



مركز بروكنجز الدوحة
BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER ANALYSIS PAPER

Number 12, November 2014

Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement

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QATARI MEDIATION:
BETWEEN AMBITION AND ACHIEVEMENT

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BROOKINGS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper builds on a three-year body of work exploring Qatar's mediation role, including an earlier paper published in 2012 with the LSE's Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States. This work stems from my work in Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, and Palestine, each of which has been the focus of Qatari mediation.

My first debt of gratitude goes to colleagues in the field who have been very generous and candid with their views on Qatar's mediation efforts. I am also grateful to the Qatari officials, former officials, and advisors who have accepted to engage with this work in the hope of improving Qatari mediation practices.

I also extend my thanks to peer reviewers and colleagues at The Brookings Institution, in particular Tamara Coffman Wittes, Ibrahim Sharqieh, and Salman Shaikh. All of them provided invaluable feedback and criticism that helped me refine and better articulate many of the arguments put forward in this paper.

Andrew Leber helped to revise successive drafts and was an important sounding board in discussing the aims and arguments of the paper. Sansom Milton and Charlie Walker at the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York, also supported earlier stages of this project. I am grateful to all of them.

Colleagues at the Brookings Doha Center created a supportive environment for writing this paper. I would particularly like to acknowledge the research and communications departments for making the publications process as smooth as possible through extensive proof reading and formatting, respectively.

Sultan Barakat
Doha, November 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decade, the small state of Qatar has both garnered significant attention and generated considerable controversy through its pursuit of several high-profile conflict mediation efforts. These included mediating between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels in 2007-2008, hosting 2008 negotiations to head off political conflict in Lebanon, and facilitating talks between the Sudanese government and various rebel movements in Darfur. While Qatar's record of success in these efforts is mixed, an in-depth analysis of its mediation history reveals a number of areas that, if fine-tuned, could potentially enable Qatar to play a much-needed role in regional conflict resolution.

In the eyes of some, Qatar's mediation efforts have come as part of the state's attempts to brand itself while boosting its global reputation, which can also be seen in its investment in Al Jazeera and its bids to host the 2006 Asia Games and the 2022 World Cup. In this light, mediation efforts can be understood as a way for the Qatari government to burnish its diplomatic credentials and carve out an image as an important regional player. Yet Qatari officials also emphasize the broader strategic advantages of engaging in mediation while describing such activity as a moral obligation.

A number of factors have aided Qatar in translating these various motivations into actual mediation efforts. From the time he assumed power in 1995, Qatar's Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani pursued a highly active foreign policy, one that sought to raise Qatar's profile while balancing between competing ties and maintaining open lines of communication with all parties. These contacts helped the country gain acceptance as a mediator—for example, good relations with various factions in Lebanon, particularly Hizballah, positioned Qatar to act as a mediator there.

At the same time, Qatar possessed the financial resources to transport and host large delegations for extended periods of time, and build credibility through ex-

tensive humanitarian work and pledges of investment to support eventual peace agreements. Most importantly, a highly personalized decision-making structure allowed a small number of key individuals, especially the former emir and former foreign minister/prime minister, to initiate mediation efforts and leverage their personal contacts and charisma to secure agreements.

Prior to 2011, these efforts produced mixed results. While Qatar's advantages as a mediator were generally successful in bringing parties to the negotiating table, these efforts were more successful in defusing short-term crises than providing long-term solutions to conflicts. An initial agreement regarding the Houthi conflict quickly broke down amid friction between the Yemeni and Qatari governments, while the 2008 Doha Agreement regarding Lebanon averted greater conflict but neglected deeper issues. Similarly, while the 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur was a major breakthrough between competing parties, it failed to attract buy-in from the most powerful rebel groups and only partially resolved the conflict. Qatari negotiators have at times lacked a detailed understanding of the conflicts at hand, while a dearth of monitoring capacity has undermined Qatari oversight of post-agreement implementation and the disbursement of pledged funds.

The events of the Arab Spring marked a turning point in Qatar's regional engagement, shifting its focus from conflict mediation to proactive intervention. With Al Jazeera providing extensive coverage of initial uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, Qatar helped rally the Arab League and the international community for intervention in Libya and attempted to do the same regarding Syria. Concurrently, Qatar provided substantial political and financial backing to newly empowered groups, such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, particularly after Muhammad Morsi was elected president.

This policy shift has provoked considerable backlash against Qatar's actions at a time when Qatar is adjusting to a leadership transition following the ascension of Emir Tamim in June 2013. Despite a greater focus on the country's domestic affairs, Qatar has generally continued its close ties to the region's Islamist groups, including in Egypt, where Morsi was overthrown by a military coup in July 2013. Disagreements over these policies among the Gulf states eventually prompted Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain to withdraw their ambassadors from Doha in March 2014.

The challenges to further Qatar-backed mediation in the region are many. Qatar's strained relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia have hindered its regional mediation efforts, as seen during the country's attempts to negotiate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas during their recent conflict. Yet given its ongoing conflicts, the region needs a location that is near at hand, both in terms of distance and cultural affinity, where opposing parties can meet to hash out their differences in a relatively neutral setting.

In the short-term, small scale successes such as securing the release of Syrian nuns from Maaloula can serve as the basis for rebuilding Qatar's reputation for mediation. Over the longer term, Qatar, due to its vast financial resources and good relationships with key actors in conflict zones, has the potential to develop a new approach to mediation. To achieve this end, Qatari officials should work to develop the country's institutions for handling mediation efforts, including systematic documentation of its third-party interventions and the use of these resources in training cadres of diplomats who can manage negotiations.

Looking further afield, it is recommended that Qatar seek to leverage its significant political contacts and financial resources by establishing an independent non-governmental entity to lay the groundwork for dialogue and mediation, whether unilaterally or through partnerships with states that have established track records in mediation. Additionally, any financial pledges by Qatar should serve as investments in the long-term development of areas prone to and affected by conflict, rather than incentives to bring participants to the negotiating table. If these and other steps are taken, then Qatar is positioned to resume its leadership role in regional conflict mediation with a more mature and effective approach to third-party intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Mediation, defined by the United Nations as “a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements,” has long been a key component of international relations.¹ Since the end of the Cold War, more than 700 mediation attempts have sought to resolve international disputes, with states generally playing the role of third-party mediator.²

While international relations theory has long acknowledged the role that small states play in mediation, state-led mediation is often seen as the domain of so-called great powers, such as the United States and Russia, which are able to deploy hard power and financial might to secure and maintain agreements.³ Many small states, in contrast, have built firm reputations as mediators by facilitating dialogue between parties.⁴ Norway’s hosting of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, culminating in the 1993 Oslo Accords, and Switzerland’s role in sponsoring mediation efforts (such as talks between the FARC rebel movement and the Colombian government) are two of the most widely cited examples.⁵ More recently, players have included Nigeria, Cuba, Finland, Malaysia, and Gabon.⁶

Within the Middle East, Qatar has mediated a number of high profile conflicts over the past decade, bringing it unparalleled attention.⁷ This is remarkable given both the traditional domination of heavyweights such as the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in the region’s mediation efforts and the common assumption that small states are destined to play a background role in conflict resolution. Despite generating considerable media attention and some attendant controversy over the last several years, Qatar’s mediation efforts have only been the subject of limited academic and policy analysis.

This paper examines the drivers behind Qatar’s choice to engage in state-led mediation in the early 2000s and the impact those drivers have had on Qatar’s ongoing mediation efforts in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The objective is twofold: to sharpen the understanding of Qatar’s mediation strategies and to identify situations in which Qatar is or is not well placed to mediate effectively.

Due to a number of recent changes in the regional and international environments, Qatar's efforts in conflict mediation have been confronted with new challenges over the past several years. Qatar's actions during and since the Arab Spring have damaged its reputation as a neutral actor, engendered increasingly hostile public reactions to its policies in countries such as Libya, Egypt, and Syria, and elicited angry diplomatic responses from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. At the same time, changing regional politics, marked by a likely American-Iranian détente, has seemingly lessened the strategic value of Qatar to the United States as a mediator. Furthermore, while Qatar's government certainly enjoys both domestic stability and significant financial resources, it is also increasingly confronted with the grievances of a population troubled by the near absence of civil society, lack of opportunity for participation in decision-making, as well as poor education outcomes, an overwhelmed healthcare system, and perceived job discrimination in favor of foreign workers, even as mounting shale oil production in the United States and elsewhere raises a potential challenge to Qatar's hydrocarbon income.⁸

These developments, which coincide with the June 2013 transition of power from Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to his son Sheikh Tamim, have led the new emir to prioritize internal affairs (at least publicly) over the active foreign policy pursued by his father.⁹ While this shift inward may herald the end of Qatar's high profile interventions and temper its strong drive to mediate conflicts in the Middle East, Qatar still has the potential to play a much-needed role as a third-party mediator in the region. Doing so, however, will require Qatar to address some crucial weaknesses and challenges, and approach the task with a different outlook.

The first section of this paper describes Qatar's transformation, within a few decades, from a little-known Gulf peninsula to an assertive regional actor. The second section discusses the conditions and factors behind Qatar's focus on mediation as a centerpiece of its foreign policy. The paper then examines some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Qatari mediation model based on a brief analysis of the key cases of Yemen, Lebanon, and Sudan (Darfur). The fourth section charts the evolution of Qatari engagement during the Arab Spring from a focus on pure mediation to a policy of bold intervention and assesses the impact of this transition on the country's ability to mediate. The fifth section reflects on the potential impact of the recent power transition upon the trajectory of Qatar's role in mediation, both regionally and globally. Finally, the conclusion offers recommendations for how Qatar can overcome the obstacles that prevent it from serving as an effective mediator, given the current regional environment.

THE RISE OF QATAR

Occupying a Gulf peninsula lodged between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Qatar has historically been overshadowed by its two larger neighbors. It has long had to balance among competing foreign players to obtain some form of external protection. Qatar only emerged as a distinct political entity under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad bin Thani (1850-1878), defeating the lingering ambitions of the Bahraini Al-Khalifa dynasty to control the peninsula, and gaining international recognition as an autonomous sheikhdom due to the implicit protection offered by Britain.¹⁰

Following independence in 1971, and particularly under the reign of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972-1995), Qatar remained inward-looking, relying on Saudi security guarantees in the face of such perceived threats as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war. Qatar's recent emergence as an independent and high profile regional actor only began in 1995, when heir apparent Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani seized control of the country from his father, Emir Khalifa.

By the early 1990s, three inter-related events—the ending of the Iran-Iraq war, which permitted the development of Qatar's North Field gas reserves in Gulf waters; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which exposed the vulnerability of small Gulf states; and tensions with Saudi Arabia, which opposed any greater autonomy for Qatari policy—had paved the way for a fundamental change in Qatar's foreign outlook. For several years prior to taking power, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa had assumed increasing responsibility for governing the country's affairs.¹¹ His ambitious vision for Qatar incorporated economic liberalization, greater political rights, and rapid development in domestic infrastructure and economic facilities. In the view of one official at Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), it was this ambition, combined with the Gulf nation's growing wealth, that ultimately brought a sense of dynamism and expansiveness to Qatari policymaking.¹²

In pursuing these goals, the new emir was aided by the development of Qatar's vast reserves of natural gas, particularly through conversion to easily transport-

able liquefied natural gas (LNG).¹³ Qatar began exporting gas in 1997 and became the world's largest LNG exporter by 2006, fuelling annual GDP growth of over 13% between 2000 and 2011. Qatari GDP skyrocketed rising from some \$8 billion in 1995 to over \$200 billion in 2013,¹⁴ with Qatari per capita income now hovering around \$100,000 as a result, the highest in the world.¹⁵

The resulting financial capacity helped the emir in his attempts to consolidate power over the state. Single-family rule under the Al Thanis was historically troubled by intra-family rivalries that resulted in numerous coups and attempted coups over the years.¹⁶ Hamad, however, was able to solidify control over the state and the ruling family, placing immediate family members in charge of domestic development and limiting the line of succession to his own sons.¹⁷ Under Hamad, Qatar constructed strong state institutions as well as an extensive welfare regime that catered to the country's small indigenous population, helping to maintain a high degree of social cohesion and central authority.¹⁸

Regionally, Hamad bin Khalifa faced challenges from the start of his rule—Saudi Arabia continued to support the deposed emir for a time and allegedly orchestrated an attempted counter-coup in February 1996.¹⁹ In confronting these issues, the emir sought to balance between competing regional powers and alliances. Thus, Qatar shifted steadily from under the Saudi umbrella and began to chart an independent and pragmatic foreign policy in which it has attempted to maintain good relations with apparently contradictory actors, such as Iran and the United States or Hamas and Israel.²⁰ Domestic stability allowed Qatar to engage externally “in an imaginative and daring way that challenged perceived norms in the region,” according to a senior MOFA official.²¹

This was strikingly illustrated by Qatar's shift towards the security orbit of the United States, particularly with the invitation to establish an American airbase near Doha. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 led several Gulf states to question their previous reliance on Saudi Arabia for security. A 1992 Defense Cooperation Agreement laid the groundwork for U.S.-Qatari military cooperation. Under Hamad bin Khalifa the Qatari government went much further towards securing a defensive alliance, investing up to \$1 billion in the Al-Udeid airbase in the late 1990s. This facilitated the transfer of the U.S. Combat Operations Air Center for the Middle East from Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Airbase in 2003 amid greater Saudi sensitivity to the presence of U.S. military personnel on its soil and strained U.S.-Saudi relations following 9/11.²²

“Under Hamad, Qatar constructed strong state institutions as well as an extensive welfare regime.”

The establishment of the satellite news station Al Jazeera in November 1996—after Emir Hamad and the Qatari government stepped in to rescue a failed Arabic-language venture between Saudi Arabia and the BBC—formed another aspect of the country’s increased international presence. The station quickly became a leading Arabic-language news source across the Middle East, featuring exclusive reports from conflict zones such as the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as well as critical coverage of Arab regimes and U.S. policies alike. With coverage previously unavailable to Arab audiences, such as news reports from within Israel, and a far more independent editorial line than other regional news outlets, Al Jazeera quickly assumed a central role in the consciousness of Arab publics while

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challenging state-run media narratives. In doing so, it garnered not only much critical acclaim but also criticism, and even outright censorship from states targeted by its stories.²³

Observers and political analysts, accustomed to the empty rhetoric and traditional alliances of the region, found Qatar’s mixed messages—such as hosting Hamas leaders and a trade office for

Israel—confusing.²⁴ “They really put all the contradictions of the Middle East in one box,” noted Mustafa Alani, a Dubai-based analyst, in 2008.²⁵ The Bush administration, for example, frequently criticized Al Jazeera’s coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and its broadcasting of messages from Osama bin Laden even as plans for basing elements of the U.S. military’s Central Command in the country were being advanced. Qatari officials, though, maintain that U.S. officials appreciated the value of open communication channels between the network and al-Qaeda, despite official U.S. statements to the contrary.²⁶ They hold that “maintaining channels of communication” is a fundamental pillar of Qatari foreign policy and that focusing on “issues” rather than “personalities and attitude” is the “only constructive way to engage in politics in our globalized environment, where trade, investment, and politics are closely aligned.”²⁷

State branding initiatives have also been central to Qatar’s emergence on the global stage. In a recent interview with Charlie Rose, former prime minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani testified to Qatar’s desire to define itself as a leading power in the region regardless of its small size.²⁸ Qatar’s Al Jazeera networks have played a key part in fulfilling this desire, with stations in Arabic, English, and other languages raising Qatar’s profile around the world. These efforts have also included the convening of international conferences; the hosting of high profile sporting events, such as the 2006 Asia Games and its successful bid to host the

2022 World Cup; establishing itself as a key air transportation hub through the expansion of Qatar Airways; and prestigious property and business investments in major cities around the world. Throughout, Qatar has cultivated an image as a modern, daring, and dynamic actor—an image it has tried to carry over into the foreign policy arena.

QATARI MEDIATION: A STRATEGIC CHOICE?

Mediators in international disputes fall broadly into five distinct categories: international organizations (e.g., the United Nations), regional governmental organizations (e.g., the Arab League), non-governmental organizations (e.g. Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva), individuals (e.g., former United States President Jimmy Carter or former President of Finland Martti Ahtissari) and states (e.g., Norway).

While organizations tend to engage because of their mandates and individuals may be driven by altruistic motivations, states “often consider the strategic benefits when deciding whether to take on the mediator role.”²⁹ Small-state mediators, however, typically have reduced strategic interests to take into account. Their motivations to get involved are usually divorced from larger strategic interests and are framed within a commitment to peace as part of “state branding” strategies that enhance their soft power or cultural influence. It follows that they can be more selective about when to mediate, rather than being forced to step in.³⁰ Furthermore, it has been suggested that small states possess key comparative advantages in pursuing third-party roles. These include a greater degree of credibility and trustworthiness that is largely rooted in their perceived impartiality, as they lack the historical baggage or potentially threatening power of bigger states.³¹ At the same time, though, small states typically do not possess the hard power resources utilized by large states to achieve outcomes and support post-agreement processes. Rather, they engage in “pure mediation,” where their capacity to determine or influence outcomes lies in the power of persuasion.³² Constrained by limited capacity and interests, small state mediation thus tends to be confined to resolving regional conflicts.

Qatar’s ultimate motivations for engaging in mediation can be hard to discern. Outside observers tend to focus on potential political gains, such as establishing a reputation as a peacemaker in the manner of Norway or Sweden, or enhancing the state’s power and influence in the region against more established neighboring powers, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Mehran Kamrava, in an article published at the outset of the Arab Spring, highlighted the role mediation efforts

stood to play in state branding strategies, helping Qatar “carve out an image” for itself as a diplomatic powerhouse and “honest broker” with an interest in peace and experience in attaining it.³³ One negotiator involved in Qatar’s mediation in Darfur held that this attempt at branding “often ends up placing more emphasis on the ‘news’ of mediation rather than the outcomes.”³⁴

The rationale advanced by Qatari officials does not deny Qatar’s vision of becoming a leading actor in the Middle East, the wider Islamic world, and on the global diplomatic stage. They acknowledge mediation as a strategic priority that could reduce the risk of threats such as terrorism or population displacement, promote a business environment conducive for Qatari investments, and, in the words of Hamad bin Jassim, allow international diplomatic efforts to focus on the Palestinian question as the core issue facing the region.³⁵ They deny, however, that Qatar aims to utilize mediation to challenge the established standing of other states. In fact, in a 2009 interview with Al Jazeera, Hamad bin Jassim could not comprehend why foreign policy officials from Egypt and Saudi Arabia met their modest efforts in Darfur and Lebanon with contempt, claiming that “Qatar has never attempted to challenge those with traditional leadership roles in the Middle East,” especially Saudi Arabia, whom he referred to as the “bigger brother.”³⁶ Of course, even the mere act of mediation can serve as a challenge. According to leaked U.S. diplomatic cables, a high-level Egyptian diplomat in Doha claimed in 2010 that “[f]rankly, Egypt is angered by Qatar’s mediation [in Darfur] purely because it involves a country in Egypt’s back yard.”³⁷

Qatari officials also stress their pursuit of mediation as “a moral, cultural, and religious duty” owed to Qatar’s own citizens and others.³⁸ These duties are reflected in the country’s 2003 constitution, with Article 7 specifically mandating that Qatari foreign policy be “based on the principle of strengthening international peace and security by means of encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes.” In the view of these officials (and in keeping with small states’ mediation strategies), Qatar has thus chosen to mediate nearby conflicts, such as in Yemen, Eritrea, Sudan, and Lebanon, where it felt it could influence the outcomes to promote greater stability. Qatari officials are quick to point to religious and cultural motivations, noting that the Holy Quran encourages parties to use *wasata* (intermediation), *sulh* (traditional reconciliation), or *musalaha* (conflict mediation), in order to resolve disputes.³⁹ Given the emphasis placed on *sulh*, or traditional Arab forms of reconciliation, in Quranic teachings and Prophetic *ahadith*

“This attempt at branding ‘often ends up placing more emphasis on the “news” of mediation rather than the outcomes.”

(sayings) as a religious duty, it is unsurprising to hear some Qatari officials deny any motive for mediating conflicts between Muslims save pleasing Allah.⁴⁰

With these various motivations in mind, it is important to look at a number of factors that have helped Qatar become a leading mediator since 2006. First, domestic and financial stability allowed Qatari policy makers to pursue ambitious domestic and foreign policy goals. Qatar financed prestige projects and an expansive welfare state at home to secure citizens' support while also spending lavishly abroad to keep global partners happy and eventually to facilitate regional

“**Qatar’s relations with all manners of political actors helped bridge divides in mediation efforts.**

mediation initiatives by offering financial inducements to participants when necessary.

Second, Qatar did not have the historical baggage of other, more established mediators in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Whether fair or not, a long record of involvement in regional affairs burdens both countries

with legacies that are not altogether positive. In Yemen, for example, both Egypt and Saudi Arabia backed competing domestic actors in the 1960s, while Saudi Arabia became directly involved in warfare in Yemen during 2009. In this context, prior to 2011, Qatar enjoyed a degree of perceived neutrality, an important factor in bringing parties to the negotiating table.

Thirdly, Qatar’s pragmatic and increasingly proactive foreign policy raised its international profile even as it maintained ties with a wide range of opposing actors. Its two-year term on the UN Security Council, beginning in 2006, was a key turning point in Qatar’s greater international role, and the effective start of its hyperactive mediation efforts.⁴¹ During Israel’s July 2006 war against Hizballah in Lebanon, Qatar used its Council seat to distinguish itself on the global stage, combining outspoken criticism of Israeli actions with alternative diplomatic initiatives. This, along with Qatar’s condemnations of Israel’s 2008-09 war against Hamas in Gaza, helped Qatar transcend the Sunni-Shi’ite divide, thus improving Qatar’s standing with Arab publics and the so-called axis of resistance (Iran and Syria). At the same time, Qatar’s relations with all manners of political actors helped bridge divides in mediation efforts, particularly among parties subjected to international sanctions or travel restrictions (e.g. Hizballah and Hamas).

Fourthly, in parallel to this expanded foreign policy, by the mid-2000s Al Jazeera was casting an image of Qatar as a land of relatively free and open debate. Qatari officials saw the network’s fostering of critical debate and dialogue between adversaries on a hitherto unseen regional platform, as an opportunity to invite

conflicting parties to come to Doha and resolve their differences through private, face-to-face meetings. This was claimed as a key factor “that shaped Qatar’s decision to embark on a diplomatic course characterized by its self-image as a neutral third party mediator in regional conflicts.”⁴²

Finally, Qatar’s choices to engage in conflict mediation were due in part to the state’s highly personalized decision-making structure, headed by Emir Hamad and supported by his trusted foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassim. In a move that placed the foreign affairs portfolio at the center of Qatari power, Hamad bin Jassim was entrusted with the additional role of prime minister in April 2007, and an intense string of Qatari mediation efforts began a month later. From that point onwards, third-party mediation, much like the establishment of Al Jazeera and hosting of high profile sporting events, came to be viewed as part of Qatar’s broader state-branding strategy.

MEDIATION IN PRACTICE: AN OVERVIEW

Between 2006 and 2010, Qatar attempted to mediate a number of different conflicts. This state-led mediation rested upon the rapid emergence of Qatar's high profile and international reputation, as well as a carefully crafted perception of neutrality arising from the country's staunchly independent foreign policy. This reputation, coupled with the state's enthusiasm and financial capacity to offer lavish accommodations and financial carrots to conflicting parties, resulted in Qatar being invited to act as a mediator for a number of high profile peace negotiations in the years prior to 2011.

Due to these diplomatic efforts, Qatar has increasingly come to be regarded as a prominent mediation authority for the Middle East—in the eyes of both regional and western powers alike.⁴³ Qatar's extensive experience in third party mediation during this period includes the cases of Yemen, Lebanon, and Darfur, which are examined here to demonstrate the general characteristics and outcomes of Qatar's mediation efforts. This is followed by an analytical assessment of Qatar's track record in mediation based on these case studies.

YEMEN

The unification agreement between the Yemen Arab Republic in the North and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the South, signed on May 22, 1990, led to the creation of the contemporary Republic of Yemen. Noting the strategic importance of Yemen's stability to the Gulf states, Qatar was the first Gulf country to support the unity of Yemen at a time when many others were opposed.⁴⁴ Despite a North-South civil war in 1994, Yemen has remained united, but a conflict between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels in the northern Saada province began in 2004. Since then, there have been six consecutive rounds of violence, punctuated by broken ceasefires and failed mediation attempts.

Qatar stepped into the fray in May 2007 during the fourth phase of the fighting to offer its mediation services, with Emir Hamad bin Khalifa visiting Yemen

following an invitation by then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Helped by good relations with Iran (long seen as a key financial backer of the Houthi movement) stemming from Qatar's strong opposition to the 2006 Israeli war against Hizballah, Qatar also sent a foreign ministry delegation with hired Yemeni facilitators to negotiate with Houthi leaders, first in northern Yemen and later in Doha.⁴⁵ Over the course of these meetings, a set of general principles laid the groundwork for a joint ceasefire agreement on June 16, 2007—only for it to break down a few months later.

A fuller peace agreement was signed in Doha on February 1, 2008, with Qatar pledging \$300-500 million in reconstruction assistance for Saada province, a Houthi stronghold and the scene of much of the fighting.⁴⁶ Both agreements included provisions for the Yemeni government to release prisoners, grant amnesties, and reconstruct war-torn areas; the Houthi rebels were, in turn, expected to disarm.⁴⁷ Moreover, Qatar reportedly offered political asylum to rebel leaders in return for their laying down arms.⁴⁸ However, shortly after the February accords were signed, fighting again resumed. It was reported that President Saleh insisted on funds being controlled by the government, while the Qataris felt that there were too many Yemeni officials with authority to access funds without sufficient accountability.⁴⁹ The episode caused a great deal of friction between the two governments. President Saleh later declared Qatari mediation a failure, and Qatar withdrew its pledges of assistance, disappointing local populations in Saada.⁵⁰

“President Saleh later declared Qatari mediation a failure, and Qatar withdrew its pledges of assistance.”

Following the breakdown of the mediation, fighting between the Houthis and the Yemeni government continued to flare up through early 2010, with the deployment of 40,000 troops, extensive aerial and artillery bombardments, and even direct military intervention from Saudi Arabia, before a government-offered ceasefire ended hostilities on February 11, 2010. Though parties did travel to Doha to renew the ceasefire, with Qatar overseeing the drafting of a 22-point political agreement, intermittent clashes continued between Houthi and pro-government forces through 2012, and resumed for much of 2014.

Despite helping to secure an eventual, supplemental agreement, Qatar's main involvement in the Houthi conflict was largely unsuccessful. Qatari mediators overestimated the consensus among the Houthis and the Yemeni government on the terms of agreement, with Houthi factions continuing to fight and Ye-

meni politicians suspecting Qatari motives.⁵¹ Further, successful implementation was reportedly hampered by Saudi Arabian interference, with the Saudi government—wary of Qatari encroachment on their traditional sphere of influence—allegedly undermining resolution efforts by pouring money into the Yemeni government and allied Sunni tribes.⁵² More damaging perhaps may have been the lack of personal engagement by the emir and other high-ranking Qatari officials (a critical factor in Qatar’s subsequent mediation efforts), possibly reflecting Qatar’s wariness of offending their Saudi counterparts.⁵³

Ultimately, the lack of effective follow-up mechanisms for monitoring implementation was a key concern.⁵⁴ Both the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels blamed each other for failure to implement the agreement.⁵⁵ Lacking established channels for mediating emerging disputes within the process, the peace agreement easily fell apart. According to the International Crisis Group, “the initiative essentially amounted to throwing money at a problem, hoping it would disappear.”⁵⁶ With limited ties to Yemen, Qatar lacked the financial leverage of Western donor countries, which played a key role in pushing for a February 2010 ceasefire, or the influence of Saudi Arabia, a major backer of the central government and a significant military power.

LEBANON

In the aftermath of the 33-day war between Israel and Hizballah in July and August of 2006, Lebanon’s divided society exploded into political conflict. Between 2006 and 2008, the government was gripped in political gridlock as protestors staged continuous sit-ins in downtown Beirut and multiple assassinations eroded trust among Lebanon’s competing March 8 and March 14 coalitions. Finally, events culminated in May 2008, when the Siniora government declared Hizballah’s telecommunication network illegal, “a charge akin to declaring the party an outlawed militia.”⁵⁷ Civil war seemed a very real possibility as Hizballah turned its forces inward and fighting erupted in the streets among competing sectarian and political factions.

Saudi Arabia’s longstanding ties to a number of Lebanon’s political groupings, known hostility to Hizballah and Iran, and legacy as patron of the Taif Accords that provided the basis for ending the Lebanese civil war in 1989 meant that it could not be an impartial mediator. Qatar, meanwhile, was a relatively new actor, albeit one with a higher profile after confronting Israel at the United Nations over the 2006 Lebanon war, and one that enjoyed at least cordial ties with Syria, Iran, and Hizballah. Contributing to this perception of neutrality, Emir

Hamad was the only Arab leader to visit both Hizballah-dominated districts of Beirut and damaged areas in south Lebanon after the war, dedicating as much as \$300 million in Qatari-run reconstruction projects to repair and rebuild damaged homes and facilities, regardless of their owners' sect or political leaning.⁵⁸ During these and later visits, Qatar held a number of meetings with various Lebanese groups, forging relationships that proved useful for its mediation efforts, beginning in 2008.⁵⁹

Conscious that Saudi Arabia would be sensitive to any unilateral Qatari role in Lebanon, Qatari officials sought support in the form of a mandate from the Arab League, banking mostly on the favorable view of Qatar then held by Hizballah, Iran, and Syria to convince the League that Qatar was the right actor for the task.⁶⁰ With this backing in hand, on May 16, 2008, Qatar brought rival groups to Doha for negotiations; the culminating Doha Agreement, signed following five days of intense talks, brought an end to Lebanon's political crisis. The agreement had two primary points: General Michel Suleiman, the head of the Lebanese National Army, would be appointed President as a compromise candidate, and a national unity government would be formed with Hizballah enjoying a de facto veto over the government decisions by controlling over one-third of the cabinet's 30 seats. The agreement was welcomed by the UN Security Council as well as by regional and international leaders.⁶¹

“Qatari officials sought support in the form of a mandate from the Arab League.

During the negotiations, Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister Hamad bin Jassim reportedly played a key role in moving the talks forward by fostering an amicable ambience that diffused tensions. Discussions were structured to ensure impartiality and efficiency: on any individual issue, each party was given only two minutes to speak and two minutes to respond. Intensive issues, such as the elections law, were dealt with on the sides of the conference by working teams agreed upon in advance of the talks. Delegates were given 24 hours to sign the final agreement in an all-or-nothing deal.⁶²

The emir, too, played a critical part in pushing through the agreement, calling Syrian President Bashar al-Assad personally to complain about pro-Syria parties obstructing the talks. Within hours of the emir's call, Hizballah announced their agreement to the terms of the accord.⁶³ It is plausible that large Qatari economic investments in Syria were also used to provide leverage over Damascus. In early 2008, the joint-venture Syrian-Qatari Holding Company, already one of Syria's largest holding companies, announced a 5-year expansion of Qatari investments

in the country to \$12 billion, reportedly by request of Emir Hamad.⁶⁴

Initial analysis viewed the Doha Agreement as a historic achievement, a success for Qatar where other actors had failed.⁶⁵ Unlike in Yemen, Qatar was able to use its political contacts to bring opposing parties to the negotiating table, achieve consensus for an agreement, and navigate competing external interests. Qatar's success shattered perceptions that it was merely a minor player; a slight garnered from failed efforts at mediating Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in 2007.⁶⁶

“Qatar’s success shattered perceptions that it was merely a minor player.

Considering that Lebanon seemed on the brink of civil war in April 2008, there is little doubt that the Doha Agreement averted a major crisis.

Still, given the complexity of the situation in Lebanon, the agreement ultimately proved inadequate in addressing the root causes of the post-2006 dispute—in January 2011, the Lebanese government collapsed after a Hizballah walkout. The agreement did not address the structure of Lebanese political institutions or alter relations between its principal actors, despite being able to resolve the immediate political standoff.⁶⁷ In this, Qatari mediation was no more successful than a long line of other attempts, tempering any longer-term impact of the Doha Agreement on Lebanon's convoluted political landscape.

DARFUR

Conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, which began in 2003, escalated in 2008, leading to renewed peacemaking attempts. In September 2008, Qatar was named as the Arab League representative to mediate talks between the government of Sudan and the various rebel factions, again providing it with a regional mandate for involvement. Unlike the previous two cases, Qatar's sustained involvement in Darfur reflected strategic interests there, given long-standing ties with Omar al-Bashir's government and the large Sudanese diaspora in Doha.⁶⁸

After several false starts, in February 2010 the government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) signed a ceasefire framework agreement, and Omar al-Bashir declared the conflict over. Later, an amalgamation of smaller rebel groups, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), also signed a framework and ceasefire agreement.⁶⁹ The documents are collectively known as the Doha Agreements. Though additional mediators proved vital to the process, notably those from the African Union and the United Nations, Qatari efforts remained prominent.

One feature of these efforts was the high levels of personal engagement demonstrated by senior Qatari officials. Then-Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmed bin Abdallah Al Mahmoud (now deputy prime minister and minister of state for cabinet affairs) spent months meeting international stakeholders to gain insight into global perspectives on the conflict and in Khartoum and Darfur meeting with the conflict parties and affected populations.⁷⁰ Holding talks in Doha also proved crucial. Qatar hosted large delegations over an extended period, including both track-one elite talks and track-two negotiations with civil society representatives. Additionally, Qatar's use of money as a leveraging tool was vital, incentivizing the completion of negotiations. In the lead-up to talks, Qatar promised to invest \$2 billion and establish a development bank to address Darfur's underdevelopment if talks were successful.⁷¹ In a move seen as a further financial "sweetener," the Qatari Investment Authority brokered a deal to develop farmland elsewhere in Sudan to promote food exports to Qatar, aiming to attract some \$1 billion in investment funds.⁷² Both areas—providing a comfortable venue and economic carrots—evidence Qatar's ability to leverage its financial power in mediation.

Despite the agreements, many have criticized Qatar's efforts in Darfur. Some parties accused Qatar of bias toward the Sudanese government, while others noted that certain Darfuri rebel groups do not trust Arab states, including Qatar, viewing them as keen to push forward with talks to protect al-Bashir from an International Criminal Court indictment.⁷³ On the other side of the negotiating table, the Sudanese government condemned the talks for being insufficiently inclusive. The failure to include factions such as the Sudanese Liberation Army (as well as the different groups' various offshoots) raised concerns about the sustainability of peace. The inability to achieve consensus between all such sides was the principal reason for past failures in mediation efforts and contributed to talks stalling in 2012.⁷⁴ Qatari mediators moved to engage these groups, brokering an agreement with the LJM in 2011 and negotiating with a larger breakaway faction in October 2012.⁷⁵ Through these actions, negotiators hoped to gradually extend the agreement's scope by encouraging more groups to join in, but were ultimately unsuccessful.

“Qatar’s use of money as a leveraging tool was vital, incentivizing the completion of negotiations.”

Other criticisms focused on the wide gap between pledges and actual disbursement of funds. Over two years on from the signing of the Doha Agreements, the Sudanese government had paid out less than \$135 million of a \$2.65 billion com-

mitment. This foot-dragging led Qatar to delay a promised donors conference until April 2013, when it pledged \$500 million.⁷⁶ Qatar also faced Sudanese complaints in 2013 that it had failed to deliver on some \$2 billion in promised investments, even as it steered investment toward other Arab capitals.⁷⁷

Further criticisms of the Darfur peace process relate to its structure and pace. Critics have argued that the two-track structure of the talks led to a lack of coordination, transparency, and substance, and may have encouraged divisions among the parties.⁷⁸ Others held that the Doha Agreements were too vague, lacking details for concrete implementation regarding timing and issues relating to security sector reform and demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration.⁷⁹ JEM representative Ahmed Hussein claimed that Qatari mediators rushed talks to avoid their relocation to Egypt, while an association of advocacy groups, in a publication titled “Roadmap for Peace,” observed that talks had been too sluggish and argued for a more straightforward framework and tighter timetable for future mediation.⁸⁰

ASSESSING QATARI MEDIATION

Qatar’s recent mediation efforts have been relatively diverse, including both classic track-one diplomacy (as in Yemen and Lebanon) and multi-track efforts targeting political groups as well as civil society (as in Darfur). Similarly, Qatar has acted as both solo mediator and in coalition with such entities as the African Union, the United Nations, the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Among these variations, common themes and patterns emerge—central among them the importance of personalities (and personal relationships) in driving Qatar’s mediation strategies.

GAINING ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance of the mediator is key to the success of the process, given the voluntary nature of mediation. Acceptance of Qatar as a third-party mediator in these regional conflicts was due in no small part to the state’s clear pursuit of an independent trajectory in foreign affairs. This, alongside Al Jazeera, helped Qatar maintain lines of communication with a wide array of actors, serving as a bridge between hostile parties even as it engages with external patrons and potential spoilers. For example, good relations with Lebanese factions, crucially Hizballah, meant that Qatar was preferred as a mediator over Saudi Arabia or Egypt in 2008. Qatar’s good relations with Syria and Libya prior to 2011 were key to pushing forward negotiations in Lebanon and Darfur, respectively, keeping

either from derailing the proceedings. Notably, this was not the case in Yemen, arguably the least successful of Qatar’s mediation attempts. Despite the open channels of communication it had with Iran at the time, a lack of “regularized contacts” with secondary conflict parties and other interested states, particularly Saudi Arabia, contributed to the ultimate failure of talks.⁸¹

Impartiality is the cornerstone of successful mediation—if a mediation process is perceived to be biased then no meaningful progress can be made. In all three case studies, interviewees who took part in mediation processes agreed that Qatar expended significant efforts toward presenting itself as an impartial actor. For the Sudan case, Qatar tried to engage with all sides. With the Lebanese talks, Qatar set out fair ground rules to manage the discussions. Qatar was also careful to offer equal privileges to all participants that were invited to Doha, even using the same hotels and aircraft.⁸²

Qatar’s credibility as a mediator in the three cases was further enhanced by a number of factors. Clear mandates to engage in mediation—by the invitation of President Saleh in the case of Yemen, and by the invitation of the Arab League in the case of Lebanon and Darfur—helped legitimize Qatar’s role as a mediator, particularly in the latter two cases. The humanitarian work of Qatar and Qatari NGOs has also lent credibility to the state’s mediation efforts. Significant investments in rebuilding southern Lebanon led Qatar to increase its standing among traditionally marginalized Shi’ite communities. Similarly, in Darfur, the involvement of the Qatari state and the Qatar Red Crescent in providing humanitarian aid helped establish Qatar’s image as a credible mediator, not only in the eyes of the region, but also the international community. Reportedly, French and American backing was key to allowing Qatar to overcome Egyptian opposition in claiming the role of third party mediator to the Darfur conflict.⁸³

“The humanitarian work of Qatar and Qatari NGOs has also lent credibility to the state’s mediation efforts.”

CONDUCTING TALKS

While Qatar successfully secured the role of mediator in each of these cases, its track record in playing this role presents a more mixed record. Certainly, the three cases suggest that laying the groundwork for talks represents a forte of Qatari mediation that helps to establish a degree of trust, manage partners, and facilitate dialogue. This is largely due to intensive personal engagement provided by the former emir, the former prime minister and foreign minister, the now-deputy

prime minister, and lately the new emir. These personal interventions promote parties' trust in negotiations, as they see facilitators' commitment to mediation. Qatar is also able to manage potential spoilers, as in Lebanon, where Syria was reportedly placated by promises of substantial Qatari investments, and was kept

informed (along with Saudi Arabia and Iran) of the proceedings to ensure their buy-in for the eventual agreement.

“A less charitable view of Qatar’s mediation record suggests that it was simply fortunate in Lebanon in 2008.

Likewise, in Lebanon, Qatari mediators demonstrated a fair understanding of conflict dynamics and the sources of power and leverage in play. Qatar acclimated to the role of me-

diation through incremental meetings held from 2006, largely in Beirut, that brought the various factions together and helped frame the eventual agreement. To some, the foundations of the 2008 Doha deal were laid here.⁸⁴ Even during mediation in Doha, the former emir made himself personally available, directly intervening when talks were reaching a dead end or when conflicting parties made personal accusations.⁸⁵ Similarly, Qatar’s long-established humanitarian missions in Darfur and the significant Sudanese diaspora in Doha afforded it some degree of contextual familiarity prior to engagement.

Nonetheless, Kamrava argues that “the extent to which Qatari negotiators appreciate the subtle complexities and differences separating each case, and therefore the specialized care and attention demanded by the case in hand, is difficult to determine.”⁸⁶ In Yemen, for example, Qatar exhibited too little contextual knowledge, with its credibility as a third-party mediator derived only from its open communication channels with Iran. Similarly, Qatari mediation was unaligned with customary practices, or *wasata*, and therefore peace agreements held inadequate moral compulsion over conflict parties.⁸⁷ The 2007 Doha Agreement demanded that the Houthis disarm, while no comparable provisions were made for the Yemeni government, not even symbolically, directly contradicting the “restorative logic of tribal mediation among equals.”⁸⁸ Indeed, a less charitable view of Qatar’s mediation record suggests that it was simply fortunate in Lebanon in 2008 and has been living off that one-off success ever since. Even in this more successful case, Qatari mediation was criticized for its lack of contextual understanding and inconsistency with traditional mediation practices.⁸⁹

Another pre-mediation consideration is the timing of intervention. In Lebanon, all the criteria for conflict ripeness were present—violence reached a mutually hurting stalemate and could not escalate further without catastrophe, while the

Doha agreement provided an acceptable “way out.”⁹⁰ Similarly, although perceptions of “otherness” were high, support for peace was likewise elevated, as the political and public spheres were both keen to avoid further bloody civil strife.

Regarding Yemen and Darfur, however, Qatar likely misjudged political and public support for peace. Some analysts have suggested that the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime had little desire to genuinely support conflict resolution as it profited from the authoritarian measures it had implemented due to the conflict, while high civilian casualties in Saada increased local outrage against the government.⁹¹ In keeping with analysis of particularly stubborn conflicts, this hardening of ideas of the “other” on both sides may have meant that there was not a genuine entry point for mediation at that time.⁹²

Moreover, in Darfur there was no mutually hurting stalemate compelling all parties to seek a resolution to the conflict. The government was not under pressure to make credible concessions on political inclusion or democratic transition, and as a result, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur failed to address the deep issues that generated the rebellion in the first place.⁹³ With dissatisfaction high among the three most powerful rebel groups, none signed the agreement.

In terms of actually constructing peace agreements, Qatar has at best a mixed record. While Qatari mediators have followed the steps necessary for successful agreement, the timeframe and plans for implementation have not always been sufficiently robust to ensure success. For example, in Yemen, while both a declaration of principles and a full peace agreement were drafted, neither included sufficient mechanisms to resolve disputes or mark progress, and the time lapse between the two agreements was punctuated by violence. The inability to resolve disagreements led to the breakdown of the agreement, with each party blaming the other. Meager progress on implementation went unmarked and thus unnoticed.

FINANCIAL POWER

Qatar, unlike most small state mediators, has a tendency to rely on considerable financial power to bring parties to an agreement. Mediation logistics is one channel for exercising these resources, with near-bottomless state coffers ensuring that mediation takes place in comfortable environments within Doha. In the case of Lebanon, all representatives were flown in on the same aircraft and stayed at the Sheraton Hotel at the insistence of the former emir.⁹⁴ This ensured that the delegates were in close contact throughout their stay in Doha, not just in the ne-

gotiating room. During the Darfur negotiations, over 120 participants stayed in top Doha hotels for more than a year, enjoying a small per diem, free car services, and free health care throughout the peace talks.⁹⁵ The negotiating environment for the Doha Agreement was, if anything, too comfortable. Doha's lavish accommodations gave some stakeholders, notably civil society groups, few incentives to swiftly reach an agreement and return to Darfur. In fact, one academic suggested that the comfort of Doha created a gap between negotiating parties and their constituencies back home.⁹⁶ Qatar's ability to deploy financial leverage to pressure one or both conflict parties to accept a proposed resolution has in some cases, including in Darfur and Yemen, brought Qatar's neutrality into question. The use of such leverage is often a characteristic of powerful mediators such as

“It is easy for negotiators to pledge significant amounts of funding in a short amount of time.

the United States but not of small state mediators such as Norway who tend to rely on trust, dialogue, and communication.

In Yemen, the offer of \$300-500 million for reconstruction in the Saada province was used to sweeten the peace deal. Likewise, substantial pledges of development aid for Darfur as well as

a commitment to hold a donors' conference once the agreement was underway helped convince parties to agree to talks while managing potential spoilers.⁹⁷ Even in the case of the Lebanese talks, participants were hardly unaware that Qatar was then pouring \$300 million into reconstruction projects throughout southern Lebanon.⁹⁸ With a long history of offering humanitarian and development assistance in countries where Qatar mediated, officials were clearly comfortable upping assistance offers in order to reach an agreement. The appointment of long-time Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, an individual with a wide range of government portfolios and business interests, as prime minister in 2007 likely played a role as well.⁹⁹ Given the concentration of decision-making powers in a few hands, and with little further approval needed to dispense funds, it is easy for Qatar's negotiators to pledge significant amounts of funding in a short amount of time. Ensuring effective distribution of these pledges, however, requires greater institutional capacity.

CAPACITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Post-agreement implementation is the critical phase of conflict resolution, often overlooked as external actors lose interest following the signing of an agreement and direct their attention elsewhere. Ideally, mediation outcomes should foster nations' internal capacity to lead and manage their own post-conflict transi-

tion, but they often require external support. Key issues include the provision of mechanisms to resolve post-settlement disputes, building popular and political support for sustained peace, and ensuring civil society and local stakeholders' participation in monitoring potential flashpoints and conflicts. All too often, though, agreements break down, are neglected, or are distorted following the close of negotiations.

This is an area where Qatari mediation is most glaringly lacking, with the country frequently criticized for failing to ensure that implementation plans are sufficiently robust and inclusive. Other criticisms identify a failure to follow through on agreements over the long-term. In Yemen, for example, where implementation proved challenging, Qatar ultimately withdrew from the mediation process and did not invest in conflict-affected areas as promised. Similar criticisms hold that Qatari mediators failed to address the root causes of conflict in Lebanon.

This kind of follow-up requires infrastructure for sustained engagement in the post-mediation phase even before negotiations begin. This is difficult for Qatar, however, given the scant number of civil servants with the requisite skills, knowledge, and experience to support such engagement. The limited capacity of MOFA is illustrated by reports that top-level mediators were so occupied with the Darfur negotiations—then-Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ahmad al-Mahmoud was spending 90% of his working hours on them—that low-level officials were sent to mediate in Mauritania, reducing chances for successful outcome there.¹⁰⁰

Qatar has also come under growing criticism regarding its weak portfolio of skills. Notably, critics target the country's inadequate institutional knowledge of best practice strategies in mediation, post-settlement implementation, and cease-fire monitoring. Members of the Darfur negotiation team noted that proceedings even lacked an official note-taker, making it almost impossible to recall exactly what was said in discussions or reflect on the process in the future.¹⁰¹ Qatar's efforts are often viewed as relying too heavily on its mediators' personal attributes, notably the former Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, and Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad al-Mahmoud, all of whom relied upon instinct, charisma, and wealth to push through agreements.

“Critics target the country's inadequate institutional knowledge of best practice strategies in mediation.”

QATARI MEDIATION: SHORT-TERM SUCCESS

It is clear from the above discussion that the state of Qatar has not developed a well-defined model of third-party mediation. It has instead relied on a combination of wealth and strategic, often personal, relationships with various parties to bring them to the negotiating table. Qatar, as an Arab and Muslim country, has been able to present itself to regional parties as a culturally appropriate mediator, yet it often lacks adequate cultural and political sensitivity in particular contexts. This has made long-established mediation experts skeptical about the wisdom of engaging fully with Qatar in these fields.¹⁰²

“Qatar’s interventions have been overall better suited to addressing short-term crises than... long-lasting solutions.

Qatari officials often describe their country’s mediation efforts in glowing terms, claiming to engage the public and media in a way that aids the negotiation process while maintaining the secrecy of the proceedings. While burnishing Qatar’s diplomatic credentials in the media has certainly helped raise the country’s international profile, it is not clear that it has always benefited negotiations. Too great a focus on mediation successes, in the press or elsewhere, risks drawing attention away from the need to develop mechanisms and institutional capacity for more long-term engagement with conflicts. Qatar’s interventions have been, overall, better suited to addressing short-term crises than paving the way for long-lasting solutions. With mediation playing into state branding efforts, the immediate prestige of a swift peace deal can overshadow the importance of investing in longer-term implementation of such agreements.

The interest in publicity also encourages Qatari negotiators to push the boundaries of impartial mediation, proposing their own solutions or offering financial sweeteners to achieve consensus. While Qatar’s “checkbook diplomacy” may encourage parties to reach an agreement, it too may promote the pursuit of short-term gains over tackling the underlying roots of conflicts.¹⁰³ This was the case in Lebanon, where insufficient structural transformation failed to head off a continued political crisis after the 2008 Doha Agreement. More damaging still have been failures to follow through on pledged aid. Whatever the reason, the long gaps between pledges and disbursements, as seen in Darfur, diminished the impact of the financial support.

These tendencies are exacerbated by the concentration of Qatar’s mediation activities in the hands of very few people. The desire to mediate often seemed to

be driven as much by the former emir's personal and religious desires to act as a peacemaker and to see Qatar play a more prominent international role as by strategic concerns regarding Qatar's foreign policy.¹⁰⁴ While this highly personal involvement has driven some successes, it has hindered efforts to cultivate deeper institutional expertise in mediation strategies. The transition to Sheikh Tamim, for example, left Qatar without two of the key individuals that embodied Qatari mediation, Emir Hamad and bin Jassim Al Thani—a significant loss given how much Qatar's mediation efforts relied on their personal contacts with parties.

QATAR'S CHARACTERISTICS AS A MEDIATOR

Characteristic	Yemen	Lebanon	Darfur
Perceived Motivation	To ensure regional security, due to gas and oil shipment routes; to move into the Saudi sphere of influence	Protect and advance business interests; usurp Saudi Arabia's role as patron of Lebanese politics	Multiple business interests in the region; food security; challenge Egypt's traditional role in Sudan
Admitted Motivation	Address regional stability; respond to moral and religious calling to act as a peacemaker	Respond to moral and religious calling to act as a peacemaker; close association between Lebanon and Qatar	Address regional stability; respond to moral calling and religious calling to act as a peacemaker; cultural ties with Darfur and Sudan
Acceptance	Arab and Islamic identity; perception as a neutral, independent and trusted actor; link to Iran eased acceptance by Houthis	Less historical baggage than regional competitors, in particular Saudi Arabia; good relations with external spoilers; good relations with Hizballah	Islamic identity; perception as a neutral, independent and trusted actor; history as trusted relief and development partner in Darfur
Capacity	Highly personalized mediation led by a few individuals; high financial leverage	Strong personal engagement by emir/PM; actual conduct of talks widely lauded as effective	Collaboration with the UN/AU mediation team; high financial leverage
Mandate	Invited by Ali Abdullah Saleh to mediate	Received Arab League backing for mediation	Received Arab League, AU and UN backing for mediation
Outcome	Largely unsuccessful: Initial success in reaching an agreement although long-term impact and follow-up weak	Most successful of Qatar's major mediation attempts, averting the eruption of civil war; but agreement broke down in 2009; weak follow up	Qualified success; Doha Document for Peace in Darfur still in 2014 the major reference point but failed to include all parties

FROM MEDIATION TO INTERVENTION

By the close of 2010, Qatar had become the subject of significant global media and diplomatic attention, mediating no less than six disputes in five years. The country's profile hit unprecedented heights in December 2010 when the country won its bid to host the 2022 World Cup; this surprising victory represented a stunning success for the Qatari "brand." Barely two weeks later, Muhammad Bouazizi set himself alight, triggering a chain of events that ultimately toppled longstanding authoritarian leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and rocked the Syrian and Bahraini regimes to their core. Amid the unrest that spread across the region, Qatar adopted a proactive stance in support of protesters in many countries. It viewed the uprisings as an opportunity to expand its outsized foreign policy even further—but it would risk its reputation as a relatively neutral mediator in the process.

Beginning with events in Tunisia, Al Jazeera's 24/7 coverage transmitted images of mass protests and regime crackdowns across the Middle East and around the world.¹⁰⁵ The resulting "Al Jazeera effect" undoubtedly helped raise the profile of the initial uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.¹⁰⁶ The network garnered both criticism and applause for going beyond merely reporting the news to play a direct role in lending support to anti-authoritarian protests. With the independence of Al Jazeera under ever-closer scrutiny, perceived imbalances, such as the near absence of coverage of protests in Bahrain, constituted the first significant setback to Qatar's claim to be standing by the people against the oppressive regimes of the region.

Qatar's foreign policy, meanwhile, shifted from a focus on patient mediation to one of advocating intervention and confrontation. In the view of one Qatari official, this was driven by Emir Hamad's view that the time was right for Qatar to assume a greater regional role, taking a principled stand at a critical point in history.¹⁰⁷ This perception was certainly buoyed by significant international attention Qatar had received for its previous mediation efforts and smaller-scale foreign ventures.

In Libya, for example, despite previously cordial ties with the Qaddafi regime, Qatar helped rally the Arab League and international community in support of a no-fly zone (which took shape in UN Security Council Resolution 1973) aimed at restricting regime attacks, and even sent six Mirage fighters to join the effort. Qatar was the first Arab country to recognize the opposition National Transitional Council as the official government of Libya, and provided over \$400 million in support, training, and weapons to various rebel groups. Hundreds of Qatari troops assisted rebel efforts during the conflict.¹⁰⁸

Qatar was likewise quick to chart an independent course in Syria, suspending the operations of its Damascus embassy in July of 2011 and leading Arab League efforts to suspend Syria's membership. It also repeatedly tried to build Arab and international support for military intervention in the country. Since the start of

“Since the start of the uprising, Qatar has provided as much as \$3 billion to Syrian rebel groups.

the uprising, Qatar has provided as much as \$3 billion to Syrian rebel groups, in addition to hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid.¹⁰⁹

While Qatar assumed an independent leadership role in addressing these crises, its actions were increasingly dogged by accusations of favoritism in how it allocated support and resources, particularly regarding its support of newly empowered Islamist groups. Several outside observers have emphasized ideological reasons for Qatar supporting such factions, pointing to the influence of Islamist preachers such as Egyptian-born Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who has lived in Doha in exile for over 50 years and enjoys close ties to the ruling Al Thani family.¹¹⁰ Other analysts regarded Qatari support for Islamists as part of a pragmatic foreign policy that identified such groups as the “next big power” in Arab politics, providing a strategic venue for Qatar to expand its influence.¹¹¹

In Egypt, while Qatar provided some \$500 million in grant money in the year following the uprising, its support dramatically increased with the election of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Muhammad Morsi to the Egyptian presidency in the summer of 2012. Over the following year, total Qatari financial support increased to some \$5 billion, with promises of up to \$18 billion in investment to follow.¹¹² In both Libya and Syria, Qatar was perceived as routing much of its funding to armed factions connected to the countries' Muslim Brotherhood organizations. This fueled accusations that its efforts were aimed at giving official opposition bodies (the National Transitional Council and the Syrian National Coalition, respectively) a decidedly Islamist character, or if this proved impossible, empowering alternate sources of authority.¹¹³

Compared to its pre-Arab Spring engagement in regional conflicts as a third-party mediator, this phase represented a dramatic interventionist streak that further raised Qatar's profile as a major power in the region. However, Qatar's newly interventionist role exposed the country to blowback. Increasingly, Qatar is seen less as an actor taking a principled stand on behalf of Arab peoples and more as an interventionist state with a partisan agenda. This shift also transformed the map of regional alliances, including Qatar's amicable relations with Iran and Syria, while, along with allegations surrounding the World Cup bid, bringing the country under unprecedented international scrutiny.

A CHANGED LANDSCAPE

Today, Qatar faces a much different regional landscape from the early 2000s. Any future attempts at playing the role of impartial mediator will likely be constrained by hostility towards its recent spate of activism. Libyan authorities grew frustrated with perceived Qatari interference in Libyan affairs, with the country's envoy to the UN denouncing Qatari "meddling" as early as November of 2011.¹¹⁴ By the summer of 2013, Saudi Arabia had come to dominate support for Syria's armed opposition, marking a re-assertion of the country's claim to regional leadership. Moreover, Qatar's importance to American foreign policy as a bridge between the United States and Iran has been reduced in the wake of the late 2013 nuclear deal, which was facilitated by Oman, without Qatari involvement.¹¹⁵

Following popular demonstrations, Egypt's Qatari-backed President Morsi was overthrown in a military coup on July 3, 2013. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) rushed to pledge political support and an initial \$8 billion in financial backing to the interim military government under General Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. Trading patrons, Egypt returned \$2 billion to Qatar in September 2013 and planned to return additional funds in 2014.¹¹⁶ A widespread crackdown on political opponents, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, followed the coup, with over a thousand killed, at least twenty thousand arrested, and the group officially labeled a terrorist organization in December 2013.¹¹⁷

By this time, Qatar was under new leadership, as Emir Hamad bin Jassim stepped down in favor of his son, Sheikh Tamim, on June 25, 2013. Mehran Kamrava, writing before the unexpected announcement that Emir Hamad would abdicate, predicted that any change in leadership at the helm of the Qatari royal family would not affect the broad trajectory of Qatar's plans, the parameters of which had been set by the realization of the former emir's ambitions.¹¹⁸ Yet early reports suggested that Emir Tamim sought a subtle shift in Qatar's approach. For example, it was reported that he would seek a "more consensual foreign policy" in the wake of the negative reaction to Qatar's increasingly bold and interventionist actions throughout the Middle East.¹¹⁹ The emir's initial speech to the Qatari

Shura Council focused heavily on themes of domestic development, while his current prime minister, Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani, also serves as the minister of interior—not foreign minister, as was the case with bin Jassim Al Thani.

In looking inward, Emir Tamim was likely motivated as much by domestic concerns as foreign setbacks. Qatar’s rapid development has not come without frustrations for its citizens, who occasionally voice their grievances in print media, online, and via the state-run call-in show, “Good Morning, My Beloved Nation.” Concerns about growing Westernization, poor education outcomes, limited health facilities, and hiring practices that discriminate against Qataris have all contributed to a sense that the state should focus more on issues at home. In fact, a 2013 poll found that 77% of Qataris agreed with the statement “the state should spend more resources inside the country.”¹²⁰ This view is further compounded by the experience of Qatari citizens who have been harassed outside of the country, many of whom now pose as Emirati or other nationals to avoid the negative attention that Qataris have received following the state’s controversial foreign endeavors.¹²¹ Signs of a more defensive posture have recently emerged, with the Qatari government announcing a program of compulsory military service for all male citizens aged 18-35 with three months service mandatory for university graduates.¹²² The move has also been framed as another policy of internal development, providing discipline and structure for young Qatari citizens.

Yet significant continuities have remained in Qatar’s foreign policy, leading to ongoing frictions with other Arab countries as well as Western allies. Throughout 2013, Qatar continued its support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and ousted President Muhammad Morsi, both officially and via favorable coverage of the Brotherhood on Al Jazeera, prompting the Egyptian foreign minister to summon the Qatari ambassador for an official explanation in January of 2014. This support subsequently sparked a more open conflict with GCC-neighbors Bahrain, the UAE, and (by far the most important) Saudi Arabia, all of whom withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in March. The three issued a joint statement indirectly accusing Qatar of interfering in their countries’ internal affairs, with a reference to “support for hostile media” widely interpreted as referring to Al Jazeera’s editorial line. Though an April 2014 summit in Riyadh managed to defuse the situation for the time being, tensions remain. In July, the UAE arrested several Qatari citizens on accusations of spying, and it continues to hold a Qatari doctor in jail for allegedly supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

“77% of Qataris agreed with the statement ‘the state should spend more resources inside the country.’”

Meanwhile, though Qatar will not face a transition to a post-energy economy for some time, other countries are beginning to challenge its LNG dominance. Australian production is predicted to surpass Qatar's by 2018, while the fracking boom in the United States has raised the possibility of lower gas prices in the future, likely impacting Doha's bottom line.¹²³ At some point, this will affect Qatar's approach to mediation, which is premised on financial leverage and lavish hosting of delegations in Doha. Some of Qatar's prestige projects, including Qatar Museums and its planned World Cup stadiums, have already faced financial cutbacks.¹²⁴

Finally, it should be noted that Qatar's state branding strategy, aimed at popularizing its image as an attractive, modern power, has suffered over the past year. The headlines in Western media outlets that are currently shaping the image of Qatar in the Western countries' public consciousness are no longer about Al Jazeera and the Arab Spring but the deaths of construction workers and allegations of corruption in the World Cup bid.

Some analysts have predicted that, faced with the waning fortunes of Islamist groups throughout the region and growing isolation, Qatar is likely to move towards closer coordination with a re-assertive Saudi Arabia. This would mark an abrupt shift away from the independence of Qatari foreign policy under Sheikh Hamad. It would also further undermine one of the pillars of Qatari mediation—its high degree of independence.

“Qatar's more partisan approach during the Arab Spring phase eroded its reputation.

Together, these various developments have worked to undermine the constellation of domestic, regional, and global dynamics that enabled Qatar to assume a leading role in mediation. In particular, Qatar's more partisan approach during the Arab Spring phase eroded its reputation as a neutral and

independent mediator that can play a major role in resolving the region's conflicts. At the same time, it is clear that the country maintains at least some capacity to mediate disputes.

Today, Qatar remains engaged in many sites of past mediation (albeit with a much lower profile), such as Darfur, where it recently pledged an additional \$88 million for the region's development in April 2014.¹²⁵ Furthermore, relying on the strength of its contacts with often-ostracized groups, Qatar has achieved some new small-scale mediation successes in recent months. In March 2014, for example, Qatari mediators worked alongside Lebanese security forces to secure the

release of 13 Syrian nuns of Maaloula, then held by jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra. Qatar contacted the kidnappers and put up \$16 million in ransom money. Likewise, Qatari intermediaries helped facilitate a deal between the United States and the Taliban that saw American prisoner of war Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl exchanged for five former Taliban leaders, whom Qatar agreed to house in Doha.

At the same time, traditional regional mediators—Saudi Arabia and Egypt—are often more estranged from the region's hotspots (Yemen, Darfur, and Gaza, among others) than they were during Qatar's 2006-2010 period of intense mediation. The potential for and prospective challenges to Qatari mediation were both on full display during Israel's prolonged assault on the Gaza Strip this past summer. Qatar has long maintained ties to Gaza's ruling party, Hamas, and has hosted its political leadership since 2012. During the same year, Emir Hamad became the sole Arab leader to visit Gaza since Hamas' 2007 election victory. Qatar also has contacts with Israel, and reportedly provided a diplomatic back channel between Israel and Hamas as late as spring of 2014. Given the new Egyptian government's poor relations with Hamas, parties such as France, the United States, and the United Nations at least initially viewed Qatar as a potential alternative interlocutor.¹²⁶ Doha did host meetings between Hamas leadership and parties such as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, but hostile reactions from Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia over Qatar's ties to Hamas ultimately relegated Qatari mediation efforts to the sidelines.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decade Qatar's active foreign policy dramatically raised the country's international profile. This was largely due to a flurry of Qatari mediation efforts between 2006 and 2010 that placed Qatar and its leaders at the center of some of the region's major conflicts. These efforts leveraged the country's substantial financial wealth and lack of historical baggage to overcome its limited hard power. Officials relied on personal contacts and Qatar's international profile to gain acceptance for its role as a mediator, and the nation's LNG-derived wealth paid for the logistics of talks and provided financial incentives to keep talks going.

This frenetic activity came at a price, even before the blowback against Qatari foreign policy over the past year turned its wide range of political contacts from a clear advantage into a potential liability. Engaging in multiple mediations simultaneously though only a handful of individuals have the personal ties, diplomatic experience, or prestige needed to conduct negotiations, Qatar has found it difficult to manage ties to all of the potential parties—or spoilers—for a given conflict. These challenges have been exacerbated by the current hostility towards Qatar's diplomatic activities, with Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia proving far more resistant to Qatari mediation efforts. Meanwhile, many of the key officials who managed Qatar's multiple foreign policy ventures have retired from the scene in the wake of last summer's transition of power, further compounding the capacity gap.

Yet it would be a loss to the region if this political transition ultimately led to a more insular Qatar, one primarily focused on domestic concerns in the manner of, say, Kuwait. Given the prevalence of inter-state and intra-state conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, the region needs a destination like Doha: a location relatively close to the region's conflicts in terms of physical distance and cultural background that is willing to host disputing parties of all stripes as they hash out their differences. While it would take some time for Qatar to fully regain its prior reputation for providing neutral and independent mediation, it doing so is clearly in the strategic interest of the region and should be supported by both, regional and international stakeholders.

To do so, Qatar should take pragmatic steps to develop a clearer strategy for engaging in the region's conflicts. In the near term, MOFA can build on recent successes in limited, single-issue mediations, such as the release of the Syrian nuns or the Taliban prisoner exchange. Qatar should leverage its contacts with political groups, Islamist or otherwise, all over the world in conjunction with other interested nations.

In focusing on broader efforts aimed at resolving thornier political conflicts, the state of Qatar should be more selective in when and how it chooses to mediate. Despite the temptation to engage in as many efforts as possible—with an eye toward the prestige that an initial settlement can bring—Qatari leaders would do well to consider each opportunity carefully before choosing to commit the state's limited mediation resources.

When it does choose to mediate, Qatar should be clear in stating its reasons for doing so, while moving to satisfy the concerns of any potential spoilers. It was encouraging to see this being attempted during the latest Gaza crisis, when the country's officials, particularly Foreign Minister Khalid al-Attiyah, generally downplayed the potential for Qatar to play more than a supporting role in achieving an ultimate ceasefire in local and international media. Emir Tamim also met with Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah on July 22, 2014 for talks that reportedly included discussions of a potential ceasefire in Gaza.¹²⁷

Finally, Qatar's mediation efforts should work towards building the Qatari "brand" by helping to secure lasting agreements, rather than merely seeking the prestige of brokering a settlement. In past efforts, Qatari mediators have succeeded when they have patiently laid the groundwork for inclusive negotiations and workable settlements, as in the 2008 Lebanon talks. Developing its potential further as a mediator will require building a capacity for mediation based on institutions, not individuals, and supporting and monitoring durable, long-term solutions. Of course, Qatar's humanitarian work plays to its strengths, and, leveraged with existing political engagement, will aid the country in claiming legitimacy as a mediator.

Ultimately, future successful engagements will require the decentralization of Qatar's mediation efforts. As noted, nearly all negotiating power lies in the hands of a few key figures. Few rank-and-file diplomats possess the training and experience that can substitute for the sheer charisma and personal contacts of individuals such as Emir Hamad or bin Jassim Al Thani. Further mediation efforts will require a more substantial knowledge infrastructure, one that can provide

state-level historical and political analysts to MOFA. While MOFA staff already participate in some conflict resolution training, little of this is based on previous Qatari experiences. Developing this institutional capacity will expand Qatar's potential for long-term engagement, making its mediation and follow-up efforts less dependent on key individuals and less affected by personnel turnover. It will also allow the emir to distance himself from the negotiation process unless the full standing he brings to the table as a head of state is required.

With an eye towards building this knowledge infrastructure, Qatar should thoroughly document its mediation efforts. Although anecdotal information and personal collections exist, Qatar would be better served by systematically recording its mediation experiences and storing them in a national depository. This documentation should be connected to publicly accessible analyses of Qatar's mediation experiences, assisting in the drafting of further conflict analyses prior to any future mediation attempts. Qatar University and other higher education institutions could help in this effort, providing training in and conducting research on conflict mediation as well as the politics and culture of countries where Qatar is likely to engage in mediation.

Looking further afield, Qatar can expand its mediation capacity through collaboration with other actors. One option might be to establish a non-governmental entity that would bring together statespersons and legal experts from the region, such as Lakhdar Brahimi, M. Cherif Bassiouni, Prince Hassan bin Talal, or Abdelkarim al-Aryani. They combine decades worth of experience in mediation and conflict resolution with name recognition and personal connections across the Middle East. Such an effort could look to the Humanitarian Dialogue Centre, the Carter Center, and the Crisis Management Initiative for innovative models of non-state mediation. This more collaborative non-state approach could then help lay the groundwork for successful dialogue and mediation, while distancing the Qatari state from such efforts during early stages. This could help reassure neighbors regarding Qatar's motives while improving perceptions of the country's impartiality by distancing mediation from its immediate foreign policy objectives. Qatar could also look to potential collaborations with other states that have long track records in mediation, such as Norway or Sweden, offering access as well as financial and logistical support while benefiting from the proven capacity and expertise of these states' diplomatic corps. These partnerships would likely prove particularly beneficial in terms of expanding Qatari capacity to implement and follow-up on negotiation agreements.

Finally, given the checkered record of Qatar's checkbook diplomacy, it would be advisable for the country to recalibrate its approach to financial leverage to focus

on long-term investment over short-term inducement. Mediators should avoid using state funds to incentivize participants, whether political leaders or particular factions, instead ensuring that financial assistance is used to support the implementation of an eventual agreement through strategic investments in local economies and government capacities. When Qatar does choose to lend financial support to political mediation, it should do so in a way that is transparent and traceable, to dispel rumors that funds granted amount to bribing key participants. Above all, if Qatar is to leverage its financial wealth in conflict zones, then it should maintain a focus on humanitarian assistance, economic development, and peacebuilding projects. These areas are vital to addressing the root causes of regional conflicts and investing in them will support Qatar's acceptance as a legitimate mediator. Such a focus would also enable better integration of humanitarian assistance, diplomacy, and mediation when defining the agenda.

Despite Qatar's recent inward turn, it seems probable that by employing effective strategies, regional mediation and peacemaking can again emerge as a major element of Qatari foreign policy. The apparent pause in intra-GCC tensions presents an opportunity for Qatar to take stock of its mediation efforts and strengthen its capacity, with an eye towards enhancing its post-mediation capabilities. Qatar's comparative advantages, including its diverse political relationships, extensive financial wealth, and willingness to play a constructive role in the region, make it likely that it can once again serve, to borrow Qatari Foreign Minister Khalid al-Attiyah's phrasing, as a "mediator for conversation, cooperation, and the advancement of peace."¹²⁸

ANNEX: KEY DATES IN QATARI MEDIATION

Date	Event
June 1995	Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifah takes power as emir of Qatar
September 1996	Israeli trade office opens in Qatar
January 1997	First exports of LNG
September 2002	US Central Command HQ moves to Doha
April 2003	Referendum approves Qatar's constitution
February 2004	Qatar negotiates release of Moroccans captured by Polisario in Western Sahara
2006—2007	Qatar becomes world's largest LNG exporter Qatar serves two year term on the UN Security Council
May 2006	Qatar donates \$100 million to Hurricane Katrina relief effort
September 2006	Qatar commits 200-300 troops to peacekeeping force in Lebanon
Late 2006	Qatar commits \$150 million to housing reconstruction in Southern Lebanon
October 2006	Qatar attempts but fails to mediate Hamas-Fatah dispute with a Six Point Plan
April 2007	Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, Qatar's foreign minister since 1992, appointed prime minister
May 2007	Qatari delegation visits Yemen to meet Houthi leaders
June 2007	Joint ceasefire agreement announced between Government of Yemen and Houthi rebels
February 2008	Subsequent peace agreement signed in Doha between Government of Yemen and Houthis, with Qatar pledging \$300-500 million for Sa'ada development
May 2008	Qatar hosts negotiations between rival Lebanese factions, resulting in the Doha Agreement
September 2008	Arab League appoints Qatar to mediate in Darfur peace talks
January 2009	Israeli trade office in Doha closed in protest of Israel's Operation Cast Lead
March 2009	President Ali Abdullah Saleh declares the failure of Qatari mediation in Yemen
February 2010	Non-Qatari mediated ceasefire between Government of Yemen and Houthi rebels; Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the Justice and Equality Movement sign ceasefire agreement in Doha
March 2010	Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the Liberation and Justice Movement sign ceasefire agreement in Doha

Date	Event
May 2010	Justice and Equality Movement withdraw from Qatar's mediation process for Darfur
June 2010	Djibouti and Eritrea reach Qatari-mediated ceasefire agreement over border dispute
August 2010	Qatar negotiates renewal of February 2010 ceasefire agreement in Yemen
December 2010	Qatar wins bid to host the 2022 World Cup
March 2011	Qatar backs Arab League support for intervention in Libya
March – August 2011	Qatar participates in coalition intervention in Libya
July 2011	Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement sign the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur
November 2011	Arab League suspends Syria's membership, with support from Qatar
October 2012	Emir Hamad becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Gaza since Hamas took power
June 2013	Sheikh Tamim replaces his father Sheikh Hamad as Emir
July 2013	Muhammad Morsi, Egypt's Islamist president, is overthrown by a popularly supported military coup
March 2014	Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates withdraw their ambassadors from Qatar; Qatar mediation assists in the release of 13 kidnapped nuns from Malloula, Syria
June 2014	Qatari officials facilitate the exchange of U.S. POW Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl for Taliban members held by the United States
July - August 2014	Ceasefire negotiations for conflict in Gaza brokered by Egypt in Cairo, despite suggestions that Qatar serve as go-between with Hamas

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