

SPEAKING ABOUT QATAR: DISCOURSES ON NATIONAL IDENTITY IN  
POSTCOLONIAL GULF

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is an account of research undertaken between January 2014 and July 2018 at the Research School of Social Sciences, School of Politics and International Relations, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

Except where acknowledged in the customary manner, the material presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original and has not been submitted in whole or part for a degree in any university.

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## ABSTRACT

Since mid-1990s, Qatar has gone through a series of transformations that have included the implementation of liberal political reforms, the boost in the exploitation of its plentiful hydrocarbon reserves and the unprecedented increase of its diplomatic activity. However, some less noticed transformations have had to do with the creation of those symbols that give Qatar its distinctive cultural character, and justify its existence as an independent nation-state, such as the construction of the national museum and the house of the national archives, the creation of the national anthem, and the celebration of the national day. This thesis is then an analysis of the way cultural heritage sites, such as museums, national celebrations, exhibition houses and archaeological sites, have ascribed Qatar's national identity with meaning. Through electronic archival research, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, this thesis looks at how national identity is being constructed in contemporary Qatar. Its main argument is the discourse on national identity displayed in those sites comprises a series of claims that reformulate and reinvent Qatar's national identity in light of neoliberal economic reform brought by the implementation of *Qatar National Vision 2030*. In addition, the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar also deals with longstanding trends in Qatar's postcolonial history: namely, the particular way colonialism was experienced in the Gulf and the rendering the majority of the population to the status of non-nationals. This thesis' main contribution is that it opens a space for reflecting on how the postcolonial nation has adapted to the changes brought by the expansion of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century postcolonial world.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis looks at the particular iteration of national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since the mid-1990s in order to enquire on the state of the postcolonial nation at the turn of the twenty-first century. By looking into museums, celebrations and other sites of cultural production that materialize and perform the Qatari nation, this thesis aims to reflect upon the contestations over the meaning of the postcolonial nation amidst the expansion of a neoliberal rationality and its corresponding governing techniques throughout the postcolonial world. Drawing on approaches to the nation-as-discourse, it starts from the assumption that the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar is not a neutral ground, and that its reactivation in recent years is not simply a natural reaction to the sense of anxiety triggered by external factors, such as rapid modernization, population imbalance or increasing cultural penetration. Rather, the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar is a field of political contestation where different versions on what the nation stands for compete against each other. The purpose then is to identify the way the postcolonial nation counters, reproduces and reinvents neoliberal rationality in this particular context.

The discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar emerged as an object of study out of the overlapping of two areas of social inquiry. On the one hand, this thesis aims to update the postcolonial critique of the nation, which rose to prominence after the heyday of the anticolonial movements in the Third World by mid-twentieth century. In this regard, it asks what happened to the nation in the twenty-first century in the postcolonial world. Specifically, it aims to enquire on how the nation operates as an arena of political contestation amidst the implementation of widespread reforms aimed to deepen and consolidate the integration of postcolonial nation-states into a free-market economy and its corresponding framework of global governance. On the other hand, it aims to join scholarly debates on the issue of nationalism in the Middle East and, more specifically, in the Arab

States of the Gulf, which have remained absent in that body of literature. The overlapping of these two areas of scholarly inquiry is what enabled the emergence of this project.

This thesis' contribution to the field of nationalism in the Middle East lies precisely in its regional focus. By analysing the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar, it adds to the scant but expanding body of literature that has emphasized the particularities of the Gulf region. Regarding nationalism, these particularities have to do with salience of transnational tribal identities, the relative short history of most Gulf countries as independent states, their strong connections with the Indian subcontinent and their relative marginalization from mainstream historical processes in the rest of the Middle East. This discussion then expands on these concerns by looking into the ways these particularities manifest themselves in the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar. By so doing, it echoes those voices that have been recently calling for shifting the attention towards the Arab Gulf States, especially to the important transformations these states have gone through since independence.

This thesis focuses then on a particular iteration of national identity that comes at a time when the government, in coordination with international financial institutions and multinational corporations, is implementing an ambitious reformist agenda aimed to turn Qatar into a knowledge-based economy through the country's integration into the logics of the free-market economy. In addition, it takes place in a country with a peculiar colonial history, where nationals have been a minority since independence. These particularities make the study of national identity in contemporary Qatar, a country that has remained relatively absent in the literature on nationalism in the Middle East, an appealing case study for both scholarly debates on postcolonial studies of nationalism and Middle East studies.

## 1.1. REITERATING THE ESSENCE OF THE QATARI NATION

In December 2010, Sheikha Al Mayassa Al Thani, chairperson of Qatar Museums Authority,<sup>1</sup> took part as a speaker in one of the conferences known as Ted Talks. She opened her speech, which was remotely transmitted from Doha to Washington D.C., by highlighting the clothes she was wearing at that particular moment. Rather than a “religious garment or statement,” she said her *‘abaya*, that black and loose dress that covered her body almost entirely, was a “diverse cultural statement that [women in Qatar] choose to wear”. Drawing on this claim, she later asserted:

We are changing our culture from within, but at the same time we are reconnecting with our traditions.

We know that modernization is happening, and yes, Qatar wants to be a modern nation, but at the same time, we are reconnecting and reasserting our Arab heritage. (TED 2010)

By pointing to an alleged tension between modernity and tradition, she introduced the purpose of her talk, which was to explain how young people, and especially women, in Qatar were enthusiastically embracing modernity, but at the same time were devising creative ways to keep their own traditions alive.

In order to illustrate how young Qataris were finding a balance between modernity and tradition, Sheikha Al Mayassa made reference to a number of cultural developments that had been taking place in Qatar since the coming to power of her father, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in 1995. These developments, which have continued under the government of her brother, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, have had to do with the creation of all those symbols that give Qatar its distinctive cultural character and justify its existence as an independent nation-state. They include, among other things, the creation of a national anthem in 1996, the establishment of a national day in 2007, the construction of a national museum, and the restoration of several archaeological sites. According to her, all these

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<sup>1</sup> Qatar Museums Authority, the major body governing cultural projects in Qatar, was re-branded in 2014 as Qatar Museums (QM) as part of a restructuring project (see: Scott 2014).

initiatives were part of a natural impulse to keep Qatar's national culture alive in light of the homogenizing forces unleashed by modernity.

## 1.2. THE ITERATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AS A SITE OF POLITICS

Sheikha Al Mayassa's account on the reactivation of the discourse on national identity in Qatar, which represents the official discourse on this matter, precludes a different reading that emphasizes the assertive, rather than simply reactive, character of such initiatives. In other words, an exclusive focus on the consequences of the widespread nostalgia for a vanishing tradition overlooks the extent to which those cultural projects reinvent national culture and redefine what national identity stands for.

This alternative account draws on Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of the "invented tradition," which refers to "a set of practices which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1). Thus, the discourse on the Qatari nation, which has entailed the mushrooming of sites performing and materializing the nation, ceases to be a necessary reminder of those memories that bind a human group together. Alternatively, this discourse emerges as a powerful device that goes into the core of that collective identity in order to define its constitutive elements. In this sense, the main site for political struggle is not to be found in the clash between tradition and modernity as perfectly distinguishable entities, but in the very construction of those imaginary lines that allow for a distinction between these two concepts.

This thesis looks at cultural projects that have emerged in Qatar over the last two decades as interventions in debates about the meaning of national identity. For this reason, the discussion that runs through the following chapters starts from questioning the claim that the nation performed and materialized in those sites is simply a neutral reflection of a deep-rooted and widely-shared form of

collective identification in Qatar. Put differently, this thesis makes the discourse on the nation its main object of enquiry in order to reflect on the power relations articulated in the quest to stabilize a contested set of meanings, such as those comprising the concept of national identity. Thus, some of the questions motivating this research are the following: how the definition of national identity becomes a site of contestation, in which ways that contestation takes place, what are the power relations influencing the definition of Qatar's national identity, and how the particular imagination of the Qatari nation articulates with broader power relations?

In recent decades, the social sciences have provided the vocabulary to think about those developments in Qatar. One important reference is the scholarly tradition inaugurated by Edward Said's famous critique of "Orientalism," which referred to the vast body of knowledge about the Orient accumulated in the West. Remaining sceptical to any essentialism, Said inquired on the intimate relation between imperialism and the persistence of conceptions of the Orient put forward in diverse fields, such as literary creation, art and scientific knowledge. Accordingly, the Orient was a concept made possible by European imperialism in Asia and Africa, and its persistence over time was rooted in its capacity to evoke the illusion of a clear boundary between Western civilization and the realm of the "other," of that which remained outside of it. For the purpose of this thesis, the relevance of Said's work lies in its scepticism towards any form of cultural essentialism, and in the corresponding quest to underscore the way fixed identity reproduces colonial authority.

The emergence of postcolonial modes of inquiry as a major theme in contemporary academic language has made unprecedented contributions. On the one hand, it has emphasized the intimate relation between European colonial history and the development of social sciences. In this sense, postcolonialism has brought a new dimension to debates around the politics of knowledge, which has to do with the imperatives of colonial enterprises and their consequences for the construction of scientific knowledge about the social world. On the other hand, it has challenged the influential historical perspective that places the European bureaucratic state at the apex of an inevitable historical

trajectory. Accordingly, postcolonial theory has directly challenged the claim that colonialism, through the state apparatuses it helped to set up, brought non-Western societies to the lineal path towards civilization. From these two contributions of postcolonial theory, the latter is especially relevant for this research because it demonstrates the “constructedness” of all nations, and brings the colonial dimension into debates about the discursive nature of that construction.

For this reason, the field of social inquiry that has focused on the study of nationalism has been particularly open to the scholarly perspectives inaugurated by Said’s critique. Thus, several approaches have challenged traditional accounts on the nation as either a modern phenomenon attributable to recent transformations or as collective identities drawing on pre-modern forms of ethnic organization. In contrast, studying the subject of anticolonial nationalism in South Asia, Partha Chatterjee looked at the postcolonial nation as an autonomous discourse articulating power relations. Looking at the nation as discourse and its specific iterations during the heyday of anticolonial sentiment, this body of literature criticized the marginalization of the feminist struggles within the movements for independence. It also criticized the construction of women as reproducers of a distinctive national culture, which subjected them to control within the new nation-states. Similarly, this scholarship underscored the racial assumptions underlying modern nations, which rendered indigenous and black people to a subordinated status due to their alleged “backwardness”. What linked together the otherwise disparate non-traditional approaches to nationalism is that they stopped seeing the nation as a stable object that could be transferred from one cultural and historical context to another, and emphasized instead its contingent and contested character.

Treating the nation as discourse implies then emphasizing its contingent character, which makes it more a site of contestation than a self-evident object. Moreover, this approach sustains a permanent scepticism towards any efforts to pinpoint the distinctive features of any national identity, and regards the quest for the essence of such an identity as a misleading enterprise that is complicit with power. In this understanding, the nation is then a site of contestation deploying different

imaginings that reflect and reproduce power relations at given historical junctures. This perspective entails then a permanent questioning of essentialism, and motivates analyses around the crystallization of collective identities, which are always historically specific.

When looking at the particular iteration of the discourse on national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since mid-1990s, several historical particularities need to be emphasized. The first of them is related with the experience of European colonialism in the eastern Arabian Peninsula, where the emergence of independent states was not the direct consequence of an anticolonial movement. This particular experience invites a deeper reflection on the way the nation is imagined in the absence of a deep-rooted anticolonial discourse and the role this peculiar, but not unprecedented, colonial experience plays in the general conception of the nation. Similarly, a demographic situation, which is also salient in other countries from the Gulf, renders the majority of the population to the status of non-nationals. This atypical situation also opens questions on how the discourse on national identity conceives non-nationals, and on how it distinguishes between nationals and non-nationals. Finally, this iteration of the discourse on the Qatari nation takes place when the entire country is undergoing a process of transformation, under the direction of the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, aimed to turn Qatar into a knowledge-based economy. The implementation of such set of reforms invites us to think about the relation between collective efforts to attain a predetermined end and the discourse on the nation. In summary, these are some of the factors defining the historicity of the contemporary discourse on the Qatari nation.

The main task of this research is then to interpret the meaning of the contemporary Qatari nation in light of the potential sites for controversy that the aforementioned historical particularities make possible. This task involves looking at those sites displaying the discourse on the nation, such as museums, exhibition houses and national celebrations, as interventions in political contestations over the construction of meaning. Thus, this thesis' main purpose is to analyse how the nation is constructed in such a bounded historical context.

### 1.3. CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON THE NATION AS DISCOURSE

This research draws on those approaches to nationalism that see the nation as discourse. Rather than seeing the nation as an object with a fixed meaning, these approaches see it as a discursive configuration, whose most distinctive features are contingency and contestability. The nation is not an object with transferable characteristics that make it identifiable across time and space, but is a rather historically specific configuration of meanings that attempt to crystalize and produce a unified moment, but this articulation is never stable, because it has to be communicated and contestation is present within the modality of iteration. In this vein, building on the Foucauldian concept of “discursive formation,” sociologist Craig Calhoun (1997) defined the nation as

a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness, but also is problematic enough that it keeps generating more issues and questions, keeps propelling us into further talk, keeps producing debates over how to think about it” (3).

Such a definition led him to assert that

nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices (5).

Thus, nations do not exist as external objects, but are rather constituted by the same language that allegedly represents them, and are thus subject to change and contestation within that discursive configuration.

Conceiving the nation as discourse has allowed the emergence of research agendas aimed to identify the way the nation comes about, the contestations it raises and the paths for political action it opens. One of the implications of such body of work has been the emergence of a number of sites as critical spaces for enquiring on related subjects, such as the articulation of nationalism, the definition of national identity and the iteration of the nation. In this regard, Nayanika Mookherjee has argued,

the nation, it is increasingly recognized, needs to be performed and materialized through various aesthetic artefacts like national anthems, flags, memorials, museums, visual art, literature, songs, dance, poetry, films, landscapes, cultural property, and linguistic (enunciative) authority (1).

In these accounts, the nation is not a sociological object that exists apart from the discourse unfolding in those sites. Moreover, the nation is not a collection of historical facts providing a yardstick for measuring the veracity of such discourses. Quite the contrary, nations only exist as performed and materialized in those sites, and any claim of authenticity is no more than an intervention on the nation's definition. This definition encompasses then a constant struggle over meanings that reaches its more productive potential in the symbolic realm.

Approaching the nation as discourse has given rise to a number of diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives that, beyond the assertion that the nation is contingent and contested, have struggled to find any common ground. One of the most prominent perspectives the approach to the nation as discourse has given rise to is the feminist critique within the field of nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1997). This perspective draws on the longstanding critique of the situated character of knowledge or human discourse. From there, it emphasizes the gender nature of the foundational concepts of scientific and philosophical knowledge, one of which was the concept of nation. This view has led to a number of works that highlighted, among other things, the gender character of the values emboldened by the nation, the subordinated role of women within nationalist projects and the gender-dependent forms of belonging to the national community. Overall, the feminist critique within the field of nationalism illustrates the avenues of social inquiry opened by looking at the nation as discourse.

Looking at the nation as discourse implies seeing the reinvigoration of the discourse on national identity in Qatar since the mid-1990s as one among many possibilities of conceiving and imagining the nation. This iteration is not, as Sheikha Al-Mayassa put it, an unproblematic reaffirmation of a widely shared identity, but is rather an active intervention in the symbolic struggle

over meaning. Starting from such assumption, the reflection on the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar has less to do with the way these sites reflect an “actual” collective identity, but more with the power relations put forward by a particular understanding of the nation. This enquiry is mostly focused on historicising and contextualizing the crystallization of a given national identity and the efforts to stabilize its meaning through the enactment of cultural projects that materialize and perform the nation.

The first step in the attainment of such purpose is to locate those sites performing and materializing the nation in contemporary Qatar, which benefits from other studies that had focused on similar issues in other contexts. These studies focused on sites of cultural production, such as folklore, literary creation, cinema, celebrations, rituals, among others, in order to enquire on the particular meaning of the nation at a given historical juncture. In addition, one outstanding feature of Qatar’s contemporary history is the mushrooming of cultural initiatives directed and sanctioned by the government, which are also sites where the nation is spoken about. Not all of these initiatives are exclusively devoted to perform and materialize the nation, but in their exhibitions, they display elements that comprise, paraphrasing Chatterjee, “fragments of the nation”. Consequently, identifying the sites for conducting this research benefited from looking at how other scholarly works had approached the nation as discourse.

For identifying those sites performing and materializing the nation this research has engaged with the interdisciplinary field of preservation studies, where a research agenda has consolidated over the last decades about the politics of contemporary uses of the past. Traditionally, the field of heritage studies had been characterized by an emphasis on the technical aspects of preservation of heritage, understanding these mainly as those tangible sites comprising the material culture of a given social group. However, since the 1980s, reflexive perspectives within the disciplines of History (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and Archaeology (Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Silberman 1989) have led to the emergence of a critical literature focusing on the socio-political context that makes possible the

emergence of knowledge on heritage, and the power relations and conflicting agendas behind the present-day conservation of reminders of the past (Breglia 2006, Harrison 2013; Winter 2015). As the nation has emerged as an important framework for understanding the mobilization of heritage, this research has followed the trend within critical studies in this field by looking at both tangible and intangible heritage sites as instances for understanding the meaning of contemporary Qatari nation.

This reasoning helped to identify several sites, but, after carefully reflecting on the suitability and representativeness of each of those sites, only some of them became part of this study. The criteria for selecting those sites relies, on the one hand, on the logistical aspects for accessing them and being able to grasp the subtle ways in which they deployed the discourse on the nation. On other hand, these criteria rely on the relevance of those sites for the discourse on the nation; that is, how critical those sites are for understanding the ways in which the nation is being imagined in contemporary Qatar. Taking such considerations as the starting point, this research focuses on museums, exhibition houses, national celebrations and archaeological zones as the sites to conduct research on national identity in contemporary Qatar. Since these sites are the most suitable and representative of the discourse on national identity in Qatar, they are the ones in which this research focuses.

It is noteworthy the mobilization of heritage value has been expanded exponentially in Qatar, as it has been the case in other GCC states, in recent years. However, the expansion of the heritage industry in Qatar and the Gulf is not exclusively related with the state-led efforts to instil a sense of national identity among the local populations, as it has also been motivated by the efforts to diversify the economy by promoting the growth of the tourism industry, by foreign policy strategies aimed to brand these countries and to put them on the map, and by the formation of a class of heritage experts in the Gulf. In spite of this multiplicity of factors, it is undeniable state-led efforts to build the nation have also influenced the expansion of heritage industry in Qatar. Since this a thesis about national identity , the nation-building component is the one that will be emphasized, which does not exclude

different readings of these heritage sites that emphasize other factors, such as public diplomacy, rule of experts and economic diversification.

For several reasons, conducting research in those sites is a challenging task demanding the use of several techniques of social inquiry aimed to collect and organize relevant information. The intellectual imperative guiding the use of those techniques has to do with accessing those sites in order to identify the deployment of discourses on the nation and, by so doing, being able to construct a particular discourse on Qatar's national identity. In order to attain such objective, the collection and organization of information follows three complementary forms of research.

The first of them is conducting research in electronic archives created and made public in order to disseminate information about each of those sites. In this sense, in parallel to the launching of such cultural initiatives, the government of Qatar has also put in place a series of strategies to publicize and disseminate the initiatives undertaken in museums, exhibition houses, archaeological sites and national celebrations. Thus, an obvious site for enquiring on the ways these sites perform and materialize the nation are the records they had left behind. The information derived from this form of social inquiry takes the form of advertising, pamphlets, brochures, short films, records of conferences or similar events and fiction books, among others. All these material provides with a first-hand and insightful perspective on the discourse on the nation deployed in those sites.

Data collected through participant observation in the sites looked at in this research complemented the information collected through electronic archival research. The purpose of conducting this kind of research is to have a first-hand experience of the way those sites deploy the discourse on the nation. Thus, this part of the research focuses on the material register left by those sites, such as exhibition objects, explanatory texts and vestiges, on the particular emotions and feelings they evoked, and on the subtle resources they employed in order to materialize and perform the nation. Photographs and field notes, organized within a fieldwork diary, comprise the material derived from conducting participant observation. This material contains the records of the participant observation

conducted in museums, exhibition houses, archaeological sites and celebrations during four month of fieldwork in Doha, Qatar.

Finally, apart from audio-visual and printed material collected through electronic archival research and records of the information derived from participant observation, this research also draws on interviews with people involved in those cultural projects. Since some of the sites are still under construction and information about them is not publicized, the best way approach them is through interviews with people involved in their development. Moreover, interviewing people who took part in some of the most important cultural developments in contemporary Qatar is a form of triangulation that provides this research with unparalleled information to interpret the discourse on the Qatari nation. The material derived from this form of research comprised the transcripts of the interviews conducted, which were based on either voice or written records. Overall, these transcripts complement the material collected through electronic archival research and participant observation.

The printed and audiovisual material that was used for this research proceeds mainly from the 2009 celebrations of the National Day, because by the time electronic archival research was conducted, this was the only material available. However, this material was complemented with some sources from other years and, more importantly, with observations and interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2015 and 2017. However, rather than producing a complete and finished overview of Qatar's national identity, this thesis provides a particular account of Qatar's national identity that identifies some recurring themes, which are relevant for the process of transformation that Qatar is undergoing under the framework of its *National Vision 2030* and its merge with local trends. Although this does not exclude the possibility of change, looking at those other voices that challenge the official understanding of Qatar's national identity is a task that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

#### 1.4. CONTRIBUTION TO DEBATES ON POSTCOLONIAL NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Since mid-twentieth century, amidst the heyday of anticolonial struggles in the Third World and the subsequent emergence of independent states in Asia and Africa, the postcolonial critique made important contributions to our understanding of nationalism. These contributions had their most prominent expressions when discussing the ways former European colonies were experiencing anticolonial nationalism in both, its revolutionary aims and its prospects for creating nations. Thus, the postcolonial critique to the nation highlighted the absence of anticolonial feminist voices from discourses on the nation and the subordinated role of women in the efforts at nation building. Furthermore, this critique underscored the disparaging consequences of the modernizing projects endorsed by nationalism for knowledges and identities designated as “indigenous,” as well as their transmission of colonial discourses on race that rendered entire communities to a subordinated role due to their skin-color or their physiognomy. Thus, these contributions took the form of a critique to the shortcomings of anticolonial nationalism.

Nevertheless these critiques continue to be important at the turn of the twenty-first century, the world has changed since then. With regard to nationalism, these changes are related with the failure of most projects of nation-building due to both internal tensions found at the intersection of race, class and gender power relations, and external pressures on the achievements in terms of autonomy and self-determination. A number of scholars working from the field of post-colonialism share this diagnostic (Mbembe 2001). Thus, lamenting the hollowing of formerly powerful concepts, such as “nation” and “third world,” some of them asserted in the late-1990s that:

the great era of national liberation in the Third World that began in the years following World War II is now over has become more or less obvious. [...] In large regions of the Third World, the powerful framework of nationalism, which held such enormous liberationist promise even twenty years ago, has begun to fall apart. In these countries, the slogans of nationalism, its mythos of heart and home, are now

the property of national elites that have been increasingly revealed to be corrupt, capitulationist, undemocratic, patriarchal and homophobic” (Mufti *et al* 1997: 3).

Put simply, in comparison to the period of decolonization, the capacity of the nation to evoke imaginings of emancipation in the Third World has faded away at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In spite of that, the nation continues to be an ordering principle of contemporary politics and one of the most recurrent sources of identity for a large portion of the world’s population. In other words, the idea of the world’s population being divided into naturally existing nations, which are based upon a diverse set of principles, is still the most influential way of conceiving the world and ordering the collective and individual lives of large amounts of people. Since the end of Second World War, collective efforts to attain far-reaching ideals, such as the abolishing of large-scale wars, which is the primordial objective of the United Nations, draw on the language of the nation as an ordering principle of politics. Similarly, any people, either individuals or groups, lacking any national identity appear as exceptions in a world divided up in nations. For these reasons, and despite its loss of appeal for emancipatory and liberationist aspirations, the nation continues to be iterated through performances and materializations in the postcolonial world.

For the most part, iterations of the postcolonial nation have been made through what Michael Billig (1996) has called acts of “banal nationalism,” such as the hanging of a national flag in a public building and the singing of the national anthem in a public event. However, some iterations of the postcolonial nations have included, as in the case of Qatar, ambitious projects directed from the state aimed to construct all those symbols that reflect the ancient roots of the nation, and to justify the persistence of an independent state, such as the development of a state-of-the-art national museum, the creation of the house of the national archives, the composition of a national anthem and the creation of a national day. The emergence of such projects might be related with particular history of Qatar and the Gulf, in which recently independent states are endeavouring to carve a national identity out of the resources provided by their large hydrocarbon reserves. However, all these developments,

banal or predetermined, come at a time when concerns over the emancipatory potential of the postcolonial nation are emerging.

In this context, it is important to enquire on what the postcolonial nation stands for. In other words, amidst the alleged lack of resonance of liberationist aims in the postcolonial nation, it is important to reflect on the iteration of the discourse on the nation in the Third World at the turn of the twenty-first century. This reflection paves the ground for some interesting questions, such as: how the meaning of the postcolonial nation has evolved and transformed, what kind of struggles over its definition emerge, where do these struggles take place and what are the power relations influencing and being transformed by discourses on the nation? Through a focus on the case of Qatar, this research aims to provide an answer to such questions. Even though these answers are by no means definite statements on this subject, they provide a starting point to grapple with this set of concerns.

In addition to contributing to the field of postcolonial nationalism, this thesis also makes an important contribution to the field of Middle East studies. In this sense, this thesis draws on scholarly debates on nationalism in the Middle East, which have followed two trends. To begin with, echoing those traditional concerns over the origins of the nation and the authenticity of nations in Asia and Africa, studies within this field have emphasized the historical roots of modern forms of collective identification. Prominent among these concerns has been the consistency of deep-rooted ethnic formations and their eventual evolution into modern nations, which has allowed for the emergence of analyses on the origins of Middle Eastern nations. For some of the participants in these debates, the consistency of ethnic loyalties and associations, which pose the seed of modern nations, form the basis upon which nation-states in the postcolonial period have been established. For some others, it is national elites who manipulate such symbols in order to promote the legitimacy of modern nation-states. In spite of their disagreements, these perspectives have been invariably concerned with a set of questions over the origins of nations in the Middle East.

Without underestimating the relevance of such concerns, an exclusive focus on the origins of nations would leave aside a whole set of questions that, in line with innovative approaches on the issue of nationalism, can be asked in the case of the Middle East. Thus, looking at the nation as discourse, innovative perspectives within the field of nationalism in the Middle East have focused on the power relations articulated by the iteration of the discourse on national identity at a given historical juncture (Gershoni 1997; Piterberg 1997, Zeruvel 1994). Among other things, these perspectives have highlighted the gender power relations emboldened in widespread notions of nationalism, which have been equally manifested in literature, cinema and official discourses (Baron 1997; Göçek 2002; Hayes 2000, Majaj *et al* 2002). Similarly, these approaches have focused on the interaction between nationalism and modernity in which the former provides the language articulating the latter (Aksikas 2009, Barghuthi 2008).

In spite of the insights provided by both traditional and non-traditional approaches to nationalism in the Middle East, a lot of work is still needed in order to understand the multifaceted and complex dimensions of Middle Eastern nations. In this sense, one recurrent trend in this body of work is its geographical focus, which has privileged some areas of the Middle East at the expense of others. The Levantine region, and especially countries such as Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, has been the main focus of this literature. To a lesser extent, the North Africa region, with a special focus on Egypt, has also been the object of such studies. The obvious absent in these discussions has been the Gulf region, and especially the Arab Gulf States, which, as the case of Qatar shows, has recently witnessed the expansion of projects at nation building. The geographical focus, which has left the Gulf region relatively unattended, is then one of the outstanding features of the field of nationalism in the Middle East.

For attaining its objective, this thesis is divided into five chapters. The first of them, entitled “Theoretical framework,” provides a more detailed overview of the theoretical discussions underlying this research. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the concepts more widely used in this thesis and

to provide a background of the theoretical debates this research draws on. The second chapter, entitled “On methodology,” offers a more thorough explanation on how discursive approaches have informed research on the nation in general. It also explains how these previous experiences inform this research. Additionally, this chapter reflects on how the particularities of Qatar as a field site transformed in small but important ways these forms of social enquiry. Taken together, these two chapters comprise the conceptual framework of this thesis, which provides the reasoning for conducting this research in accordance with certain methodology.

Subsequently, chapters three, four and five analyse the material gathered through this research in light of the theoretical and methodological discussions highlighted in previous chapters. Each of these chapters focuses on one of the claims that comprise the core of the discourse on national identity. Thus, the third chapter, entitled “who makes the nation?” discusses the intervention of the discourse on the nation in the field of collective memory in order to clarify who, and for what reasons, can claim belonging to Qatar’s national community. The fourth chapter, entitled “this is our model of society,” analyses the way particular subjectivities and forms of association, which are critical to the plans form economic reform, are imagined and recreated as defining features of Qatar’s national identity in the sites displaying this discourse. Finally, the fifth chapter, entitled “these are our natural rulers,” focuses on the legitimizing features of the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar, which emphasizes the naturalness of Al-Thani’s rule over the country. Overall, these chapters offer an insight on the meaning of the contemporary Qatari nation as materialized and performed in those sites looked at in this research.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains the critique posed by postcolonial scholarship to the issue of the nation, and its implications for conducting research on nationalism and national identity in the twenty-first century postcolonial world. For doing so, it first discusses traditional approaches to nationalism, in order to understand the emergence of perspectives on the nation as discourse, in which postcolonial perspectives to nationalism are included. After offering an overview of postcolonial scholarship, the discussion then focuses on the specific contributions of this body of literature to debates on nationalism and national identity. In the third section, the discussion turns its attention to the way approaches to nationalism have tackled the issues of nation and national identity in the Middle East. After that, a discussion on the emergence of neoliberalism and its absorption in the Third World in the form of contemporary frameworks of global governance takes place. Finally, the discussion tackles the particularities of the case in which this research has focused: namely, the iteration of national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since the mid-1990s through the creation of many of those symbols that give Qatar its distinctive character and justify its existence as an independent nation-state.

### 2.1. MAJOR PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY OF NATIONALISM

Perspectives on nationalism are diverse and numerous. For several decades, well-established scholarly projects have devoted to the study of nations and its related concepts, such as nationalism and national identity. As prominent historian Eric Hobsbawm (1990) has ascertained, “the number of works genuinely illuminating the question of what nations and national movements are and what role in historical development they play is larger in the period 1968-1988 than for any earlier period of twice that length” (4). Navigating through such vast academic literature, the following pages provide an overview of the way social scientists have constructed nations and nationalism as objects of

sociological inquiry. By highlighting some of the concerns within social sciences nations have given rise to, the discussion that follows aims to clarify the particular perspectives on nationalism addressed by this research.

One of the most prominent discussions within the field of study on nationalism has referred to the origins of the nation as a form of collective identification. In this debate, the nation appears as a trans-historical and abstract object whose most outstanding features are comparable across cultural contexts. Based on this assumption, some perspectives, known as primordialists, have ascertained the nation is a particular manifestation of the inherent need of human societies to associate along ethnic identities. In contrast, modernists have asserted the nation is a historically specific phenomenon whose emergence is intrinsically related with the transformations brought about by modern capitalism. The ramifications of the debate between primordialists and modernists touch upon a number of relevant issues, such as the possibility to establish a historical imperative from which to assess the coincidence of a given national formation with a pre-existing ethnic identity and the persistence of national identity as an inhibiting force for the emergence of a transnational class-consciousness.

The nation appears in these accounts as a relatively stable and permanent object. On the one hand, the nation is stable because its meaning remains relatively constant throughout history. While variations and transformations in the meaning of nations or in their operationalization at a given historical juncture might be acknowledged, these do not become the main object of inquiry. On the other hand, the nation is permanent because its embracement and absorption by a given collective body is usually taken for granted. In general terms, traditional perspectives on nationalism have been more interested in analyzing the nation as a longstanding configuration whose spread as the most prominent ordering principle in contemporary world is related with either major transformations in modern societies or the inherently human desire to form social groups. For this reason, their analyses have usually comprised ambitious historical accounts that provide an answer to the question of how the nation became such a pervasive principle of human association.

### 2.1.1. *The primordialist perspective*

The primordialist perspective, which makes emphasis on the pre-modern character of the nation is present in some anthropological works in the mid-twentieth century. In this sense, some scholars contended that national identity and its corresponding polity, the nation, are particular manifestations of the timeless and pre-social need of humans to associate. Accordingly, one example is the persistence of kinship relations in premodern times. This position informed the work of Clifford Geertz in his 1963 book *Old Societies and New States*, as well as that of Edward Shils, in his article “Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties”, published in 1957 in the *British Journal of Sociology*. In those early works, the nation is regarded as a continuation of those primordial links that brought together a given ethnic community. Thus, while they recurred to the language and symbolism of modernity, nations actually mirrored more locally rooted and ancient conceptions of community.

The more empirically oriented and anthropological works that initially informed the primordialist perspective were later stretched to more comprehensive accounts enacting claims applicable across different contexts (Young, Zuelow and Sturm 2007). These works usually drew on the ideas of Anthony Smith (1986), who claimed that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena drawing on premodern notions of ethnic community (*ethnie*), whose core resides in myths, memories, values and symbols. According to him, the endurance of the *ethnie* in Europe and elsewhere has shaped the content of modern nations and nationalism by setting limits on, and constraining the construction of national identity in more recent times. Smith did not deny the crucial role that modern developments played in the emergence of nations, such as technological progress, industrialization and the spread of communications. However, he saw the notions of ethnic community as constraining factors that filtered the effects of modernity on the emergence of nations. Apart from its descriptive potential, this perspective had a normative dimension in that it considered as nations only those forms of collective identification that could claim a continuity with a pre-modern *ethnie*.

After the dismantling of European empires in Asia and Africa and the subsequent emergence of independent nation-states, the issue of the authenticity of national identity was a crucial theme, because it articulated claims over self-determination, delimitation of borders, political legitimacy. Through its emphasis on ethnic ties as the roots of modern nations, the primordialist perspective had a big say in those discussions. In this sense, Smith (1983) did not deny the crucial role played by colonialism in the emergence of particular forms of national identity in the European colonies of Asia and Africa. Instead, he thought of the colonially-inspired national boundaries and their corresponding identities as being at odds with the boundaries posed by the primordial concept of the *ethnie*. Thus, when studying the formation of states and nations in sub-Saharan Africa, Smith (1983) contended that “nation-building’ has entailed ‘nation-destroying’; or, even better, ‘state-building’ has erased or eroded many a variable nation. For, the Western model is essentially a ‘state-system’ rather than a ‘nation-system’; and this has been its fateful legacy to Africa and Asia” (11). This perspective reinforced the claim that the drawing of borders in postcolonial Africa was an external imposition that disregarded local forms of collective identification.

Rather than a single and unified perspective, primordialism is a quite diverse set of views on the nation. In this sense, by establishing a direct link between the alleged primitive need of human association and the emergence of modern nations in the former European colonies of Asia and Africa, early writings in this tradition favored the view that postcolonial nation-states were “natural” configurations. Later writings, such as Anthony Smith’s, contended this view, and emphasized the contradictions and tension between colonially-influenced national identities and precolonial identities, which called into question the authenticity of nations in the postcolonial world, especially in the African continent. However, what binds these approaches together is their endorsement of the primitive human need for association as the main motivation for group formation, either in its ethnic or national form. This endorsement, which justifies then an emphasis on the authenticity of nations, is an outstanding feature of the primordialist perspective.

### 2.1.2. *The modernist perspective*

In opposition to primordialism, some voices have regarded the nation as an exclusively modern phenomenon whose emergence meant a break with previous forms of human association. This set of diverse perspectives, known as modernism, asserted in general terms that national identity is a historically-specific form of collective identification with the nation, a modern phenomenon whose roots can be traced back to any of the major transformations in recent human history, such as the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution. From this point of view, the nation is a constitutive element of modernity and its trajectory is closely tied to the more recent changes in human history. Consequently, modernism focuses on themes related with the temporality of nations, such as the overlapping of the nation with other forms of collective identity, especially class-consciousness, and the eventual reconfiguration or disappearance of the nation due to the arrival of new phases in human history (Hobsbawm 1990: 191).

One of the earliest exponents of the modernist perspective was British academic Elie Kedourie, who started his work on nationalism as a lecturer in the *London School of Economics* at the time of decolonization in Asia and Africa. For Kedourie (1960), nationalism is a European doctrine that emerged during the nineteenth-century after the overlapping of two major developments. These were the new style of politics spread after the French revolution and the conception of the state as the ideal environment for the attainment of individual self-determination. Accordingly, nationalism and its related ideas were later exported to the European colonies in Asia and Africa through the work of external powers, who agitated successful nationalists in order to advance their own struggle with dominant powers, and through the efforts of nationalist intelligentsias, which were comprised by Western-educated individuals who learnt fundamental notions of Western philosophical thinking. For this reason, Kedourie (1970) thought of nationalism in Asia and Africa as an alien ideology that was unlikely to fill the promises of good government in those newly proclaimed independent countries.

Similarly, Benedict Anderson, whose well-known book *Imagined Communities* is an important reference in the study of nationalism, located the origins of the nation at the intersection of several historical factors in late-eighteen-century Europe. Accordingly, the cultural root of nationalism was the need to address the enigma of death, or the “transformation of fatality into continuity”, after the decline of the religious modes of thought (Anderson 1983: 11-12). Nationalism is well equipped to deal with this task because it provides an object of transcendence to the short lives of individuals. The development of print-capitalism and the appearance of books and newspapers written in vernacular languages allowed the spread of nationalism in both Europe and the Americas. People in these parts of the world started to regard themselves as being part of an imagined community, whose members would hardly know each other, but were sure they shared particular conceptions of time and space. Colonialism later brought nationalism to Asia and Africa through the emergence of a national intelligentsia that was for the most part educated in the metropole. In this way, the nation became, according to Anderson (1983), “the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (3).

Finally, the work of Ernest Gellner is probably the most representative of the modernist perspective in that it locates the emergence of the nation in the particular social organization brought about by the transit from agrarian to industrial societies. In some of his works (1983; 1964), Gellner developed the idea that nationalism was functional to industrial societies in that it provided a homogenous culture and language that facilitated mass production and created a national labor market. Moreover, the emergence of nations paved the ground for the creation of highly centralized forms of governance with a tight bureaucratic control. Since then, educational institutions in industrial societies have carried the task of producing such kind of homogenous communities. Gellner’s influential account rendered nations as top-down developments manipulated by modern elites to which people at the bottom of society was unable to dispute.

Overall, moving aside from the primitive need of human association, the modernist perspective provided historically specific accounts on the intimate relation between modern transformations and the spread of the nation as the most prominent ordering principle in contemporary world. However, the big absent in all these account was the issue of colonialism and its historical role as constitutive of modernity. Aforementioned perspectives mainly saw modernity as a Western internal development that had nationalism as one of its defining characteristics, and which was later exported to the rest of the world. These perspectives overshadowed the ways in which colonialism settled the conditions for the idea of Western civilization to become an almost undisputable truth and, for this reason, was unable to account for the ways this influenced the spread of nations as an uncontestable form of organization in the former European colonies of Asia and Africa. For the most part, these accounts regarded the colonial world as an empty recipient of an alien ideology that had emerged beyond its confines and, for that reason, they provided the basis for looking at the spread of nationalism as part of the *mission civilisatrice* in the rest of the world.

### *2.1.3. Perspectives on the nation-as-discourse and the shift to national identity*

The division of the field of studies on nationalism between primordialism or modernism, known as the “classic” debate on nationalism (Day and Thompson 2004: 8), has thus made important contributions to the construction of the nation and its related concepts as objects of sociological inquiry. However, in recent decades a number of works have emerged that go beyond the discussion on the origins of the nation as an already observable and transferable object, but try to approach the nation as a social construct whose meaning is constantly reformulated, iterated and contested (Calhoun 1997; Doty 1996; Reicher and Hopkins 2001; Özkirimli 2005; Zake 2002). These accounts call into question the fixed and stable character of the nation mostly assumed by classical approaches, and by emphasizing its contingent character, these perspectives open the possibility to enquiry on the

reproduction of power relations through the crystallization of the nation and its identity component at a specific historical moment. Although they include a great array of divergent and sometimes contradictory positions, these approaches will be termed here as perspectives on the nation-as-discourse.

Day and Thompson (2004) have termed this set of varied perspectives as the “post-classical” debate in the field of studies on nationalism. Accordingly, what binds these perspectives together is the consensus “that sociology should concern itself less with appraising the reality of [claims on nation and nationalism] than with analyzing how and why they have been constructed and perpetrated” (84). This consensus led to privileging, as object of inquiry, the political contestation through the processes of crystallization of national identity over the search for the origins of nations as self-evident and generally accepted forms of collective identification. In other words,

within the field of nations and nationalism, [skepticism towards grand narratives] has brought about a transfer of attention from the characteristics of nations and nation-states towards a greater emphasis upon national identity and identification –a move from the realm of the object to that of subjective consciousness and perception (Day and Thompson 2004: 87).

Due to their questioning of essentialism, these perspectives look at the quest for the origins of nations as part of the nationalist agenda and, thus, as reflective of its underlying power relations.

A pioneering perspective that made important contributions towards looking at the nation as discourse was the feminist critique, which made emphasis on the gendered nature of the foundational concepts with which humanity approached the world. One of those concepts was the nation, which was increasingly regarded as being imbricated in gender dynamics. For instance, drawing on the assertion that “knowledge is situated and that knowledge emanating from one standpoint cannot be ‘finished,’” Yuval-Davis (1997) noted that alarmingly “most of the hegemonic theorizations about nations and nationalism [...] have ignored gender relations as irrelevant” (1). As a response to this omission, she highlighted the mutually constitutive relation between gender and nation. Thus, she

pointed to several intersections among both concepts, which included the reproductive rights of women within the nation, the role of women in national symbolism, which resonated by the fact that the word nation itself derived from the Latin word *natio* (to be born), and women's access to citizenship as subordinated to their family role and their relation to men.

Looking at the nation as discourse has led researchers to focus on a number of sites performing and materializing the nation in order to grasp the subtleties of particular iterations of national identity and to highlight the nation's contingent character. Some of these sites include the realms of literature (Janzen 2005; Skurski 1994), museums (Coffey 2004; Macdonald 2003; Ostow 2008), historiography (Duara 1995; Kuzio 2002), symbols and monuments (Billig 1996; Hayward and Dumbuya 1984; Wilson 2007), sports (Krishna 2002), material and cultural heritage (Kalia 2005; Mookherjee 2005), celebrations and commemorations (Butler and Spivak 2007; Elgenius 2007), among others. Most of these approaches have emphasized the role of collective memory (Gillis 1994) as a critical component of national identity in that it provides a shared understanding over the past that provides a sense of community and purpose.

Through its emphasis on the role of collective memory as a critical instance for the construction of the nation, discursive approaches to nationalism have entered into a direct dialogue with that strand of literature within heritage studies that has emphasized the sociopolitical context that makes possible the emergence of knowledge about reminders of the past (Breglia 2006, Harrison 2010, 2013; Logan et al 2015; Winter 2013, 2015; Winter and Waterton 2013; Witcomb and Buckley 2013). Critical literature in this field started from the assumption that knowledge about heritage was comprised not only by the technical aspects around preservation of vestiges, but also by the overlapping and competing political agendas that allowed and constrained the emergence of such knowledge and the power relations influencing the contemporary uses of the past. Since nationalism and the different iterations of national identity emerged as important historical forces influencing the field of heritage studies, critical perspectives within this field are quite relevant for discursive perspectives on

nationalism, especially as it comes to identify those sites for enquiring on the construction of the nation through collective memory.

## 2.2. THE POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF THE NATION

There is a coincidence between approaches to the nation-as-discourse and postcolonial scholarship in that both, remaining skeptical towards essentialisms, enquire on the processes through which nations acquire stable meaning. However, when focusing on the issue of nationalism, postcolonial scholarship went beyond this general assertion in order to focus on the way colonial frameworks of thinking spanned through discourses on the nation. In this sense, postcolonial scholarship is concerned with the potential to attain self-determination posed by nationalism, and the way to make national struggles consistent with their promise to subvert colonial conditions of subordination. In this way, the postcolonial critique to the nation found its most flourishing field at the intersection of race, class and gender dimensions.

### 2.2.1. *Postcolonial theory and the study of nationalism*

In recent decades, the label “postcolonial theory” has expanded to include a vast array of perspectives in the fields of anthropology, history, literature, sociology, cultural studies, which makes difficult any attempt to summarize the assumptions, concerns and contributions of such a diverse body of scholarship. However, postcolonial theory is mainly an intellectual critique concerned with the Eurocentrism of much of social, historical and political thought, which opens the possibility to question the universality of the truth claims made by scientific knowledge. This questioning of the universality of otherwise situated knowledge led Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) to ask whether the “subalterns,” by which she meant all those classes excluded from history, could actually speak for themselves or were their voices perpetually condemned to translation through the language provided

by historically specific frameworks of knowledge. As such, postcolonial theory is more of a philosophical position regarding the world of ideas and knowledge than a new set of propositions aiming to produce a more complete truth.

The issue of the nation as lived and experienced in the Third World became a concern for postcolonial scholarship because of its salience in articulating anticolonial claims of emancipation and self-determination. As postcolonial theorist Leela Gandhi (1998) has argued, “[since] it is generally acknowledged that nationalism has been an important feature of struggles for decolonization in the Third World, any adequate account of the colonial encounter requires a theoretical and historical engagement with the issue of Asian and African nationalisms” (102-103). Some of the major postcolonial concerns over the issue of the nation have to do with the extent to which postcolonial nationalism is a foreign idea that rose to prominence only because these regions’ subordination to European imperialism and the potential for emancipation and self-determination posed by the nationalist discourse. The postcolonial critique to the nation is then a perspective on the nation-as-discourse in that it regards the nation as a non-essential cultural iteration whose hegemonic interpretations are open to challenge and contestation.

The issue of anticolonial nationalism had been a matter of concern for postcolonial scholarship since the early writings of the well-known Martinican intellectual Frantz Fanon. Thus, in his celebrated book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon lamented the unfulfilled promises of national consciousness, which he considered as an “empty shell” that only reflected the aims of the national bourgeoisie in the former European colonies in northern Africa. For him, the subordinated character of the national bourgeoisie produced a dependent relation with the metropolitan elite that continued up until the postcolonial period, and constrained the emancipatory potential of nationalist movements. The reproduction of a racist discourse within the anticolonial nationalist movements themselves, which enacted the colonial social hierarchies and armored them from any radical criticism, deepened further the condition of postcolonial subordination in the former European colonies (Fanon 1967). As

Fanon's work shows, the postcolonial critique emerged then in parallel to the rise to prominence of the anticolonial nationalist movements in the Third World.

In a similar vein, Partha Chatterjee (1986) challenged the idea that the postcolonial nation was a “derivative discourse.” Thus, analysing the nation as an autonomous discourse rather than as a sociological phenomenon, he argued the main feature of nationalist discourse in Asia and Africa was to show the colonial master that a supposedly backward culture could modernize itself, while retaining its traditional and distinctive character. He paid attention to an absent issue in the literature on nationalism:

Why is it that non-European colonial countries have no historical alternative but to try to approximate the given attributes of modernity when that very process of approximation means their continued subjection under a world order which only sets their tasks for them and over which they have no control? (10).

For Chatterjee, the answer to this question meant the conceptualization of knowledge as a site of contestation and reproduction of power relations, an intellectual task that had been largely absent in the study of nationalism.

In his later book *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Chatterjee (1993) directly addressed the subject of the nation as an imagined community by looking at the formation of national identity in colonial Bengal. Countering the claim that nationalism in Asia and Africa was simply an imitation of those modular forms of nationalism in Europe and the Americas, he argued anticolonial nationalism was modelled by imitation as much as differentiation from those older forms of nationalism. According to him, “the most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (5). In this sense, dividing national culture into the material and spiritual realms, nationalist elites of the colonial world conceded the superiority of Western technological progress in the material realm. However, they claimed sovereignty over the spiritual

realm, where they put in place creative efforts to generate a distinctive identity. Since there is no ending point in the creation of such differentiation, the creation of a distinctive national culture entails a process where the nation is constantly re-imagined and re-invented.

One of those realms that re-imagine and re-invent the distinctive national culture is the realm of literature, which in the Third World took the form, according to Frederic Jameson (1986), of “national allegories.” Thus, the realm of literary creation is a critical site for imagining the possibilities opened by the arrival of a new era in former colonial dominions. In this sense, Homi Bhabha (1990) identified the realm of literary creation as the site *par excellence* where the nation was re-created, re-invented, and re-imagined through a process he characterized as “the nation as narration.” The postcolonial critique to the nation within the field of literary studies gave rise to possibilities of discussing narrative works in the Third World that did not fit the model of “national allegories” (Franco 1997), as well as those that articulated a post-national imagination which was distinct from the orthodox account on the effects of globalization (Pease 1997). In all these works, the nation, and especially Chatterjee’s spiritual realm of national culture, appears as a non-essential and contingent discursive configuration.

As was the case with discursive approaches to the nation, postcolonial perspectives to nationalism also enter into dialogue with the field of heritage studies, where post-colonialism has emerged as one of the critical perspectives emphasizing the politics of knowledge. Postcolonial perspectives within heritage studies draw on the more general concerns about the politics of knowledge and the contemporary uses of the past, but they focus on the particularities of such concerns in the context of postcolonial societies (Basu 2013; Basu and Damodaran 2015; Chirikure et al 2016; Giblin 2015; Hancock 2008; and Winter 2007). Thus, they emphasize how, in spite of their claims to independence and self-determination in all spheres of life, cultural production in post-colonial societies is very much reliant upon the frameworks of thought brought about by colonialism, which reflects the dependency and derivativeness of post-colonial societies found in other realms, such as politics and

economics. Given the centrality of memory for constructing the nation, postcolonial perspectives on heritage provide a crucial standpoint for deconstruct the cultural fabric that constitutes the essence of post-colonial nations, and for call into question the material culture that sustains its claims for primordialism and authenticity.

One of the realms of political contestation in the cultural realm identified by postcolonial scholarship on heritage is the colonial archives, which together with their ways of knowing and classifying the “Other”, have provided most of the historical material upon which post-colonial nations have been built. For instance, looking at the opening of the Sierra Leone’s Peace and Cultural Monument in 2011, Basu (2013) introduces the concept of “postcolonial pastiche”, which retains the idea of imitation, attested in the monument’s references to the colonial archive and its drawing on Western aesthetic conceptions, but also makes room for considering the place of memory and narrative, which take the form of recasting the civil war as a sacrifice on the nation’s behalf. Thus, through its efforts to “indigenize” the colonial archive and its reproduction of Western aesthetics conceptions, the Peace and Cultural Monument of Sierra Leone helps to reflect on the way the cultural production in postcolonial nation reproduces the forms of dependency in the political and economic realms that postcolonial states still negotiate.

Similarly, logics of heritage conservation have been another realm of political contestation identified by the literature on post-colonial heritage. For instance, looking at the 2000-onwards drystone-wall restorations at Khami World Heritage Site in Zimbabwe, Chirikure et al (2016) underscore the continuing prominence of Western conservation values imported to African colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through this study, they point to one of the most important concerns for postcolonial scholarship on the contemporary uses of the past, which is the hegemony of Western conservation values and practices in postcolonial states, and their clash with locally-rooted conceptions about heritage. The nation appears here when questioning the notion of

authenticity after pointing the Western logic of conservation underlying most of the testimonies of the ancient roots of the nation and its authentic character.

Taken together, postcolonial scholarship within critical heritage studies focuses on whose memory and for what reasons is preserved in post-colonial societies. For this reason, these works have directed their attention towards the politics of post-colonial memory, which takes place in the historical material informing those memorialization practices, as well as the colonial legacies of authorized heritage discourse, which informs aesthetic conceptions and conservation practices in post-colonial societies. However, as Giblin (2015: 324-326) argues, recent works on the uses of the past in postcolonial events, sites and nations do not necessarily reproduce the idea of (neo-)colonial conformity, but they rather emphasize the multiple agendas and meanings that are imbued in the selective adoption of colonial imaginaries about local or indigenous cultures. Hence, rather than uncritically reproducing the idea of cultural conformity on the side of the colonized, post-colonial scholarship on nation-building analyzes how cultural dependency is negotiated in a number of ways, such as “indigenizing” colonial archive and “essentializing” local conservation values.

### *2.2.2. Recurrent themes in the study of postcolonial nationalism*

The postcolonial critique to the nation allowed for the emergence of a complex and multifaceted body of intellectual work that explored the anticolonial nationalist movements and the subsequent projects at nation building that took place in former European colonies. The most basic assumption underlying this research has been the postcolonial view of the nation as a non-essential discursive configuration whose crystallization at a given historical juncture reproduces power relations operating at a broader social setting. Thus, this body of work was especially interested in disclosing those power relations reproduced by the specific meaning of the nation that informed nationalist movements during most of the twentieth century. While this scholarship welcomed the struggle against colonialism and the

corresponding efforts to attain self-determination, it was skeptical on the nation's potential to work in line with those ideals.

To begin with, a vast number of works focused on the postcolonial nation as a vehicle for the transit of those entrenched perceptions that excluded and despised those human communities, also known as “indigenous people,” that inhabited a given territory well before the colonial encounter. Through its focus on the construction of Western civilization from a distinction with the “Other,” a subject that was the backbone of Edward Said's critique of the body of knowledge about the Orient, postcolonial scholarship intersected with a parallel critique within the field of social sciences known as “decolonialism.” Even though these two schools of thought emerged in different spatial and temporal contexts and developed out of divergent assumptions, some scholars have pointed towards their points of coincidence as a possibility to establish a creative dialogue between them (Bhambra 2014; Dube 2016). However, due to its intellectual roots and the social environment in which it developed, decolonial thought became more concerned with the issue of indigeneity as a constitutive element of colonialism and, thus, modernity.

Drawing on perspectives from dependency theory and critical theory, a number of Latin American scholars, such as Aníbal Quijano, María Lugones and Walter D. Mignolo, developed what has come to be known as decolonial thought, which involves a philosophical critique aimed to underscore the colonial relations underlying modern knowledge and a set of discussions aimed to inform practices of decoloniality. Quijano (2007) puts forward the concept of modernity/coloniality as a duality that should always be together, despite the fact that the former appears often without reference to the latter, its darker side. Based on an intersectional dimension, Lugones (2007) argues that colonialism imposed gender, race and sexuality on the colonized, which overshadowed and erased particular conceptions of those categories that existed before the colonial encounter. Mignolo (2000) takes these discussions to a struggle for decoloniality in the epistemic realm by acknowledging the historical and geopolitical dimensions of knowledge production.

One of the main critiques enacted by decolonial perspectives is the claim that notions of modernization and development, which informed great part of the anticolonial and nationalist discourse, were based on the singular Western experience, which universalized a particular historical trajectory (Mignolo 2005: 15). Accordingly, indigenous cultures were predominantly considered as being part of those pre-modern stages in human history, which needed to pass through a civilizational phase in order to become subjects of history. Similar assumptions underlined the idea of the “noble savage”, which portrayed a wild character that had not been corrupted by the “forces of civilization.” Thus, one of the contributions made by this body of scholarship is to highlight the persistence of such assumptions in anticolonial discourses, which rendered indigenous people, due to their alleged “backwardness,” to a subordinated status in those political projects orchestrated under the umbrella of nationalism (Mignolo 2005: 18).

Conceiving of indigenous cultures as backwards elements belonging to a pre-modern past has been a recurrent theme in the nationalist projects of Latin America. Thus, when looking into the responses of a so-called “ethnic intelligentsia” to the state-led nationalist projects during the post-revolutionary period in Mexico, Gutierrez Chong (1999) noted that Mexican nationalism has relied on a distinction between the “dead Indian people,” which are reminders of a glorious past, and the “living Indian people”, which are considered as the antithesis of modernity (15). However, far from being an exclusive development of Mexico’s twentieth century, this story has been a defining feature of the projects at nation building that have taken place in Latin America since the nineteenth century. In this sense, Mexican-Chilean anthropologist Claudio Lomnitz has stated,

in nineteenth-century Spanish America, [...] both natural and historical images were mobilized for the exclusion of the opinions and immediate interests of large portions of the population who, it was felt, needed to be civilized, educated, racially improved, or even, in some cases, exterminated (xiii).

Put simply, the history of Latin America since independence provides a robust historical record of nationalism as a discourse that integrated indigenous cultures and peoples as “otherness”.

Race is then one of the points of intersection between decolonial and postcolonial thought. However, race and indigeneity has not been the only concern of postcolonial scholarship on the nation. Since it endorses the view of the nation as a non-essential discursive configuration, postcolonial scholarship on nationalism has also included the gender dimension, as do the approaches to the nation-as-discourse outlined above. However, postcolonialism offers a particular iteration of the feminist critique within the field of nationalism, which places itself against the male-dominated view of orthodox approaches to the nation and the colonial dimensions within the mainstream feminist discourse. Thus, postcolonial feminism brings into the discussion other elements that did not figure prominently in conventional literature on gender and nation.

Looking at the iteration of the nation during the heyday of anticolonial sentiment, postcolonial scholarship criticized the marginalization of the feminist struggles within the movements for independence, which put forward a particular form of liberation that did not consider patriarchy as part of the yoke to be defeated (McClintock 1995). Moreover, in times of anticolonial struggles, women have had to cope with the tension created by their traditional role as mothers and home keepers and their duties with the struggle of national liberation. Similarly, looking at the subsequent projects at nation building, it also criticized the construction of women as “bearers of the nation” or, in other words, as reproducers of a distinctive national culture, which subjected them to control within the new nation-states (Jayawardena 1986). In the period after independence, women were considered as the reservoirs of those traditions that ensured the survival of the nation’s distinctive character, which conditioned their social role and led to control of their bodies and lives. The feminist critique was a recurrent issue not only during periods of anticolonial effervescence, but also during periods of nation building after independence.

Several examples throughout the postcolonial world illustrate the importance of paying attention to the gendered nature of nationalism and the projects enacted under its name. Thus, in considering the exclusion of women’s struggles from the anticolonial movements, feminist scholar

Anne McClintock (1993) started from the assumption that “all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous [...] in the sense of representing relations to political power and to the technologies of violence” (61). Thus, she argued, “the invention of *Afrikaner* tradition [in South Africa] had a clear gender component,” and consequently, “*Afrikaner* nationalism would be synonymous with white male interests, white male aspirations and white male politics” (68). This example shows how identities allegedly shared by a given social group, are actually a reflection of particular and gendered aims and imperatives.

Postcolonial scholarship has also highlighted the way in which widespread perceptions of the role of women in traditional societies and on the ways natives treated the women justified colonialism. This is a major theme in the debate triggered by Spivak’s provocative critique on the possibility of subalterns, by which she meant women, to actually speak for themselves (Spivak 1988). Accordingly, women’s body appeared as a site of struggle between two patriarchal structures that silenced them as speaking subjects. This perspective has informed more recent critiques of United States’ military adventures in the Middle East, which have drawn on colonial claims purporting a civilizing mission that has at its centre saving women from oppressive forces of primitive cultures (Abu Lughod 2013).

Beyond colonialism and anticolonial struggles, the gendered nature of nationalism also manifested itself during the subsequent projects aimed to build the nation. In this sense, in her introductory book to postcolonial theory, Ania Loomba (1998) noted, “across the colonial spectrum, the nation-state or its guiding principles are often imagined literally *as* a woman [therefore], as national emblems, women are usually cast as mothers or wives, and are called upon to literally and figuratively reproduce the nation” (215-216). These perspectives showed the need to emphasize the particularities of women’s struggle in the postcolonial world and to be attentive to the gender dimension of nationalism.

Finally, postcolonial scholarship scrutinized the nation in order to reflect on the persistence of racism after the triumph of anticolonial movements and the emergence of independent nation-states

in the Third World. One of the main concerns of this body of scholarship has been to reflect on the way in which the nationalist discourse reproduced or kept intact those identities enacted by the colonial experience, such as “black people”. These racially-based identities rendered large numbers of people to subordinated strata within colonial social hierarchies and, as such, played a critical role for ensuring the correct functioning of the colonial enterprise. Notwithstanding nationalist elites aggressively challenged the primacy of the colonial ruler, most often those social hierarchies have outlasted colonialism, integrating themselves in to the backbone of postcolonial national identities.

Examples of the ways in which nationalist struggles kept untouched colonial identities and their corresponding social hierarchies abound. The most prominent of them come from the transnational black movement, which denounced the racial foundations of important events, such as the independence of the United States, and linked themselves with a form of transnational identity, based mainly in skin-color, that transcended the nations’ imaginary boundaries. For instance, Paul Gilroy’s (1995) idea of the “Black Atlantic” illustrated such a transnational identity in that it makes the case for a black culture that goes beyond nationalism and is neither African, American, British, Caribbean, but all of these at once. This criticism to the nation found in the exposition of the nation’s racial foundations a theme in common with more recent works that have disclosed how a number of “new nations” actually reflect the predominance of one ethnic group, such as the “Chinese” in the Singaporean nation (Wee 1993, Barr and Skrbis 2008) and the Ashkenazim Jews in Israel (Shohat 1997). Taken together, these perspectives point to a recurrent theme in postcolonial scholarship: namely, the reproduction of colonial identities based on racial assumptions.

These three themes –gender, race, and ethnicity- are examples of the particular meaning of the issue of “constructedness” of the nation. They show how articulation and attempted crystallization of identities reproduce broader power relations. However, they are mainly related with the particular manifestation of national identities that took place during the heyday of anticolonial struggles and the subsequent projects at nation building in the former European colonies of Asia and Africa. In spite of

that, they pave the ground for asking questions related to power and nation, such as: how is the nation constructed in the absence of anticolonial struggles in the Global South, what are the power relations reproduced by the enactment of national identity during periods of reform to the global economy, what happens to national identity when the people belonging to that nation is a minority within the boundaries of the state.

### 2.3 FRAMING NEOLIBERALISM IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Looking at the nation as a discursive configuration, one of the main concerns in this thesis is to question what has happened to the postcolonial nation at the turn of the twenty-first century. The aim here is then to look at the specific ways in which the postcolonial nation has crystalized under recent political and economic transformations at the world stage, and to enquire on the discursive battles over the meaning of contested national identities. One main motivation for this intellectual endeavor is a strong belief that the nation's presence in the political imaginary of the contemporary Third World is less connected with the emancipatory aims that informed political activism during the twentieth century, and more with projects of global integration and governance that often clash with the achievements of those nationalist movements.

The location of this discussion at the turn of the twenty-first century is not only a random temporality, but has to do with a series of concerns over the set of economic relations spanning throughout the globe and the political frameworks governing those practices. More specifically, this discussion is concerned with the consequences for the discursive configurations of the nation posed by the efforts to expand the free-market economy throughout the world and the specific political forms accompanying this expansion in the postcolonial world. These concerns find a concrete manifestation in the critiques to neoliberalism and its corresponding frameworks of global governance, which have

informed the work of people inside and outside academia. Put simply, the aim of this thesis is to enquiry on the state of the postcolonial nation under neoliberalism.

For this reason, the discussion in this thesis is historically bounded. Its aim is not to produce an essentialist view of the postcolonial nation that would inadvertently be complicit with the efforts to crystalize national identities. Rather, looking at the nation as a contested terrain, it aims to enquire on the struggles over the definition of postcolonial national identities under neoliberalism.

### 2.3.1 *What is neoliberalism?*

When discussing the historical roots of neoliberalism, British geographer David Harvey provided one of the most informative accounts of this phenomenon (Harvey 2005). According to him, neoliberalism comprised a set of revolutionary changes with global reach that started to take place in the late 1970s. However, this date refers only to the actual materialization of a set of political and economic prescriptions, whose intellectual roots started to take shape several decades before. In this sense, neoliberalism emerged as a political theory in the 1940s as part of the work of a group of intellectuals, known as the *Mont Pelerin Society*, headed by the Austrian political philosopher Friedrich Von Hayek. In general terms, the main tenets of neoliberalism, according to Harvey (2005), pose that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2).

As a political and economic theory, neoliberalism remained in the periphery until the late-1970s, when a series of events brought it into the forefront of world politics. The most prominent among them were China’s economic liberalization because of Deng Xiaoping’s reformist agenda, the electoral outcomes in U.S. and Great Britain that brought Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to power, and the accession of Paul Volcker as director of the U.S. Federal Reserve. After the 1973 coup

that deposed the government of Salvador Allende, Chile was the first test site for neoliberalism (Harvey 2005: 1). From there, neoliberalism expanded to the rest of the Third World, which was experiencing by then a wave of nationalism that had produced anticolonial movements in Asia and Africa, as well as revolutionary nation building projects in Latin America. For this reason, Indian Marxist intellectual Vijay Prashad (2012) considers the expansion of neoliberalism as the demise of the Third World project that opened up “the countries of the South to a new geography of production” (12).

In summary, neoliberalism is a political theory posing that human well-being can be best attained through the procurement of free market economy. It also poses a set of prescriptions that include, among other things, deregulation of all economic sectors, privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises, and the partial withdrawal of the state from the economy, especially as it comes to the provision of social services. A number of international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, accompanied the global expansion of neoliberalism. However, the particular face that neoliberalism acquired changed according to temporal and geographical dynamics. In most of the Third World, which was still experiencing the inertia of the nationalist wave, it meant the gradual dismantling of the nation building projects and their increasing integration into a new political and economic rationality.

### *2.3.2 Neoliberalism as a government technique: biopolitics and governmentality*

When discussing the rise and spread of neoliberalism, Harvey emphasized the political dimension of this set of theoretical assumptions. Neoliberalism appeared in his account not only as a set of prescriptions on how to govern markets and economic relations, but it also appeared as a broader framework concerned with the regulations of all spheres of social life. For this reason, Harvey devoted part of his discussion to the role of the state in the neoliberal era, which has, accordingly, two distinctive features. These are, firstly, the commitment of the neoliberal state to create a good business or

investment climate and, secondly, its tendency to favor the integrity of the financial system, especially in periods of conflict (Harvey 2005: 68-70). These two features of the neoliberal state, and especially the former, have consequences for the government of societies in that they present the prescriptions of a given economic doctrine as the target of collective efforts.

Other renowned scholars have emphasized the political dimensions of neoliberalism and its implications for the government of societies. For instance, in her detailed study about the assembling of neoliberal spaces throughout East and Southeast Asia, where neoliberalism is more the exception than the rule, anthropologist Aihwa Ong (2006) argues that “as a new mode of political optimization, neoliberalism –with a small n- is reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality” (3). Such reconfiguration of governing relations implies, according to her, recasting governing activities as non-political and non-ideological problems that need technical solutions. Thus, one of the consequences of neoliberalism is that it has rendered important governing matters as the exclusive realm of reduced group of “experts,” who are entitled with the capacity to decide on the destiny of entire societies.

Similarly, US political scientist Wendy Brown contends that understanding neoliberalism in simple economic terms is misleading because it fails to address the “political rationality that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the market” and does not capture what is new in the contemporary forms of political and economic organization (Brown 2005: 38). In her later work, she claims “neoliberalism is best understood not simply as economic policy, but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself exclusively as *homo oeconomicus*” (Brown 2015: 176). In this sense, through a slow but consistent process Brown calls “undoing the *demos*”, neoliberalism hinders the modest achievements of representative democracy in the attainment of self-government in the Euro-Atlantic world.

An important body of knowledge informing the development of reflections around the political dimensions of neoliberalism are the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault regarding

the government of modern societies. Throughout his intellectual life, Foucault was concerned with the more ambitious project of understanding the nature of power in modern times and, more specifically, with the sophistication of control mechanisms for disciplining societies. In this general framework, he devoted part of his work to think about the manifestation of these longstanding processes in more bounded historical contexts. Therefore, in his lectures at the *Collège de France* in 1979, Foucault tracked the liberal art of government that emerged in the eighteenth century onto the post-war period, when some currents of thought started to challenge the system of the welfare state. He thus focused on two of these currents: namely, the *Ordoliberalen*, who decried the anti-competitive effects of society and played a significant role in the reconstruction of the post-War German state, and the Chicago School of economics, which advocated extending the field of economic theory into all parts of human behavior (Gordon 1991: 41-43).

One prominent Foucauldian concept circulating in debates about neoliberalism as a set of governing techniques is that of biopolitics. In his lectures at the *Collège de France*, Foucault describes a process that starts in the late-seventeenth century and that includes a reformulation and transformation of the sovereign's right to take life and let live, which became a right to make live and let die. For him,

one of the basic phenomena of the nineteenth century was what might be called power's hold over life. [What he meant was] the acquisition of power over man insofar as man is a living being, that the biological came under State control, that there was at least a certain tendency that leads to what might be termed State control of the biological (Foucault 1997: 239-240).

Thus, whereas the sovereign's right had been formerly equated with the right to kill, the gradual emergence of this new technology of power identified by Foucault meant the possibility to make life through disciplining techniques aimed to surveil, train, use, and punish a mass of body comprised by individual bodies.

In addition to biopolitics, another important Foucauldian concept spanning through debates on the governing dimension of neoliberalism has been that of governmentality or the "conduct of

conduct” (Gordon 1991: 2). Governmentality is then a form of power guiding or shaping the conduct of persons through modern techniques of the self. By the word “governmentality,” Foucault (1991) meant:

The 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 (102).

Foucauldian perspectives on the government of modern societies have been then important intellectual contributions for thinking about the political dimension of neoliberalism and the transfer of market rationality into every sphere of life. As the work of Wendy Brown in the Euro-Atlantic world and of Aihwa Ong in East Asia show, the free-market rationality and its implications in all spheres of life come together with a set of governing techniques aimed to produce the kind of society that is functional to the spread of those forms of power. The diffusion of these forms of power rely on individual bodies and in the aggregate mass comprised by these individual bodies or the body politic. For this reason, constructing individuals with specific characteristics and setting up policing institutions, such as schools, families, and individuals, have been critical developments in the neoliberal era.

### *2.3.3 Policing families and constructing subjectivities under neoliberalism*

Looking at neoliberalism as a modern governing technique that involves the reproduction of power throughout self-surveilling societies comprised by a mass of disciplined bodies, has opened the door for discussions on the concrete forms in which these processes actually occur. These discussions have highlighted the concrete manifestations and the specific workings of neoliberal rationality in concrete historical circumstances. Some of the recurring sites are the construction of neoliberal subjectivities, which have at their center a self-responsible individual, and the strengthening of traditional families as

the fundamental unit of society. Rather than naturally occurring social phenomena, individuals and families appear in these discussions as critical sites of political contestation where neoliberalism as governing technique operates more clearly and decisively.

David Harvey identified individuals and families as being crucial factors in the spread of neoliberalism in Great Britain. Thus, he recalls British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once famously declared: “[there is] no such thing as society, only individual men and women’ –and, she subsequently added, their families” (Harvey 2005: 23). The emergence of individualism as a prominent concept within neoliberal imaginary prescribed, according to him, the dismantling of all forms of social solidarity in favor of private property, personal responsibility, and family values. In the neoliberal era, self-responsible individuals with strong family values became the foundation of British society due to their suitability for constructing the kind of human capital necessary for a deregulated and privatized economy.

In a similar vein, Aihwa Ong has emphasized the social engineering posed by the spread of neoliberalism in Asia. In this sense, she argues:

it is important to trace neoliberal technology to a biopolitical mode of governing that centers on the capacity and potential of individuals and the population as living resources that may be harnessed and managed by governing regimes. Neoliberalism as used here applies to two kinds of optimizing technologies. Technologies of subjectivity rely on an array of knowledge and expert system to induce self-animation and self-government so that citizens can optimize choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions. Such techniques of optimization include the adherence to health regimes, acquisition of skills, development of entrepreneurial ventures and other techniques of self-engineering and capital accumulation” (6).

Put simply, the assemblage of neoliberalism in Asia takes the form of a set of governing techniques characterized by the spread of a logic of self-disciplining among the body politic.

One of the innovative moves brought about by neoliberalism is then the recreation of individual subjectivities that are functional to market principles of discipline, efficiency and

competitiveness. In addition to being an economic doctrine aimed to govern markets, neoliberalism is a philosophy of the social that relies on the construction of individual subjectivities through “technologies of the self” (Foucault 1989: 16-49). Depending on the concrete social setting, these technologies of the self can take a number of forms, such as presenting traditional family as the only capable of producing the human capital necessary for the well-functioning of a free-market economy (Peterson 2011) or efforts to make the body “presentable” as an asset in the pursuit of self-achievement (Pathak 2014). Moreover, these different forms of neoliberal subjectivities unfold over a number of platforms, such as sites of cultural production that recreate, spread and contest neoliberal subjectivities (Brady 2008; Gill 2008), and mass media that normalizes notions of autonomy, responsibility, entrepreneurship, and positivity as defining features of the individual experience (Türken *et al* 2016).

When reflecting upon the role of families in the government techniques displayed by neoliberal rationality, one important precedent is the study of sociologist Jacques Donzelot on the policing of families. For analyzing the widely acceptance of the aristocratic model of family as the platform for launching demands for the improvement of living conditions in twentieth-century France, he drew on Foucault’s concept of biopolitics, which he defined as a set of technologies policing the family in a creative, rather than repressive, sense. Thus, he argues, in the eighteenth-century a tacit alliance between the state and the family emerged, according to which the former would absorb undesirable members of the family, allowing it to maintain its honor and prestige. The family, in turn, would instill into its members, especially children, the set of values that would allow the reproduction of governmentality throughout the body politic (Donzelot 1979: 6-9). Through his ambitious study, he showed the historical specificity of a particular model of family and its relation to power.

Drawing on Donzelot’s work on the policing of families, several perspectives have shed light on the role of families under neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics. Thus, building upon the tacit alliance between a particular model of family and state power, one major concern has been the transfer to the family of social services formerly provided by the state, such as child care, elder care, and

housing. For instance, Yilmaz (2015) contends that increasing concerns over the viability of the welfare regime in Turkey led to the government of the Justice and Development Party to implement a series of policies aimed to promote strong families that would be able to fulfil their role as social services providers. Similarly, others have highlighted the coming of foster families as part of a network of state institutions governing children's life (Cradock 2012) and the overlap between emergent kin relations and the expansion of neoliberal governmentality in non-European contexts (Ellison 2009). These perspectives have taken debates on the policing of families to the alliances between basic forms of human association and the spread of government techniques in contemporary world.

Gender has also been an important matter of concern when looking at these projects of global governance and their articulation in a generic form known as neoliberalism. The issue of women's empowerment has been especially prominent. These frameworks of governance usually put forward a narrow understanding of women's empowerment that makes emphasis on their participation in a market economy, and explodes their potential as producers and consumers in this environment. For attending such imperative, campaigns to empower women have often employed white women from the developed world to talk to black, Muslim or indigenous women from less developed societies about their rights. The hegemonic and arrogant aims of such campaigns have been highlighted by a number of feminist scholars from the Global South (Kandiyoti 2007: 505-507).

One common trend in the gender literature from the Global South is the complex lives and the structures of power that women in non-Western contexts face, which the hegemonic conceptions of women liberation propagated by white and liberal feminism often ignores (Ahmed 2017; Biccum 2010; hooks 2015; Mendoza 2014). At the same time, women have been integrated in nationalist projects as "bearers of the nation," which places their role at this collective projects at the intersection of global market forces, constrained by the imperative of value-creation, and nation-building, where the aim is to reproduce the cultural distinctiveness of the nation through their reproductive capacities

and their role in child breeding. In neoliberal projects, women then have to face the tensions posed by their performance as market subjects and their duties with the nation.

#### *2.3.4 Belonging in the neoliberal era*

Increasing scholarly awareness about the nature of power and its relation with governing and disciplining techniques has also had implications for discussions around the struggles over the definition on who falls inside and outside those principles organizing collective life in contemporary world, most notably nation-states and their corresponding frameworks of citizenship. A focus on neoliberal rationality as a set of government techniques implies an intervention in debates around the politics of belonging because of their emphasis on individual responsibility as the principle in which self-discipline and the diffusion of power rely. In such circumstances, important questions arise regarding the role of group loyalty under neoliberalism, as well as the criteria for belonging to certain collective configurations, the demands for those who belong and the regulation of those who do not belong. Rather than simply dismissing them, neoliberal rationality has endeavored to transform collective identities and their regulatory effects of individual life in order to make them consistent with its governing logics.

Through their emphasis on the role of established forms of collective identification in the spread of disciplining and governing techniques, perspectives on neoliberalism joined scholarly debates on the politics of belonging, which gained prominence in Europe and the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century. Many of the interventions into these discussions focused on the effects of globalization, understood as the blurring of state borders due to the advance of technology and the transnational flows of information, people, goods and services, on the sense of belonging among national, tribal, local and other forms of community (Croucher 2004). Thus, some of them focused on the challenges of “integration” in the “multicultural” societies of developed countries (Castles and

Davidson 2000), the perceptions of “home” as triggers of nationalism in those same societies (Duyvendak 2011), the need for solidarity and identity in an uncertain world (Pfaff-Czarnecka and Toffin 2011). Rejecting the centrality of globalization in their accounts, other perspectives on belonging emphasized the capacity to provide people with security through “mental maps” and “checkpoints” that indicate what is beyond the familiar realm, (Migdal 2004), and the contingent character of the experience of being member of a group (Westwood and Phizacklea 2000).

The specific contribution of perspectives on neoliberalism to debates on belonging has been their emphasis on the centrality of disciplining and governing techniques for thinking about the principles of inclusion and exclusion in modern societies. In this sense, Yuval-Davis (2011) argues, “the politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but also the inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this. But what are these kind/s of power?” In answering this question, she develops a concept of power that draws on Foucault’s notion of “disciplinary society,” including body politics and governmentality. Furthermore, she argues, “the politics of belonging involve not only the maintenance and reproduction of the boundaries of the community of belonging by the hegemonic political powers, but also their contestation, challenge and resistance”. Moreover, “the politics of belonging also include struggles around the determination of what is involved in belonging, in being a member of such a community” (20).

Under neoliberalism, those who are placed within the limits of society, or those who belong, are usually interpellated as market subjects, which allows the emergence of particular habits, lifestyles and practices that rely on disciplined bodies. In accordance, Ong (2006) argues:

market-driven intrusions have realigned citizenship elements in different ways, thus challenging unified modes of citizenship, on the one hand, and the national framework of its claims, on the other. It is becoming increasingly clear that the temporal dimension of citizenship is less fixed than we had

previously presumed, as flows of people and ideas attenuate citizenship protections, and new articulations of claims emerge in novel political spaces” (14-15).

In other words, the prominence of neoliberal rationality has had an impact on national identity and its concrete instrument of belonging, that of citizenship, which is increasingly becoming fully applicable only to those who are considered as fit and suitable for succeeding in a market-oriented society.

The categorization of bodies inspired by modern governing techniques leaves aside entire groups of people, such as the mad, the convict, and the criminal, who are not considered as fit and suitable for performing well in a life dominated by market intrusions. In her conversation with Gayatri Spivak on “who signs the nation state,” Judith Butler, drawing on the ideas of philosophers Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben, asserts “the state derives its legitimacy from the nation, which means that those national minorities who do not qualify for ‘national belonging’ are regarded as ‘illegitimate’ inhabitants” (Butler and Spivak 2007: 31). Accordingly, “state power understood as sovereign power exercises itself paradigmatically through the capacity to return some part of a population to a state (not a state) that is outside of the polity, one that Agamben, as you know, has described as bare life” (36). Under neoliberal forms of governance, the unfit are placed in a place outside of the polity, but are still subject to the disciplining techniques that spread power throughout a mass of individual bodies.

### *2.3.5 Flavoring global trends with a local jargon: the magic of neoliberalism*

As a final consideration on the spread of neoliberalism in contemporary world, a focus on the discursive articulations sustaining the functioning of governmental rationalities is in order. In this sense, literature on neoliberalism highlights how the reproduction of disciplining techniques, which transcend national boundaries and expand through the whole world, relies on a conflation with local expressions that have meaning and relevance in specific contexts. Nonetheless neoliberal rationality has a global reach, its articulation in particular sites often relies on its capacity to melt with local

practices and language, which affects its actual operation, but provides it with a particularistic face that exists in tension with its universal aspirations.

David Harvey noted the flavoring of neoliberalism with local language when discussing how neoliberal rationality as a form of global governance spread throughout the world (Harvey 2005: 38). Thus, he asserts, while a military coup imposed neoliberalism in Chile and Argentina, in Great Britain and the United States it was necessary to construct consent through what Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci called “common sense”. Common sense, he adds, “is constructed out of longstanding practices of cultural socialization *often rooted deep in regional or national traditions*” (Harvey 2005: 39, emphasis added). Moreover, he maintains,

the neoliberal state needs nationalism of a certain kind to survive. Forced to operate as a competitive agent in the world market and seeking to establish the best possible business climate, it mobilizes nationalism in its efforts to succeed. Competition produces ephemeral winners and losers in the global struggle for position, and this in itself can be a source of national pride or of national soul-searching (85).

One example of this is the kind of nationalism that too often sport competitions trigger, which emphasize the success of collective efforts materialized in the performance of a national team.

Countering the idea that national identity might be in danger of disappearing due to the emergence of a unified global market and the procurement of a cosmopolitan culture, Harmes (2012) has argued “nationalist policies are not only compatible with neoliberal values, but that these values may actually be dependent on certain nationalist policies” (59). For instance, analyzing representations of asylum-seekers in Australian media, Lueck, Due and Augoustinos (2015) argue the compatibility between nationalism and neoliberalism lies in their aim to protect “White Australia” from undesirable people who do not have the possibility to succeed in an economically competitive environment. These works advance the claim that the nation will endure because it serves as the language through which contemporary frameworks of global governance are made intelligible among national audiences.

The intervention of neoliberal forces in the definition of the meaning of the nation at a given historical juncture is a subject of scholarly debate. For instance, Gkintidis (2014) shows how the meaning of Greek nationalism has stretched since the mid-1990s to include principles of individual entrepreneurship and deterritorialized economic action, suggesting that new political and economic practices are built upon previously established symbolic forms. Looking at the World Thracian Congress that took place in 2012 in the town of Feres, he argues the discourse on the nation has been a crucial field for the “vernacularization of neoliberalism” in Greece, which presents individual economic conduct and entrepreneurial success as outstanding contributions to national progress (for a similar account on a different context, see: Powell 1996).

However, it is not only the nation, which in some circumstances might seem as an abstract and misplaced configuration, which provides the language for turning neoliberalism into a vernacular development. Thus, other forms of collective identification, which span through linkages that are more concrete, and which rely on relations that are more intimate, become also part of the set of nodal points that sustain the expansion of neoliberal rationality and its corresponding governing techniques.

In this regard, Coffey (2004) has focused on the emergence of the idea of “community,” in opposition to the “national-popular” that had at its center the figure of the *Mestizo* (mixed-race), as the privileged formation of social identity in Mexico since the 1980s. This latter formulation, which arose in parallel to the shift from state-sponsored capitalism toward neoliberalism, re-imagines the national aggregate as an atomized network of indigenous or subnational groups. Thus, she argues:

as a newer figuration of society, community enables the processes of ‘governing at a distance’ that have characterized liberal forms of government from their inception. Thus the shift from a national-popular to a kind of multiculturalism made up of subnational identities signals not a withdrawal of government from the affairs of everyday life, but rather, new governmental processes that attempt to constitute autonomous and self-governing communities, as well as national citizens who conduct themselves as modern, enfranchised political subjects (207-208).

One important site putting forward the idea of community as the building block of Mexican society are, according to her, the local or regional museums, which, as their national counterparts, have proven to be important technologies of power through their work in the realm of cultural representation (on museums as technologies of power, see: Bennet 1995).

In a similar vein, Ahmed Kanna has shown how the ideologies of powerful local institutions in Dubai, such as corporations and privileged sectors, are based on key claims of neoliberal discourse: namely, the retreat of the state from the economy, the marketization of sectors previously managed by the state, and the promotion of the individual entrepreneur as a “creative genius” (Kanna 2010: 101). Based on ethnographic work among citizens of the city-state who reached adulthood in the 1990s, he argues:

I call the young Dubai professionals engaged in fashioning a locally inflected neoliberalism ‘flexible citizens’ to describe their shifting between different scales and cultural worlds in constructing their identities. The ways that Dubai’s flexible citizens appropriate neoliberal discourses shows both how neoliberalism, rather than being monolithic, is inflected by local meanings, discourses, and histories, and how appropriations of neoliberalism mediate local ambiguities pertaining to social and gender identity” (101-102).

Belonging to the city-state of Dubai, which together with other emirates makes up the confederation of the United Arab Emirates, is attained through the performance of a global and business-oriented mentality among young professionals, who become then crucial nodes for the articulation of neoliberalism in this particular space.

The emergence of neoliberalism as a set of economic prescriptions and its expansion as a modern governing technique throughout the world has had several implications for discussing the discursive character of contemporary nations. First, neoliberalism relies on the construction of particular subjectivities and disciplining institutions, such as the family, for its operation and reproduction. Thus, some questions emerge regarding the interaction between these technologies of

power and the discourse on the nation, which reflect upon the contradictory or consistent character of individualism and family loyalty with the nation. Second, the functioning of those governing techniques relies on setting clear dividing lines between those who do and do not belong to society. Although both realms, external and internal, are subject to power and discipline, neoliberalism introduces new belonging criteria by putting market rationality at the forefront. Finally, the flavoring of neoliberalism with local jargon involves discourses on the nation, as well as any other form of community, which opens then the discussion about the contestation over the meaning of national, or any other collective identity under neoliberalism.

After a brief discussion of nationalism in the Middle East, with a special focus on Qatar and the Gulf, this thesis will introduce the case from which the reflection upon the iteration of national identity under neoliberalism takes place. The purpose of the discussion in the following section is to show how the Middle Eastern nation has become an object of scholarly inquiry and whether this body of scholarship has something to say about the questions motivating this thesis. Having done that, the only remaining task will be to introduce the case study, emphasizing on the parallel development of both nationalist and neoliberal agendas in contemporary Qatar.

## 2.4 DEBATES ON NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE GULF AND QATAR

In addition to its engagement with postcolonial perspectives on nationalism, this thesis contributes to the literature on nationalism in the Middle East by focusing on Qatar, a state of the Gulf that has recently seen an unprecedented reinvigoration of the discourse on national identity. As the following pages show, a considerable amount of literature on nationalism in the Middle East has expanded alongside the salience of scholarly debates on the nation in the field of social sciences since the 1960s.

There have been two trends within the literature on nationalism in the Middle East. On the one hand, this body of work has privileged the classical over the postclassical debate on nationalism,

placing at the center of the research agenda issues such as the origins of the nation, the authenticity of nations in the Third World, and the historical trajectory of nationalist movements. On the other hand, this literature has almost exclusively focused on nationalism in North Africa and the Levant, discussing either the persistence of national identities that span over contemporary nation-states, such as Arab nationalism, or the more localized national identities, which can be consistent or not with contemporary borders. In consequence, this thesis' contribution to the field of nationalism in the Middle East is twofold, because it focuses on the barely recurred post-classical concerns over the Middle Eastern nation, and it explores these concerns in the Gulf, a sub-region that has been relatively absent in such debates.

The following pages will provide an overview of the scholarship on nationalism in the Middle East in order to illustrate the specific contribution this research will make to this field of academic inquiry. Therefore, the discussion will begin by highlighting the literature on nationalism in the Levant and North Africa that has mainly focused on the origins of nations. The purpose of this discussion is to illustrate the relative lack of concern by this literature for the power relations articulated by the discourse on the nation. After this, the discussion will consider the role of these concerns in the study of nationalism in the Gulf, which has produced a less extensive number of works, but has also left aside those relevant concerns for the post-classical debate on nationalism. Finally, the discussion will focus on the small, but increasing amount of literature on nationalism and national identity in Qatar.

#### *2.4.1 Approaches to nationalism in the Middle East*

In the Middle East, as in most of the postcolonial world, the issue of nationalism became a prominent subject of political discussion by mid-twentieth century. For this reason, the most important concern on the issue of nationalism in the Middle East was its enactment as a primitive identity that served as a platform to articulate demands for an end to colonial rule. These concerns gave rise to questions

about the authenticity of the nation, in any of its concrete manifestations, as a form of identification that claimed preeminence over other subjectivities. These discussions served as a reference to articulate concrete demands for anticolonial movements and the ensuing political arrangements that emerged at the end of colonialism. Put simply, in the Middle East approaches to nationalism called into question the subjugation of this region into European colonialism, and put forward claims on the political arrangement after independence.

The issue of Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya al-Arabiyya*) was one of the most prominent subjects for calling into question European imperialism in the Middle East and the political arrangement that should emerge in the post-independence period. Due to its role as the most prominent anticolonial discourse in the Middle East, Arab nationalism has been an important matter of concern for debates on nationalism in this region. Arab nationalism gained prominence at the beginning of the twentieth-century, due in part to the work of committed nationalists such as George Antonious and Sati' al-Husri. These scholarly contributions were important in making the case of Arab identity as the basis of nationalism, whose core was Arabic language.

The emergence of Arab nationalism as a major political narrative in the twentieth-century Middle East gave rise, a few decades later, to a number of scholarly works that, enquiring on the origins of Arab nationalism, regarded Arab national identity as a historically specific political narrative, rather than a perennial form of collective identification (Cleveland 1972; Dawn 1973 and Tibi 1981). This strand paved the ground for the emergence of those approaches that made room for other forms of identification silenced and overshadowed for the salience of Arab nationalism, such as Kurdish nationalism (Natali 2005), and the nationalism that would form the basis of the postcolonial nation-states in the Middle East.

Taken together, literature on Arab nationalism has two outstanding features. On the one hand, it mainly focuses on the Levant, leaving aside other sub-regions of the Middle East, such as the Gulf. On the other hand, due to its relation with the anticolonial sentiment, this literature is especially

concerned with the authenticity of Arab nationalism, and with its salience as the most natural form of identification that should inform political arrangements in the postcolonial period. For instance, one of the most important works on Arab nationalism is an edited book by prominent scholars of the Middle East, which explicitly deals with the origins of Arab nationalism (see: Khalidi, Anderson, Muslih and Simon 1991). This book is divided into four parts. In the first of them, a series of essays are included that deal with the development of early Arab nationalism at the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East at the beginning of the twentieth-century. The three remaining parts include a number of essays focusing on case studies spanning over three sub-regions: namely, the Levant (Syria and Iraq), the Hijaz (the western Arabian Peninsula) and Northern Africa. Thus, the territories of the contemporary Arab States of the Gulf remained absent in the thirteen chapters comprising this book on the origins of nationalism, which exemplifies the general state of the field.

The collapse of the United Arab Republic in 1961, Egypt's defeat in the Six Days War in 1967 and the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the champion of Arab nationalism, in 1970 were some of the events that pointed to the decline of Arab nationalism (Ajami 1992). This decline had an impact on scholarly debates, which were now more attentive to the persistence of more localized national identities (*qawmiyya al-Wataniyya*). These local identities, which in most cases underlined the postcolonial nation-states in the Middle East, had been part of the discussions on the origins of the nation, and their prominence as object of study grew in parallel to the decline of Arab nationalism. Therefore, a body of literature on nationalism in the Middle East has focused on the triumph of the nation-state over Arab nationalism, locating its roots in several developments. Some of these developments are the Ottoman system of millet (Gerber 2004), the period of European colonialism and the creation of colonial institutions (Massad 2001; Cole and Kandiyoti 2002; Zubaida 2002) or the contestation within Arab nationalism itself (Muslih 1991; Chaitani 2007).

However, similar to the literature on Arab nationalism, those works dealing with the issue of local nationalism in the Middle East present two outstanding features related to thematic and

geographical focus. On the one hand, this literature is still mainly concerned with the origins of a given collective identity: namely, those identities that underlie the formation of modern nation-states in the Middle East. On the other hand, this literature heavily focuses on the Levantine countries, leaving aside the Arab Gulf States. For instance, an edited book whose aim was to apply “the broad range of Arab nationalisms as they developed from the World War I period onward” (Jankowski and Gershoni 1997: xiv), presents these two features in the discussion it puts forward. Thus, apart from having the origins of more localized form of national identification as their main subject of discussion, the essays comprising this volume either take the Middle East as a whole or focus in specific countries, mainly Egypt, Iraq, Palestine and Syria. Given the book’s editors themselves recognize the chapters in this book often focus in some regions more than in others, which is symptomatic of the state of the field, an important contribution to ongoing debates on local nationalisms in the Middle East would come from paying more attention to the Arab States of the Gulf.

To sum up, the literature on nationalism in the Middle East has focused on either the form of transnational identity comprised by Arab nationalism or the more localized identities that underlie the formation of most modern nation-states. Two outstanding features of this literature are its geographical emphasis, which comprises mainly the countries of the Levant, and its emphasis on the origins of a given national identity and its persistence throughout history. Nevertheless, the emergence of a number of works addressing the issue of nationalism in other sub-regions of the Middle East, especially the Gulf, has somewhat filled the geographical gap left by this literature.

#### *2.4.2 Approaches to nationalism in the Gulf*

In part as a response to the absence of the Gulf in the literature on nationalism in the Middle East, some works have recently turned their attention to this sub-region of the Middle East. This is consistent with the concerns expressed by Dresch (2005), in the sense that “the Middle East is poorly

served by academic literature, and the Gulf particularly ill served” (1). In some cases, this body of work does not focus explicitly on questions of nationalism or national identity in the Gulf. However, they do tackle questions relevant for discussing that subject. A great part of this literature has drawn on debates on political developments in the Arab Gulf States, which have paid attention to the ways political regimes within those States have interacted with society in order to guarantee their survival. Apart from the allocative system financed through oil revenues, nationalism appears then as an ideology promoted by the state in order to sustain their perpetual search for legitimacy. Other works have focused on the interaction between national identity and other forms of collective identity, such as tribalism, in the Eastern Arabian Peninsula. Thus, these works have imprinted the particularities of the Gulf into scholarly debates on nationalism in the Middle East.

The body of literature focusing or tackling the issue of nationalism in the Gulf has shifted its attention from the Levant to the Arab Gulf States, which became independent a few decades later. This move has allowed for the inclusion of the particularities of the Gulf into academic discussions on nationalism in the Middle East. However, this small literature itself has not been exempt from paying more attention to some countries at the expense of others. Thus, looking at their geographical focus, two types of work appear within this literature. On the one hand, there are aggregate accounts that tackle the issue of nationalism in the Gulf in general, making case-by-case distinctions only when necessary and emphasizing the common features among the Arab Gulf States (e.g. recent independence, tribalism, sizeable non-national populations). Despite their generalizing aims, these works usually focus on the bigger Arab Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and are thus unable to locate the particularities of each case (Patrick 2005). On the other hand, some works actually distinguish between each of the Arab Gulf States, but they generally focus on the bigger countries too, excluding the country in which this research has focused, the state of Qatar (Dresch and Piscatori 2005; Alsharekh and Springborg 2008).

The regional shift made by this literature has meant including the particularities of the Arab Gulf States into debates on nationalism in the Middle East. Among others, these particularities are the role of national identity in the legitimizing efforts of political regimes and the interaction of nationalism with other prominent identities, such as tribalism and diasporic identities of the large groups of “expats” living in the Gulf countries. Due to the recent history of the Arab Gulf States as independent nations, these works have emphasized, their path to nationhood has to deal with the more grass-rooted tribal understandings of community, which sometimes conflict with the conception of borders posed by the nation-states. Similarly, conceptions of the nation in the Arab Gulf States have to deal with the presence of numerous populations, considered generically as “immigrants” even though some of them have inhabited the Gulf since before the emergence of independent states (Vora 2013; Gardner 2010).

However, the role of these particularities in the literature on nationalism in the Gulf is very much in line with the traditional concerns over the origins of nations and the issue of authenticity. In other words, the discussion about national identity as a modernizing trend that overlaps and sometimes conflicts with non-modern forms of collective identification is a more specific formulation of the long-standing concern among studies on nationalism over the origins of nations (Al-Fahad 2004; Longva 2005). Similarly, the exclusion of the majority of the population in the Gulf countries from the mainstream of the national community has led to debates about the authenticity of postcolonial nation-states, which is also in line with traditional concerns over the origins of nations (Dresch 2006). Thus, despite its regional shift, which has allowed for the emergence of sub-regional subtleties in the field of nationalism in the Middle East, literature on nationalism in the Gulf is still very much concerned with traditional concerns over the origins of nations.

In summary, literature on nationalism in the Arab Gulf States has included a sub-region left aside by the literature on nationalism in the Middle East. In this sense, this literature has highlighted some of those trends that distinguish the Arab Gulf States from other countries in the region, which in turn enriches the study of nationalism in the Middle East. However, the regional shift has not

necessarily meant a thematic shift, since the literature on nationalism in the Gulf still reproduces traditional concerns over the origins and the authenticity of nations. For this reason, in order to locate the evolution of these discussions into more localized contexts, the following paragraphs will focus on the debates on nationalism and national identity in a Middle Eastern country of the Gulf that served as the focus of this research: the state of Qatar.

### *2.4.3 Approaches to nationalism in Qatar*

Despite the astonishment shown by renowned scholar of the Middle East Fred Halliday (2000) when pointing to the fact that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, “even Qatar claimed its own perennial identity” (50), this country had been absent in debates on nationalism in the Middle East and, more specifically, in the Gulf. Thus, case studies focusing on nationalism and national identity in Qatar have attempted to fill the geographical gap left by such studies. These case studies have highlighted the particularities of Qatar, which generally relate with the paradox that Qatar, the “quintessential” rentier-state, because of its comparatively small population and its large hydrocarbon reserves, has nonetheless invested heavily in instilling a sense of national pride among the population. Accordingly, the fact that the state of Qatar is launching such projects shows that oil wealth does not automatically translate into political legitimacy (Mitchell 2016). These accounts rely on a division between state and society, in which the former is in constant need to resist the forces of change coming out of the latter. As such, they have provided advantageous insights to reflect on the issue of nationalism and national identity in Qatar.

Since the early 2000s, the literature on a number of social and political aspects of Qatar, in consonance with that on the Arab States of the Gulf, has abruptly increased. Regardless of their main focus, most of this literature has tackled the issue of national identity in Qatar. The pages that follow explain the contribution of this body of work to the study of national identity in Qatar by diving it into

three main categories. First, some historical accounts have analyzed the evolution of different forms of collective identity in Qatar. Second, others, more sociologically-oriented works, have described general features of national identity in Qatar. Finally, reflecting the prominence of the discourse on national identity in Qatar since the mid-1990s, other works have explicitly tied these developments with a particular historical context, which has then influenced their own accounts. However, this body of work still lacks a full account of how the Qatari nation is constructed at the turn of twenty-first century, and what are the actors and power relations involved in this process.

In recent years, a number of historical accounts have been published that focus, in one way or another, on questions of national identity in Qatar. For instance, drawing succinctly in Durkheim's concept of "anomia", Fromherz (2011: 8-10) argues in his account of Qatar's modern history that Qataris have constructed a tradition or at least neo-traditional form of collective identity which has at its center those forms of organization through lineage and consanguinity. In a more concise way, Rolim Silva (2014) discusses the relation between sports and nation-building in Qatar through the study of Qatar's National Olympic Committee (QOC), which was created a few years after independence. For him, the development of sports infrastructure in Qatar since the 1970s has been aimed to gain international recognition for the young nation, while the hosting of sportive mega-events has produced collective memories and national consciousness among the population. Similarly, Al-Malki (2016) locates, through a detailed historical account, the prominence of national identity in Qatar in the decline of other forms of collective identity, such as Arab and Gulf identities, in the 1980s. In spite of their important contributions to the study of national identity, these works do not see anything outstanding or peculiar about the iteration of national identity in Qatar that has taken place since the mid-1990s, which limits in turn their relevance for understanding the way the role of the postcolonial nation in the twenty-first century Gulf.

In parallel to the emergence of those historical accounts, more sociologically-oriented works have appeared that offer a snapshot of a particular iteration of national identity in an unbounded space

and time. For instance, Gardner and Zakzouk (2014) discuss a form of identity that distinguishes Qataris from non-Qataris and from other Qataris themselves. This identity is rooted at the intersection of gender and class considerations and both reflects itself in, and is constituted by, car consumption. However, these perspectives offer neither a contextualization of the moment in which these iterations take place, nor a discussion of the theoretical implications of those observations. Thus, as it is the case with the aforementioned historical accounts, these works hardly provide general assumptions to systematically reflect about the role of the contemporary postcolonial nation and the power relations involved in their iteration.

In contrast, some contributions to the debate about national identity in Qatar emphasize some particularities of the reinvigoration of the discourse on the nation that has taken place in this country since the mid-1990s. Some of them, regard the construction of contemporary national identity as an automatic reaction to the homogenizing effects of globalization or modernization. In this sense, Al-Dosari (2016) looks at the construction of Qatari national identity in state television through the concept of “tradition” (*turath* in Arabic). Furthermore, through conventional gender lenses, Mitchell, Paschyn *et al* (2015) point to the fact that national identity, or the salience of traditional social norms put an extra pressure on women, whose “empowerment” as market subjects is hindered by their role as pillars of the family. In spite of their illuminating scope, these perspectives leave aside the politics of iterating a given form of national identity, and naturalize such iteration as an automatic reaction to the homogenizing effects of globalization. As consequence, a more meticulous discussion of the processes and politics behind the contemporary iterations of the postcolonial nation beyond the general effects of “globalization” is precluded.

Moving aside a simple reference to the homogenizing effects of globalization, some perspectives offer a more nuanced account of the historical context in which current iterations of national identity in Qatar are taking place. In this sense, one of the most prominent themes is the efforts of the state leaders to increase their power both domestically and internationally through

innovative strategies, such as branding the nation. A pioneering piece on branding was Peterson's (2006) article published in the *Middle East Journal*, which discussed how the motivation behind certain foreign policy initiatives was to be found in the efforts by the ruling elite to brand the country, which was one of the only remaining strategies to guarantee the survival of a small state living in a convulsed environment. Since then, the idea of branding has been very influential for analyzing Qatar's international engagement (Eggeling 2017).

Drawing on ideas about the relation between branding and foreign policy, some have highlighted how the hosting of sports mega-events helps to project a particular image of Qatar as an Arab-hospitable country that is also capable of developing modern sportive activities in its soil (Amara 2005; Brannagan and Giulianiotti 2015). Despite their conceptual clarity and their enlightening of certain aspects of Qatar's international engagement, literature on branding does not focus on the construction of the postcolonial nation through collective memory, cultural artifacts and the mobilization of heritage, but rather on some accessories (i.e. modern and progressive, committed to democracy, forward-looking) that do not constitute the nation. Thus, while it is clear what brand for the nation is being pushed forward, it is less clear what the constitutive features are of the Qatari postcolonial nation at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Within the strand of literature that has focused on the iteration of Qatar's national identity since the mid-1990s, there are some works that have looked beyond the state in order to identify the actors and forces implicated in the construction of Qatar's national identity. For instance, Campbell (2010) notes how the efforts to construct the Qatar "national team" in the realm of sports has relied on an active engagement on the part of governmental agencies in the transnational labor market of elite athletes, which demonstrates the co-constitutive relation between nationalism and transnational forces in the "global era." Similarly, Vora (2014; 2015) analyzes through ethnographic research how students in Education City have negotiated the apparently contradictory aims of the liberalizing agenda that underlie branch campuses and the "Qatarization" agenda that gave birth to those campuses.

Furthermore, Kane (2015) examines how the construction of new subjects, tied to human capital, in Education City is not only prompting a shift in the social contract, but also resulting in the recalibration and extension of conventional notions of citizenship in Qatar (for a similar argument see: Maziad 2016). While they provide useful insights for thinking about the postcolonial nation in the twenty-first century, these works have reflected upon the consequences of nation-building, but they have not systematically analyzed the type of nation that is being built and, more importantly, the politics behind such construction.

Most contributions to the discussion on the particular iteration of national identity that has taken place in Qatar since the mid-1990s comes from a focus on the reinvigorated and considerable construction of heritage both tangible and intangible, such as material and visual culture, folklore, among others. These works emphasize the important role of the state in the construction of heritage, but also include other forces and actors, such as international experts, authorized discourses and private collectors. The study of nationalism in Qatar has greatly benefited from the conversation between critical perspectives on the uses of the past, which have been already introduced in this chapter. Thus, one prominent theme has been the practices of heritage preservation in Qatar, which, as in other postcolonial settings, draw heavily on Western authorized discourses, confining to the margins local practices around conservation and exhibition of cultural material.

In this sense, conservation and exhibition practices in Qatar have been conducted within the framework of a homogenous and derivative nation, a discourse enforced by the state and international organizations, such as UNESCO, since before independence (Erskine-Loftus et al 2016: 2). For instance, investigating the process that led to the establishment of Qatar's first national museum after independence, Al-Mulla (2014) underscores the need of the emerging postcolonial state to construct national identity through a national museum that was built around the Old Emiri Palace and thus claimed a history that dated back to the years before the consolidation of British supremacy in the Gulf. Similarly, emphasizing the role of heritage sports in constructing the Qatari nation, Koch (2015a)

certain sports in the Gulf, such as “falconry”, with the global and cosmopolitan sports that have also gained prominence in the region. For her, heritage sports emerge as a response to the sense of anxiety caused by rapid modernization and change, and they reproduce an “ethnicized” and masculinist view of the nation.

However, works on cultural heritage in Qatar have not only emphasized the national framework as the local expression of authorized Western discourses on conservation and exhibition of objects. Thus, looking at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha, which is one of the initiatives of the outward-looking Qatar Museums, Exel (2016a) analyzes how Western discourses around design and display are being recreated in Qatar. She argues that the reproduction of Western discourses has taken the form in MIA of an iteration of Orientalist knowledge about “Islamic Art” that does not recognize the Bedouin past as part of its heritage and, consequently, does not resonate with local Qatari audiences. This kind of works show that beyond the nation, it has been also the idea about civilizations (i.e. Western and the rest) that has pervaded heritage discourses in Qatar.

In spite of the salience of Western discourses in the practices of display and conservation of objects in Qatar, some works have looked at the manifestation of local practices and the way these negotiate their presence in the burgeoning heritage industry in that country. For instance, Exel (2014) analyzes the collecting and displaying practices around the private Sheikh Faisal museum, which is located outside Doha and opened in 1998. Although the museum’s directorate emphasizes the role of the museum as preserving Qatar’s national heritage, she argues the Sheikh Faisal museum offers a more intimate narrative that reflects individual interests and local traditions, such as life around the *Majlis*, and provides a sense of the reactions caused by rapid modernization. By the same token, emphasizing some objects displayed in the Echo Memory Collection of Msheireb Arts Center, Exel (2016) argues that despite the salience of Western discourses around collection, there are in Qatar local collecting practices that challenge the narrative of a homogenous and hyper-modern national identity.

Overall, the local practices underscored by these works constitute alternative logics of conservation and display that question the often-heard claim that “there is no heritage in Qatar” (Exel and Rico 2013: 670).

Besides literature on cultural heritage in Qatar, another burgeoning and engaging body of work that has looked at questions of national identity is that which looks at the gigantic urban growth experienced by the Arab States of the Gulf in the last decades, which has been motivated by the increasing relevance of their cities as nodes of international networks and the massive expansion of their workforce through migration. Some examples of these works include (Vora 2014a), which discusses how expatriate population in Qatar is critical for the maintenance of the national/non-national divide through their reproduction of notions of belonging in their everyday lives (for a similar argument see: Mohammad and Sidaway 2016; Nagy 1998; 2006, Scharfenort 2014).

Other examples of intersections between national identity and urban studies are those works that focus on debates about sustainability. In this sense, Gardner (2014) analyzes the challenges to turn Doha into a sustainable urban environment. Accordingly, one of those challenges has to do with identity, because Gulf cities are, on the one hand, symbols of modernity and, on the other, instruments in the maintenance of a population balance and a sense of status and tradition among nationals. Finally, Koch (2014; 2018) regards discourses on urban sustainability as part of the efforts to brand the city and the nation and of the efforts by the ruling elite to attain legitimacy at home through the promotion of a sense of national pride (for a similar argument see: Rizzo 2016; 2017). However, while these contributions have emphasized the relation between national identity and urban planning and space distribution, the construction and iteration of a given national identity is not their main focus. Thus, they hardly constitute a conclusive account of the way the postcolonial nation is iterated in the twenty-first century and the politics behind such process.

Overall, the literature on nationalism and national identity in Qatar has thus made important contributions to the study of nationalism in the Middle East. On the one hand, it has paid exclusive

attention to a country that had remained relatively absent in such scholarly debates. On the other hand, by highlighting the particularities of Qatar it has expanded the scope of such studies into previously ignored areas of inquiry. In spite of their contributions, there is still a need to think of the recent reinvigoration of the discourse on national identity in Qatar in a systematic way in order to reflect on how the recently launched cultural initiatives imagines the contemporary nation. Moreover, it is necessary to reflect on the specific socio-political context in which these initiatives take place and to reflect on the way this constrains the way the imaging of the nation. Since this is the specific task undertaken in this research, in the following pages it will be explained what socio-political context makes an inquiry onto the specific meaning of contemporary Qatar's national identity so appealing.

## 2.5 QATAR AS A CASE STUDY: CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN A PECULIAR SETTING

The above discussion shows this thesis' contribution lies in its dialogue with two fields of scholarly inquiry. On the one hand, it engages with the literature on nationalism and, more specifically, with the discursive approaches to the nation, in order to update the postcolonial critique to the nation by looking at a specific instance of re-iteration of national identity in the twenty-first century in the postcolonial world. On the other hand, it takes issue with studies on nationalism in the Middle East by looking at the meaning of Qatar's national identity in a given historical juncture, which departs from the mainstream debates within this literature. Thus, this thesis' most important contribution lies at the overlapping of two areas of scholarly inquiry: namely, post-colonial approaches to nationalism in the Middle East and the iteration of nationalist projects amidst the expansion of neoliberal frameworks of governance in the Third World. This section provides a thorough explanation of the specific features that make the contemporary state of Qatar an appealing case for those debates on nationalism found at the intersection of post-colonialism and Middle Eastern studies.

The relevance of Qatar for contemporary debates on the power relations articulated by discourses on national identity in the twenty-first century postcolonial world has to do with the historical juncture at which a specific iteration of Qatar's national identity is taking place. The discourse on the Qatari nation has become ubiquitous since Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani became Emir of Qatar in 1995. Efforts to instill a sense of national pride among the population have included the annual celebrations of Qatar's national day, the redevelopment of the national museum and the restoration of a number of archaeological sites that preserve the nation's cultural roots. They have also included the construction of the national archives, the creation of symbols, such as the national anthem, that give Qatar its distinctive national character, as well as academic initiatives funded by the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), such as the Qatar Unified Imagining Project, which is comprised, according to its creators, by the "first public registry of primary source collections and an online digital archive with digital stills, oral histories and vintage films" (Moe and Onley 2013: 278). It is striking that despite Qatar having attained independence since early seventies, most of these developments did not emerge but until a few decades later.

However, the emphasis paid to recent developments does not mean that projects aimed to construct the nation and instill a sense of national belonging among the population had been absent during the first two decades of Qatar's history as an independent state. Quite the contrary, since before independence there have been efforts to create Qatar's national myth and to enact those symbols materializing the nation. For instance, the distinction among Gulf States through national flags became recurrent during the period of British supremacy in the Gulf, due to the need of Gulf rulers to distinguish the ships navigating the Gulf waters (Zahlan 1989: 15-16). By flagging their ships, Gulf rulers made sure British fleet in the Gulf would be able to recognize every boat's ownership and, more importantly, to distinguish them from threatening ships. Similarly, as Crystal (1990) shows, leaders of labor movements promoted a sense of national identity among workers in the oil industry during the 1960s in order to garner support around their demands for better working conditions, salary increases

and hiring considerations. Put simply, a diverse set of actors pushed forward the idea of Qatar being a nation for a number of reasons even before the emergence of Qatar as an independent nation-state in 1971.

The discourse on the Qatari nation became even more prominent after independence, when the newly independent state started promoting ambitious projects in order to show the existence of a nation with ancient origins. In this sense, the government of Qatar created in the early 1970s the Qatar National Committee for Collecting Ethnographical Materials, as the body in charge of collecting, preserving and classifying all those objects testifying the materiality of the Qatari nation since ancient times. The objects collected through the team of archeologists who worked in that department led to the inauguration just after independence of the Qatar National Museum at the Old Emiri Palace<sup>2</sup> (Al-Mulla 2014). This state-owned museum became part of a number of museums that emerged throughout the Arabian Peninsula in the seventies, due to the emergence of independent nation-states (Erskine-Loftus, Penziner and Al-Mulla). Thus, the idea of Qatar being a nation continued to play a prominent role in the first years after independence, which led to the launching of ambitious projects aimed to materialize and perform the nation.

It is clear then that the discourse on national identity in Qatar did not begin in the mid-1990s, not even in the 1970s, after Qatar became an independent state. On the contrary, a number of political events led to the promotion of the discourse on the Qatari nation since the mid-twentieth century at least. However, the particular iteration of the discourse on national identity that is taking place in Qatar since the mid-1990s presents some specificities that turn it into a differentiated object that can make important contributions to those scholarly debates privileged in this research.

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<sup>2</sup> The Old Emiri Place is a building, located in the outskirts of Doha, which Sheikh Jassim, Qatar's founding father, built for one of his sons by the end of the nineteenth-century.

### 2.5.1 *Framing neoliberalism in the Gulf thorough Qatar National Vision 2030*

To begin with, the present iteration of the discourse on national identity comes at a time when the government of Qatar is launching an ambitious reformist agenda aimed to diversify the country's economy by turning it into a knowledge-based economy. The document *Qatar National Vision 2030* (QNV), released in a public ceremony in 2008, and whose elaboration included the work of government officials, national and international experts and business people, embodies this reformist agenda. The implementation of the National Vision has led to the creation of sectorial plans and development strategies for periods of five years. Thus, the plans in which QNV relies span through the sectors of sport, health, education, among others. In addition, the government released the first development strategy in 2011 under the name of *Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016* (QNDS). In order to reach the goals stated in the National Vision, this strategy includes specific targets for the first five years.

One of the legacies of colonialism in the Gulf is the integration of postcolonial states into the international division of labor as sources of raw materials, specifically oil and natural gas, which have been constitutive elements of modernity. Thus, one of the necessary moves for building lasting state structures in the Gulf has been envisioning alternative sources of income that allow Gulf states to move beyond their reliance on finite natural resources. As political economist of the Gulf, Martin Hvidt (2013: 3) has shown, discussions about economic diversification in the Gulf started since oil was discovered. However, they became more prominent during the first oil boom of the 1970s, after the oil embargo imposed on Western countries supportive of Israel by the Arab members of OPEC, and during the second oil boom of the 1980s, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. In spite of the relatively low price of oil, in the early 2000s important discussions about economic diversification took place in the Arab State of the Gulf, which in many cases culminated in the release a few years later of

unprecedented plans for economic reform that put forward specific strategies to attain the goal of economic diversification.

In this sense, the government of Qatar, which in 2008 released the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, has not been alone in its efforts to produce a national plan aimed to put an end to the country's reliance on the export of hydrocarbons for sustaining its economy. Other countries in the Gulf have followed a similar path. Thus, in 2010 the government of the United Arab Emirates launched the *UAE Vision 2021*, which would complement plans at the sub-national level, such as the *Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030*, launched in November 2008. Similarly, in 2017, the government of Saudi Arabia launched the *National Vision 2030*, which served as the most emblematic symbol of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's reformist credentials. One common feature of these reformist agendas in the Gulf is that despite their common language in both their titles and their envisioning of development, they pretend to be strictly national developments that emerged organically from the national efforts channeled through the rulers.

Despite their claims to be singular national developments, these visions are the product of close coordination with international experts that include officials from international organizations, such as the World Bank. Moreover, the naming of these plans, which sets the year 2030 as the target for the implementation of these reforms, is unequivocally in line with the language of contemporary frameworks of global governance. The language on development spanning throughout these plans is the one that informs the work of the United Nations and its Agenda 2030, whose official name is *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. In 2015, the United Nations launched this agenda as a replacement of the Millennium Development Goals, which ended that same year. It is comprised by 17 goals, which include good health and well-being for people, quality education, gender equality, affordable and clean energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, among others. In this sense, the national visions of the Arab Gulf States, including *Qatar National Vision 2030*, are specific manifestations of a global discourse on governance and development.

The specific way in which the government of Qatar aims to position itself is through the implementation of a knowledge-based economy, which also draws on a widespread discourse on global governance and development (Gremm, Barth et al 2018). Qatar has been going through a process of top-down reform since early 2000s, when the government of Qatar consulted international experts to discuss the possibility of turning the country into a knowledge-based economy. According to the deliberations in a series of meetings between officials from the World Bank and representatives of the Qatari government:

Qatar is devoted to develop its economy towards a knowledge-based economy enriching its level of human capital and improving its competitiveness. [...] In this context, the Planning Council of Qatar and the Qatar Foundation have asked the World Bank to help them in carrying out a knowledge economy assessment of Qatar as well as in formulating a knowledge-based economy vision as part of Qatar's National Vision 2025 (Government of Qatar 2007: 2).

In the nineties, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defined knowledge-based economies as “economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD 1996), and highlighted the increasingly important role that knowledge and technology played in the economies of OECD countries.

Emerging research within the social sciences has characterized the global discourse on “knowledge-economies” and its implications for higher education as one of the latest manifestations of neoliberal rationality throughout the world (Bockman and Eyal 2002; Coombe 2016). Accordingly, this latest manifestation includes the commodification of knowledge through the promotion of alliances between universities and the industry, and the introduction of indicators to assess academic performance. As Olssen and Peters (2005) have argued:

the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the associated discourses of ‘new public management’, during the 1980s and 1990s has produced a fundamental shift in the way universities and other institutions of higher education have defined and justified their institutional existence. The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with an institutional stress on

performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits.

Consistently with global trends, efforts to turn Qatar's economy into a knowledge-based economy have come together with an ambitious project to create an infrastructure for knowledge production (Powell 2014: 255-57). For instance, Qatar Foundation, a government-related organization headed by the mother of the current Emir, launched in 1997 Education City, which has been its flagship project since then. Education City, which hosts the branches of several US and European universities, aims to turn Qatar into a referent for education in the Arab and Islamic worlds, at the same time it provides the intellectual and human resources to sustain the knowledge-economy. Almost one decade later, Qatar Foundation created the *Qatar National Research Fund*, a governmental funding body aimed to fostering research culture in the country.

Since its release in 2008, QNV 2030 has become a broad framework for policy-making in Qatar and has opened space for the formulation of more concrete series of steps to attain a predetermined goal, such as the QNDS. In this sense, policy-making in Qatar by government offices and government-related organizations is explicitly linked to one or some of the goals stated in QNV and their procedures are aligned with the strategies envisioned in QNDS. In 2007 Qatar Foundation, the Qatar Planning Council, and the World Bank collaborated on a report entitled *Turning Qatar into a Competitive-Based Economy: Knowledge Economy Assessment of Qatar*. Since then, as Weber (2014: 61-62) has noted, the model of a knowledge-based economy, which forms the core of QNV, has become an almost mandatory reference for every economic or planning document issued by the Qatari government. QNV is constitutes then the most important framework for policy-making in Qatar.

The adoption of a knowledge-based economy, which has been promoted since the eighties as a model for development in the Third World by international organizations, such as the World Bank and the IMF, as a model for diversification in Qatar demonstrates how QNV is a local manifestation of neoliberal planning and policy-making in the Gulf. However, there are more elements that support

this consideration, especially in view of the trends related with neoliberalism highlighted in previous pages of this chapter. To recapitulate, these trends are: 1) the construction of neoliberal subjects and the policing of families; 2) the changing dynamics of belonging; and 3) the transformation of an aspiring-universal language into local jargon. The resonance of these trends in *Qatar National Vision 2030* demonstrates why this framework for policy-making is considered as local manifestation of a neoliberal agenda for global governance.

As already mentioned, the implications of the expansion of neoliberalism rationality do not only concern the strict economic sphere, but also include other aspects of social life, such as the construction and reproduction of particular subjectivities. The construction of neoliberal subjectivities, which take the form of generating the necessary human capital for the implementation of a knowledge economy, is one of the most outstanding imperatives in QNV. In this sense, this document states:

Future economic success will increasingly depend on the ability of the Qatari people to deal with a new international order that is knowledge-based and extremely competitive. To meet the challenge, Qatar is establishing advanced educational and health systems, as well as increasing the effective participation of Qataris in the labor force (GSDP 2008: 6).

Accordingly, the future Qatari citizens envisioned by QNV are not only national citizens, but first and foremost, global citizens adopting notions of self-achievement, meritocracy, individualism and entrepreneurship (Kane 2015 and Maziad 2016).

Several initiatives and organizations have been involved in the creation, reproduction and reinvention of neoliberal subjectivities in Qatar during the period of reform initiated by the release of QNV. As extensive research has shown (Kane 2015; Koch 2018; Luomi, Crist et al 2013; Powell 2014; Rizzo 2016, 2017; Vora 2014), the campuses of Western universities hosted in Education City have functioned as platforms for socializing Qatari nationals and non-nationals into a globalized space where notions of meritocracy, individuality, self-achievement and entrepreneurship are part of the ethical principles regulating social behavior. Moreover, organizations, such as the International

Chamber of Commerce in Qatar, which is committed to the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, have allowed for the expansion of the discourse of "empowerment" through women's education and participation in the labor market, which has been a critical component of a neoliberal agenda in that it has looked for expanding market forces into previously excluded spaces (Mitchell, Paschyn *et al* 2015). Thus, the construction of neoliberal subjects in Qatar is not only part of the text of QNV, but also a concrete set of initiatives by an array of organizations in Qatar to produce the human capital necessary for the implementation of a knowledge economy.

Something similar happens with the policing of families, which in previous pages was identified as one neoliberal trend in that it maintained a social institution that could help the reproduction of neoliberal governmentality in the private realm and to which social services formerly provided by the state could be transferred. Consistent with global trends, Qatari families envisioned in QNV play this twofold role as reproducers of neoliberal logics and institutions of social welfare. Thus, QNV states:

The State of Qatar aspires to advance and develop the social dimensions of its society by nurturing Qatari citizens capable of dealing effectively and flexibly with the requirements of the age they live in, and by preserving a strong and coherent family that enjoys support, care and social protection (GSDP 2008: 11).

In this sense, Qatari families, which are considered as manifestations of a distinctive cultural tradition, are instrumental for developing the kind of human capital envisioned in QNV and are also critical for the transformation of state-society relations.

Several organizations in Qatar are embedded in the policing of families that has been an integral component of QNV's agenda. For instance, the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), formerly known as Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD), was established in 2006 by Qatar Foundation in order to produce policy-oriented knowledge about Qatari and Arab families. One of the main imperatives guiding the work of this organization is to bolster the role of families as the fundamental unit of society through reducing divorce rates, promoting youth marriage

among Qataris and disseminate knowledge about parenting. As with the case of constructing neoliberal subjects, the policing of families in Qatar has produced a set of policies and organizations aimed to harness the potential contribution of strong families to the transformation of the country into a knowledge-based economy.

As noted above, neoliberalism has not only been concerned with the construction of subjects and the policing of families, but it has also overlapped with questions of belonging in that it has introduced new criteria for inclusion and exclusion of populations in modern societies. This new belonging criteria has taken the form in QNV of a classification of population in terms of their potential contributions to a knowledge-based economy and of envisioning only certain parts of it and suitable and capable of taking active part in Qatar's future. In this sense, QNV states:

Qatar will strive to increase the effective labor force participation of its citizens. However, for the foreseeable future Qatar will not have a sufficient number of citizens to manage the complex systems, infrastructure and other requirements of a rapidly growing, diversifying and technologically sophisticated economy. In order to realize Qatar's future ambitions, it will be necessary to make up for the shortages of local labor with expatriate workers. Attracting and retaining the right mix of skills will require appropriate incentives, as well as institutional arrangements for ensuring the rights and safety of expatriate labor (GSDP 2008: 7).

Hence, QNV recognizes the necessity for "expatriate" in order to sustain the knowledge-based economy, but makes clear the national/non-national divide and puts at the forefront the possession of certain skills as criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Thus, one big distinction between those who belong and do not belong runs along the lines of nationality. While QNV recognizes the need to attract expatriate workers to Qatar in order to successfully implement the development plans, it puts forward an essential distinction between citizens and non-citizens that, as Anthropologist Neha Vora (2013: 3-5) has showed, produced differentiated regimes of citizenship and belonging in the Gulf. Everyday practices and habits, such as occupation and space distribution, construct and reproduce dividing lines between different populations in Qatar

and the Gulf (see: Rizzo 2016: 103; Vora 2014a: 172-173). In other words, institutionalized practices among foreign populations in Qatar with regard to employment and mobility within urban spaces are in line with questions of belonging deployed in QNV in that they reproduce the essential distinction between nationals and non-nationals.

Moreover, although the distinction between nationals and non-nationals is a prominent one in Qatar, there is also a distinction to be made between non-nationals themselves, which is more clearly related with their capacity to contribute to the knowledge-based economy. Thus, construction and unskilled workers coming from countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal, are seen as temporary guests whose provisional stay in Qatar is aimed to produce the infrastructure that will allow for the emergence of a developed country inhabited by Qatari nationals and highly qualified expatriate workers from Europe and North America. The most important instrument for maintaining this divide between non-nationals themselves is the *Kafala* system, whose purpose is to monitor migrant laborers by requiring them to have a sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their legal status in the country (Vora and Koch 2015). By deploying monitoring and disciplining techniques among some sectors of the non-national population in Qatar, the *Kafala* system reproduces the neoliberal criteria for belonging put forward by the QNV.

As the above discussion shows, the iteration of the discourse on national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since the mid-1990s coincides with the launching and implementation of a top-down reformist agenda in this country. The language and aims of this reformist agenda are in line with the global discourse on development, which indicate some efforts by the Qatari government to position itself within broader frameworks of global governance. Consequently, analyzing the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar means researching on the particular crystallization of postcolonial national identities amidst the expansion of neoliberal rationality and its corresponding techniques for governing and disciplining societies. For this reason, focusing on the way national identity is constructed in Qatar since the mid-1990s means discussing the way national identity, as an

arena of contestation, becomes constructed and made meaningful in a period where the conceptions around Qatar's role in the world and regional economic environment is being transformed. However, as the following pages will show, there are additional reasons for looking at the iteration of Qatar's national identity since the mid-1990s.

### *2.5.2 Constructing a self-reflective form of postcolonial nationalism*

Some historical trends tie Qatar's evolution as a modern state with the rest of the countries in the Gulf, especially those smaller countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council: namely, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Oman. These trends are key elements for discussing issues of nationalism and national identity in the Arab States of the Gulf because they have been defining features of these countries' history as independent states. One of these trends is the lack of substantive anticolonial struggles that questioned these countries' subordinate positioning in a network of imperial relations spanning throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. Another trend has to do with the demographic situation in the Arab States of the Gulf, where the segment of the population that comprises the national community has been a minority since the emergence of independent states. These two trends, the relative lack of salience of anticolonial struggles and the demographic situation that excludes the large majority of the population from the status of nationals, motivate a deeper discussion of nationalism and national identity in the Arab States of the Gulf.

This is not to deny that important differences, both within and between them, have been present through Arab Gulf States' modern history. Quite the contrary, despite popular and sometimes even academic writings tend to think about these states as being essentially the same, differences among the Arab Gulf States abound. For instance, these countries' paths to statehood differ in that some of them, as Crystal (1990) has showed, were accompanied by the emergence of a strong local merchant class (e.g. Kuwait), while others lacked the formation of such class (e.g. Qatar). Others have plenty of

hydrocarbon resources with a small population (e.g. United Arab Emirates), while others have such resources but much bigger populations (e.g. Saudi Arabia). Despite those differences, the aforementioned similarities make the Arab Gulf States, including Qatar, an interesting object of study for debates on postcolonial and Middle Eastern nationalism. Furthermore, the particular manifestation of these trends in the specific case of Qatar make it then an interesting instance for informing such debates.

To begin with, contrary to what has been the case in many parts of the postcolonial world, nationalist ideals that called into question the subordination to European powers did not spread with such a strength in Qatar. During the twentieth century, when revolutionary movements for self-determination emerged throughout the Middle East, the most prominent anticolonial discourse in the region, Arab nationalism, did not take root in Doha as it did in other Arab capitals, such as Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad. El-Rayyes (1988) has documented how the ruling elites of the Gulf sheikhdoms, including those of Qatar, were particularly careful about preventing the spread of Arab nationalism into their territories, because it also represented a threat to their own rule, which was regarded as colonial imposition by Arab nationalists (on this point see also: Davidson 2008: 43-50). When the oil industry in the Gulf began to expand after the Second World War, these countries' rulers looked to South Asia as a source of imported workforce, rather than recruiting workers from neighbouring Arab countries, who might become a catalyst for the spread of nationalist ideas.<sup>3</sup>

To be fair, there were movements in Qatar that protested against foreign domination. As Crystal (1990: 126-127) has showed, national solidarity was an especially salient narrative of protests and strikes organized by workers in the oil industry, who often denounced the preferential treatment given to foreign workers. However, the nationalist euphoria that underlined the emergence of

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<sup>3</sup> There were obviously exceptions. For instance, Kuwait was keen to hire workers of Arab, and especially Palestinian origin. Actually, one of the most important leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat spent part of his youth in Kuwait, where he founded the organization al-Fatah. The 1990 Gulf War and the stance of the PLO after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait meant a break of this trend.

anticolonial movements elsewhere during the twentieth century did not resonate with such strength in the Gulf sheikhdoms, especially in Qatar. For this reason, these countries became independent nation-states several years after their Arab counterparts, when the British government ended its treaty relations in the Gulf in 1971 (Onley 2009: 21). Thus, the emergence of independent states in the Gulf was not the consequence of a nationalist and anticolonial movement, but rather of a unilateral decision related with internal political changes in Great Britain, and the construction of national identity is not necessarily an automatic response to the integration of these countries as subjects to the imperial metropole.<sup>4</sup>

The construction of what is called here a self-reflective form of postcolonial nationalism, which is not the direct product of struggles for independence and does not have thus anti-colonialism as one of its main components, is not an exclusive feature of Qatar or even the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf. Rather, trajectories of nationalism in other postcolonial settings have experienced a similar trajectory that presents nonetheless some particularities. In Africa, for instance, nationalism in countries such as Ethiopia and Liberia followed a similar trajectory in that these were the only two countries that did not succumb to European imperialism in what has been called as the “scramble for Africa.” However, as British historian and Africanist Basil Davidson (1994: 103) has shown, colonialism can hardly be regarded as an ineffectual force in these two African countries, which despite remaining as independent entities when the rest of the continent was being subjugated by European powers, their governments had to make some concessions to European powers in terms of territory, foreign trade and control over their resources.

However, in contrast to Qatar, efforts to build the Liberian nation had been in place for at least one-hundred years before the expansion of European imperialism in West Africa, which produced an

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<sup>4</sup> The coming to power of the Labour party, which advocated a new role for Britain in the world is sometimes cited as the main reason for that decision. Similarly, it has been also said that the British withdrew from their remaining overseas dominions because of lack of resources. Whatever the reasons, what is true is that Gulf rulers were not very happy with that decision, because they were even willing to afford Britain’s military presence in the Gulf after its withdrawal was announced in 1968.

experience of violence and exclusion among ethnic groups that led to a heinous civil war in the late twentieth-century (Moran 2000: 117-121). In 1822, the American Colonization Society, an organization founded in 1816 in Washington D.C. to create a colony for freed blacks in Africa, began sending black volunteers to the Pepper Coast (now Liberia) in pursuance of its goal. Since then, the Americo-Liberians settlers became a minority elite that held on to power and excluded indigenous Africans. On 1847, the settlers issued a Declaration of Independence and promulgated a constitution, creating the first independent black republic of Africa. The first Liberian civil war erupted in December 1989 after Charles Taylor launched an insurrection against the government of Samuel Doe, who had led a military coup nine years before, and lasted until 1995. Thus, Liberian nationalism was, on the one hand, more than a form of collective identification that informed the political organization that replaced European colonialism in West Africa and, on the other, a highly-contested historical evolution that produced memories of winners and losers.

This was also the case in Ethiopia, which by the time of European expansion in East Africa had already initiated a process of nation-building under the rule of Menelik II, who was Emperor of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) from 1889 until his death in 1913. Moreover, this process involved a good dose of violence, not only between different ethnic groups, but also against imperial forces, which took the form of Italian expeditionary forces. In this sense, the troops of Emperor Menelik II defeated the powerful Italian expeditionary force in the Battle of Adwa in 1896. It is revealing that this military success against Italy can be attributed, according to some historians, to the presence of an early form of nationalism in Ethiopia, which helped to maintain cohesion and a combative spirit among the troops (see: Tibebe 1996: 414; Falola 2002: 401). However, the independence of Ethiopia was interrupted by the invasion of the Italian troops, now under the command of Benito Mussolini, in 1935, and the occupation of the country that lasted until 1941, when Great Britain recognized the sovereignty of Ethiopia and restored the imperial rule of Haile Selassie. As in the case of Liberia, nationalism in Ethiopia was more than a substitute for a crumbling colonial system in East Africa, but was more of a

process related to internal political dynamics that produced traumatic episodes and memories of violence among the concerned parties.

The particular way in which colonialism and independence was experienced in the Arab States of the Gulf finds some similarities with other places beyond Africa, such as the Soviet Union, which has been regarded by a recent historiographical tradition as the last Empire of the world, deeming the subsequent independent nations as comparable to other postcolonial settings (Barkey and Mark von Hagen 1997; Parrot 1997; Suny 1995). It is thus noteworthy that during the final years of the USSR, not all the Soviet states made strong claims in favour of independence, but preferred rather to remain as part of the Union. Hence, in order to thwart nationalist forces, the government of Mikhail Gorbachev proposed a new Union that would serve as a substitute for the then declining USSR. Following his proposal, Gorbachev submitted to a referendum in March 1991 his proposal on the creation of new Union among the Soviet republics, which was held only in nine of them, given the rebuttal of Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and Moldova. The remaining nine states, and especially the Central Asian republics, favored their permanence as members of a new form of Union that later took the form of the Commonwealth of Independent Nations.

Despite their reluctance to attain full independence or, at least, their interest in keeping some form of union among the Soviet republics alive, most of those former USSR states initiated, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, have reified national identities that see the Soviet past as an interruption in their path to nationhood. According to Historian Eric Hobsbawm (1990), in post-communist societies “ethnic or national identity is above all a device for defining the community of the innocent and identifying the guilty who are responsible for ‘our’ predicament; especially once communist regimes are no longer there to function as scapegoats” (174). Similarly, in their study of nationalism in the post-soviet borderlands, Graham et al (1998) state that “the nature of the federation exposes the post-Soviet nationalist myth that for the borderland states the process of nation-building was interrupted by Soviet rule and could begin again only with statehood in 1991” (6). Hence, the

processes of nation-building in most post-Soviet states resemble, despite their initial scepticism towards a future outside the USSR, common forms of postcolonial nationalism in that they have anti-colonialism as one of their defining features.

However, the independent republic of Belarus stands out as an exception among post-Soviet states in that the process of nation-building has not led in this country to a dismissal of the Soviet past. As Kuzio (2002), in his discussion about nation-building and memory in the post-Soviet state has emphasized: Belarus is “an anomaly among postcolonial states in claiming that the colonial legacy was positive” (250). Moreover, he notes that while Soviet postcolonial regimes are “reviving national historiography as one of the spheres of their state and nation building projects”, in Belarus, where Russians are joint ruling titulars, Russian/Soviet historiography is being maintained to buttress a pan-eastern Slavic ideology (241). Cases as that of Belarus, where anti-colonialism is not an outstanding feature of postcolonial national identity, are the ones that could benefit the most from this study about the iteration of national identity in postcolonial Qatar, given their similar character as particular instances of a more general form of self-reflective postcolonial nationalism.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, one common feature of nationalism in the colonial world is their anticolonial character. Due to their emergence in an environment where external powers subjugate the nation, notions of self-determination and differentiation *vis-à-vis* their imperial masters has been an inherent feature of nationalisms in the colonial world. In this regard, it is revealing Chatterjee’s contention in the sense that nationalism in Asia and Africa emerged out of imitation and differentiation of its European and American counterparts. Thus, while nationalism in Asia and Africa imitated Western progress in the material realm of national culture, it endeavored to maintain a distinction in the spiritual realm of language, art and folk expression. In light of this, it becomes then interesting to look at the development of nationalism in Qatar, where independence through anticolonial struggle is more an exception than a rule. The case of Qatar challenges theories of nationalism in the Third World to think on the transformations of national culture, and provides

empirical evidence to construct a more general category of self-reflective postcolonial nationalism that applies to other cases where anti-colonialism is not a defining feature of national identity.

### *2.5.3 Constructing national identity where nationals are a minority*

In addition to Qatar's particular history of independence, which was not the direct consequence of a deep-rooted anti-colonial sentiment, demography is another element that makes Qatar an interesting case study for debates on postcolonial and Middle Eastern nationalism. This refers specifically to the situation in which people who do not have the status of nationals comprise the majority of the population. This demographic trend, which is common among the Arab States of the Gulf, has been a feature of Qatar since its emergence as an independent nation-state in 1971. The first census in Qatar, conducted in 1970, estimated this country's population at little more than 100 000 inhabitants, of which almost 60 per cent were non-nationals. As the country's population grew, so did the ratio between nationals and non-nationals. In this sense, while Qatar's population grew at an average rate of 6.2 per cent yearly from 1986 to 2013, non-nationals went from 60 per cent of the country's population in 1970 to 86 per cent in 2010 (De Bel-Air 2014: 4). In this way, the national population has always been a minority in Qatar,<sup>5</sup> which has always posed a challenge for the definition of Qatar's national identity along ethnic lines.

This demographic trend has been far from a temporary situation, and most certainly will be an outstanding feature of Qatar over the coming decades. As 2017, Qatar's population was about 2.5 million inhabitants, of which less than 15 per cent had the status of nationals. Moreover, as De Bel-Air (2014) has argued, "fulfilling the rulers' ambitions to modernise the country's institutions and infrastructure to a world-class level, and more generally, investing the huge hydrocarbon revenues

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<sup>5</sup> More statistical information regarding demographic trends in Qatar over the last five decades can be found at the Census section of the knowledge centre at the website of Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics: <http://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/statistics1/StatisticsSite/Census/Pages/default.aspx>.

requires equally huge numbers of foreign manpower, too large to ever be fully replaced by the small numbers of Qataris” (4). Therefore, due to the overlapping between continuing immigration and stringent citizenship laws (Babar 2014: 414), the situation in which non-nationals comprise the majority of the population will continue to be a defining feature of Qatar’s demographic future.

This demographic situation makes Qatar, along the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf, a relevant case study for discussing postcolonial and Middle Eastern nationalism. This gives rise to a number of questions, such as how does the nationalist discourse deal with the fact that the national community comprises only a small portion of the population, what the role of national identity is in such a context and how conceptions of the nation conceptualize the majority of non-nationals. In other words, this situation invites to a reflection on the way the dividing line between nationals and non-nationals is discursively constructed and reproduced. In summary, the particularities of Qatar’s history as an independent state provide a set of experiences to reflect on the sources of national consciousness in the absence of a strong anticolonial discourse and on the paradox of constructing national identity while at the same time excluding the majority of the population from such identity.

### 3 ON METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology of this research. For doing so, it first discusses the implications of considering the nation as discourse, which have to do with the emergence of certain questions and concerns regarding the nation, as well as the most appropriate ways to grasp its subtleties and content. Thus, the first part of this chapter discusses the notion of archive as emerging from a conception of the nation as discourse, and the way this notion informs the study of nations. Based on this discussion, the chapter later applies those assumptions to this thesis' case, the contemporary state of Qatar. Accordingly, the second part of the chapter provides a general overview on how the display of the discourse on the nation in contemporary Qatar and which of the sites displaying this discourse proved to be the most suitable and viable for conducting this research. After having done so, it will turn to the third part of the chapter, in which it will be explained the set of steps this research followed in order to analyse the discourse on the nation in contemporary Qatar, and the justification of the sources used for this research. Finally, some brief remarks summarize the whole methodological discussion.

#### 3.1 CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON THE NATION AS DISCOURSE

As a first step in the discussion on how this research proceeded, it becomes necessary to reflect on the methodological implications of treating the nation as discourse by asking how to grasp its subtleties and manifestations. This concern has to do with the identification of the archive that allows for conducting research on the nation. Then, some examples will illustrate the way in which this notion of archive has informed research on the nation as discourse in other studies. Taken together, these two points provide the justification for conducting this research in the terms explained in the next two sections.

### 3.1.1 *The notion of archive in research on discourse*

When discussing the way he proceeded to analyse modern discourses on human sciences, such as psychiatry and political economy, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1972) rejected to focus on a single book or *oeuvre*, because doing so would hardly exhaust the field of knowledge about a single subject. Thus, he focused on what he called “discursive formation” (or simply discourse) in order to grasp what were the boundaries of a particular subject. For Foucault the relations established between a series of statements comprise the field of discourse. He first discussed four ways in which this relation could happen. Firstly, he focused on the objects that were the referent of those statements dispersed in time and different in form. Secondly, he looked at the framing of statements themselves or, in other words, if they followed certain style or a certain constant manner. After that, he paid attention to the system of permanent and coherent concepts involved in a group of statements. Finally, he proposed that a way to regroup these statements might be accounting for the identity and persistence of themes.

After realizing the aforementioned assumptions did not offer reliable criteria for organizing statements and establish a relation between them, Foucault argued we should abandon the idea of constructing isolated islands and then analysing their internal consistency. Thus, he favoured instead a description of the systems of dispersion formed by the statements themselves. In this sense, he argued:

whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*” (Foucault 1972: 41).

The concept of discursive formation, which made emphasis on the regularities in a given system of dispersion, substituted then those of “science,” “ideology,” and “theory.” In Foucault’s view, the combination of those four elements –objects, types of statement, concepts and thematic choices– gave birth to discursive fields that provided the language and the limits for developing knowledge and speaking about every subject, such as the body’s anatomy or the functioning of capitalist economy. In

this understanding, discourse is not the actual statements uttered from a given field of knowledge, but rather the set of practices and sayings allowed by a given discursive field.

Pursuing research on human sciences as discourse demanded then an immersion into the field in order to understand how particular statements related with each other and, more importantly, how they related with a broader dimension that constituted the discourse itself. For doing so, Foucault ran against the current and, rather than focusing on the major works within a given field only, he focused on other kinds of sources that reproduced and put in practice particular forms of knowledge. For instance, for conducting research on medical discourse, he focused not only on the medical canons, but also on medical reports, protocols and other documents coming out of the medical institutions. By looking into those sources, he found a great array of information regarding the evolution of concepts, such as “madness,” alongside the spread of modern governing techniques (Foucault, 1964). In this way, the concept of discursive formation provided the language and the rationale to conduct a particular form of analysis.

In this particular form of analysis, the question that emerges is what constitutes then an archive. In other words, according to what criteria one should identify the particular sources in order to analyse a given discursive field. Following Foucault (1972), an archive is not only comprised by the works that have become an authority in a given discourse, but rather every bit of information that has something to say regarding that same discursive field. In this way, a set of logical and deductive steps establishing the limits of what is relevant for a given discursive does not necessarily constitute the archive. Rather, the logic of the discourse itself defines the relevance of a particular source and the limits of the archive by looking at the way in which particular bits of information relate with the aforementioned four components of the field of discourse. In this sense, the archive is not only a building or a deposit of documents or sources that someone has previously organized according to a given criteria. Rather, the archive comprises a diverse array of sources whose relevance for a particular discursive field is in constant reformulation and construction.

The archive is then a living place that constantly calls into question previous organizations and classifications and turns them into objects of sociological inquiry. Archives are not only there speaking by themselves. Rather, their organization reflects particular imperatives and conceptions. For instance, colonial archives provide knowledge about the conquered peoples and contribute to the construction of the subordinated “other” that is made then subject of control, while many archives of colonial governance were destroyed upon the colonial regime’s departure. As Stoler (2009) has argued, “Dutch colonial archival documents serve less as stories for a colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories, as documents with itineraries of their own” (1). Furthermore, the limits of the archive are never predetermined. In this sense, the archive appears as a limitless dimension where the relevance of sources can be determined according to the role the statements found there play in a given field of discourse. As Foucault argued when analysing discourses on human sciences, it is not the predetermined canon of a field that defines the limits of the discourse, but rather the particular relations between statements. Similarly, archives comprise a number of sources, such as Foucault’s medical reports and protocols, which play different roles in a given field of discourse.

### 3.1.2 *Archival research and the nation-as-discourse*

As already discussed in the theoretical framework, looking at the nation as discourse has been a major theme within postcolonial scholarship since the publication in 1984 of Partha Chatterjee’s *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse*. In that book, Chatterjee made the case that, contrary to what most scholarship on nationalism had done up until that point, the nation is, rather than a sociological phenomenon, an autonomous discourse. This conceptual shift meant going into the roots of that discourse and disclosing the power relations enacted through it. This intellectual movement produced a whole different set of concerns and questions regarding the nation that were quite different from the emphasis on the roots of this form of collective identification, which had been hitherto the

dominant controversy. Rather, most prominent themes had now to do with the ways in which anticolonial nationalist discourse in the former European colonies reproduced colonial authority. Put simply, treating the nation as discourse produced a new set of concerns on the study of nationalism as experienced in the postcolonial world during the nineteen and twentieth centuries.

By talking about the nation as discourse, this research follows the postcolonial scholarship on the subject, which has opened new areas of research that have to do with the power relations articulated by national identity and its related concepts. Consequently, this research builds on the postcolonial critique on the nation as a contested site where power relations are articulated and reproduced. Since the discussion in the last subsection revolved around the ways to conduct research on discourse, the conclusions derived from that discussion help to understand the way this research has proceeded.

The most outstanding assumptions deriving from the discussion on archives undertaken in the previous subsection is, on the one hand, the limitless character of the archive and, on the other, the incapacity to define the archive *a priori*. Regarding the latter argument, the archive is not a predetermined body of knowledge, or collection of documents, that one has readily identified according to a predetermined criteria imposed by someone, probably even arbitrarily. Rather, the archive is being constantly constructed and reformulated according to the role played by its sources in a broader field of discourse. This need for the archive to be constantly constructed relates with the former argument in that it produces an idea of the archive that is never finished. In other words, the limits of the archive can be never set, and some pieces of lost or apparently ineffectual information could always emerge that actually have a lot to say for the discourse in question.

Thus, two elements should form the basis of research on the nation a discourse. First, rather than defining the limits of the archive *a priori*, they are rather constantly set and redrawn according to new pieces of information and disparate documents that one encounters or even generates. Secondly, the archive is in constant construction and the relevance of its sources depends upon their role in a broader field of discourse. Scholars writing on the nation are well aware of this, and thus provide a

non-exhaustive list of the sites to conduct research on the nation. For instance, Nayanika Mookherjee (2011), when discussing the aesthetics of nations, argued that

the nation, it is increasingly recognized, needs to be performed and materialized through various aesthetic artefacts like national anthems, flags, memorials, museums, visual art, literature, songs, dance, poetry, films, landscapes, cultural property, and linguistic (enunciative) authority” (1).

Accordingly, rather than providing an exhaustive list of sites to research the nation, the best one can do is justify the relevance of certain sites as fragments of the nation.

Perhaps the most outstanding example of such kind of research on the nation is Homi Bhabha’s *Nation and narration*, which directed our attention to the field of literature as a way to understand the imaginings of the supposedly emancipatory project of nationalism (Bhabha 1990). In this way, literary creation set the boundaries for imagining the emerging nation in the postcolonial world and the task of interpreting narratives was then a critical task for understanding the nation as discourse. Building on Bhabha’s arguments, some scholars later inquired on post-national imaginings in the postcolonial literature (Franco 1997; Pease 1997). Regardless of relevance of the “national allegories”<sup>6</sup> in today’s postcolonial literature, what these examples show is that the field of literary creation has been an important site for conducting research on the nation as discourse, especially within the field of postcolonial studies.

Having reflected on some of the implications, in terms of sociological inquiry, of treating the nation as discourse, and having provided some examples of the kind of research entailed by such assumption, the next section shall provide an explanation of the sites this research focused on and the reasons for undertaking research in those particular sites.

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<sup>6</sup> “National allegory” was the term Frederic Jameson used to characterize Third World literature in what he termed the “era of multinational capitalism”.

### 3.2 NATION AS DISCOURSE IN QATAR

The task now is to translate the aforementioned reasoning regarding the archive and the research on the nation as discourse to this thesis' case of study, the state of Qatar. The questions that emerge are, first, what sites speak about the nation in Qatar and, second, which of them are the most relevant and accessible for conducting this research. Answering these questions will then allow for a thorough explanation of what sites this research looked at, what material comprised those sites' archives and what kind of data came out of them. The following pages will focus on the first set of questions that revolves around the issue of how to conduct research on the Qatari nation. The next section will deal with the second set of questions, which relate with the specific methodology informing this research.

#### 3.2.1 *Sites performing and materializing the Qatari nation*

The previous section pointed to the impossibility to define the limits of an archive for conducting research on discourses and, consequently, that conducting research on the nation as discourse demands inquiring into a set of different sites where the nation is performed and materialized. For conducting research on the nation in Qatar, this means constructing an archive where these performances and materialization can be grasped and then subjected to social inquiry in an act of translation.

In recent years, the state of Qatar has embarked on a series of projects and initiatives aimed to reinvigorate its national identity. These initiatives emerged after the coming to power of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in 1995. More importantly, these initiatives have emerged in parallel to the launching of an ambitious plan, known as *Qatar National Vision 2030*, for promoting economic reform in the country, and they are mainly related with the creation or redevelopment of those institutions that have served as depositories of the symbols of the nation elsewhere. They include, among others, the National Museum of Qatar, which as mid-2018 was still under construction. They have also included the creation of the National Day, through an Emiri decree in 2008, which has been celebrated

since then every December 18. Similarly, the national archives are being constructed and in 1998 a national anthem was adopted. In other words, in recent years the state of Qatar has embarked in an effort aimed to build the nation.

All those initiatives speak about the reinvigoration of the discourse on national identity in Qatar, which by themselves justify a deeper study. Why this is happening, who is promoting those initiatives, at what time in the history of this young nation they emerge, and, more importantly for the purposes of this research, what kind of nation those initiatives speak about. These questions immediately come to mind after looking at political developments in contemporary Qatar. The launching of those initiatives provides itself the justification on where to look at when trying to answer the kind of questions that motivate this research. In other words, they provide the answer for the question of what sites speak about the nation in contemporary Qatar.

In this sense, Qatar is not different at all from the sites that have been identified as critical for talking about the nation in other countries. An obvious starting point for conducting research on the nation as discourse in Qatar is then national archives, libraries and museums. According to Brown and Davis-Brown (1998) changes associated with modernity, such as the emergence of industrial capitalism, the construction of national identities and the notion of individuality as the unit of society, “helped give rise to modern archives, libraries and museums as places not of sacred tribal memory, but of secular national memory” (19). Through specialized knowledge and sophisticated techniques, these institutions reconceptualise objects and artefacts as fragments of a broader national identity and, by so doing, they contribute to the nation’s materialization. Following Benedict Anderson (1983), national libraries, museums and archives are “institutions of power,” which turns them into critical sites for conducting research on the nation, including the Qatari nation.

Similarly, as in almost every other country, commemorations and national celebrations are also relevant sites for conducting research on the nation in contemporary Qatar. In this regard, Elie Podeh (2011), who conducted research on national celebrations and commemoration in five Arab countries,

argued: “the national calendar, in a nutshell, tells the story of the nation, passed on from one generation to the next through holidays” (2-3). Over recent years, celebrations have become an important site for performing the nation by commemorating the most important events in its perennial history. To be fair, national celebrations have taken place in Qatar since independence in 1971. However, national celebrations have unprecedentedly spread in recent years. More importantly, the national day, which was instituted in 2008, has become a more ambitious occasion for national celebration, with events spanning throughout a whole week. Additionally, other celebrations include the national sports day and the family day. All of them are important sites for conducting research on the nation as discourse in contemporary Qatar.

In addition to national institutions (e.g. archives, libraries and museums) and national celebrations, especially Qatar’s national day, there are other sites performing and materializing the nation. These are especially two. The first is the educational system, which through the use of textbooks and courses on national culture, aims to instil in the younger generations a national spirit. Nowadays, even expatriate children, who comprise the majority of children enrolled in primary education, take courses on national culture and are required to follow the protocols on praising the nation, such as signing the national anthem. Thus, they are required to learn and praise a nation that is not theirs, and most probably will never be. These kind of developments show that primary education is a relevant site for conducting research on the nation in Qatar.

Another site that has become important for speaking about the nation are those sites of cultural production, especially those related with the film industry. In this regard, the most important institution for filmic production in Qatar is the Doha Film Institute (DFI), which was created in 2006, as a subsidiary organization of Qatar Foundation. Among other things, DFI promotes the work of young Qatari filmmakers and organizes workshops and international events to promote film industry in this country. A focus on film to inquire on issues of national identity has taken place in other countries. For instance, exploring the different notions of “Mexicaness” in several sites of cultural production,

Anne Doremus (2001) noted that cinema and the film industry in general, are critical sites for discussing modern issues such as nationalism and national identity (for a similar argument in the case of Egypt, see: Armbrust 2002). The case of Qatar is not the exception and therefore film industry has to be taken into consideration when conducting research on the Qatari nation.

### *3.2.2 Site selection criteria*

Since the scope of this research is limited, it is necessary to pinpoint those sites that are actually more relevant for attaining its purpose. This does not mean the sites that will be privileged here are the only ones where research on the nation as discourse in Qatar can be conducted, or that they are even the most relevant. The answer to such questions will largely depend on what is the purpose of researching the nation as discourse. Since the main purpose here is to grasp and interpret the specific understanding of the nation as purported by the state, some sites are more suitable and relevant for attaining that objective. They are relevant because their institutional purpose makes them the most obvious sites for attending the question that motivates this research and they are suitable because they can be accessed in ways that allow for the construction of an archive. The pages that follow scrutinize, according to this criteria, the sites that emerged from the discussion undertaken in the last subsection.

However, before providing a more detailed explanation of the site selection criteria for this research, it is necessary to provide a sense of the cultural landscape of Qatar and, more specifically of the organizations and institutions involved in Qatar's cultural sector. Given this research's aim is to look at the construction of national identity in the realm of culture, this is then a critical discussion. Nowadays, one of the most prominent institutions for organizing cultural initiatives in Qatar is Qatar Museums, which was previously known as Qatar Museums Authority. Qatar Museums is a government organization headed by Sheikha Al Mayassa Al Thani, who is sister of Qatar's current Emir. Qatar

Museums administers the exhibitions, museums and archaeological sites of Qatar, and as such, is the most important institution in the realm of heritage preservation in Qatar.

Alongside Qatar Museums, there is a non-governmental organization, Qatar foundation, which is headed by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who is the mother of current Qatar's Emir. Although Qatar Foundation's work is not exclusively devoted to the realm of culture, it does have some initiatives, such as the ones administered by Msheireb Properties, which have an impact on the construction of national identity in contemporary Qatar. These two institutions, Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation, established in 2005 and 1995 respectively, are part of a cultural assemblage that began to emerge after the coming to power of the father of the current Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. According to Qatari cultural expert, Mariam Al-Mullah, these two institutions, and especially Qatar Museums, are part of the state-led efforts to create a globally oriented narrative of collection at the turn of the twenty-first century (Al-Mulla 2013: 137-39).

Although they enjoy the preference of the current government when it comes to the administration and management of cultural initiatives in Qatar, QM and QF are by no means the only governmental institutions in charge of cultural projects. In this sense, alongside the museums, exhibitions and archaeological sites administered by either QM or QF, there are other sites of cultural production in Qatar, such as the annual celebrations of the National Day, which are organized by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, formerly known as the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage until 2016. Although it was officially established in 2008, this ministry has garnered the initiatives and the personnel of the state-sponsored cultural industry in Qatar that was created just after independence in the early 1970s. In contrast to QM and QF, the Ministry of Culture and Sports draws more heavily on local cultural manifestations and traditions.

Moreover, there has been in recent years certain public discontent about the managing of the cultural sector by the Qatari government, which had privileged Qatar Museums at the expense of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. These concerns had to do mainly with the fact that Qatar Museum's

staff had been filled by Western, especially US, cultural experts. Part of these concerns was manifested by Qatari journalist and writer Faisal Muhammad Al-Marzoqi in a 2013 article published in the Qatari newspaper *Al-Arab* (Al-Marzoqi 2013). However, other examples of this public discontent include, according to Karen Exel (2016a: 32-33), the emergence of the hashtag #What's happening in the museums authority (original in Arabic), Aisha Al Muftah's article in *Al-Arab* in 18 December 2008, some entries in the blog *leqatarien* by Hassan Al Ansari and the Monday meetings organized by Dr Ali Khalifa Al Kuwari. Thus, it was necessary for this research to include cultural initiatives from these two institutional realms in order to have a representative pool of the state-led initiatives aimed to instill a sense of national identity among the population.

Furthermore, alongside these state-controlled cultural institutions, there are also private institutions and organizations in Qatar that have their own cultural initiatives. The most prominent among them is the Sheikh Faisal Museum, which is located in the outskirts of Doha and is owned by a member of Qatar's royal family. Through a particular notion of collection and display, this museum exhibits objects, such as old cars, pictures, photographs, antiquities, that produce a very personal, but locally-rooted understanding of heritage. As Exel (2014) has argued, the Sheikh Faisal Museum not only challenges conceptions of heritage rooted in Western traditions, but also offers a notion of heritage that exceeds the state-sanctioned version of national heritage. Less ambitious examples include the campaign "Share your Qatari heritage and win", which was launched during the 2012 National Day celebrations by the communications company Vodafone-Qatar. On that occasion, this company invited the general public to share photographs representing Qatari heritage. Since then, Vodafone has involved in Qatar's National Day celebrations every year through the launching of similar campaigns, as well as public events and promotional videos that circulate in social media. Despite the actual presence of this private projects of cultural heritage in Qatar, these projects are not part of this research, which is interested in the version of national identity that is constructed in the state-sanctioned sites of cultural production and heritage.

Going back to the possible sites for conducting this research and taking into consideration the aforementioned points regarding Qatar's cultural sector, the first of those sites is the field of primary education, which offers students with a perspective on what the nation is, according to the state, through lessons on national culture and history throughout the different grades that comprise elementary education in this country. Nonetheless the overlapping between education and the production of the nation gives rise to a number of subjects, such as the type of education system and its relation with a national project, design of curricula, approaches to pedagogy and centralism versus federalism on the governance of education, a set of questions is especially relevant for this research, given their direct implications with the construction and reproduction of discourses on the nation. These revolve around a questioning of the role of the nation in history lessons, the place of "non-nationals" in that imaginary, and the way they represent the nation's future. These type of questions have been asked with regard to other countries. For instance, Australian historian Anne Clark (2006) has argued that

as purveyors of the past, schools are an important site of convergence in memory politics. History syllabuses and textbooks, with their capacity to define the nation's past, are central to the development of national narratives—and it is the capacity of history education to construct collective memory that makes it so contested and fraught (4).

Thus, primary education is undoubtedly a relevant site for answering the question that motivates this research. Focusing on this research would provide with relevant material for discussing what does the nation stand for in the twenty-first century postcolonial world.

In spite of that, there are some problems when attempting to construct an archive out of the teaching of the nation in primary school. To begin with, one should identify what kind of material could emerge from there. Thus, the material that one could actually gather from this site is mainly comprised by textbooks that are actually used to teach the nation. Additionally, one could conduct participant observation in classrooms in order to have an insight on the way instructors teach the

nation, and to interview teachers, and any other personnel involved in the education process. Even though this would be relevant material, this research did not include any material related to elementary education mainly because difficulties related to access. Textbooks are sold to parents of those children who are actually enrolled in a Qatari elementary school and, more importantly, having access to one of those schools to conduct participatory observation is quite difficult because of the regulations and lack of attentiveness to research in the country.

Another relevant site is film industry, especially the DFI's productions. These productions provide an important site for discussing the nation because they are usually about Qatari characters who are involved in some of those circumstances of contemporary life in Qatar. However, this is not always the case. As any other film company, DFI showcases the work of many film directors whose interests and concerns are not exclusively related with a national framework. Thus, even though it might touch upon nationalist subjects through some of its productions, DFI is not an institution exclusively devoted to speak about the nation or to reproduce a particular understanding of Qatari national identity. For this reason, DFI's productions are not the most obvious site where this research has to look at. This does not diminishes the relevance of this site for conducting research on Qatar's national identity in the future. However, the most obvious sites for this research are those which are designed exclusively to speak about the nation.

One of the most obvious sites for conducting research is the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) which, according to its website, "will give voice to Qatar's heritage whilst celebrating its future." (QMA Website). Since one of its main purposes is to speak about the nation, NMoQ becomes an obvious site for this research. Moreover, others have conducted this kind of work in the Gulf and elsewhere. For instance, in an edited volume on the subject of national identity and museums in the Arabian Peninsula, Erskine-Loftus *et al* (2016) argued that national museums, which emerged in the region in the 1970s, "aimed to create what Benedict Anderson has called an 'imagined community', a community of people who perceive themselves as part of the new nation that transcended other

existing identities to tribe, family or ruler” (1) (see also Coffey 2004). These works reveal the importance of museums for conducting research on the issue of national identity.

However, a question arises regarding access because by the time this research took place, the National Museum of Qatar had not yet opened to the public. According to reports in its website, the museum’s directorate had been organizing some private visits, but these were only for Qatari citizens. In order to compensate for this lack of access, the next section will introduce the alternative ways to gather data on the NMoQ. Thus, some of the sites in which this research focused was the National Museum of Qatar, as well as other heritage sites in the country that are embedded in the discourse of the nation. These other sites are the museums and archaeological sites administered by Qatar Museums, such as the Museum of Islamic Art and the fort Al Zubarah, and the exhibition houses at Doha’s downtown, which are administered by Msheireb Properties, a real-state company and a subsidiary of Qatar Foundation.

Other sites devoted exclusively to perform and materialize the nation are the national celebrations held every year through the country, especially in the capital, Doha. Among them, the most important is the National Day, which became a big national celebration since the issuance of an Emiri decree in 2008. Since then, every year on December 18 there has been widespread celebrations on Qatar’s National Day, with the exception of year 2016.<sup>7</sup> However, celebrations, such as children’s activities, gatherings, expositions, conferences, are usually held throughout Doha during several days before the actual national day. These celebrations provide in turn a nation-wide platform for reflecting on what the nation is about. For this reason, one of the sites for exploring the question that motivates this research are the celebrations on the National Day. Additionally, this research focuses on other, less important celebrations, such as the National Sports Day, which takes place every year in February. Finally, the National Family Day provides an important platform for discussing the relation of the

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<sup>7</sup> The government suspended the 2016 national day celebrations because of the death of several people in Aleppo, Syria amidst the civil war in this country.

family and the nation, which, as the previous chapter showed, is a critical subject for the study of nationalism in contemporary societies.

To sum up, to explore the question of how the Qatari nation is imagined, this research focuses on cultural heritage sites, such as museums, exhibitions and national celebrations. The task that needs to be carried out is to interpret how those specific sites perform and materialize the nation in order to discuss what the postcolonial nation is about in the twenty-first century. The selection of those sites does not exclude others. In this sense, the discussion this research opens would greatly benefit from exploring this question in other sites, some of which were the main focus of discussion in previous paragraphs. This warning is consistent with the idea that the archive for researching discourse of the nation is never a finished product, but it is in constant construction.

### 3.3 RESEARCHING NATION AS DISCOURSE IN QATAR

The last subsection explains why this research on the nation looked at certain cultural heritage sites. It also shows how recent academic works discussing the nation as discourse have focused on similar sites. Thus, after introducing the sites in which this research focuses, it is now imperative to discuss how to conduct research in those sites. For doing so, the following pages explain the most suitable techniques to access those sites and the kind of data coming out of those sites, as well as questions related with changes of national identity over time. Finally, the discussion focuses on how to organize the information gathered through this research in order to analyse how the imaginings on the contemporary Qatari nation. Overall, the relevance of this discussion lies in that it provides the reasoning and the specific procedures behind each of the arguments guiding the following chapters.

### 3.3.1 *The problem of access*

In order to access sites of cultural production and national celebrations for conducting research on the nation as discourse in Qatar, several techniques of qualitative inquiry were employed. The first of them was conducting archival research in the electronic archives that the government of Qatar itself has created in order to disseminate information regarding activities during national celebrations, temporary and permanent exhibitions in the museums and audio-visual and printed material related to those sites. Since these archives host physical material about imaginings of the nation, conducting this kind of research was the first way to collect information. By so doing, a number of documents came out that informed the reflection on national identity in contemporary Qatar.

For the museums and archaeological sites, archival research in the website and You Tube channel of Qatar Museums was one of the most recurrent forms of inquiry in this research. Qatar Museums is the main government body in charge of eight museums,<sup>8</sup> including the forthcoming National Museum of Qatar, and several archaeological sites, including the Al-Zubarah fort, which became the first UNESCO heritage site in Qatar in 2013. Since the four exhibition houses of the recently-inaugurated Doha's downtown project of Msheireb properties is one of those sites displaying the discourse on the nation, the website of Msheireb properties was part of this research too. Similarly, the website and the You Tube channel of Qatar's National Day that includes videos related the yearly celebrations since 2010, was the main source to access the national celebrations. These two sites provided this research with printed and audio-visual material regarding the national celebrations. Taken together, these different sources comprised the electronic archive informing this research.

This research employed participant observation as a second form of inquiry, which included visits to most of the aforementioned sites during the four months of fieldwork in Doha, Qatar. Since

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<sup>8</sup> The museums administered by Qatar Museums are the following: Museum of Islamic Art, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Garage Gallery: Fire Station, QM Gallery Alriwaq, QM Gallery Katara, National Museum of Qatar, Orientalist Museum and 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum.

some of them were not open to the public and some others were still under construction by the time fieldwork took place, it was impossible to visit all of the sites selected for research. Similarly, due to time constraints it was impossible to attend all the events on occasion of the national day. These events took place during the 2015 celebrations, and the data collected through participant observation was complementary of that collected through electronic archival research.

For the purposes of this research, conducting participant observation meant visiting some of the sites informing this research, taking notes and photographs during those visits, and collecting documents related to those sites, such as booklets and brochures. These visits included museums and archaeological sites administered by Qatar Museums and the exhibition houses of Msheireb properties in Doha's downtown. These activities also took place in the celebrations on the National Day, which provided an additional way of collecting data in those sites. Participant observation was thus an additional technique of research that allowed to collect critical information for informing this study about the way the nation is imagined in contemporary Qatar.

Finally, the third research technique used to access those sites was semi-structured interviews with journalists, government officials and academics. The purpose of these interviews, which took place during fieldwork in Doha, was to gain a broader understanding of the reinvigoration of the nationalist discourse in Qatar over the last years, and to have access to different perspectives on the imaginings of the nation within those initiatives. For attaining this purpose, interviewing academics from universities and research centres based in Qatar and journalists from local media outlets was especially important. Furthermore, since some of the sites that are relevant for this research are either not open to the public or still under construction, interviewing people involved in those projects was the only way to access those sites. Overall, these interviews provided data which complemented that collected through archival research and participant observation.

Before explaining how data was collected and analysed through the aforementioned research techniques, it is noteworthy to reflect upon questions of language. In this regard, as the appendix

shows, the language of the material used for this thesis is English and Arabic. While most of the material is comprised by English sources, some Arabic source were also included, such as the booklet “Mosques in Qatar: their history and their buildings” (*Masajid Qatar: Tarikhuba wa-‘Amaratuba*), the video on occasion of Qatar’s family day (*Tawa’ni bi-Munasibah Yaum al-Usrah fi-Qatar*), the animated film “The Hero and the Message” (*Waza’iqi: Batal wa-Risalah-Kartoon*). The main selection criteria for the sources was availability, as it was English the most recurred language in the sources available. Moreover, while some sources were also included in Arabic, they were simple and unaltered translations of the English versions. Given English sources would be more easy to analyse and manage, it was the English version, rather than the Arabic one, which were included in this research.

Furthermore, while it is recognized Arabic sources might slightly differ from English sources, it might be risky, without a proper research, to make a cutting distinction between Arabic and English discourses, and to construct two separate domains of the nation depending on the language used. Since exploring the possibility of having two different discourses by comparing how the Qatari nation is represented in Arabic and English sources would be a different project, this thesis does not address that question. Thus, the main objective here is to discuss whether national identity, as it is attributed with meaning in heritage and cultural sites, is somehow related with the assemblage of neoliberal frameworks of governance in the specific case of Qatar. In other words, does national identity plays any role in this context of economic and political reform, regardless of the differences between Arabic and English sources. The material in which this thesis draws is useful for attaining that purpose because it shows the recurrence of certain tropes that appear intertextuality regardless of the language of each source.

### 3.3.2 Data generation

Since the data that came up after conducting research in the sites specified above was organized according to its source, there are three types of data: first, those that came out of electronic archival research, second, those that emerged from participant observation and, finally, the ones derived from semi-structured interviews. Each of these research techniques provided this research with specific type of data that the following paragraphs shall explain in more detail.

Firstly, after conducting research in the aforementioned electronic archives, a number of printed and audio-visual material emerged that provided a bulk of information to interpret the imaginings around the Qatari nation. On the one hand, there is material that came out of the electronic archives of the National Day and other national celebrations and, on the other, that which came from electronic archives of museums, exhibition houses and archaeological sites. Taken together, this material comprised the data that emerged out of the research on electronic archives.

The electronic archives of the National Day mentioned in the previous section produced a number of sources. The first set of data proceeds from national celebrations. It comprises videos about important events in Qatar, such as the annual national parade, as well as the propaganda created and distributed by the state during celebrations. For instance, one of those sources is the short film entitled “The Hero and the Message” (*al-Batal wa al-Risala*), produced by the committee on the National Day celebrations in 2012 and shown during that year through several platforms. The second set of data is printed material, such as children’s fiction books and booklets, created and distributed by government entities, such as the national day committee during the national celebrations. In summary, the data that emerged out of this research in electronic archives comprises printed and audio-visual material distributed and created by government bodies during the national celebrations.

Similarly, the electronic archives of the museums, exhibition houses and archaeological sites mentioned in the previous section produced another set of data that informed this research. Part of

this data included videos about the temporary and permanent exhibitions at the museums administered by Qatar Museums, and about objects displayed at the exhibition houses of Msheireb project in Doha's downtown. The second set is printed material, especially booklets with information about these sites. Similarly, the data that emerged out of these electronic archives comprises printed and audio-visual material.

Secondly, another part of this research had to do with conducting participant observation in national celebrations and sites of cultural production. These pieces of data are comprised, on the one hand, by field notes taken during fieldwork and, on the other, by photographs taken during the visits to those sites. Regarding notes, 35 field notes recorded the most important observations during four months of fieldwork. These notes recorded general observations on the field at large, but also on the way the researcher's position in the field evolved, as well as a brief analysis of the way those observations related with this research. These field notes served mainly as background information for this research. However, they also served as sources of information for the exhibitions included in this research. Also, a number photographs taken in those places became important sources of information for interpret the meaning of Qatari national identity. Put simply, the data that emerged out of participant observation comprises field notes and photographs.

Finally, the third set of data that emerged out of the research strategies mentioned in the previous section are the records of semi-structured interviews. These interviews, conducted during fieldwork, included government officials, journalists and academics, and their purpose was to triangulate and contrast the information obtained through other means. During four months, it was possible to conduct eleven interviews. The material deriving from them was voice recordings and, due to explicit request by some interviewees, written notes. At the end, the data coming out of these sources are the transcripts of those interviews based either on voice-recordings or notes. Thus, the third source of data for this research are the transcripts of eleven interviews, whose role is to provide

complementary data for those sites where access through archival research and participant observation was not possible.

Since this research involved the participation of human subjects it was necessary to have the approval of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian National University, which was the institution where the main investigators were based. The committee placed my human ethics protocol in the “Expedited Ethical Review” (E2) category, because it was considered participation in this research did not put in danger or harmed participants. Thus, the application form 2015/207 was submitted on April 2015 to the Human Research Ethics Committee, which approved it three months later. This application included the participant information sheet that would be used for informing participants about the purpose of this research, the risks and benefits of participating, how data would be stored, and how issued of confidentiality would be managed. It also included the oral and written consent forms that would be used for registering the interviewees’ genuine desire to take part in this research (see appendix two).

During fieldwork in Doha, Qatar, informants were generally approached in the following way. Through a first contact via email, telephone or face to face, the main investigator provided potential informants with a quick overview of the research project and asked their willingness to participate in this research. If they agreed, the next step was to set the date and place of the interview. At the start of the interview, informants were provided with the participant information sheet and with enough time to read it carefully. They were then provided with a written consent form, which they should fill out and sign. If they were unwilling or unable to fill and sign the form, consent was obtained orally, using a voice recorder. Since all the informants rejected to be identified, their names have been anonymized in this thesis. This process allowed this research to include human subjects in accordance with ethical principles and standard academic practices.

### 3.3.3 *Questions of time in this research*

Before proceeding to explain how this data was analyzed, it is noteworthy a few words on questions of time and the representativeness of this material for the changing nature of national identity. This thesis questions the role of postcolonial national identity in the context of the implementation of a reformist plans aimed to change some of Third World countries' role in the international division of labor and to integrate their societies into the logics of the free-market economy. This question was explored by looking at the case of Qatar, whose government has launched, in parallel to the implementation of a National Vision aimed to turn the country's economy from resource-based to knowledge-based, a number of cultural heritage projects aimed to instill a sense of national identity among the population.

A focus on questions of belonging and subjectivities amidst the implementation of widespread forms of neoliberal governance and reform in Qatar does not exclude the salience of local trends. Prominent among these local trends are, on the one hand, the particular way in which colonialism was experienced in the Gulf, which prevented the emergence of a typical form of postcolonial nationalism that had anti-colonialism as its main component, and on the other, the demographic trends in the Gulf that render the majority of the population to the status of non-nationals. The intermixing between local experiences on colonialism and demographic trends, on the one hand, with global trends on national belonging and subjectivities, on the other, constitutes the main problem this research aims to address. And it is this intermixing of global trends with global conditions that has been a constant and stable feature of Qatar's sociopolitical environment since the turn of the twenty-first century.

Due to the recurrence and stability of the aforementioned research problematic, this discussion does not devote any attention to more incidental local trends, such as the relatively minor effects of the Arab Spring in Qatar, and the 2017 imposed on Qatar by some of its counterparts in the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This is not to deny these other local trends

might have an impact on Qatar's national identity, such as the popular support for the current Emir, who is presented as an integral component of the nation, sparked by the blockade. Nonetheless, the particular assemblage of neoliberal forms of belonging and subjectivities in Qatar does not automatically lead to a consideration of Qatar's relation with its neighbors or to the looming of a moderate opposition against the government. Moreover, while these more incidental local trends might have an impact on the degree of identification with the nation, they do not necessarily alter the meaning of national identity.

One of the signs of inconformity of some sectors of Qatar's population with their government, which echoed the contestability inherent to the Arab Spring, was the Monday meetings of a group of men led by Dr. Ali Khalifa Al-Kuwari, who is a prestigious and well-regarded professional in Qatar, which led to the publication of the book "The People Want Reform in Qatar Too...". However, by their reluctance to accept women in their meetings and their consideration of the population imbalance as one of Qatar's biggest problems, this opposition group actually reproduces the essentialist view of national identity that emphasizes "the need to preserve tradition," and that is promoted also by the official discourse. Similarly, the blockade has produced a strong sense of nationalism, but this nationalism puts at the center the Emir or *Tamim al-Majid* (Glorious Tamim), which is also an outstanding feature of the official account of Qatar's national identity. These examples show that incidental local trends, such as the moderate effects of the Arab Spring on Qatar and the blockade imposed by some of its neighbors, do not remarkably alter the meaning of national identity.

The points made above about the focus of this research have important consequences for the material analyzed. In this sense, it is noteworthy the printed and audiovisual material used for this research comes mainly from the 2009 celebrations of the National Day, because by the time electronic archival research was conducted, this was the only material available. However, this material was complemented with some sources from other years and, more importantly, with observations and interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2015 and 2017. This research produced then a reliable body

of material for looking at the construction of Qatar's national identity, belonging and subjectivity, amidst the country's integration into the logics of the free-market economy and its corresponding frameworks of global governance.

Finally it is important to mention that rather than producing a complete and finished overview of Qatar's national identity, this thesis provides a particular account of Qatar's national identity that identifies some recurring themes, which are relevant for the process of transformation that Qatar is undergoing under the framework of its *National Vision 2030*. This does not exclude the possibility of change and, more importantly, of challenge, contestation and reinvention. However, looking at those other voices that challenge the official understanding of Qatar's national identity is a task that is beyond the scope of this study.

#### 3.3.4 *Data analysis*

Analysing the data that came out of this research was a task that demanded the use of a software for qualitative analysis. Since the main purpose was to interpret the discourse on Qatar's national identity displayed in a number of sites of cultural production, this analysis did not proceed from a series of fixed and preconceived premises on how the nation "should" be imagined. Rather, it began only from the assumption that the characteristics that make Qatar an interesting case study were relevant for studying the way the nation is imagined there. This assumption served as a starting point to see what the data itself said in this regard. Organizing data was important because it would give a sense of where certain bits of information came from, which would then be helpful to coherently integrate the information into this research. Dividing the data into two groups helped to locate where particular bits of information came from, which would then allow a balanced discussion on how the Qatari nation is imagined in both sites: sites of cultural production and national celebrations.

For this reason, the source was the main criteria for organizing data, which produced two main groups. The first group comprised those documents related to museums, archaeological sites and exhibition houses in Qatar. This group included booklets, videos, field notes, photographs, interviews and every other document related with those sites of cultural production managed by Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation. The second group comprised those documents related to national celebrations, especially the National Day. This group included those videos, books, booklets and any other document related with the national celebrations and commemorations taking place during the national calendar in Qatar over the last few years. For managing purposes, these two groups broke down into several subgroups reflecting the more particular types of sites of cultural production and national celebrations included in this research. However, the most important categorization was the distinction between the two main groups, because it helped to balance between the two sources of data.

For understanding the relevance of their sources for organizing data it is important to recall the discussion about the cultural sector in Qatar. As mentioned earlier, there are two governmental institutions in the realm of culture in Qatar. One of them is the assemblage formed by Qatar Museums and Qatar Foundation and the other is the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The former is more outward-oriented and emerged in parallel to the rise to prominence of Hamad's family and inner circle in Qatari politics. The latter draws more explicitly in the cultural tradition of Qatar and is the recipient of the work developed in the cultural sector since independence. Classifying the data according to its source allows for the maintenance of a clear genealogy of the material used for this research, as well as a complete overview of how the different governmental agencies in Qatar's cultural sector tackle the issue of the nation.

After organizing data, the next step was to code it with the help of the software for qualitative analysis MAXQDA. A series of codes reflecting each of the reasons for why discourse on the Qatari nation deserves attention, which were discussed in detail in this thesis' theoretical framework, was the main criteria to code data. To recapitulate, these reasons were, on the one hand, the parallelism between

the reassertion of discourse on national identity and the launching of an ambitious reformist project and, on the other, the exclusion of the majority of the population from the status of citizens. Initially, two codes followed this line of reasoning, one of them was named “reforms” and the other was named “non-citizens.”

However, coding data in an iterative way made possible to redesign these codes after looking at the data for the first time. Similarly, subdivisions in each of those codes depended on what the data itself indicated. Thus, after coding and recoding the data, the following three codes emerged: “excluding,” “disciplining,” and “legitimizing.” This was the definite set of codes for analysing data. Moreover, the writing of the empirical chapters was based on that set of codes. In this sense, the discussion on the imagining of the nation in the sites this research looked at was inductively driven, because it relied in great part on what came out after analysing the data.

Each of these three codes opened new areas of inquiry into the imaginings of the Qatari nation, but still retained a strong connection with the conditions that make Qatar an interesting case for updating the postcolonial critique to the nation in the twenty-first century in the Middle East. The first code (excluding), comprised every bit of information related to the construction of the national community through delimiting the boundaries between nationals and non-nationals. For instance, it included the retelling of the history of the nation and its focus on the main characters of that history. The second code (disciplining) included all those bits of information related with the depiction of the ideal society of the Qatari nation. For instance, it took into account the ways those sites represent national individuals and families. Finally, the third code (legitimizing) comprised every bit of information related with the way Al Thani’s right to rule and their capacity to define the nation’s future is explained. Thus, it included, for instance, the way those sites depict leader’s characteristics and the evolution of their leadership. As exemplified in the previous discussion, these three codes, which emerged after looking into the data, consolidated the initial organization and classification and provided the basis for writing the subsequent chapters.

In summary, the main purpose of the discussion above was to explain the methodology behind this research. Even though there is not a simple formula, the easiest way to answer to such a question is by drawing on previous experiences. The next steps, which formed the backbone of the preceding discussion, were to explain how to grasp, analyse and interpret the discourse on the nation. Therefore, the following chapters shall focus on the outcome of this research.

#### 4 WHO MAKES THE NATION? THE EXCLUSIONARY FEATURE OF QATAR'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

This chapter's argument draws on a particular historical narrative that emerges out of the intertextual reading of the heritage and cultural production sites looked at in this research. The historical narrative that informs the discussion in the following pages is neither the only accepted version of Qatar's national history nor the only set of memories recalled by the sites looked at in this research. However, it is a predominant story about the past that can be grasped when putting together some of the elements that are displayed throughout those sites, and that have something relevant to say about the making of the Qatari nation. Moreover, this historical narrative is closely related with the social transformation Qatar has been undergoing since the turn of the twenty-first century, which serves as the contextualization for the present discussion on the construction of Qatar's national identity in a period of reform.

The historical narrative that informs this chapter's argument is, in simple terms, an answer to the question, "who makes the nation?" In this sense, an intertextual reading of the analysed sources reveals how the heritage and cultural production sites looked at in this research intervene in the field of collective memory. This intervention takes the form of defining who belongs to the nation by constructing certain historical events as landmarks in the development of the nation, as well as creating, through an emphasis on some identity markers, certain ideal characters as the protagonists in those events. While these identity markers –clothing, Arabic language and names, Muslim devotion and customs of life in the desert- are common to the rest of the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),<sup>9</sup> Qatar's distinction from neighbouring countries does not rely on those markers, but on the iteration of its history as a single political unity. Put simply, the claim on who makes the Qatari nation

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<sup>9</sup> The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (*Majlis al-Ta'awwun li-Duwal al-Khalij al-Arabiyya*), commonly known as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is a regional organization founded in 1981 by the states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

identified here is about providing the reasons for who can legitimately claim belonging to the national community.

The claim on who the makers of the nation are, identified in this research, puts an ethnically differentiated group at the centre of the nation's history. Representative characters of this ethnically-differentiated group are the loyal tribesmen, in the pre-colonial period, the noble military men, in the colonial period, and the petroleum worker in the post-colonial period. Moreover, the ethnic distinction of the group represented by these characters is achieved through an emphasis on some identity markers, such as clothing, Muslim devotion, Arabic language, and a lifestyle rooted in the desert, that bind them together and differentiate them from "others." Regarding this point, Koch (2015a) has argued that

set up in stark contrast to the Gulf nationals, expats do not 'belong' as Gulf nationals do: they are always narrated as 'transplants', even if they are fourth-generation residents. The deserts of the Arabian Peninsula are not their 'primordial homeland', nor is the desert 'heritage' their own (526).

Thus, by telling a particular account in the history of the nation, this discourse emphasizes the centrality of certain people as makers of the nation, but also attempts to obscure or minimize the contributions made by non-ethnic Qataris or "foreigners".

In the case of Qatar, emphasizing who can legitimately claim belonging to the nation is a critical move demanded by the nationalist agenda, because it helps to naturalize a condition that has been always a feature of this country's demography since its emergence as an independent state: namely, rendering the majority of the population to the status of non-nationals (De Bel-Air 2014).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, while the expansion of the oil industry fuelled this demographic trend, nationals being a minority is expected to be an outstanding feature of Qatar's demography in the coming decades (GSDP 2008: 7, GSDP 2011: 105). Put simply, by emphasizing certain historical events in the nation's development

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<sup>10</sup> Statistical information regarding demographic trends in Qatar over the last five decades can be found at the Census section of the knowledge centre at the website of Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics: <http://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/statistics1/StatisticsSite/Census/Pages/default.aspx>

and characterizing the people who took part on them, this discourse silences the stories of great portion of the population in the overall account on the making of the nation. In this way, the official response to the question of why most of Qatar's population is excluded from nationality is that only a small portion of the population can be attributed with the making of the nation.

Apart from its exclusionary features, this claim also devotes a subordinated role to women, who have played, according to this story, only a marginal role in the making of the nation. Women appear in this account as supporters of the males' efforts to build the nation only. They are stripped from any form of agency beyond their supportive role. This finding echoes feminist perspectives on nationalism that call into question, as discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the prominent role of men and the exclusion of women in nationalist projects, which produces a gender-laden conception of contemporary nation-states. In contrast to the non-ethnic Qatari population, women "belong" to the nation, but only through a subordinated role, which is mediated by their capacity, or lack thereof, to support the male efforts to build the nation.

Keeping a clear demarcation between nationals and non-nationals is especially critical at a time when new patterns of belonging are being pushed by *Qatar National Vision 2030*, which make emphasis on the capacity to contribute to the knowledge-based economy as the main criteria for belonging. One of the contributions of literature on neoliberalism, chapter one showed, has been its emphasis on the dynamics of belonging inherent to the expansion of market rationalities into every sphere of human life. In this sense, neoliberal rationality imposes criteria on who should be included and excluded from society, stressing the need to produce a collective of individuals who are fit and suitable for performing correctly in a market-oriented life. Literature on neoliberalism has thus contributed to scholarly debates on belonging by pointing to an innovative dimension: namely, the salience of neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics for understanding dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in modern societies.

The reformist agenda the government of Qatar has been implementing since 2008 under the name of *Qatar National Vision 2030* is a particular manifestation of the expansion of neoliberal rationality in the postcolonial Gulf, especially due to its aim to turn Qatar into a knowledge-based economy. As such, *QNV 2030* provides a rationale for considering who can belong to contemporary Qatari society by noting that:

[economic growth has] led to a large increase in the ratio of expatriates to locals in the labour force, and a particularly sharp and unanticipated rise in the immigration of unskilled workers. *The composition of a nation's population will determine the nature of its society.* Qatar must determine a suitable size and quality of its expatriate labour force. It must weigh the consequences of recruiting expatriate workers in terms of their cultural rights, housing and public service needs, as well as *the potential negative impact on national identity*, against the anticipated economic benefits that accrue from an increase in the numbers of foreign workers in the total labour force (GSDP 2008: 3-4, emphasis added).

By endorsing a categorization of people according to their capacity to contribute to the kind of human capital the knowledge-based economy demands, the vision proscribes the criteria on how, and under what status, society will integrate non-national population.

However, the creation of that ideal society envisioned by the reformist plans in Qatar is not a smooth process that is divorced from local conditions. Quite the contrary, the creation of such a society has to deal with the salient demographic situation that renders the national population to the status of minority, and makes necessary to iterate the dividing lines between those who belong and those who do not. Thus, while an increasingly important criteria for exclusion/inclusion of population in Qatar is the capacity to contribute to the model of society envisioned by the reformist plans, another important criteria is also membership in the Qatari nation. Moreover, the latter criteria is linked to the former one, in that the increasing prominence of the capacity to contribute to the model of society envisioned by the reformist plans as a criteria for inclusion/exclusion in Qatar makes necessary to make clear who can legitimately claim belonging to the nation in order to keep the national community

at the top of society. In this case, the reformist society overlaps with the nationalist society in order to produce particular dynamics of belonging.

Furthermore, the study of the construction of the historical evolution of the Qatari nation in the sites looked at in this research helps to inform another debate that concerns this thesis. This debate has to do with nuancing the idea of postcolonial nationalism, which has traditionally been recognized as having anti-colonialism as defining feature. By looking at the way national history is constructed in a country that departs from the usual experience of colonialism, given the absence of formal colonization, and independence, given the relative lack of interest in building a sovereign state, this thesis calls enquiries what is the role of anti-colonialism in peculiar postcolonial settings, such as Qatar. If anti-colonialism has been identified as one powerful legitimizing force for nationalist elites elsewhere, what are then the discursive sources of nationalist legitimacy in countries that experienced colonialism in particular and unusual ways?

For discussing how the claim on who makes the nation unfolds over those sites where the state-controlled discourse on Qatar's national identity is displayed, this chapter is divided into three sections. Each of them will discuss one of the events that, according to this discourse, are landmarks in the development of the nation, as well as the characterization of the people who took part in those events. In chronological order, these events are the creation of the nation during the precolonial period, the defense of the nation during the colonial period and the building of the nation during the postcolonial period. In order to provide examples of the way this claim is deployed, references will be made to those sources in both Arabic and English that, according to the discussion in the second chapter, were gathered after conducting research on the nation in Qatar.

The aim of the following discussion, it is noteworthy, is not joining historiographical debates aimed to scrutinize the trueness of a given historical account (on Qatar's historiography see: Valenti 2011). Rather, the aim in the following pages is to identify which parts of the national history are emphasized in order to understand how the discourse on national identity reproduces power relations

in contemporary Qatar. For this reason, the discussion that follows is more concerned with current, rather than past events. Moreover, the objective of the discussion in the following pages is to offer a historical narrative constructed through an intertextual analysis of historical sources, and a framework for thinking how this historical narrative relates with contemporary politics in Qatar. Thus, while the discussion in this chapter does not exclude alternative histories emerging from these same sites, these alternative histories can be best captured by an analysis of these sites' materiality, which is outside the scope of this research.

#### 4.1 PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

In the state-controlled discourse on national identity in Qatar, the pre-colonial period can be located before the establishment of the Ottoman rule in the Qatari peninsula in the nineteenth century (on the establishment of Ottoman rule in Qatar see: Huss 1962; Anscombe 1997; Kurşun 2002). This discourse depicts the pre-colonial period, whose beginning is not clearly specified, as a period dominated by inter-tribal rivalry and the harshness of life in the desert. Accordingly, the most heroic event taking place during those years was the creation of a unified political entity in the Qatari peninsula by the tribes who inhabited this territory. Allegedly, these tribes put aside their differences and ancient rivalries in order to work for a common goal, the creation of the nation. The discourse on national identity emphasizes the characteristics of the people who undertook the heroic task of creating the nation and, by so doing, it delineates the features of the emerging Qatari nation. Several sources exemplify this account's salience in the overall discourse on the nation. These include the children's book, *The Pearl*, which was published and distributed under the auspices of the organizing committee of Qatar's National Day during the 2009 celebrations, and the information at the website of the National Day. It is also, as the following pages show, a major theme of the permanent exhibitions in the forthcoming National Museum of Qatar.

#### 4.1.1 *The emergence of a unified nation*

According to the story in *The Pearl*, during the nineteenth century, life in the Qatari peninsula was developed in the blue waters of the Gulf and in the “vast, seemingly endless waves of sand [that looked] like a mighty yellow ocean” (National Day Committee 2009: 44). Herding, fishing and the collection of pearls were the main economic activities developed in those lands, and they allowed for the emergence of trade relations within the Qatari peninsula and throughout the Gulf. However, those inhabitants did not constitute a unified community, but they rather split into a number of tribes that exerted authority over different and changing territories. Nonetheless the tribes in the Qatari peninsula cooperated sometimes in order to attain a common objective, they had notorious differences which manifested themselves in open conflict and war. At a time of struggle between regional and imperial powers, such as the British and Ottoman empires, for control over the country, inter-tribal rivalry was the main obstacle for maintaining the Qatari peninsula free from external interference. Thus, keeping external domination at bay demanded a unified local population willing to defend their homeland.

According to Qatar Museums, one of the most important material legacies through which the pre-colonial life in Qatar is depicted are the vestiges of the coastal town al-Zubarah, which are located around 100 kilometres north-west of Doha, and which became the first UNESCO World Heritage Site in this country in 2013. This site is considered as “one of the best-preserved examples of an 18th-19th century merchant town in the Gulf region”. It was founded in the mid-eighteenth century, and rapidly developed into “a centre of the pearling and international trade” (Qatar Museums 2014). However, the story told by al-Zubarah is not only one of a flourishing international trade of pearls, which is considered as a key to a proper understanding of “Qatar’s cultural identity,” but also one of regional rivalry that manifested in several attacks to Qatar’s territory. Thus, the official account is that “the success of al-Zubarah attracted the attention of other Gulf powers, and after several attacks the town was eventually burned to the ground in 1811” (Qatar Museums 2014). In this way, the story of

nineteen-century Qatar emphasizes a country with a burgeoning international trade that was constantly threatened from outside.

External threats were worsened by internal divisions triggered by ancient rivalries among tribes, a subject that reportedly will be part of the exhibitions displayed in the still under-construction National Museum of Qatar. According to an article published in the “Art and Design” section of *The New York Times*, the galleries in the museum “will be loosely arranged in chronological order,” and will include “historical exhibitions on the tribal wars and the establishment of the Qatari state” (Ooroussoff 2010). Similarly, the official website for the National Day recalls that in 1851 Doha was the target of an invasion coming from Mesaimeer, a town located north-west of Doha. When the people of Qatar went out to confront the invaders, “each tribe would use its own rallying cries and fly its own banner” (QND website). These two examples show not only the prominent role played by the issue of inter-tribal rivalry during the nineteenth-century in the state-control discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar, but also their presentation as an obstacle Qataris had to overcome in order to face the external threats to their homeland.

The internal division among Qataris not only hindered the capacity to deal with the external threats, but it also made everyday life dangerous. The risks of everyday life in Qatar during the pre-colonial period, when inter-tribal rivalries were a salient feature, was first-hand experienced by Cat, Ebrahim and Peter, the three main characters in the story of *The Pearl*. After travelling to the deserted lands of eighteen-century Qatar through the magical powers of a pearl, these three characters saw “three Bedouin men on horseback over the rim of a small nearby dune.” However, they were not happy to see these men, after all, they did not know “whether those men were even Qatari” (National Day Committee 2009: 50).

Amidst those harsh conditions, Qataris of the time had to find a way to reach unity. Otherwise, their homeland would be subjugated by those external powers who had a vested interest in controlling their territory. The official discourse on national identity portrays the attainment of such task as the

most heroic act of the precolonial period accomplished by Qataris. Hence, overcoming deep-rooted inter-tribal rivalries and subordinating their tribal loyalty to their duties with the protection of the national homeland is depicted as the most heroic act of the precolonial period in Qatar. In this way, by being able to identify, and work towards the achievement of, a general interest over particular ones, nineteenth-century Qataris become, according to this discourse, pioneers in the emergence of the nation.

To sum up, by mid-nineteenth century, the official story goes, a new political entity in the eastern Arabian Peninsula started to grow, which after a few decades would be widely known as the Sheikhdom of Qatar. Thus, according to the website on the national Day, Qataris celebrate each year in order to “remember how [their] national unity was achieved and how [they] 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.” This important achievement was not the product of randomness, but was rather the outcome of the efforts put by “heroic forefathers who endured severe hardships and paid a dear price for the unity of the nation” (QND website). In this way, the efforts of these ancestors are considered as pioneering efforts in the rise of the nation.

#### *4.1.2 Constructing the loyal tribesmen*

The discourse on national identity in Qatar constructs the precolonial period with reference to the dangers and rewarding experiences related to life in the desert mainly. It emphasizes the predominant nomadic lifestyle in the eastern Arabian Peninsula during the nineteenth-century as the defining feature of those ancestors and pioneers who wisely and bravely worked towards the praiseworthy effort to attain national unity. Life in the desert and its most noticeable features and symbols become in this way nationalized; that is, they become one of the most important components of the essence of Qatar’s national identity. The people who put aside their particular loyalties to the tribe in favour of a more general loyalty to the nation is said to have certain identity markers that can still be found around the

country. Nonetheless nomadic lifestyle is not anymore an outstanding feature in contemporary Qatar, certain identity markers that make reference to the old and deep-rooted traditions related with life in the desert remain still in place.

Figure 3.1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions, but it can be found in the following source: National Day Committee (2009). *The Pearl*. Written by Peter Corey and illustrated by Henry Climent. London: Stacey International, p. 45, available at: <http://www.qatar.qa/English/Ebooks/EBooksListing>, accessed in December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

The discourse on the nation considers nomadic tribes as the main units of social organization and, consequently, the main objects of individual loyalty in nineteenth-century Qatar. This particular social organization sustained the dynamics of conflict and rivalry among tribes. For this reason, suspicion and fear were the most natural reactions among people every time they had an encounter with a different tribe. However, feelings of security and familiarity could replace those sentiments once tribal communities started to interact with each other, which would actually reveal their shared character as people from the desert.

This sense of collective identification that would later form the basis of an “imagined community” is clearly illustrated by the story of *The Pearl*, when Cat, Ebrahim and Peter ran into a group of Bedouins in the middle of the desert. Their initial cautiousness was replaced by relief and pleasure once interaction began:

The tribesmen kept a wary distance, but Peter suspected that they were every bit as curious as their sheep. After all, it can't be every day that a tribe of Bedouin come across three children in the middle of the desert. One of the tribe's small children who had been herding the sheep moved towards Cat. The shock of recent events seemed to have caught up with her, and she was shivering on the sand. Peter braced himself, ready to defend his sister if needs be, but equally aware that any action on his part could be disastrous for all three of them. But the boy meant them no harm. He could see that Cat was feeling the chill of the breeze that followed the sand storm through the torn shreds of what was left of

her *thobe*, coupled with the chill of her near-death experience. The boy carefully removed the brightly patterned sleeveless jerkin he was wearing and held it out to Cat (National Day Committee 2009: 50).

The passage quoted above not only illustrates the feeling of solidarity and identification when the Bedouin boy saw that the inclement weather and the harsh life in the desert was disturbing Cat, but it also emphasizes other identity markers of nineteenth-century Qataris and their nomadic life. Herding goats and sheep was one of the main activities that Qataris performed in order to make a living. This is why as the tribesmen drew closer, “Peter heard the sound of goats and sheep.” Horse and especially camel riding is said to be an outstanding feature of Qataris at the time, but this was an exclusive task of grown man, who had already learnt this craft. Thus, while boys herded goats and sheep, they were “followed by men on camels” (National Day Committee 2009: 50).

Other identity markers are the Bedouin garment and hunting. With regard to the first one, a reference can be made to the same passage quoted above, when after seeing that Cat was feeling the chill of the breeze, the Bedouin boy removed the “brightly *patterned sleeveless jerkin* he was wearing and held it out to her.” This “patterned sleeveless jerkin” is a piece of clothing made out of sheep’s wool that is especially suitable for the winter in the desert, because it keeps the body’s warmth and allows the sleeves of the *thobe* (the white robe widely used in the Gulf countries nowadays) to come out. In this passage, both the *thobe* and the patterned sleeveless jerkin are emphasized as outstanding pieces of clothing that Qatari men wore by the time the nation was being unified. With regard to women, one of the pieces of clothes that is emphasized is the *battulah*, a type of mask that covers women’s faces around the eyes. Thus, when one woman among the tribesmen traveling the desert “smiled at her from behind her *battulah*, Cat [realized she] had never seen such kind eyes” (National Day Committee 2009: 54).

The discourse on Qatar’s national identity depicts the hunting skills of the falcon as something that is inherent to the natural conditions of the desert. In this way, the story in the book *The Pearl* includes a passage in which a snake that was ready to attack Cat, “suddenly flew up into the air, seized

in the vice-like beak of a falcon” (National Day Committee 2009: 48). Since the hunting skills of the falcon naturally belongs to this particular landscape, the Bedouin’s use of the falcon as a tool for obtaining food is something that connected them organically with the life in the desert. Thus, according to the state-controlled discourse on national identity, hunting becomes another identity marker of the nineteenth-century Qataris.

All of the features mentioned above are organically related, giving a sense of the kind of community that endeavoured to create a unified nation. The hunting capacities that the falcon naturally developed were put at the service of obtaining food by the tribe. Similarly, the Bedouin garment was made out of the materials that were available to this people, such as goat’s skin and sheep wool. Taken together, these features congeal the essence of life in the desert during the mid-nineteen century, which, according to the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar, constitutes the essence of Qatar’s national identity during the pre-colonial period. These identity markers, however, are not only an outstanding feature of this period, but they become recurring themes in the definition of Qatar’s identity in subsequent periods. As such, they link together the different generations of Qataris, and construct a story of continuity among those populations who are said to have performed heroic tasks on the nation’s behalf.

#### 4.2 COLONIAL PERIOD

The next step in the historical construction of the national community in contemporary Qatar is the colonial period. This period refers to that time in history when the Qatari peninsula came under the authority of the Ottoman Empire, through its attachment to the Basra Vilayet (provincial government in Basra), in today’s southern Iraq. This period is depicted as one in which Qataris, who accepted the

authority of the Sublime Porte<sup>11</sup> mainly because of its Islamic character, had to contain the ambitious Ottoman authorities, who often abused their power in order to extract more benefits than those Qataris were capable of providing. Accordingly, the most heroic act performed by Qataris, whose features are the same which are said to characterize the national community in the previous period, was fighting against the ambitious and greedy Ottoman authorities during the late-nineteen century. This story is exemplified by the animated documentary *The Hero and the Message*, produced and screened under the auspices of the organizing committee of Qatar's National Day during the 2012 celebrations. This is also a major theme in the website of the National Day, as well as in some other printed material published and distributed during national celebrations.

#### 4.2.1 *Defending the nation's interests*

During the late-nineteen century, Qataris carried out the heroic task of defending the nation from the ambitious and greedy Ottoman authorities, who wanted to take advantage of their position of power in order to sack the nation. Accordingly, Qatar's leadership and people were happy to come under the authority of a Caliphate that was devoted to the guidance of a large part of the Muslim community. However, once Ottoman authorities began to abuse their power, Qatari people followed their leaders in order to defend their nation against foreign domination. The most important episode in this story is the battle of Al-Wajba, which took place in 1893 in a small town located a few kilometres north-west of Doha. In that episode, a small number of nationally-committed and faithful Qatari soldiers defeated the powerful Ottoman army. According to the official account, the result of that event was the emergence of a more cohesive and self-confident nation.

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<sup>11</sup> Sublime Porte is the name through which the Ottoman Empire's central government in Istanbul has come to be known.

The story emphasizes that by the end of the nineteenth century, authorities in Istanbul implemented a set of modernizing reforms with the aim to extract financial resources from the provinces in order to address the challenge posed by the European expansion into the territories of the Caliphate. In this way, the information published in the official website of Qatar's National Day highlights that at some point, the Ottomans implemented measures that were against Qatar's national interest, and which "were represented in the establishment of the Department of Customs, and imposition of taxes on traders including imposition of taxes on the sale of pearls." Although such initiatives were opposed by Qataris, the Ottomans authorities, "driven by their bad need for money to spend on their military forces, insisted on implementing their scheme unconcerned with its potential impacts on the living conditions of the citizens" (QND website). Accordingly, the main challenge for Qataris of the time was the Ottomans' ambitions over their resources.

Due to their willingness to subjugate the people of Qatar by any means necessary, the Ottoman official embodies the external power's ambition and greediness. The greedy and ambitious Ottoman is one of the main characters in the animated documentary *The Hero and the Message* (Al-Rayyan 2012). Travelling back in time through a magical wagon, a boy named Muhammad and his sister Lulwah arrived in the deserted lands of the Qatari peninsula in year 1893. The wagon landed in the middle of a battle between a young man riding a camel and three soldiers riding horses. The leader of those three soldiers was someone to be feared. He had a strong gaze and did not hesitate to use his sword against anyone getting in his way. As his comrades, he wore a blue uniform and a fez, a hat that became popular in the Levantine region during the Ottoman era. He was unmistakably an Ottoman official, and his objective was to prevent that a message written by Qatar's leadership reached its destination. In this way, the Ottoman official is presented as the main enemy during the colonial period.

According to the discourse on national identity, Qataris themselves undertook a heroic act in the battle of al-Wajba in 1893, which the information section of the official website of Qatar's National Day extensively deals with. This source indicates that after noticing the Qataris' ejection to the

decisions taken by the Sublime Porte, the Wali of Basra, who was the provincial authority in the Qatari peninsula, arrived in Doha in order to enquire Qatar's leadership on their reluctance. The Emir of Qatar did not agree to meet with the Wali and sent his brother instead. The Wali, who saw this decision as an insurgency against the Ottoman Empire, took the Emir's brother as prisoner, and led a military offensive against the Emir's stronghold in al-Wajba. In spite of the military superiority of the Ottoman army, their braveness and conviction allowed the Qatari forces to win this battle and to expel the Ottomans from their land.

Undoubtedly, the battle of al-Wajba was the most heroic act of Qataris in the colonial period, because it meant risking their lives in favour of a higher ideal, protecting the nation from foreign domination. Thus, after witnessing the battle of al-Wajba in their journey to the past, Muhammad and Lulwah, from the aforementioned documentary, listened closely to their father talking about the history of Qatar. Their father explained the significance of year 1893, and the battle that took place then. According to him, the Ottomans had sought to impose direct control on Qatar for some years, but they found a strong opposition that eventually led to the most decisive battle in Qatar's history. The importance of this battle lied, according to him, in the fact that the small Qatari forces were able to defeat the powerful Ottoman army and to forge, in that way, an independent nation. The two brothers listened carefully and smiled with complicity. After all, they had personally witnessed what their father just talked about (Al-Rayyan 2012).

In this same vein, the discourse on national identity details that after this "decisive battle," a prouder and more self-confident nation emerged. This nation never relinquished its loyalty to the Ottoman caliphate, as long as it was guided by the principles of justice and righteousness. Thus, according to the information section the official website of Qatar's National Day, the importance of the battle of al-Wajba lies in that

Qataris proved they were faithful, cooperative and willing to sacrifice as they struggled in pursuit of liberation for more than half a century. They did it to finally establish a homeland they could be proud

of, [and] a country entrusted to a leadership adhering to justice and consultation in its dealings with the people (QND Website).

In summary, according to the contemporary discourse on national identity in Qatar one of the cornerstones in the emergence of the Qatari nation was the struggle against the Ottomans in the late-nineteen century. Thus, the most heroic act of this period was the battle of al-Wajba, where Qataris risked their lives in order to defend their nation.

#### 4.2.2 *Constructing the noble military men*

One important component of the Qatari population during the late-nineteen century was a brave and loyal group of people who were willing to defend their country from foreign domination and to reach the ideal of liberation and national self-determination. Accordingly, some of the identity markers that embodied the essence of being Qatari during the colonial period are those related with clothing, life in the desert, religion, and Arabic language. These identity markers are distinctive characteristics of the noble military men who fought against the Ottomans. The military force that fought against the Ottomans in the heroic battle of al-Wajba was far from a professional and well-trained army. Rather, it was an irregular force that comprised the tribes living in the Qatari peninsula by that time, and ordinary people whose common concern was to defend their country against foreign domination. Since they had an organic relation with the surrounding social environment, the discourse on the nation assures, those men shared the features that made Qataris a distinctive people.

The noble Qatari of the time is clearly represented in the story *The Hero and the Message* by a young man met by Muhammad and Lulwah during their travel to the past. In contrast to the Ottoman official, who was the villain in that story, this man was young and friendly. His braveness was never in doubt, as he was willing to face the far superior Ottoman forces in order to protect his homeland. Similarly, his loyalty was always clear, as his main task was to ensure that the message written by the

Qatari leadership reached its destiny. Put simply, this man who praised honour and embraced justice embodied the essence of being Qatari during the colonial period.

Figure 3.2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions, but it can be found in the digital platform for creative industries Behance, in the following website: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/8538087/Hero-and-The-Message>.

This character was undoubtedly a Qatari man, as testified by two identity markers that are considered as timeless characteristics of any Qatari national: namely, clothing and belonging to the desert. He was clearly a Qatari man because he wore a *thobe*, the long and white robe widely used in this country, and a *ghutra*, the headscarf characteristic of the clothing in the Gulf region. Moreover, he was clearly a man of the desert, as shown by the skilfulness for camel riding. In contrast to the Ottoman officials, who rode horses, he rode the most representative animal of life in the desert, the camel. In other words, he shared that lifestyle that grew organically from the relationship between Qataris and their surrounding environment, and which allowed for the unity of an otherwise disparate group of tribesmen. Through its emphasis on such details, the discourse on national identity indicates that those who defended the nation were unmistakably Qataris, because they wore the national dress, and embraced the lifestyle that emanated from of the desert.

Finally, the discourse on the nation emphasizes religion as one of the most important identity markers of the colonial period in Qatar. Accordingly, Qataris of the time were pious Muslims, as shown by their willingness to accept the Ottoman authority, the most legitimate political body for guiding the *Ummah* at that time. Qataris only relinquished Ottoman authority once the Sublime Porte had abused its power, but they would not question the legitimacy of the Caliphate as long as it guided its action by Islamic values, such as justice and respect.

The presence of mosques throughout the country further attests the piety of Qataris during the late-nineteen century. For instance, the document *Mosques of Qatar*, a booklet published under the

auspices of the Organizing Committee of the National Day during the 2009 celebrations, states the oldest local architectural style for the planning of mosques in Qatar goes back the Abbasid period in the Third Century (National Day Committee 2009a: 16). This document also includes examples of Qatari mosques during the nineteen century, such as the Ottoman mosques themselves (*Masajid 'Uthmaniyya*), al-Khuwair mosque, located at the village al-Gariyah in the municipality of Madinat ash Shamal, and al-Thakhira mosque, located in the village al-Thakhira in the municipality of al-Khor. Those buildings are thus a testimony to the piety of the people of the Qatari peninsula during the nineteen century, which is one of the identity markers of the Qataris who defended their nation against the Ottomans.

To sum up, the discourse on national identity in Qatar constructs a history of the nation that went through a period of struggle against an external power, the Ottoman Empire. It was Qataris themselves who protected the nation and made sure, through their sacrifice, the nation would keep its independent character. In this period, the organic features emerging out of the interaction between Qataris and the surrounding environment, the life in the desert, as well as other identity markers, such as clothing, names and religion, are emphasized as inherent features of those Qataris who fought to defend the nation.

#### 4.3 POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD

The next episode in the making of the nation develops during the post-colonial period, which started after Qatar regained autonomy from the Ottoman Empire by the end of the nineteen century and the beginning of the twentieth. After that, Qatari rulers entered into a treaty relation with Britain in 1916 that lasted until 1971, when Qatar emerged as an independent country. According to the discourse on national identity, the most important challenge faced by Qatar during this period came after the collapse of the pearl industry in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which entailed difficulties to procure

livelihood after the collapse of the pearling industry in Qatar. Two external events that triggered the collapse of the pearl trade in the Gulf and thus had negative consequences for Qatar's economy at the time were the Great Depression of the inter-war period and the introduction of Japanese cultured pearls into the market.

In their treaty with Britain, Qatar surrendered its foreign relations, including signing deals for the exploitation of their hydrocarbon reserves, to the British Empire. In spite of that, taking into account the bits of information provided by the discourse on national identity, the twentieth century does not belong to the core of the colonial period. According to Zahlan (1989), a euphemism for attaining independence in the Gulf is “the ending of these countries’ treaty relations with Britain,” which happened after “Britain’s termination of its east of Suez defence policy and departure from the Gulf in 1971” (2). An advisor of the forthcoming National Museum of Qatar reaffirmed this point during an informal conversation in the spring of 2016. This person, who asked to remain anonymous, assured that the directorate of the museum was reluctant to name 1971 the year of independence, but preferred to call it the year that the British left, which keeps intact the idea that Qatar was always an independent entity throughout the twentieth-century.

Accordingly, the most heroic act attributed to Qataris during that period is the early development of the oil industry after the discovery of the first oil field in Dukhan, in the eastern coast of the country. Similar to the construction of the pre-colonial tribesmen and the colonial military men, the hard-worker Qatari men is the one who carried out the heroic task of building the nation during a forty-year period that began with the collapse of the pearling trade in the 1930s, and ended with the nationalization of the oil industry in the 1970s. Furthermore, the same identity markers that characterized the pre-colonial tribesmen and the colonial military men –religion, clothing, Arabic language and names, and costumes of life in the desert-, are also outstanding features of Qataris during the first half of the twentieth century. This story is a major theme in the exposition at Company House,

one of the four exhibition houses at the recently renovated Msheireb quarter that used to host the headquarters of the Anglo-Persian oil company in Qatar.

#### *4.3.1 Building the nation through hard-work and sacrifices*

As already mentioned, the state-controlled discourse on national identity constructs the difficult period that Qataris went through after the collapse of the pearling trade in the Gulf in the 1930s. Staying in Qatar during that time and facing the life difficulties with the rest of the national community was undoubtedly a nationalist attitude that showed people's attachment to their homeland. Hence, the main challenge during this period was to generate new ways for securing livelihood in the Qatari peninsula and, in that way, building a solid and self-sufficient nation.

A few years later, Qataris found what could be the platform upon which they would continue their path to nationhood. In 1940, they noticed about the existence of an oil field near the city of Dukhan in the east of the country, which had the potential to become the platform from which to build the country. With this discovery, oil could occupy the place of pearls in the nation's development. In this sense, oil is not only considered as a natural resource whose exploitation allowed Qatar to amass a great amount of wealth, but is rather considered as an integral part to Qatar's identity, without which the Qatari nation would not be what it has been since then.

In spite of the potential of the new discovery, oil fields would not develop by themselves. Instead, there was a need to imprint hard work in order to turn oil into oxygen for the agonizing Qatari nation. Moreover, the plans for the exploitation of Qatari oil lagged behind due to the irruption of the Second World War, which prevented major oil companies to invest in the development of the Dukhan oil field. In this way, oil would not simply spring out from the ground and become a financial asset that Qataris could use for developing their nation. Rather, transforming oil into money was a slow process that posed a lot of challenges for those committed to build a future for the nation away from

the collapsed pearl industry. The challenge was thus finding a way to overcome those obstacles in order to develop the newly-discovered oil fields to their full potential.

In such adverse circumstances, some nationally-committed Qataris who took up on the challenge to develop the nation, the discourse on the nation reminds, performed the most heroic and patriotic act by mid-twentieth century. They developed the nation “with their bare hands,” which is the slogan used in one of the exhibitions rooms at Company House. Located in Doha’s downtown, Company House “tells the story of the pioneering Qatari petroleum industry workers and their families, who helped transform Qatar into a modern society” (Msheireb Museums booklet). Accordingly, the early Qatari petroleum workers were the pioneers who provided the necessary labour in order to turn the newly discovered oil into oxygen for the agonizing nation. For instance, two phrases attributed respectively to Qatar’s former Emir and his wife, can be read in one of the walls of Company House: “our human potential represents real wealth, not oil” and “it is a source of pride for Qatar to know the creativity, skills and ideas of its children as much as its natural resources.” Thus, the nation’s value lies in those Qatari petroleum workers “who laboured not just to provide for their families but also to lay the foundations for their emerging nation” (Msheireb Museums booklet).

After the end of Second World War, the story goes, the oil industry in Qatar began to grow and manpower was needed in order to develop the Dukhan oil field. This was actually the main task Qataris needed to fulfil in order to address their nation’s demand. In this sense, through a ten-minute documentary shown in one of the museum’s rooms, Company House tells the story of a group of brave men who had to leave their families back in Doha. The storyteller recalls, “the company came and they needed workers. We started working for them in the late 1930s. [...] We lived in tents and under wooden pergolas.” The storyteller recalls other vicissitudes Qataris went through in those years, such as their “struggle” against the fire provoked by an oil spill that lasted for days and did not allow them to stop, “not even for food” (field note no. 52). However, they managed to overcome all of those adversities because they cherished their nation.

Obstacles did not end with the first extraction of oil in the Dukhan field. Rather, they continued for the next decades and were related mainly with the development of the oil industry, which was still in British hands. Accordingly,

before the nationalization of oil, Qataris worked under British bosses and Indian supervisors as laborers, riggers, drivers, mechanics, carpenters, and firemen, changing positions as requirements altered. Their employment terms and living conditions were inferior to those of other company employees (Msheireb Museums).

This point is illustrated by the life stories displayed in Company House, in which the sacrifices of the heroes that worked to build the nation is told. For instance, Hassan, “who joined the company before the war”, recalls that

when [he] rejoined the Company after the resumption in 1946, the food rations were totally inadequate and some of [his] group were threatening to go on strike. [...] But [they] decided to do something about the situation [themselves] and whenever [they] went to Doha [they] would buy meat or fish with [their] own money and cook it to eat with the rice provided (Msheireb Museums).

Similarly, Jassim, who “after applying many times, was eventually hired to help build the harbor in Zikrit<sup>12</sup> [...] was promoted to foreman but suffered lifelong injuries in a fall from a platform and, when the war stopped operations, was among the first to be laid off” (Msheireb Museums).

These life stories illustrate the claim that sacrifices of Qatari petroleum workers did not end with the first extraction of oil, rather they continued until the nationalization of the petroleum industry in the 1970s. More importantly, together with the suffering of the pioneers who developed the Qatari oil industry with their bare hands, these life stories become the substance of a claim displayed throughout the state-controlled discourse on national identity in the sense that during the first half of the twentieth century, the main heroic act on behalf of the nation was carried out by a group of workers who helped to build the Qatari nation through the development of the oil industry.

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<sup>12</sup> Zikrit is a small town in the north-west of Doha, near the city of Dukhan, that grew in parallel to the development of the oil industry.

#### 4.3.2 *Delineating the Qatari Petroleum Worker*

The men who took up the heroic task of building the nation in spite of the suffering they encountered in their journey were not, the state-controlled discourse on national identity assures, people disconnected from the environment that gave rise to the Qatari culture. Quite the contrary, they were clearly part of the national community that is today called the Qatari nation. The same identity markers emphasized in the construction of the tribesmen and the military men –Arabic names, religion, clothing and costumes related with life in the desert- are also present in this group of pioneering workers, who are said to be the heirs of the people who, in the past, created and defended the nation. Through the emphasis on those markers, the Qatari petroleum workers become also the predecessors of the contemporary national community that continues to wage battles on behalf of their nation.

To begin with, the discourse on national identity identifies people who took on the heroic task of building the nation by working in the early development of Qatar's oil fields, by emphasizing the use of Arabic language, especially in their names. The use of Arabic names connects Qatari petroleum workers with the old Arabic culture. Company House exhibits the life stories of those pioneers who through their hard work "hoped to build a society in which all Qataris might enjoy a life free of the poverty they had endured for so long" (Msheireb Museums). We can see again those names that were also present during previous periods, such as Hassan, Ibrahim, Jassim and Muhammad. These names connect these workers with the organic life that emerged out of the interaction between people and their surrounding environment. Put simply, those names make them part of a community that has lived in the Qatari peninsula since time immemorial.

Religion also plays an important role in identifying those petroleum workers as nationals, and as the heirs of those who founded and defended the nation in the nineteenth century. Accordingly, Muslim devotion had always been a very important part of everyday life in Qatar and this did not change with the advent of oil. Qatari workers maintained their religious commitment in spite of the

demands of their harsh working life. The life story of Thamir Muftah, who “was one of many young Qataris who began working with the Company when it returned to Qatar, in 1946” clearly illustrates this claim of the discourse on national identity. After suffering a foot injury that never healed, “Thamir was made redundant in 1964 and became a *muezzin*<sup>13</sup> and caretaker of mosque” (Msheireb Museums).

As in the previous stages of the nation’s development, manners related with life in the desert are emphasized as identity markers of those people who, by mid-twentieth century, had to sacrifice and work hard in order to build the nation. In the official discourse, these practices, considered as an outstanding feature of Qatar’s national identity, mixed with the demands of modernization in order to produce a creative cultural synthesis. As people from the desert, Qatari petroleum workers also shared those traditions and lifestyles, which sometimes became assets when applying for jobs at the oil company. For instance, Mansour, “the first Qatari to be employed by the Company [...] was appointed the Company’s guide because of his exceptional vision and a photographic recollection of seemingly every inch of the Peninsula”, which he developed through the years he spent in the desert. Similarly, Muhammad, “who began to work in the Company as a telephonist”, recalls that “when the Company brought in some really big vehicles, they also brought in some English drivers [...] who proved incapable of handling these monsters on the rough desert tracks so the experienced Qatari drivers [were the ones who] drove them” (Msheireb Museums). These are examples of how Qatari workers are said to have been connected organically to their surrounding environment, the desert.

Finally, one important identity marker that is emphasized throughout the whole story, and that plays also a prominent role in the stage of building the nation, is clothing. Clothing is one of the most visible identity markers of people because it comprises the most visible part of a person’s silhouette. This particular clothing is also emphasized as an identity marker of Qatari petroleum workers. For instance, the black-and-white portraits displayed at Company House depict, without exception, faces

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<sup>13</sup> The muezzin is the person in a mosque who is in charge of leading the call to prayer.

of men wearing the traditional *ghutra* and the *'igbal*.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the sculptures representing those workers wear the clothing that identifies them as Qataris too. Those sculptures are depicted as carrying artifacts related to the oil industry, such as a fuel container, a big adjustable spanner or some boots and helmet, along with the distinctive clothing that allows the visitor to identify them as Qataris, especially the *thobe*, *ghutra* and *'igbal*. However, there are other statues in which clothing is used to show their character as oil workers and thus they are wearing boiler-suits. In spite of that, one can still see a piece of clothing that identifies them as Qataris, such as the *tariqah* -a knitted cap that is usually worn under the *ghutra*-, which can be seen even in the statues of those workers who are wearing a helmet.



Figure 3.3 Statue of Qatari petroleum worker displayed at Company House at Msheireb, February 2017. Photo taken by Erick Viramontes.

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<sup>14</sup> The *ghutra* is the name given in the Gulf to the headdress usually worn by men in the Middle East. It is usually red during winter and white during summer. The *'igbal* is the black ring that holds the *ghutra* in the head.

As was the case with the pre-colonial tribesmen and the colonial military men, the discourse on national identity emphasizes some identity markers considered as timeless features of the Qatari national community when representing the Qatari petroleum worker of the post-colonial period. By highlighting their Arabic language, especially through their names, religiosity, attachment to life in the desert and clothing, the early Qatari petroleum workers become the heirs of previous generations of Qataris who also made efforts on behalf of their nation. In this same way, they become the predecessors of those future generations that will be the ones in charge of keeping alive the task initiated by their ancestors.

#### 4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the case of Qatar shows, the postcolonial nation in the twenty-first century articulates global concerns on belonging posed by the spread of neoliberal rationalities throughout the world. The nation serves as a cathartic dimension depicting the type of society functional to the expansion of market-rationality to all spheres of life. In Qatar, the discourse on national identity outlines the history of that community which is now called into action in order to implement the government's reformist agenda. Moreover, the iteration of the national community takes a peculiar taste due to the demographic particularities of the Gulf, where nationals usually comprise the minority of the population, while the characters delineated as the makers of the nation produce a gendered history of the nation's history, which integrates women in a subordinated manner. Finally, the national history displayed in the sites looked at in this research provides new ways for thinking about post-colonial nationalism by decentring the role of anti-colonialism as the foundation of the nation's legitimacy or right to exist.

As argued in the introduction to this chapter, one of the features of the state-controlled discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar is its exclusionary character. In other words, this discourse normalizes a demographic condition that has been always the case in the short history of

Qatar as an independent state: namely, that only a minority of the population is considered as national and is thus entitled to claim citizenship in this modern, postcolonial nation-state. Through its display in several sites of cultural production, such as the ones this research has analysed, the discourse on national identity provides the reasons for why this is the case. Moreover, in this same way it sets the parameters for thinking about the issue of nationality. Thus, the discourse does not provide any background to formulate more radical questions, such as how to generate a national identity that takes into account those other communities that together form the excluded majority that has been present in Qatar since the last four decades at least. Quite the contrary, it only provides clues to formulate more reactionary questions, such as what can be done to prevent Qatari national identity from dissolution. This kind of questions can only lead to exclusionary positions.

Setting the ground for the discussion on nationality is all the more pressing for the discourse on national identity given present and future demographic trends. As already mentioned, Qatar's population has always been comprised by a huge amount of non-nationals. However, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of non-nationals in the total population during the last decades, going from 70 per cent in 2004 to 88 per cent in 2010 (De Bel-Air 2014: 6). As the implementation of the development plans will demand the import of workforce, this demographic condition will continue to be the case over the coming decades. Thus, it becomes necessary to provide justifications for why the majority of the population is excluded from the status of nationals. In other words, in an era of reform in Qatar a pressing issue for the state-controlled discourse on national identity is to reaffirm who can legitimately claim belonging to the national community. In this way, the discourse on national identity addresses both the concern on the national community that occupies a privileged position within society, and those dissenting voices that might question their exclusion from the national community.

As this chapter has showed, the discursive basis for determining who can claim belonging to the national community are set through an emphasis on the Qatari component as the defining feature

of contemporary national identity. National identity cannot be understood without strict reference to its Qatari component. This is achieved through the construction and iteration of a story on the development of the nation through the pre-colonial colonial and postcolonial periods. In each of these periods, the state-controlled discourse on national identity presents a given heroic act that Qataris of the time made on behalf of the nation. In chronological order, these heroic acts were the creation of the nation, the protection of the nation, and the building of the nation. In each of those moments, the discourse characterizes the people who took part on those events through some identity markers – Arabic language and names, religion, clothing and a lifestyle rooted in the desert- that gives a sense of continuity among the national community. In this way, the young Qatari of today that strives to keep the nation alive is the heir of the petroleum worker who built the nation through the development of the oil industry, who is the heir of the military man who defended the nation and of his successor, the tribesman who strived to attain national unity. Put simply, the intervention of the state-controlled discourse on national identity in Qatar in the field of collective memory constitutes its exclusionary feature.

Albeit certain particularities, the rest of the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also have Islam, Arabic language, particular clothing and life in the desert as inherent features of their official identity. Since the state-controlled discourse on national identity in Qatar emphasizes those same features as identity markers of the people who made the nation, Qatar's national identity could then potentially be merged with that of the other GCC states. However, the distinction of Qatar from the neighbouring countries does not rely on the deployment of those identity markers, but on the iteration of the claim that Qatar was an independent entity since before the establishment of Ottoman rule over the Qatari peninsula by the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus, while the discourse recognizes that Qatar is similar to other Arab Gulf States, it also emphasizes that its difference relies on a particular history, in which a group of people fought for self-determination under the leadership of a given royal family.

The previous point is related with the last conclusion derived from the discussion in this chapter, which has to do with the relatively marginal role of anti-colonialism in the nation's legitimacy or its right to exist. In contrast to other postcolonial nations, where the efforts to return to a national "golden age" interrupted by colonialism is the main *raison d'être* of the postcolonial nation, in Qatar the nation is said to have followed a slow but uninterrupted path of development since time immemorial. However, anti-colonialism, or at least some form of resistance against external expansionism, which took the form, according to the sites looked at in this research, of inter-tribal solidarity, struggle against Ottoman dominance and efforts to develop and nationalize the oil industry, still play a role in legitimizing the ethnic character of the Qatari nation. Thus, in spite of its peculiar history, anti-colonialism still plays a role in the construction of the postcolonial Qatari nation.

## 5 THIS IS OUR MODEL OF SOCIETY: THE DISCIPLINING FEATURE OF QATAR'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

As already discussed in this thesis' theoretical framework, one of the characteristics of the expansion of neoliberal rationality in contemporary world is its overlapping with modern techniques for controlling, disciplining and governing societies. In this sense, the reproduction of a market-oriented society relies upon the spread of governmental rationality among self-disciplining subjects, who are the possessors of those classified and codified bodies that disseminate social power. Thus, one important set of ideas informing debates around neoliberalism are those of French philosopher Michel Foucault, especially his perspectives on the micro-processes of power and their relation with the ordering of human life (biopolitics) and the art of government through the control over individual conduct (governmentality). The overlapping between Foucault's ideas on modern governing techniques and the expansion of neoliberal rationalities has allowed the emergence of scholarly debates on the ways power reproduces itself, and on how it leads to contestation and transformations.

Some of the realms of reproduction, contestation and transformation of power under the aegis of a society that is functional to deregulated, flexible and privatized economies are the subject and the family. Under neoliberalism the policing and construction of these two social institutions takes in novel characteristics that articulate the global expansion of neoliberal rationality and its emphasis on the creation of human capital with the specificities of local contexts. As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, the expansion of neoliberalism comes hand in hand with the prescription of morals and notions of success that put at the center the individual realization within a set of market-oriented social relations. Similarly, the family has emerged under neoliberalism as the provider of those services, such as child and elderly care, formerly attributed to the state, as well as a conduit of certain values, such as entrepreneurship, self-responsibility and individualism. Altogether, neoliberal subjectivities and families are two critical instances for the art of governing human life in contemporary world.

The construction of subjectivities and the policing of families under neoliberalism involves a gender dimension. Individuals are differentiated according to their gender roles, and while women are expected to take part in the economy as active economic subjects (i.e., consumers and producers), they are also expected to fulfil their role as pillars of the family. Moreover, nationalist projects demand women perform their role as “bearers of the nation” through the breeding of the future members of the national community and their capacity to instill nationalist values among those members. The overlapping between demands for performing successfully in a market-oriented society and their duties and responsibilities with the nation leads to particular forms of ordering women’s lives and control over their bodies usually articulated within the language of “women’s empowerment.”

The particular manifestation of neoliberal rationality in Qatar has taken the form of a reformist agenda, known as the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, which is based on the guidelines of international organizations, such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the OECD, and is in line with the UN agenda for sustainable development. *QNV 2030*, which has been praised by heads of international organizations and managers of transnational corporations alike, aims to integrate Qatar into the logics of the free-market economy through the creation of a knowledge-based economy. More specifically, it aims to turn a society allegedly reliant on state provisions into a self-sustaining nation, capable of performing successfully in a competitive market economy. In this sense, *QNV 2030* is a localized iteration of neoliberal rationality and its corresponding frameworks of global governance that has spanned throughout the Gulf, where national governments have recently approved similar plans for reform.

Given the characteristics of the expansion of neoliberal rationality, especially regarding the policing of families and the construction of subjects, one important concern over the specific manifestation of neoliberal forms of governance in Qatar is the role of families and subjects in the pursuance of the objectives of *QNV 2030*, and the ways gender dynamics affect such roles. Following the insights provided by the literature on neoliberal subjectivities, a question then arises on how the

reformist agenda in Qatar conceive the morals and imperatives that should constrain the action of subjects. Similarly, the role of families in the broader aims of the national vision through their capacity to instill market-oriented values and to absorb certain activities formerly attributed to the state. For this reason, one of the most important concerns guiding the discussion in the following pages is the role of families and subjects within *QNV 2030*, and the gender dimension as an ordering principle of duties and responsibilities within those realms.

In addition, the discussion in this chapter revolves around the way in which the discourse on the nation integrates those subjects and families, and their corresponding gender dimension. In other words, one concern running through the following pages is the extent to which the global tendency to construct neoliberal subjectivities and families articulates with a local context through its integration into a discourse on the nation. This discussion draws on approaches to the nation as discourse and on postcolonial perspectives on nationalism, which indicate that, rather than being an essential feature of a given community, national identity is a discourse performed and materialized in several sites, whose crystallization at a given historical juncture reproduces broader power relations. For this reason, the reactivation of the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar is not simply a nostalgic sentiment for a dying past. Rather, it is an assertive creation that iterates and reformulates the content and meaning of national identity.

For enquiring on this reinvention of Qatar's national identity, this research looked at several sites of cultural heritage that perform and materialize the nation, such as museums, archaeological sites and commemorations. The particular understanding of the contemporary Qatari nation emerging out of those sites is comprised by several claims. One of those claims –“who makes the nation?”- was the main subject of the discussion in the first chapter. Similarly, this chapter focuses on the second claim: namely, “this is our model of society”. This claim presents a particular way of being Qatari, emphasizing certain subjectivities and forms of human association as defining features of national identity. In this way, the discourse on national identity displayed in those sites actively intervenes in

the definition of the nation by iterating the essence of being Qatari. By presenting certain subjectivities and forms of human association as defining features of Qatar's national identity, this discourse sustains then the transformation of society demanded by the government's reformist agenda.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first of them focuses on why and how certain individuals and families are critical for sustaining the implementation of the plans for reform in Qatar during the coming decades. The discussion in this part is based on the analysis of *Qatar National Vision 2030*, and its development strategies and implementation plans, such as *Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016* (QNDS), *Education and Training Sector Strategy 2011-2016*, and *National Health Strategy 2011-2016*. Since these documents comprise the government's agenda for reform, they are the obvious reference for discussing the horizons of transformation of Qatar's society over the coming years. However, these documents are complemented by other sources, such as pieces of news, government reports, legislation and recorded observations in the field. The use of these additional sources is aimed to illustrate, or expand on, specific points within the general discussion. Based on all these sources, the argument underlying the first part of the chapter indicates the implementation of the government's agenda for reform in Qatar demands the construction of particular subjectivities and forms of human association.

The second part focuses on the nationalization of the two social institutions sustaining the agenda for reform –the individual and the family. The discussion in this section is based on the material that emerged after conducting research in the cultural heritage sites introduced in the second chapter, entitled “On methodology”. The sources used in this section include printed and audiovisual material distributed and broadcasted during the national celebrations by the organizing committee of Qatar's National Day. They also include pieces of information collected through electronic archival research and recorded observations from museums and archaeological sites. Throughout this section, these sources are referred to in order to illustrate the way in which the aforementioned subjectivities and forms of association are presented as defining features of Qatar's national identity. The argument

underlying the second part of the chapter highlights those particular subjectivities and forms of human association as a defining feature of Qatari nation through their iteration in the state-controlled discourse on national identity.

## 5.1 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS SUSTAINING REFORM IN QATAR

In November 2015, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Christine Lagarde, gave a speech at Georgetown University campus in Qatar. Her main purpose was to advice people in the Gulf on what they should be doing then in order to face the challenges posed by a world economy that was, in her view and that of the IMF, “a bit fragile, quite uneven and in complete transition”. She opened her talk by pointing to a series of transitions in the world economy, related with domestic changes in both emerging and advanced economies, which meant a big challenge for the oil-exporting states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).<sup>15</sup> For this reason, she asserted young people should “change their mind,” so they could turn a negative situation into a window of opportunity. Accordingly, they should reconsider their “personal business model,” and do different things than those their parents did in the past, such as stop thinking they were entitled to certain benefits, and be willing to join the private sector or setting up their own company. To conclude, Dr Lagarde stated, “be prepared to take some risks in an environment that can reward you for the risks you are taking. If you fail, bounce back and try again”.

Dr Lagarde’s conference reiterated the claim that has been heard repeatedly in Qatar and the other Arab Gulf states over the last decades in the sense that, for attaining full modernization, Gulf societies should embrace new ways of thinking and supersede those lifestyles associated with the periods of oil bonanza. According to this claim, most people in the Gulf, are used to high standards

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<sup>15</sup> The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (*Majlis al-Ta’awwun li-Dimal al-Khalij al-Arabiyya*), commonly known as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), is a regional organization founded in 1981 by the states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

of life provided by oil wealth and they are, consequently, unprepared and unwilling to make the sacrifices required to create productive and stable national economies. Thus, what is needed is a transformation that leaves behind what has been called the “rentier mentality”, in which people is allegedly used to fulfill their needs by the government’s allocative policy (Beblawi 1987, Hertog 2010). In this way, the claim against the so-called “rentier mentality” is one of the underlying assumptions in the social transformation envisioned in the plans for economic reform in Qatar.

The implementation of the government’s agenda for reform in contemporary Qatar necessitates two social institutions: namely, self-governing individuals and strong and traditional families. These forms of subjectivity and human association complement each other. On the one hand, carving a particular individuality can be best attained through the governing role played by the family as an extension of the state. On the other hand, the construction of a particular type of family is to be found in self-governing individuals, who share certain characteristics and values. For this reason, rather than being antithetical or contradictory, the types of individuals and families envisioned in the reformist agenda are actually complementary.

The following pages will explain, firstly, what type of individual the government’s agenda for reform in Qatar necessitates, as well as the reasons behind the construction of such a subjectivity. Similarly, they will then explain what type of family those plans for reform necessitate, as well as the reason behind the construction of such form of human association. Since the following discussion is about the social institutions envisioned in the government’s agenda for reform, it will be based mainly on the documents comprising this agenda, such as the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, its development plans and implementation strategies. However, in order to illustrate specific points, such as the steps the government is taking in order to construct the aforementioned social institutions, additional sources will be used, such as academic literature, pieces of news, legislation, government documents, and reports.

### 5.1.1 *The individual as a pillar of reform*

The language of QNV and QNDS is illustrative of the close link between social transformation and individual subjectivity. For instance, human development is understood in the former as “development of all people to enable them to sustain a prosperous society” (GSDP 2008: 6). Building on this definition, the latter states: “Qatar will continue to invest in its people so that all can participate fully in the country’s social, economic and political life and function effectively within a competitive knowledge-based international order” (GSDP 2011: 12). The implementation of this strategy requires then an individuality constructed along national lines, which is still functional to, and fully integrated in, the logics of a free-market economy.

Accordingly, the first characteristic of the individual that will sustain the government’s reformist agenda in Qatar is an entrepreneurial mentality. These plans for reform envision a highly motivated national citizen with an entrepreneurial spirit and a set of ethical principles that ascribe a high value to hard-work and individual sacrifice. The capacity to succeed and to contribute to the state-led vision for the country become in this way moral principles guiding society. For instance, one of the expected outcomes of promoting human development is, according to QNV, producing “a capable and motivated workforce.” As it is constantly recognized, the implementation of this set of reforms requires “strengthening core values that instil positive attitudes and productive work practices” (GSDP 2008: 40). Put simply, the national citizen envisioned in these plans should inevitably accept the challenges posed by a global labor market that, it is alleged, is highly competitive and extremely harsh, but at the same time, rewarding and meritocratic.

Within the plans for reform, the growth of the private sector is considered as a cornerstone in the creation of a more diversified economy (Hvidt 2013). However, they also acknowledge Qatar’s national population lacks the training and the attitudes to be competitive in the global labor market. For this reason, constructing an individual with an entrepreneurial mentality ensures that Qatari nationals will play the leading role in society by occupying managerial roles and founding innovative

enterprises in the private sector, which is the local manifestation of the global labor market.<sup>16</sup> Since, according to these plans, economic diversification necessitates assertiveness, hard-work and high motivation, the individual envisioned there is not any type of individual, but rather an individual who has the adequate mentality to deal with the challenges posed by a “competitive,” but at the same time “rewarding” international order.

Education is the second characteristic of the individual supporting the implementation of the reformist agenda in Qatar. Accordingly, the renovated national citizen will have a high level of education and the right set of skills that will allow them to successfully compete in the global labor market, where –one is constantly reminded- knowledge is considered as the most valuable asset. It is revealing that one of the expected outcomes of promoting human development is, according to QNV, the production of “an educated population” that is responsive to “the current and future needs of the labor market” (GSDP 2008: 8). In accordance with such a conception, the national citizen not only has a suitable mentality for competing in the global market, but has also the particular training and set of skills that will allow them to do so. For this reason, certain areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), are emphasized as critical for the development of such a well-educated individual.

In line with the global neoliberal agenda on the construction of neoliberal subjects, constructing an individual who values education and who is willing to learn through his entire life the set of skills that will make them competitive in the global labor market are critical steps in the pursuance of the government’s reformist agenda. In this sense, QNDS states, “as Qatar’s economy diversifies more from its reliance on gas and oil, success will increasingly depend on the ability to compete in a global knowledge economy. Educating and training Qataris to their full potential will be critical to

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<sup>16</sup> Efforts to increase the share of national population in the country’s workforce or “Qatarization” of the labor market has been an important matter of concern for the government, which in parallel to what its homologues in the region have been doing, has implemented a series of strategies that include investing in the education and training of the national population, establishing mechanisms for transferring knowledge from expatriates to citizens, and encouraging citizens to join the private, rather than the public, sector (see: Randeree 2012).

continuing progress” (GSDP 2011: 122). More specifically, producing individuals with the right set of skills is critical for promoting the growth of the private sector, which is at present “discouraged by the skill level, work attitudes and motivation of new Qatari entrants into the labour market” (GSDP 2011: 149). Put simply, this well-educated national citizenry is a key part of the state-driven efforts of converting Qatar from an oil-dependent country into a knowledge-based economy. For these reasons, the government has spared no efforts in constructing an individual with a market-oriented education.

In recent years, ambitious initiatives have been undertaken in order to attain the goal of constructing individuals whose skills and education are aligned with the demands of the labor market in Qatar (On education in Qatar see: Althani & Romanowski 2013; Khodr 2011; and Rostron 2009). Regarding the primary and secondary educational levels, in 2001 the government commissioned the US-based think tank RAND Corporation the task of reviewing the entire education system in order to identify challenges and possible solutions. The outcome of this work was the document *Education for a New Era*, which was published in 2007. This document included a detailed assessment of Qatar’s primary and secondary education system and a set of policy recommendations “for building a world-class system that would meet the country’s changing needs” (RAND 2007: xvii).

In the realm of tertiary education, in 2003 Qatar Foundation, a well-known NGO headed by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missnid (who is the mother of the current Emir of Qatar), officially inaugurated its landmark project Education City, a complex in the outskirts of Doha that hosts several branches of US, European and Qatari universities, which is an important pillar for supporting the knowledge-based economy in Qatar.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as part of the sectorial plans aimed to attain the goals of QNV, in recent years the government released the *Education and Training Sector Strategy*, which aims to prepare “citizens to become part of the driving economic power in the state” (Ministry of

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<sup>17</sup> The eight US and European universities hosted by Education City are: Virginia Commonwealth University, Weill Cornell Medical College, Texas A&M University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Northwestern University, *École des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Paris* and University College London. In addition, the two Qatari universities are the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Education 2011). These initiatives show the relevance of constructing a well-educated and highly skilled individual for the implementation of the top-down reforms in Qatar.

Health, which is attained in great part by the practice of sports, is the third characteristic of the reformist individual. Accordingly, enjoying good physical condition through the practice of sports will allow the national citizen to improve their quality of life and to increase their life-expectancy. As QNV makes clear, producing a physically and mentally healthy population is one of the expected outcomes of promoting human development. Consequently, one of the most important goals in the near future is to “develop an integrated healthcare system that [helps] all people in Qatar live longer and healthier lives” (GSDP 2011: 104). In this way, the individual envisioned in the government’s reformist agenda is not only highly motivated and well educated, but also enjoys good health, which is partly due to their practice of sports. This is a typical technique of self-government that is consistent with the biopolitics of carving a healthy mass of bodies supporting the expansion of neoliberal governance.

Constructing a healthy and sportive individual with a good quality of life and long life expectancy is a key part of the top-driven plans for reform in Qatar. On the one hand, a good quality of life means a stronger and physically apt individual that is able to perform better and more productively in the workplace. On the other hand, increasing life expectancy means extending the productive life of individuals. In this regard, QNDS states the following:

*People are a country’s most valuable asset.* The human development pillar of QNV 2030 calls for investing in and developing all of Qatar’s people, enabling them to participate fully in economic, social and political life and contribute to sustaining a prosperous society. A key element of that human development pillar is health. *A healthy population* served by a world-class, well managed healthcare system available to all *is essential to Qatar’s development* (GSDP 2011: 106, emphasis added).

Ensuring the presence of a healthy body politic through self-governing techniques, such as the practice of sport, is then a critical step in the creation of the human capital needed for the implementation of

these plans for reform, because it allows for economic diversification through the emergence of a more productive workforce.

For this reason, health is one of the key areas in which the implementation strategies emerging out of the QNV have focused (see: Qatar Olympic Committee 2011 and Ministry of Health 2013). Moreover, alongside the construction of medical facilities, the government has been promoting healthy life styles, through the practice of sports (on sports in Qatar, see: Amara 2005; Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015; and Reiche 2015). Prominent among the governmental initiatives aimed to promote the practice of sports in Qatar is the hosting of top-level competitions, such as the 2006 Asian Games and the forthcoming 2022 FIFA World Cup. Similarly, there has been an open effort to promote sportive figures, such as Mu'taz Barshim, who was depicted as a "national hero" by media and government officials alike after winning the first silver-medal for Qatar in the Rio Olympics in 2016 (see: al-Arab 2016 and al-Sharq 2016). These initiatives are examples of the relevance of sports in Qatar and the ways in which the government is trying to construct a healthier and sportive individual, which is key for the implementation of its agenda for reform during the coming decades.

Finally, a strong sense of belonging is the fourth characteristic of the individual that will support the implementation of the reformist agenda in Qatar. In this sense, the goal of developing a cohesive and participatory society that identifies itself irrevocably with the nation demands the construction of an ideal citizen that remains true to Qatari culture and values. These culture and values are only those envisioned by the state, who claims exclusivity on defining what counts as an expression of Qatari national identity.

It is exemplifying that some of the purposes for creating a "national network of formal and non-formal educational programs" is, according to QNV, to foster among society, especially children and youth, "a solid grounding in Qatari moral and ethical values, traditions and cultural heritage [and] a strong sense of belonging and citizenship" (GSDP 2008: 8). Similarly, QNDS recognizes the importance of carving among the population "a sense of belonging, responsibility and citizenship" and

of promoting “social cohesion and respect for Qatari values and heritage” (GSDP 2011: 124). As elsewhere observed, neoliberalism has a direct impact on belonging in contemporary world, setting the criteria for citizenship and exclusion through an articulation with chauvinistic forces of nationalism or community. Thus, apart from entrepreneurial mentality, market-oriented education and physical aptitude for productive work, the individual envisioned in the plans for reform must be capable of identifying himself with the nation and of honoring the values and symbols that are said to be part of the nation’s heritage.

Such a strong sense of belonging and citizenship is critical for the implementation of the reformist agenda over the coming decades because it helps to align the prospects of individual life with an overarching set of predetermined goals and strategies. This concern is present at QNDS, which states that “on a societal level, [Qatar’s education system] will afford students a sense of belonging, responsibility and citizenship so they can lead the way to an economic and societal vision beyond hydrocarbons” (GSDP 2011: 124). In other words, constructing an individual that identifies himself with the nation is critical for ensuring the social endorsement of top-driven initiatives, such as the one that is now being implemented in Qatar.

One of the ways in which this promotion has been done is through cultural activities aimed to make society aware of the officially defined “Qatar’s cultural heritage.” As QNDS recognizes, culture can be used “as a platform to safeguard and develop Qatar’s national heritage” (GSDP 2011: 26). Some of the government initiatives aimed to foster a sense of belonging among the population became obvious while conducting fieldwork in Doha, Qatar by late-2015 and early-2017. For instance, the events taking place throughout the year at Katara Cultural Village, in which children are usually involved, have as one of their most important goals to safeguard Qatar’s national heritage by educating the new generations on the legacies of the past. However, this sense of belonging is not only about identifying oneself with past events, but also about aligning contemporary individuals towards the attainment of predefined goals. In this sense, it is revealing that QNV, its development plans and

implementation strategies are an integral part of the education programs in Qatar's elementary schools. Such activities teach children which community they belong to and which goals they should be working to attain.

To sum up, the recently released plans for reform in Qatar rely in their implementation on an ideal individual. The main characteristics of such a subjectivity are an entrepreneurial mentality suitable for competition in the global labor market, a high-level of education that is responsive to the needs of the private sector, a good health that sustains lasting productivity and a strong sense of belonging that helps to align individual objectives with collective goals. In other words, the control and disciplining of the body politic through self-governing techniques are critical components of the reformist agenda in Qatar, because they help to turn society into the human capital the knowledge-based economy demands. As later will be seen, the state-controlled discourse on national identity presents such an individual as a defining feature of being Qatari.

#### *5.1.2 The family as a pillar of reform*

The family is the second social institution supporting the implementation of the plans for economic reform in Qatar over the coming decades. However, as with the case of the individual, not any kind of family is required. Quite the contrary, traditional nuclear families equipped with the right set of values are envisioned as the basis of Qatar's society in the development plans. In this sense, by functioning as the fundamental form of social organization, the family becomes the dominant form of individual socialization. Furthermore, in line with the observed policing of families by neoliberal governmentality, nuclear families with the right set of values, which include compliance with traditional roles ascribed to each of their members, are considered as the only appropriate environment for individual development and for the production of the human capital needed for the implementation of the reformist agenda in Qatar.

The first characteristic of the Qatari family, according to the recently approved plans for reform, is strength and cohesiveness, which means maintaining the dominant social role of this particular form of association. In those plans, families are envisioned as the pillar of society, as a fundamental and natural institution that constitutes the building block of broader human communities, such as the nation. However, this feature of the family as the core of society is said to be rooted in the very essence of Qatar's identity, in which Arab culture and Islamic religion are the defining features. Accordingly, based on article 21 of Qatar's permanent constitution, which considers the family to be "the basis of the society," QNV opens by stating that despite recent and abrupt transformations, "Qatar has maintained its cultural and traditional values as an Arab and Islamic nation that considers the family to be the main pillar of society" (GSDP 2008: 1). Similarly, QNDS, which includes a chapter entitled "Family cohesion: the core of Qatari society", considers the family to be "the foundation on which rest all aspects of Qatar's social architecture" (GSDP 2011: 165). Development plans not only consider the family to be a pillar of society, but also tie that image with Qatar's traditions.

Moreover, the plans for reform present "globalization," not clearly defined, as a threat to the traditional role of families in society, due to the modern patterns of life it brings. According to QNDS, the main threatening developments for Qatari traditional families have to do with "the sharply rising proportion of Qatari women who never marry and the steadily increasing divorce rates, which are particularly high among couples married for a short time" (GSDP 2011: 166). The foundation of society in strong families is then constructed as one of the defining features of Qatar's tradition and culture, while practices that jeopardize this tradition, such as divorce and singlehood, are considered as modern forces unleashed by globalization, which endanger Qatar's identity. For this reason, the plans for reform ascertain, the preservation of "a strong and coherent family that enjoys support, care and social protection" (GSDP 2008: 11) is a spontaneous response to the threats posed by modern patterns of life.

However, contrary to what this particular account of the situation of the family in contemporary Qatar might lead to think, the efforts at preserving the family as the pillar of society are, rather than governmental responses to a widespread nostalgia for a vanishing tradition, a critical component of the ideal Qatari family that serves as one of the social institutions upon which the implementation of the government's reformist agenda relies. To begin with, maintaining families as the fundamental unit of social organization is part of the expansion of neoliberal governmentality in Qatar in that it extends the state into the private realm and, through its regulatory functions, helps to align the everyday life of individuals with the broader collective goals defined from the top of society. With regard to this concern, QNDS considers that "the well-being of families is crucial to a sound social structure, and it is necessary to build an effective social care and protection system", and the construction of "a prosperous future for the country [...], begins with strengthening families" (GSDP 2011: 165 and 196). Thus, rather than preserving a traditional family model, the plans for reform in Qatar are reinventing Qatari families according to the demands of the neoliberal reformist agenda.

According to QNDS, the government of Qatar will undertake important steps to maintain the family as the fundamental unit of society. The most outstanding are the strategies aimed to address the alleged threats posed by "modern-life patterns," such as the declining rate of married women and the increasing divorce rates, as well as the delays in the age of marriage, which is triggered by access to what is called "illicit sexual relationships" (GSDP 2011: 166). To ensure the dominant role of family in society, marriage will be protected through the development of a program that provides marriage counselling and support to divorcées, which will be aided by the collection of statistics and other demographic data. Furthermore, the expansion of governmental rationality will include economic support for new marriages, which will now be conditioned to the attendance of premarital courses aimed to educate young couples on the obligations of marriage and the importance of family formation.

Similarly, counselling and psychological specialists will be made available through the instalment of family centres throughout the country, both public and private, in order to reduce divorce rates.<sup>18</sup>

The implementation of the strategies to strengthen families and keep them as the fundamental unit of society is being assisted by the production of specialized knowledge. For instance, in 2006, *Qatar Foundation*, established the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development (DIIFSD), which later became the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI). The vision of this organization is “to become a global knowledge leader on issues facing the Arab family through research, policy and outreach” (DIFI website). In 2016, in collaboration with Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), DIFI launched the OSRA research grant that focused on some priority themes, such as patterns of marriage, delayed marriages, singlehood and divorces. The production of knowledge is then one of the main strategies to preserve the family as the fundamental unit of society.

A traditional character is the second characteristic that the families envisioned in the reformist plans of the government of Qatar must have. These families shall provide a stable environment that allows the full development of children and youth through the performance of specific roles by their members, such as the male as provider and the female as breeder. Ensuring this type of family demands then the dissemination of the logic of the state in the internal workings of the family, which is sanctioned by the article 21 of Qatar’s permanent constitution that mandates the law to provide adequate means to “support the family structure and strengthen its ties” (State of Qatar 2005). This is also manifested in QNV, where it is expected that the promotion of social development will eventually lead to the emergence of “strong cohesive families that care for their members” (GSDP 2008: 12).

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<sup>18</sup> The policing of families in Qatar has sparked discontent among society. For instance, in November 2016, the English newspaper *Doha News* published a story of a young Qatari national who, under the nickname “Yousef,” complained about the stringent laws on marriage and the meddling of government institutions in deciding whom national citizens should marry (Yousef 2016). Rather than blaming pre-modern religious beliefs, this testimony pointed to the nation and its corresponding disciplining institutions, as the responsible for Qataris being discouraged to freely decide who they wanted to marry. Yousef’s article was a critique against the nation and the type of family it promotes, which used a particular interpretation of Islam as a justification for its traditional choices. In this way, the discourse on the nation reproduces the orientalist division between Islam and the West, and its corresponding monolithic and homogenizing view of culture, in order to reject the allegedly vicious and extraneous influences of the latter.

The gender dimension of the expansion of neoliberal rationality in Qatar and its corresponding governing techniques finds a concrete manifestation in the prescription of gendered roles between the family members. In this particular context, cohesive families are understood as traditional families whose members perform traditional roles which allows for the production of the human capital demanded by the vision for the country. The family roles that, according to the state, women and men should play are clearly stated in the 2006 Family law, which points out in its article 58 that some of the rights of the husband against his wives include “look after the household and regulate affairs thereof [and] take care of his children and breastfeed them” (State of Qatar 2006). Similarly, article 57 of this law states it is a right of the wife against her husband to receive a permanent alimony.

Concomitantly with the global policing of families under neoliberalism, one of the main goals in QNDS is to educate families on what the responsibilities of each of their members are in order to ensure parental roles are correctly carried out. With regard to women’s family role, the strategy states the following: women are central to the evolving Qatari family [...]. Through their nurturing of language, codes of ethics, behavioural patterns, value systems and religious beliefs, women play an indispensable role in upholding traditional familial and cultural values (GSDP 2011: 165). In this way, traditional families become an institutional extension of the state aimed to regulate individual’s private life since childhood. They are an inherently gendered technology of power that ensures the presence of the state in every corner of society through breaching the delicate border between private and public realms. In order to achieve its goal of policing families, the government of Qatar has undertaken several initiatives ranging from the creation of specialized agencies, the implementation of policies and the launching of promotional campaigns.

Most of those initiatives have directly addressed the challenges to the correct functioning of Qatari families identified in QNDS. One of those challenges is the increasing and expanded reliance by Qatari households on domestic helpers, who are generally non-citizen female workers coming from overseas. This strategy considers especially alarming that many of those domestic helpers are in charge

of taking care of Qatari children, because this would allegedly lead to weakened family ties and to an erasure of traditional family values, which would ultimately have a negative impact on child well-being. Consequently, the strategy has identified as one of its targets for the year 2016 the reduction by half of the average number of domestic helpers per household through enhancement of parent-child relationships and regulation of domestic work.

The aforementioned Doha International Family Institute has been especially relevant for creating a platform of knowledge and strategies that allow the government to reinforce the model of family envisioned in the development plans. Actually, the policing of families and the promotion of traditional roles among their members is part of the Doha Declaration, a document released after the celebration of an international conference on the family in 2004 in the capital of Qatar. In this sense, the Doha Declaration makes a call to “evaluate and assess economic, social and other policies to support mothers and fathers in performing their *essential roles*” (UNGA 2004, emphasis added). Moreover, the OSRA research grant provided by this organization serves to produce knowledge that sustains the strategies aimed to reinforce parental roles. For instance, one of the projects recently funded aims “to investigate parental knowledge, attitudes and practices among Qatari and non-Qatari Arab parents [in order to] develop a culturally sensitive parenting program” (DIFI 2016). As shown by these initiatives, knowledge is critical for reaching the transformation of families in Qatar and make them consistent with the aims of the reformist agenda.

To sum up, the transformation of Qatari society over the coming decades entails, and relies on, the production of a particular form of human capital. According to the plans for reform, the production of such human capital relies on a particular model of family that has as two of its most outstanding characteristics its dominant social role as the fundamental form of human association and its traditional character that prescribes specific roles to each of its members. Recently, the government has undertaken several initiatives in order to carve such a model of family among the population. These initiatives range from policy implementation based on statistical and demographic data, creation of

counselling institutions and research centres. Concomitantly, as later will be argued, the discourse on the nation is another technology of power for the policing of families in that it presents such a model of family as a defining feature of Qatar's national identity.

## 5.2 INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AS DEFINING FEATURES OF QATAR'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

This section will focus on the role played by these forms of subjectivity and human association in the state-controlled discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar. For attaining this objective, the discussion in the following pages will address, firstly, the role of the individual in the discourse on national identity and, secondly, the role of the family in this same discourse. The discussion in both subsections is based on the sources that emerged after conducting research on the nation in contemporary Qatar. With regard to national celebrations, these sources include printed and audiovisual material distributed during the celebrations on the National Day, records of events and conferences held on these same occasions, information extracted from the official website of the National Day, and legislation on national commemorations. Regarding museums and archaeological sites, these sources include mainly information extracted from electronic archives. The argument underlying the following discussion is that through their iteration in the sites looked at in this research, the aforementioned social institutions become defining characteristics of Qatar's national identity.

When discussing the reformist agenda, it was noted that the new forms of individuality and human association envisioned by the plans for development in Qatar contrasted with the "rentier mentality," in which people are depicted as being exclusively reliant on states' provisions allowed by oil revenues. The state-controlled discourse on national identity presents the new forms of individuality and human association as a defining feature the Qatari nation. By so doing, this discourse precludes the image of the Gulf national as reliant on the state's provisions, and presents contrasting subjectivities and forms of association as natural expressions of the Qatari nation. Thus, by narrowing down the possibilities for being Qatari, the particular understanding of the nation displayed throughout the sites

this research looked at renders the attitudes and behaviors associated with the “rentier mentality” as non-consistent with the essence of being Qatari.

#### *5.2.1 The ideal individual of the Qatari nation*

Throughout the different sites where the state-controlled discourse on national identity in Qatar is displayed, one of the most recurrent themes is the ideal form of society that has at its center a particular form of subjectivity. In these sites, the particular Qatari subject is said to have a certain set of natural and integral characteristics that allow them to be considered as a full member of the national community, but at the same time turn them into the kind of individual envisioned by the plans for reform. In this way, the reformist subjectivity is placed within a nationalist framework, according to which a Qatari national individual cannot be understood but exactly in those terms. This particular way of conceiving the national subject becomes then a natural component of the contemporary nation, and the discourse on the nation emerges as an instrument for disciplining individual life.

The market-oriented entrepreneurial mentality that will allow the national subject to take part and eventually reach success in the “competitive” and “rewarding” global economy is a recurrent theme within the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar. The modern Qatari subject is not simply a continuation of traditional ways of being, which are tied to life in the desert. Rather, the individual is considered within this imaginary as highly consistent with, and modeled by, international trends. In this way, the state-controlled discourse on national identity set the limits for personal attitudes regarding substantive existential questions, such as the meaning of success and the purpose of individual endeavors.

The discourse on national identity promotes the emergence of an active and participatory citizenry. Rather than feeling any anxiety for the emergence of such an engaged civil society, the government actively promotes participation. Thus, when explaining the importance of the celebrations on Qatar’s National Day, it is contended that apart from adapting the “best and most useful” parts of

Qatar's heritage and tradition to modern times, Qataris' "pride in National Day also demands that [they] adopt the highest level of personal and collective responsibility." The importance devoted by the discourse on national identity to the role of civil society becomes even clearer when "good, healthy citizenship" is equated with "responsibility and participation" (National Day Website). In this way, the discourse on national identity does not prevent the emergence of a participatory society, but rather sets the limits on what is considered as legitimate participation and what aims and endeavors are considered as solid steps in the attainment of the collective goals that allegedly reflect the nation's aims for the future.

The instilment of a particular mentality in the national subject, through an iteration of what does the nation stand for, is about setting limits on what is considered as legitimate and constructive social engagement. With the creation of Qatar's National Day through an Emiri decree in 2007 (see: State of Qatar 2007), the state set up a platform in which at least once a year such an iteration would take place. In this sense, the National Day is an unparalleled opportunity for the state to propagate its own version of what kind of collective behavior and social participation is consistent with Qatar's national identity, and by so doing, to sustain its own vision for the country.

For instance, during the 2008 celebrations on the National Day, the organizing committee held an unprecedented seminar that brought together academics, researchers and intellectuals to discuss the life and legacy of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani, who is considered as the founding father of the Qatari nation. In one of the opening speeches, Abdul-Rahman Alfraih, who was then member of Saudi Arabia's Shura Council, after noting that "the national day means promotion of the patriotic spirit in citizens, especially young people", asserted that

Qatar is celebrating this date today while implementing an economic policy that depends on planning and competence. It realizes that the system of wealth is knowledge-based, a universal system which has changed a lot of the landmarks of culture and politics and generated new ideas influencing the individual, media, values and social relationships.

Consequently, Alfraih contended that “with determination, clear vision, target identification and perseverance it becomes possible to enter the knowledge-based economy” (National Day Committee 2008: 24-27). In the different events organized on the occasion of the National Day similar exhortations are constantly heard, which allows to think about these events as a platform generated by the state to propagate its own version of what kind of collective purposes individual Qataris stand for.

Since the development plans remind that effective participation in the global economy cannot be reached solely with the carving of a new mentality among Qatari youth, a set of skills that is predominantly responsive to the demands of the labor market is also needed. This is why equating modern education with Qatar’s national identity is a recurrent theme in the discourse on the nation, as well as the need to honor past glories through the embracement of contemporary initiatives by the government in the realm of education. Here, the National Day is again an unparalleled opportunity to remind people that “pushing forward in their quest to turn themselves, their institutions, universities and media into guiding beacons of knowledge and righteousness” is a way of following the message of their heroic forefathers (National Day website). In other words, pursuing high-level education, and enduring the hardships of such a quest, is considered not only as a mature choice that any rational individual that aims to succeed in the competitive global market would make, but also as a duty with the nation and as a form of compliance with the aims of its founders.

Furthermore, in the state-controlled discourse on national identity the Qatari national subject is depicted as an individual that includes modern education and Western forms of knowledge-propagation as an integral component of their condition as Qatari national. The close link between modern education and the individual experience of being a Qatari national is clearly illustrated by the story of Fahad, the main character of the book *Fahad the Brave*, which was published and distributed under the auspices of the Organizing Committee on the National Day during the 2009 celebrations. According to this story, Fahad was a proud Qatari child who loved to read, and wanted to be as brave and strong as the founding father Sheikh Jassim. One day he learnt from his grandfather that Sheikh

Jassim, whom he highly cherished, was a wise man who “bought many books for his people, and encouraged children to learn to read.” His grandfather celebrated the presence of “excellent schools and universities” in the country that allowed boys like Fahad to be educated (National Day Committee 2009: 9). In this story, Fahad is presented as the perfect archetype of the modern way of being Qatari, which has as one of its outstanding features an inherent appreciation for knowledge and education.

The ideal Qatari national is not only an innovative entrepreneur with a market-oriented education, but also a healthy-conscious individual who values the practice of sports. The discourse on national identity considers sport as an integral component of the contemporary Qatari nation. In this way, the specific member of the Qatari nation cannot be understood, but as a subject committed to sport and healthy life-styles.

Equating sport as a natural component of the Qatari nation and thus as an integral component of the Qatari national subject is a recurrent theme in museums’ exhibitions where the state-controlled discourse on the Qatari nation is displayed. The most prominent among them is the still under-construction 3-2-1 *Qatar Olympic and Sport Museum*, whose aim is to “demonstrate to the world that sport and Qatar are intrinsically linked” (Qatar Museums Website). Ahead of its official inauguration, the directorate of the Olympic museum has been organizing a series of exhibitions throughout Doha to attain its goals of “generating a spirit of participation” and “promoting the value of sports” among the population. A good example is the exhibition “Olympics, Past & present”, which took place in the exhibition hall of Qatar Museums from March 27 to June 30, 2013. This exhibition dedicated a section to Qatar in the Olympic Games in which the achievements of the Qatari athletes were displayed, including their first participation in the Olympic Games in 1984 and the winning of their first medal in 1992 (Qatar Sports Museum 2014).

Similarly, equating Qatari national identity with the practice of sports has reached the realm of national celebrations. In this regard, in 2011 an Emiri decree instituted the National Sports Day, which would be celebrated in February each year with the aim of “raising awareness of the importance of

sport and its role in the lives of individuals and communities” (State of Qatar 2011). Since then, the National Sports Day is considered as one of Qatar’s public holidays, in which private companies and government bodies are required to organize physical activities for their employees. Throughout Doha, several sport events are organized on that occasion. Overall, the introduction of the sports day in the calendar of national celebrations is not only a government strategy aimed to promote sports among the population, but is also a strong statement of what the Qatari nation is, and what its members should stand for.

A strong sense of belonging and an unrestricted endorsement of the duties with the nation is another characteristic of the national subject. This particular individual feature allows for the channeling of the power posed by Qatar’s human capital into the ambitious and transformative initiatives posed by the government’s reformist agenda. As the official account on the importance of celebrating the National Day states, “no nation can advance unless its people uphold its foundational values, work together to build it, and fulfill the aspirations of its founders” (National Day Website). Accordingly, the discourse on national identity presents identification with the nation as the main locus of collective identification among Qataris, and demands an agreement with certain collective goals and an endorsement of the strategies aimed to attain those goals.

Once Qatari national identity has been equated with the support of such collective goals and strategies, the remaining task is to present the nation as the only possible form of collective identification. This is precisely the task performed by the discourse on national identity that spans over celebrations and sites of cultural production controlled by the state. One good example is the short film “The Hero and the Message” (*al-Batal wa al-Risala*), which was produced and broadcasted during the national day celebrations in 2015 under the auspices of the Organizing Committee on Qatar’s National Day (Al-Rayyan 2015). One of the main characters in that short film is Muhammad, a Qatari boy who traveled to the past through a time machine with her sister Lulwah. Apart from appreciating education, Muhammad was a proud Qatari young who always wore the national dress and who

honored the founding father, of whom he had a picture in his room. The love for the nation was also shared by Fahad, the main character in the aforementioned children's fiction book *Fahad the Brave*. According to this story, the Qatari nation was always present in Fahad's mind, even when he was playing. Thus, one of his preferred games was to perform as "one of Sheikh Jasim's brave soldiers," and when building a sand castle in the beach he thought it would be a good idea to "have the national flag of Qatar flying from one of the towers" (National Day Committee 2009a: 27).

In summary, the deployment of the discourse on national identity in the particular sites looked at in this research articulates a form of individual subjectivity that is instrumental to the transformative aims of the top-driven reformist agenda in contemporary Qatar. The themes of entrepreneurial mentality, market-oriented education, sportive and healthy life-styles and a strong sense of belonging, which are considered as outstanding features of the individual that will support the transformation of society over the coming decades, are presented as the defining characteristics of the modern Qatari subject. The delineation of the essence of being Qatari is then far from neutral or descriptive, but is rather a normative exercise aimed to control the individual aspirations of modern subjects and to channel social power into the attainment externally-defined collective goals and their corresponding strategies.

### 5.2.2 *The ideal family of the Qatari nation*

The family, one of the pillars of the government's agenda for reform in contemporary Qatar, is also a recurrent theme in the discourse on national identity as displayed in those sites this research focused. The particular model of family envisioned by the development plans spreads throughout these sites in several ways, such as the publication of printed and audiovisual material about stories that include Qatari families, and the institution of public holidays aimed to promote family values among the population. However, the model of family promoted by the state is not simply a neutral description of contemporary Qatari families. As in the case of the national subject, the national family is a normative

model that normalizes a given form of human association by presenting it as a defining feature of Qatar's national identity. By so doing, this discourse becomes a technology of power aimed to discipline the population according to the imperatives of the top-down reformist agenda.<sup>19</sup>

To begin with, according to the discourse on national identity the traditional nuclear family is the fundamental form of social organization surrounding the national subject.<sup>20</sup> Beyond this type of family, no other form of human association allowing the individual to engage in a network of social relations is envisioned. This family is not only the natural environment for individual development, but it is also the only possible one. Thus, the family plays a dominant role within the nation in that it is considered as the determining element of individuals' social life. This dominant role is ubiquitous within the discourse on national identity, and it can be seen in the way families are depicted within the stories of the children's fiction books and in the model of family that is promoted during the celebrations of the family day, which since 2012 has been celebrated every year in April 15. By portraying the ideal Qatari family in such fashion, the discourse on national identity reproduces the conception of the family in the development plans as the basic unit of Qatar's society.

There are several implications of considering the family in such a way. To begin with, the individual only becomes a national subject as long as it is part of a family. The individual cannot be understood in different terms and its relation with the nation is always mediated through the family. The role that a given individual plays within the family is what strengthens and legitimizes their broader role in society, either as parents or as sons and daughters. National citizens must have always attached

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<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the official account of the ideal Qatari family is far from being generally accepted. Thus, following the homophobic mass-killing in a night club in Orlando, United States, a Qatari national, under the nickname "Majid Al-Qatari", published an opinion piece in the newspaper *Doha News* in which they spoke about the feeling of despair provoked by living a hidden homosexual life, which is generally considered in Qatar as a "western invention" (Al-Qatari 2016). Accordingly, it was painful to know that if they wanted to live a family life, it should be only through a heterosexual relationship. Moreover, "it was traumatizing to feel they were the cause of their parents anguish, that they were shaming their family", which shows the complicit alliance between the state actually operates in Qatar. This piece provoked the response of another Qatari national (Al-Maadadi 2016), who contended that Qatar, by virtue of being a Muslim and Arab nation, naturally did not tolerate homosexuality. Thus, the author asserted that anyone who claimed belonging to the Qatari nation should oppose homosexuality, which is an example of how the normative elements of the state-controlled discourse on national identity are put in practice.

<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the family is circumscribed to the limits of the nation-state as there is no room for transnational families, which are commonplace in the Gulf and Qatar.

to them a group of people that can be said to be the family to which they belong. This is especially true for women, whose increasing reluctance to get married at a young age, or even to get married at all, is considered as a challenge to the production of Qatar's social capital. This situation has been addressed through government programs directed to promote marriage among Qatari women in order to perpetuate the family as the basis of society, which in turn demonstrates the intimate relation between gender and biopolitics. In other words, the carving of a body politic often relies on a gender classification of individual bodies in order to perform specific roles within society.

Furthermore, the family is considered as the only possible form of mediatory realm between the individual and the nation. Whereas the relation of the individual and the nation is mediated by the family, there is no mediatory instance between the family and the nation. The family is then the everyday expression of the nation's aims and feelings. Since communication between the individual and the nation happens through the family, the demands and rules of the family become automatically those of the nation. The regulation and policing of everyday life is then based upon the embodiment of the nation by the family, which is another implication of the hegemonic role of the ideal family depicted by the discourse on national identity in Qatar.

Apart from the hegemonic role played by the family as the only realm of individual development and as the most legitimate form of mediation between the nation and its subjects, the Qatari family articulated through the discourse on national identity is a traditional family where parental roles are strongly emphasized. Moreover, families where maids play a prominent role in the domestic work and in raising children, which QNDS acknowledges as a common feature of contemporary Qatari households, are not considered as part of the national family. In this way, the discourse on national identity reproduces a specific type of family as the one embodying the nation's values and, consequently, as the only legitimate one.

The role that each member of the family should play is a strong component of the particular type of family reproduced in the discourse on national identity, which then highlights the gender

dimension into the discourse on the nation. The male-father is the family's public face. Through carrying out remunerated work, he becomes the financial pillar of the family. More importantly, through the performance of his public role and his authority within the family he is the main conduct between the family and the nation. He is the one who teaches children about nation's history and values, as well as the one who is in charge of reprehending children due to their misbehavior. The female-mother, on her part, is the one in charge of the family's private matters. She carries out domestic tasks, such as cooking, and is compliant with the father's authority at all times. Apart from the parental roles, there are other secondary roles, such as those of the grandparents, who connect youth and children with the nation's ancient roots.

Finally, the issue of values also plays a role in the way Qatari families are depicted within the discourse on national identity. Qatari families are not only proudly nationalistic and patriotic, instilling within their members the nation's values and the legacies of the heroic forefathers. They are also modern families who value hard-work and knowledge, and they are preoccupied in carving among their members a proper ethics of work and a strong attainment to life-long learning. They are, in a nutshell, families with a strong sense of belonging, and whose values are consistent with those of the nation.

The normal Qatari family is spoken and reproduced by the state-controlled discourse on national identity in several sites. The annual celebrations on the national day are an unparalleled opportunity for the state to iterate and imprint among the population the model of family that allegedly reflects the spirit of the nation. Through the publication of printed and audiovisual material, the state reinforces the discourse on the role of the family as the pillar of society, as well as its understanding of how a Qatari traditional family looks like. This is the way in which the link between a given conception regarding the family and a particular understanding of Qatari national identity is made.

One example of the model of Qatari family articulated by the discourse on national identity is the story of Peter, the main character in the children's fiction book *The Pearl*, which was published and

distributed under the auspices of the Organizing Committee of the National Day in 2009. After being invited for dinner at Ebrahim's place, his Qatari friend, Peter noticed about the prominent and hegemonic role played by family in society, as he learnt that "it was traditional that when a Qatari child grew up and married, the family home would be expanded to accommodate the new family members. This could continue until sometimes several generations lived under the same roof". He also learnt about the deep-rooted parental roles in Qatari families, especially about the role of women as responsible of domestic matters, when he tasted the delicious food made by Ebrahim's mother. This was reinforced by the statement of Ebrahim's uncle in the dining table in the sense that "all women should learn to cook!" (24).

The iteration of gendered parental roles as integral to Qatari identity is also a recurrent theme in other stories which are published during the celebrations of the National Day. This is the case with the story in the aforementioned children's book *Fahad the Brave*. In his attempt to imitate Sheikh Jassim, Fahad provoked a chaos in the kitchen, where his mother was cooking food for the entire family. When his father arrived home after work, Fahad realized that what he had done was not all good. However, his father was happy that he wanted to be like Sheikh Jassim and told him a lot of stories about the founding father in an attempt to introduce Fahad to the nation's history and to keep promoting a sense of belonging in the young Qatari boy. Constructing a child with strong ties to his nation was also a task of Fahad's grandparents, who through their stories allowed him to learn the cultural and traditional roots of Qatar's national identity, which were rooted in an era before the appearance of oil.

Similarly, the aforementioned film "The Hero and the Message" also takes a stance on the issue of families in Qatar. The two main characters in this story, Lulwah and her brother Muhammad, travel to the past through a "time machine" that takes them to that period in history when Ottomans wanted to control the Qatari peninsula. Their father, who is very well-learned about Qatari history, takes them to Lusail, a historical town in the outskirts of Doha, and teaches them about the heroic battles fought

there. Their mother, who appears at the beginning of the film setting up the table for everyone to eat, remains silent for almost the entire duration of the film, and is compliant at all times with what her husband says. Her role is simply taking care of domestic affairs and making sure children are growing healthy. Together with *The Pearl* and *Fahad the Brave*, this story exemplifies the place of the family in the state-controlled discourse on national identity in Qatar as deployed during the celebrations on the family day. Moreover, these three examples show the specific type of family and the particular roles that each member should perform.

Apart from the celebrations on the national day, the most important national holiday for celebrating and reproducing the type of family envisioned by the government is the family day, which is celebrated every year in April 15 since 2012. Sheikha Moza, the chairperson of Qatar Foundation, proposed the celebration of the family day in Qatar in 2004, after the celebration of an international conference on the family that same year (Al-‘Amadi 2017). Through the organization of conferences, academic events and public campaigns the purpose of the national day is to reinforce the family as the basis of society and to promote strong families with the right values.

One important institution in the celebrations of the national day is the Family Counselling Centre (*Wifaq*). The centre, which was established in 2002 under the umbrella of Qatar Foundation, is a concrete instance of the policing of families amidst the creation of human capital for the expansion of neoliberalism in Qatar, in that it provides free counselling and assistance to Qatari families in order to prevent family disintegration and to strengthen family ties (Wifaq website). During the 2017 celebrations of the Family Day in Qatar, Wifaq launched a public campaign entitled “We stay together when we disagree” (*Nabqa ‘Ala Wifaq Lanwa Ikhtalafuna*). This campaign included the diffusion through social media of a video portraying an ideal nuclear family as the means to attain happiness and individual achievement (see: Wifaq 2017). Additionally, a series of conferences were organized which focused on subjects such as “Marriage in Qatar: reality and challenges” and “Responsible parenthood: a goal and means of sustainable development” (Al-Rayah 2017).

Figure 5.1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions.

In summary, the discourse on national identity in Qatar iterated and displayed in national celebrations, such as the National Day and the Family Day, recreates the type of family envisioned in the development plans as the most suitable form of human association for the creation of human and social capital. Through the publication of printed and audiovisual material, the organization of conferences and the launching of promotional campaigns in social media, a singular type of human association is presented as a defining feature of Qatar's national identity, which normalizes the traditional nuclear family as a spontaneous manifestation of the modern way of being Qatari. In this way, the discourse on national identity emerges as a technology of power aiming to discipline society and to sustain the plans for transforming society over the coming decades.

### 5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The implementation of the plans for reform in Qatar rely in two social institutions: on the one hand, a self-governing individual and, on the other, a nuclear and traditional family that becomes the link between the state and the individual. In recent years, the government has taken several initiatives in order to construct such institutions, which are very likely to continue over the coming years. As has been argued throughout this chapter, one site for the construction of those institutions is the discourse on national identity, which links those particular models of family and individual with the very experience of being Qatari.

These two social institutions are the ones who have been identified elsewhere as sustaining the integration of societies' into the logics of the global-market economy. Thus, the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar shows that the nation and the integration of society into the logics of

the free-market are not necessarily antithetical. Rather, one sustains the other through the construction of the neoliberal social institutions as defining features of the national identity. In other words, the disciplining component of the agenda for reform is presented by the discourse on the nation as a spontaneous and national outcome that has to do with an idiosyncratic local evolution, rather than an externally imposed model of governance. For this reason, anyone who identifies him or herself with the nation has to observe and follow the particular models of individual being and human association. Otherwise, their belonging would be called into question.

What the discussion in this chapter has shown is that the expansion of neoliberal rationality in Qatar relies on the discourse on the nation, which provides the moral dimension for assessing the adequateness of social attitudes and behavior. The discourse on the Qatari nation has become a critical site for sustaining the set of governmental techniques spread through the body politic. As the salience of neoliberalism in other contexts has shown, these set of governing techniques include self-governing national subjects in pursuance of individual success and cohesive and traditional families that instill among its members the necessary values to succeed in an environment governed by the market laws. Simply put, by presenting the self-governing individual and the traditional family with gendered roles, two forms of neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics in contemporary world, as defining features of Qatar's national identity, success in a neoliberal environment becomes part of the performance of belonging to the Qatari nation.

It is noteworthy that this particular way of conceiving the nation cannot be attributed to every voice that has something to do with regard to what the Qatari nation means. Quite the contrary, this particular discourse on the nation is displayed in sites of cultural production and national celebrations controlled by the state. As such, this particular feature of the Qatari nation can be attributed to the state, which does not mean that all those who have something at stake with the Qatari nation accept such claims and comply with their prescriptions. As already mentioned, some dissenting voices, such

as those published by the news-outlet *Doha News*,<sup>21</sup> have publicly called into question the understanding of the Qatari nation as promoted by the state. By questioning the discriminatory treatment to transnational marriage, as well as the condemnation of homosexuality and its confinement to a private realm, these dissenting voices might open the door for the public appearance of different ways of understanding the nation.

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<sup>21</sup> According to the well-known news outlet BBC, access to the website of Doha News was temporarily shut down in December 2016 in an act of censorship on the part of the Qatari government. See: BBC (2016).

## 6 THESE ARE OUR NATURAL RULERS: THE LEGITIMIZING FEATURE OF THE DISCOURSE ON QATAR'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

In this thesis' theoretical framework, a discussion took place about the way the expansion of neoliberalism and its corresponding governing techniques has relied upon its capacity to merge with local language and practices. This "vernacularization" of neoliberalism coincides with David Harvey's contention in the sense that, in order to become a globally accepted doctrine, neoliberalism had to become part of the common sense through resonating with predominant worldviews and practices in specific locales. However, these locales do not refer to the nation only. Rather, as shown in the theoretical discussion, neoliberal rationality also draws on local practices and worldviews related with notions of community and belonging in urban landscapes. All these specific cultural realms provide the language through which neoliberalism, as an ordering principle of social life, reinvents, reproduces and transforms itself.

The "vernacularization" of neoliberalism is what constitutes the magic of neoliberalism. Through its mixing with local practices and the flavor provided by local jargon, neoliberalism transforms itself in order to fulfil its aspirations to become a set of governing techniques with global reach. Notions of individual success and national genius spanning through sport competitions are widespread examples of the infusion to neoliberal rationality with local meaning. However, other examples include local museums that facilitate liberal forms of governing at the distance through empowering and self-disciplining communities. Similarly, young professionals perform their inclusion to Dubai as a global city-state through notions of individual success and business-oriented mentality, which puts neoliberal governmentality into direct contact with questions belonging. Alongside a set of predetermined and top-down strategies, the spread of neoliberal frameworks of governance is sustained by these spontaneous and locally rooted operations.

In the case of Qatar, the “vernacularization” of neoliberalism takes the form of presenting the agenda of reform, comprised by *Qatar National Vision 2030* and its implementation plans, as an exclusively national development. In this sense, the agenda for reform is the latest manifestation of a national genius that has manifested at several times in history, through the endeavors of Qatar’s leadership. The country’s rulers, who belong to the royal Al Thani family, is then considered as the vehicle channeling this national genius whose latest manifestation is tracing the path that Qatar should follow at the turn of the twenty-first century by envisioning a national vision. The role of the discourse on the nation in this flavoring of neoliberalism with local language has to do with providing the reasons for why Qatar’s ruling elite has the right to decide on the nation’s future.

The main argument underlying this thesis counters the claim that the reinvigoration of the discourse on national identity in Qatar since the mid-1990s is a natural reaction to a sense of nostalgia triggered by the effects of rapid modernization on traditional cultural expressions. This claim has informed the official characterization of such cultural developments in contemporary Qatar. However, rather than automatic responses aimed to protect a disappearing identity, these state-sponsored cultural projects are assertive initiatives that reformulate what Qatar’s national identity means in order to produce a national culture aligned with the reformist agenda embodied in *Qatar National Vision 2030*. These cultural initiatives redefine Qatar’s national identity through a series of claims displayed throughout cultural heritage sites.

Previous chapters of this thesis have discussed, first, how the discourse on national identity, through an intervention in the field of collective memory, reiterates the national community that is called into action in order to implement the reformist agenda, but that excludes the majority of the population as “makers of the nation”. Secondly, they have discussed how the discourse on national identity promotes an ideal society that has at its center the individual and the family, which are the two social institutions in which the implementation of the agenda for reform rest upon. This chapter will discuss a third claim deployed throughout those sites looked at in this research. This third claim

provides a direct answer to the question of why contemporary Qatari rulers are enforcing social transformation through their reformist agenda. Since they are the nation's natural rulers, the discourse maintains, the current ruling elite has the right and the capacity to define the future of the nation and the strategies to attain such goals. For this reason, this claim is called "these are our natural rulers."

Recent work on the burgeoning heritage industry in Qatar has emphasized the relation between ruling legitimacy and heritage products. As Exel and Rico (2013) have shown, the naturalization of the ruling family through cultural initiatives was present since the inception of the first National Museum of Qatar just after independence in 1971, because it created "a linear narrative that linked the current rulers to a long history of progress and technological evolution" (677). Qatari historian Mariam Al-Mulla has also pointed out how the newly-created ethnographic and archaeological collections in that first national museum were displayed "as part of a narrative of national identity and the Al Thani right to rule" (123). Similarly, Michell (2016) has placed Qatar, the so-called "quintessential rentier state" of the Arabian Peninsula, in a general framework of national-building that emphasizes the salience of cultural initiatives for inventing traditions that "establish group cohesion, legitimize institutions and authority, and inculcate particular values and behaviours in society" (60). In the context of the enactment and implementation of *Qatar National Vision 2030*, heritage products in Qatar become, due to their close relation with the legitimization of authority, vehicles for introducing neoliberal reforms.

However, as later in this chapter will be shown, scholarly work focusing on questions of legitimacy in Qatar and the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf has focused on the durability of the bargain between society and their rulers. According to this perspective, which has also influenced perspectives on the role of heritage for legitimizing purposes, questions of legitimacy in the Gulf are mainly related with the capacity of the ruling elite to remain at the top of society and to control the revenues for the exploitation of natural resources in each country. Although some perspectives within this debate recognize the salience of cultural and historical factors for explaining regimes' legitimacy (Foley 2010), most of them emphasize the weak and unsustainable charter of the ruling bargain, which

will most likely collapse as the oil revenues disappear (Davidson 2012). In contrast to these perspectives, this chapter emphasizes how cultural products and the heritage industry in Qatar serve legitimizing purposes, which are related with the capacity to enforce social change, rather than staying at the top of society. The discussion in this chapter draws then on a notion of ruler's legitimacy in a context of transnational transformation and social engineering.

For discussing the way in which the claim “these are our natural rulers” is deployed, this chapter will first discuss the relation between this claim and the thesis' general argument, which makes emphasis on the display of a particular understanding of national identity in those sites looked at in this research. This particular understanding is related with the government's agenda for reform released in 2008 under the title of *Qatar National Vision 2030*. Then, it will discuss the way in which the discourse on national identity displayed in those sites makes the case for the current governing elite as the nation's natural rulers. This case is made through emphasizing two characteristics of the ruling elite. One of them is that they are enlightened rulers who have been always in the right side of history. The other one is that they possess wisdom, which allows them to make appropriate judgements on the nation's behalf. These two characteristics of the claim will be discussed in the second and third parts of this chapter.

For illustrating the way in which the claim “these are our natural rulers” is deployed, this chapter will rely on evidence derived from the data gathered during the four months of fieldwork in Doha, Qatar, and through research in electronic archives created by the government of Qatar itself. This chapter will refer to parts of that information in order to illustrate specific points within the general argument. Specifically, this chapter will rely on the participant observation conducted at the temporary exhibition *Muhammad Ali: Tribute to a Legend*, held at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha from July 7, 2016 to February 25, 2017, at the exhibition house *Bayt Bin Jelmood* in the recently renovated Msheireb quarter in Doha's downtown. It will also rely in the information provided by the official website on Qatar's National Day.

## 6.1 RULER'S LEGITIMACY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORMIST AGENDA

The discussion in the following paragraphs deals with the relation between the right and capacity for a small group to decide on the nation's future and to enforce social change, on the one hand, and the implementation of the government's reformist agenda embodied in *Qatar National Vision 2030*, on the other. The relation has to do with who has the capacity and the right to decide on the nation's future. In other words, why is a small group of people entitled to decide on what is going to happen in the coming decades in Qatar? The following discussion paves the ground for the advancement of this chapter's main argument, which indicates that the discourse on national identity provides an answer for such a question, because it presents Al Thani family as enlightened rulers who have been always in the right side of history and as possessors of wisdom that allows them to make right decisions on the nation's behalf.

### 6.1.1 *Legitimacy within Qatar National Vision 2030*

As a modern nation-state, Qatar is subjected to controversies over political legitimacy that call into question, not only the configurations of power within this political formation, but also the set of principles in which the state itself is based. Thus, the provision of explanations for who is capable of exerting authority, as well as the reasons for such a mandate, are a constant concern in contemporary Qatar. This is especially true amidst the implementation of an ambitious set of reforms entailed by the *National Vision 2030*, which demand the constant reminding on the part of the government of previous reasoning regarding the nature of political authority in this country.

By virtue of its modern character, the particular authorities within the Qatari nation-state pay attention to the issue of legitimacy. In logical terms, legitimacy and the state in Qatar are inextricably linked. Thus, in some way or another, the nature of the state of Qatar and of the distribution of authority within it has to be explained by reference to a series of irrefutable principles. Differences

would start to appear once the focus shifts towards the particular set of principles in which legitimacy of a given political authority is founded upon and, more importantly, towards the specific understanding of those general principles in this particular setting. Furthermore, the embracement of those set of principles would give rise to a field of contestation where idiosyncratic debates about the legitimacy of a particular political authority can be judged. The question of political legitimacy becomes, from the government's point of view, all the more pressing in a context when an ambitious set of reforms, entailed by the *National Vision 2030*, are being implemented. The definition of the collective goals pursued by society and the identification of specific strategies aimed to attain those goals demand the constant reiteration and reinvention of previous reasoning regarding the nature of political authority in this country.

More recently, the issue of legitimacy has come the forefront along the implementation of a National Vision that is said to reflect "the aspirations, objectives and culture of the Qatari people." Since, according to the text of the vision itself, "it is now imperative for Qatar to choose the best development path that is compatible with the views of its leadership and the aspirations of its people" (GSDP 2008: 1), an important matter of concern is then to define who and for what reasons has the capacity to define what those views and aspirations are. Put simply, the implementation of the reformist agenda demand an explanation of why a specific group of people is enforcing such changes.

#### *6.1.2 Legitimacy as the right and capacity to implement reform*

The issue of political legitimacy in the Arab Gulf States has been a prominent area of debate over the last decades. These debates have mainly emphasized the heavy reliance of those states' economy on the exports of hydrocarbons and the legitimizing effect of oil wealth. Thus, a widespread perspective on political legitimacy in the Arab Gulf States has emphasized the allocation of oil revenues among the population by the national governments in exchange for political allegiance (Beblawi 1987;

Davidson 2005; Gray 2011). This perspective, known as the “rentier-state theory,” has led to the claim that in order to guarantee their legitimacy regardless of the fluctuations in the world’s oil market, regimes within the Gulf States need to diversify their economies away from oil in order keep their redistributive policies in place. In this sense, the issue of legitimacy refers mainly to the capacity of these regimes to remain in charge of government affairs through either allocative policies or any other mechanism.

In the case of Qatar, and of those other Arab Gulf States that have recently launched similar plans for economic reform, the framework of the rentier-state tends to regard *Qatar’s National Vision 2030* as the latest and most decisive step to diversify the economy. In this way, it is argued, the state of Qatar is giving strong steps to guarantee the survival of its regime independently of the fluctuations in the world energy market (Gray 2013). In this sense, QNV is seen more as a legitimizing tool whose correct implementation will have a direct impact on the regime’s stability and security.

This chapter’s argument departs from these perspectives in a small, but substantive way. Rather than seeing Qatar’s regime as being in constant and permanent search for legitimacy due to the possibility that oil revenues will run out, legitimacy is seen here as the capacity to mobilize social forces in order to attain a pre-determined set of goals. This discussion does not focus on the regime’s capacity to remain at the top of society, but rather in its capacity to mobilize social forces in order to reach certain objectives that it has previously identified. This perspective does not deny the effect of oil revenues on the stability of Qatar’s regime, but focuses on a different type of legitimacy only. Thus, rather than as a legitimizing tool that turns to diversification in order to maintain the so-called “rentier pact” (Davidson 2005), *Qatar National Vision* appears here as a set of objectives whose implementation raises the issue of legitimacy, which refers to the capacity to enforce change and to define the nation’s future.

### 6.1.3 *The nation as an arena of legitimacy*

This view draws on discussions around the link between political legitimacy amidst enforcement of social change. In those accounts, the nation has emerged as an important site for recreating political legitimacy. In this sense, the nation has a legitimizing potential far beyond the existence of unstable conditions, which leads to the conclusion that the relation between nation and legitimacy is permanent, rather than tangential, and that the manipulation of national symbols does not only occur in those places where fragile process at nation building are taking place. In line with this reasoning, social psychologist Michael Billig coined the term “banal nationalism” to describe and analyse those “ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced,” because nationalism for him, “far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition” (Billig 1996: 6). In light of this, he discussed the way in which governments of the United States and Great Britain referred to symbols of the nation in order to justify and gain support from military initiatives abroad. For him, the reproduction of the nation through banal acts, such as a flag hanging unnoticed on a public building, produces a symbolic arsenal that is ready for use in military campaigns, such as the wars in the Persian Gulf and the Falkland Islands.

In recent decades, these initiatives are not necessarily military ones, as developments in the United States and other European countries seem to suggest, but also constructive and developing, as attested by the experience of many Third World countries. For instance, the devastating consequences of a prolonged war with neighbouring Iraq in the eighties posed big obstacles for the project of constructing a strong Islamic republic after the 1979 revolution in Iran. In this context, Bayat (2001) has emphasized that the notion of “Islamic nationalism” was pushed forward in Iran in order to pursue the monumental task of post-war reconstruction. The working class was the main target of those mobilization efforts that included the construction of an “Islamic ideology of work,” through the propagation of *ahadith* (sayings and doings attributed to Prophet Muhammad), such as “the Prophet

kisses the hands of a labourer”, and Ayatollah Khomeini’s statements, such as “Labour is the manifestation of God” (194).

The discussion above starts from the assumption that the nation is one of the primary realms where a critical question of political modernity is formulated and debated: namely, who and according to what reasons has the capacity to rule over a given collective body. For this reason, authorities have been keen to join such discussions and to formulate their rule according to broader national assumptions that are always unstable. Some perspectives have emphasized that this is especially true during periods of crisis that can lead to a questioning of political authority. However, the argument in this chapter draws on those other voices that have seen the recurrence to national symbols as a constant iteration on the part of authorities. In this sense, placing political authority within the framework of the nation is not only a response to critical conditions, but also an assertive movement that becomes especially recurrent in moments when authorities try to gain support around their own initiatives.

In the following pages, the discussion will focus on how the issue of legitimacy is deployed in the discourse on national identity this research looked at. More specifically, the discussion turns to the ways in which particular conceptions on national identity in contemporary Qatar make the case for contemporary rulers as being the country’s natural rulers. In this way, this particular understanding of the nation provides an answer to the question opened by the QNV itself, which revolves around the idea of why a small group of people is entitled with the right and capacity implement a reformist agenda.

## 6.2 AL THANI FAMILY AS A SOURCE OF ENLIGHTENED RULERS

One of the ways in which, according to the discourse on national identity, people in Qatar should follow the commands of their ruling elite is because of their strong attachment to a broader normative dimension comprised by the values of human civilization. According to this account, the initiatives of

the ruling elite, which is comprised by a small cadre of the Al Thani family, reflect the spirit of human civilization and, consequently, are constrained by universal values. Thus, the ruling elite does not rely on their own will to define the nation's future. Rather, they are attentive to a normative dimension that differentiate human beings from every other living species in the universe. Moreover, since this framework is formed by a set of shared assumptions regarding what is right and wrong, no one should dare to doubt about the goodness and beneficial character of the initiatives enacted by the ruling elite on the nation's behalf. In this way, emphasizing the attachment to the universal values of human civilization is especially important in a period where the government of Qatar is implementing a set of reforms, because it gives their initiatives a universal and natural image, which is important for attaining legitimacy.

Such a claim is especially pertinent in the current conditions in Qatar, where a plan for reform aimed to turn Qatar into a knowledge-based economy that is fully integrated into the logics of the free market is being implemented. The implementation of such plans open the question of why Qatar's leaders are deciding which path should the nation follow in the coming decades. The very wording of that plan, whose major document is the *Qatar National Vision 2030*, opens such a question, because it locates its origin in the genius and creativity of the ruling family. Similarly, the implementation of the plan itself, which demands the involvement of all sectors of society, might give rise to the question of why the nation should follow this specific path. Legitimacy is understood here as the right of the ruling family to decide how the nation should look like in the future. Put simply, legitimacy is not only staying in power but, more importantly, what to do with that power.

The discourse on national identity displayed throughout the sites looked at in this research provides an answer to that question by presenting Qatar's ruling elite, which is comprised by a particular branch of Al Thani royal family, as enlightened rulers. In several ways, the most prominent members of Qatar's ruling elite are presented within this discourse as sharing the values of human civilization. Such a depiction provides then a direct and clear answer to the question of why is this

particular group of people entitled with deciding on the nation's future. Accordingly, the royal family has the right and the capacity of implementing such reforms and deciding on the nation's future because they represent the spirit of human civilization. Since they have always been in the right side of history, as the discourse on national identity maintains, the ruling elite has the right and capacity to decide on the nation's future.

#### *6.2.1 Former Qatari rulers as people in favour of peace*

The attachment of the ruling elite to the values of human civilization is a prominent subject in the way the nation is spoken about in the sites looked at in this research. Specifically, emphasizing that the inner circle of Al Thani family has always been in the right side of history is critical for establish a link between the ruling elites and the values most cherished by human civilization. According to this claim, the ruling elite is said to be part of a broader international coalition that is endeavouring to put an end to the most painful problems affecting humanity as a whole, such as poverty, lack of freedom, inequality and violence. The ruling elite is presented then as being part of a network comprised by people with high moral standards that are continuously thriving to bring progress to humanity. This network is comprised by international organizations, such as the United Nations, and prominent figures, such as Nobel-Prize winners and other "heroic" figures. In contemporary times, this means placing Qatar's ruling family within a network of actors promoting particular forms of governance around the world.

One good example is the temporary exhibition *Muhammad Ali: Tribute to a Legend*, held at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha from July 2016 to February 2017. This exhibition, which was inaugurated just one month after the death of the famous boxing champion in June 3, 2016, "looked at [Ali's] career and his time in Qatar as homage and tribute to the greatest professional boxer and activist of all time." However, according to Susan Rees, head of conservation at *3-2-1 Qatar Olympics*

and *Sports Museum*, which was the body in charge of curating the exhibition, this was a project that was being planned since long ago (Saad 2016). Thus, more than simply an opportunistic appropriation of an event of international resonance, such as the death of an internationally acclaimed sportsman and political activist, this exhibition might be the product of the kind of projects launched by the still-under construction sports museum in Qatar.

The exhibition began by defining the character about whom the objects displayed in the fourth floor of MIA spoke. One of the things emphasized were Ali's achievements in the sport of boxing both at the amateur and professional levels, along his most famous bouts against Joe Frazier, which he named "Thrilla in Manila" and later with George Foreman, which came to be known as "The Rumble in the Jungle". All these sportive achievements and popular spectacles were, according to the exhibition's narrative *al-haqā'iq* (the facts). According to this account, Muhammad Ali was primarily a well-achieved sportsman who succeeded as both an amateur and professional boxer.

However, it was remarked, Muhammad Ali's legacy went far beyond sports, because alongside his achievements in boxing, he was also an activist. This is exactly what the title "more than a champion" implied. In this vein, it was stated that Ali "refused to be drafted into the US army, citing religious and personal beliefs." More importantly, after retirement, he "devoted much of his life to humanitarian affairs", and became *Rayul al-Salam* (man of peace), which was attested by "being honoured with the UN Messenger of Peace award in 1998." No mention was made to Ali's links with the Nation of Islam, his harsh criticism of the racist foundations of the United States as a nation and his solidarity with anticolonial movements in the Third World, which led him to openly criticize US military campaign in Vietnam (Marqusee 1999). Rather, the exhibition privileged the less controversial face of Muhammad Ali as a man of peace, whose life reminded about those values that characterize human civilization. In other words, through his tireless fight in favour of peace and his humanitarian ideals, Muhammad Ali reminded the observers what kind of values humanity should stand for.



Figure 6.1. A photo, displayed in the temporary exhibition at MIA in February 2017, of Muhammad Ali during his second visit to Qatar, in which he made a tour at the National Museum of Qatar. Photo taken by Erick Viramontes

After the humanitarian and peace-lover face of Muhammad Ali had been pushed forward in the exhibition, it was stated that Qatar's ruling elite had a strong connection with that specific historical character. In this sense, it was recalled that Muhammad Ali visited Qatar two times, one in 1971 and the other in 1991. In his first visit to Qatar, Ali had an exhibition bout in the Doha Stadium, at the end of which he "expressed his appreciation for the great leaders he met," such as then Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani, and his deputy, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad (current Emir's grandfather). The recorded version of this spectacle was shown through a video in a contiguous room where the exhibition was displayed. In his second visit, Qatar's rulers invited Ali to Qatar National Museum, which was shown in the exhibition through some photographs. By displaying those photos and audio-visual material, the exhibition highlighted the close links between Muhammad Ali, the face of humanitarianism and struggle for peace, and Qatar's rulers. In this way, former Qatar's rulers were presented as being in the right side of history as they stood for those same civilizational values and ideals embodied by the exhibition's character.

This temporary exhibition showed a character that embodied the values of human civilization, which was shown through his refusal to go to war and his embracement of peace. The exhibition also emphasized this man's virtue was recognized by important institutions which are constitutive of that human civilization, such as the International Olympic Committee, which entrusted Muhammad Ali with the lighting of the Olympic flame at Atlanta in 1996, and the United Nations, which named him "messenger of peace" in 1998. Moreover, the two visits made by Ali to Qatar, where he met with the rulers of this country and spoke about their virtues as leaders, were also emphasized. Thus, by placing former rulers of Qatar alongside such a spectacular character, the exhibition reminded of the enlightened character of Qatar's former rulers and their constant position in the right side of history.

#### *6.2.2 Fighting slavery in contemporary world*

However, being in the right side of history has not only been, according to this discourse, a particular feature of certain leaders, such as those that hosted Muhammad Ali in his two visits to Qatar in 1971 and 1991. The attachment to the values cherished by human civilization is a permanent feature of Qatar's ruling elite that has spanned throughout the history of this country since its emergence as an independent entity until today. In this sense, the current ruling elite, whose most prominent members are Sheikh Hamad and his nuclear family, is said to be part of this international alliance that stands for the most crucial struggles in favour of humanity. The discourse on national identity is thus about merging contemporary Qatari leadership with a broader civilizational spirit that stands for undeniably laudable struggles and values.

For instance, in January 2010, Msheireb properties, a subsidiary company of Qatar Foundation, began the construction of its flagship project aimed to "regenerate and preserve" the historical downtown of Doha (Scharfenort 2014). This project included the construction of four museums in a quarter that would also include houses, government buildings and shops built around a "new

architectural language” that brought together sustainability, harmony with the environment, and a strong connection with local cultural roots. One of those museums is Bin Jelmood House, built upon the house of a slave trader in the Gulf during the 1930s, whose goal is “to raise awareness and play a pivotal role in the global abolition of human exploitation.” Since the beginning, the exhibition at Bin Jelmood House emphasizes the crucial role played by Sheikha Moza (Sheikh Hamad’s wife) in opening a space for reflecting about one of the most important problems facing humanity today, that of slavery. Overall, this exhibition house makes the case that contemporary rulers of Qatar are in the right side of history, because they stand for those struggles aimed to bring progress to humanity, such as the abolition of slavery and exploitation.

The exhibition at Bin Jelmood House shows that slavery, mainly understood as taking away someone’s freedom, has been one of the most prominent forms of human exploitation and, as such, has been with us since thousands of years ago. Slavery is, within this understanding, a non-political problem almost inherent to human life that has an ancient and global character. After that, the exhibition proceeds to tell the story of slavery in the Indian Ocean, and introduces Islam as an abolitionist force that always opposed such form of human exploitation. The next section focuses on the issue of slavery in Qatar, paying special attention to the arrival of a number of slaves from East Africa to the Gulf countries during the nineteen and twentieth centuries. It is recalled that the region of Zanzibar, which used to be part of the Sultanate of Oman during the seventeen century and is today part of Tanzania, became an important centre for slave trade in the Indian Ocean and especially the Gulf. Finally, the exhibition focuses on some forms of human exploitation in contemporary world. While it did not provide a thoughtful discussion of where this problem came from, the exhibition showed that one of the obstacles to promote human progress has been to put an end to all forms of human exploitation.

Since noticing that slavery and other forms of human exploitation have accompanied humanity since ancient times would probably produce a sense of impotence and pessimism among the audience,

the exhibition at Bin Jelmood House stated that there is still hope this problem would come to an end. The reason for this is there has been forces for good throughout the history of humanity that have worked to abolish every form of human exploitation. In contemporary times, this force for good has formed an alliance under the umbrella of the United Nations. Moreover, this alliance draws on a long tradition of struggle led by prominent figures, such as former president of the United States Abraham Lincoln and South African Nobel Prize Nelson Mandela, as well as some non-government organizations that had been recognized by the UN for their efforts in favor of humanity.

In this force for good, one could find Sheikha Moza bint Nasser al Missned, current Emir's mother and chairperson of Qatar Foundation, who supported financially those efforts. At the entrance of the exhibition house, one can find a phrase attribute to her, according to which, "freedom is not an attribute specific to just one civilization, but is a human value, one that I believe is the driving force behind the making of human history." Accordingly, the legacy of Sheikha Moza to human civilization would be equitable to those of heroic figures, such as Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela. Put simply, this exhibition showed that contemporary Qatari rulers carried with them the highest moral standards of human civilization because they were convinced of the need to put an end to slavery.



Figure 6.2. Image of Sheikha Moza, below a phrase attributed to Nelson Mandela, shown at the entrance of Bin Jelmood House, Msheireb Proect at Doha's downtown in February 2017. Photo taken by Erick Viramontes.

Similar to the temporary exhibition on Muhammad Ali, the exhibition at Bin Jelmood House presents Qatar's rulers, especially Sheikha Moza, as embodying the core values of human civilization. This exhibition introduces a problem that, according to its own narrative, has been present throughout the entire history of humanity: namely, slavery. Since it has been an almost natural characteristic of human history, this particular account reminds, slavery has also been present in Qatar, which is testified by the history of the building hosting the exhibition house. In spite of that, the visitor is reminded of the existence of a human coalition, comprised mainly by heroic figures and respectable institutions that have been fighting to put an end to slavery. Accordingly, one member of such coalition is Sheikha Moza, who is credited with the opening of this exhibition house and whose conviction and principles are in line with those of other prominent members of the coalition against slavery. In this way, contemporary Qatari rulers are presented as enlightened leaders who, as was the case with their predecessors, have the virtue to be in the right side of history.

Temporary exhibitions of Qatar Museums, such as that devoted to Muhammad Ali, and the exhibition houses that fall under the authority of Qatar Foundation, such as Msheireb's Bin Jelmood House, are sites where the discourse on the nation is displayed. In those sites, one defining feature of the state-controlled discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar is pushed forward: namely, the legitimacy of Qatar's rulers to decide on the nation's future. Because of their strong attachment to the values of human civilization, it is asserted, Qatar's ruling elite is part of a force for good that cannot but make correct decisions on the nation's behalf. Due to their subjection to a normative dimension comprised by the values of human civilization, Qatari rulers are then enlightened rulers that do not make arbitrary judgements. For this reason, the discourse on national identity leads to think, they are the ones who can decide on the path the nation should follow over the coming decades.

The discourse on Qatar's national identity displayed in the sites looked at in this research provides clues for understanding why the government's judgement regarding what is good for the nation should not be called into question and why the ruling elite is invested with the right and capacity to make decisions on behalf of an entire society. As explained in the previous section, the first answer to such a question has to do with the historical record of the royal family, which has placed them in the right side of history as enlightened rulers. For this reason, their capacity to judge what is good for the nation is not in doubt. The second way in which this happens is, as the following discussion will show, through presenting the particular branch of Al Thani family that is now in power as possessors of a hidden capacity to make the right decision on the nation's behalf. This hidden capacity is a wisdom that has been, according to this discourse, an outstanding feature of Al Thani's rule since the early nineteenth century. Its very existence should be enough to dispel any concern regarding the suitability of the decisions made by contemporary Qatari rulers on the nation's behalf.

The wisdom with which Al Thani have been entrusted points towards a historical legacy that makes them the most suitable people for leading the nation. This historical legacy has at its centre the struggle for self-determination and the leadership of an emerging nation carried out by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani during the late-nineteen century. Accordingly, Sheikh Jassim, the founder (*Mu'assis*) of the state of Qatar, was the recipient of a wisdom that allowed him to unify all the tribes of the Qatari peninsula, and fight back the Ottomans by the end of the nineteenth century. This same wisdom allowed rulers in the twentieth century to develop Qatar into what it is today. Thus, the discourse maintains, the inner circle of Al Thani family carries the wisdom that manifested in bravery and leadership during the late-nineteen century, as well as smartness and innovation during the twentieth. Such a condition turns them into natural rulers, and suggest only they know how to manage the country's affairs.

### 6.3.1 *Al Thani's wisdom and the embracement of reform*

In a period of reform, pushing forward such an account on the relation between previous and current rulers is especially relevant because it provides an answer to the question of why certain changes are being enforced and why a given group of people is entitled to make such decisions on the nation's behalf. The historical legacy held by the current ruling elite is a powerful story for explaining, not only why the inner circle of Al Thani family should remain in power, but also why they have decided to use that power in certain ways. This story explains the reasons for promoting the transformation of society into a pro-market force, the transgression on the part of the state of the blurry dividing line between the private and public realms, and the introduction of new elements in society's relation with the nation's natural resources. In this way, the sacrifices and changes that the nation demands from its subjects are justified because they come directly from Qatar's leadership, who are allegedly the contemporary recipients of Al Thani's wisdom. Since this wisdom led to the creation of an independent and developed political entity, one is led to think, it must also illuminate the minds of the current rulers of Qatar to decide on the path their nation should follow.

The wording of QNV 2030 itself, which locates the origins of the reformist agenda in the genius of the royal family, might give rise to questions regarding the right and the capacity of the ruling elite to decide on the path the nation should follow over the coming decades. The argument of this chapter is that the specific understanding of Qatar's national identity this research has focused on addresses such potential questions by depicting the ruling elite in a certain way. Specifically, alongside highlighting their place in the right side of history, Al Thani are depicted as being the possessors of a wisdom that has been transmitted from one generation of rulers to the other. Thus, the issue of legitimacy within this discourse is not a timeless understanding of Al Thani's rule whose aim is to justify their stay in power. Rather, it is a temporal contention providing specific answers to localized questions that might emerge in historically bounded contexts. In this case, the question of legitimacy

is related with the implementation of the government's reformist agenda and the extraction of social power that is needed in order to carry on the transformations included in such an agenda.

### *6.3.2 Sheikh Jassim's wisdom and the struggle for independence*

While the discourse on national identity in Qatar does not mention the origins of such a wisdom, it nonetheless locates certain events as landmarks in the history of Al Thani's rule over Qatar. Due to their role in this story, these events become then manifestations of Al Thani's wisdom. In this sense, one of the most important manifestation of it took place, according to this discourse, in the late nineteenth and early twenty century, during the reign of Sheikh Jassim bin Muhammad Al Thani. This event unfolded during the period of Ottoman rule over the Qatari peninsula, and refers to the fight against Ottoman authorities by a group of military men led by Sheikh Jassim. Thus, one of the earliest manifestations of this wisdom, and probably the most important of them, took place at the end of the nineteenth century, when Sheikh Jassim led the struggle for Qatar's independence against the more powerful and far superior Ottoman army.

As "the Founder" of modern Qatar, Sheikh Jassim is considered as one of this country's natural rulers because of his devotion, his religious instruction at the hands of renowned Islamic scholars, and his belonging to a lineage of noble people. The celebrations on the National Day, which are held annually in the day Sheikh Jassim came to power, are an unparalleled opportunity to push forward such an account. Accordingly, during his childhood in Fuwairat, in the northeast of Qatar, Sheikh Jassim "received his education at the hands of religious scholars who taught him Quran and its sciences, such as *Fiqh* and *Shariah*." Moreover, his capacity to rule came from his great qualities, such as "prudence, generosity and exercise of sound policy, bestowed upon him by Almighty Allah", and from his lineage as a member of Wahebbba tribe, which "gave birth to a large number of celebrities in knowledge and courage" (Our History, QND Website). In this way, the discourse on the nation recalls

by that time Sheikh Jassim Al Thani was the natural ruler of Qatar because of his divinely endowed and culturally rooted right to rule. He was, by then, the possessor of Al Thani's wisdom.

Accordingly, Sheikh Jassim's wisdom led him to envision the path that his people should follow: pursuance of nationhood through unifying the different, and sometimes conflicting, tribes in the Qatari peninsula, and fighting back the ambitious Ottoman authorities. The discourse maintains he was not simply responsive to the external challenges, but he was rather assertive and decided to reach his goals on the nation's behalf. Thus, when discussing the National Day's importance, it is recalled that Sheikh Jassim "was keen on unifying the Qatari Peninsula and safeguarding the interests of its people in the darkest of times ever witnessed by this part of the world." Similarly, it is asserted, Sheikh Jassim "believed he and his country had a mission to maintain the religious and intellectual importance of the region" (Day Importance, QND Website). Founding a unified and independent nation was the manifestation of Sheikh Jassim's wisdom during the late-nineteen and early-twentieth centuries. Through such endeavours, the naturalness of Al Thani's capacity to define the nation's future becomes tangible and observable.

Sheikh Jassim's oeuvre becomes in this way the most remote vestige of the historical legacy endowed to the Al Thani family. It is a reminder of the good outcomes that are obtained when the commands of this wise leadership are followed. Illustrative of this is a reflection endorsed by the Qatari government on commemoration of the National Day:

The values we have inherited from Shaikh Jasim Bin Muhammad Bin Thani and our early ancestors reinforce our resolve to keep our country indomitable and strong, *a proponent of reform*, a defender of the oppressed, and a catalyst for resolving conflicts and spreading peace. By God's will, we shall be able to achieve these noble objectives because we –the leadership and the people – are in harmony, united in solidarity, and fully understand the local, Arab, Islamic and global legacy entrusted to us by the advent of Shaikh Jasim at the glorious dawn of our united country (Day Importance, QND Website, emphasis added).

This quote illustrates the early struggle for independence and the contemporary efforts at reform are presented as sharing a common denominator: the wisdom of Qatar's leadership. For this reason, no doubts should exist in the sense that this is the right path to follow.

### *6.3.3 Contemporary rulers as inheritors of such wisdom*

In contemporary times, the possessors of such wisdom are the current rulers: namely, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (former Qatar's Emir) and his nuclear family. According to the discourse on national identity, they are the recipients of that intangible force that allowed Sheikh Jassim to found a unified and independent nation in the past. This wisdom came to them because of their inheritance and their lineage, which is directly connected to the Founder himself. In recent years, the current ruling elite has used both national commemorations and sites of cultural production to make that linkage more explicit. Thus, in 2007, the Emir issued a decree to mark the day of Sheikh Jassim's accession to power as the National Day. Also, in 2010 the construction of a brand-new national museum began around the building of the Old Emiri Palace, which had been built in the early twentieth century by one of Sheikh Jassim's descendants. These gestures are powerful political symbols aimed to explain how the Al Thani's wisdom was transferred to the current rulers of Qatar, which also provides with a sense of continuity that merges past and present in a prolonged time.

However, as with the case of Sheikh Jassim, alleging possession of wisdom is not enough as there has to be some tangible referents that demonstrate the practical implications of such a mystical force. For this reason, the figure of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (current Emir of Qatar) and his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani is present everywhere in Doha, especially in those sites where the country's progress and development is more clearly attested. One of the most illustrative images is that which depicts both men standing in front of the modern, luxurious and enlightened Doha's skyline. Within the modernist imaginary surrounding Qatar's leadership, there is hardly a better

reminder of progress and development than the tall and shining buildings standing upon formerly deserted land. Another popular image is that which shows one of those men kissing or holding the FIFA World Cup trophy. In this way, both Tamim and Hamad are presented as the architects of modern Qatar, which aims to become an undeniable sign that they are the contemporary holders of the Al-Thani's historical wisdom.



Figure 6.3. A poster in Souq Waqif (Doha's downtown) showing former Qatari Emir, Hamad Al Thani, holding the FIFA World Cup Trophy. Photo taken by Erick Viramontes in September 2015.

The parade held every year during the celebrations on the National Day is also a case in point. On this occasion, in the anniversary of The Founder's accession to power a crowd gathers throughout the Corniche, the main road in Doha's downtown, to celebrate the Qatari nation. A series of powerful symbols are displayed in the parade. The particular urban setting in which this event takes place is one

of them. The Corniche, which runs around a blue bay, brings together all that which is said to characterize Qatar's successful present. The tall and shining skyscrapers at one extreme of the road represent Qatar's undeniable embracement of modernity. Meanwhile, at the other extreme, traditional gathering places and sites for the preservation of heritage, such as *Souq Waqif* and the Museum of Islamic Art, are symbols of the surviving traditions. At the center of all these celebrations are current rulers of Qatar, especially the current Emir and his father, who are attributed with the capacity to modernize the country, while preserving its traditions at the same time. The wisdom of contemporary rulers is then the reason for Qatar's present success, which balances between rich cultural traditions and modernization.

To sum up, the second way in which the discourse on national identity sustains the claim that Al Thani family are Qatar's natural rulers is by presenting them as possessors of a wisdom that has its origins in the qualities bestowed upon the founding father by God. This wisdom gave Sheikh Jassim the capacity to unify Qatari tribes under his leadership and to fight back the Ottomans at the end of the nineteenth century. It also was transmitted to the founder's descendants, the contemporary rulers of Qatar, who are, the discourse reminds us, the architects of modern Qatar and the responsible of this country's material success. Due to the possession of this wisdom, Qatar's ruling elite has the right to decide on the nation's behalf, and no one should dare to doubt the future they have identified for the country is also the correct one. For this reason, the discourse asserts, naturalness of Al Thani's rule stems from their possession of that magical wisdom and the projects they are putting into place should be embraced because they derive from the nation's natural leadership.

#### 6.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The discussion in this chapter focused on one of the claims made by the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar as displayed in those sites this research looked at. This claim can be summarized

in the phrase “these are our natural rulers,” and makes the case for Al Thani family as being the natural rulers of the Qatari nation because of their enlightened character and their possession of a wisdom. Pushing forward such a claim is especially relevant in a period of reform, when the government initiatives need endorsement and support by the general population. In this sense, accepting belonging to the nation means accepting its natural rulers and, most importantly, the initiatives they have launched to define the nation’s future.

As the discussion above showed the relation between political legitimacy and the nation is hardly an exclusive phenomenon of the state of Qatar. Rather, by being two of the foundational concepts of modernity, legitimacy and the nation have always been intertwined. The aspirations of a group of people are recreated in the language of the nation, and the authorities’ right to rule, as well as challenges to their authority, are usually framed in national terms. As a modern nation-state, Qatar is not the exception and the discourse on the nation includes also notions of political legitimacy. However, the innovative aspect of this discussion lies in the particular understanding of political legitimacy that becomes possible in a period when a massive transformation of society is underway. In this sense, the discourse on the nation has to make clear who, and for what reasons, has the right to decide on the nation’s behalf.

In contemporary Qatar, making clear who and for what reasons has the right and capacity to decide on the nation’s future is a critical issue. Amidst the implementation of a far-reaching agenda for reform, which touches upon many sectors in society, justifying why a particular group of people is entitled with the right to make such an important judgement is a necessary task. The possibility to formulate such questions is opened by the QNV 2030 itself, which presents Al Thani family as the leaders who will rightly decide on the path the nation should follow over the coming decades. Thus, it has been argued in this chapter, the discourse on national identity provides an answer to such questions by emphasizing the righteousness and suitability of Al-Thani’s leadership. In conjunction with the claims regarding who the makers of the nation are and how an ideal national society looks like, the

claim “these are our natural rulers” provides with a historically-specific meaning to the concept of Qatar’s national identity displayed in those sites looked at in this research.

Given that *Qatar National Vision 2030* is a particular manifestation of the expansion of neoliberal rationality in the Third World, the claim “these are our natural rulers” is also related with the “vernacularisation” of neoliberal rationality. The introduction to this chapter emphasized the flavouring of neoliberalism and its corresponding governing techniques by the language and practices rooted in a local context is critical for its expansion as a global doctrine. Thus, in the case of Qatar, the “vernacularisation” of neoliberalism takes the form of presenting this vision as an exclusively national development. In this sense, the discourse on the nation claims, the agenda for reform is but the latest manifestation of the will of the natural leaders, who are able to transmit the national genius into the definition of the path that society should follow through their enlightened character and wisdom.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Following approaches to the nation-as-discourse, which look at the nation as an arena of contestation, the main question motivating this research was what kind of discursive transformations and debates over the postcolonial nation are taking place in the twenty-first century. Thus, this thesis aimed to start a discussion on the reformulation of the postcolonial nation amidst the advance of neoliberal rationality and their corresponding frameworks of global governance in contemporary postcolonial world. For doing so, this thesis drew on the critique to the nation enacted from the field of postcolonial scholarship amidst the salience of anticolonial movements in the Third World and the ensuing emergence of independent nation-states in Asia and Africa. This thesis' aim was then too look at what Chatterjee called "the spiritual realm" of national culture in order to analyze the transformations and contestation it has gone through in a contemporary situation that has apparently meant the dismissal or obsolescence of the postcolonial nation.

In order to start such a discussion, this research looked at a specific iteration of the postcolonial nation that has been taking place since the mid-1990s in a Middle Eastern country, the state of Qatar. Since the coming to power of Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in 1995 and his succession by his son, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in 2013, several state-sponsored initiatives have taken place in Qatar aimed to instill a sense of national pride among the population. These include the creation of a national museum, the construction of national archives, and the enactment of all those symbols, such as the national anthem, that give Qatar its distinctive national character. These developments provide then the empirical material that made possible this discussion on the state of the postcolonial nation. However, rather than looking at developments in Qatar as a particular instance of a broader phenomenon, this thesis provides concrete guidelines to grapple with that question. Its purpose is not to generalize Qatar's experience, but to provide arguments on the way contemporary iterations on the postcolonial nation can become an object of sociological inquiry.

This thesis addressed the question on the transformations through which the postcolonial nation is going through by looking at a peculiar postcolonial setting, where ambitious plans for economic reform, under the name of *Qatar National Vision 2030*, are being implemented. Through the creation of a society, under the model of a knowledge-based economy, that is functional to the logic of the free-market economy, *QNV 2030* is a local manifestation of the expansion of neoliberal rationality and its corresponding frameworks of governance in the Gulf region. Furthermore, the particular iteration of national identity this research looked at is taking place in a historical context where migration, allowed for the establishment of colonial relations and the integration of the Gulf into the imperial network spanning throughout the Indian Ocean, have produced a country where nationals are a minority. Finally, they are taking place in a context where anticolonial sentiment is relatively weak, which is testified by the absence of strong anticolonial movements and which allow for the construction of the concept of self-reflective postcolonial nationalism.

The discourse on the Qatari nation displayed in museums, commemorations and those other sites this research looked at, is responsive to the particular postcolonial condition mentioned above. Thus, performance and materialization of the nation taking place in those sites reformulates the core of national identity in order to make it consistent with the demands of the plans for economic reform. In other words, the aforementioned cultural initiatives reinvent what it means to be Qatari in line with the model of society demanded by the integration into the neoliberal frameworks of global governance. At the same time, they set the lines between those who do and do not belong to the nation, normalizing a demographic situation that has been a distinctive feature of Qatar's postcolonial history, where nationals comprise a small minority of the population. The discourse on the nation continues to be in this case an integral part of the political imaginary in that it articulates the new reformist aims and the longstanding features of Qatar's postcolonial history.

This thesis' main contribution is that it shows the postcolonial nation continues to be iterated in the twenty-first century due to its capacity to link global trends in relation to the governance of

societies with locally rooted historical processes. The capacity of the discourse of the nation to evoke collective emotions in pursuance of a perceived common cause provides then the language to articulate global trends according to a local imaginary. This thesis shows that sometimes the advance of neoliberal rationality and their effects of the integration of society into the logics of the free-market economy does not necessarily preclude the instilment of a sense of pride about the nation. Rather, the progress of neoliberal governmentality and bio-politics can actually rely on a particular reformulation of national identity in order to flavor global trends with a local language. Still, the discourse on the nation has to deal with postcolonial particularities dependent upon specific historical contexts.

The articulation of neoliberal rationality and its corresponding frameworks of global governance with a locally-rooted political imaginary, which has been termed by Gkintidis (2014) as the “vernacularization of neoliberalism,” takes place in Qatar in the discourse on the nation performed and materialized in museums, exhibition houses, national celebrations and commemorations. As the preceding chapters have shown, this discourse is comprised by a series of claims that reformulate and reproduce a particular meaning of Qatar’s national identity. In what follows, a deeper reflection will be provided on the relation between the claims on Qatar’s national identity discussed in the previous chapters and the distinctive elements that make Qatar an appealing case study. After doing so, it will be discussed some further areas of research opened by this thesis.

Before doing so, it is important to make a clarification regarding the appearance of religion in the discourse on Qatar’s national identity analyzed in this thesis. In this sense, diversity within Islam has been always a defining feature, which in the case of Qatar is exemplified by the prominence of Sunni Islam among many possible forms of confessions, internal divisions, loyalties, interpretations of the sacred sources, and systems of beliefs. Thus, sometimes it becomes necessary to differentiate what confessional group within Islam one is refereeing to when using the more generic denominations “Muslim” or “Islamic”. However, making this distinction was not critical in this thesis as it might even contradict some of the arguments it puts forward. Therefore, while the particular form of Islam that

is integrated into the official discourse on Qatar's national identity is only one among many possible manifestations of the Muslim faith, the sites looked at in this research present it as the only possible form of Islam.

The vagueness inherent to the use of the label "Muslim," rather than "Sunni Muslim," might be an intentional move aimed to present the official form of Islam in Qatar as the only possible form of Islam. Otherwise, by making a distinction between Sunni and Shi's Islam, the discourse on national identity would recognize that theirs is only one among many possible forms of Islam, which would then pose the question of religious legitimacy. This is clearly exemplified in the text of Qatar's constitution, whose first article describes Qatar as an Arab state where "Islam," rather than "Sunni Islam," is the official religion and "Shari'a law," rather than a particular school of thought, is the main source of legislation. For this reason, whenever religion was referred to by the discourse on Qatar's national identity in this thesis, the more generic denomination "Muslim" or "Islam" was used, rather than the more specific "Sunni Islam or Muslim."

## 7.1 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM

Since the beginning, this thesis emphasized the historically specific character of national identity and the idea that, in order to analyze the nation as discourse, it was necessary to contextualize those features that are said to define the nation's essence. For the particular iteration of national identity this research looked at, that of contemporary Qatar, one historical factor is especially important. This historical factor is that the projects aimed to instill a sense of national pride among the population emerged at the same time the government, coordinated with international organizations, experts and corporations, is implementing an agenda for reform known as *Qatar National Vision 2030*. The main objective of this reformist agenda is to insert Qatar into the global economy as something more than provider of hydrocarbons through turning the country into a knowledge-based economy. Thus, when analyzing

the discourse on the contemporary Qatari nation, the fact that currently an agenda for reform is being implemented in the country must be kept in mind. This intellectual task will help to highlight the historical character of the Qatari nation and the particular power relations that are being reproduced through its essential identity.

The period of reform that Qatar has been going through since early-2000s is thus an important consideration when interpreting the meaning of contemporary Qatar's national identity. This consideration opens the possibility to reflect about the particular meaning of the iteration of Qatar's national identity that has been taking place in this country over the last two decades. This consideration not only opens the possibility to think about the kind of claims this particular understanding of the nation puts forward, but also the way in which these claims relate with broader power relations. In this sense, one of the main constitutive elements of contemporary Qatar's national identity is the emphasis on those episodes that are considered as breakthroughs in Qatar's national history, and the external features of that community that was the main protagonist in each of those episodes. This constitutive element has been named here as the claim "who makes the nation?" and has been identified as a salient claim displayed through those sites of cultural production this research looked at.

The claim on the makers of the nation relates with the reformist agenda in that it iterates a particular history of the nation that can be repeated in contemporary times. One of the main outstanding characteristics of Qatar's national history is, according to this particular account of the nation, the challenges the national community had to go through at several moments. However, the national community was allegedly decided to face those challenges in order to overcome the obstacles to the emerging nation. For this reason, the high moral authority and the capacity to fight for the nation despite difficulties of the time is, according to this claim, one of the main characteristics of the national community. By emphasizing this feature, the claim "who makes the nation?" paves the ground for exhorting the contemporary national community to address the challenges the nation is facing in present times. This is then a critical claim in order to sustain the current plans for reform.

The claim on the makers of the nation intervenes in the field of collective memory and brings about a particular story according to which the ancestors of contemporary Qataris made an important effort in building and keeping the nation alive. Accordingly, members of the contemporary national community should follow the example of their ancestors and work hard in order to overcome the present challenges to the nation. This challenges have to do with envisioning a future for the nation beyond hydrocarbons and embracing the strategies defined by the government in the QNV 2030. This claim includes an ethical dimension according to which contemporary Qataris should follow the example of their ancestors and should endeavor in order to keep alive the nation they created with so much effort. Put simply, this claim provides an emotional component to the government's invitation to endeavour in order to attain the goals of the reformist agenda.

However, equating contemporary challenges with previous struggles on the nation's behalf is not the only way in which the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar sustains the plans for economic reform in this country. The second claim on the nation displayed in those sites looked at in this research –namely, “this is our model of society”- is also related in a subtle way with the plans for economic reform that are being currently implemented in Qatar. In this sense, the discourse on national identity set limits to the field of collective imagination in order to dictate how the ideal national society should look like. At the center of this imagined national society are two informal institutions: traditional and cohesive families and assertive and entrepreneurial individuals. Thus, by presenting these two institutions as constitutive features of the nation, this discourse set the limits on the ideal behavior, attitudes and forms of organization that a proud and ideal national society should embrace.

The claim “this is our model of society” sustains the plans for economic reform because it turns the two social institutions in which the QNV 2030, traditional families and assertive individuals, into defining features of being Qatari. Moreover, those families and individuals who considered themselves as part of Qatar's national community should embrace those specific forms of individual behavior and association. Thus, strong and cohesive families whose members perform traditional roles,

such as “male father” and “female mother”, play a double role as critical institutions for the production of the human capital demanded by the knowledge-based economy, on the one hand, and a defining feature of Qatar’s ideal nation, on the other. Similarly, healthy individuals with entrepreneurial mentality and a Western-oriented education play also a double role as fundamental units of the human capital demanded by the reformist agenda and the most outstanding characteristic of Qatar’s national society. This is the second way in which the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar sustains the plans for economic reform that are being currently implemented in this country.

Finally, the third way in which the discourse on national identity relates with the reformist agenda envisioned in QNV 2030 is through its third claim “these are our natural rulers.” Through this claim the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar presents the role of Al Thani family in the nation as the producer of its natural rulers. In other words, this discourse presents royal family’s rule as a defining feature of Qatar’s national identity, without which the nation could not be conceived. However, Al-Thani’s natural rule does not derive from nowhere, but it rather comes from two observable and identifiable sources. The first is the possession by Al Thani of a wisdom that has allowed Qatar’s rulers to make the right decision on the nation’s behalf, and which is transmitted from one generation to the other. The second of them is the enlightened character of Al Thani rulers, which is testified by their being in the right side of history. By making such assertions the discourse on national identity constructs the naturalness of the royal family’s rule, which also sustains the reformist agenda.

The claim “these are our natural rulers” made by the discourse on national identity relates with the reformist agenda in a similar way to the other two claims discussed above. Henceforth, this claim also sustains the plans for economic reform in Qatar through presenting Al Thani’s rule as natural. In other words, by presenting Al Thani’s rule as a defining feature of Qatar’s national identity this discourse makes clear the royal family is the one entitled to make decisions on the nation’s behalf. This reasoning applies also to the contemporary period, in which an ambitious reformist agenda is being

implemented that demands the involvement of all levels of society. According to this discourse, society should embrace QNV 2030 because it comes directly from Qatar's natural rulers, who are the inheritors of that wisdom that allowed their predecessors to make the right decisions on the nation's behalf and also because they share that enlightened character that places them at the right side of history. It is through such kind of claims that the discourse on national identity sustains the reformist agenda in contemporary Qatar.

## 7.2 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE EXCLUSION OF THE MAJORITY

Notwithstanding the relevance of the period of reform through which Qatar is going through since early-2000s, there are other factors that should be taken into account when contextualizing the iteration of the discourse on national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since the mid-1990s. One of these factors is the demographic condition, shared with other Arab States of the Gulf, which has rendered the national community to a status of minority since the emergence of Qatar as an independent state in 1971. Any discussion of national identity in Qatar, as with the rest of the Arab Gulf States, has to address the way national identity deals with this demographic condition, which has been an outstanding feature of colonialism and post colonialism in the Gulf. Such a discussion involves identity issues related with class, gender and race, as well as the way these influence the construction of the nation. For this reason, this analysis of contemporary national identity in Qatar has included the demography of nationals-as-minority as one of the historical and contextual elements that provide this case with distinctiveness.

More specifically, the relation between the contemporary discourse on Qatar's national identity and the aforementioned demographic condition lies in the demarcation between who is part of the national community and who is not. The discourse on national identity does this by making reference to a number of identity markers, such as language, names, clothing and customs, as the defining

features of Qatar's national community. These identity markers provide then an ethnic character to Qatar's national identity, which serves to exclude all those who do not have Arabic language as their mother tongue or cannot regard life in the desert as part of their own heritage. As this research showed, the reference to such ethnic identity markers is especially relevant in the elaboration and display of the claim on the makers of the nation. Here the makers of the nation since the mid-nineteen century are depicted as embodying the ethnicity that comprises the essence of Qatar's national identity. Arabic language, Muslim religion and the traditions of life in the desert are claimed as the most outstanding features of such an essence.

Moreover, the discourse on national identity also provides reasons to consider such an ethnic configuration as the essence of Qatar's national identity, and by so doing, to render the vast majority of the population to the status of non-nationals. This is also done by the claim "who makes the nation?" which depicts the makers of the nation as sharing only those identity makers that are said to constitute the essence of national identity. Thus, the loyal tribesmen, the brave military men and the petroleum worker share all that ethnic character that makes them Qatari. Some of their defining features are their devotion to Islam, their Arabic language and their organic relation with the desert. This claim makes clear why people with certain ethnicity can be considered as part of the national community. The answer is they are the only ones who have taken part in the building of the nation. Put simply, by making clear who and for what reasons can legitimately claim belonging to the national community, the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar normalizes Qatar's demographic condition since independence, which has rendered the vast majority of the population to the status of non-nationals.

Finally, a third theme made Qatar an appealing case study for scholarly debates on postcolonial nationalism in the twenty-first century Middle East. This third theme provided a justification to historicize and contextualize the specific iteration of national identity that has been taking place in Qatar since mid-1990s in order to enquire on the way the nation is constructed in such a context. This third theme refers to a historical particularity related with the way the colonial experience developed in the Gulf and, more specifically, in the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, which has allowed for the construction of the concept “self-reflective postcolonial nationalism”. In contrast to other parts of the colonial world, including the Middle East, anticolonial discourse did not become a prominent political theme during the decolonization period of Asia and Africa in the twentieth-century. Actually, the emergence of independent states in the Eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula was not the consequence of an anticolonial struggle, but it was rather the result of the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, which most leaders in the region openly opposed. Since one common feature of postcolonial nationalism is its antithetical character which places them in an opposing position with the colonial experience, the historical particularities of the case of Qatar help to reflect on the ways postcolonial nationalism is constructed and developed in a context where such anticolonial sentiment is not a prominent discourse.

Keeping in mind this historical particularity is important to analyze the particular iteration of the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar. This historical particularity is that in Qatar, as in the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf, the discourse on the nation did not rise to prominence as a response to a perceived subjugation to an external power, but was rather more related with the need to justify the existence of the independent state. Several questions emerge after taking into consideration this particularity, and most of them are related with enquiring on the role played by the colonial experience in the construction of the nation. Specifically, the question emerged on whether

anti-colonial imaginary plays an influential role in defining what the nation is, and whether the need to generate a distinctive identity from that ascribed by imperialism is a prominent nationalist subject as it has been in other colonial settings. These questions help to grasp the particularities of the Gulf and to reflect on the historical particularities of the discourse on national identity in Qatar.

In contrast to most experiences of postcolonial nationalism, anti-colonialism is not a prominent discursive resource that explains the nature of the postcolonial nation. In this sense, common themes in postcolonial nationalism observed elsewhere, such as the return to a “golden age” that was interrupted by colonialism and the definition of the “Other” in terms of foreign influences imported by colonialism are not defining features of Qatar’s national identity. Thus, rhetoric surrounding contemporary nationalist initiatives in Qatar emphasizes neither the return to a past period of greatness nor a cathartic move aimed to recover the purity of the nation by getting rid of the foreign influences brought about by colonialism. Thus, the case of Qatar shows the postcolonial nation does not necessarily have anti-colonialism as one of its defining features and is thus a good example of what has been called here “self-reflective postcolonial nationalism”.

However, in spite of the relative weakness of the anticolonial discourse in Qatar during and after the period of European colonialism and its ineffectual character in the subsequent emergence of an independent state, the contemporary discourse on national identity in Qatar still includes a history of subjugation and contestation to an external power. It is noteworthy the main subjugating power in this history is not the British Empire, which by early-twentieth century signed an agreement with Qatar’s rulers in order to integrate this country into a network of imperial relations in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Surprisingly, this period of history is mainly remembered as a positive step in the nation’s development, because it is thought as promoting the nation’s security at the expense of ceding a small degree of autonomy. Thus, the Qatari nation distinguishes itself from the Ottoman Empire, whose authorities are depicted as greedy and ambitious. For this reason, the origins of the nation are located even before the expansion of the Ottoman influence into the Qatari peninsula by the nineteenth

century through the restoration of sites that testify such history. Put simply, the anti-colonial character of Qatar's national identity derives more from this country's relation with the Ottoman Empire than with the British Empire.

Such anticolonial character of the Qatari nation is a prominent theme in one of the claims identified in this research as constitutive of contemporary Qatar's national identity: namely, "who makes the nation?" One of the episodes in the making of the nation was, according to this story, the struggle of some brave Qatari military men against the greedy and ambitious Ottoman officials, who were only interested in extracting resources from the Qatari peninsula, without any concern for the local population. Accordingly, in the battle of al-Wajbah in 1893, a small group of Qatari soldiers was able to defeat the powerful Ottoman army. This event is considered as a cornerstone in the nation's development because it allegedly produced a more confident nation that was entitled to decide on its own future without external intervention. This is a typical anticolonial nationalist claim that goes beyond the period of British supremacy and locates itself in the period of Ottoman expansion in the Arabian Peninsula. This particular claim demonstrated Qatar's national identity, in spite of its particular history, has still an anticolonial character due to its reliance on a colonial past.

That the Ottoman period is the one that gives content to the anti-colonial character of Qatar's national identity does not mean the period of British hegemony in the Gulf is absent from such account or that it is only seen as a positive development. To be fair, there are some developments within the period of British hegemony in the Gulf that are integrated into the anti-colonial account of the discourse on national identity in contemporary Qatar. One of them is the subordinated relation of Qatari workers with respect to their British patrons in the oil industry. Thus, the claim on the makers of the nation recalls, while the Qatari petroleum workers made a big effort to develop the oil industry, their foreign patrons would take most of the profits with them with much less effort. According to this claim, this humiliating situation ended with the nationalization of the oil industry in the 1970s, which is considered as another important episode in the path to nationhood in Qatar. This account

reinforces the argument that despite the discourse on the nation did not rise to prominence as a consequence of a deep-rooted anticolonial sentiment, the contemporary discourse on national identity in Qatar still has an anti-colonial character as the rest of the nationalisms in the colonial world.

#### 7.4 FURTHER AREAS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INQUIRY

The previous paragraphs discussed the contributions this research made to several areas of social and political inquiry, such as the field of postcolonial nationalism and the study of national identity in the Middle East. After having done so, it becomes important to reflect on the new areas of research this research has opened. In what follows, it will be discussed what kind of questions can be asked by building on the arguments on Qatar's national identity this thesis has put forward. Notwithstanding this thesis has put forward some conclusive arguments regarding the construction of national identity in the postcolonial Middle East of the twenty-first century, it has also paved the ground for formulating new questions regarding such concerns. Two set of questions will be discussed here. In order to continue reflecting on the process of constructing national identity in a historically specific environment, the first of them expands on the analysis of the case this research focused. Meanwhile, the second looks at other instances of iteration of national identities in order to stretch the arguments extracted from an exclusive focus on the iteration of national identity in contemporary Qatar.

Deepening the study of the discourse on the nation in contemporary Qatar can offer insights on the contingent character of national identity, and the political struggle that emerges out of its definition at a given historical juncture. However, this is not the only area where this research can expand. Another set of questions this thesis gives rise to has to do with the comparative value of its conclusions; that is, the way this particular form of performing and materializing the nation develops in other instances of the postcolonial Middle East in the twenty-first century. An obvious starting point for such an intellectual task is looking at the way instances of national identity construction emerge

and develop within the Gulf Cooperation Council. The countries comprising this regional organization, which have been here referred to as Arab Gulf States in this thesis, display a number of similarities that invite a deeper reflection on the way specific forms of performing and materializing the nation are transferred from one context to another.

To begin with, contemporary Arab Gulf States share a number of similarities with Qatar, which then give rise to the question of whether the nation is performed and materialized in the same ways and through the same technologies than those identified through this research. Answering such question would contribute to the development of a research agenda on discourses on national identity in the postcolonial Middle East in the twenty-first century by looking into the persistence of trends throughout the Gulf. These trends, which are common features among the Arab States of the Gulf, have to do with the peculiarities of European colonialism in the eastern Arabian Peninsula, with the specific demographic conditions in the countries from the region and with the specific process of nation-building they have gone through since the turn of the twenty-first century. Since these three features are the ones which make Qatar an appealing case study for scholarly debates on discourses on postcolonial national identity, the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf have also the same potential to contribute to such discussions.

Regarding the peculiar history of European colonialism in the eastern Arabian Peninsula, it is noteworthy that most Arab Gulf States did not become independent as a direct consequence of a strong anticolonial struggle within their territories. The particular history around the emergence as an independent nation-state in Qatar can be also said to be an outstanding feature of the neighboring countries, especially Bahrain, Oman and UAE, which attained independence after the withdrawal of British presence in the Gulf in 1971. This history is somewhat different in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in that the former emerged as an independent state in the 1930s, as a consequence of an alliance between tribal and religious leaders, while the latter did so in 1961, partly as a result of nationalist claims. This peculiar history, where the emergence of independent nation-states does not include as

one of its defining features the open and violent confrontation between nationalist movements and imperial authorities, invite a deeper reflection on how discourses on national identity tackle the issue of colonialism. Specifically, it opens a discussion on whether, as in the case of Qatar, the discourse on national identity in the Arab Gulf States also emphasizes stories of struggle against foreign powers in previous historical phases, such as the period of Ottoman expansion.

Apart from a shared history of European colonialism, the Arab States of the Gulf shared another similarity not necessarily divorced from the previous one: namely, a demographic condition in which a vast amount of the population is rendered to the status of non-nationals. In some of these states, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, this demographic condition gets to the point where the national community is actually a minority among the population. This demographic trend is somewhat attenuated in Saudi Arabia and Oman, where there is a more proportionate ratio between nationals and non-nationals. However, the iteration of the discourse on national identity in the Arab Gulf States has to deal with this demographic condition that is, to a greater or lesser extent, an outstanding trend throughout the region. Henceforth, further research could enquire on the way the discourse on the nation deals with this demographic condition and whether exclusion lines are established in the same way as they are established in Qatar through a clear distinction between those who made and did not make the nation.

The last similarity between Qatar and the rest of the Arab States of the Gulf has to do with the process of nation-building most of them have undergone since the turn of the twenty-first century, which has at its core the launching of an agenda for reform. As explained in this thesis' introduction, these agendas for reform are generally named as "national visions," and they have been usually designed in coordination with international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, directorates of multinational corporations and groups of international experts on global finance and economics. At the core of these agendas is the aim to reduce these countries' economic dependency on oil revenues and, consequently, transform their role in the global economy

through an absorption of the logics of the free-market economy. Since the implementation of these agendas, which can take the form of a knowledge-based economy, as in the case of Qatar, or of any other diversification scheme, demands the participation of all levels of society, further research could enquire on the way the enforcement of these changes influence the discourse on the nation and whether the social institutions in which the reformist agenda relies are depicted, as it is the case in Qatar, as defining features of national identity. These potential areas of sociological inquiry have been made possible by the arguments advanced in this thesis, which relate to the particular iteration of national identity amidst the advance of neoliberal rationality into a peculiar postcolonial setting.

## APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF DOCUMENTS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

### LEGISLATIONS

| No. | Document                                                                                                                      | Type of document | Author        | Date             |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1   | Law no. 21 of 1996 on the National Anthem                                                                                     | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | December 5, 1996 |
| 2   | Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar                                                                                  | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | June 08, 2004    |
| 3   | Law no. 38 of 2005 on the acquisition of Qatari nationality                                                                   | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | October 30, 2005 |
| 4   | Law no. 22 of 2006 Promulgating the “Family Law”                                                                              | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | June 29, 2006    |
| 5   | Law no. 11 of 2007 considering the power assumption day of Sheikh Jassim Bin Mohamed bin Thani as a National Day of the State | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | June 21, 2007    |
| 6   | Emiri Resolution no. 2008 of 2011 on Sports Day                                                                               | Legislation      | Emir of Qatar | 2011             |

### DOCUMENTS RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENT

| No. | Document                                                             | Type of document        | Author                                       | Date          |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 7   | Qatar’s National Vision 2030                                         | Development Plan        | General Secretariat for Development Planning | October, 2008 |
| 8   | Education and training sector strategy 2011-2016 (Executive Summary) | Implementation Strategy | Ministry of Education and Training           | 2011          |

|    |                                                                               |                         |                                                 |                   |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 9  | Qatar's National Development Strategy 2011-2016                               | Implementation Strategy | General Secretariat for Development Planning    | March, 2011       |
| 10 | Sports sector strategy (2011-2016)                                            | Implementation strategy | Qatar Olympic Committee                         | July 2011         |
| 11 | Qatar National Tourism Sector Strategy                                        | Implementation Strategy | Qatar Tourism Authority                         | February 23, 2014 |
| 12 | Realising Qatar National Vision 2030, Qatar's Fourth Human Development Report | Report                  | Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics | June, 2015        |
| 13 | Turning Qatar into a Competitive Knowledge-Based Economy                      | Report                  | Government of Qatar                             | 2007              |

MATERIAL RELEASED BY NGOS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND STATE-RELATED AGENCIES

| No. | Document                                                                     | Type of document    | Author                 | Date              |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 14  | The Courtyard: Life as a Worker                                              | Exhibition          | Msheireb Properties    | Collected in 2015 |
| 15  | Msheireb Museums Booklet                                                     | Booklet             | Msheireb museums       | Collected in 2015 |
| 16  | Jassim Bin Mohammed Bin Thani: The Day of Solidarity, Loyalty and Honor 2008 | Website information | National Day Committee | 2008              |
| 17  | The Pearl                                                                    | Children's book     | National Day committee | 2009              |
| 18  | Masajid Tarikhuha 'Amaratuha Qatar: wa-                                      | Booklet             | National Day committee | 2009              |
| 19  | Fahad the Brave                                                              | Children's book     | National Day committee | 2009              |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                      |                    |                                 |                  |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 20 | Factsheet about Heritage Sites                                                                                                                                       | Online publication | Qatar Museums                   | 2014             |
| 21 | Olympics Past & Present: A Journey through the Exhibition                                                                                                            | YouTube video      | Qatar Sports Museums            | 2014             |
| 22 | Education for a New Era: Design and Implementation of K–12 Education Reform in Qatar                                                                                 | Report             | RAND Corporation                | 2007             |
| 23 | Sheikha Al Mayassa: Globalizing the local, localising the global                                                                                                     | YouTube video      | TedTalks                        | 2010             |
| 24 | Annex to the letter dated 2 December 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General | Official document  | United Nations General Assembly | December 3, 2004 |
| 25 | Fidyu Tawa'wi bi-Munasibah Yaum al-Usrah fi-Qatar                                                                                                                    | YouTube video      | Wifaq                           | April 12, 2017   |
| 26 | The Knowledge-Based Economy                                                                                                                                          | Official report    | OECD                            | 1996             |
| 27 | Film Waza'iqi: Batal wa-Risalah-Kartoon                                                                                                                              | Short film         | Al-Rayyan TV                    | 2012             |
| 28 | Developing Culturally Sensitive Parenting Material & Education Programs in Qatar: Focus Group Study                                                                  | Research proposal  | DIFI                            | 2016             |

#### INTERVIEWS OF QATAR'S HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS WITH MEDIA OUTLETS

| No. | Document                                                         | Type of document     | Author                           | Date          |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| 29  | “Qatari foreign minister discusses democratic moves, Saudi ties” | Interview transcript | British Broadcasting Corporation | June 24, 2005 |

|    |                                                                              |                      |                                  |                                  |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 30 | “A rare interview with Emir of Qatar”                                        | Interview transcript | The Charlie Rose show            | September 13, 2005               |
| 31 | “Qatari foreign minister defends Israel ties”                                | Interview transcript | British Broadcasting Corporation | September 27, 2005               |
| 32 | Interview transcript: Sheikh Hamad, Emir of Qatar                            | Interview Transcript | Financial Times                  | October 10, 2010                 |
| 33 | Interview with Qatari Amir on regional developments, ties with Israel        | Interview transcript | British Broadcasting Corporation | September 9, 2011                |
| 34 | Qatar’s Emir interview with Christiane Amanpour                              | Interview transcript | Cable News Network (CNN)         | September 25, 2014               |
| 35 | Qatari FM on ties with Iran, Turkey, says GCC states “immune to revolutions” | Interview transcript | British Broadcasting Corporation | February 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2015 |
| 36 | Lunch with the FT: Sheikh Hamad Bin-Jaber al-Thani                           | Interview transcript | Financial Times                  | April 15, 2016                   |

#### INTERVIEWS BY RESEARCHER

| No. | Document                                                                            | Type of document     | Author           | Date             |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 37  | Interview 1. Editor-in-chief of Qatar-based newspaper.                              | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | October 3, 2015  |
| 38  | Interview 2. High-level official from the embassy of Kuwait in Qatar                | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | October 10, 2015 |
| 39  | Interview 3. Qatar-based expert on museology in the Arabian Peninsula and director. | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | October 27, 2015 |

|    |                                                                       |                      |                  |                   |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 40 | Interview 4. Dean of Qatar-based private university.                  | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | October 27, 2015  |
| 41 | Interview 5. High-level official from the embassy of Sudan in Qatar   | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | November 3, 2015  |
| 42 | Interview 6. High-level official from the embassy of Sudan in Qatar   | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | November 3, 2015  |
| 43 | Interview 7. Director of Qatar-based, private research centre.        | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | November 30, 2015 |
| 44 | Interview 8. Advisor to the committee of the National Museum of Qatar | Interview notes      | Erick Viramontes | February 7, 2017  |
| 45 | Interview 9. Director of Qatar-based, state-related research centre.  | Interview notes      | Erick Viramontes | February 7, 2017  |
| 46 | Interview 10. Former director of Qatar National Museum                | Interview transcript | Erick Viramontes | February 20, 2017 |
| 47 | Interview 11. Director of Qatar-based, private research centre.       | Interview notes      | Erick Viramontes | February 22, 2017 |

#### FIELD NOTES

| No. | Document         | Type of document | Author           | Date          |
|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 48  | Diary note 01/43 | Field note       | Erick Viramontes | June 27, 2015 |
| 49  | Diary note 02/43 | Field note       | Erick Viramontes | June 29, 2015 |

|    |                  |            |                  |                    |
|----|------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 50 | Diary note 03/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | July 31, 2015      |
| 51 | Diary note 04/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | August 31, 2015    |
| 52 | Diary note 05/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 01, 2015 |
| 53 | Diary note 06/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 02, 2015 |
| 54 | Diary note 07/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 04, 2015 |
| 55 | Diary note 08/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 05, 2015 |
| 56 | Diary note 09/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 06, 2015 |
| 57 | Diary note 10/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 08, 2015 |
| 58 | Diary note 11/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 09, 2015 |
| 59 | Diary note 12/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 10, 2015 |
| 60 | Diary note 13/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 12, 2015 |
| 61 | Diary note 14/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 13, 2015 |
| 62 | Diary note 15/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 14, 2015 |
| 63 | Diary note 16/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 16, 2015 |
| 64 | Diary note 17/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 17, 2015 |
| 65 | Diary note 18/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 20, 2015 |
| 66 | Diary note 19/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 21, 2015 |

|    |                  |            |                  |                    |
|----|------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 67 | Diary note 20/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 22, 2015 |
| 68 | Diary note 21/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 23, 2015 |
| 69 | Diary note 22/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 26, 2015 |
| 70 | Diary note 23/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 28, 2015 |
| 71 | Diary note 24/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | September 29, 2015 |
| 72 | Diary note 25/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 01, 2015   |
| 73 | Diary note 26/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 03, 2015   |
| 74 | Diary note 27/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 07, 2015   |
| 75 | Diary note 28/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 08, 2015   |
| 76 | Diary note 29/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 09, 2015   |
| 77 | Diary note 30/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 11, 2015   |
| 78 | Diary note 31/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 12, 2015   |
| 79 | Diary note 32/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 13, 2015   |
| 80 | Diary note 33/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 20, 2015   |
| 81 | Diary note 34/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 21, 2015   |
| 82 | Diary note 35/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 22, 2015   |
| 83 | Diary note 36/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 24, 2015   |

|    |                  |            |                  |                   |
|----|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 84 | Diary note 37/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 26, 2015  |
| 85 | Diary note 38/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | October 27, 2015  |
| 86 | Diary note 39/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | November 01, 2015 |
| 87 | Diary note 40/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | November 02, 2015 |
| 88 | Diary note 41/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | November 10, 2015 |
| 89 | Diary note 42/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | November 11, 2015 |
| 90 | Diary note 43/43 | Field note | Erick Viramontes | November 22, 2015 |

## APPENDIX TWO: COPY OF HUMAN ETHICS PROTOCOL

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

[ANU logo in a letterhead]

#### Participant Information Sheet

##### Researcher:

Erick Viramontes. Ph.D. student at the School of Politics and International Relations at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. My interest in contemporary politics in the Middle East and the theoretical discussions within the field of international relations have led me to conduct a research on some of the initiatives the state of Qatar has led in the Arab and Islamic worlds over the last decade. I am working under the supervision of Dr. April Biccum, lecturer at the School of Politics and International Relations, ANU.

**Project Title:** Speaking about Qatar: Discourses on national identity in postcolonial Gulf

##### General Outline of the Project:

- **Description and Methodology:** This project seeks to understand how Qatar's national identity is attributed with meaning through state-sanctioned cultural initiatives .
- **Participants:** Data will be collected mainly from interviews with policymakers, government officials, academics and journalists.
- **Use of Data and Feedback:** Data collected for this project will be used for completion of a Ph.D. dissertation, but it may be used as well for peer-reviewed publications in academic journals or books.

##### Participant Involvement:

- **Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:** Participation in this project is **voluntary** and the participants may, without any penalty and without providing an explanation, decline to take part or withdraw from the research at any time until the work is prepared for publication. They can also refuse to answer a question. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be destroyed and not used.
- **What does participation in the research request of you?** Participants are required to undertake an interview. If the interviewee so conceded, a record of the interview will be made in audio and/or written form.
- **Location and Duration:** Typically, the interview will take place only once, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The interview will be carried out in the office of the interviewee or in a public place. Interviews will take about 45 minutes.

- **Risks:** One of the possible risks arising out of this research is that of third-party identification – that is, that you as participant might be identified by what you say in the interview. For that reason, you are free to let me know your preferences regarding the confidentiality of this interview. In that same vein, if extracts of information are considered to be risky during the reporting phase, they won't be disclosed.
- **Benefits:** Although it is unlikely that you will personally benefit from participating in this research, I expect that this research will help to broaden our understanding of the factors influencing the foreign policy of Qatar and will help to promote dialogue between Islam and the West.

### Confidentiality:

- **Confidentiality:** In case that the interviews are recorded either electronically or in written form, only the primary researcher and the supervisor will have access to those records. The records will be kept in a personal PC secured by a password only known by the primary researcher. Also, confidentiality of the participants will be protected as far as the law allows.

### Data Storage:

- **Where:** The transcripts or audio records of interviews will be stored electronically, in a PC secured with a password only known by the researcher. The hard copy of the data will be stored in a locker whose key will be in the hands of the researcher only.
- **How long:** Transcripts and records will be kept for at least five years after the publication of any material based on the information contained in them.

### Queries and Concerns:

- **Contact Details for More Information:** If you have any queries regarding your participation in this research, you can contact the primary investigator at any time at [erick.viramontes@anu.edu.au](mailto:erick.viramontes@anu.edu.au) or +61 2 6125 0193. Participants may also contact the supervisor of this research, who is responsible for directing the different stages of the research and is one of the persons who will evaluate the final results of this research:

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### **Ethics Committee Clearance:**

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager  
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee  
The Australian National University  
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ORAL CONSENT

[ANU logo in a letterhead]

### **ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT for Participants**

#### **Speaking about Qatar: Discourses on national identity in postcolonial Gulf**

1. I have read out the information sheet about the research project “Constructing a state’s identity: the foreign policy of Qatar since 1995”.

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Was this information clear?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you have any questions?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you agree to participate in this project?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you agree for this interview to be audio recorded?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you agree that your identity be disclosed when refering to extracts of this interview during the report of the results of this research?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

7. Please, feel free to let me know, at any time, if there are some issues you would prefer not to talk about. Is that ok?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you have any further questions?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

9. May we start the interview now?

Yes:\_\_\_\_\_ No:\_\_\_\_\_

WRITTEN CONSENT

[ANU logo in a letterhead]

WRITTEN CONSENT for Participants

I have read and understood the Information sheet you have given me about the research project, and I have any questions and concerns about the project **“Speaking about Qatar: Discourses on national identity in postcolonial Gulf”**

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I agree to participate in the project YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to this interview being audio-recorded YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to be identified in the following way within research outputs:

Full name YES ☐ NO ☐

By my position and institution/organisation YES ☐ NO ☐

Complete confidentiality YES ☐ NO ☐

Signature:.....

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