

# The Qatari Danger and the Gaza Strip

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## ► Executive Summary

*In discussions regarding the future of the Gaza Strip, Qatar has been suggested as a candidate for taking on a central role in rebuilding the Strip, either on its own or as part of a coalition of Arab states.<sup>1</sup>*

Placing the Gaza Strip under Qatari influence will degrade Israel's strategic position and significantly restrict its leeway to act against its Gazan enemy. To support this claim, this paper will take a deep dive into the details, reviewing the different aspects of Qatar's power, foreign relations, and goals.

The key to understanding Qatar, is to see it not as a regular Western state but rather as a family in possession of state power. The Al-Thani family rules Qatar, a small state in which only 11.6% of the 2.6 million residents are citizens. It is an extremely wealthy state, sharing the world's largest gas field with Iran, and providing approximately a third of the world market's liquified gas.

Qatar has positioned itself as a versatile player willing to cooperate with any party that can forward its interests. For Qatar, Saudi Arabia constitutes one of its primary challengers in terms of economics and spheres of influence, and the state's increasing ties to Iran, Turkey, and the Muslim Brotherhood axis should be viewed through this prism. At the same time, Qatar safeguards itself by cooperating with the US and by hosting a massive American military presence, providing the American forces with a base for much of their action in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the shadow of its economic power, Qatar has formed an international network of influence. It is a major energy provider; it owns Al-Jazeera, the most prominent Arabic media company, and it donates large sums of money to leading academic institutions around the globe, taking a hand in shaping their environment. It was recently revealed that Qatar bribed politicians and public figures with huge sums of money. In addition, Qatar purchases weapons and technology all around the West, and is the patron of Hamas, playing host to its leading members. In fact, Qatar has been hosting and assisting radical Islamists for decades, facilitating institutional antisemitism and disseminating Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi's teachings throughout the Arab world.

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1 See: Dr. Moran Zaga, Ariel Admoni and Maryann Bisharat, "Israel's policy on Qatar after the October 7 attack", Mitvim Institute and Berl Katzenelson Foundation, Nov 2023. [\[here\]](#);  
Jason Pack, "The Road to Middle East Peace Runs Through Doha", Foreign Policy, 7 Nov 2023. [\[here\]](#);  
Hussein Ibish, "Qatar May Hold the Key to Hamas' – and Gaza's – Future", The Arab Gulf States in Institute in Washington. 18 December 2023. [\[here\]](#)

Considering the above, the geopolitical reality of Qatari dominance in Gaza can be outlined as follows:

- A. The primary consequence of October 7 will be a strategic gain for Hamas, now empowered by state patronage.
- B. Israel may find itself facing state power in any future and inevitable friction in the Gaza Strip. Such a dynamic is already playing out to a smaller degree with Jordan vis-à-vis the Temple Mount. The formal dominance of a powerful state in clearly bounded territory leads to serious challenges and will restrict Israel's scope of action. In simple terms, Israel, before taking any military action or even applying economic pressure, will need to consider and assess the Qatari reaction across all its powers and affiliates, as well as other states' reactions to Qatari displeasure.
- C. Because of Qatar's key role in the energy market, any friction in the Gaza Strip will bring on international pressure. Qatar provides around a third of the world's natural liquefied gas (LNG) and is projected to provide 40% by 2029. The importance of the Qatari gas trumped Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt's attempts to boycott trade with Qatar at the time of the blockade (2017-2020). Qatar took advantage of the blockade to develop its independence and leave OPEC. The war in Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions on Russia strengthened the importance of Qatari gas, and its export to Europe, the UK, Poland, and Germany has increased<sup>2</sup> – Qatar provides close to 10% of the LNG import to the EU.<sup>3</sup> Qatar has already displayed how it uses its gas as leverage – after the EU began investigating suspected Qatari bribes to European Members of Parliament, Qatar warned that the investigation may negatively impact the supply of gas.
- D. The importance of the American military presence on Qatari soil may lead to US pressure on Israel to avoid all conflict. Israel may well voluntarily avoid such conflict during American military action in the Middle East.
- E. Qatari dominance in the Gaza Strip may expand Turkey's involvement in the area, considering the ideological and strategic pact between the two states.
- F. Various elements in the Strip will be granted *de-facto* immunity from Israeli strikes or arrests due to their position as Qatari representatives.

It goes without saying that Israel must bring about a strategic defeat for the Gazans. The success of such will be indicated when Gaza no longer presents a threat to Israel, and when the state of Israel has free reign to act on its security needs in the Gaza Strip. Qatar, together with Hamas political leaders in Doha, may well hand the Gazan government to parties they have worked with in the past, namely, Hamas-affiliated parties. Qatar has adopted an openly anti-Israel (and antisemitic) line, even after the October 7 massacre, and should not be rewarded with a state-like entity on Israel's border. Should Qatar become Gaza's savior, its image as a sponsor of terrorism will be replaced by the image of a humanitarian actor, thus denying Israel one of its only points of leverage. Therefore, Israel must keep Qatar at arm's length from any future administration of Gaza.

2 "Qatar's Foreign Policy: Decision-making processes, baselines and strategies". German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Dr. Guido Steinberg, April 2023, pg. 12-15; "Qatar and the future of European energy security", Global Counsel, Ahmed Helal. 8 September 2022. [\[here\]](#)

3 EU imports of energy products continued to drop in Q2 2023. 25 September 2023. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25\)%20and%20Nigeria%20\(5.1%25\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25)%20and%20Nigeria%20(5.1%25))

## ▶ A | Qatari Foreign Policy

Qatar is a small and wealthy state in the Persian Gulf (its GDP stood at 229,007 billion dollars in December 2022), containing a population of 2.6 million, only 11.6% of whom are Qatari citizens, the rest being foreign workers. Qatar gained its independence from the UK in 1971<sup>4</sup> and the central neighboring states on its borders are Saudi Arabia and Iran, with which latter it shares one of the world's largest gas fields.<sup>5</sup>

The Al-Thani family exercise authoritarian rule over the state, the current leader being the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who rose to power in 2013 following his father's abdication, ostensibly for medical reasons.<sup>6</sup> The primary threat to Qatari rule is Saudi Arabia, a country with historical claims to Qatari land, alongside attempts at regime change within the country which are supported by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states (Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates). The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 convinced Emir Hamad bin Khalifa and his son the current Emir that other Arab states present a threat to the small Gulf states.<sup>7</sup> In 2017, Saudi Arabia, joined by the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, blockaded Qatar over its support of terrorist organizations. In an October 2016 interview to CBS News, the Emir Tamim said he believed Saudi Arabia and its allies were attempting a regime change in Doha (the Qatari capital).<sup>8</sup>

Qatar promotes several lines of policy to fortify the Al-Thani family rule: developing the gas industry; relying on American protection by hosting an American Air Force base; cultivating "soft power" by investing in media, academia, and cultural events; supporting Islamist organizations and positioning itself as a political mediator.<sup>9</sup> Qatar presents its foreign policy as independent from its neighbors', specifically Saudi Arabia's, which is one reason it moved forward to occupy the vacuum of power left by the withdrawal of Hamas from Syria and Iran following the Syrian civil war. In a similar move, Qatar played an important role in sponsoring the Muslim Brotherhood's regime in Egypt after the fall of the Mubarak administration in addition to the Islamist rebels who fought the Gaddafi regime in Libya.<sup>10</sup>

Since the nineties, Qatar has cultivated its gas industry in an effort to lessen its dependence on Saudi Arabia. The state owns the third largest gas field in the world, after Russia and Iran; but contrary to them, the Qatari gas industry is based on cutting edge technology and access to markets they are shut out of due to Western sanctions. Today, Qatar provides approximately a third of the world's liquified gas (LNG), the importance of which won out over the attempts by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt to prevent international companies from doing business with the state during their blockade (2017-2020). Qatar used the blockade period to develop its independence, leaving OPEC. The war in the Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions on Russia strengthened the importance of Qatari gas and increased its export to Europe<sup>11</sup> – particularly to the

- 4 "Qatar", The World Factbook, updated November 6, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-worldfactbook/countries/qatar/>; "Qatar Gross National Product (GNP)", CEIC, accessed December 12, 2023, <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/qatar/gross-national-product>; "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Qatar", Office of the Historian, accessed December 12, 2023, <https://history.state.gov/countries/qatar#:~:text=Qatar%20had%20previously%20been%20a,of%20trea%20ties%20with%20Great%20Britain>.
- 5 "Factbox: Qatar, Iran share world's biggest gas field", Reuters (2010), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northfield-qatar-idUSTR66P1VV20100726>.
- 6 Rod Nordland, "In Surprise, Emir of Qatar Plans to Abdicate, Handing Power to Son", The New York Times, 24 June 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/25/world/middleeast/qatar-transfer-of-power.html>; Christopher Dickey, "Qatar's Succession Drama", The Daily Beast, 25 June 2013 (updated 11 July 2017), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/qatars-successiondrama>.
- 7 Steinberg, *supra* note 2, pg. 9.
- 8 Tamim said: "It's... so obvious. History as well tells us, teaches us they tried to do that before, in 1996 after my father became the emir. So, and they made it also so obvious in the last couple of weeks". Charlie Rose, "Qatar's Emir Stands Defiant in Face of Blockade", CBS News, 29 October 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/qatars-emir-standsdefiant-in-face-of-blockade/>.
- 9 Steinberg *supra* note 2.
- 10 Written Testimony of Mr. Avi Jorish, American Foreign Policy Council, " Hamas's Benefactors: A Network of Terror" Hearing.
- 11 Steinberg, *supra* note 2, pg. 12-15; "Qatar and the future of European energy security", Global Counsel, Ahmed Helal. 8 September 2022. [\[here\]](#).

UK, Poland and Germany - to nearly 10% of the EU's LNG import.<sup>12</sup> In July 2023, the Qatari Minister of Energy declared that his country was projected to provide approximately 40% of the global liquefied natural gas by 2029.<sup>13</sup>

Aware of its importance to world economics, Qatar has no compunction using its gas supply as leverage and has already done so. Qatar recently signed enormous deals with France, Italy, and the Netherlands to supply LNG for the next 26-27 years. After the EU announced its intention of investigating allegations of corruption against European members of Parliament who apparently accepted Qatari bribes, Qatar warned that the investigation could negatively impact the supply of gas.<sup>14</sup>

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12 EU imports of energy products continued to drop in Q2 2023. 25 September 2023. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25\)%20and%20Nigeria%20\(5.1%25\).](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25)%20and%20Nigeria%20(5.1%25).)

13 Salim A. Essaid, "Qatar leans east to achieve 40% global LNG output by 2029", Al-Monitor, 13 July 2023. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/07/qatar-leans-east-achieve-40-global-lng-output-2029>.

14 [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2022/12/22/how-dependent-is-europe-on-qatar-for-its-gas-supplies\\_6008665\\_19.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2022/12/22/how-dependent-is-europe-on-qatar-for-its-gas-supplies_6008665_19.html); <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/10/24/europe-deepens-dependence-qatar-gas-despite-hamas-links/>.

## ► B | Qatari Foreign Policy

Qatar identifies Saudi Arabia as the primary threat to its independence and has been attempting to break free of its influence since the nineties. Establishing Al-Jazeera was part of its plan to adopt an independent line of foreign policy, leading to overt tension between the states. In 2002, the network aired an interview with a Saudi dissident who criticized the peace proposals with Israel and accused the king of treason. In response, Saudi Arabia closed its embassy in Qatar, reopening it again only in 2008. It was estimated that the rapprochement was due to Iran's nuclear program and the fear of Iranian retaliation in the event of American or Israeli strikes.<sup>15</sup>

Qatari support for rebels and dissidents in the Arab Spring period (2011-2013) led to a new crisis in Saudi-Qatari relations. Saudi Arabia views the Muslim Brotherhood as an existential threat to the political and religious legitimacy of the Saud family reign and has gone so far as to politically and financially support the Sisi regime that ousted their rule in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Qatar, in contrast, offered safe haven to the leaders of the Egyptian movement and Al-Jazeera continued to broadcast criticism of el-Sisi. The Emir Tamim agreed to cease the political and financial support for the Muslim Brotherhood at the behest of the Saudi King, but keeping his promise didn't last long.<sup>17</sup>

The relations between the states reached a new low in 2017, among others because of a hostage release agreement in Syria. Qatar paid ransom to an Iranian affiliated Shi'ite organization to release Qatari hostages, among them Al-Thani family members. The deal was part of a larger agreement to release Shi'ite fighters captured by an al-Qaeda affiliated Syrian organization in addition to evacuating besieged Syrian cities.<sup>18</sup> Saudi Arabia accused Qatar of exploiting the situation to transfer funds to Shi'ite and Sunni extremists and on June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Bahrain severed ties with Qatar and declared a siege. The four Arab states laid down thirteen demands for the resumption of relations, giving Qatar only ten days to comply. The demands included severing ties with Iran and deporting Islamic Revolutionary Guards from the Emirate; severing ties with terrorist organizations (the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, al-Qaeda and Hezbollah); shutting down Al-Jazeera and other denunciatory networks; severing military ties with Turkey; ending all intervention in the internal affairs of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Bahrain; and complying with the other Gulf states' line of foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Qatar firmly rejected what it saw as an attack on its independence.

The crisis caused Qatar to tighten its relations with Turkey and Iran. Iran supplied Qatar with foodstuffs as well as access to its ports and air space. To reciprocate, Qatar fully restored its relations with Iran previously demoted in the recall of their ambassador after a terrorist attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran in 2016.<sup>20</sup> Following the blockade, Qatari imports from Iran in 2018 grew by nearly 100 million dollars a year to 400 million dollars. Nevertheless, the extent of trade between the states is still small (300-400 million dollars) in comparison to the Iranian trade with the UAE (a billion dollars a year). In February 2022, Iran's President Raisi visited Qatar- the first Iranian presidential visit in eleven years - and signed fourteen agreements for cooperation between the states regarding trade, media, tourism, and infrastructure.<sup>21</sup>

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15 Steinberg, *supra* note 2 pg. 29; Robert F. Worth, "Al Jazeera No Longer Nips at Saudis", *The New York Times*, 4 January 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/04/world/middleeast/04jazeera.html>.

16 "Saudi Arabia vs. the Muslim Brotherhood", Dr. Mordechai Kedar, 4 January 2021. Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. <https://besacenter.org/saudi-arabia-muslim-brotherhood/>.

17 Jim Sciutto and Jeremy Herb, "Exclusive: The Secret Documents That Help Explain the Qatar Crisis", CNN, 11 July 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/07/10/politics/secret-documents-qatar-crisis-gulf-saudi/index.html>. The original text and an English translation can be found here: <https://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf>.

18 Erika Solomon, "The \$1bn Hostage Deal That Enraged Qatar's Gulf Rivals", *Financial Times*, 5 June 2017.

19 "List of Demands on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, Other Arab Nations", *Associated Press News*, 23 June 2017, <https://apnews.com/article/bahrain-qatar-iran-saudi-arabia-united-arab-emirates-3a58461737c44ad58047562e48f46e06>.

20 Steinberg, *supra* note 2 pg. 31.

21 Anna L. Jacobs, "Qatar and Iran Expand Ties Amid Broader Gulf De-escalation", The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, 11 March 2022. <https://agsiwi.org/qatar-and-iran-expand-ties-amid-broader-gulf-de-escalation/>.

Qatar also strengthened its ties to Turkey, its erstwhile partner in Libya and Syria, and a state with whom it shares close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Since 2014, Turkey has operated a small military base on Qatari soil, and since the blockade, their relations have been upgraded to military cooperation.<sup>22</sup> The Turkish military presence provides Qatar security and allows it the safe space to pursue an independent foreign policy. Covert military cooperation between the two has been reported, such as for instance, the attempt to gain control over the Socotra Island.<sup>23</sup>

Turkey benefits from the cooperation with Qatar by thus promoting its status as leader of the Sunni world, an ambition that brings it into conflict with Saudi Arabia and Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

Diplomatic ties between Qatar and the other Arab states were restored in 2021, following a convention in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. At the commencement of the Biden administration, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sought to enhance his country's image in American eyes and settle disputes in the Gulf, leading to closer ties between Riyadh and Tehran. The removal of the blockade on Qatar without it ever having achieved its goal is testimony to the survivability of Qatar, who never severed its ties with Islamist organizations or ceased to sponsor them.<sup>25</sup>

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22 Egin Yuksel and Hasim Tekines, "Turkey's love-in with Qatar: a marriage of convenience", Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations. January 2021.

23 "Israeli Military Advisors Arrive in Socotra Island on UAE Plan", Islamic World News, 23 December 2023, <https://english.iswnews.com/32517/israeli-military-advisors-arrive-in-socotra-island-on-uae-plane/>

24 Yuksel and Tekines, *supra* note 22.

25 Samuel Ramani, "The Qatar Blockade is Over, but the Gulf Crisis Lives On", Foreign Policy, 27 January 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/27/qatar-blockade-gcc-divisions-turkey-libya-palestine/>.

## ▶ C | Qatar and Islamism

The Qatari regime has longstanding ties with political and radical Islamic movements.<sup>26</sup> Qatar provided refuge to prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood during the fifties, following the movement's persecution by the Nasser regime in Egypt. In the sixties and eighties, these activists assisted in establishing the Qatari Ministry of Education and in entrenching Islamism as the central ideology in the country.<sup>27</sup> The state also hired Saudi trained Salafi Imams, judges, and officials. At that time, Qatar promoted the integration of the ultra-conservative Salafi religious belief with the radical political renewal aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>28</sup> The Qatari state and the Muslim Brotherhood movement cultivated mutually beneficial ties so long as the latter committed to refraining from challenging the Al-Athani family's control of the state.<sup>29</sup>

An extensive network of connections and support for Islamist organizations are part of Qatar's strategy to expand its soft power and sphere of influence.<sup>30</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, Qatar's founder Jassim al-Thani described the state as the "The Kaaba [holy cube] of the oppressed". Indeed, down through the years Qatar gave refuge and safe haven to political and religious radicals. One of these was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, an al-Qaeda leading member, in the aftermath of the 1993 terror attack on the World Trade Center in New York. When American agents told the Emir of their intention to arrest the Sheik in 1996, he disappeared within hours. Five years later he was discovered to be one of September eleven's architects.<sup>31</sup>

In 1996, the Al-Thani family established the Al-Jazeera media network as part of its "soft power" project. From the very first, the network platformed Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, future leading Muslim religious authority and Muslim Brotherhood man. His prime-time show, "al-Shari'a wa-l-Ḥayah (The Sharia and Life)" drew sixty million Muslim viewers every week.<sup>32</sup> He served as the supreme spiritual and legal-religious figure for Hamas, went to great lengths to garner support and funding for them in the Muslim world and was affectionately known by Hamas operatives as "Sheikh of Palestine". Al-Qaradawi's teachings are explicitly antisemitic, rejecting any legitimacy to the state of Israel, describing Jews as the source of evil and justifying the murder of Jewish civilians.<sup>33</sup>

In 2011, Qatar began supporting a network of Islamist rebels and dissidents around the Muslim world. One of the explanations for this is that the Muslim Brotherhood and similar organizations looked at the time like the winning horse to bet on in the wave of protests sweeping the Middle East.<sup>34</sup> Another reason given is Qatar's longstanding familiarity with such parties, while others point to ideological closeness or the regard in which they were held by Qatari decision makers.<sup>35</sup> The truth is likely a combination of all factors.

During the 2011 protests in Egypt's Tahrir Square, Qatar had Al-Jazeera broadcast directly from Cairo 24

26 Islamism is here defined as a worldview that sees Islam as a comprehensive political ideology according to which society must be designed. Understanding Islamism, Policy Exchange. Sir John Jenkins, Dr. Martyn Frampton and Tom Wilson. P. 7 <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Understanding-Islamism.pdf>.

27 Abdullah Al-Nafisi, "The Islamic situation in Qatar", Islam Today (2007), [www.islamtoday.net/bohooth/artshow-19-8828.htm](http://www.islamtoday.net/bohooth/artshow-19-8828.htm).

28 Andrew Hammond, "Qatar's leadership transition: like father like son", European Council on Foreign Relations (2014), [https://ecfr.eu/publication/qatars\\_transition\\_like\\_father\\_like\\_son304/](https://ecfr.eu/publication/qatars_transition_like_father_like_son304/).

29 David Roberts, "Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood: Pragmatism or Preference?", Middle East Policy Council, accessed December 10, 2023, <https://mepc.org/journal/qatar-and-muslim-brotherhoodpragmatism-or-preference>.

30 Roberts, David B. "Reflecting on Qatar's "Islamist" soft power". Brookings Institution, 2019.

31 "Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: How '9/11 mastermind' slipped through FBI's fingers", BBC News, Gordon Corera and Steve Swann. Sept 6, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58393231>.

32 Dr. Shaul Bartal and Dr. Nesya Shemer, "Mind of Hamas : Jews, Zionism & Israel in Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi's thought", Pardes Publishing 2021, pg. 9.

33 *Ibid*, pg. 198.

34 Weinberg, David Andrew. "Qatar's Muslim Brothers: A Failing Regional Strategy". *Allies, Adversaries, and Enemies: America's Increasingly Complex Alliances* (2014) pg. 65-74.

35 Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, and Luke Lischin. "Qatari foreign policy and Islamist violent non-state actors". *Allies, Adversaries & Enemies* (2014) pg. 75.

hours a day, to galvanize the Egyptian mobs against the Mubarak regime. After the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power, Qatar transferred billions of dollars to fortify the Mohamed Morsi government and served once again as a place of refuge for the movement's activists after their fall.

The Qataris also supported the Islamist rebels who rose against Gaddafi's rule in Libya, supplying them with funding and weapons through Ali al-Sallabi, an exiled Libyan leader residing in Doha. This support played no small part in the struggle between the Islamists and the nationalist, UAE backed rebels.<sup>36</sup>

In Syria, Qatar gave political, strategic, and financial support to Islamist rebels against the Assad regime. These organizations varied between Muslim Brotherhood affiliates and al-Qaeda ones like al-Nusra Front.<sup>37</sup> In 2015, the US Department of State reported:

“...entities and individuals within Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support for terrorist and violent extremist groups, particularly regional al-Qaeda affiliates such as the Nusrah Front”.<sup>38</sup>

Since 2018, one of the original founders of the Taliban, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, has run the organization from an office in Doha that has been in operation as early as 2013. Qatar mediated between the US and the Taliban prior to the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and in 2020 Baradar signed the peace agreement with the US, later made obsolete by the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan in 2021. Qatar flew Baradar from Doha to Kandahar days after the organization took power.<sup>39</sup>

On November 29, 2023, MEMRI Institute uncovered a secret document sent to the Emir by the Qatari Minister of Finance according to which the state was transferring fifteen million dollars to Islamist terrorist organizations in Mali and the Sahel.<sup>40</sup> French journalists had already reported a number of times on the Qatari sponsorship of terrorist organizations in Africa. Marc Eichinger, a former French intelligence officer and an expert on Qatari funding said of the revelation:

“This document is more important than the others in that for the first time we have proof the Emir is directly involved in the financing of terrorism. He personally gave the orders to pay money to people over whom he has no control. This funding destabilized the whole of West Africa to satisfy and provoke an unprecedented wave of migration”.<sup>41</sup>

36 David B. Roberts, “Reflecting on Qatar’s ‘Islamist’ Soft Power”, supra note 30 Policy Brief (2019) pg. 3 [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FP\\_20190408\\_qatar\\_roberts.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FP_20190408_qatar_roberts.pdf)

37 David B Roberts, *supra* note 30, pg. 4.

38 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258249.pdf>

39 <https://www.dw.com/en/why-qatar-fosters-close-contact-with-the-taliban/a-59030146>.

40 The Raven Project Leaks: Qatar Reportedly Paid \$15 Million To Islamist Movements In Northern Mali And The Sahel In 2011, MEMRI, Nov 29, 2023. <https://www.memri.org/reports/raven-project-leaks-15-million-reportedly-paid-islamist-movements-northern-mali-and-sahel>

41 Leaks show Qatar secretly sent \$15 million to Islamist movements in Mali, i24, Benjamin Weinthal. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/the-gulf/1701623547-qatar-secretly-sent-15-million-to-islamist-movements-in-northern-mali-report>



## ▶ D | Patron of Hamas

Qatar is Hamas's political and financial sponsor. In a 2014 US congressional hearing on Hamas funding, Dr. Jonathan Schanzer from the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies called it "Hamas' ATM".<sup>42</sup> Qatar makes a monthly donation of nearly thirty million dollars to Gazan "public workers' salaries", i.e., Hamas terrorists. This support is not only rooted in pragmatism; concern for the "Palestinian issue" as a general Muslim problem is one of the cornerstones of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology.<sup>43</sup> In 2018, Mohammed al-Emadi, Qatar's ambassador to Gaza, delivered a suitcase containing fifteen million dollars in cash through the Erez Crossing.<sup>44</sup> In 2021, it pledged five hundred million dollars to rebuilding Gaza after the fighting in Operation Guardians of the Wall. As of today, Qatar has transferred over 2.1 billion dollars to Hamas in Gaza.<sup>45</sup>

The connections between Qatar and Hamas are longstanding and have tightened over the years. Khaled Meshaal, former Chief of Hamas, lived in Doha between 1999-2001 as well as since February 2012 when he was deported from Damascus. Between 1999-2011, the Syrian capital served as the base for the terrorist organization's political operations. In the Syrian civil war, Sunni Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadist groups fought against the Iran-backed Assad regime.<sup>46</sup> Hamas as a Sunni organization supported the Sunni axis and was consequently forced to leave Damascus. Current leader of Hamas Ismail Haniyya has been living in Doha since 2019 and Hamas leader Abu-Marzouk escaped there at the beginning of the Swords of Iron war.<sup>47</sup>

Qatar played an important, though auxiliary to Saudi Arabia, role in mediating between Hamas and the Fatah in the 2006 civil war.<sup>48</sup> It strengthened its ties to Hamas after the latter took control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, and closed the Israeli trade office in Doha in response to Israeli military action in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead.<sup>49</sup> The Emir Hamad visited Gaza in October 2012, pledging on that occasion to transfer four hundred million dollars to rebuilding the Strip. The visit was harshly criticized by Israel, who saw it as a move that strengthened Hamas and legitimized its rule.<sup>50</sup> Qatar played the role of mediator between Israel and Hamas on a number of occasions: in the ceasefire of Operation Protective Edge (July-August 2014), in the tensions that flared in 2020, in Operation Guardians of the Wall (May 2021) and in the skyrocketing tension surrounding the Temple Mount in April 2022.<sup>51</sup>

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42 "Hamas's Benefactors: A Network of Terror", Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on the ME and NA and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, Sept 9, 2014.

43 Bartal and Shemer *supra* note 32.

44 Qatar, Iran, Turkey and beyond: Hamas's network of allies, France24, Jean-Luc Mounier, October 15, 2023. <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231014-qatar-iran-turkey-and-beyond-the-galaxy-of-hamas-supporters>.

45 Qatar restores monetary aid to families in besieged Gaza after months-long pause, Doha News, Adnan Said, Sept 24, 2023 <https://dohanews.co/qatar-restores-monetary-aid-to-families-in-besieged-gaza-after-months-long-pause/>.

46 Testimony of Mr. Avi Jorish, American Foreign Policy Council, "Hamas's Benefactors: A Network of Terror" Hearing.

47 Isabel Vincent and Benjamin Weinthal, "Hamas leaders worth staggering \$11B revel in luxury — while Gaza's people suffer", New York Post, 7 November 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/11/07/news/hamas-leaders-worth-11bn-live-luxury-lives-in-qatar/>.

48 Robert F. Worth, "Qatar, Playing All Sides, Is a Nonstop Mediator", The New York Times, 9 July 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/world/middleeast/09qatar.html>.

49 Andrew England and Tobias Buck, "Two Arab States Suspend Links with Israel", *Financial Times*, 17 January 2009.

50 Jodi Rudoren, "Qatar's Emir Visits Gaza, Pledging \$400 Million to Hamas", The New York Times, 23 October 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/middleeast/pledging-400-million-qatari-emir-makes-historic-visit-to-gazastrip.html>.

51 David M. Halbfinger and Adam Rasgon, "Israel and Hamas Agree to Cool Hostilities, for Now", The New York Times, 31 August 2020 (updated 24 September 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/31/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-coronavirus.html>; Patrick Kingsley and Raja Abdulrahim, "Israeli Government Crisis Deepens after Closing of Major Mosque", The New York Times, 17 April 2022 (updated 6 May 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/17/world/middleeast/jerusalem-al-aqsa-mosque.html>.

Today, Qatar continues to mediate the negotiations between Israel and Hamas in the attempt to retrieve Israeli hostages, all the while remaining the primary financial patron of the terrorist organization. On October 7, Al-Jazeera broadcast an exclusive recording of Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif, who called on Palestinians and Israeli Arabs to join the fight and “burn the ground under the looting conquerors’ feet – kill, burn, destroy and block the roads”.<sup>52</sup> Its role as mediator allows Qatar to accumulate credit and influence as a vital party, whitewashing its support of Hamas and projecting the image of a moderate state.

On the same day as the massacre, the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Israel is solely responsible for the situation due to “the ongoing violations of the rights of the Palestinian people”.<sup>53</sup> In the current war, Qatar has adopted an explicit anti-Israel line. In a parliamentary session on October 24, Shiek Hamad wondered why the West granted Israel “free license” to kill Palestinians and called for international pressure on Israel to cease its operations.<sup>54</sup>

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52 Hamas Military Commander Mohammed Deif Announces Launch Of Operation Al-Aqsa Deluge, Calls On Palestinians In West Bank, Jerusalem, And Israel Proper To Attacks With Guns, Knives, Vehicles. October 7, 2023. <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-military-commander-deif-operation-aqsa-deluge-calls-palestinian-carry-out-attacks>.

53 “Qatar Expresses Concern over the Developments in Gaza Strip and Calls for De-escalation”, 7 October 2023 <https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/statements/qatar-expresses-concern-over-the-developments-in-gaza-strip-and-calls-for-de-escalation>.

54 “Qatari emir, a Hamas ally, claims Israel’s allies granting ‘free license to kill’”, Times of Israel. 24 October 2023. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/qatari-emir-a-hamas-ally-claims-israels-allies-granting-free-license-to-kill/>

## ▶ E | Al-Jazeera - Propaganda in Service of Qatar

The Al-Thani family founded Al-Jazeera in 1996 in order to promote Qatari influence and “soft power”. The news network plays an instrumental role in inciting against the region’s governments (aside, of course, from the Qatari government). As mentioned above, during the Tahrir protests in Egypt, the network broadcast some of its programming directly from Cairo, twenty-four hours a day. When the Saudi Arabian-led Arab states blockaded Qatar in 2017, one of their demands was shutting down Al-Jazeera.<sup>55</sup>

The Qatari media network adopts an anti-Western, anti-Israel and pro-Islamist line and sustained heavy criticism from the Bush administration for its exclusive broadcast of al-Qaeda recordings.<sup>56</sup> Al-Jazeera began to adopt a sympathetic view of Islamism under the management of Wadah Khanfar, the Kabul bureau chief who served as the network’s Managing Director in 2003 and Director General in 2006. In its programming during the Second Lebanon war, the network supported Hezbollah, with Qatar later mediating between the various Lebanese factions. During Operation Cast Lead in 2008, Al-Jazeera broadcast in favor of Hamas.<sup>57</sup>

In the summer of 2013, when the Egyptian military toppled the Muslim Brotherhood regime, an English-speaking Al-Jazeera anchor was demoted for not expressing enough admiration for the Muslim Brotherhood movement. At the same time, Ahmed Mansour, an Arabic language anchor, was quoted disseminating conspiracy theories that the president was Jewish and covertly in Israel’s service. Faisal al-Qasim, another anchor, wondered if the Alawites should be eliminated in Syria. In 2014, another anchor tweeted support for the murder of a Shi’ite at the hands of ISIS.<sup>58</sup>

In 2020, the American DOJ ordered AJ+, a subsidiary of Al-Jazeera producing short political films, to register as a Qatari agency under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In a letter, the DOJ pointed out that Qatar funds the network and appoints the board of directors, and that the network’s broadcasting goal is to influence American popular opinion in favor of a foreign country.<sup>59</sup> In July 2021, several Senators sent a letter to the AG demanding the enforcement of the registration law against AJ+ and another Al-Jazeera founded network.<sup>60</sup> In February 2023, Members of Congress demanded the revocation of congressional entry permits that had been granted to Al-Jazeera journalists, and noted that Qatar spied on American officials acting against the UAE. The Members of Congress added that in 2017, Al-Jazeera hired a journalist conman to secretly record Jewish activists in order to publish antisemitic theories about dual loyalty and Jewish treason against America.<sup>61</sup>

Since the October 7 attack, Israeli security and intelligence bodies support shutting down Al-Jazeera broadcasting in Israel, because the network reveals tactical assembly areas and other sensitive locations, thus harming IDF operations.<sup>62</sup> Following the massacre, the network broadcast not only Deif’s declaration but a declaration from Ismail Haniyeh as well, calling all Arabs to join the fight against Israel.<sup>63</sup>

55 Gregg Carlstrom, “What’s the Problem With Al Jazeera?” The Atlantic. 24 June 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/al-jazeera-qatar-saudi-arabia-muslim-brotherhood/531471/>.

56 “Al-Qaida tapes often come through Al-Jazeera”, NBC News. 21 January 2006. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna10948626>

57 Hammond, *supra* note 28 p. 3

58 Carlstrom *supra* note 55.

59 Marc Tracy and Lara Jakes, “US Orders Al Jazeera Affiliate to Register as Foreign Agent”, the New York Times, 30 October 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/15/business/media/aj-al-jazeera-fara.html>; Jerry Dunleavy, “DOJ orders Al Jazeera Plus to register as a foreign agent of Qatar”, Washington Examiner, 16 September 2020. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/doj-orders-al-jazeera-plus-to-register-as-a-foreign-agent-of-qatar>

60 [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/senators\\_to\\_justice\\_dept.aljazeeraforeignagentregistration.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/senators_to_justice_dept.aljazeeraforeignagentregistration.pdf)

61 <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000186-149d-d453-a38e-76dff17c0000>; Adam Kredo, “Qatar-Backed Spy Operation on U.S. Jews Puts Al Jazeera in Congressional Crosshairs”, Washington Free Beacon, 13 February 2018. <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/qatar-backed-spy-operation-u-s-jews-puts-al-jazeera-congressional-crosshairs/>; Armin Rosen, “Pro-Israel Hoaxer Hits DC”, Tablet. 20 January 2017 <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/pro-israel-hoaxer-kleinfeld>.

62 Avishai Greenzweig and Roi Kais, “The Mossad supports closing Al-Jazeera: it reveals IDF soldiers’ locations” [Hebrew], Kan-News, October 16, 2023.

63 “Al-Jazeera Airs Hamas Leader Ismail Haniyeh’s Statement On Hamas’s Invasion Of Southern Israel: ‘I Call On Palestinians In The West Bank, Israeli Arabs, And The Entire Nation Abroad To Join The Battle; To The Enemy I Say: Get Out Of Our Land!’”, MEMRI, 7 October 2023. <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-ismail-haniyeh-statement-jazeera-operation-aqsa-deluge-palestinians-west-bank-israel-abroad-join-battle>.

## ► F | Institutional Antisemitism

Antisemitism is rife among the Qatari citizens and promoted by the Al-Thani family in the school system, religious institutions, and the media. The depths of Jew-hatred in the country were revealed by the large number of harassment and violence incidents experienced by Israeli fans and journalists in the 2022 World Cup hosted by Qatar.<sup>64</sup>

The ADL, in collaboration with MEMRI Institute, reviewed the official schoolbooks in Qatari schools in the years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. They found that the Qatari education system teaches classic antisemitic conceptions – statements that Jews are treacherous and Prophet killers, Holocaust minimization and denial, conspiracy theories and rejection of Israel’s right to exist.<sup>65</sup>

The religious system in Qatar promotes Jew-hatred as well. In February 2013, Saudi preacher Saad bin Ateeq al-Ateeq was invited to preach the Friday sermon in the Grand Mosque, where he prayed that Allah destroy the Jews and Christians. He repeated this message in another religious speech in October. Since then, he’s been reinvited to speak to the Qatari troops, including the Navy and airport security.<sup>66</sup> In February 2015, two years after his first sermon, al-Ateeq preached another antisemitic hate-filled sermon in the Grand Mosque.<sup>67</sup> As mentioned, Al-Jazeera aired a weekly program with Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose views are radically antisemitic and who has praised Hitler and hoped the Muslims finish his work.<sup>68</sup>

The Emirate also holds an annual book fair, in which Mein Kampf, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and new antisemitic books feature prominently.<sup>69</sup> Even after the October massacre, official institutions in Qatar continue to disseminate murderous antisemitism – in their schools, universities and government organizations.<sup>70</sup>

In 2017, Qatar financed a meeting between the Emir and a delegation from the Jewish American community, and even hired an American PR firm to polish its image as a state in the eyes of the Jewish community.<sup>71</sup> The Qataris hoped that Jews in senior positions would convince the administration and the American public of their moderation.

64 “Israelis shunned at Qatar World Cup: ‘You are not welcome’”, Jerusalem Post, 27 November 2022 <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-723449>

65 D. A. Weinberg, “Qatari textbooks teach that Jews are treacherous”, Anti-Defamation League, (5 April 2021), available at: <https://www.adl.org/blog/qatari-textbooks-teach-that-jews-are-treacherous>.

66 O. Adaki, and D. A. Weinberg, “Preaching hate and sectarianism in the Gulf”, Foreign Policy, (5 May 2015), available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/05/preaching-hate-and-sectarianism-in-the-gulf-saudi-arabia-qatar-uae-saad-binateeq-al-ateeq/>.

67 Ariel Admoni (2022) Political antisemitism: Qatar’s attitude towards Jews and Israel, Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 16:1, p. 66, DOI: 10.1080/25765949.2022.2057077.

68 Sheik Yousuf Al-Qaradawi: Allah Imposed Hitler upon the Jews to Punish Them – “Allah Willing, the Next Time Will Be at the Hand of the Believers”, MEMRI. <https://www.memri.org/tv/sheik-yousuf-al-qaradawi-allah-imposed-hitler-upon-jews-punish-them-allah-willing-next-time-will>.

69 B. Cohen, “ADL protests inclusion of viciously antisemitic titles at official Qatar book fair”, Algemeiner, (5 December 2018), available at: <https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/12/05/adl-protests-inclusion-of-viciously-antisemitic-titles-atofficial-qatar-book-fair/>; Jewish group to oppose Qatar UNESCO bid over anti-Semitic lit’, The Times of Israel, (13 March 2015), available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/jewish-group-to-oppose-qatar-unesco-bid-over-anti-semitic-lit/>

70 Z. Harel, “Antisemitic And Anti-Israel Content In Qatar’s Education System: Jews Are Enemies Of Allah; Palestine Stretches From The River To The Sea”, MEMRI, 11 December 2023. <https://www.memri.org/reports/antisemitic-and-anti-israel-content-qatars-education-system-jews-are-enemies-allah-palestine> .

71 Amir Tibon, “Report: Qatar Signs \$50,000 Contract to Court American Jews”, Haaretz, 7 September 2017. [\[here\]](#); Stephen M. Flatow, “Qatar and the Jews: More than meets the eye”, Israel Hayom, 19 October 2021. [\[here\]](#)

## ▶ G | The Double Game with the US

In a congressional hearing, Qatar was described as a US “frenemy”.<sup>72</sup> As a small state whose wealth comes from the natural gas industry, Qatar is threatened by neighboring states Iran and Saudi Arabia, and thus has long sought to form ties with the US for protection. The height of their relations was the establishment of an American Air Force base in Al Udeid.

Qatar began to produce gas from its “North Field” gas field in 1991, and immediately began feeling the tension vis-à-vis Iran. In 1992, Qatar signed a bilateral agreement with the US, granting the American Army access to bases in the Emirate and accommodation for American military materials while the US trained the Qatari military. Between 1992-2021, the Qatari base as-Sayliyah served as one of the most prominent American bases outside the US. When American troops were ordered to evacuate from Saudi Arabia before the Iraqi invasion, they moved to Qatar. There are, on a regular basis, eight to eleven thousand soldiers in Qatar, and the country served as the base from which to launch strikes at Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.<sup>73</sup>

US-Qatar relations deteriorated under President Trump, who promoted ties with Saudi Arabia and expressed initial support for the blockade of Qatar. Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (who had developed close ties to Qatar as former CEO of ExxonMobil) persuaded the President to change his position. Between June and December of 2017, the Qataris signed deals with the US to buy seventy-two F15 planes worth twenty-one billion US dollars. In July 2017, Tillerson visited Doha and the two states signed a treaty to cooperate against terrorism and its financing. The US expanded the use of its base in Al-Udeid with Qatari funding and rejected the UAE proposal to transfer its troops to the Al-Dhafra base in Abu-Dhabi.<sup>74</sup> Qatar also offered the American Navy the use of its new port in place of the naval base in Bahrain.<sup>75</sup>

Since his inauguration to the White House, President Biden has distanced himself from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and moved towards Qatar. The repercussions of the Russian war on Ukraine in terms of the energy market increased Qatar’s importance to the US. In January 2022, Biden invited the Emir Tamim to the White House and declared Qatar to be “an important non-NATO ally”. He justified such declaration on the grounds that Qatar assisted in the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, maintains stability in Gaza and puts pressure on ISIS.<sup>76</sup> The non-NATO ally status symbolizes special closeness besides access to American military training and technology. In the Middle East, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco have gained this status, but not Saudi Arabia or the UAE.<sup>77</sup>

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72 Written Testimony of Mr. Avi Jorish, American Foreign Policy Council, “ Hamas’s Benefactors: A Network of Terror” Hearing.

73 Steinberg, *supra* note 2 pg.15.

74 See, e.g., the following article by the UAE Ambassador to the US: Yousef Al Otaiba, “Qatar Cannot Have It Both Ways”, Wall Street Journal, 12 June 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/qatar-cannot-have-it-both-ways-1497307260>. See also Simon Henderson, “White House Meeting with Emir of Qatar Holds Potential for Deal, or Two”, The Hill, 8 April 2018, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/382025-white-house-meeting-with-emir-of-qatar-holds-potential-for-deal>.

75 Steinberg, *supra* note 2 17.

76 Alex Gangitano, “Biden says he will designate Qatar as major non-NATO ally”, the Hill. 31 January 2022, <https://thehill.com/regulation/international/592128-biden-says-he-will-designate-qatar-as-major-non-nato-ally/>.

77 Steinberg *supra* note 2 pg. 17; Michael D. Shear, “Biden Designates Qatar as a Major Non-NATO Ally”, *The New York Times*, 31 January 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/31/us/politics/biden-qatar-nato.html>.

## ▶ H | Investment in “Soft Power”

After the rise of the current Emir’s father Hamad bin-Khalifa al-Thani to power in 1995, Qatar shifted its foreign policy and greatly emphasized “soft power”, i.e., the ability to influence other states via peaceful means. This ability is often achieved by investing in other states, promoting a positive image, and increasing the state’s legitimacy and attractiveness. The most striking example in recent years of Qatar’s achievement in such direction is their hosting of the World Cup for Soccer in November 2022, for which event the state invested more than two hundred billion dollars. Aside from overt promotion of a positive image (hosting sport and culture events for instance), Qatar also promotes its power by massive, mostly covert investments and donations to elite universities that are intended to influence and shape global public opinion and research in its favor.

In 1995, the Qatari government led by Hamad established The Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, which operates as a non-profit from its base in Doha. The organization changed its legal status to that of private organization in service of the public good in 2006, yet remained even so under Qatari government control. It is headed today by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, The Emir Tamim’s mother and second wife to his father, Emir Hamad. The legal change, however, was highly significant in allowing the organization to operate as a private body not subject to oversight or governmental rules, while still under control of the Qatari government. Sheika Moza, known for her adherence to fashionable but modest dress, serves as the public face of the state (a power of which she takes firm advantage to smear Israel).<sup>78</sup>

Through the years, Qatar has intensified its soft power by its cultural influence.<sup>79</sup> So, for instance, it acquired a share of London’s Heathrow airport, the Paris football team San-Germaine and held a larger real estate portfolio than Queen Elizabeth.<sup>80</sup> In honor of opening a new museum in Doha in 2019, Qatar hosted hundreds of celebrities and fashion moguls,<sup>81</sup> while the Museum for Islamic Art, opened in 2008, is one of the largest in the world to display Islamic art and artifacts,<sup>82</sup> all as part of Qatari strategy to acquire works of art and invest in its museums. It was estimated that Sheikha al-Mayassa Hamad bin Khalida al-Thani, the Qatari Emir’s sister, commanded a budget of one billion dollars for acquiring art in 2019.<sup>83</sup> In the world of fashion, Mayhoola for Investments, a company owning several international fashion brands such as Valentino and Balmain, has ties to the Emir’s mother.

For fifteen years France strengthened its ties with Qatar, with billions of dollars lavished on French property in that time. Today, the Qataris hold significant percentages of every French company, and possess a large amount of French weaponry.

In the background, in the shadows, other widespread financial connections are being made. Dark financial connections were recently discovered between Qatar and European senior officials in the “Qatar Leaks” incident that has rocked France since 2021. Several prominent French figures and politicians received millions of Euros to set up a lobby for Qatar, and the French Defense department received three hundred million Euro to cover the expenses of French participation in the 2011 battle in Libya. Nicola Sarkozy’s ex-wife, the famous philosopher Bernard-Henri Levi and even the French secretary of state all reportedly received

78 Lahav Harkov, “Sheika Moza: Qatar’s glamorous – but viciously anti-Israel – face”, Jewish Insider, 1 December 2023. <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/sheikha-moza-bint-nasser-qatar-gaza-israel-doha/>.

79 Ganji, Sarath. “THE AUTHORITARIAN’S GUIDE TO FOOTBALL: THE REACH AND REPERCUSSIONS OF QATAR’S SPORTS EMPIRE.” *Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2022): 37–64. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27169802>.

80 Elizabeth Paton, “Why Soft Power is in Style in Qatar”, the New York Times, 4 April 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/04/fashion/qatar-luxury-fashion-national-museum-blockade.html>.

81 *Ibid.*

82 “In Qatar Arab modern art gets its first museum”, the Independent, 20 February 2011. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/in-qatar-arab-modern-art-gets-its-first-museum-2220228.html>

83 Carol Vogel, “ Sheika al-Mayassa Hamad bin Khalida al-Thani of Qatar Museums”, the New York Times, 26 December 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/29/arts/design/sheikha-al-mayassa-hamad-bin-khalifa-al-thani-of-qatar-museums.html>

monies from a Qatari source. In an article by the French “Blast”<sup>84</sup> it was claimed that Jean Marie Le Guen, the French Secretary of State, had close ties to the Qatari Emir between 2014-2017, and received money from a Qatari source. The reports are still being investigated. The Belgian police are conducting an investigation against Members of the European Parliament for allegedly accepting bribes for pro-Qatari lobbying activity. According to revealed documents, European Members of Parliament were paid to promote a visa waiver agreement and to quell parliamentary criticism of the human rights situation in Qatar.<sup>85</sup>

All the above makes it clear that it is extremely difficult to estimate the scope of Qatar’s covert influence with open sources of information.

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84 "Qatar Connection : Jean-Marie Le Guen, un secrétaire d’État au service de l’Émir", Blast. [[here](#)].

85 Elisa Braun, Gian Volpicelli and Eddy Wax, “The Qatargate Files: Hundreds of leaked documents reveal scale of EU corruption scandal”, Politico, 4 December 2023. [[here](#)].

## ▶ I | Qatari Money in American Academia

According to recent research by ISGAP (Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy), Qatar donates more money to American universities than any other state.<sup>86</sup> The donations focus on a number of prestigious universities, particularly on their schools for Middle Eastern Studies. This points to the desire to obtain influence, and not to mere munificence on the part of Qatari rulers.

Collaborations between the Qatar Foundation and American universities led to the creation of the “Education City” in Doha, a campus encompassing twelve square kilometers that hosts international branches of leading American and other universities, among them Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Texas M&A, the University of London, Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell Medical School, University of Virginia and HEC Paris.<sup>87</sup>

According to ISGAP, Qatar refuses to reveal the extent of its donations or even the full details of known agreements. The Institute further pointed to problematic conditions even in those details that have been revealed, such as Qatar retaining a high degree of influence over curricula, research goals and academic freedom.<sup>88</sup>

The aforementioned difficulty in ascertaining the scope of Qatari influence over academia is compounded by the rare enforcement of laws pertaining to foreign financing of universities and think tanks in the US. Section 117 of the American Higher Education Act that requires universities to report bi-annually on the extent of all foreign endowments and contracts above two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.<sup>89</sup> Although this legal obligation has existed since 1986, the American government seldom enforces it, with only three hundred of America’s six thousand universities voluntarily reporting on foreign funding, at times only partially so.<sup>90</sup> When an American Senate committee reviewed the issue in 2019, foreign funding for universities was described as a “black hole”.<sup>91</sup> Although reporting was improved somewhat after the US Department of Education published a report on the matter in 2020, the full picture still isn’t clear.<sup>92</sup> The conventional estimate is that Qatar has transferred billions of dollars to universities without due report.<sup>93</sup>

Another difficulty in identifying Qatari funding are monies in the form of research grants and salaries paid to American universities for their collaboration with other universities. In other words, Qatar can transfer money to a certain university for research it benefits from, such money being reported or not. Later, that same university will collaborate with researchers from another university, thus granting them part of the Qatari funding without such funds ever being reported as foreign since they come ostensibly from an American university. ISGAP reported a number of such cases in the University of Yale.<sup>94</sup>

Qatar also collaborates openly on research with American Universities through the Qatar National Research Fund with which it encourages projects and studies beneficial to Qatar.<sup>95</sup> In addition to all the above is the

86 Networks of Hate: Qatar Paymasters, Soft Power and the Manipulation of Democracy, ISGAP, 2023, P. 23.

87 Paul Michael Brannagan and Richard Giulianiotti, “The soft power-soft disempowerment nexus: The case of Qatar”, Manchester Metropolitan University pg. 1147-1148 [[here](#)]; See also: Susan Svrluga, “U.S. universities in Qatar wary of diplomatic upheaval isolating the country”, the Washington Post, 12 July 2017. [[here](#)]

88 Networks of Hate, *supra* note 86 p. 27.

89 Sec. 117 Higher Education Act of 1965, available [here](#).

90 [Institutional Compliance with Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 U.S. Department of Education](#) pg. 7 (hereinafter: American Report on Sec 117 Enforcement).

91 [CHINA’S IMPACT ON THE U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM](#), page 70.

92 American Report on Sec 117 Enforcement *supra* note 90.

93 Volume II – Examining Undocumented Foreign Funding of American Universities: Implications for Education and Rising Antisemitism by Charles Asher Small and Michael Bass, available [here](#).

94 ISGAP, The ongoing failure to report: Yale university, Qatar and undisclosed foreign funding (2023) [here](#).

95 Networks of Hate, *supra* note 86 pg. 31-33.



usage of techniques reminiscent of money laundering. For instance, Qatar transferred money to American universities through the Spanish energy company Iberdola and its American branch Avangrid. In one instance, Iberdola transferred Qatari funds to Yale for a study of green energy in collaboration with Avangrid.<sup>96</sup>

All the above point to Qatari effort in concealing their investment in American academia. Not only are most unaware of all the money actually flowing from Qatar to research purposes, but the investment system itself ensures widespread influence. By focusing most of its efforts on elite American institutions, Qatar maximizes its effect on academic research as a whole.<sup>97</sup>

The “Lawfare” organization has collated many cases demonstrating the antisemitic and anti-Israel consequences of the Qatari money that flows through the Qatar Foundation and the Qatar Foundation International. For instance, Duke University opened a training program for Middle Eastern Studies geared for high school teachers in June 2019. The participants were chosen by the Qatar Foundation International, the syllabus was radically biased against the non-Muslim history of the region, and some of the program’s “experts” joined an antisemitic conference currently under investigation by the Federal Department of State. The university itself, a beneficiary of Qatari donations, signed a settlement agreement with the Department of Education to close a complaint made against it of antisemitic harassment and discrimination in December 2019. Similarly, the University of North Carolina instituted an academic program for Middle Eastern Studies that was the subject of a letter of rebuke from the Department of Education for its one-sidedness and disregard of non-Muslim minorities in the region. Both universities and programs were the recipients of Qatari funding. “Lawfare”’s report also notes the collaboration agreement signed between Northwestern University’s branch in Qatar and Al-Jazeera and the public hostility to Israel displayed by those academics who received grants as a result of the agreement.<sup>98</sup> Another report by ISGAP shows that Qatari investment in an academic institution predicts low commitment to freedom of speech and to the proliferation of antisemitic incidents. Between 2015-2020, institutions receiving Qatari money experienced 300% more antisemitic incidents than others.<sup>99</sup>

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96 *Ibid* pg. 29-31.

97 *Ibid*, pg. 23.

98 “Memorandum Addressing Application of the Foreign Agents Registration Act to Agents and Instrumentalities of the State of Qatar”, the Lawfare Project, 27 January 2020. [https://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FARA\\_Memo\\_with\\_Exhibits\\_R-1.pdf](https://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FARA_Memo_with_Exhibits_R-1.pdf).

99 The Corruption of the American Mind: How Concealed Foreign Funding of Higher Education in the United States Predicts the Erosion of Democratic Values and Antisemitic Sentiment on Campus. ISGAP (2023). [Here](#)

## ▶ J | Summary

Since the nineties, Qatar has been working assiduously to counterbalance its basic vulnerability and turn itself into a key state in the production and export of liquified gas, the importance of which has increased since the Russia-Ukraine war. It assumed the patronage of a wide network of Islamist organizations throughout the Muslim world and refused to sever these connections despite threats from Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. These connections were leveraged to grant Qatar important diplomatic roles such as mediator between the US and the Taliban or between Israel and Hamas. At the same time, Qatar positioned itself as an important ally to the US, protecting itself from the repercussions of hosting and financing terror organizations by granting the Americans military access in the Persian Gulf. Qatar developed its Al-Jazeera network into a powerful propaganda tool to galvanize Arab mobs against other Arab regimes, the US and Israel. After the Arab Spring, the other Arab states recognized this power and demanded Qatar shut down the network.

The Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, failed to subdue Qatar through a blockade (2017-2021), and Israel has no similar leverage against it, making it risky to grant Qatar a role in rebuilding the Gaza Strip. Qatari influence can promote Hamas under another guise. The Qataris are not interested in being Israel's ATM, their money serves their purposes, and their interests do not align with Israel's. Israel has very few tools with which to force its own interests on Qatar.

In truth, one of the only points of leverage Israel has is tarnishing the shiny image of modernity Qatar cultivates. The October 7 horrors succeeded in painting Qatar to some degree with the colors of a terrorist sponsor and abettor. If Qatar becomes Gaza's savior, this image will be replaced by a humanitarian one, freeing Qatar to carry on financing terrorism and radicalism without worrying about negative public relations or diplomatic repercussions.

Facing provocations by Qatari backed Hamas 2.0, Israel may find itself greatly restricted in the scope of its military and strategic action.

Considering the above, the geopolitical reality of Qatari dominance in Gaza can be outlined as follows:

- A.** The primary consequence of October 7 will be a strategic gain for Hamas, now empowered by state patronage.
- B.** Israel may find itself facing state power in any future and inevitable friction in the Gaza Strip. Such a dynamic is already playing out to a smaller degree with Jordan vis-à-vis the Temple Mount. The formal dominance of a powerful state in clearly bounded territory leads to serious challenges and will restrict Israel's scope of action. In simple terms, Israel will need, before taking any military action or even applying economic pressure, to consider and assess the Qatari reaction across all its powers and affiliates, as well as other states' reactions to Qatari displeasure.
- C.** Because of Qatar's key role in the energy market, any friction in the Gaza Strip will bring on international pressure. Qatar provides around a third of the world's natural liquified gas (LNG) and is projected to provide 40% more by 2029. The importance of the Qatari gas trumped Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt's attempts to boycott business with Qatar at the time of the blockade (2017-2020). Qatar took advantage of the blockade to develop its independence and left OPEC. The war in Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions on Russia strengthened the importance of Qatari gas, and its export to Europe, the UK, Poland and Germany has increased<sup>100</sup> – Qatar provides close to 10% of the LNG import to the EU<sup>101</sup>. Qatar has already displayed how it uses its gas as leverage – after the

100 Steinberg, *supra* note 2 pg. 12-15; "Qatar and the future of European energy security", Global Counsel, Ahmed Helal. 8 September 2022. [\[here\]](#)

101 EU imports of energy products continued to drop in Q2 2023. 25 September 2023. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25\)%20and%20Nigeria%20\(5.1%25\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230925-1#:~:text=As%20far%20as%20liquefied%20natural,%25)%20and%20Nigeria%20(5.1%25))

EU began investigating suspected Qatari bribes to European Members of Parliament, Qatar warned that the investigation may negatively impact the supply of gas. The importance of the American military presence on Qatari soil may lead to US pressure on Israel to avoid all conflict. Israel may well voluntarily avoid such conflict during American military action in the Middle East. The US sees Qatar as an important mediator between it and extremist organizations such as the Taliban, Hamas and Iran. In an open conflict between Qatar and Israel, the US is likely to put pressure on Israel and restrict the scope of its action.

- D.** Qatari dominance in the Gaza Strip may expand Turkey's involvement in the area, considering the ideological and strategic pact between the two states.
- E.** Various elements in the Strip will be granted de-facto immunity from Israeli strikes or arrests due to their position as Qatari representatives.

Not only will Qatari dominance in the Gaza Strip grant Israel no strategic advantage, but it will facilitate the strategic empowerment of Hamas and the Gazans. An Israeli invitation to place an enemy state on its Southwestern border will be a historic disaster.