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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, a small Arab Gulf monarchy which has about 300,000 citizens among a total population of about 2.4 million, 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). Qatar has fostered a close security partnership with the United States while engaging with a wide range of actors who are often at odds with each other, including some Sunni Islamists, Iran and Iran-backed groups, and Israeli officials.

Some of Qatar's fellow GCC and Arab states object to Qatar's independent foreign policy and the criticism of Arab leaders often seen on its Al Jazeera media network. 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 sought a resolution of the dispute, in part because the rift was hindering U.S. efforts to formalize a broad front of Arab states to counter Iran. Following its Arab neighbors' actions, Qatar deepened relations with Turkey and Iran. On January 5, 2021, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt agreed to lift the blockade and restore ties, although the UAE although lingering resentments remain, and the UAE and Bahrain have not reopened their embassies in Doha.

Like other GCC leaders, Qatar's leaders work with the United States to secure the Persian Gulf and the broader region. 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. In January 2018, Qatar and the United States inaugurated a "Strategic Dialogue" to institutionalize joint discussions on security and stability in the region. Qatar is a significant buyer of U.S.-made weaponry, including combat aircraft. In 2017, the United States and Qatar signed a broad memorandum of understanding to cooperate against international terrorism. In recognition of Qatar's support for U.S. policy, during the visit to Washington, DC of Qatar's leader on January 31, 2022, President Biden announced that Qatar would be designated as a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally.

Qatari military facilities, including the large Al Udeid Air Base, host the regional headquarters for U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and about 8,000 U.S. forces deployed there participate in operations throughout the region. Al Udeid Air Base was used extensively in the U.S. operation to evacuate U.S. personnel and Afghan allies from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. Qatar has been active as a mediator between the international community and the Taliban regime there, and Doha has served as the temporary location for a U.S. embassy to Afghanistan after U.S. Embassy Kabul closed in the course of the U.S. withdrawal.

Qatar's record on human rights and political freedoms is mixed. The voluntary relinquishing of power in 2013 by Qatar's former leader marked a departure from GCC patterns of governance in which leaders generally remain in power for life or are removed by rival members of the ruling family. Apparently out of concern for widening divisions in Qatari society and politics, Qatar delayed holding elections for a legislative body for several years, but the first vote for 30 out of 45 seats of the *Shura* Council (Consultative Council) was held on October 2, 2021. U.S. and international reports, which are scrutinizing Qatar in advance of its hosting of the World Cup soccer tournament in October 2022, criticize Qatar for not adhering to international standards of labor rights practices, but credit it for taking steps to improve the conditions for expatriate workers.

As have other GCC states, Qatar has wrestled with volatility in prices of its oil exports and changes in international gas markets, as well as the economic effects of measures taken to mitigate spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Qatar shares with virtually all the other GCC states a reliance on revenues from sales of hydrocarbon products. However, Qatar has been able to weather economic headwinds because of its small population, substantial financial reserves, and its favorable business conditions for entrepreneurs. On December 3, 2018, Qatar withdrew from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), stating that it wanted to focus on its natural gas export sector; Qatar has the third largest proven reserves of natural gas in the world. U.S. officials reportedly are urging Qatar to increase supplies of natural gas to European Union countries, which have articulated an intention to reduce their dependence on supplies from Russia.

A Congressional Caucus on Qatari-American Strategic Relationships remains active. In recent years, many Members of Congress have visited Qatar to attend regional security conferences and to conduct oversight of U.S. regional policy and U.S. military operations in Qatar.

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Brief History

Prior to 1867, Qatar was ruled by the family of the leaders from what is now neighboring Bahrain, the Al Khalifa. That year, an uprising in the territory led the United Kingdom, then the main European 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 conservative Sunni religious scholar whose followers have formed a centuries long partnership with the ruling Al Saud family of Saudi Arabia, belonged.[1] Qatar's officially sanctioned religious practices and doctrines reflect conservative Islamic traditions long associated with Saudi Arabia.

In 1916, in the midst of World War I and after the Ottoman Empire relinquished its territorial claims over Qatar, the Al Thani family 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 had 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. The United States is currently represented by Charge D'Affaires Natalie Baker.

Table 1. Senior Leaders of Qatar

Position	Leader
Amir (ruler) and Minister of Defense	Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (since 2013)
Deputy Amir and Crown Prince (heir apparent)	Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani (since 2014)
Prime Minister and Minister of Interior	Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani (since 2020)
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs	Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah (since 2017)
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani (since 2017)
Minister of Finance	Ali Sharif al-Imadi (since 2013)
Ambassador to the United States	Mishal bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (since 2017)

Source: Qatari Government Websites.

[1] 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:* 2.4 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):* $275 billion on purchasing power parity (ppp) basis *GDP per capita:* $103,000 on ppp basis *Inflation:* 2.3% (2021) *GDP Growth Rate*: 2.9% (2021)
Oil and Gas	*Oil Exports:* Slightly more than 700,000 barrels per day. Negligible amounts to the United States. Gas (LNG) Exports: 126 billion cubic meters per year

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

Governance

Qatar's governing structure resembles that of the other states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman). It is led by a hereditary Amir

(literally "prince," but interpreted as "ruler"), Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani,[2] who 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 January 2020, the Amir appointed a new prime minister, U.S.-educated Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani. The Amir's younger brother, Shaykh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani, is deputy Amir. In part because the Amir is relatively young, succession issues in Qatar have received little discussion within the ruling family and among Qatari elites, to date.

Formal political parties are banned and political disagreements are usually aired in private as part of an informal process of consensus-building. Citizens approved a constitution in a 2003 referendum by a 98% vote in favor. The document affirms that Qatar is a hereditary emirate, specifies Islamic law as a key source of legislation,[3] and provides for elections for 30 of the 45 seats of the country's Advisory Council (*Majlis Ash-Shura*), a national legislative body. The *Shura* Council is empowered to remove ministers (two-thirds majority vote), to approve a national budget, and to draft and vote on proposed legislation, although subject to a veto by the Amir. Still, it remains unclear how much influence the *Shura* Council has on sensitive issues such as foreign and defense policy. The country has long held elections for a 29-seat Central Municipal Council, which advises the government on local public services. Elections for the fifth Council (each serving a four-year term) were held in April 2019. Voter registration in 2019 was lower than the government expected; roughly one in 13 Qatari adults cast ballots.[4]

October 2, 2021, *Shura* Council Election

Qatar's leaders long delayed elections for a *Shura* Council, a legislative body that expands popular participation in nation decision-making, reportedly out of concern that the elections would divide Qataris and potentially provide opportunity for Qatar's neighbors to interfere in Qatari politics. In October 2019, the Amir ordered the establishment of a committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to organize the first Council elections.[5] In November 2020, the Amir announced the first *Shura* Council elections would take place in October 2021. An election law adopted in early August 2021 to govern the Council elections required voters to be above 18 years old, be "original" Qataris (families present in Qatar prior to 1930), be born in Qatar, and have Qatari grandfathers. In sum, these criteria excluded from voting many members of the Al Murrah tribe, many of whom do not have Qatari citizenship. Several hundred members of the tribe held a public protest against the election law on August 9, 2021,[6] and continued to protest their exclusion through established complaint processes after the election.

According to Qatari officials, 284 candidates ran for the 30 elected seats, of which 28 were women. Campaigning was said to focus on appeals to familial and tribal relationships rather than issues and differences of opinion among competing candidates. The turnout was about 63% of

[2] Shaykh is an honorific term.

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

[4] Justin Gengler, "Qatar's first elections since 2017 reveal unexpected impact of GCC crisis." *Al Monitor*, April 24, 2019.

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

[6] "Protests in Doha: The Qatari Citizenship Is Not Enough for Voting," *Al Bawaba*, August 10, 2021.

eligible voters. None of the women who ran was elected, however. On October 14, the Amir included two women among his 15 appointments to the Council.[7]

Human Rights Issues[8]

The State Department human rights report for 2020 (latest available) identifies the most significant human rights problems in Qatar as:

> restrictions on free expression; restrictions on peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including prohibitions on political parties and labor unions; restrictions on migrant workers' freedom of movement; limits on the ability of citizens to choose their government in free and fair elections; lack of investigation of and accountability for violence against women; criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual conduct; and reports of forced labor.

A National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), which investigates allegations of human rights abuses, operates independently, but it is funded largely by the Qatar Foundation that is run by the Amir's mother, Shaykha Moza. Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the Amir appoints all judges.

Freedom of Expression

Despite the absence of significant visible opposition among the citizenry, the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprisings apparently prompted the government to increase 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." A law enacted in 2020 authorizes imprisonment for anyone who "broadcasts, publishes, or republishes false or biased rumors, 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."[9] Qatari officials assert that the law targets those who organize violent opposition activities. The government organizes an annual, highly publicized "Doha Forum" in which numerous regional and international officials discuss major issues; some Members of Congress and congressional staff typically attend the gathering.

Al Jazeera Media Network

According to the State Department's human rights reports, the government owns and partially funds the Al Jazeera Media Network, which has evolved into a global media organization that features a wide range of guests from all over the region debating issues. According to Al Jazeera representatives, it has a legal status in Qatar similar to a U.S. nonprofit.[10] The State Department quotes "some observers and former Al Jazeera employees" as alleging that Qatar's government "influences" Al Jazeera content.[11] Some experts and officials criticize the network as giving individuals affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and other Islamist groups a platform

[7] Qatar News Agency, October 14, 2021.

[8] Much of the information in this section is based on U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Qatar*, March 30, 2021.

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

[10] Information provided to CRS in August 2020 by CLS Strategies, a firm that represents Al Jazeera in the United States.

[11] U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Qatar*, March 30, 2021.

to promote their ideology,[12] and some Arab leaders have reacted to the network's critical coverage by closing Al Jazeera's bureaus or imprisoning its journalists. The network has run stories that criticize the Qatari government policies, for example on the situation of expatriate laborers.[13] 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).[14]

[12] Jared Malsin, "In the Eye of the Storm: Can Al Jazeera Survive the Gulf Crisis?" *Time,* August 21, 2017.

[13] See, e.g., "Renewed Calls for Qatar to Address Treatment of Migrant Workers," *Al Jazeera,* September 19, 2019.

[14] Office of Senator Tom Cotton, "Lawmakers Seek FARA Evaluation of Qatari-owned Al Jazeera," 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. Shaykh Tamim became Amir on June 25, 2013, when Amir Hamad stepped down in a voluntary transfer of power that was unprecedented for Qatar and the Gulf region. 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. A wide range of observers assess him as highly popular for resisting Saudi-led pressure during the intra-GCC crisis from 2017-2021.

Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Amir Tamim's father, *Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani,* seized power from his father, Amir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, in June 1995, during his father's absence 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, one of his wives, 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. 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: various press, and Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Women's Rights

According to the State Department, social and legal discrimination against women continues, despite the constitutional assertion of equality.[15]The application of Islamic law, which is not gender-neutral on marriage, divorce, child custody and guardianship, and inheritance, as well as a lack of laws against domestic violence, contribute to this gender inequality.[16] Laws prevent women from passing citizenship to their children, though a 2018 permanent residency law has created a mechanism for children born to Qatari women married to non-Qatari men to access government-funded health and education. Guardianship laws require young women to obtain permission from their male guardians to travel alone, as well as "to marry, obtain a government scholarship to pursue higher education, work in government, and obtain some reproductive health care."[17]

Women in Qatar drive and own property, and work in the government and private sector. Qatar's constitution recognizes the right of women to vote and hold office. In November 2017, the Amir appointed four women to the *Majlis As-Shura* for the first time in the body's history.[18]As noted above, no women candidates were elected in the October 2, 2021, *Shura* Council elections, but the Amir included two women among his 15 appointments to the Council. 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).[19]

Trafficking in Persons and Labor Issues[20]

The State Department's Trafficking in Persons report for 2021 maintained Qatar at a Tier 2 ranking on the basis that the government does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. Qatar has enacted a Domestic Worker Law to better protect those workers and it has established a coordinating body for anti-trafficking initiatives. Still, 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 vulnerable to trafficking due to their positioning 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.[21]

Scrutiny of Qatar's labor practices has centered on the status of the many expatriate workers hired to prepare for the 2022 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament in October. The State Department assesses Qatar's labor laws as not adequately protecting the rights of workers to form and join independent unions, conduct legal strikes, or bargain collectively. Qatari law does not prohibit anti-union discrimination or provide for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. The State Department does credit the country with taking some steps to protect labor rights, including for expatriate workers. According to the State Department Trafficking in Persons report for 2021:

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[15] U.S. Department of State, *2020 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, March 2021.

[16] For more information and source material, see: CRS Report R46423, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress*, by Zoe Danon and Sarah R. Collins.

[17] Human Rights Watch, *"Everything I Have to Do is Tied to a Man": Women and Qatar's Male Guardianship Rules*, March 29, 2021.

[18] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "IPU welcomes appointment of four women to Qatar's Parliament," November 13, 2017.

[19] "Amir appoints Lolwah Al Khater as Assistant to FM," *Gulf Times*, December 2, 2019.

[20] This section is based on the U.S. Department of State, *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 25, 2020.

[21] U.S. Embassy in Qatar, "Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue," media note, January 30, 2018.

"The government announced and implemented reforms to its sponsorship system, including the removal of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) to allow all workers to transfer jobs at any time during their contract period." Reforms that took effect in August 2020, established a monthly minimum wage of $275 and provide for stricter penalties for those that fail to provide their mostly expatriate labor force with adequate housing. The government also has increased its cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to help expatriate workers. Some studies suggested that crowded conditions for expatriate laborers fueled their relatively high per capita infection rate from COVID-19 in 2020.[22] Amnesty International released a report in mid-2021 that found that Qatari authorities had failed to investigate the deaths of thousands of migrant workers over the past decade, despite evidence of links between premature deaths and unsafe working conditions.[23]

Religious Freedom[24]

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 overwhelming majority (about 95%) of Qatari citizens are Sunni Muslims, possibly explaining an absence of observable sectarian tensions. 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. Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, or other non-Muslim religious groups are registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and they have established villas and private homes as houses of worship. The law provides for a prison sentence of up to seven years for offending or misinterpreting the Quran, "offending" Islam or any of its rites or beliefs, insulting any of the prophets, or defaming, desecrating, or committing blasphemy against Islam, Christianity, or Judaism.

Foreign Policy

Over the past two decades, Qatar's aims to influence political outcomes in the Middle East and North Africa and mediate conflicts in the region and beyond have required Qatari officials to build ties to individuals and parties at odds with those supported by some other regional states, including fellow GCC members Saudi Arabia and the UAE. One source of friction has been Qatar's engagement with regional Islamist movements, including those affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatari officials maintain that it is useful to maintain ties to Islamist groups, including the Brotherhood, that participate in the legitimate political process.[25] Leaders of some of the other Gulf states, particularly the UAE, assert that the Brotherhood and other Islamist movements seek to destabilize established governments in the region and should be isolated, not engaged.

In 2014, differences over this and other issues led Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain to withdraw their ambassadors from Doha, returning them after Qatar pledged to implement a

[22] "These two countries are tiny, rich and have the world's highest coronavirus infection rates," *Associated Press*, July 23, 2020.

[23] Amnesty International. "Qatar: Failure to investigate migrant worker deaths leaves families in despair." August 26, 2021.

[24] This section draws from the U.S. Department of State, *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom*.

[25] For analysis of the differing views of the Gulf states on the Muslim Brotherhood, see: Eric Trager, The Muslim Brotherhood Is the Root of the Qatar Crisis, *The Atlantic*, July 2, 2017,

November 2013 commitment to end support for Muslim Brotherhood-linked organizations.[26] The differences erupted again in June 2017 when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt and Jordan, cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. The group initially demanded that, as a condition for ending the boycott, Qatar close Al Jazeera, sever relations with Muslim Brotherhood organizations, downgrade relations with Iran, and end the deployment of Turkish military personnel in Qatar.[27] Amir Tamim expressed openness to negotiations but said Qatar would not "surrender" its sovereignty by agreeing to the demands. One month after the intra-GCC rift began, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on the causes of the rift and the status of U.S.-Qatar relations. Among the issues raised in that hearing were Qatar's engagement with and possible funding of regional Islamist groups.[28] President Trump initially echoed criticism of Qatar's policies, but later backed efforts by then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to mediate a resolution of the intra-GCC rift.

Realizing few benefits from continuing the blockade, by 2019, Saudi Arabia and the UAE apparently began to look for a resolution - an outcome strongly urged by the Trump Administration.[29] In July 2019, Jordan restored diplomatic relations with Qatar, signaling the beginning of a resolution of the blockade.[30] During October 2019-January 2020, Qatar and Saudi Arabia held high-level direct talks, but the talks were suspended in early January 2020.[31] At the 41st GCC summit in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, on January 5, 2021, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Egypt announced that they would restore diplomatic relations with Qatar. The Al-Ula Declaration did not commit Qatar to meeting any of the initial Saudi/UAE demands, but referred to restoring "collaboration among all Member States" and strengthening "the bonds of brotherhood among them."[32]Tensions between Qatar and the UAE, in particular, have continued to simmer since the formal reconciliation, as demonstrated by the fact that the UAE has not reopened its embassy in Doha. But, the UAE National Security Advisor Shaykh Tahnoun bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan visited Qatar in August 2021, the first such visit in over four years.[33] In September 2021, the Amir, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and Shaykh Tahnoun met at a Red Sea resort. Amir Tamim attended the GCC summit in Saudi Arabia in January 2022.

The intra-GCC rift has played out in the broader region and beyond:[34]

- In Egypt, Qatar supported and financially assisted the government of a Muslim Brotherhood-linked figure, Muhammad Morsi, who was elected president in 2012. The UAE and Saudi Arabia backed Morsi's ouster by Egypt's military in

[26] 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.

[27] The list of demands can be found at "List of demands on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, other Arab nations," *Associated Press*, June 23, 2017.

[28] House of Representatives. Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs. Assessing the U.S.-Qatar Relationship. July 26, 2017.

[29] "US secretary of state in Qatar urges end to Gulf diplomatic rift," *Deutsche Welle*, January 13, 2019.

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

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

[32] Tuqa Khalid, "Full transcript of AlUla GCC Summit Declaration: Bolstering Gulf unity," *Al Arabiya*, January 6, 2021; Sultan Barakat, "Qatar-GCC agreement: A victory for measured diplomacy," opinion, *Al Jazeera*, January 8, 2021.

[33] "Emir of Qatar receives delegation led by Tahnoun bin Zayed," *Emirates News Agency*, August 26, 2021.

[34] For background and analysis on Qatar's competition with other Gulf states in East Africa, see: Omar Mahmood, The Middle East's Complicated Engagement in the Horn of Africa, *U.S. Institute of Peace*, January 28, 2020.

2013, and they support former military leader and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Egypt joined the boycott of Qatar in 2017, but Qatar has sought recently to improve relations with Egypt. In late March 2022, Qatar announced a $5 billion investment in the country.[35]

- In Libya, Qatar joined the United States and other partner countries in air operations to help oust Libyan leader Muammar al-Qadhafi in 2011. Subsequently, Qatar, reportedly in partnership with Turkey, supported the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli. The UAE and Egypt have supported ex-military commander Khalifa Haftar, a staunch opponent of Islamist factions who unsuccessfully sought to seize control of Tripoli and oust the U.N.-backed government in 2019.[36]Qatar is publicly supporting a U.N.-backed process to reconcile Libya's contending factions through national elections, which were to be held in December 2021 but have been postponed.
- In Yemen, in 2015, Qatar joined the Saudi-led military coalition to battle Iran-backed Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels, including deploying about 1,000 military personnel, along with armor, to guard the Saudi border from Houthi incursions. The Qatari Air Force also flew air strikes against the Houthis.[37] After the intra-GCC rift erupted in mid-2017, Qatar withdrew from the mission.
- In Syria, Qatar provided funds and weaponry to Islamist rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar Al Asad.[38] Qatar claimed that its engagement with Syrian Islamist groups was instrumental in persuading them to sever their ties to Al Qaeda and to release Western prisoners they were holding.[39]

Iran

Qatari leaders have consistently pursued dialogue with Iran while cooperating with U.S. efforts to counter Iran strategically. In solidarity with its GCC partners, Qatar withdrew its Ambassador from Tehran in January 2016 during a Saudi-Iranian rift over the Saudi execution of a dissident Shiite cleric. However, Qatar turned to Iran to help it cope with the GCC rift, including by importing Iranian foodstuffs and by overflying Iranian airspace. Qatar Airways paid Iran over $130 million per year in overflight fees.[40] In August 2017, Qatar restored full diplomatic relations with Iran, and Qatar did not support the May 8, 2018, U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear agreement, instead stating that efforts to "denuclearize" the region should not lead to "escalation."[41] Through mutual visits of high-ranking officials, Qatar and Iran sought to de-escalate the U.S.-Iran tensions in the Gulf in 2019.[42] Qatar has since supported dialogue between

[35] "Qatar to invest $5bn in Egypt as ties improve." *Al Jazeera*, March 29, 2022.

[36] U.N. Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011), March 9, 2016. For information on the conflict in Libya, see CRS In Focus IF11556, *Libya and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

[37] Author conversations with Qatar Embassy personnel, 2019.

[38] Anand Gopal and Jeremy Hodge, *Social Networks, Class, and the Syrian Proxy War*, International Security Report, New America, April 6, 2021.

[39] "Analysts: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, pushed al-Nusra Front to break with al-Qaeda," *Agencia EFE*, July 29, 2016.

[40] "UN aviation ruling could deny Iran hundreds of millions of dollars," *Fox News*, July 14, 2020.

[41] Qatar Foreign Ministry Statement, May 9, 2018.

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

the GCC countries and Iran to lower Gulf tensions.[43]Qatari officials express support for Biden Administration efforts to restore full Iranian and U.S. adherence to the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA). Qatar and Iran have shared a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf without incident.[44]

Israeli-Palestinian Issues/Hamas[45]

Qatar has had high-level contacts with Israel since the mid-1990s. It hosted a visit by then-Prime Minister of Israel Shimon Peres in 1996 and allowed Israel to open a formal trade office in Doha from 2000 until a 2009 Israel-Hamas conflict erupted. Small-scale direct Israel-Qatar trade, as well as visits to Doha by Israeli security officials, athletes, doctors, and other Israelis, reportedly continued after that clash.[46] At the same time, Amir Tamim regularly accuses Israel of abuses against the Palestinians and expresses support for Palestinian efforts to gain full United Nations membership and recognition.[47] Qatari officials say they have ruled out joining the UAE and Bahrain in normalizing relations with Israel until there is substantial progress toward resolving the Israel-Palestinian dispute.[48]

Qatar has engaged with the Islamist group Hamas, a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot and U.S.-designated terrorist group that has exercised de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2007. Qatari officials assert that their engagement with Hamas can help foster Israeli-Palestinian peace.[49] Some of Hamas's top leaders have been based in Doha, and the current leader of its political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, reportedly relocated there in 2020.[50] Qatar provides substantial financial aid to the people of Gaza, which Israeli officials support as a means of promoting calm on the Israel-Gaza border.[51] The aid is provided through a "Gaza Reconstruction Committee" headed by Qatari official Mohammad Al-Emadi, who serves informally as an envoy to Israel. Qatar was a key mediator to end eleven days of clashes between Israel and Hamas in May 2021, reportedly facilitated, in part, by additional pledges of aid to Gaza.[52]

Among legislative action on the issue of financial support to Hamas, 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, would have sanctioned foreign governments determined to be providing financial or other material support to Hamas or its leaders. Versions of that bill introduced in the 116th Congress, H.R. 1850 and S. 2680, contained sanctions exceptions for purely humanitarian aid. H.R. 1850 passed the House on July 23, 2019, by voice vote. The bill was reintroduced in the 117th Congress (H.R. 261) but has not advanced. It provides for a presidential waiver.

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[43] "Gulf states and Iran should agree on format for dialogue, says Qatari minister," *Reuters*, May 6, 2021.

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

[45] See CRS Report R44245, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations in Brief*, by Jim Zanotti, and CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

[46] "Qatar cozies up to Israel, again," *Electronic Intifada*, February 26, 2020.

[47] "Israel Doesn't Want Peace: Emir," *Qatar The Peninsula*, September 29, 2015.

[48] "Interview: Qatar's FM rules out normalization with Israel, Syria." *Axios*, February 2, 2022.

[49] Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Conference of His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris," June 12, 2017.

[50] "Hamas leader Haniyeh decides to settle in Qatar – report," *Jerusalem Post*, February 2, 2020.

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

[52] "Israel and Hamas Near Cease-Fire Amid Mounting Pressure." Wall Street Journal, May 19, 2021.

Afghanistan/Taliban[53]

Qatar did not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan when the movement ruled Afghanistan during 1996-2001. However, the stalemate in the subsequent conflict there apparently contributed to a Qatari decision in 2013, supported by the United States, to host a Taliban representative office in Doha through which moderate Taliban figures could engage with international diplomats. During the Trump Administration, Qatar brokered and hosted talks between the United States and Taliban representatives, culminating in a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement signed on February 29, 2020 (the "Doha Agreement"). Doha also hosted talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban on a political solution for Afghanistan.[54] Throughout the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan during 2001-2021, Qatari ground forces did not deploy to Afghanistan, but U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan used Qatari facilities, and Qatar's air force delivered cargo and provided other logistical support to U.S. forces.

Following the Taliban's August 2021 takeover of the country, Qatari diplomats in Kabul helped the United States evacuate a total of 75,000 U.S., Afghan, and third-country nationals from Kabul, including by escorting small groups of Americans into the Kabul airport.[55] Since the completion of the U.S. withdrawal on August 30, 2021, several Qatar Airways charter flights have evacuated additional U.S. and other nationals. Senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Austin, thanked Qatar for its help in the evacuation operation, as well as for Doha's hosting of a U.S. embassy to Afghanistan. U.S. Embassy Kabul was closed in conjunction with the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover, and its diplomats were transferred to Doha. Qatar has agreed to host some Afghan nationals for a limited period while their vetting and processing for onward migration is completed. Several Members of Congress visited Qatar in the course of the evacuation operations to exercise oversight of U.S. activities. In the 117th Congress, Members introduced a resolution (S.Res. 390) that would thank Qatar for its support of the United States during the 2021 evacuation.

U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Cooperation[56]

Regional and bilateral issues remain a key topic of high-level U.S.-Qatar meetings. U.S.-Qatar defense and security relations are extensive, including through yearly "Strategic Dialogue" meetings since January 2018. The U.S-Qatar defense relationship began to take shape after the six Gulf monarchies formed the GCC in 1981 to back Iraq against Iran in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. GCC forces joined the U.S.-led military coalition that expelled Iraq from Kuwait in February 1991, and Qatari armored forces helped defeat an Iraqi attack on the Saudi town of Khafji in January 1991.

More recently, Qatar has been a member of the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (the Islamic State organization), and coalition press releases identified Qatar as undertaking airstrikes

[53] See CRS Report R46879, *U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions,* coordinated by Clayton Thomas.

[54] Mjuab Mashal, "Afghanistan Peace Talks Open in Qatar, Seeking End to Decades of War," *New York Times,* September 12, 2020. See also CRS Report R45122, *Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy: In Brief,* by Clayton Thomas.

[55] "Biden says safe zone around Kabul airport to expand, as Pentagon enlists commercial airlines to aid evacuations," *Washington Post,* August 22, 2021.

[56] Much of this section is derived from: U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," fact sheet, July 30, 2021.

in Syria as part of that campaign in 2014. In 2019, Qatar joined the multilateral, U.S.-led maritime security mission (International Maritime Security Construct, IMSC) established to deter Iran from further attacks on commercial shipping in the Gulf.[57]

Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA)

The United States and Qatar signed a formal DCA on June 23, 1992, 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.[58] Over the past several years, the number of U.S. military personnel are deployed at the various facilities in Qatar, including Al Udeid Air Base, has ranged from about 8,000 to over 10,000.[59]

Qatar's total force of about 17,000 personnel is the smallest in the region except for Bahrain. Of that force, about 12,000 are ground forces, 2,500 are naval forces, and 2,000 are air forces. Qatar has sought to compensate for the small size of its force with purchases of advanced weaponry such as U.S.-made combat aircraft and German-made Leopard tanks.[60]

Al Udeid Air Base (Air Force/CENTCOM)[61]

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.[62] The base is host to: the headquarters of U.S. Central Command Forward, U.S. Air Force Central Command Forward, and U.S. Special Operations Command Central Command Forward, as well as Combined Joint Interagency Task Force – Syria, U.S. Central Command's Combined Air Operations Center, and the U.S. Air Force's 379th Air Expeditionary Wing.[63] U.S. personnel deployed to Qatar participate in U.S. operations such as Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) against the Islamic State organization, and they provide a substantial capability against Iran. The United States stations some of its most sophisticated combat aircraft at the facility.

The U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue has produced agreements to expand defense and security cooperation, including the establishment of fixed housing and other structures for U.S. personnel deployed at Al Udeid. In January 2019, the Qatar Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) 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]."[64]Al Udeid has been steadily expanded and

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

[58] U.S. Library of Congress, *Country Studies: Persian Gulf States,* 1994. 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.

[59] U.S. Department of State, "Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Nathan A. Sales Travels to Qatar," media note, August 12, 2020; Department of Defense, "U.S. and Qatar Sign MOU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base," January 14, 2019.

[60] "Qatar is now one of the most well-equipped military forces in the Middle East," *Army Recognition,* July 20, 2020.

[61] U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue," media note, January 30, 2018.

[62] Adam Taylor, "As Trump tries to end 'endless wars,' America's biggest Mideast base is getting bigger," *The Washington Post,* August 21, 2019.

[63] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," fact sheet, July 30, 2021.

[64] U.S. Department of Defense, "U.S. and Qatar sign MoU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S.

enhanced with Qatari funding (over $8 billion to support U.S. and coalition operations at Al Udeid since 2003) as well as U.S. military construction funding.[65]

As Saliyah Facility (Army) and Hamad Port

From 1992 until 2021, the U.S. Army component of U.S. Central Command prepositioned enough armor to outfit one brigade at Camp As Sayliyah outside Doha. U.S. armor stationed in Qatar was deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom that ousted Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003. Since that war, which largely ended the Iraqi threat to the Gulf states, the Defense Department has de-emphasized prepositioning armor in Qatar. The As Sayliyah facility was closed in June 2021,[66] although it was reopened in August 2021 to help evacuate U.S., Afghan, and third country nationals from Afghanistan after the Taliban regained power there in August 2021. Some third country nationals have remained housed at the facility under U.S.-Qatari agreement while their onward migration is arranged. In response to the heightened naval threat from Iran, Qatar has been expanding the Hamad Port to be able to potentially accommodate larger U.S. Navy operations.

Major Non-NATO Ally Designation

Coincident with the January 31, 2022 White House visit of Amir Tamim, President Biden announced that he would designated Qatar as a "major non-NATO ally" (MNNA). Qatar joins Bahrain and Kuwait as Gulf states given that designation, which qualifies Qatar to purchase certain U.S. arms, receive excess defense articles (EDA), and engage in defense research cooperation with the United States for which it would not otherwise be eligible. On February 14, 2022, the President transmitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the notice of the intent to designate Qatar as a Major Non-NATO Ally.

U.S. Arms Sales to Qatar

Over the past two decades, Qatar has shifted its weaponry mix from European sources toward U.S.-made equipment.[67] According to the State Department military cooperation factsheet cited above, the United States has $26 billion dollars in active government-to-government sales cases with Qatar under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system, and, since 2016, the United States has authorized the permanent export of over $2.8 billion in defense articles to Qatar via the Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) process. Qatar has a 100% favorable rate on Blue Lantern end-use monitoring (EUM) checks for direct commercial sales and a "satisfactory" rating for the FMS Golden Sentry EUM monitoring program.

- **Tanks.** Qatar fields 30 French-made AMX-30s battle tanks and 62 German-made Leopard 2 tanks. Qatar has not purchased U.S.-made tanks, to date.
- **Combat Aircraft.** In 2016, based on a 2013 Qatari request, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified Congress of the potential sale to Qatar of

Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base," press release, January 14, 2019.

[65] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," fact sheet, July 30, 2021.

[66] "Curtain falls on ASG-Qatar after three decades supporting readiness, resilience," News: First Theater Sustainment Command, June 24, 2021.

[67] Information on Qatar's existing military forces and equipment is derived from The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The Military Balance: The Middle East and North Africa."

up to 72 U.S.-made F-15s, with an estimated value of $21 billion.[68] The approval came after an evaluation of the sale with respect to the U.S. legal requirement to preserve Israel's "Qualitative Military Edge" (QME).[69] During June-December 2017, the United States and Qatar signed agreements for Qatar to purchase of all 72 of them, with deliveries to be completed by 2023. Subsequent upgrades to the technology associated with the F-15s have been agreed. Qatar signed a $7 billion agreement in 2015 to buy 24 French-made Rafale aircraft,[70] and deliveries began in 2019. In September 2017, Qatar signed a "Statement of Intent" with the United Kingdom to purchase 24 Typhoon combat aircraft.

- **Attack Helicopters**. In 2012, the United States sold Qatar AH-64 Apache, UH-60 M Blackhawk, and MH-60 helicopters, with an estimated value of about $6.6 billion. In 2018, the United States agreed to provide 5,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapons Systems II Guidance Sections for use on the Apaches. In May 2019, DSCA notified Congress of a possible sale of another 24 AH-64E Apaches to help Qatar defend its oil and gas platforms, at an estimated cost of $3 billion. S.J.Res. 26 was introduced on May 14, 2019, to prohibit the sale but, after the Administration stated an intent to veto the bill, a motion to discharge the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations from further consideration failed 42-57.[71] The differences between the Administration and some in Congress on the sale came in the context of broad congressional questions about the degree of oversight of the sale of arms to the GCC states that could potentially be used in the conflict in Yemen or other conflicts in the region.[72]
- **Short-Range Missile and Rocket Systems.** During 2012-2016, the United States sold Qatar Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, Javelin anti-tank systems, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and the M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS). A July 2019, joint U.S.-Qatar statement said that Qatar had recommitted to buy 40 National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAM), at an estimated value of $215 million. In July 2019, Raytheon announced that Qatar would be the first country to purchases its Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile – Extended Range (AMRAAM-ER) weapon.[73]
- **Ballistic Missiles.** At its national day parade in December 2017, the Qatari military displayed a newly purchased Chinese-origin SY 400-BP-12A ballistic missile, which has a 120-mile range and is considered suited to a surface attack mission.[74]

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[68] Defense Security Cooperation Agency (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.

[69] For information on the QME requirement, see CRS Report RL33222, *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*, by Jeremy M. Sharp.

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

[71] Record Vote Number 162, June 13, 2019. See Congressional Record, MOTION TO DISCHARGE--S.J. RES. 20 AND S.J. RES. 26; S3457-S3462, Vol. 165, No. 99, June 13, 2019; and, Marianne Levine, "Senate fails to block arms sales to Bahrain and Qatar," *Politico*, June 13, 2019.

[72] "Senate rejects Paul bid to block arms sales to Bahrain, Qatar," *Roll Call*, June 13, 2019.

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

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

- **Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD).** 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. The United States has 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.[75] Qatar has not finalized an agreement to buy the system.
- **Naval Vessels.** In 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, estimated at $5 billion.[76]

Other Defense Partnerships

Qatar has developed defense relations with several other partners.

- *NATO.* Qatar established 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.
- *France*. Prior to 2000, Qatar bought most of its major combat systems from France. In March 2019, France and Qatar signed agreements on defense information exchange, cooperation to combat cybercrime, and education.[77]
- *Turkey*. To help Qatar cope with the Saudi/UAE-led blockade, Turkey increased food exports to Qatar and added more than 1,500 troops to its Tariq bin Ziyad base in Qatar, which was established in 2014. Turkish forces deployed to a second military base in Qatar in 2019.[78]
- *Russia.* Since 2016, Qatar has been broadening its relationship with Russia, including with several visits to Russia by Amir Tamim, apparently in recognition of Russia's heightened role in the region.[79] Qatar reportedly considered buying the S-400 sophisticated air defense system,[80] but U.S. opposition and the potential for U.S. sanctions for the sale apparently have contributed to Qatar's decision, to date, not to move forward on that 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. Qatar supported the U.N. General Assembly resolution denouncing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Qatar's Foreign Minister visited

2017.

[75] DSCA announcement, November 5, 2012, http://www.dsca.mil/major-arms-sales/qatar-terminal-high-altitude-area-defense-thaad.

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

[77] "Qatar, France sign 5 defense, security deals," *Xinhua*, March 28, 2019.

[78] Stasa Salacanin, "Turkey expands its military base and influence in Qatar," *The New Arab*, September 10, 2019.

[79] "Qatari emir in Russia to discuss Syrian crisis," *Al Jazeera*, March 25 2018.

[80] "Qatar still studying Russian defense system, minister says," *Reuters*, March 4, 2019.

Moscow in mid-March 2022 to attempt to help mediate a cessation of Russia's war against Ukraine as well as to discuss regional issues such as multilateral talks to revive the JCPOA.[81] Qatar has publicly committed to maintaining its supplies of natural gas to Europe during the crisis and has announced humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees.

Counter-terrorism Cooperation[82]

According to the State Department, the United States and Qatar have continued to increase counter-terrorism cooperation since the signing of a bilateral counter-terrorism memorandum of understanding in July 2017. The State Department's recent reports on international terrorism state that U.S. technical assistance to Qatari law enforcement and judicial agencies has been expanding. A Department of Justice resident legal advisor has been stationed in Qatar since 2018, providing technical assistance to Qatar's counter-terrorism efforts and building prosecutorial capacity. Qatar uses national funds to pay for participation of Qatari personnel in the Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) training program, including training pertinent to Qatar's preparations to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

There have been no terrorist incidents reported in Qatar in recent years. In 2019, the Qatari government finalized new counter-terrorism legislation that enhanced penalties for committing acts of terror and enabled the prosecution of Qataris who commit acts of terror. Both laws went into effect in February 2020. However, Qatar's efforts to prevent the movement of terrorists in or through Qatar have at times been lacking: at least one high-ranking Qatari official provided support to Al Qaeda figures residing in or transiting Qatar, including Khalid Shaykh Mohammad, the suspected mastermind of the September 11, 2001, attacks.[83]

Terrorism Financing Issues

U.S. officials credit Qatar with taking steps to prevent terrorism financing and the movement of suspected terrorists into or through Qatar. According to the State Department, the Qatari government passed a new AML/CFT (anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism) law in 2019. Qatar continued to maintain restrictions, imposed in 2017, on the overseas activities of Qatari charities, requiring all such activity to be conducted through one of two approved charities in an effort to better monitor charitable giving for terrorist financing abuse.

The country is a member of the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a regional body that coordinates efforts combatting money laundering and terrorism financing. Its Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) is a member of the Egmont Group - a network of over 150 countries' FIU's that share information and best practices on AML/CFT. Qatar is also a member of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC), a U.S.-GCC initiative announced in May 2017 that has designating terrorists affiliated with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. In September 2021, the United States and Qatar conducted a joint operation to uncover and sanction a Gulf-based financing network used by Lebanese Hezbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization (FTO) that is extensively linked to Iran.[84]

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[81] "Foreign Minister meets Russian Foreign Minister," *The Peninsula*, March 14, 2022.

[82] Much of the information in this section is taken from: U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Qatar. Released December 16, 2021.

[83] Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States.

[84] Department of the Treasury, "The United States and Qatar Take Coordinated Action against Hizballah Financiers," September 29, 2021.

Countering Violent Extremism

Recent annual State Department reports on international terrorism maintain that: "Qatar has made significant strides in addressing state-sourced internal and external support for educational and religious content espousing intolerance, discrimination, sectarianism, and violence, although examples are still found in textbooks and disseminated through satellite television and other media." Qatar has hosted workshops and participated in regional meetings on the issue.

Economic Issues

Over the past decade, Qatar's substantial energy exports, a sovereign wealth fund estimated at more than $350 billion, and its small population, have enabled the country to weather such varied economic challenges as energy price volatility, the intra-GCC rift, and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 COVID-19 pandemic.[85]About 40% of Qatar's food was imported from Saudi Arabia prior to the intra-GCC crisis, and there were reports of runs on stocks of food when the blockade began, but the government was able to replace those imports with goods from Turkey, Iran, and India.

Large oil and gas reserves and its small citizen population have combined to make Qatar on of the countries with the world's highest per capita incomes. Oil and gas still account for over 90% of Qatar's export earnings, and over half of government revenues. Proven oil reserves of about 25 billion barrels 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 are about 13% of the world's total and it is the second largest exporter of natural gas in the world. [86] In 2018, Qatar withdrew from OPEC in order, it stated, to focus on its more high-priority natural gas exports. Some experts assessed that the intra-GCC rift represented an additional cause of Qatar's decision to leave that grouping.[87] 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 the country shares with Iran (see Figure 2), and transportation by subsea pipeline to the UAE and Oman.[88] Qatar did not reduce gas deliveries to other GCC states during the intra-GCC rift.

Qatar's gas resources have made the country a focus of European efforts to reduce their dependence on natural gas supplies from Russia. Whether Qatar might potentially supply additional gas to Europe was a focus of Amir Tamim's meeting with President Biden on January 31, as Russia was positioning forces around Ukraine.[89]Qatar Petroleum announced in early 2021 that it will boost LNG output by about 40% by 2026 through expansion projects at its North Field.[90] However, gas supplies from Qatar and other gas exporters are largely committed to buyers in Asia and elsewhere under long term contracts, and Qatari energy officials stressed that no combination of major gas exporters could supply enough natural gas to Europe, on short notice, to compensate completely for a shutoff of gas supplies from Russia. In March 2022, in the

[85] "Qatar Has $340 Billion in Reserves, Can Withstand 'Any Kind of Shock,' Central Bank Says," *Istanbul Sabah Online*, July 10, 2017; Arwa Ibrahim, "Beating the blockade: How Qatar prevailed over a siege," *Al Jazeera,* June 5, 2020.

[86] CIA, *The World Factbook*.

[87] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen. "Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?," *New York Times,* op-ed, December 10, 2018.

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

[89] "Biden Hosts Qatari Leader to Talk Gas Supplies, Afghanistan." *Foreign Policy,* January 31, 2022.

[90] Jessica Jaganathan, "Analysis: Qatar tightens global gas market grip with bold expansion moves," *Reuters,* March 16, 2021.

context of a European Union effort to wean off Russian gas supplies by 2027, Germany and Qatar reached agreement to discuss a long term contract for the supply of Qatari natural gas to Germany.[91]

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. In 2004, the United States and Qatar signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), which Qatar has used to undertake large investments in the United States. The joint statement of a 2018 U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue "recognized" the Qatar Investment Authority's commitment of $45 billion in future investments in U.S. companies and real estate. 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.

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.[92]

Qatar's airline, Qatar Airways, has been a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft. Coincident with Amir Tamim's visit to Washington, DC in January 2022, Qatar Airways announced that it would purchase up to 50 cargo aircraft and 50 737 Max passenger aircraft from Boeing.[93] Some U.S. airlines have challenged 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.[94] 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.

U.S. Assistance

In large part because of its wealth, Qatar receives negligible amounts of U.S. 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 FY2020, the United States provided Qatar about $106,000 (Defense Department funding) to help build institutional capacity in its security sector. [95]

[91] "Germany agrees gas deal with Qatar to help end dependency on Russia," *The Guardian*, March 20 2022.

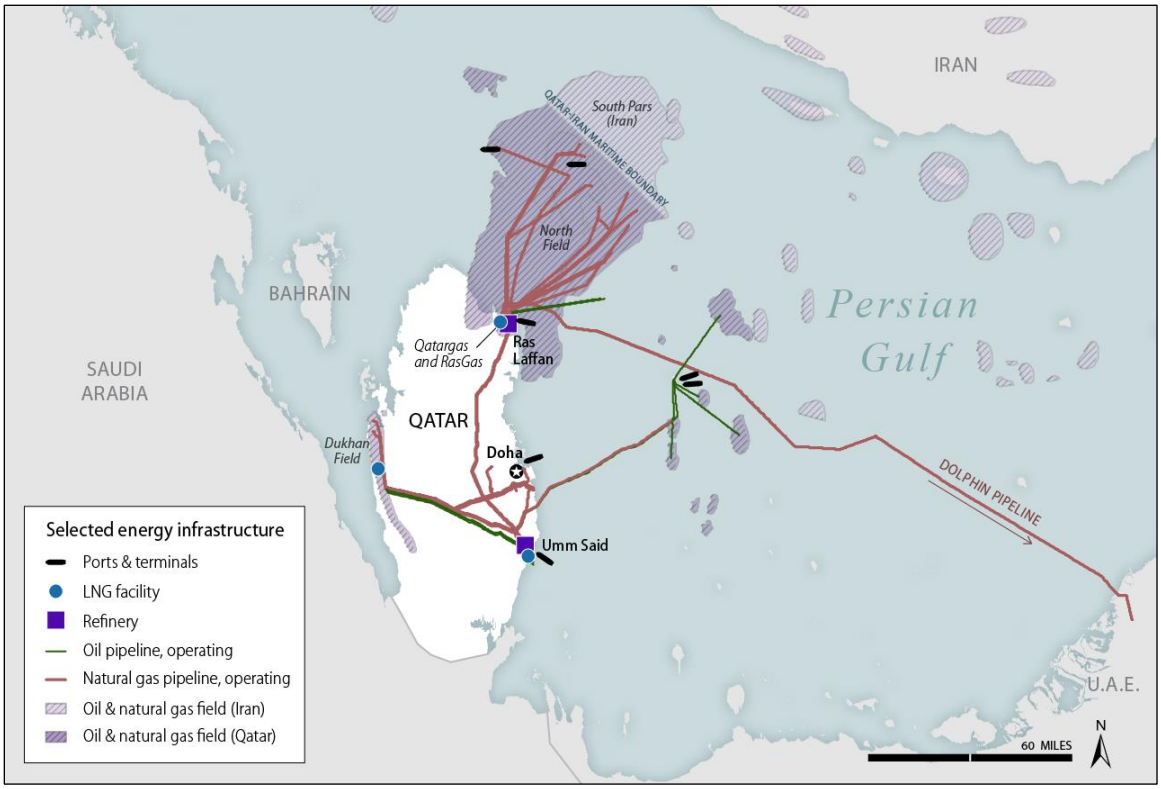
[92] Adam Schreck, "AP Interview: Qatar Energy Minister Wants 'Fair' Oil Price," *Associated Press*, May 24, 2016.

[93] "Boeing lands huge airplane order from Qatar Airways." *Associated Press*, January 31, 2022.

[94] Frank Kane, "Open Skies Dispute Between US and Gulf Airlines Escalates," *The National*, January 30, 2016.

[95] USAID Explorer Database, March 2022.

Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure



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

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