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Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy

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SUMMARY

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Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy

The State of Qatar has employed its ample financial resources to exert regional influence often independent of the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Oman), an alliance of six Gulf monarchies. While fostering a close defense and security alliance with the United States, Qatar has intervened in several regional conflicts and has maintained ties to a wide range of actors who are often at odds with each other, including Sunni Islamists, Iran and Iran-backed groups, and Israeli officials. Qatar has maintained consistent dialogue with Iran, but the country also hosts U.S. forces that are attempting to deter Iran and conducting combat against major regional terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State.

Qatar's support for regional Muslim Brotherhood organizations and its Al Jazeera media network have contributed to a backlash against Qatar led by fellow GCC states Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt and a few other governments, severed relations with Qatar and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. The Trump Administration has sought a resolution of the dispute, in part because the rift is hindering U.S. efforts to formalize a "Middle East Strategic Alliance" of the United States, the GCC, and other Sunni-led countries in the region to counter Iran. Qatar has countered the Saudi-led pressure with new arms purchases and deepening relations with Turkey and Iran. Some signs that the rift might be soon be resolved emerged in late 2019, but progress apparently stalled in January 2020.

Qatar's leaders have looked to the United States to guarantee their external security since the 1980s, as do the other GCC leaders. Since 1992, the United States and Qatar have had a formal Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) that reportedly addresses a U.S. troop presence in Qatar, consideration of U.S. arms sales to Qatar, U.S. training, and other defense cooperation. Under the DCA, Qatar hosts up to 11,000 U.S. and coalition forces and the regional headquarters for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) at various military facilities, including the large Al Udeid Air Base. These facilities help U.S. forces participate in operations throughout the region. Qatar is a significant buyer of U.S.-made weaponry, including combat aircraft. In January 2018, Qatar and the United States inaugurated a "Strategic Dialogue" and, in January 2019, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to expand Al Udeid Air Base to improve and expand accommodation for U.S. military personnel. Qatar signed a broad memorandum of understanding with the United States in 2017 to cooperate against international terrorism, partly representing a joint effort to rebut claims that Qatar supports terrorist groups.

The voluntary relinquishing of power in 2013 by Qatar's former Amir (ruler), Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, departed from GCC patterns of governance in which leaders generally remain in power for life. However, Qatar is the only one of the smaller GCC states that has not yet held elections for a legislative body. U.S. and international reports criticize Qatar for not adhering to international standards of labor rights practices, but credit it for taking steps in 2018 to improve the conditions for expatriate workers.

Like other GCC states, Qatar is wrestling with the fluctuations in global hydrocarbons prices that started in 2014 and are now compounded by the Saudi-led embargo. Qatar is positioned to weather these headwinds because of its small population, substantial financial reserves, and its favorable business conditions for entrepreneurs. But, Qatar shares with virtually all the other GCC states a lack of economic diversification and reliance on revenues from sales of hydrocarbon products. On December 3, 2018, Qatar announced its withdrawal from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in order to focus on its natural gas export sector.

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Brief History

Prior to 1867, Qatar was ruled by the family of the leaders of neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa. That year, an uprising in the territory led the United Kingdom, then the main Western power in the Persian Gulf region, to install a leading Qatari family, the Al Thani, to rule over what is now Qatar. The Al Thani family claims descent from the central Arabian tribe of Banu Tamim, the tribe to which Shaykh Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism, belonged.[1] Thus, Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism, a conservative Islamic tradition that it shares with Saudi Arabia.

In 1916, in the aftermath of World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement under which Qatar formally became a British protectorate. In 1971, after Britain announced it would no longer exercise responsibility for Persian Gulf security, Qatar and Bahrain considered joining with the seven emirates (principalities) that were then called the "Trucial States" to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, Qatar and Bahrain decided to become independent rather than join that union. The UAE was separately formed in late 1971. Qatar adopted its first written constitution in April 1970 and became fully independent on September 1, 1971. The United States opened an embassy in Doha in 1973. A U.S. Ambassador to Qatar, Dana Shell Smith, resigned from that post in June 2017, reportedly over disagreements with the Trump Administration. A replacement nominee has not been confirmed, to date, and the United States is currently represented there by Charge D'Affaires Philip Nelson, appointed to that post on March 2, 2020.

Table 1. Senior Leaders of Qatar

Position	Leader
Amir (ruler) and Minister of Defense	Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir and Crown Prince (heir apparent)	Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani
Prime Minister and Minister of Interior	Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani
Deputy Prime Minister	Ahmad bin Abdallah al-Mahmud
Minister of State for Defense Affairs	Khalid bin Muhammad Al-Attiyah
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman Al Thani
Minister of Finance	Ali Sharif al-Imadi
Ambassador to the United States	Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, "Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments."

[1] Information in this section is taken from Bernard Haykel. "Qatar and Islamism." Policy Brief: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. February 2013.

Figure 1. Qatar at-a-Glance

Area	11,586 sq km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)
People	*Population:* 2.3 million, of which about 90% are expatriates *Religions:* Muslim 68%, of which about 90% are Sunni; Christian 14%; Hindu 14%; 3% Buddhist; and 1% other. Figures include expatriates. *Ethnic Groups:* Arab 40%; Pakistani 18%; Indian 18%; Iranian 10%; other 14%. Figures include expatriates. Virtually all citizens are Arab.
Economy	*Gross Domestic Product (GDP):* $350 billion (2018) on purchasing power parity (ppp) basis *GDP per capita:* $125,000 (2018) on ppp basis *Inflation:* 1% (2017) *GDP Growth Rate*: 1.5% (2019) *Export Partners:* (In descending order) Japan, South Korea, India, China, Singapore, UAE *Import Partners:* (In descending order) United States, China, UAE, Germany, Japan, Britain, Italy, Saudi Arabia (pre-2017 GCC rift)
Oil and Gas	*Oil Exports:* Slightly more than 700,000 barrels per day. Negligible amounts to the United States. Producer of condensates (light oil) vital to S. Korean petrochemical industry. *Natural Gas Exports:* Almost 125 billion cubic meters in 2014

Sources: Graphic created by CRS. Map borders and cities generated by Hannah Fischer using data from Department of State, 2013; Esri, 2013; and Google Maps, 2013. At-a-glance information from CIA, *The World Factbook, Economist Intelligence Unit* country report on *Qatar; World Bank.*

Governance

Qatar's governing structure approximates that of the other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman). Qatar is led by a hereditary Amir (literally "prince," but interpreted as "ruler"), Shaykh[2] Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. He became ruler in June 2013 when his father, Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, relinquished power voluntarily—an unprecedented move in the modern Gulf. The Amir governs through a prime minister, who is a member of the Al Thani family, and a cabinet, several of whom are members of the Al Thani or other prominent families. In November 2014, Amir Tamim appointed a younger brother, Shaykh Abdullah bin Hamad, to be deputy Amir and the heir apparent. Amir Tamim serves concurrently as Minister of Defense, although most of the defense policy functions are performed by the Minister of State for Defense. The Prime Minister historically has served concurrently as Minister of Interior. **Table 1** contains a list of senior Qatar officials.

On January 28, 2020, the Amir appointed a new Prime Minister, U.S.-educated Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani, replacing Abdullah bin Nasir bin Khalifa Al Thani. Shaykh Khalid had been serving as the head of Tamim's office (*diwan*) since 2007. The reasons for the replacement were not stipulated, but no significant challenge to Tamim's rule has been evident. There have been no significant protests by Qatari citizens in many years, even though political parties are banned and there are no "political societies" that act as the equivalent of parties. Political disagreements in Qatar are aired mainly in private as part of a process of consensus building in which the leadership tries to balance the interests of the country's families.

Then-Amir Hamad put a revised constitution to a public referendum on April 29, 2003, achieving a 98% vote in favor. The document affirms that Qatar is a hereditary emirate and specifies Islamic law as a key source of legislation.[3] The constitution stipulates that elections will be held for 30 of the 45 seats of the country's Advisory Council (*Majlis Ash-Shura*), a national legislative body, but elections have been repeatedly delayed. In 2017, the first women were appointed to the *Majlis As Shura.* The Council, when elected, is to have the ability to remove ministers (two-thirds majority vote), to approve a national budget, and to draft and vote on proposed legislation that can become law (two-thirds majority vote and concurrence by the Amir). Naturalized Qataris who have been citizens for at least 10 years are to be eligible to vote, and those whose fathers were born in Qatar are to be eligible to run. In October 2019, the Amir ordered the establishment of a committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to organize the first Council elections.[4] No election date is set.

The country holds elections for a 29-seat Central Municipal Council, which advises the Minister of Municipality and Urban Affairs on local public services. Elections for the fifth Council (each serving a four-year term) were held in April 2019. Voter registration and turnout—21,735 voters registered out of an estimate 150,000 eligible voters, and 15,171 of those voted—were lower than expected,[5] suggesting that citizens viewed the Council as lacking influence. The State Department stated that "observers considered [the municipal council elections] free and fair."[6]

[2] Shaykh is an honorific term.

[3] Amy Hawthorne. "Qatar's New Constitution: Limited Reform from the Top." August 26, 2008..

[4] "Qatar takes step toward first *Shura* Council election: QNA agency." Reuters, October 31, 2019.

[5] Department of State. Human Rights Report for 2015: Qatar. p. 13.

[6] https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265728.pdf.

Human Rights Issues[7]

Recent State Department reports identify the most significant human rights problems in the country as limits on the ability of citizens to choose their government in free and fair elections; restrictions on freedoms of assembly and association, including prohibitions on political parties and labor unions; restrictions on the rights of expatriate workers; and criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity.

A National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) investigates allegations of human rights abuses in the country. It operates independently, but it is funded largely by the Qatar Foundation that is run by the Amir's mother, Shaykha Moza. Among the NHRC's functions is to monitor the situation of about 1,000-2,000 stateless residents ("*bidoons*"),[8] mostly members of families whose citizenship was revoked decades ago for opposing Qatar's leaders. They receive public services but cannot own property or travel freely. Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the Amir, based on recommendations from the Supreme Judicial Council, appoints all judges.[9]

Freedom of Expression

Despite the absence of open opposition among the citizenry, Qatar has adopted some policies similar to those of the other GCC states since the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprisings, including adopting new laws restricting freedom of expression and increasing penalties for criticizing the leadership. In 2014, the government approved a cybercrimes law that provides for up to three years in prison for spreading "false news." Some human rights organizations criticized a law, enacted in January 2020, authorizing the imprisonment of "anyone who broadcasts, publishes, or republishes false or biased rumours, statements, or news, or inflammatory propaganda, domestically or abroad, with the intent to harm national interests, stir up public opinion, or infringe on the social system or the public system of the state."[10] Qatari officials rebutted criticism of the law, asserting that the law is targeted at activists who seek to organize violent opposition activities using social media.

Al Jazeera

The government owns and subsidizes the Al Jazeera satellite television network, which has evolved over the past two decades into a global media conglomerate that also earns revenues from advertising and other sources. The network features a wide range of guests from all over the region debating issues. The network's stories critical of some Arab leaders has sometimes caused the closure of Al Jazeera's bureaus or imprisonment of its journalists. The network has run stories that criticize Qatar's human rights practices.[11] The State Department quotes "some observers and former Al Jazeera employees" as alleging that Qatar's government "influences" Al Jazeera content. Some Members of Congress have asserted that Al Jazeera is an arm of the Qatar government and that its U.S. bureau should be required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). [12]

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[7] Much of the information in this section is based on: Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights for 2018: https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2018&dlid=289226#wrapper.

[8] *Bidoon* is the Arabic word for "without," and refers to persons without documentation for their residency in country.

[9] State Dept human rights report on Qatar: 2017, op. cit.

[10] Qatar: Repressive new law further curbs freedom of expression. Amnesty International, January 20, 2020.

[11] "Renewed Calls for Qatar to Address Treatment of Migrant Workers." Al Jazeera, September 19, 2019.

[12] Lawmakers Seek FARA Evaluation of Qatari-owned Al Jazeera. Office of Senator Tom Cotton press release. June 19, 2019.

Qatari Leadership

Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Amir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Shaykh Jasim, renounced his claim, reportedly based on his father's lack of confidence in Shaykh Jasim's ability to lead. Shaykh Tamim became Amir on June 25, 2013, when Amir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Amir Tamim was educated at Great Britain's Sherbourne School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Amir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe, including in Harrod's department store in London, the United States, and elsewhere. He is reportedly highly popular for resisting Saudi-led pressure in the intra-GCC crisis.

Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Amir Tamim's father, *Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani,* took power in June 1995, when his father, Amir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, was in Europe. In 1972, after finishing his education in Britain and assuming command of some Qatari military units, Hamad had helped his father depose his grandfather in a bloodless seizure of power while then-Amir Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani was on a hunting trip in Iran.

While Shaykh Hamad is no longer Qatar's ruler, he, his wife, and several of their other children remain key figures in the ruling establishment. Qatari media refer to Shaykh Hamad as "The Father Amir" and acknowledge that he has some continuing role in many aspects of policy. His favored wife (of three), Shaykha Moza al-Misnad Al Thani, continues to chair the powerful Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF). The QF runs Doha's Education City, where several Western universities have established branches and which is a large investor in the United States and Europe. One daughter (and full sister of the current Amir), Shaykha Mayassa, chairs the Qatar Museums, a major buyer of global artwork. Another daughter, Shaykha Hind, is vice chairman of the QF. Both daughters graduated from Duke University. Another relative, Hamad bin Jasim Al Thani, remains active in Qatar's investment activities and international circles. During Amir Hamad's rule, Shaykh Hamad bin Jasim was Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, and architect of Qatar's relatively independent foreign policy. Shaykh Hamad's father, former Amir Khalifa bin Hamad, died in October 2016.

Sources: http://www.mofa.gov, author conversations with Qatari and U.S. officials.

Women's Rights

According to the State Department, social and legal discrimination against women continues, despite the constitutional assertion of equality. No law criminalizes domestic violence, and a national housing law discriminates against women married to noncitizen men and divorced women. The laws criminalizes rape. Court testimony by women carries half the weight of that of a man. Women in Qatar drive and own property, and constitute about 15% of business owners and more than a third of the overall workforce, including as professionals.

Women serve in public office, such as minister of public health, chair of the Qatar Foundation, head of the General Authority for Museums, and ambassadors to the United Nations and several countries. In November 2017, the Amir appointed four women to the national consultative council for the first time in the body's history. However, most of the other small GCC states have more than one female minister. In December 2019, the spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, Lolwah Al Khater, was appointed "assistant minister" of Foreign Affairs (number two at the Foreign Ministry).

Trafficking in Persons and Labor Issues[13]

The State Department's Trafficking in Persons report for 2019 maintained Qatar at a Tier 2 ranking. Qatar had been upgraded to that level in the 2018 report, from Tier 2: Watch List, on the basis that the government made significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Qatar enacted a Domestic Worker Law to better protect domestic workers and, in recent years, it also established a coordinating body to oversee and facilitate anti-trafficking initiatives and enacting a law that reforms the sponsorship system to significantly reduce vulnerability to forced labor. But, Qatar remains a destination country for men and women subjected to forced labor and, to a much lesser extent, forced prostitution. Female domestic workers remain particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to their isolation in private residences. Alongside the January 2018 U.S.-Qatar "Strategic Dialogue," the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to create a framework to combat trafficking in persons.

Labor Issues

The State Department assesses Qatar's labor rights as not adequately protecting the rights of workers to form and join independent unions, conduct legal strikes, or bargain collectively, and the single permitted trade union, the General Union of Workers of Qatar, as "not functioning." Qatari law does not prohibit antiunion discrimination or provide for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. Yet, the State Department credits the country with taking steps to protect labor rights, including for expatriate workers. In December 2016, a labor reform law went into effect that offers greater protections for foreign workers by changing the "*kafala*" system (sponsorship requirement for foreign workers) to enable employees to switch employers at the end of their labor contracts rather than having to leave Qatar when their contracts end. The law abolished the kafala system entirely at the end of 2019. The government also has stepped up arrests and prosecutions of individuals for suspected labor law violations, and has increased its cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to take in worker complaints and better inform expatriate workers of their rights.

[13] This section is based on the State Department "Trafficking in Persons" report for 2019. https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/qatar/.

Scrutiny of Qatar's labor practices has centered on the plight of the many additional, mostly expatriate, engineers, construction workers, and other laborers hired to prepare for the 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament. An Amnesty International report of September 2019 reports workers sometimes are not paid for work and the lack of adequate dispute resolution mechanisms.[14] The Qatar government responded to the report with a statement that: "Many of the cases included in the report precede recent legislative amendments—including the establishment of the Committees for the Settlement of Labour Disputes. These have significantly improved the processes and increased the speed for resolving labour disputes."

Separately, an investigation by German journalists found continuing violations of labor rights and poor conditions among workers preparing for the 2022 tournament in Qatar, including the deaths of over 100 expatriate workers from Nepal in 2019.[15] Some human rights groups have criticized Qatari officials for failing to enforce prohibitions on outdoor work in very hot weather.[16] Hundreds of expatriate workers demonstrated in Doha in August 2019 against poor working conditions and unpaid and delayed wages.

Religious Freedom[17]

Qatar's constitution stipulates that Islam is the state religion and Islamic law is "a main source of legislation," but Qatari laws also incorporate secular legal traditions. The law recognizes only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The overwhelming majority (about 95%) of Qatari citizens are Sunni Muslims, possibly explaining why there have been no signs of sectarian schisms within the citizenry. The government permits eight registered Christian denominations to worship publicly at the Mesaymir Religious Complex, and it has allowed the Evangelical Churches Alliance of Qatar to build a church. The government also allows house churches to operate.

Jews and adherents of unrecognized religions—such as Hindus, Buddhists, and Baha'is—are allowed to worship privately but do not have authorized facilities in which to practice their religions. Qatari officials state that they are open to considering the creation of dedicated worship spaces for Hindus, Jews, and Buddhists and that any organized, non-Muslim religious group could use the same process as Christians to apply for official registration. In July 2019, Qatar withdrew from a letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council, signed by 37 countries, defending Beijing's policy toward its Uighur community, who practice Islam.

Foreign Policy

Qatar uses its ample financial resources to support a foreign policy that attempts to influence a wide range of regional actors. Its policies have enabled Qatar to mediate some regional conflicts, while at times backing regional actors at odds with those supported by Saudi Arabia and other GCC states. As have some of the other GCC states, Qatar has at times also used its military forces to intervene in regional conflicts. Regional and bilateral issues have reportedly constituted the focus of Amir Tamim's meetings with President Trump and other U.S. officials.[18]

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[14] "All Work No Pay: The Struggle of Qatar's Migrant Workers for Justice." Amnesty International, September 19, 2019.

[15] Qatar 2022: FIFA admits violation of workers' standards. Deutsche Welle, June 6, 2019.

[16] Statement by Human Rights Watch, September 27, 2017.

[17] This section is based on the State Department report on International Religious Freedom for 2018.

[18] White House. Joint Statement from the President of the United States Donald J. Trump and His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar. July 9, 2019.

Qatar and the Intra-GCC Dispute

A consistent source of friction within the GCC has been Qatar's embrace of Muslim Brotherhood movements, which Qatari officials argue is a moderate political Islamist movement that can foster regional stability through participation in the legitimate political process. The UAE, in particular, asserts that the Brotherhood is a recruiting vehicle for Sunni terrorist groups in the region. In 2013-2014, differences over this and other issues widened to the point where Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014. The Ambassadors returned in November 2014 in exchange for a reported pledge by Qatar to fully implement a November 2013 "Riyadh Agreement" that committed Qatar to end support for Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.[19] Qatar's position on the Brotherhood is backed by Turkey, whose government has received financial backing from Qatar and which maintains a military base in Qatar (see below).

The differences erupted again following the May 20-22, 2017, visit of President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia, during which he expressed substantial support for Saudi leaders. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt and a few other Muslim countries, severed diplomatic relations with Qatar, expelled Qatar's diplomats, recalled their ambassadors, and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. Accusing Qatar of supporting terrorist groups and Iran, on June 22, 2017, the Saudi-led group presented Qatar with 13 demands,[20] including closing Al Jazeera, severing relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, scaling back relations with Iran, and closing a Turkish military base in Qatar. Amir Tamim expressed openness to negotiations but said Qatar would not "surrender" its sovereignty, arguing that Qatar has historically given refuge to Islamists from the region, including Brotherhood adherents, and that repressing or expelling these elements would require authoritarian measures. Reports quoting U.S. intelligence officials say that the isolation move was based, in part, on UAE hacking that posted false quotes attributed to Amir Tamim.[21] In December 2017, Saudi Arabia closed its Salwa border crossing into Qatar. Qatar's ample wealth has enabling it to limit the economic effects of the Saudi-led move, but the blockade has separated families and caused other social disruptions. Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia fund a wide array of U.S.-based representatives and lobbyists to support their respective positions on the intra-GCC rifts, and they provide funding to U.S. think-tanks that write on the rift, as well.[22]

President Trump initially echoed criticism of Qatar's policies, but later delegated mediation of the rift to then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson who, working with Kuwaiti leaders, conducted "shuttle diplomacy" in the region during July 10-13, 2017. President Trump facilitated a phone call between Amir Tamim and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman on September 9, 2017,[23] but the dialogue faltered over a dispute about which leader had initiated the talks. The U.S. envoy who was assigned to work on this issue in August 2017, General (retired) Anthony Zinni, resigned in January 2019.

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[19] Cable News Network released the text of the November 2013 agreement, which was signed between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. The November 2014 agreement was among all the GCC states except Oman.

[20] The list of demands can be found at https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/list-of-demands-on-qatar-by-saudi-arabia-other-arab-nations/2017/06/23/054913a6-57d0-11e7-840b-512026319da7_story.html?utm_term=.5bde2f68b6b1.

[21] "UAE Orchestrated Hacking of Qatari Government Sites, Sparking Regional Upheaval, According to U.S. Intelligence Officials." *Washington Post*, July 16, 2017.

[22] Various press; Author conversations with a wide array of Gulf officials and experts on the Gulf. 2017-2019.

[23] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41209610.

Yet, at the beginning of 2020, signs that the dispute might be close to resolution are multiplying. Qatari forces and commanders have been participating in GCC "Gulf Shield" military exercises and command meetings in Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, and athletes from the blockading states have resumed competing in matches in Qatar. The UAE has moved closer to the Qatari position on Iran and on the war in Yemen and, on July 9, 2019, Jordan, which had recalled its ambassador from Qatar at the start of the blockade, restored full diplomatic relations with Qatar[24] and hosted Amir Tamim in late February 2020. The annual GCC summit during December 10-11, 2019 was attended by then-Prime Minister of Qatar Abdullah bin Nasir; the summit declaration called for GCC "unity," and GCC officials indicated that the dispute was moving toward resolution.[25] Separately, during October 2019-January 2020, Qatar and Saudi Arabia held high-level direct talks that reportedly discussed Qatar's limiting support for the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Qatar's Foreign Minister stated in February 2020 that the talks had not made sufficient progress and had been suspended in early January.[26] Yet, suggesting that steps toward progress continued, in February 2020, the UAE announced it was restoring postal service to Qatar.[27]

The dispute has to date thwarted U.S. efforts to assemble a new "Middle East Strategic Alliance" (MESA) to counter Iran and regional terrorist groups. This alliance—to consist of the United States, the GCC countries, and other Sunni-led states—is reportedly to be formally unveiled at U.S.-GCC summit that has been repeatedly postponed since early 2018 and is not scheduled. The MESA was further hampered by Egypt's April 2019 decision to refrain from joining the alliance. The State Department has continued to convene meetings of Gulf and other Arab officials on the concept.[28]

Qatar's disputes with other GCC countries have come despite the resolution in 2011 of a long-standing territorial dispute between Qatar and Bahrain, dating back to the 18th century, when the ruling families of both countries controlled parts of the Arabian peninsula. Qatar and Bahrain referred the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1991 after clashes in 1986 in which Qatar landed military personnel on a disputed man-made reef (Fasht al-Dibal). In March 2001, the ICJ sided with Bahrain on the central dispute over the Hawar Islands, but with Qatar on ownership of the Fasht al-Dibal reef and the town of Zubara on the Qatari mainland, where some members of the ruling Al Khalifa family of Bahrain are buried. Two smaller islands, Janan and Hadd Janan, were awarded to Qatar, which accepted the ruling as binding.

Iran

Qatar has consistently engaged Iran, arguing that dialogue with Iran is key to reducing regional tensions, while simultaneously cooperating with U.S. efforts to counter Iran strategically. In February 2010, as Crown Prince, Shaykh Tamim, visited Iran for talks with Iranian leaders, and as Amir, he has maintained direct contact with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani.[29]Qatar enforced international sanctions against Iran during 2010-2016, and no Qatar-based entity has been cited by the United States for Iran sanctions violations. Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 in solidarity with Saudi Arabia over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, and Qatar joined the February 2016 GCC declaration that Lebanese Hezbollah is a terrorist group.

[24] "Inching Away from Saudi-UAE Axis, Jordan Restores Ties with Qatar." Al Jazeera English, July 9, 2019.

[25] GCC summit calls for unity amid hopes of easing Gulf crisis. Al Jazeera, December 10, 2019.

[26] Qatar says talks to end GCC crisis were suspended in January. Al Jazeera, February 15, 2020.

[27] UAE restores postal service to Qatar despite protracted dispute. Reuters, February 10, 2020.

[28] Author conversation with visiting Qatari official. September 2019.

[29] Al Arabiya, "Iran, Qatar Seek Improved Relations despite Differences," June 19, 2015.

As discussed below, in 2015, Qatar also joined the Saudi-led military coalition against the Iran-backed Houthi movement in Yemen.

Apparently perceiving that the June 2017 intra-GCC rift provided an opportunity to divide the GCC, Iran has supported Qatar in the dispute and has exported additional foodstuffs to Qatar to help it compensate for the cutoff of Saudi food exports. It has permitted Qatar Airways to overfly its airspace in light of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini denial of their airspace. In August 2017, Qatar formally restored full diplomatic relations with Iran, and Qatar did not directly support the May 8, 2018, U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear agreement, instead issuing a statement hoping that efforts to "denuclearize" the region will not lead to "escalation."[30] Through mutual visits of their foreign ministers, Qatar and Iran have sought to de-escalate the U.S.-Iran tensions in the Gulf since May 2019.[31] In December 2019, Qatar's Foreign Minister publicly thanked Tehran for helping Qatar blunt the effects of the blockade. Still, in March 2020, Qatar banned travel to and from Iran to try to stop the spread in Qatar of the COVID-19 disease, which has spread in Iran to a greater degree than in any other regional state.

Qatar also argues that its engagement with Tehran has yielded benefits not only for Qatar but for the region and for the United States. Qatar and Iran have shared a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident, although some Iranian officials have occasionally accused Qatar of cheating on the arrangement.[32] In 2008, Qatari diplomats brokered the "Doha Agreement" to resolve a political crisis in Lebanon that led to clashes between Lebanon government forces and Hezbollah. Qatar's role as a mediator stemmed, at least in part, from Qatar's role in helping reconstruct Lebanon after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, and from then-Amir Hamad's postwar visit to Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon. Further fueling Saudi and UAE suspicions was a 2017 Qatari payment to certain Iraqi Shiite militia factions of several hundred million dollars to release Qatari citizens, including royal family members, who were kidnapped in 2016 while falcon hunting in southern Iraq.[33]

Egypt

In Egypt, after the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, a Muslim Brotherhood-linked figure, Muhammad Morsi, won presidential elections in 2012. Qatar contributed about $5 billion in aid, aggravating a split between Qatar and the other GCC states over the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia and the UAE backed Morsi's ouster by Egypt's military in 2013. Because of its support for Morsi, Qatar's relations with former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have been strained, and Egypt joined the 2017 Saudi-led move against Qatar.

Libya

In Libya, Qatar joined the United States and several GCC and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, Qatar, reportedly in partnership with Turkey, has supported the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli, which has Muslim Brotherhood-linked factions supporting it. The UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia support ex-military commander

[30] Qatar Foreign Ministry Statement. https://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/statements/statement-on-the-developments-of-the-iranian-nuclear-deal.

[31] The Latest: Qatar trying to defuse tensions amid Iran crisis. Fox News, May 16, 2019.

[32] "Iran, Qatar, Face Off Over North Field, South Pars. Oil and Gas News," June 6-12, 2016.

[33] New York Times, April 21, 2017.

Khalifa Hifter, who has consolidated his control of much of Libya over the past four years and is attempting to seize control of Tripoli.[34]

Yemen

During 2006-2007, Qatar failed in efforts to mediate between the Zaidi Shia Houthi movement and the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who left office in 2012 following an "Arab Spring"-related uprising in Yemen. In 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition to battle Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen, including conducting air strikes against Houthi and allied positions. In September 2015, Qatar deployed about 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to guard the Saudi border from incursion attempts by the Houthis and their allies. Four Qatar soldiers were killed in that mission. The Qatari Air Force did fly air strikes against the Houthis.[35] As a result of the intra-GCC rift, in mid-2017 Qatar withdrew from the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Syria, Iraq, and Anti-Islamic State Operations

In Syria, Qatar has provided funds and weaponry to rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Asad,[36] including those reportedly linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and which competed with anti-Asad factions supported by Saudi Arabia. Qatar also built ties to Jabhat al Nusra (JAN), an Al Qaeda affiliate that was designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).[37]Qatari officials claimed credit for the group's formally severing its ties to Al Qaeda in July 2016, and for the release of Lebanese and Western prisoners captured by that group. Qatar has not, to date, reopened its embassy in Damascus.[38] According to the State Department, Qatar has allowed 20,000 Syrians fleeing the civil war there to retain residency in Qatar. In November 2019, after visiting Qatar, Turkey's President Recep Tayyib Erdogan said Qatar would contribute funds to mitigate the humanitarian effects of Turkey's incursion into northern Syria in the fall of 2019, which occurred after President Trump pulled U.S. forces out of northern Syria.[39]

Qatar is a member of the U.S.-led coalition combating the Islamic State. In 2014, Qatar flew some airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State positions. However, by the end of 2014, the coalition ceased identifying Qatar as a participant in coalition strikes inside Syria. No GCC state participated in coalition air operations inside Iraq. In April 2017, Qatar reportedly paid to obtain the release of 26 Qatari ruling family members abducted by Iraqi Shia militiamen while on a hunting trip in southern Iraq in 2015. The Iraqi government said in June 2017 that it received the ransom, presumably for its role in compelling the militias to release the Qataris.

[34] U.N. Security Council. Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011). March 9, 2016.

[35] Author conversations with Qatar Embassy personnel. 2019.

[36] Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo, "U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels," *New York Times*, January 23, 2016.

[37] Al Jazeera, December 2, 2015.

[38] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/qatar-normalise-relations-syria-foreign-minister-190114080234797.html.

[39] Erodgan Says Qatar backs Turkey's plans to settle Syrian refugees: NTV. Reuters, November 26, 2019.

Israeli-Palestinian Issues/Hamas

Qatar has attempted to play a role in Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations by engaging all parties. In 1996, then-Amir Hamad hosted a visit by then-Prime Minister of Israel Shimon Peres and allowed Israel to open a formal trade office in Doha—going beyond the GCC's dropping in 1998 of the secondary Arab League boycott of Israel. In April 2008, the Foreign Minister of Israel attended the Qatar government-sponsored Doha Forum and met with Amir Hamad.[40] Qatar ordered the Israeli offices in Doha closed in January 2009 at the height of an Israel-Hamas conflict and the offices have not formally reopened. Still, small levels of direct Israel-Qatar trade reportedly continue; Israeli exports to Qatar consist mostly of machinery and technology, and imports from Qatar are primarily plastics.[41]

On the other hand, Amir Tamim regularly accuses Israel of abuses against the Palestinians and expresses consistent support for Palestinian efforts for full United Nations membership and recognition, while at the same time backing negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel.[42] Qatar reacted to the Trump Administration's January 2020 unveiling of its Israel-Palestinian peace proposals by saying that it welcomed efforts to broker "longstanding peace," but warned that was unattainable without concessions to the Palestinians.[43]

Qatar has also engaged the Islamist group Hamas, a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot that openly rejects a negotiated settlement with Israel and has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007. Qatari officials assert that engagement with Hamas can help foster favorable conditions for Israeli-Palestinian peace. U.S. officials have told Members of Congress that Qatar's leverage over Hamas, which comes in the form of vast financial aid it provides to the people of Gaza, can be helpful to reducing conflict between Hamas and Israel.[44] Qatar has pledged that none of its assistance to the Palestinians—funneled through a "Gaza Reconstruction Committee" headed by Qatari official Mohammad Al-Emadi—goes directly to Hamas.[45] Press reports say that Israeli officials have supported Qatar's Gaza aid as a means of promoting calm on the Israel-Gaza border.[46] Israel's military liaison to the Palestinian territories reportedly met with Emadi in Jerusalem on February 25, 2020, and concurred with a Qatari plan to disburse about $15 million to needy families in the Gaza Strip.[47] In March 2020, Qatar donated $10 million to the Palestinian Authority to help it deal with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Qatar's critics assert that Hamas leaders are too often featured on Al Jazeera and that Qatar's relations with Hamas constitute support for a terrorist organization. In the 115th Congress, the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Act of 2017 (H.R. 2712), which was ordered to be reported to the full House on November 15, 2017, appeared directed at Qatar by sanctioning foreign governments determined to be providing financial or other material support to Hamas or

[40] "Qatar and Israel: A Strategic but Complicated Alliance." Fanack Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa. April 27, 2013.

[41] Ibid.

[42] "Israel Doesn't Want Peace: Emir." *Qatar The Peninsula*, September 29, 2015. http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/353598/israel-doesn-t-want-peace-emir.

[43] Qatar welcomes US Mideast peace plan, but urges changes. AFP, January 29, 2020.

[44] Letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Julia Frifield to Rep. Peter Roskam. November 21, 2014.

[45] Letter from Julia Frifield, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, to Rep. Peter Roskam. November 21, 2014.

[46] Neville Teller. "What Do You Make of Qatar?" The Jerusalem Post, September 19, 2019.

[47] Israel Oks more Qatari Funds for Gaza to Contain Escalation. Al Monitor. March 5, 2020.

its leaders. A version of that bill introduced in the 116th Congress, H.R. 1850, does not directly reference Qatar as supporting Hamas and contains sanctions exceptions if aid to Hamas or related groups is purely humanitarian in nature.[48] The bill passed the House on July 23, 2019 by voice vote.

As have the other Gulf states, Qatar has sought to compensate for a curtailment of U.S. contributions to the U.N. Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). In April 2018, Qatar donated $50 million to that agency. In December 2018, Qatar reached a two-year agreement with UNRWA to donate to that agency's programs in education and health care.

Afghanistan/Taliban Office

Qatari forces did not join any U.S.-led operations inside Afghanistan, but its facilities and forces support U.S. operations there. In January 2018, Qatar's air force completed the first two flights of its C-17 (Globemaster) cargo aircraft to Afghanistan and back. According to then-Defense Secretary Mattis, the flights provided logistical support to the NATO "counterterrorism" campaign there.

Qatar has brokered talks between the United States and Taliban representatives. Unlike Saudi Arabia and UAE, Qatar did not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Kabul when the movement ruled during 1996-2001. In June 2013, the Taliban briefly opened a representative office in Qatar, but its flying a flag of the former Taliban regime caused Qatar, at U.S. request, to immediately close the office. Taliban officials nonetheless remained in Qatar, and U.S.-Taliban talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of captured U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban figures held at the prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The five were banned from traveling outside Qatar and, in November 2018, the five joined the Taliban office in Doha.

Qatar permitted the Taliban office in Qatar to formally reopen in 2015,[49] and Qatar has been the host of U.S.-Taliban talks that have taken place since mid-2018 between Taliban negotiators and the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad. The U.S.-Taliban talks culminated in a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement that was signed in Doha on February 29, 2020.

The talks might have benefitted from Qatar's contacts with the Haqqani Network, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) that is allied with the Taliban. In January 2016, Qatari mediation reportedly caused the Haqqani Network to release a Canadian hostage, Colin Rutherford.[50] And, Qatar reportedly played a role in an Afghanistan-Taliban prisoner swap in late November 2019 which produced the release from Afghan custody of Anas Haqqani, the brother of the deputy leader of the Taliban movement. That latter release reportedly built confidence between the U.S. and the Taliban and perhaps helped in the reaching of the U.S.-Taliban accord.

Other Qatari Relationships and Mediation Efforts[51]

Elsewhere in the region:

[48] "Eliot Engel Weakens Hamas Sanctions Bill After Lobbying from Qatar." *New York Post*, September 21, 2019.

[49] Author meeting with Pugwash representatives, June 2015.

[50] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/us/politics/militants-free-american-woman-and-family-held-for-5-years-in-afghanistan.html.

[51] For more information on Qatar's mediation efforts, see Sultan Barakat, Brookings Doha Center publication "Qataru Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Final-PDF-English.pdf.

- Qatar has mediated in the conflict over Sudan's Darfur region. In 2010, Qatar, including through grants and promises of investment, helped broker a series of agreements, collectively known as the Doha Agreements, between the government and various rebel factions. Qatar's influence in Sudan in the aftermath of the ouster of longtime President Omar Hassan Al Bashir in 2019 is uncertain, amid competition among several of the Gulf states for influence over the new authorities there. In March 2018, Qatar and Sudan signed an agreement to jointly invest $4 billion to develop the Red Sea port of Suakin off Sudan's coast.
- Qatar has forged relationships with several countries in Central Asia.[52] Amir Tamim has exchanged leadership visits with the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov in 2016 and 2017. The two countries are major world gas suppliers. The leader of Tajikistan, Imamali Rahmonov, visited Doha in February 2017 to reportedly discuss Qatari investment and other joint projects. Qatar funded a large portion of a $100 million mosque in Dushanbe, which purports to be the largest mosque in Central Asia.

U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Cooperation

U.S.-Qatar defense and security relations are extensive—a characterization emphasized by senior U.S. officials in the course of the two U.S.-Qatar "Strategic Dialogue" sessions in January 2018 and in January 2019. Senior U.S. officials have praised Qatar as "a longtime friend and military partner for peace and stability in the Middle East and a supporter of NATO's mission in Afghanistan."[53]

The U.S-Qatar defense relationship emerged during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in late 1981 and collectively backed Iraq against the threat posed by Iran in that war, despite their political and ideological differences with Iraq's Saddam Hussein. In the latter stages of that war, Iran attacked international shipping in the Gulf and some Gulf state oil loading facilities, but none in Qatar.

After Iraq invaded GCC member Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC participated in the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait in February 1991. In January 1991, Qatari armored forces helped coalition troops defeat an Iraqi attack on the Saudi town of Khafji. The Qatari participation in that war ended U.S.-Qatar strains over Qatar's illicit procurement in the late 1980s of U.S.-made "Stinger" shoulder-held antiaircraft missiles.[54] U.S.-Qatar defense relations subsequently deepened and the two countries signed a formal defense cooperation agreement (DCA). Then-U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Joseph Votel testified on February 27, 2018, that U.S. operations have not been affected by the intra-GCC rift. Qatar has hosted part of the added U.S. force deployments sent, beginning in May 2019, to counter Iran.

[52] See Natalie Koch. Qatar and Central Asia. PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 484, 2017.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Elaine Sciolino. "Qatar Rejects U.S. Demand for Return of Illicit Stingers." *New York Times*, June 28, 1988. Congress responded to the Qatari Stinger acquisition by enacting a ban on arms sales to Qatar (Section 566(d) of P.L. 100-461). The ban was repealed by Section 568 of the foreign aid appropriations act for FY1991 (P.L. 101-513).

Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA)

The United States and Qatar signed a formal DCA on June 23, 1992, and it was renewed for 10 years, reportedly with some modifications, in December 2013. The text of the pact is classified, but it reportedly addresses U.S. military access to Qatari military facilities, prepositioning of U.S. armor and other military equipment, and U.S. training of Qatar's military forces.[55] About 10,000 U.S. military personnel are deployed at the various facilities in Qatar, including Al Udeid Air Base, discussed further below.[56]

The DCA also reportedly addresses U.S. training of Qatar's military. Qatar's force of about 12,000 is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, about 8,500 are ground forces, 1,800 are naval forces, and 1,500 are air forces. A 2014 law mandates four months (three months for students) of military training for males between the ages of 18 and 35, with a reserve commitment of 10 years (up to age 40). Then-CENTCOM commander General Votel's February 2018 testimony stated that Qatar is seeking to expand its military both in size and capacity.

Al Udeid Air Base (Air Force/CENTCOM)[57]

Most of the U.S. military personnel in Qatar are U.S. Air Force personnel based at the large Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha, working as part of the Coalition Forward Air Component Command (CFACC).[58] Al Udeid Base also hosts the forward headquarters for CENTCOM. U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) against the Islamic State organization and Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan, and they provide a substantial capability against Iran. In conjunction with U.S.-Iran tensions since mid-2019, the United States has deployed F-22 combat aircraft to Al Udeid.

The January 2018 Strategic Dialogue resulted in a number of U.S.-Qatar announcements of expanded defense and security cooperation, including Qatari offers to fund capital expenditures that offer the possibility of an "enduring" U.S. military presence in Qatar and to discuss the possibility of "permanent [U.S.] basing" there. To enable an enduring U.S. presence, Qatar is expanding and enhancing Al Udeid over the next two decades—an effort that would facilitate an enduring U.S. presence there. On July 24, 2018, the U.S. and Qatari military attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the Al Udeid expansion, which is to include over 200 housing units for families of officers and expansion of the base's ramps and cargo facilities. On January 24, 2019, during the second U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, the Qatar Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Department of Defense signed a memorandum of understanding that DOD referred to as a "positive step towards the eventual formalization of Qatar's commitment to support sustainment costs and future infrastructure costs at [Al Udeid Air Base]."[59]

Al Udeid has been steadily expanded and enhanced with Qatari funding (over $8 billion to support U.S. and coalition operations at Al Udeid since 2002) and about $500 million in U.S.

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[55] U.S. Library of Congress. Country Studies: Persian Gulf States. Some provisions of DCA's with other GCC states are discussed in Sami Hajjar, *U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects* (U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute), March 2002, p. 27.

[56] State Department Country Reports on Terrorism: 2018. Released October 2019, p. 148.

[57] Department of State. Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue. January 30, 2018.

[58] "Biggest U.S. Base in Middle East is Getting Bigger." *Washington Post*, August 24, 2019.

[59] Department of Defense. "U.S. and Qatar sign MoU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base."

military construction funding since 2003.[60] Qatar reportedly is providing another $1.8 billion for the Al Udeid expansion plan.[61] In March 2018, the State Department approved the sale to Qatar of equipment, with an estimated value of about $200 million, to upgrade its Air Operation Center.

As Saliyah Facility (Army)

The U.S. Army component of U.S. Central Command prepositions armor (enough to outfit one brigade) at Camp As Sayliyah outside Doha.[62] U.S. armor stationed in Qatar was deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom that removed Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq in 2003. However, because the ground force threat to the Gulf from Iraq has largely ended since the 2003 Iraq war, it is likely that the Defense Department might de-emphasize prepositioning armor in Qatar, according to a wide range of observers.

Hamad Port

Qatar has indicated it will join the U.S.-led maritime security mission (Operation Sentinel) intended to deter Iran from further attacks on commercial shipping in the Gulf, which thus far includes Bahrain, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.[63] Qatar has been expanding the Hamad Port to be able to potentially accommodate larger U.S. Navy operations.[64]

U.S. Arms Sales to Qatar

Qatar's forces continue to field mostly French-made equipment, such as the AMX-30 main battle tank, but Qatar is increasingly shifting its weaponry mix to U.S.-made equipment.[65] According to General Votel's February 27, 2018, testimony, Qatar is currently the second-largest U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customer, with $25 billion in new FMS cases. And, Qatar is "on track" to surpass $40 billion in the next five years with additional FMS purchases. The joint statement of the U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue in January 2018 said that Qatari FMS purchases had resulted in over 110,000 American jobs and the sustainment of critical U.S. military capabilities.

- **Tanks.** Qatar's 30 main battle tanks are French-made AMX-30s. In 2015, Germany exported several "Leopard 2" tanks to Qatar. Qatar has not purchased U.S.-made tanks, to date.
- **Combat Aircraft.** Qatar currently has a small air force, armed mostly with French-made aircraft. In 2013 Qatar requested to buy 72 U.S.-made F-15s. After evaluating the potential sale against the U.S. commitment to Israel's "Qualitative Military Edge" (QME), on November 17, 2016, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified Congress of the potential sale, which has an estimated value of $21 billion.[66] On June 14, 2017, the United States and Qatar signed an agreement for a reported 36 of the F-15 fighters, which predated

[60] Figures compiled by CRS.

[61] "Biggest U.S. Base in Middle East is Getting Bigger." Op. cit.

[62] See Global Security.org at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-as-sayliyah.htm.

[63] Qatar, Kuwait told U.S. they will join naval coalition, official says. Reuters, November 25, 2019.

[64] Qatar Defense Attache in Washington, DC, press release, July 24, 2018.

[65] Information on Qatar's existing military forces and equipment is derived from The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). "The Military Balance: 2016." Chapter 7: The Middle East and North Africa.

[66] DSCA Transmittal Number 16-58. The FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1278 of P.L. 114-92) required a DOD briefing for Congress on the sale, including its effect on Israel's QME.

then-Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Senator Bob Corker's June 26, 2017 announcement that he would not concur with arms sales to the GCC countries until the intra-GCC rift was resolved – a hold that was dropped on February 8, 2018. In December 2017, the Defense Department announced that Qatar would buy the second tranche of 36 F-15s under the sale agreement. Deliveries of all aircraft are to be completed by the end of 2022. Qatar signed a $7 billion agreement in May 2015 to purchase 24 French-made Rafale aircraft,[67] and, in September 2017, a "Statement of Intent" with Britain to purchase 24 Typhoon combat aircraft. Dassault began delivering the jets in February 2019.

- **Attack Helicopters**. In 2012, the United States sold Qatar AH-64 Apache, UH-60 M Blackhawk, and MH-60 Seahawk helicopters, with an estimated value of about $6.6 billion. On April 9, 2018, DSCA announced that the State Department had approved a sale to Qatar of 5,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapons Systems II Guidance Sections for use on the Apaches, with an estimated value of $300 million. On May 9, 2019, DSCA notified Congress of a possible sale of another 24 AH-64E Apaches, justified as fulfilling Qatari requirements to defend its oil and gas infrastructure platforms. The estimated cost of the potential sale is $3 billion. S.J.Res. 26 was introduced on May 14, 2019, to prohibit the sale. On June 12, 2019, the Administration said the President's advisers would recommend a veto. A motion to discharge the bill on June 13, 2019 failed 42-57.
- **Short-Range Missile and Rocket Systems.** Various suppliers have provided the country with short-range missile and rocket systems suited primarily for ground operations. During 2012-2016, the United States sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin guided missiles, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS). The total potential value of the sales was estimated at about $665 million. On April 22, 2016, DSCA notified to Congress a potential sale to Qatar of 252 RIM-116C Rolling Airframe Tactical Missiles and 2 RIM 116C-2 Rolling Airframe Telemetry Missiles, plus associated equipment and support, with an estimated sale value of $260 million.[68] On November 27, 2018, DSCA notified Congress of a State Department approval of a commercial sale by Raytheon of 40 National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAM) at an estimated value of $215 million, and the July 9, 2019 joint Trump-Tamim statement said Qatar had recommitted to that purchase. On July 10, 2019, Raytheon announced that Qatar will be the first country to purchases its Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile – Extended Range (AMRAAM-ER) weapon.[69]
- **Ballistic Missiles.** At its national day parade in Doha in December 2017, the Qatari military displayed its newly purchased SY 400-BP-12A ballistic missile, which has a 120-mile range and is considered suited to a surface attack mission. The display apparently represented an effort to demonstrate to the Saudi-led bloc Qatar's capabilities to resist pressure.[70]

[67] Tom Hussain. "Is France Positioning Itself for Lead Role in Persian Gulf?" McClatchy, May 1, 2015; "Senators Begin Push for Jet Sales to Kuwait, Qatar." Defense News, January 22, 2016.

[68] Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Transmittal Number 16-07.

[69] Jane's Defence Weekly, July 11, 2019.

[70] Why is Qatar Showing Off its New Short-Range Ballistic Missile Arsenal?" *Al Arabiya English*, December 20, 2017.

- **Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Systems.** Qatar has purchased various U.S.-made BMD systems, consistent with U.S. efforts to promote a coordinated Gulf missile defense capability against Iran's missile arsenal. In 2012, the United States sold Qatar Patriot Configuration 3 (PAC-3, made by Raytheon) fire units and missiles at an estimated value of nearly $10 billion. Also that year, the United States agreed to sell Qatar the Terminal High Altitude Area Air Defense (THAAD), the most sophisticated ground-based missile defense system the United States has made available for sale,[71] but Qatari budgetary and operational concerns have delayed or derailed that purchase.[72] In February 2017, Raytheon concluded an agreement to sell Qatar an early warning radar system to improve the capabilities of its existing missile defense systems, with an estimated value of $1.1 billion. In December 2017, the Defense Department awarded Raytheon a $150 million contract to provide Qatar with services and support for its PAC-3 system, and the Qatar Ministry of Defense has committed to acquire additional Patriot systems, with an estimated value of about $2 billion.
- **Naval Vessels.** In August 2016, DSCA transmitted a proposed sale to Qatar of an unspecified number of U.S.-made Mk-V fast patrol boats, along with other equipment, with a total estimated value of about $124 million. In August 2017, Qatar finalized a purchase from Italy of four multirole corvette ships, two fast patrol missile ships, and an amphibious logistics ship, with an estimated value of $5 billion.[73]

Other Defense Partnerships

Qatar has also developed relations with NATO under the "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative" (ICI). Qatar's Ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, the headquarters of which is based near Brussels. In June 2018, Qatar's Defense Minister said that his country's long-term strategic "ambition" is to join NATO.[74]

France

Qatar has historically bought most of its major combat systems from France. On March 28, 2019, French Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe visited Doha and signed with Qatar's Defense and Interior Minister five agreements to boost ties. The agreements focused on defense information exchange, cooperation to combat cybercrime, and culture and education.[75]

[71] Defense Security Cooperation Agency announcement. November 5, 2012. http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/qatar-terminal-high-altitude-area-defense-thaad.

[72] "Lockheed Says Qatar Budget Woes Could Delay Defense Deal." *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2016. http://www.wsj.com/articles/lockheed-says-qatar-budget-woes-could-delay-defense-deal-1461692108.

[73] "Qatar's EUR5 Billion Naval Deal with Italy Sees Three Ship Types to Be Delivered." *IHS Jane's Navy International*, June 17, 2016.

[74] AFP, June 6, 2018.

[75] Xinhua, March 28, 2019.

Turkey

Turkey has helped its ally cope with the Saudi-led blockade. In 2014, Turkey opened a military base (Tariq bin Ziyad base) in Qatar,[76]although at that time the Turkish deployment was intended to help all the GCC states, not just Qatar, deter Iran. However, because Turkey shares Qatar's relatively positive view of the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the "13 demands" of the Saudi-led bloc has been that Qatar close the base. Since the rift began, Turkey has sent additional troops to its base in Qatar, expanding their number from 300 to about 2,000, and including a naval and air component. Turkey also has increased food exports to Qatar to replace those previously provided by Saudi Arabia. Turkey opened a second military base in Qatar in September 2019.[77]

Russia

Qatar has broadened its relationship with Russia since 2016, apparently in recognition of Russia's heightened role in the region and, particularly, Syria. Amir Tamim has made several visits to Russia in the past few years. One of Qatar's sovereign wealth funds has increased its investments in Russia, particularly in its large Rosneft energy firm, and Qatar Airways has bought a 25% stake in one of Moscow's airports. Qatar is reportedly considering buying the S-400 sophisticated air defense system, but U.S. opposition and the potential for U.S. sanctions for the sale has contributed to Qatar's lack of movement to complete the purchase. Section 231 of the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA, P.L. 115-44) sanctions persons or entities that conduct transactions with Russia's defense or intelligence sector. The section mandates the imposition of several sanctions that might include restrictions on certain exports to Qatar, restrictions on Qatari banking activities in the United States, restrictions on Qatari acquisition of property in the United States, and a ban on U.S. investments in any Qatari sovereign debt.

Counterterrorism Cooperation[78]

U.S.-Qatar cooperation against groups that both countries agree are terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State organization, is extensive. However, U.S. and Qatari officials sometimes differ over the threat posed to the region by some groups, such as Hamas. Perhaps in reaction to the intra-GCC rift, on July 10, 2017, Qatar's foreign minister and then-Secretary Tillerson signed in Doha a Memorandum of Understanding on broad U.S.-Qatar counterterrorism cooperation.[79] The United States and Qatar hold a yearly Counterterrorism Dialogue to set priorities on this issue. In an effort to implement the U.S.-Qatar MoU, and perhaps also as a gesture to the blockading states, on March 22, 2018, the Qatar Ministry of Interior issued list of 19 individuals and eight entities that it considers as "terrorists." The list includes 10 persons who are also are also named as terrorists by the blockading GCC states.

The State Department report on terrorism for 2018 credits Qatar with providing a wide range of counterterrorism cooperation with the United States, including aviation security information sharing and funding of State Department anti-terrorism training programs to help Qatar to prepare to hold the World Cup soccer tournament in 2022. The State Department report assesses that

[76] Heather Murdock, "Turkey Opens First Mideast Military Base in Qatar," *Voice of America News*, May 10, 2016,

[77] Turkey expands its military base and influence in Qatar. The New Arab. September 10, 2019.

[78] Much of the information in this section is taken from: Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. "Country Reports on Terrorism: 2018." Released October 2019.

[79] Carol Morello. "Qatar Agrees to Curb Terrorism Financing Under Deal with U.S." *Washington Post*, July 11, 2017.

Qatar maintains "an aggressive posture" toward monitoring internal terrorism-related activities, is "well positioned to respond to incidents," and is "active in prosecuting terrorism and terrorism financing cases." In April 2018, a Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor position was established in Doha. However, Qatari agencies such as the State Security Bureau and the Ministry of Interior have limited manpower and are reliant on nationals from third countries to fill law enforcement positions—a limitation Qatar has tried to address by employing U.S. and other Western technology.[80]

In the past, at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including suspected September 11, 2001, attacks mastermind Khalid Shaykh Mohammad.[81] None of the September 11 hijackers was a Qatari national.

Terrorism Financing Issues

U.S. officials have stated that Qatar is taking steps to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar. In 2018, according to the State Department report on terrorism for 2018, Qatar continued to maintain restrictions on the overseas activities of Qatari charities. The report also credits Qatar with "deepen[ing] cooperation with the United States on combatting terrorism financing in 2018." In 2018, the U.S. Attorney General and his Qatari counterpart signed a memorandum of understanding on the fight against terrorism and its financing and combating cybercrime.

The country is a member of the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a regional financial action task force that coordinates efforts combatting money laundering and terrorism financing. In February 2017, Qatar hosted a meeting of the "Egmont Group" global working group consisting of 152 country Financial Intelligence Units. Qatar is also a member of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC), a U.S.-GCC initiative announced during President Trump's May 2017 visit to Saudi Arabia. In October 2017, and despite the intra-GCC rift, Qatar joined the United States and other TFTC countries in designating terrorists affiliated with Al Qaeda and IS.

In terms of the Qatari legal structure, in 2014, the Amir approved Law Number 14, the "Cybercrime Prevention Law," which criminalized terrorism-linked cyber offenses, and clarified that it is illegal to use an information network to contact a terrorist organization or raise funds for terrorist groups, or to promote the ideology of terrorist organizations. The Qatari government developed a new draft anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) law in 2018, but it awaits final approval.

At the same time, some deficiencies remain. The United States has imposed sanctions on several persons living in Qatar, including Qatari nationals, for allegedly raising funds or making donations to both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.[82]

Countering Violent Extremism

Qatar has hosted workshops on developing plans to counter violent extremism and has participated in similar sessions hosted by the UAE's Hedayat Center that focuses on that issue. Also in 2015, Qatar pledged funding to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to help

[80] Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. "Country Reports on Terrorism: 2014."

[81] Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

[82] U.S. Department of the Treasury: "Treasury Designated Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators," September 24, 2014; "Treasury Designated Al-Qa'ida Supporters in Qatar and Yemen," December 18, 2013; "Treasury Targets Key Al-Qa'ida Funding and Support Network Using Iran as a Critical Transit Point," July 28, 2011.

address violent extremism and radicalization among youth and vulnerable populations. Still, reports persist of Qatari clerics giving sharply anti-Western and anti-Semitic sermons in mosques and of Qatari personalities, in appearances on Al Jazeera, supporting violent regional movements.

Economic Issues

Qatar has been wrestling with the fall in world energy prices since mid-2014 and, more recently, the economic effects of the intra-GCC rift. Large oil and gas reserves and its small citizen population have combined to make Qatar the country with the world's highest per capita income. Qatar has been a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), along with other GCC states Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and UAE and other countries, but in 2019, Qatar withdrew from OPEC in order to focus on its more high-priority natural gas exports. Some observers attributed the decision, at least in part, to the ongoing intra-GCC rift.

Qatar has coped with the intra-GCC rift. About 40% of Qatar's food was imported from Saudi Arabia pre-crisis, and there were reports of runs on stocks of food when the blockade began. However, the government's ample financial resources enabled it to quickly arrange substitute sources of goods primarily from Turkey, Iran, and India. The effects on Qatar's growing international air carrier, Qatar Airways, have been significant because of the prohibition on its overflying the blockading states. In November 2017, Iran and Turkey signed a deal with Qatar to facilitate the mutual transiting of goods. Some economic data is presented in **Figure 1**.

Qatar's main sovereign wealth fund, run by the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), as well as funds held by the Central Bank, total about $350 billion, according to Qatar's Central Bank, giving the country a substantial cushion to weather financial demands.[83] QIA's investments consist of real estate and other relatively illiquid holdings, such as interest in London's Canary Wharf project. Qatar also has cut some subsidies to address its budgetary shortfalls, and it ran a slight surplus in 2019. Its 2020 budget, announced in December 2019, anticipated a more substantial surplus of about $1.2 billion,[84] but the economic effects of the COVID-19 disease, which has caused energy prices to fall dramatically, might reduce that surplus figure. As of March 9, 2020, 18 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Qatar, and the country has banned travel to Iran, which has recorded substantially more cases of infection, and to several other countries in the region and in East Asia.

Oil and gas still account for 92% of Qatar's export earnings, and 56% of government revenues.[85] Proven oil reserves of about 25 billion barrels are far less than those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but enough to enable Qatar to continue its current levels of oil production (about 700,000 barrels per day) for over 50 years. Its proven reserves of natural gas exceed 25 trillion cubic meters, about 13% of the world's total and third largest in the world.

Qatar is the world's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is exported from the large Ras Laffan processing site north of Doha. That facility has been built up with U.S.-made equipment, much of which was exported with the help of about $1 billion in Export-Import Bank loan guarantees. Qatar is a member and hosts the headquarters of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), which is a nascent natural gas cartel and includes Iran and Russia, among other

[83] Qatar Has $340 Billion in Reserves, Can Withstand 'Any Kind of Shock,' Central Bank Says. Istanbul Sabah Online, July 10, 2017.

[84] Qatar Announces 2020 Budget, its Biggest in Five Years. Al Jazeera, December 19, 2019.

[85] CIA,*The World Factbook*. June 2016. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_qa.html.

countries. In June 2018, Qatar Petroleum bought a 30% state in an Exxon-Mobil-run development of an onshore shale natural gas basin in Argentina (Vaca Muerta).[86]

Qatar is the source of the gas supplies for the Dolphin Gas Project established by the UAE in 1999 and which became operational in 2007. The project involves production and processing of natural gas from Qatar's offshore North Field, which is connected to Iran's South Pars Field (see **Figure 2**), and transportation of the processed gas by subsea pipeline to the UAE and Oman.[87] Its gas industry gives Qatar some counter leverage against the Saudi-led group, but Qatar has said it will not reduce its gas supplies under existing agreements with other GCC states. Both the UAE and Qatar have filed complaints at the WTO over their boycotting each other's goods; the United States reportedly has backed the UAE's arguments that the WTO does not have the authority to adjudicate issues of national security.[88]

The national development strategy from 2011 to 2016 focused on Qatar's housing, water, roads, airports, and shipping infrastructure in part to promote economic diversification, as well as to prepare to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament, investing as much as $200 billion. In Doha, the result has been a construction boom, including the building of a metro transportation system that has begun operations.

U.S.-Qatar Economic Relations

In contrast to the two least wealthy GCC states (Bahrain and Oman), which have free trade agreements (FTAs) with the United States, Qatar and the United States have not negotiated an FTA. However, in April 2004, the United States and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). Qatar has used the benefits of the more limited agreement to undertake large investments in the United States, including the City Center project in Washington, DC. Also, several U.S. universities and other institutions, such as Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Brookings Institution, and Rand Corporation, have established branches and offices at the Qatar Foundation's Education City outside Doha. In 2005, Qatar donated $100 million to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The joint statement of the January 2018 U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue "recognized" QIA's commitment of $45 billion in future investments in U.S. companies and real estate.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's "Foreign Trade Statistics" compilation, in 2018, U.S. exports to Qatar were about $4.4 billion, and imports were about $1.57 billion. U.S. exports to Qatar increased substantially in 2019 to $6.5 billion, but U.S. imports from Qatar were little changed at about $1.7 billion. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aircraft, machinery, and information technology. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products, but U.S. imports of Qatar's crude oil or natural gas have declined to negligible levels in recent years, reflecting the significant increase in U.S. domestic production. State-run Qatar Petroleum is a major investor in the emerging U.S. LNG export market, with a 70% stake in an LNG terminal in Texas that is seeking U.S. government approval to expand the facility to the point where it can export over 15 million tons of LNG per year.[89] The White House statement after the meeting between President Trump and Amir Tamim on July 9, 2019 stated that the Chevron-Phillips Chemical Company and Qatar Petroleum had agree to develop a petrochemical complex in Qatar. **Figure 2** contains information about Qatar's energy resources and export channels.

[86] Qatar Taps into Giant Argentinean Shale Reserve. UPI, June 4, 2018.

[87] Dolphin Energy website. http://www.dolphinenergy.com/en/6/about-dolphin-energy/about-us.

[88] "UAE Challenges Qatar at the WTO in Case with National Security Implications." Inside Trade, February 4, 2019.

[89] Adam Schreck. "AP Interview: Qatar Energy Minister Wants 'Fair' Oil Price." *Associated Press*, May 24, 2016.

Qatar's airline, Qatar Airways, is a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. In October 2016, the airline agreed to purchase from Boeing up to another 100 passenger jets with an estimated value of $18 billion—likely about $10 billion if standard industry discounts are applied. The White House announced after the July 9 Trump-Tamim meeting that Qatar Airways would buy (1) five Boeing 777 Freighters; (2) large-cabin aircraft from Gulfstream; and (3) GE jet engines and services to power its 787 and 777 aircraft.[90]

Some U.S. airlines challenge Qatar Airways' benefits under a U.S.-Qatar "open skies" agreement. The U.S. carriers assert that the airline's privileges under that agreement should be revoked because the airline's aircraft purchases are subsidized by Qatar's government, giving it an unfair competitive advantage.[91] The Obama Administration did not reopen that agreement in response to the complaints, nor has the Trump Administration. However, the United States and Qatar reached a set of "understandings" on civil aviation on January 29, 2018, committing Qatar Airways to financial transparency and containing some limitations on the airline's ability to pick up passengers in Europe for flights to the United States. Some assert that Qatar Airway's 2018 purchase of Air Italy might represent a violation of those limitations.

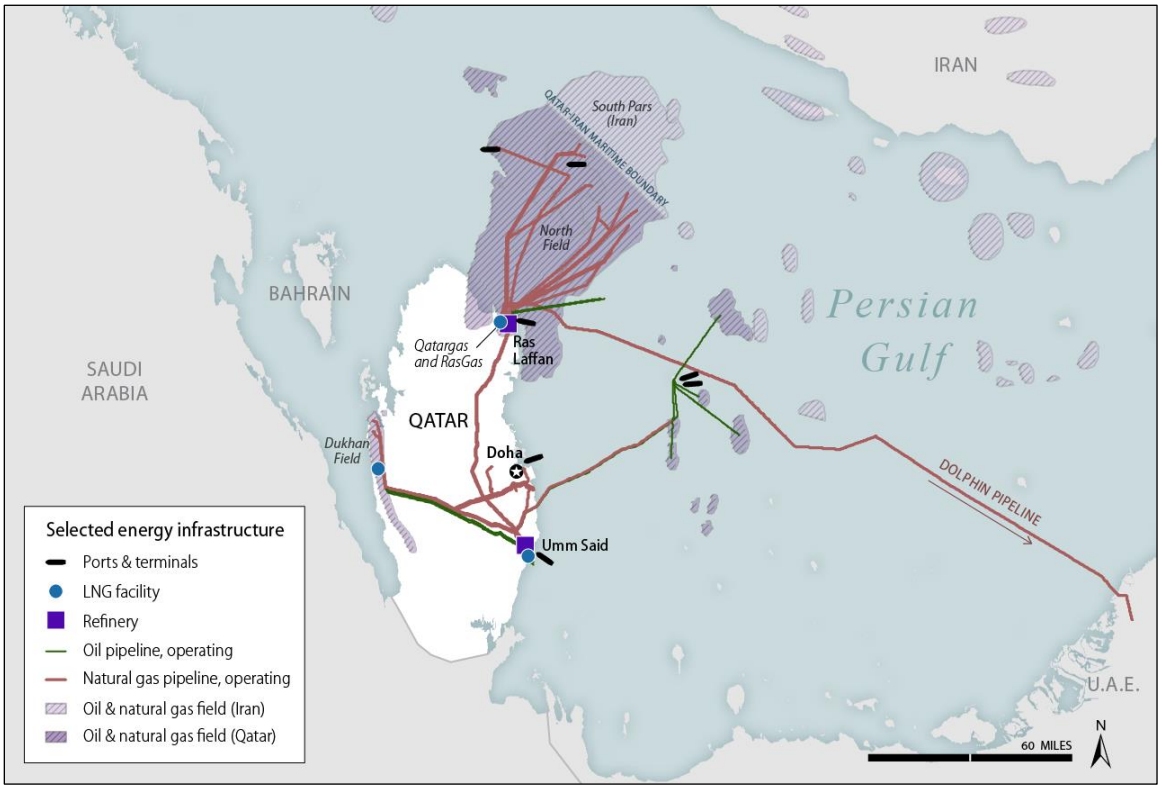
U.S. Assistance

Qatar, one of the wealthiest states in the world on a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) basis, receives virtually no U.S. military assistance. At times, small amounts of U.S. aid have been provided to help Qatar develop capabilities to prevent smuggling of arms and narcotics, and the movement of terrorists or proliferation-related gear into Qatar or around its waterways. In FY2015, the United States spent $35,000 on programs in Qatar, of which two-thirds was for counter-narcotics. In FY2016, the United States spent about $100,000 on programs in Qatar, about two-thirds of which was for counter-narcotics programming. In FY2017, the United States provided a total of $78,000 in aid to Qatar, of which $53,000 was for programs to support Qatar's counter-narcotics capabilities. The remainder was for maternal and other health programs. Virtually no U.S. aid of any kind was provided for Qatar programs in FY2018, the last fiscal year for which precise data is available.

[90] Joint Statement, July 9, 2019, op. cit.

[91] "Open Skies Dispute Between US and Gulf Airlines Escalates." *UAE the National*, Jnuary 30, 2016.

Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure



Source: U.S. Energy Information Agency, as adapted by CRS.

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