

## Analysis

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
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CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
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## Turkey and Qatar risk losing regional influence: Analysts

Turkey and Qatar risk losing geopolitical influence due to turmoil in Libya and Sudan, as regional rivals Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates extend their own reach, analysts say. Doha, a long-time ally of deposed Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir, has silently watched developments unfold in Khartoum following the veteran leader's ouster on April 11.

Talks between Sudan's military rulers and protesters on a transition to civilian rule remain deadlocked. Bashir, who came to power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989, had long been able to count on foreign aid from energy-rich Qatar, which - along with Turkey - supports Islamist groups, primarily the Muslim Brotherhood. "Doha has lost influence in Sudan amid the revolution," Andreas Krieg, a professor at King's College London said.

Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, the head of Sudan's new military council, "has stronger ties to Abu Dhabi than Doha", Krieg said. Key regional power brokers Saudi Arabia and the UAE have voiced support for the transitional council, while they continue to isolate Qatar for allegedly supporting "terrorists" and seeking closer ties with arch-rival Iran.

Sudan is part of a UAE and Saudi-led military coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. Krieg said Riyadh and Abu Dhabi are "trying to cement their personal relationship" with Burhan and "consolidate long-term control" in the country. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the deputy chief of Sudan's military council, met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah on Thursday, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

In the council's first major foreign policy announcement since it ousted Bashir, Dagalo vowed to back Saudi Arabia "against all threats and attacks from Iran and Houthi militias", according to a council statement on Friday. Dagalo also told the crown prince that Sudan would continue sending troops to support the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, the statement said.

### 'Battlefield'

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have each deposited \$250 million (223 million euros) in Sudan's central bank as part of a three-billion dollar support package following Bashir's departure. The two oil-rich countries oppose any kind of popular uprising in the region that could lead to the rise of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, which they blacklist as a "terrorist" organization.

Doha's support for the Muslim Brotherhood is one reason behind the ongoing diplomatic dispute with Qatar. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut all ties with Doha in June 2017 over accusations it supports "terrorists". Qatar denies the allegations.

The struggle between the two blocs has played out across the region, including in Khartoum. "There is a struggle over power and influence in Sudan between those in favor of the Qatar-Turkey camp and those inclined to join the Saudi-UAE camp," said Mathieu Guidere, a professor at the University of Paris and a specialist in Arab politics. For leaders of the country's protest movement, Sudan should be left to resolve its own affairs.

"The political change has been brought by Sudanese people and has nothing to do with any other country," a protest movement official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We are really concerned about the intervention of Gulf countries because they are trying to use our country as their battlefield," the official said, adding that Sudan wants "balanced" ties with countries across the region and beyond. The protest movement has drawn together a wide range of factions, including secular parties.

Another struggle is playing out in Libya, where Doha similarly risks losing influence. While Qatar and Turkey back the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), Saudi Arabia and the UAE support strongman Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA). The UAE and Egypt are accused of militarily supporting Haftar, who is leading an offensive against the UN-recognized government in Tripoli. Haftar has accused Turkey and Qatar of supplying weapons to his rivals.

Fighting since Haftar launched his assault on Tripoli in early April has left at least 510 people dead, according to the World Health Organization. As many as 10 countries are "permanently interfering in Libya's problem" funneling arms, cash and military advice to the country, UN envoy Ghassan Salame warned Wednesday. For Karim Bitar, an expert at France's Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, Sudan and Libya "have become fields of confrontation between rival powers in the Gulf". The camps are "engaged in a military struggle in Libya" and an "economic and financial" one in Sudan, he said. Guidere said Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's engagement in Libya and Sudan may "reduce Qatar's influence and aggravate its isolation", he said. — AFP

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A young family passes past election campaign billboards in Berlin during the European elections yesterday. — AFP

## European Union: 60 years of twists and turns

From economic union via the euro to a migration crisis and Brexit, here is a look at 60 years of ups and downs in the European Union.

### Birth of a European bloc

On May 9, 1950 French foreign minister Robert Schuman unveils proposals for an economic union between France and West Germany. A year later six countries - Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands - establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

### Towards the EU

On March 25, 1957 the same six sign the Treaty of Rome that establishes the European Economic Community, a common market. It takes effect a year later, establishing key European institutions: the Council of Ministers, the executive European Commission and the Parliamentary Assembly, which later becomes the European Parliament. The first parliamentary elections by direct universal suffrage take place in 1979. Britain, Denmark and Ireland join the EEC on January 1, 1973. They are followed by Greece in 1981, Portugal and Spain in 1986, and Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995.

On February 7, 1992 the Maastricht Treaty is signed,

laying the foundation for a single European currency. In January 1993 a single market allowing the free movement of goods, services, people and capital becomes reality. The EEC becomes the European Union on November 1, 1993. It is only in March 1995, however, that travelers in some EU member states will be able to travel without showing their passports under the Schengen accord that drops some internal border controls.

### Euro and enlargement

Euro banknotes and coins go into circulation in 12 countries on January 1, 2002, replacing national currencies such as the deutschmark, franc, lira and peseta. Britain, Denmark and Sweden, however, decide to keep their national currencies. In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the EU on May 1, 2004 swells to 25 members, taking in Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Bulgaria and Romania join in 2007, and Croatia becomes the 28th member in 2013.

### Crises

Storm clouds gather in 2005 as French voters reject a draft European constitution, as proposed in the Treaty of Lisbon. Three days later, Dutch voters do the same.

Shocked European leaders manage to get the treaty ratified in 2009 with provisions designed to improve the functioning of the enlarged EU institutions. In November 2009 Athens reveals a sharp rise in its public deficit, unleashing a financial crisis across the eurozone.

First Greece, then Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus seek aid from the EU and the International Monetary Fund, which demand strict fiscal discipline in return. Several heads of government fall as austerity measures provoke a popular backlash. Just as it begins to emerge from the financial crisis, Europe is hit by its most serious migration crisis since the end of World War II with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers peaking at around one million in 2015 according to the International Organization for Migration. EU leaders fail to work out a joint action plan.

### Divorce with Britain

In the biggest blow to the union, Britain on June 23, 2016 votes 52 percent in favor of quitting the EU, putting itself on course to become the first country to quit. It comes with the bloc weakened by the rise in populism and euroscepticism. After three years of disagreement and delays over the divorce terms, the deadline for Brexit is pushed back to October 31, 2019. — AFP

## Key statistics about the EU

The European Union explained in five figures:

### 28 nations

It was born out of the European Economic Community formed in 1958 by six nations seeking closer economic integration: Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and West Germany. In 1993 the six joined with Britain, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain to establish the European Union. The EU grew over the years to reach 28 member nations. However Britain is planning its departure, the deadline for its troubled Brexit process set at October 31, 2019.

The bloc's biggest expansion was in 2004 when 10 countries signed up: eight ex-communist nations, including the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland; and the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta. Nineteen today share the euro which replaced national currencies like the Deutschmark, French franc and Italian lira in 1999, with coins and notes coming into circulation in 2002. Britain, Denmark and Sweden chose to remain outside the euro and recent EU entrants are making preparations to join it.

### One market

Together EU members form a single market in which goods, people, capital and services can move freely without red tape at internal borders. In force since 1993 and considered among its greatest achievements, the EU boasts that its single market is "the biggest trading bloc in the world". Its whopping gross domestic product of \$17.2 trillion (15.2 trillion euros) in 2017 is behind that of the United States' \$19.3 trillion but ahead of China's \$12.2 trillion.

### 513 million people

With a combined population of 513 million in 2018, the EU is the third most populous area in the world after China and India, each with more than a billion people. It outstrips the US population of 327 million. Germany has the most people (82 million) and Malta the least (468,000). Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, and from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean, the EU covers 4.3 million km<sup>2</sup> (1.6 million square miles). It is dwarfed by Russia's 17 million km<sup>2</sup> and the United States (9.8 million km<sup>2</sup>), but is larger than India (3.2 million km<sup>2</sup>). France is the largest EU country (632,800 km<sup>2</sup>, including overseas territories) and Malta is the smallest (316 km<sup>2</sup>). Twenty-two EU countries have abolished passport controls between them as part of the Schengen zone.

### 24 languages

Its 24 official languages range from widely spoken English and French to lesser-known Irish, Finnish and Bulgarian. The mix means a potential 552 language combinations at European Parliament sessions, requiring an army of translators.

### One percent

Member states contribute one percent of their GDP to the EU budget but also take out in the form of agricultural subsidies and aid for job creation, poor regions, rural development and fisheries. Its purse for 2014-2020 is 963 billion euros (around \$1 trillion). There is concern that Britain's departure will cause a shortfall. The EU also has tens of thousands of pieces of legislation and legal acts which member states must adopt, ranging from international agreements to environmental standards for beaches, working hours for lorry drivers and standards for fishing nets. — AFP



A woman with a so-called 'Bollenhut' traditional hat stands in a voting booth to vote for the European elections in Gutach yesterday. — AFP

## European elections: Voting differs across countries

Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg. Belgium and Luxembourg can even issue fines in case of a no-vote.

### Regional constituencies

Most EU member nations vote for parliament as single entities but five map out regional constituencies. Belgium has three constituencies, defined along language lines. The others are all geographical: 13 in Poland, 12 in Britain, five in Italy and three in Ireland.

### Post, proxy and internet

Sixteen countries allow voting by post, in most cases for the benefit of citizens living abroad. They include Britain, Germany, Spain and the Nordic nations. Six countries allow proxy voting in which a person can ask someone else to vote on their behalf. In Belgium, Britain, France and The Netherlands, this option is available to everyone. In Poland and Sweden it is reserved for voters who are unable to go to a voting station, including because of age or disability. Voting online is allowed only in tech-savvy Estonia.

### Representation of women

Eleven countries impose gender quotas on candidate lists. In Belgium, France, Italy and Luxembourg the lists must feature the same number of men and women. In Croatia, Spain and Slovenia at least 40 percent must be of one sex, dropping to 35 percent in Poland and 33 percent in Greece and Portugal. In Romania at least one woman, or one man, must be included on each list. Some countries have measures in place to ensure gender quotas are met but sanctions are not always enough to make parties oblige. While non-conforming lists are nullified in Greece, in countries such as France and Luxembourg the only risk is a fine.

### Minimum age

In all but three countries, the voting age is 18. In Greece it is 17, and Austria and Malta allow voting at 16. For candidates, in 15 countries the minimum age is 18. It rises to 21 in 10 others, including Poland and the Czech Republic. In Romania, a candidate must be at least 23 years old and in Italy and Greece the minimum age is 25. — AFP

### Compulsory voting

Voting is compulsory in five member states: