers to the usage of the latter. Introducing machinery into a place or process is the main idea. This can be linked with the notions of industrialisation and urbanisation. Today, Qatar has made the use of technology an important matter as it offers investment opportunities in the technology sector and declares its desire to turn the state "into a smart country" through the power of innovation (Invest Qatar, 2024). The healthcare services have also made use of digital developments. The latest National Health Strategy encourages the use of technological tools for achieving a patient centred system. Even though they may not have had enunciated explicitly, the openness of most of the sheikhs towards innovation had been the building blocks for Qatar's contemporary position.

Conclusion

To conclude, debates carried out regarding the notion of development, the different experiences of countries, and the persisting gap between the developed and undeveloped have led to the emergence of theories of development which have come to be associated with the idea of modernisation. One of the many approaches of these theories was multiple modernities paradigm. MMP was strongly against the orthodox theories adhering to a convergence thesis and exalting the Western experience as the pinnacle of modernity. This paradigm claimed the existence of different modernities being influenced by their historical legacies; such as, tradition, religion, and culture. It emphasised civilisational influence on the course of a country's path of development. MMP also acknowledged the need for certain elements to exist as common denominators characteristic of a modern or modernising political entity: industrialisation, rationality, urbanisation, legality and legitimacy, centralised political organisation, use of technology, and mechanisation. The paradigm has been utilised for evaluating country-based case studies.

The introduction of Qatar to political history can be traced back to the 18th century. Its story started with the Al-Thani family in which the patriarch Muhammad bin Thani al-Wadhiri played a key role in its inception. While not all of the sheikhs were influential figures, a majority of them had contributed much to the development and independence of Qatar. The modernisation path taken by the country is comprised by many dimensions; such as, economic, cultural, and political. The economic aspect puts forward the glaring leap between the pre-oil and post-oil periods. The revenues gained from the extraction and exportation of hydrocarbon fuels have been utilised for the improvement of employment opportunities and welfare policies. The political dimension displays the slow but impactful evolution of reforms towards the transition to a more democratic mode of governance. Lastly, the cultural aspect emphasises development in the areas of healthcare, education, and women's rights. It also shows the endeavour to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity as can be seen from the preservation of Bedouin and Islamic heritage.

Qatar's aptitude in managing to create a system that is not only reflective of religious norms and values but also globally engaging displays the coexistence between Sharia and modernisation. Its educational initiatives, commitment to technological improvement, social development, and economic policies of fairness are all rooted in Islamic values. The modernisation story of Qatar, though not complete, can be evaluated within the framework of MMP. While retaining the influences of its Islamic civilisational legacy, it has also managed to satisfy (mostly) the parameters put forward by the paradigm. Even though it does not conform to the Western experience and idea of modernisation, this does not undermine the value of its development course, or the reality of a non-conforming modernisation process cannot be ignored. Religion has not acted as an impediment for the pursuit of modernity.

References

Al-Kubaisi, M.A.M. (1984). Industrial development in Qatar: A geographical assessment (Doctoral Thesis, Durham University). Durham E-Theses.

Amiri Diwan. (2024). *The constitution*. https://www.diwan.gov.qa/about-qatar/constitution?sc_lang=en.

Anderson, L. (1991). Absolutism and the resilience of monarchy in the middle east. *Comparative Politics, 20*(1), 1-15.

Berger, P.L. (1980). From secularity to world religion. *The Christian Century, 97*, 44-48.

Brewer, D. J., Augustine, C. H., Zellman, G. L., Ryan, G., Goldman, C. A., Stasz, C. and Constant, L. (2007). *Education for a new era: Design and implementation of K-12 education reform in Qatar*, RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG548.pdf.

Calvert, P. and Calvert, S. (2007). *Politics and society in the developing world* (3rd ed.), Essex: Pearson.

Crystal, J. (1990). *Oil and politics in the gulf: Rulers and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenstadt, S. N. (1976-1977). Sociological characteristics and problems of small states: A research note. *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, 2*(2), 35-50.

Eisenstadt, S. N., Riedel, J. and Sachsenmaier, D. (2002). The context of the multiple modernities paradigm. In *Reflections on multiple modernities* (pp. 1-23). Brill.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2022). *National health strategy 2018-2022 – Our health our future.* https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC177224/.

Fourie, E. (2012). A future for the theory of multiple modernities: Insights from the new modernisation theory. *Social Science Information, 51*(1), 52-69.

Fromherz, A.J. (2012). *Qatar: A modern history*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Göksel, O. (2016). In search of a non-Eurocentric understanding of modernisation: Turkey as a case of 'multiple modernities'. *Mediterranean Politics, 21*(2), 246-267.

Gray, M. (2013). *Qatar: Politics and the challenges of development*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Graz, L. (1992). *The turbulent gulf: People, politics and power*, United Kingdom: I.B.Tauris.

Herb, M. (1999). *All in the family: Absolutism, revolution, and democracy in the middle eastern monarchies*, New York: State University of New York Press.

Herb, M. (2014). *The wages of oil: Parliaments and economic development in Kuwait and the UAE*, Cornell University Press.

International Labour Organization. (2021). *Labour reforms in the State of Qatar: Coming together around a shared vision.* https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@arabstates/@ro-beirut/@ilo-qatar/documents/publication/wcms_859843.pdf.

Invest Qatar. (2024). *At a glance.* https://www.invest.qa/en/sectors-and-opportunities/technology.

Isaac, J.C. (2015). From the editor: Modernisation and politics. *American Political Science Association, 13*(1), 1-5.

Kalberg, S. (1980). Max Weber's types of rationality: Cornerstones for the analysis of rationalisation process in history. *American Journal of Sociology, 85*(5), 1145-1179.

Kamrava, M. (2013). *Qatar: Small state, big politics*, London: Cornell University Press.

Koch, N. (2018). *The geopolitics of spectacle: Space, synecdoche, and the new capitals of Asia*, New York: Cornell University Press.

Laniel, J.F. (2017). On the relevance of small nations. Religion and politics in S.N. Eisenstadt's multiple modernities paradigm. *Nations and nationalism*, 1-21.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2024). *Qatar affirms women are 70% of STEM School Graduates.* https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/2024/04/25/qatar-affirms-women-are-70--of-stem-school-graduates.

Offutt, S. (2014). Multiple modernities: The role of world religions in an emerging paradigm. *Journal of Contemporary Religion, 29*(3), 393-409.

Oxford English Dictionary. (2024). *Legality and legitimacy*. https://www.oed.com/?tl=true.

Popp, R. (2008). An application of modernisation theory during the cold war? The case of Pahlavi Iran. *The International History Review, 30*(1), 76-98.

Rathmell, A. and Schulze, K. (2000). Political reform in the gulf: The case of Qatar. *Middle Eastern Studies, 36*(4), 47-62.

Roberts, D. B. (2017). *Qatar: Securing the global ambitions of a city-state*, Hurst Publishers.

Sastry, G. R. N. (1993). *Qatar's economy transition from oil based economy to gas based economy* (No. INIS-MF--13562). Ministry of Energy and Industry.

Schmidt, V.H. (2006). Multiple modernities or varieties of modernity? *Current Sociology, 54*(1), 77-97.

Shaxson, N. (2007). Oil, corruption and the resource curse. *International Affairs, 83*(6), 1123-1140.

So, A.Y. (1986). The economic success of Hong Kong: Insights from a world-system perspective. *Sociological Perspectives*, *29*(2), 241-258.

Spohn, W. (2001). Eisenstadt on civilisations and multiple modernity. *European Journal of Social Theory, 4*(4), 499-508.

The World Bank. (2022). *Urban Population (% of total population) – Qatar*. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=QA.

Todaro, M. (1997). *Economic development*, United Kingdom: Longman.

Ulrichsen, K. C. (2014). *Qatar and the Arab spring*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Wiedmann, F., Salama, A. and Thierstein, A. (2012). Urban evolution of the city of Doha: An investigation into the impact of economic transformations on urban structures. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture, 29*(2), 35-61.

Zahlan, R.S. ([1989]2016). *The making of the modern gulf states: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman*, New York: Routledge.

Zahlan, R.S. (1979). *The creation of Qatar*, London: Croom Helm.