

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

QATAR'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT:

THE ERA OF SHEIKH HAMAD BIN KHALIFA AL-THANI 1995-2013

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Qatar's Foreign Policy Towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The era
of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani 1995-2013

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The purpose of this research is to examine the objectives, tools, and features of Qatari foreign policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013). It also explores to what extent Qatar has overcome its constraints as a small state located between two regional rival powers (Saudi Arabia and Iran) and become an influential player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ultimately, it analyzes Qatar's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through utilizing the speeches of Sheikh Hamad and Qatar's soft power instruments. Since Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was only through its soft power, the theoretical framework of the research is centered around the soft power theory. The research uses a qualitative methodology that employs the case study approach. In collecting the data, the research uses both primary and secondary resources, the former include the speeches of Sheikh Hamad, Qatari government documents, UN resolutions as well as interviews, whereas the latter include books, peer-reviewed journals, internet web sites, research centers' reports and semi-official newspapers.

The data analysis shows that Qatar's position as a small state located between two large powers prompted it to protect its security by following a hedging strategy.

The analysis also demonstrates that Qatar's security dilemma became more pressing after the Gulf War of 1991, Al-Khafus border dispute in 1992, and the coup attempt on Qatar in 1996. Qatar's involvement in the conflict aims to support Palestinians, advance the peace process and to play a regional role.

Qatar has been in support of the Palestinian rights, has demanded the Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 territories, and has promoted the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Additionally, the research finds out that Qatar's involvement in the conflict is due to several reasons. The first one is protecting its national security and sovereignty. The second reason is Qatar's solidarity with Arab and Muslim causes. The third reason is playing a regional role through mediation. The research has also demonstrated that Qatar had a great influence on the conflict. This is evident by the role of Al Jazeera in raising awareness of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians, the financial aid to Palestinians and mediation between Fatah and Hamas. Al Jazeera is Qatar's strongest soft power tool. It exposed the Israeli aggression, but at the same time gave a voice to the Israelis on its screen. Financial aid is another soft power tool aimed at elevating the Palestinian suffering, easing the tension between Hamas and Israel and promoting Qatar. However, this tool provides short term solutions. Mediation to wield influence is Qatar's third soft power tool; however, it didn't succeed to end the split between Fatah and Hamas.

The research also finds out that Qatar's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not always in line with the GCC. Qatar's stance is also not in line with the small state traditional security strategies. Furthermore, the study finds out that in its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is obvious that Qatar's foreign policy

has certain features. These are mainly the support of Arabic and Islamic identity, the support of peaceful resolutions and international law, the support of political Islamic movements, visionary, determined and initiative leadership, divergence from the GCC, and Pragmatism.

The potential contribution of this research is advancing the debate on the role of small states in regional and international politics and the opportunities and challenges that these states face in their foreign policy and the relationship between security and size. In addition, furthering the research on small wealthy states in the Gulf region and their foreign policy decisions. Moreover, exploring how a small state uses soft power to exert influence and filling a knowledge gap regarding Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the entirety of Sheikh Hamad's reign. The research is particularly useful for scholars and students of Middle Eastern studies, foreign policy analysis and international relations.

DEDICATION

*To my parents, Nadia and Ibrahim
For their endless love, encouragement, and prayers*

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Figure 1. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
diwan.gov.qa



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ar.maps-qatar.com



Figure 3. Map of Israel-Palestine
news.bbc.co.uk

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Qatar is a peninsula situated on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Qatar is a small, wealthy state that spans 11,610 km² (data.worldbank.org, 2019) and 2.88 million people (Worldometers.info, 2020) and has received increasing attention at the regional and global levels. This is because Qatar possesses the third-largest natural gas reserve in the world after Russia and Iran and is the world leader in liquefied natural gas (LNG). According to Qatar Gas, Qatar produces approximately 77 million tons of LNG per year and plans to expand production to 126 million tons by 2027 (qatargas.com, 2020). Crude oil production totals approximately 600,000 barrels per day (Shoeb, 2018). However, Qatar has many structural constraints due to its small size and geopolitical location; these threaten its political and security situation.

Qatar is located between two rival regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, in a tense and complex Middle Eastern context. Due to its small geographic and demographic size, Qatar is vulnerable to external intimidations and suffers from a power imbalance, which leads it to be threatened by these two regional hegemonic powers. Qatar shares coastal borders with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, and Bahrain, while its only land border is with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Historically, Saudi Arabia has claimed that Qatar is part of its territory. This resulted in a border dispute in 1992; however, the conflict dates back to 1965, when the Saudis and the Qataris accepted the border demarcation proposed by Britain, which had previously been a significant imperial power in the region. Nevertheless, problems arose in the 1990s as both sides interpreted the demarcation differently. The dispute between Qatar

and Saudi Arabia led to fatal clashes at the Al-Khafus post on the Saudi-Qatari border, which resulted in the deaths of three people. Furthermore, tensions increased when the Saudis built a road in the disputed area, depriving Qataris of free access to the UAE by car (Rabi, 2009). Qatar was also infuriated with the Saudis, because the latter supported Bahrain in its border dispute with Qatar, which began in the mid-1900s over the Hawar Islands and the town of Zubara. In 1991, Qatar referred the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It was resolved in 2001, when the ICJ decided that Bahrain had a claim over the Hawar Islands; Qatar was awarded Zubara and the Janan Islands (*Bahrain re-opens border dispute with Qatar, 5 Nov 2017*). Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Qatar escalated in December 1995 at the Muscat GCC summit. The Saudis rejected the Qatari candidate for the position of the Secretary General of the GCC. This decision prompted the Qatari delegate to withdraw from the summit. In addition, in 2006, Saudi Arabia refused to allow Qatar to construct a gas pipeline that would pass through Saudi land and enable Qatar to export gas to Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman.¹ Consequently, Qatar had to look beyond the Gulf region to expand its gas industry, which is its main source of development and growth.

Qatar is not only threatened by Saudi Arabia but also by Iran. In 1981, the Gulf states established the GCC to protect their security and sovereignty after a series of events, including the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 (one of its slogans was “exporting the revolution”), the onset of the Iranian-Iraqi War (1980–1988), and the

¹ In 2014, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain have withdrawn their ambassadors from Qatar after claiming that Qatar has been interfering in their affairs and supporting Islamic groups. They returned them eight months later.

In 2017, the above countries imposed a blockade on Qatar which Egypt participated in it over the same allegations in addition to objection on Al Jazeera news network policies and other issues. They ended the blockade after more than three years in 2020.

threats posed by Iran to oil routes. The GCC was crucial to the security of the Gulf Arab states, since Britain ended its mandate in the Gulf region in the late 1960s; subsequently, these states lost their main security protector. Their fears were realized after a coup attempt took place against the regime in Bahrain in 1981, which was backed by Iran (Wright, 2011). As a result, Qatar grew closer to its larger neighbor, Saudi Arabia, in order to safeguard its territories against Iranian aggression. In 1989, the South Pars/North Dome field—the world's largest natural gas field, with shared ownership between Iran and Qatar—began to export gas. Compared to other Arab GCC states, Qatar decided to be more flexible with Tehran in order to maintain its own economic interests with Iran, balance its relationship with Saudi Arabia, and ensure regional stability. Thus, Qatar used its status as a member of the United Nations Security Council to vote against a resolution to set a deadline for Iran to pause its uranium enrichment activities by June 2006. In brief, Qatar managed to maneuver between Iran and Saudi Arabia based on the situation at hand. Ultimately, Qatar's aim is to maintain its security and sovereignty as a small state constrained by a sensitive geopolitical position and a lack of people.

A major shift in the foreign policy of small Gulf Arab states occurred after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Following the Second Gulf War in 1991, the small Gulf states realized that Saudi Arabia, the largest Arab Gulf state (2,149,690 km²), was unable to defend Kuwait (17,818 km²). Saudi Arabia had to build alliances with Arab and foreign armies to liberate Kuwait. As a result, the Saudis' dominant hegemonic role in the region started to diminish, and Saudi Arabia was exposed as a fragile state. As a result of the GCC's powerlessness to defend the small state of Kuwait, the Second Gulf War of 1991 caused a political vacuum. Like other Gulf Arab states,

Qatar signed a defense cooperation agreement (DCA) with the United States in 1992 for protection. Consequently, the United States replaced Britain in the provision of defense for Arab GCC states in the region. This signals the first real instance of American military presence in the Arabian Peninsula, which particularly infuriated the Arab world—the Islamist groups that strongly believe that Saudi Arabia is a holy land that should only be accessed by Muslims.

A key development for Qatar occurred in 1995 with the arrival of a new and young leadership represented by Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani. Sheikh Hamad had a far-sighted vision to develop his country and to free it from the security tangles imposed by its geopolitical constraints and dependence on the Saudis. His ambition went further; he intended to make Qatar an influential player in regional affairs by leveraging the state's wealth and security backing provided by the United States. This did not appeal to Arab neighboring states; in particular, Saudi Arabia organized a coup attempt on Sheikh Hamad with help from the UAE and Bahrain in 1996. Named “Operation Abu Ali,” the coup attempt occurred on February 14, 1996—nearly a year after Sheikh Hamad assumed the throne. However, the coup was detected and thwarted (*New Details Revealed on 1996 Coup Attempt against Qatar, 2018*). In light of the failed coup attempt, the political vacuum that emerged after the Second Gulf War in 1991, and the Al-Khafus border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, Qatar seized the opportunity to reconsider its foreign policy. The leadership decided to adopt a more pragmatic approach to protect the country's security, sovereignty, and interests and further its ambitions to become a key player in regional politics, aided by its enormous, gas-derived financial resources and the security umbrella provided by the United States.

One of the first steps that Qatar took to demonstrate its new, pragmatic foreign policy direction and deviation from the GCC was the founding of the Al Jazeera news network in 1996. Al Jazeera was a departure from traditional government-controlled media in the Arab world; for the first time in Arabic media, the news outlet disseminated discussions of controversial social, political and economic issues that affected the Arab world, which raised Qatar's profile at the regional and international levels. Al Jazeera was seen by many Arab governments as a direct attack on their establishment and the status quo. Large Arab states such Saudi Arabia and Egypt felt endangered by Qatar's ambition and regarded it as a threat to their historic leading role in the Middle East.

Another important step occurred when Qatar allowed an Israeli trade office to open in Doha in 1996.² In addition, Qatar hosted the fourth annual Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Economic Conference in Doha in 1997 with an Israeli representative. Moreover, Qatar made the decision to resolve its border disputes with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in 2001 through the ICJ instead of on a regional basis. This was a strong indication that Qatar was pursuing an autonomous policy and extending its reach to international law and society. Since 2002, Qatar has hosted the United States Central Command forces at the Al-Udaid and Al-Sailiyah bases. These troops were previously stationed at the Riyadh military base, starting from 1991; Qatar offered to host them after the deterioration of relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, in which 15 out of the 19 hijackers who carried out the attacks were Saudis. The presence of two American bases

² Qatar closed the Israel's trade office in 2000 after Saudi Arabia and Iran threatened to boycott the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference that the Qatar hosted on November 12, 2000.

provided extra protection for Qatar, in addition to the 1992 defense agreement with the United States.

After 2004, the resources generated from LNG production and export significantly increased, making Qatar one of the most developed economies in the world and granting it with security and political clout that surpassed what is typically accessible to a small state (Krane & Wright, 2014). This has not only enabled Qatar to develop and secure its lands but also to brand itself and play a regional role. Since the mid-2000s, Qatar has become one of the world's most active mediators in regional and international conflicts across the Middle East and parts of Africa (Kamrava, 2013). Qatar's hydrocarbon revenues have also enabled it to invest abroad and provide generous financial aid to countries that are disadvantaged and in crisis. Qatar's economic strength, its Al Jazeera news network, its visionary and ambitious leader, and its mediation efforts have enabled the country to establish itself on the regional and international stage. These factors have provided Qatar with global recognition and attracted the attention of many politicians and researchers.

Qatar and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

One of the oldest and most complicated international conflicts, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved despite significant regional and international efforts. The conflict influences both state and non-state actors in the Middle East region and has not ceased since 1948. As a result, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become a recurring story in both Arab and international news outlets. On the one hand, Arabs and Israelis have been involved in nine wars against each other from 1948 to 2014. On the other hand, there have been several attempts to resolve the conflict, which have

created political, social, and economic instabilities in the region and beyond. The failure to recognize the rights of Palestinians and establish an independent Palestinian state has created major concerns for Arabs and Muslims, as they regard Palestine a national and religious priority.

Originally, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an Israeli-Arab/Muslim conflict for two reasons. First, Palestine is part of the Arab world, and it was part of the last Islamic caliphate (Ottoman Empire) that collapsed in 1914 following World War I. Second, Israel occupied parts of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War,³ which created significant strife in the Middle East. The current research provides an in-depth examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as viewed through the lens of the small state of Qatar, while excluding other Arab countries. In addition, Qatar has not received as much scholarly attention as larger states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, throughout the 72-year history of the conflict. Thus, the current study intends to fill this research gap. However, the research does not cover the “historic Palestine” or what is known after 1948 as Israel, because Qatar has no official relations with Israel. Instead, the research covers the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which are recognized by 138 United Nations (UN) member states as Palestine.

After the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Qatar—like many other Arab countries—has welcomed Palestinian presence on its lands. Skilled Palestinians have contributed to the development of Qatar and the establishment of the knowledge

³ The Camp David Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1978 ended the conflict between the two countries, and Wadi Araba Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan, also ended the conflict between the two countries.

department which later become the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)⁴ opened one of its first offices in Doha. In 1971, during Qatar's independence speech, the late Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the "right of Palestinians to reclaim their land" (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020).

Historically, regional superpowers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, along with major international powers such as the United States, Russia, and European countries, have been key players in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Small Arab states, including Gulf states, followed the lead of large Arab states with regard to foreign policy positions towards the conflict. With the emergence of oil and gas in the Arabian Gulf region, the region's strategic importance has increased, and small Gulf countries have become increasingly involved in regional conflicts.

In November 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference was held based on Security Council Resolutions 242⁵ and 338.⁶ The conference was organized after the Second Gulf War of 1991. It was co-sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union before the latter collapsed in December 1991. At the conference, Arab countries (except for Egypt), Palestinians, and Israelis publicly met for the first time. Furthermore, it was the first time that Gulf delegates from GCC countries, including Qatar, were present at the conference. Bilateral and multilateral talks followed the conference and culminated in

⁴ PLO was first founded in 1964 by Yasser Arafat during an Arab League Summit in Cairo. In 1969, Arafat became Chairman of the PLO's until his death in 2004. In October 1974, the Arab League recognized the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," with full membership. Fatah is a Palestinian political party and the largest faction of the PLO.

⁵ 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories of 1967 issued 22/11/1967

⁶ 338 calls (Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria to cease all military activities and implement Resolution 242 issued 22/10/1973

the signing of the Declaration of Principles (or the Oslo I Accord) between the PLO and Israel on September 13, 1993 in the White House. The accord provoked strong resistance from Hamas⁷ and some PLO factions. Based on the Oslo Accord, Israel and the PLO formally recognized each another for the first time. The accord shifted control of the main Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the newly founded Palestinian National Authority (PNA), an interim structure created to supervise administration and security in these areas.

On September 28, 1995, the Oslo II Accord was signed between the PLO and Israel in Taba, Egypt. Sheikh Hamad attended the signing ceremony. This constituted a clear sign of his support for the peace process and his personal involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Oslo II Accord divided the West Bank into three regions: A, B, and C. In Areas A and B, the PNA controlled most affairs, including education, health, and the economy, while the Israelis controlled security. Area C was supposed to be handed over to the PNA, but Israel has retained control of it to the present.

However, the Oslo Accords collapsed after the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000, which resulted from former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to Al Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest mosque for Muslims after the two mosques of Makkah and Medina. The failure of the Oslo Accords to establish a Palestinian state on land that was occupied in 1967 (with Jerusalem as its capital), the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the unsolved issue of

⁷ Hamas was established in 1987 in the Gaza Strip by Ahmad Yassin after the eruption of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas is considered one of the main factions in the Palestinian landscape and a rivalry to Fatah.

Palestinian refugees in Arab countries and beyond continue to be sources of instability in the region. Thus, Qatar and other Arab countries are either directly or indirectly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁸

In 2002, Israel launched the largest military operation since the 1967 Six-Day War in the West Bank and constructed a wall between Israel and the West Bank, causing protest and anger among Palestinians and Arabs. The escalating violence against Palestinians provoked Arab leaders to react. In 2002, then-prince Abdulla Bin Abdel Aziz of Saudi Arabia presented a peace initiative that called on Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders in return for peace with Arab countries. This initiative was adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in 2002. However, Israel refused to accept it. On November 11, 2004, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat died; Mahmood Abbas became the president of the PNA on January 9, 2005. By September 22, 2005, Israel had withdrawn from the Gaza Strip under heavy pressure from Hamas and other Palestinian parties. In 2006, Hamas, a rivalry to Fatah, won the second legislative Palestinian election in the Gaza Strip, which was not accepted by the PNA in Ramallah. A power struggle between Fatah and Hamas led to a split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as the PNA and the Middle East Quartet (United States, Russia, United Nations, and European Union), many world countries, and some Arab countries refused to accept Hamas victory and its control over the Gaza Strip and therefore, suspended foreign aid to it. In 2007, Israel imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip that remains in place to this day. The Gaza Strip is also under restrictions from the PNA and Egypt, which controls the Rafah border with Gaza. Both the PNA and Egypt oppose Hamas.

⁸ In 2020, four Arab countries held peace treaties with Israel. They are UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco

In 2008, 2012, and 2014, Israel launched three wars on Gaza.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has witnessed major developments and turning points shortly before and during the time period examined in the present research: 1995 to 2013. This time period is significant for a number of reasons. Before 1995, Qatar did not have a well-defined foreign policy and did not play a significant role in global affairs (Hansen, 2013; Nuruzzaman, 2015; Rabi, 2009). Prior to Sheikh Hamad, Qatar was in the shadow of its large Gulf neighbor Saudi Arabia under the umbrella of the GCC. Therefore, it followed its foreign policy directions, particularly when it came to the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After 1995 with Sheikh Hamad's promotion from heir Amir to Amir with absolute authority, relatively young age (45), western education and a vision to develop his country and secure it, he began detaching Qatar from Saudi Arabia. This infuriated Saudi Arabia which plotted a coup attempt on the new Amir in 1996. Therefore, this date (1995) is a turning point in Qatar's history and marks a new era with a new foreign policy direction. Likewise, 2013 represents the end of Sheikh Hamad's reign and the beginning of a new chapter in Qatar's history with the ascension of Sheikh Hamad's son, Sheikh Tamim to power. Furthermore, during the period of the study (1995-2013) major events in Palestine, coupled with forward-looking Qatari leadership that sought regional and international influence, enabled Qatar to play a more significant role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This role has attracted the attention of many academics, who have tracked the evolution of Qatar's foreign policy. In general, the academic literature on Qatar's foreign policy remains limited, since Qatar is a relatively new state that only gained independence in 1971. Furthermore, Qatar's foreign policy towards and within Palestine has received only partial attention. In studies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the focus is usually on large states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which have traditionally led the region.

The focus of this research is on the interplay of economic strength and geopolitical location, and how these influenced Qatar's foreign policy in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular. The research attempts to explain the objectives as well as the tools that Qatar has used to impact the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mainly through financial aid to the Palestinians, Al Jazeera coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and mediation between Fatah and Hamas.

Articulating the research problem, questions, and objectives

The argument of the thesis concerns the opportunities seized by Qatari leadership in the political vacuum that followed the Second Gulf War in 1991. Qatari leadership adopted a pragmatic foreign policy to overcome Qatar's constraints as a small state, aided by the country's enormous financial resources and the security umbrella provided by the United States. The resources generated by LNG production and export enabled Qatar to build economic relations with major international players such as the United States, the European Union (EU), Russia, and China. Qatar's wealth also enabled it to prosper in a dynamic geopolitical landscape and to develop the tools needed to become a key player in regional affairs, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The purpose of this research is to examine the objectives, tools, and features of Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013). It investigates why a small state like Qatar decided to intervene in the complicated Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than limit itself to protecting its own security and maintaining the welfare of its citizens.

Research questions

Two main research questions were developed for the study:

- What were the objectives, tools, and features of Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's rule (1995–2013)?
- Did the foreign policy adopted by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani have an impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Research objectives

The following objectives were formulated for the research:

- Explore the extent to which Qatar has overcome its constraints as a small state and become an influential player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Examine the objectives, tools, and features of Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad's rule (1995–2013).
- Analyze Qatar's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through Sheikh Hamad's speeches and Qatar's soft power tools.

Significance of the research

The importance of the current research stems from the importance of the Gulf region, which contains approximately 40% of the world's oil reserves and 23.6% of the world's gas reserves (Meltzer et al., 2014). This region is also important because of its

strategic location as a pathway between the East and the West through the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, Qatar—the small state has received increasing attention at the regional and global levels. Qatar’s economic strength, along with its visionary leadership and the security umbrella of the United States, has empowered the country to prosper, play a political role, and increase its influence in events after the Second Gulf War of 1991, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This role has prompted many researchers to study Qatar’s foreign policy. An interest in studying Qatar, without attaching it to the other GCC states or to the Arabian Peninsula, began to take shape after the country’s independence in 1971. However, Qatar’s foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has received only partial attention. Most studies on this topic have examined Qatar’s overall foreign policy and either briefly mentioned the conflict or highlighted it as an example of Qatar’s regional and international involvement. Available studies on Qatar and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are predominantly in Arabic and in limited circulation (e.g., theses). Some studies have focused on financial and humanitarian aid to Palestine (Abu Amer, 2011; Zureik, 2017), while others have centered on Qatar’s relations with Israel (Al-Tokhli, 2017; Rabi, 2009; Revell, 2011). Most studies only cover time periods related to specific events, such as the peace process (Al Thani, 2017) or the Arab Spring as it relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Rantissi, 2012).

Therefore, the present research focuses on Qatar and its relationship with the most important conflict in the region during a crucial period of Qatar’s contemporary history. This time period reflects the reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, which lasted for 18 years. There is a need for an in-depth study of Qatar’s stance

towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict throughout Sheikh Hamad's rule (1995–2013). Under Sheikh Hamad, Qatar transformed from an unknown entity into a bold and controversial regional player. It was during Sheikh Hamad's rule that Al Jazeera was launched, and an Israeli trade office was opened in Doha, both in 1996. Sheikh Hamad paid two visits to Palestine in 1999 and 2012, which was the first time that an Arab leader had done so since 1967. Moreover, Qatar's support to the Gaza government ruled by Hamas, which differed from the position of other GCC states towards Hamas, is worth studying. More importantly, the narrow focus on Qatar and Palestine enabled the collection and analysis of all of Sheikh Hamad's speeches about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To the researcher's knowledge, these speeches have not been analyzed in previous studies. Therefore, the present study fills a gap in the literature on Qatari foreign policy and contributes much-needed knowledge on the role of small, wealthy Gulf Arab states in regional and international relations. It also fills a knowledge gap with regard to Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the entirety of Sheikh Hamad's reign.

In the current research, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is used as a case study. The study covers the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where Qatar has been directly and intensively involved. The results of this research potentially advance the debate on the role of small countries in regional and international relations and creates a basis for further research on small, wealthy states in the Gulf region. This study is particularly useful for scholars and students of Middle Eastern studies, foreign policy analysis, and international relations. The research is also helpful for foreign policy decision-makers in the GCC region, mainly for small Gulf states such as Qatar and Bahrain. The focus on decision-making is important for understanding foreign policy actions, and

strategies of small states.

Dissertation roadmap

The research is divided into six main chapters. Chapter one includes the research problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the research, the research method and data collection as well as the literature review. Chapter two is the theoretical framework of the research which includes some definitions of foreign policy, explaining the concept of the small state, examining the soft power theory and finally linking all these factors together. In other words, investigating how the small state of Qatar has used its soft power tools to influence the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter three is a research context of the study which includes a brief overview of Qatar and its foreign policy, the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the foreign policy of the Gulf Cooperation Council towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as a quick examination of the Second Gulf War of 1991 which has been a turning point in the history of the Gulf region. Chapter four discusses Qatar's foreign policy objectives and features towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani's reign (1995-2013). The objectives include first, maintaining Qatar's national security since it is a small state located between two regional superpowers (Saudi Arabia & Iran) through following a hedging strategy. Second objective of Qatar's foreign policy towards Palestine is solidarity with Arab and Muslim just cause taking in consideration that Palestine is part of the Arab and Muslim world. The last objective of Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is playing a regional role through mediation. This role makes the superpowers in the world interested in Qatar's security and comes to rescue it if it falls in a crisis. Regarding the features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is also part of chapter four,

these include, support of Arabic and Islamic identity, support of peaceful resolutions and international law, visionary bold and initiative leadership, divergence from the GCC and pragmatism. Chapter five tackles the tools of Qatar's foreign policy towards Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in particular Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalif Al Thani's speeches and Qatar's soft powers tools which are financial aid to the Palestinians, Al Jazeera coverage of the conflict and mediation between the two main Palestinian factions; Fatah and Hamas. Chapter six is the conclusion and the recommendation of the research which summarizes the research's findings and recommends some relevant topics for future investigation by other researchers.

Research methodology

The topic of the research often dictates the appropriate research design. There are two main methods of scientific research: quantitative and qualitative. The current study primarily adopted a qualitative research approach. In their book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Merriam and Tisdell (2013) explain that qualitative research is founded on the belief that knowledge is built by people as they make sense of an action, experience, or phenomenon. For Merriam and Tisdell (2013), constructivism underlies a basic qualitative study, in which the researcher is concerned with understanding the meaning of a phenomenon, while meanings are constructed by people as they become involved in the world they are interpreting. There are six common approaches to conducting qualitative research: basic qualitative research, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, phenomenology, and qualitative case study.

The current research mainly uses the case study approach, as it enables a thorough understanding and interpretation of the subject and can provide answers to the research questions rather than simply describing the phenomenon. More specifically, the case study approach was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of a small state's foreign policy. In his book, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Creswell (2013) explains that the case study is a qualitative method in which the researcher investigates a case over time through comprehensive data collection from various sources of information, including observations, interviews, videos, documents, and reports. The case study approach was chosen, because it can enrich the theoretical understanding of state behavior in the Middle East and the Gulf region. In addition, researchers collect data by examining documents, conducting observations, and interviewing people. Therefore, this research combines document analysis and interviews with various people who are familiar with the case study.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was used as a case study in the current research in order to explain the objectives, tools, and features of Qatari foreign policy towards the conflict during Sheikh Hamad's rule (1995–2013) and to examine how Qatar overcame its constraints to become an influential player in the conflict. The reasons behind choosing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case study is that it is the central conflict in the Middle East region and one of the main reasons for its instability. It influences state and non-state actors in the region such as Hizbullah and Hamas. Because of this conflict, Israelis and Arabs had ten wars together from 1948-2021. Furthermore, this conflict has caused huge refugee problems inside and outside Palestine (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) that is unsolved until now. In addition, the underdevelopment of many Arab countries is partially blamed for this conflict. Some Arab countries deprived their

people of their legitimate rights making the excuse that focusing on the conflict is their priority. Moreover, because of this conflict, several regional and international organizations are established, such as the Arab league (1945), the Organization of Islamic Conference (1969), Hizbullah (1982) and (Hamas (1987) which all played a role not only in the conflict, but also in the foreign policy of many Arab countries. This conflict is also fundamental because it has been going on for over 7 decades without being resolved which put a huge pressure on the frontier states (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt) and all the other Arab countries who host Palestinians or they are part of the Arab league and other regional organizations (GCC, OIC).

Qatar as an Arab and Muslim state is directly and indirectly involved in the conflict. In fact, the PLO opened one of its first offices in Doha in the sixties of the last century. Moreover, many Palestinian educators and skilled workers came to Doha and help in building its education system and its infrastructure. In fact, one of Sheikh Hamad's schoolteachers in the elementary school was a Palestinian. In addition, Azmi Bishara, is a political philosopher, author and the General Director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies is one of the influential figures in Qatar. Furthermore, Article 6 of the Constitution of Qatar (2004) emphasizes the defense of Arab and Muslim identity, respect for international agreements, the preservation of peace and security, and the recognition of human rights. To this end, Qatari foreign policy, as outlined in Article 7 of the Constitution, aims to maintain peace and security, recognize other peoples' right to self-determination, observe the principle of noninterference in the affairs of other states, and cooperate with peace-seeking nations (Diwan.gov.qa, n.d). Qatar's involvement in regional and international organizations (Arab league, GCC, OIC, UN) prompted and facilitated its involvement in the conflict

for the above reasons and for achieving Qatar's political ambition by playing a regional role and branding the country.

Data collection

Appropriate data collection methods are determined by the researcher's theoretical orientation, the research problem and purpose of the study, and sample selection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013). The resources used in this research are divided into two categories: primary and secondary. There are four main primary resources: the speeches of Sheikh Hamad from his 18 years of rule (1995–2013), government institution and international organization websites, and interviews. Books, peer-reviewed journals, videos, websites, research center reports, and semi-official newspapers were used as secondary sources. The research relied on the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) to identify frequently cited articles and authors and journals that are important to the research topic. By using multiple resources, the current research analyzed Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict using various materials that cover a wide range of scholarly perspectives on the topic.

Primary resources

Sheikh Hamad's speeches

The researcher collected official speeches given by Sheikh Hamad from 1995 to 2013 from the Amiri Diwan Archivals. The Amiri Diwan is the seat of rule in Qatar. In total, 210 official speeches by Sheikh Hamad are publicly accessible at the Amiri Diwan on the official website of the State of Qatar (diwan.gov.qa, n.d). The speeches

are available as videos as well as Arabic and English texts. Overall, 73 out of 210 speeches relate to Palestine and Israel. The researcher relied on the speeches to understand Qatar's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A list of the 73 speeches is tabulated in appendix 1.

The Qatari government and GCC, Arab, and world agencies

For the study, the researcher accessed the websites of the Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mofa.gov.qa), Qatar's Government Communications Office (www.gco.gov.qa), Qatar's Planning and Statistics Authority (www.psa.gov.qa), Qatar's Amiri Diwan (www.diwan.gov.qa), and the UN Security Council (www.un.org/securitycouncil). These official state and international channels provide additional information regarding Qatar's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Interviews

In total, 27 Qatari, Palestinian, Gulf, and international political scientists, researchers, scholars, journalists, and experts, as well as a representative from Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participated in this research. They were chosen based on their deep knowledge of Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Regarding the interviews with Palestinian participants, the researcher ensured that the main Palestinian factions were represented, including Fatah, Hamas, and unaffiliated individuals. A complete list of the interviewees' names and positions is tabulated in the appendix 2.

UN resolutions

Qatar's voting in the UN regarding resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been used in this research to show Qatar's official stance towards the conflict. The focus is on Qatar's resolution from 1995-2013 which is the time period of the study.

Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the preparation and organization of data for examination, the categorization of data into themes through coding, and the presentation of data through tables, figures, or discussion (Creswell, 2007). In order to analyze the data and address the research questions, content analysis was adopted as a strategy. Content analysis is a research method designed for the analysis and interpretation of data (Schreier, 2012). Content analysis helps researchers to summarize the content of written material and describes the attitudes of the material's author (Crowley & Delfico, 1996).

Accordingly, documents and interviews were used to identify and analyze the role of Qatar as a small, wealthy state regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and subsequently assess Qatar's objectives and outcomes. Qatar's stance towards the conflict was assessed using Sheikh Hamad's speeches and its use of soft power tools (particularly Al Jazeera coverage of the conflict), financial aid to Palestinians, and its mediation efforts between Fatah and Hamas. In other words, the effectiveness, seriousness, and implementation of Qatar's policies and decisions and their outcomes

and impact were treated as indicators of Qatar's positions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Data analysis of Sheikh Hamad's speeches

The researcher used a content analysis approach to analyze Sheikh Hamad's speeches in order to outline Qatar's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sheikh Hamad's speeches were used, because Sheikh Hamad was the leader of Qatar, represented its official positions, and established key policies and directions for the country. Out of 210 official speeches during Sheikh Hamad's rule (1995–2013), 73 mentioned Palestine and Israel; this means that one third of Sheikh Hamad's speeches referred to the research topic. Two out of 73 speeches solely concerned Palestine: one made in Doha on February 26, 2012 at the International Conference on Jerusalem and one made during a visit to the Gaza Strip on October 23, 2012. As part of the research, 73 speeches were analyzed, and conclusions regarding Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were drawn.

Data analysis of interviews

Extended, semi-structured, and open-ended interviews with 27 Qatari, Palestinian, Gulf, and international scholars and experts were conducted. After preparing the interview questions and the consent form in accordance with Qatar University's policies, the researcher applied for approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). After a period of eight weeks, the approval was granted in December

2019, and the researcher began to contact interviewees in Qatar, the Gulf region, Palestine, and other parts of the world. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher could not travel to Palestine as planned and perform face-to-face interviews. Therefore, interviews were conducted through Zoom, WhatsApp, email, and phone calls between April 2020 and December 2020. Furthermore, because of the closure in Doha following the Covid-19, the disruption of daily affairs and the movement of education and work online, it was hard for many scholars and politicians to accept the researcher's invitation for interviews. Azmi Bishara is a main character that the researcher would have loved to interview, but it seems he was not accessible during the interview period.

Interviews helped the researcher to better understand the context of the researched topic and gain in-depth insight into issues related to the research topic, which profoundly contributed to the study.

Participants were selected through the researcher's connections with Qatar University professors, colleagues, family, and friends. Due to travel restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the researcher asked a family member to call some participants (particularly those in Palestine) to confirm the researcher's identity and offer to provide authentication documents from Qatar University. However, not everyone that the researcher contacted for an interview accepted; many either ignored the frequent requests or declined to participate.

The interviewees were selected based on their knowledge of and involvement in Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In total, there were 19 Palestinian interviewees. The main Palestinian factions were represented, including

Fatah, Hamas, and independent individuals. They included the head of a political party, a former minister, research center directors, university professors, journalists, a former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and researchers.

In addition, four Qatari participants were interviewed as part of the research: the Assistant Foreign Minister and Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lolwah Al Khater and three well-known professors and scholars from Qatar University. All of them are permeant guests on television channels and have written books on Qatar's foreign policy. In addition to being a professor, one participant hosts the political program *Al Haqeeqa* on Qatari television.

Other participants included four Kuwaitis: a former member of parliament, a journalist, an economics expert, and a university professor. There was also a renowned Omani scholar, an Iraqi political science professor, an American scholar and a British one. Finally, the research included a well-known Iranian scholar. The purpose of recruiting such a diverse group of participants was to provide a very well-rounded picture of Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

After contacting the participants, the researcher sent them the approved IRB consent form to sign and agreed with them on a date and a time to conduct the interview based on each person's preferences. In the consent form, the researcher introduced herself, the research, and the interview process and explained that all personal information would remain confidential and that data would be saved and securely stored on a Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drive. Moreover, the researcher provided participants with the option of reading their answers before inclusion in the dissertation.

Generally, the interviewees were asked similar questions to enable the researcher to compare answers and draw conclusions. The interview questions revolved around the interviewees' opinions on the factors that contributed to Qatar's rise, its objectives for becoming involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the effectiveness of the tools that Qatar employed in order to shape its role in the conflict, and whether Qatar had an impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews and summarized and interpreted key points in order to use them in the dissertation. The written answers, which were collected through email, were also read, analyzed, and interpreted. For interviews that took place in Arabic, the researcher translated them to English to the best of her ability.

Data analysis of UN resolutions

Since its independence from Britain in 1971, until December 1, 2019 Qatar has voted on 4994 resolution in the UN. 987 of these resolutions are related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. During the period of the study which is 1995-2013, there are 350 resolutions relating to the conflict. The researcher used this data to show Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the period of study.

Data analysis of secondary resources

Secondary resources such as books, peer-reviewed journals, websites, research center reports, and semi-official newspapers were intensively used in the research. These resources were produced by different authors and organizations. The Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) was used to identify frequently cited articles, authors and journals that are important for the research topic. The purpose of gathering diverse materials was to examine the topic in depth and to represent a comprehensive number of perspectives. This was done to ensure that the research is not biased.

Research ethics

The researcher has followed ethical procedures during the study. The Arabic sources has been translated into English with adherence to the original meaning. The researcher has not deliberately hidden any sources that are contrary to her views. While acknowledging the challenges of positionality (namely that the researcher is personally connected to the case study), the researcher has done her best to avoid subjectivity and bias. In an effort to be unbiased, the research has relied on the Social Science Citation Index to identify related materials to the topic that reflect a wide variety of different opinions. In addition, the collected data from the interviews has been kept in a secured place to avoid loss or misuse. Interviews has been conducted according to appropriate procedures outlined by Qatar University in conducting dissertation research.

Literature review

The current section provides an overview of available studies on Qatar and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Notably, the names “Palestine” and “Israel” are used interchangeably in the literature, depending on the author’s attitude towards and perspective of the conflict. There have been numerous studies related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its duration of over 70 years. There is also a growing number of scholarly works on Qatar due to increased attention to the country’s gas reserves and its influential role in regional politics. However, Qatar’s foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has received limited attention. It is important to note that virtually any book or article about Qatar’s modern history, particularly its foreign policy, includes a section on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is because Palestine is primarily an Arab country, and its occupation is a major factor in instability in the Middle East. The current literature review tracks relevant studies in chronological order, as more recent studies usually build on or benefit from older ones.

Since 1948, the Arab countries that neighbor Israel have been directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the Qatari context is different, and the relationship between Qatar and Palestine has followed a different path. Although Qatar and Palestine do not share any physical borders, they share the same religion, language, and ethnicity. Moreover, Qatar is intensively involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, primarily during the reign of Sheikh Hamad and his son Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, as a result of Sheikh Hamad’s vision for Qatar to become a regional player and his branding of the country. This section of the literature review discusses studies that are directly related to Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Qatar.

Rabi (2009) explains that Qatar's independent foreign policy is designed to promote its regional position and upgrade its international profile. Thus, Qatar's relationship with Israel should be viewed as part of its complex foreign policy. Qatar does not maintain relations with Israel in order to cultivate relations with the United States nor to sell its natural gas to Israel, as other scholars have claimed. According to Rabi (2009), it is to promote its regional and international status. An example of Sheikh Hamad's autonomy policy was to host the fourth annual Middle East and North African Economic Summit in Doha in November 1997, which included the participation of the Israeli trade minister. However, Sami Revell—the first Head of Mission of the Trade Representation Office of Israel in Doha from 1996 to 1999—disagrees with Rabi. In his book, *Qatar and Israel File Secret Relations* (2011), Revell explains that Qatar's relations with and export of gas to Israel was aimed at the global promotion of the North Field in Qatar. The latter is the largest natural gas field in the world, with an estimated volume of more than 25 trillion cubic meters. Revell believed that Egypt attempted to hinder this relationship out of fear for its regional status and that Qatar rather than Egypt would export gas to Israel. In the context of the present study, Rabi and Revell's research was very useful for understanding the gradual development of Israeli-Qatari relations and how Qatar leveraged this controversial relationship to deviate from GCC countries' policies and to raise its international profile. However, neither of their studies provided a comprehensive overview of Qatar's stance towards Palestine, as their focus was on Qatar and Israel. Thus, the current research addresses Qatar's position on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during an important period of Qatar's contemporary history, namely 1995 to 2013.

Abu Amer (2011) uses a descriptive analytical approach to examine Qatar and

Turkey's financial aid to Gaza. He argues that the financial support provided by Qatar and Turkey to the Gaza Strip occupied a large share of total global aid, which helped reduce the effects of the Israeli blockade on Gaza and enabled Qatar and Turkey to be regional players in the conflict. However, Amer calls for serious research on ways to reduce aid, especially if it is conditional. In his opinion, Palestinian decision-makers in the Gaza Strip should create conditions for the return of migrant capital, which is estimated at \$60 billion, and encourage national investments. For the purposes of this study, Amer's research provided an understanding of the financial aid granted to Palestine, how it was employed, and what its impact has been. However, Amer's study only focused on Qatar's financial aid to Gaza and did not discuss other aspects of Qatar's involvement in Gaza nor the West Bank, such as mediation and media coverage of the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

Qandil (2011) focuses on the nature, determinants, and constraints of Qatari foreign policy through the lens of role theory. His research focuses on determining the direction of Qatar's foreign policy, particularly after the start of the peace process in the region. According to Qandil, this knowledge is important and presents opportunities for decision-makers in the area of Qatari foreign policy. Specifically, Qandil's research centered on the impact of Arab regional powers on Qatari foreign policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, Qandil's study differs from the present study in terms of the theory that was applied and the examined time period. He employed role theory from international relations, while this research relies on the soft power theory. Moreover, Qandil's study examined the period from 1996 to 2010, which ended prior to the beginning of the Arab Spring, while this study covers the period from 1995 to 2013.

Hansen (2013) explains that Qatar's involvement in Palestine has been the main feature of Qatari foreign policy. He indicates that, although Qatar has maintained a close relationship with the United States, this has been challenged by its relationship with Hamas. Thus, Qatar was seen as biased towards the latter, but this did not hamper its mediation role between Fatah and Hamas. Qatar believed that Hamas could be influenced into a more peaceful relationship with Israel through engagement rather than isolation. Qatar's involvement in Palestine has largely taken place through humanitarian aid and coverage from Al Jazeera. This involvement became more evident after Sheikh Hamad became the Amir in 1995. Hansen emphasized that Qatar's engagement in Palestine was subjective; Al Jazeera was perceived as being pro-Hamas and anti-Fatah. For example, its staff wore black when Ahmad Yasin, the founder of Hamas, was assassinated in 2004. Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became more obvious after 2006, when Hamas won the second legislative election and ruled Gaza. Hansen concluded that Qatari involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was partially due to Egypt's failure to handle the division between Hamas and Fatah. Hamas viewed the Egyptians as being pro-Fatah and eager to weaken Hamas due to the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's distress over the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt⁹. In the context of the current research, Hansen's paper shed light on the nature of the hidden conflict between Qatar and Egypt, which resulted from the countries' support for different Palestinian factions and Egypt's alarm at Qatar's growing role in the region. However, this study is more comprehensive than Hansen's study, as it details the objectives, tools, and features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-

⁹ Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamic political group founded by Hassan Al -Bana in Egypt in 1928 and viewed by Egyptian governments as opposition.

Palestinian conflict and explains how small states use soft power to survive and exercise their influence.

Hassinah (2013) reviews the GCC and Qatar's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the establishment of the former in 1981. His study focuses on Qatar's stance before and after Hamas rule of the Gaza Strip, the division between Fatah and Hamas, and the efforts to reconcile the two groups. Hassinah argues that, before 2006, Qatar advocated for Palestinians' rights and supported the UN resolutions regarding Palestine; after the 2006 election, Qatar encouraged the division of Palestine by funding Hamas and abstaining from coordination with the PNA. Hassinah's study differs from the current one in its methodology and focus. The current research excludes large Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and examines Qatar to show how a small state can influence an issue as complex and as expansive as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Choucair (2014) discusses Qatar and Turkey's positions with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before and after the Palestinian legislative election in 2006. He argues that both Qatar and Turkey were supportive of the Palestinians. However, these stances could not be directly employed for the political goal that Hamas wished to obtain, which was the liberation of all Palestinian land and the obtention of weapons. However, their stances provided security networks that enabled the Palestinian resistance to counter Israeli attacks. Their stances could also back up the establishment of a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders and to protect the political and human rights of Palestinians according to international legal instruments. According to Choucair, these rights have recently been ignored by many Arab and Muslim states. Abu Amer (2011) and Choucair's studies (2014) drew attention to two new players in the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict: Qatar and Turkey. These non-traditional players did not have real opportunity to get involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when Saudi Arabia and Egypt were at the forefront of handling the conflict and leading the region. It is possible that Qatar and Turkey's ideological rapprochement with the Muslim Brotherhood explained their involvement in the Gaza Strip after Hamas gained control in 2007.

Rantissi (2012) uses a descriptive analytical approach and content analysis in his research. He posits that there is a connection between the Arab Spring and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as Palestinians and Arab nations alike have revolted against oppressors. Moreover, Rantissi argues that Qatari foreign policy aims to achieve Qatar's aspirations among Arab countries and at the regional levels, particularly after the retreat and absence of large regional players such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Rantissi believes that Qatar has succeeded in seizing the opportunities presented by the Arab Spring in order to maximize its political and economic position in the region. In addition, he claims that Qatar has leveraged the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to engage with other regional issues. Rantissi's book differs from the current research in terms of methodology, time period, and focus. His research centered on the Arab Spring countries (mainly Tunisia and Egypt), and the last part of the book concerned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whereas Rantissi adopted a descriptive analytical approach, this study relied on soft power theory. Lastly, the time period under study in Rantissi's book spans two years (2011–2013), while the present research focuses on the period between 1995 and 2013.

Zureik (2017) documents Qatar's financial assistance to Palestine. According to

Zureik, Qatar is an example of a small state that depends on its capital and soft power to maintain its interests in the Middle East. He analyzed newspapers and other documents to evaluate Qatar's financial assistance from 2010 to 2016. He emphasized that Qatar's aid is coordinated with Israel which is in control of Palestine. In conclusion, Zureik recommended embracing the political economy perception in dealing with charitable aid. Zureik's study was useful for understanding how Qatar uses its wealth as a soft power tool to simultaneously provide help to Palestine and grow its influence in the region. Zureik's study resembled that of Abu Amer (2011) in terms of its focus on the financial aspects of Qatar's engagement with Palestine and its exclusion of other factors, such as mediation between Fatah and Hamas or Al Jazeera's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Al-Thani (2017) argues that Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflects Qatar's desire to establish itself as a significant mediator on the regional and international stages. In general, the foreign policies of GCC countries have linked the progress of the peace process with the normalization of economic and diplomatic relations with Israel. However, Qatar has independently worked to normalize its relations with Israel, irrespective of the progress made in the peace process. Al Thani employed the democratic peace theory and examined the period from 1991 to 2005.

Toukhli's (2017) examines the nature and determinants of Israeli-Qatari relations and the impact of Israeli-Qatari relations on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Toukhli relied on a historical, analytical, descriptive method and the theory of decision-making to conduct his research. He argues that Qatar established relations with Israel

in order to attract the attention of the United States and bolster Qatar's bid to become a regional player. In his opinion, Qatar's foreign policy is contradictory. On the one hand, Qatar hosts the United States Central Command and develops relations with Israel; on the other hand, it builds alliances with Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Qatari grants to the Gaza Strip are politically unconditional and are aimed at alleviating the suffering of Palestinians who live there. Toukhli's study aligns with those of Rabi (2009) and Al-Thani (2017) in that it argues that Qatar's relationship with Israel is calculated to raise Qatar's international profile and brand Qatar as a friendly and flexible mediator that engages with all sides. Kamrava (2017) and other researchers have referred to Qatar's engagement with many differing parties as hedging strategy.

Ciorciari and Haacke (2019) argue that hedging is a security or alignment strategy, assumed by a state toward another, including cooperative and confrontational factors. It arose in the post-Cold War era. They explain that security threats particularly from great powers is the reasons why states hedge. States also adopt hedging to optimize between protection and economic opportunity. Hedging also may assist to protect domestic government or the legitimacy of a regime.

Finally, Michael and Guzansky (2018) posit that Israel and Qatar have a shared interest in transferring humanitarian aid to Gaza. For Israel, providing aid can postpone the next round of hostilities with Hamas. The researchers quote the Qatari envoy to Gaza, Mohammad Al-Emadi, to explain the benefits of providing aid for Qatar; El-Emadi stated that sending aid to the Gaza Strip would not be possible without Israel and that Qatar did so to prevent the next war in the area. Michael and Guzansky (2018) added that providing aid promotes Qatar's status and brings the United States closer to

Doha, a relationship that Qatar hopes to benefit from with regard to the blockade imposed on it by some other Gulf states. Michael and Guzansky (2018) shared similarities with Rabi (2009), Revell (2011), and Toukhli's (2017) studies due to its focus on Israeli-Qatari relations rather than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the purposes of the current research, it was useful in clarifying the political dimension of financial aid, which is not only used to help Palestinians but also to prevent more wars in the Gaza Strip.

Conclusion

In summary, the current research differs from previous works with regard to methodology, focus, and the time period under examination. Many studies were quantitative in nature, focusing on financial aid to Palestine (e.g., Abu Amer, 2011; Zureik, 2017)), the nature of Israeli-Qatari relations (e.g., Michael & Guzansky, 2018, Revell, 2011) or Qatar's overall foreign policy; only part of the literature centered on Palestine (e.g., Rantissi, 2012). Several studies were Arabic-language master's theses (e.g., Hassinah, 2013; Qandil, 2011; Toukhli, 2017) with limited circulation and accessible only to Arabic speakers. The present research focuses on Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during a pivotal period of Qatari history (Sheikh Hamad's reign). More importantly, none of the abovementioned works tackled the entirety of Sheikh Hamad's reign, which spanned 18 years. Moreover, this research excludes other GCC and Arab countries to cover the small, Middle Eastern states of Qatar and Palestine in greater depth. In addition, Qatar—a relatively new and independent state—has not received as much attention as larger states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, over the seven-decade history of the

Israeli-Palestine conflict. Finally, the focus on Qatar enabled the researcher to collect and analyze all speeches by Sheikh Hamad that mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which enriched the study results. Therefore, this dissertation fills a research gap with regard to modern Qatari history and contributes much-needed knowledge on the role of small Gulf states in regional and international relations.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of four topics that are crucial for understanding the context of the current research: the history of Qatar, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the GCC's foreign policy, and the Second Gulf War of 1991.

In fact, the foreign policy of modern Qatar is an extension of its history and the gradual evolution of its political system. This was a slow, informal process due to the tribal nature of Qatari society, Qatar's low population, and the prevailing illiteracy in the Gulf Arab region few decades ago. Qatar's modern history starts with Al Thani's family. The history of Al Thani, a brief history of Qatar, its rulers, its state building process, and its governance system are presented below.

The Al Thani family

At the beginning of the 18th century, many tribes migrated from Najd (central Saudi Arabia) to Qatar's seaports (prosperous trade hubs) due to economic and social conditions. Ancestors of the Al Thani family migrated from Najd and settled in Qatar. In the mid-19th century, their social and financial status grew due to the accumulation of wealth from the pearl trade, which enabled them to unite the tribes and lead the country amid tempestuous conditions caused by the rivalry between the British and the Ottomans. Sheikh Mohammed bin Thani was the first ruler of Qatar from 1850 to 1878 and united the Qatari tribes. He was followed by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani, the founder of Qatar (1878–1913). Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani was the third ruler of Qatar (1913–1949). During his tenure, the first oil well was drilled in the country. He was succeeded by Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Al Thani, who oversaw the

export of Qatar's first oil shipment, thereby opening the door to social and economic development. Under the rule of Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani (1960–1972), the fifth ruler of Qatar and the first to be named Amir, the Shura (advisory) Council was formed. Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972–1995) was the sixth ruler of Qatar. During his reign, the First Interim Basic Law was amended, and Qatar signed several agreements to extract and market oil. Schools and colleges were established, as was Qatar University. The current case study focuses on the seventh ruler of Qatar: Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013), also known as the “Father Amir.” His reign signaled Qatar's transformation from an unknown entity to a bold and active regional player. He was born on January 1, 1952 in Qatar and finished his high school education there. He then attended the British Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, Britain. On May 31, 1977, he was appointed the heir apparent and Minister of Defense. He became the Amir of Qatar on June 27, 1995. On June 25, 2013, Sheikh Hamad transferred power to the heir apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad (History of the Ruling Family, 2020).

Sheikh Hamad was chosen as the focus for this study mainly because of his effective involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was marked by steadfast diplomatic, political, and financial support to the Palestinians, but also because of his internal policies, which enabled Qatar to achieve rapid economic, social, and cultural development. For instance, GDP increased 24-fold and per capita GDP increased six-fold, while gross value added in the hydrocarbon sector rose from \$3,021,148,020 to \$110,683,877,460 during his reign (Diwan.gov.qa, n.d). Furthermore, the fact that he is no longer in power increases the objectivity of this study and the accuracy of the analysis. Focusing the study on Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's era also limits the

changing developments in Qatari politics.

State building in Qatar

Qatar's modern history began around the sixties of 19th century, when all tribes were united under the reign of the Al Thani family. During the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the local ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Thani (1850–1878), signed an agreement in 1868 with Colonel Lewis Pelly, a British resident of the Gulf, in which Britain promised to protect Qatar from external hostilities. Sheikh Mohammed was succeeded by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani (1878–1913). After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was defeated. In 1916, Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani (1913–1949) signed a treaty in which Britain pledged to protect Qatar from maritime aggressions and from foreign interference in its internal affairs. Sheikh Abdullah renewed this treaty in 1935, and the first oil concession agreement to explore oil in Qatar was signed with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The first oil strike occurred at the end of 1939, but oil exploration stopped during World War II. In the early 1950s, living conditions began to improve in Qatar due to the impact of oil exportation. In January 1968, Britain withdrew its troops from East of Suez, ending the protectorate period with Arabian Gulf States rulers. On September 3, 1971, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972–1995), then the heir apparent and prime minister, announced the dissolution of the 1916 treaty and declared Qatar an independent state during the reign of Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani (1960–1972) (*Founding of the State*, n.d).

Qatar's governance system

In Qatar, the ruler is called the Amir and is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The system of government is based on the separation of powers and partnership, whereby the Amir assumes the executive power, supported by the Council of Ministers. The executive power encompasses the Council of Ministers, ministries, government authorities, institutions, and other government structures.

The Shura Council is the country's legislative authority. Judicial authority is vested in courts of law in compliance with the Constitution of Qatar. The prime minister leads sessions of the Council of Ministers and oversees work among various ministries. The ministries are established by an Amiri order based on the prime minister's suggestion. The powers of ministries and other government institutions are spelled out by law. The Council of Ministers is responsible for the management of internal and external affairs, while ministries, institutions, and other government structures are responsible for discharging public programs and policies (System of Government, 2020).

The Amiri Diwan is the administrative office of the Amir. It links the Amir with governmental and nongovernmental units. It keeps the Amir informed of the most important developments at home and abroad, submits draft laws and other legislative instruments to him for examination and approval, and delivers his directions to the concerned authorities. In addition to the office of the Amir, the Amiri Diwan includes the offices of the deputy Amir and of the prime minister (*About Amiri Diwan*, n.d).

Qatar's constitution and the Shura

The First Interim Basic Law was promulgated in Qatar in 1970 and amended on April 19, 1972. From 1995 to 1996, some sections in the First Interim Basic Law concerning the succession of rule, the Council of Ministers, the Shura Council, and the judiciary were amended. On July 13, 1999, Sheikh Hamad issued Amiri Decision No. 1 on the drafting of a permanent constitution. On April 29, 2003, a referendum was held on the Draft Permanent Constitution was set on April 29, 2003, and 96.6% of Qatari people voted to adopt the constitution. On June 8, 2004, the Permanent Constitution of Qatar was established (The Constitution, 2020).

The Shura Council was established on April 19, 1972 to organize the powers of the modern Qatari state. *Shura* is an Arabic word that means “consultation” and is a main principle of Islamic Sharia (i.e., law). The Shura Council is one of two main bodies of Qatar's legislative branch. Proposed laws are presented to the Shura Council for consideration. The other legislative body is the Cabinet, which proposes bills and prepares draft laws to submit to the Council for recommendations. The Shura Council exercises its power by approving, accepting, or rejecting draft bills and other matters presented to it. In addition, the Shura Council may propose and consider issues that are of public concern, including inviting ministers and government officials to discuss them (The Shura Council, 2018).

Central Municipal Council

On March 8, 1999, elections were held to select members of the Central Municipal Council (CMC). The CMC includes 29 members who represent 29 constituencies and more than 242 districts in Qatar. CMC elections are held every four years, and CMC meetings are publicly held every two weeks in Doha with at least two thirds of members. According to Article 8 of Law No. 12 (1998) concerning the regulation of the CMC, the CMC is responsible for monitoring the implementation of laws, decrees, and regulations related to urban and industrial planning, infrastructure, and other public systems and overseeing the economic, financial, and administrative management of municipal affairs and agriculture (Central Municipal Council, 2020).

People's session

Jalset Al Shaab (or "People's Session") consists of face-to-face meetings between the Amir and communities. It is tradition in Qatar to listen to the people and enable them to discuss important issues with the Amir. This convention has been followed by all of Qatar's rulers in order to foster strong relationships with the public (People's Session, 2020).

According to Katzman (2020), Qatari governance resembles that of other GCC states. Qatar is led by a hereditary Amir, who rules through a prime minister and a cabinet. Qatar benefits from internal stability; there have been no significant protests

by Qataris, although political parties are banned. In Katzman's opinion, political disagreements in Qatar are expressed in private as part of a consensus building process in which the leadership tries to balance the interests of the country. Furthermore, Khatib (2013) indicated that decisions in Qatar are highly centralized. Limiting decision making to a small circle of elites means that domestic and foreign policy decisions can be made quickly, allowing Qatar to react to conflicts with offers of mediation in a timely manner. Article 6 of the Constitution of Qatar (2004) emphasizes a commitment to the preservation of the state's independence, the defense of Arab and Muslim identity, respect for international agreements, the preservation of peace and security, and the recognition of human rights. To this end, Qatari foreign policy, as outlined in Article 7 of the Constitution, aims to maintain peace and security, recognize other peoples' right to self-determination, observe the principle of noninterference in the affairs of other states, and cooperate with peace-seeking nations (Diwan.gov.qa, n.d).

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The current sub-section provides a brief overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the focus of this research. The aim is to provide context to the research. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began at the end of the 19th century, when Jews started to immigrate to Palestine with support from Europe. At the time, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. It covers an area of approximately 27,000 km² (gopalestine.org). Jewish immigration to Palestine was a response to a call in 1897 by Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism to establish a Jewish state. After the end of World War I, the British took over Palestine following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement made between Britain and

France in 1916. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 established a homeland for the Jews in Palestine, which accelerated Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine.

The British government announced its intention to terminate its mandate on Palestine and refer the matter of Palestine to the UN. After the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 to partition Palestine between the Palestinians and the Israelis on November 29, 1947, Britain announced the termination of its mandate in Palestine, which became effective on May 15, 1948. At midnight on May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence. Arab states militarily confronted Israel, with logistical help from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Arab countries. The first Arab-Israeli War in 1948 was known as the Nakba (“catastrophe”) among Arabs, while the Israelis viewed it as their war of independence. The war left the Israelis with 78% of Palestinian territory. More than 350 Arab villages were destroyed, and the center of Palestinian life shifted to the Arab towns of the eastern region (later named the West Bank), which resulted in a massive number of displaced Palestinians. The number of Palestinians within the newly created state of Israel decreased from around 700,000 to 165,000 in 1949. More than 20% of Palestinians were forced to migrate and resettle in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, starting the Palestinian refugee crisis. Western countries supported and recognized the creation of Israel, whereas Arab states rejected it; several movements and organizations were formed to resist Israeli occupation. However, Israel received unlimited political, economic, and military support from the United States and Europe and managed to build a strong army (The Arab-Israeli wars: Five major wars define the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, 2003).

On March 22, 1945, the Arab League—a regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East and parts of Africa—was formed in response to concerns about

postwar colonial divisions of territory and strong opposition to the emergence of a Jewish state on Palestinian territory (Masters & Sergie, 2020). The Arab League made the decision to boycott Israel, signed the Arab Joint Defense Treaty on April 13, 1950, and initiated economic cooperation among member countries. In January 1964, the Arab League Summit was held in Cairo, Egypt to discuss the issue of the Jordan River, whose path Israel had altered to secure the majority of its water. In response, the league decided to establish a unified Arab leadership to confront threats from Israel and stressed the need to involve Palestinians in the liberation of their homeland. Accordingly, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established. It was widely accepted and recognized as the main representative of the Palestinian people in Palestine and across the diaspora (Al-Rashidi, 2004).

The second Arab-Israeli War began on October 29, 1956 when Israel, Britain, and France attacked Egypt to overthrow President Gamal Abdel Nasser. This war signaled the decline of Britain's colonial power in the Middle East. The incident that precipitated the conflict was the establishment of an arms deal between Gamal Abdel Nasser and Czechoslovakia, a move that Britain and the United States viewed as a shift towards closer ties with the Soviet Union. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower sponsored a UN resolution to denounce the 1956 attack on November 6, 1956. On the same day, a ceasefire went into effect, and UN emergency forces were stationed in Egypt. In addition, control of the Suez Canal was returned to Egypt.

On June 5, 1967, Israel took advantage of weakened Arab states to occupy the rest of Palestine and parts of Syria (Golan Heights), Lebanon (Shebaa Farms), and Egypt (the Sinai Desert). This was variously known as the June War, the Six-Day War,

or Nakash. This war increased anti-Western and anti-American sentiment among Arab nations, since they viewed the West and the United States as being supportive of Israel. More Palestinians became refugees in the occupied territories and neighboring Arab countries, worsening the unresolved Palestinian refugee crisis. In 1968, Israel invaded East Jordan and attacked Palestinian refugee camps; however, the Jordanian army and PLO fighters achieved victory in what was known as the Al-Karamah Battle, which boosted morale among Arabs after their defeat in 1967. On August 21, 1969, an Australian started a fire at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which destroyed the 800-year-old Saladin Podium before it was extinguished. This terrorist attack resulted in the formation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Morocco on September 25, 1969. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the second largest multilateral organization after the UN, with a membership of 57 states that espouse pan-Islamic sentiment and unity (Watson & Correy, 2019).

To reclaim the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, the Egyptian and Syrian governments retaliated on October 6, 1973 by attacking Israel. Egypt and Israel signed a ceasefire agreement in November 1973. However, fighting continued on the Syrian front until a ceasefire was reached in 1974. After the war, Egypt and Syria resumed diplomatic relations with the United States, which had been broken since the 1967 war. The latter had also marked the beginning of Arab solidarity, as evidenced by the Arab oil embargo. Arab countries of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed a boycott against the United States as a response to the U.S. decision to re-supply the Israeli army and to gain influence in the post-war peace negotiations. The 1973–1974 war resulted in a major power shift in the Middle East and led to the signing of the Camp David Accords between Egyptian President Anwar Al- Sadat and

Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on September 17, 1978 at Camp David in Maryland. Israel returned the Sinai Desert to Egypt, which had been seized during the 1967 war, and Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize Israel. Subsequently, it was expelled from the Arab League until 1989 (*The Arab-Israeli Wars*, 2003). The Camp David agreement signaled the retreat of Egypt's role in the region.

Palestinian guerrillas and their leaders, including Yasser Arafat, were dismissed from Jordan in 1970 and moved to Lebanon in the 1970s. On June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon to repeal PLO guerrillas from its northern borders. Israeli forces besieged Beirut, and Ariel Sharon authorized Lebanese militias allies to enter the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps to engage with PLO fighters on Israel's behalf. They carried out a massacre of Palestinian civilians that culminated in the slaughter of at least 800 people. The Israelis withdrew from Beirut under fire from the Lebanese nationalist resistance and Hezbollah, a newly emerged Islamic Shiite movement that would later prove to be a formidable opponent to Israel. In January 1985, Israeli forces withdrew to a narrow security area that they occupied as a buffer zone. The final Israeli withdrawal took place on May 25, 2000 due to the resistance and Hezbollah's fight against the occupiers (*The Arab-Israeli wars: Five major wars define the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict*, 2003).

On December 8, 1987, the Palestinians witnessed a new form of resistance fueled by Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It was called the "Stone Intifada," as Palestinians used stones as weapons. The intifada erupted after an Israeli rammed his vehicle into Palestinian workers in Gaza, killing four of them. Protests and clashes broke out, spreading rapidly across the West Bank and East

Jerusalem (Remembering the First Palestinian Intifada, 2019). This intifada led to the establishment of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), which is now considered a main faction in the Palestinian landscape and a rival to Fatah.

A few years after the intifada, the Arabs accepted an invitation to attend the Madrid Peace Conference on October 30, 1991. The conference was sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union. Its purpose was to establish peace between the Arab countries and Israel. It marked the first time that the Palestinians and the Israelis met face to face. The conference took place at the initiative of U.S. President George H.W. Bush in the aftermath of the Second Gulf War of 1991 and was based on the principles of land for peace¹⁰ and UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Delegations from Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon participated in the Madrid conference, while Jordan and the Palestinians formed a joint delegation. It led to the start of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries. At the beginning of 1993, secret talks began between delegations from the PLO and Israel in Oslo, which led to the signing of the Oslo Accord between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in Washington, D.C. The most prominent clauses of the agreement concerned mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel, gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the formation of an elected Palestinian National Authority with limited powers.

In accordance with the agreement, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, while Arafat and PLO officials returned to Palestine from Tunisia and established the PNA in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The first Oslo Accord was

¹⁰ Land for Peace is an interpretation of UN resolution 242 meaning if Israel withdraws from the occupied Arab territories, including the Palestinian land that it occupied in 1967, the Arabs will make peace with Israel.

followed by the signing of the Oslo II Accord in September 1995 in Taba, Egypt. However, this accord faced strong resistance from Hamas and some PLO factions. On October 26, 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel known as Wadi Araba. Israel restored approximately 380 km² of occupied land to Jordan, and a considerable share of water from the Yarmouk River and the Jordan River in return for peace and the recognition of Israel.

However, despite decades of diplomatic efforts and the signing of three peace agreements with Israel, all of them failed to bring peace to the region (The Arab-Israeli wars: Five major wars define the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, 2003). The Oslo Accords collapsed after the Second Intifada erupted after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000. As a result, in 2002, Israel resumed occupation of Palestinian cities in the West Bank (which had been under the control of the PNA after the Oslo II Accord came into effect in 1995); the most prominent one was Ramallah, the base of the PNA and Arafat, who was under siege in his headquarters until his death in November 2004. Israel built a separation wall in 2002 that destroyed many agricultural Palestinian lands and placed barricades throughout the occupied lands (Remembering the First Palestinian Intifada, 2019).

During the intifada in 2002, Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz (then the crown prince of Saudi Arabia) introduced a peace initiative to achieve peace in the Middle East. The initiative was adopted on March 27, 2002 at the Arab Summit in Beirut and included an Arab peace offer in exchange for Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 borders of the occupied Arab territories and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. These resolutions were reinforced by the Madrid Conference

of 1991 and the principle of land for peace. A few months later, on December 21, 2002, Doha hosted the 23rd summit of the GCC. At the summit, it was stressed that the establishment of a Palestinian state on lands occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, was the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East; this was in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative (Farouq, 2004). Although Israel ignored the latter, Qatar and other Arab countries believed that it was the most appropriate solution to the ongoing conflict. They persisted until 2020, when the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco violated the consensus by signing peace treaties with Israel. On January 9, 2005, Mahmood Abbas was elected president for Palestine. On September 22, 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip to 1967 borders under pressure from Hamas and other resistance factions. In 2006, Hamas won the second legislative election, but it was not accepted by the PNA; this led to a split between the West Bank and Gaza. In 2007, Israel imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on the Gaza Strip that remains in place. Many politicians and human rights activists have described the Gaza Strip as the largest prison on earth due to the elevated number of people locked into a small piece of land. At approximately 360 km², the Gaza Strip accounts for approximately 1.3% of the area of historic Palestine (Gopalestine.org, 2020). The West Bank measures approximately 6,220 km² and comprises around 21% of the area of historic Palestine. The combined population the West Bank and Gaza is approximately 5,083,752 as of 2020 (Worldometers.info, 2020), of which around 2 million live in the Gaza Strip.

The strict blockade on the Gaza Strip has left many people exhausted. Hostilities between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian factions have resumed. Israel launched three wars on the Gaza Strip in December 2008, November 2012, and July 2014. From Israel's perspective, these wars were retaliation for rocket attacks made by Hamas on

Israel from the Gaza Strip. Many political analysts have highlighted other reasons for these wars, such as the desire to destroy Hamas, enact collective punishment, discourage Palestinians from seeking state status with the UN after the 2012 war, and disrupt the unity government agreed upon by Hamas and Fatah after the 2014 war. However, Palestinians view the rocket attacks by Hamas as a response to Israel's blockade on Gaza, the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and ceasefire violations (justvision.org, 2019).

From the above review of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is apparent that it has affected many Arab and Muslim countries, regardless of whether they are neighboring states (such as Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria) or states that do not share any borders with Israel (such as the Gulf states). Since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 1948, many organizations have been formed, including the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference. Furthermore, several resistance movements have emerged, such as the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah, which have since played key roles in the Middle East. In addition, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict saw the retreat of the British and French colonialism and the emergence of American hegemony in the region. It is also important to note that, due to this conflict, the Palestinian refugee crisis remains unresolved. Finally, approaches as divergent as boycotting Israel on the one hand and signing peace treaties with it on the other have shaped Arab and Muslim relations over the past 70 years.

The Gulf Cooperation Council's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

This section provides a brief overview of the GCC's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the period under study (1995–2013). The aim is to provide a better understanding of how Gulf states have dealt with the conflict. In her book, *Palestine and the Gulf States: The Presence at the Table*, Rosemarie Said Zahlan (2016) states that the first link between Palestine and the Gulf was established in 1948 with the arrival of Palestinians to the Gulf Arab states who sought jobs at states institutions that had been created in the late 1940s thanks to the economic progress that followed the discovery of oil. Other waves of Palestinians arrived in the Gulf due to the crises of 1948, 1967, 1970, 1973, and 1976. The second link between Palestine and the Gulf was established through the massive financial aid provided to Palestinians, which began in the 1930s when the Gulf countries were still poor and increased as they become more prosperous. This aid constitutes the main source of support for Palestinians at home and in the diaspora (Zahlan, 2016).

Nearly 10 years after the Gulf states gained independence from Britain, they formed the GCC in 1981 in response to the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) in order to protect their sovereignty. This council was vital for ensuring the security of Arab Gulf states, since Gulf states lost their main protector when Britain withdrew from the region (Wright, 2011). The GCC, which includes Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, promotes economic, security, cultural, and social cooperation between member states and organizes an annual summit to discuss regional affairs (What is the GCC?, 2017)

A central regional issue for the GCC is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The

foreign policies of GCC states have converged in their support for Palestinian rights. In fact, GCC states have supported all regional and international initiatives, decisions, and conferences that aim to identify a fair and comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Abu Amsheh, 2016; Al Thani, 2017). Regarding the peace process, Al Thani (2017) has argued that the foreign policies of GCC states reflected agreement with the idea of holding an international peace conference. GCC states believe that peace is a tactical and crucial alternative to the ongoing conflict and that wars give rise to more wars and crises. Furthermore, they believe that all inhabitants of the Gulf region have the right to live in peace and that Israel's security could never be achieved through violence or illegal settlements. The view of the GCC is that Palestinians have absolute rights and that peace cannot be achieved, except through Israel's withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Al Thani's study found that the GCC have supported all U.S. initiatives to achieve peace in the Middle East while protesting the United States' unlimited support of Israel. Moreover, they believe that this support encourages Israel's stubbornness and ultimately hinders peace for all parties to the conflict. The GCC has consistently called on the United States to adopt a more neutral attitude towards the conflict. The GCC also supported the Arab Peace Initiative in Beirut (2002), which required Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 in exchange for peace and the normalization of relationships. However, Israel rejected the initiative.

All GCC countries have financially and diplomatically backed the Palestinians. According to Ulrichsen (2014), financial aid to Palestinians spiked after the 1967 war, GCC states' independence from Britain, and the surge in oil revenues after the oil

embargo in 1973. Furthermore, GCC states supported the peace process by attending the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991. However, many Palestinians believe that the actions of the GCC do not rise to their demands for the immediate and rapid fulfillment of their freedom and independence and the confrontation of Israel's aggression (e.g., Abu Amsheh, 2016; Choucair, 2014).

To illustrate the stances of some GCC states towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar's positions are explained in the following paragraphs. Saudi Arabia is the largest GCC country and carries the greatest weight in the Arab and Islamic worlds, as it is the cradle of Islam and has been at the forefront of supporting the Palestinians. Other members of the GCC have followed Saudi Arabia's decisions and policies regarding Palestine. Saudi Arabia has been highly supportive of Palestine since its occupation in 1948. It has welcomed many Palestinians and provided financial and political support to Palestinian civilians and leaders both within Palestine and in the neighboring states (i.e., Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt). One bold and practical step taken by Saudi Arabia was the oil boycott of 1973. During the 1973 war, Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed a boycott against the United States in retaliation for supporting Israel.

However, Saudi foreign policy towards Palestine has not always been consistent. According to Al-Atiqi (2015), Saudi Arabia pursued mediation, coupled with \$500 million in foreign aid to the PNA. King Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz made great efforts to reconcile Fatah and Hamas, which led to the Mecca Agreement in February 2007. However, Al-Atiqi indicated that King Abdullah felt that he had been failed by Hamas. Hamas' connections with Iran increased this distrust. In addition, with the

beginning of the Arab uprisings, Saudi adopted anti-Muslim Brotherhood policies, and Saudi foreign policy towards Palestine deteriorated as a result. However, the rise of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud renewed the Saudis' ties to Hamas in order to support Saudi Arabia's objective to limit Iran's influence and undermine ISIS; to this end, Saudi Arabia helped Hamas in its fight against ISIS in the Gaza Strip and prohibited Iran's influence in Palestine through its support of Hamas. Similarly, Al-Hamood (2010) has tracked the fluctuations in Saudi Arabia foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which underwent a transformation during the rule of King Abdullah bin Abdel Aziz (2005–2009). Saudi Arabia's position on Palestine prior to King Abdullah's reign could be described as positive based on financial, public, and political support for Palestine according to the resolutions of the international legitimacy (resolutions 242, 383). However, King Abdullah shifted Saudi Arabia's approach from neutral positive to intervention, which was evidenced by the introduction of the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002 and the hosting of reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas, which culminated in the Mecca Agreement in 2007.

For its part, Kuwait has served as a second home for thousands of Palestinians. According to Jarrar (2020), the discovery of oil in Kuwait more or less aligned with the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Kuwait required a labor force to increase its development and therefore welcomed Palestinians and other foreigners. Palestinians accounted for 400,000 to 450,000 of the nearly 2 million immigrants to Kuwait in 1990 (Jarrar, 2020). Moreover, Kuwait provided Palestinians with residences, education, and subsidized goods and services and supplied Palestinian leadership with foreign aid and permission to establish Fatah and PLO offices in Kuwait.

However, Arafat's support of Saddam Hussein during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait was disastrous to Palestinians who had settled in Kuwait. After 1991, it took many years to repair Kuwaiti-Palestinian relations. In 2004, the Palestinian president, Mahmood Abbas apologized to Kuwait for the Palestinian support of Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War, a signal to mend fences with Kuwait that the late Yasser Arafat had offended by siding with Hussein in the conflict. Arafat believed that Hussein was the best ally to support the Palestinian struggle for statehood. For many Palestinians in Kuwait, the invasion signaled a second exodus after the first one in 1948 (Jarrar, 2020). Ghabra (1995) has argued that the end of the social contract between the Palestinians and the Kuwaitis represented a gloomy end that hurt both parties' economic, cultural, professional, and humanitarian well-being. The author has explained that the Kuwaitis did not understand the pressure and estrangement felt by Palestinians in Kuwait before 1990. At the same time, the Palestinians did not realize the extent of the grief that the Kuwaitis felt over the Iraqi invasion. The Kuwaitis were disappointed with the Palestinians, while the Palestinians felt that they were victims of everything that had occurred. According to Ghabra (1995), not all Palestinians in Kuwait supported the Iraqi invasion. It is also untrue that all Kuwaitis harmed the Palestinians and considered them their enemies. Al Thani (2017) has argued that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait affected the foreign policies of the GCC and its member states, particularly with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He has explained that the effect demonstrated in the negative impact on the interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the GCC and its member states, because the PLO took a stance in support of Iraq in 1990. However, this negative impact was short-lived; the Arab Gulf states eventually resumed relations with the PLO and continued to support the Palestinians. In light of their fragile military position at the time, GCC states sought to coordinate defense with

the United States through treaties.

The present study examines Qatar's role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in depth. However, it should be noted that Qatar has supported the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people since the beginning of the conflict in 1948 and before achieving its own independence. It has welcomed Palestinians in Qatar, and the PLO opened one of its first offices in Doha. In 1971, during Qatar's independence speech, the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the "right of Palestinians to reclaim their land" (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020). Currently, Qatar supports the establishment of a Palestinian state within the territories occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital. Qatar has backed all decisions taken by the GCC, the Arab League, and the UN with regard to Palestine. Qatar's support for the Palestinians is political, diplomatic, and financial in nature. For Qatar, Palestine remains a central issue, and its restoration is viewed as the right of all Palestinians and Arabs. Furthermore, solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is vital to ensure the stability of the Middle East.

Overall, the foreign policies of GCC states towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained very supportive of the Palestinian rights during the period examined in this study. Although many GCC countries had some connection with the Israelis, these ties did not hinder their ties with the Palestinians. However, a break in the GCC's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict occurred in 2020, when the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco signed a peace agreement with Israel.

The following sub-section provides a brief overview of the Second Gulf War of

1991, as it represented a critical turning point for Qatar and other Arab countries. After the war, Qatar signed a defense treaty with the United States in 1992, which enabled it to secure its territory and pursue a more daring foreign policy in order to take advantage of its financial capabilities and the political vacuum in the region.

The Second Gulf War (1991)

The Second Gulf War (1991) between Iraq and a U.S.-led international coalition resulted from Iraq's occupation of Kuwait on August 2, 1991. Kuwait is a small state and one of the six members of the GCC. It achieved independence from Britain in 1961. Kuwait's foreign policy has shown a strong tendency towards neutrality. The state has used economic and diplomatic leverage in support of its foreign policy to carve out an influential position for itself both regionally and internationally (Naser, 2017).

Cordesman and Wagner (1996) argued that the Second Gulf War of 1991 was part of a radical change to the world system after World War II and the first real war that occurred after the Cold War. The Second Gulf War gave rise to first collaboration between the United States and Russia and the first coalition between Western and Arab nations. Iraq justified the invasion of Kuwait as the liberation of territory stolen by the British, but it was in fact provoked by an economic crisis prompted by the long war with Iran and Hussein's ambition. Iraq was able to bolster its own oil reserves with those of Kuwait, which enabled Iraq to displace Iran as the second most powerful oil regime in the region after Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the invasion signaled Iraq's willingness to act individually and in defiance of the United States, Britain, and other

countries, whether Arab or Western (Cordesman & Wagner, 1996). Estes (2006) elaborated on Cordesman and Wagner's (1996) argument that the Second Gulf War introduced U.S. air and ground forces to the Gulf region which was formerly patronized only by its naval marines. They have elaborated that after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Saddam Hussein seized the opportunity to initiate a strike that would settle border disputes and prevent Iraqi Shi'a Muslims from joining Iranian fanatics.

However, the First Gulf War (1980-1988) would prove disastrous for Iraq and Iran, which ceased aggressions in July 1988. Nearly two years later, Iraq occupied Kuwait partially out of a desire to recover economically from the First Gulf War and partially because of border disputes. In retaliation, the United States led international coalition to liberate Kuwait on January 17, 1991, and U.S. forces stayed in the Gulf region (Estes, 2006). According to Rabi (2009), the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a turning point in the Gulf's security. The Gulf states, including Qatar, could not overlook the ineffectiveness of regional cooperation to contend with threats from neighbors such as Iraq and Iran. Given border disputes in the region, Qatar viewed protection from the United States as a national security strategy to counterbalance threats from its neighbors, its dependence on Saudi Arabia, and the powerlessness of the GCC.

Qatar also decided to build relations with its neighbors, including Hamas, in order to present itself as a regional mediator. Qatar's lack of adherence to a political camp gave it the freedom needed to maneuver a shifting geopolitical environment and its own national interests. Qatar mediated between Iraq and Kuwait but also supported the removal of sanctions against Iraq in 1999, which angered both Kuwait and Saudi

Arabia (Rabi, 2009). However, Qatar's efforts in mediation and its support of removal of sanctions on Iraq clearly signaled Qatar's new foreign policy approach, which did not align with that of Saudi Arabia, the regional hegemonic power.

Sulaib (2015) argued that, before the Second Gulf War, Kuwaiti foreign policy resembled that of Qatar after 1995. Kuwait's attitude was independent of regional and international powers and ran counter to Saudi Arabia and the United States' interests on several occasions. In addition, Kuwait's geography and demographics resembled those of Qatar, as it was located between two large powers, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, Sulaib (2015) believes that Kuwait's foreign policy principles mostly changed after 1991; it isolated itself from regional affairs and mostly abandoned its role as a mediator until the Gulf crisis of 2017. According to Sulaib, Qatar internalized the lessons learned from Kuwait. Although Kuwait pursued an ambitious foreign policy, it was not backed by a military protector and refused to allow U.S. military presence on its territory for reasons that were embedded in pan-Arab nationalism, exposing Kuwait to the Iraqi invasion in 1990 (Sulaib, 2015).

Naser (2017), in line with Sulaib, examined the new approach that Kuwait adopted after the Second Gulf War in 1991. The end of Hussein's regime led to several changes in Kuwaiti foreign policy; economic diplomacy was prioritized to ensure both economic and political benefits, including the signing of alliances with states that had a global economic impact. Rosman-Stollman (2004) added another dimension to this important development. He explained that, after the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990, small and weak Gulf states (i.e., Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman) realized that they could not protect themselves without relying on an external ally. They turned

to the United States due to its status as a hegemonic power, which led to a gradual shift towards the normalization of relations with Israel as a way of currying favor with the United States.

After the Second Gulf War and the exposure of the inability of the GCC and large Arab states to protect smaller states in the region, there was a political vacuum in the Middle East, which Qatar effectively used to its advantage. According to Ulrichsen (2014), the large Arab states were busy with their own internal problems. Egypt was suspended from the Arab League until 1989 after it signed the Camp David Accords with Israel in 1978. There was civil war in Algeria from 1992 to 1999, a regime change in Syria in 2000, aging leadership in Saudi Arabia after 1996, and damage to Saudi Arabia's image after the September 11 terrorist attacks. All of these events contributed to a political vacuum that allowed countries like Qatar to grow their influence in the region (Ulrichsen, 2014). Similarly, Kamrava (2017) remarked that the skillful deployment of subtle power by Sheikh Hamad from the late 1990s to 2013 was enabled by the international isolation of Iraq and Iran, along with the increasing age and decreasing popularity of leaders in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Qatar benefited from the retreat of large Arab states to involve itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Al-Mokh (2019) has argued that Qatar has exceptional influence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to the decrease of Saudi Arabia and Egypt's impact. He cited four examples of Qatar's involvement in the conflict. First, Qatar hosted Hamas leaders in 1999 after they left Jordan. Second, it helped lift the blockade on Arafat in Ramallah in 2002. Third, in 2009, Qatar bypassed Saudi Arabia and Egypt to hold an urgent summit in Doha after the Israeli war of 2009 on the Gaza

Strip. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad joined the summit, which irritated the Saudis who are rival to Iran and both compete on leading of the Gulf Region. According to Al-Mokh, Iran's inclusion in the Arabic summits and meetings meant the reduction of Saudi Arabia's role in the region. Unlike Saudi Arabia, however, Qatar did not pay attention to ideological differences, which reinforced its ability to benefit from the rival powers. At the time, Syria was busy with a civil war, and Iran was relatively isolated.

Izzat Al -Risheq, a member of the Political Bureau and Head of the Office of Arab and Islamic Relations in Hamas explained that Sheikh Hamad's host of the Gaza summit is an honorable action in standing with the besieged Gaza Strip, which is exposed to Israeli aggression and criminality, Qatar took the lead in calling this summit, embracing it and supporting it politically despite all attempts to thwart it and prevent it from achieving its goals in stopping the continuation of the brutal aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip (I. Al-Risheq. Personal communication, December 14, 2020). On February 6, 2012, Hamas leader Khaled Mishaal signed an agreement with Mahmood Abbas in Doha to form a united government led by Abbas (Al Mokh, 2019).

In summary, it is clear that the Second Gulf War of 1991 had a significant impact on the Gulf region. It led to cooperation between Gulf states and Western powers and introduced U.S. troops to the region. Furthermore, the Second Gulf War led all of the Gulf states to sign defense agreements with the United States, resulting in U.S. hegemony in the region; thus, the United States replaced Britain in its role as protector. For Qatar, the war prompted it to reconsider its foreign policy options in order to protect its security and sovereignty after the GCC failed to defend Kuwait.

CHAPTER 3: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

The theoretical framework provides the backbone of the research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2013), a theoretical framework underpins all research, including how the research questions are formulated and integrated into a problem statement. Before elaborating on how the present research addresses the two research questions outlined in the first chapter, it is appropriate to discuss some of the foreign policy definitions, the concept of small states, the theory of soft power, and how all of these relate to Qatar.

Foreign policy definitions, objectives and process

Foreign policy is a subfield of international relations (IR), and its main purpose is to explain relations between states. Scholars have developed many theories within IR, including realism, liberalism, Marxism, and constructivism. The history of foreign policy dates back to ancient Greece, Persia, Rome, and other empires; in other words, it is as old as civilization. In the modern era, the League of Nations was established after World War I to maintain world peace; however, the organization was replaced by the UN after World War II.

In their book, *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior*, Hey and Rieenner (2004) assert that foreign policy entails the identification of actors, interests, and trends and the dissection of intricate power relationships, bureaucratic relationships, and other relationships within and between states. Kevlihan

(2014) has highlighted that IR is a discipline that seeks to understand the behavior of states in the international system; traditionally, its primary focus has been on war and peace, but it has broadened over time to include political economy, international institutions, global justice, international development, and global civil society.

In *Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century* (2016a, 2001, p.4), Hill defines foreign policy as “the sum of exterior relations directed by an independent player (typically but not solely a state) in IR. The expression ‘an independent player’ enables the enclosure of non-state entities such as the European Union or Hezbollah.” In their book, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Toolbox*, Morin and Paquin (2018, p.3) define foreign policy as the “actions of an independent political authority,” as it is reserved for sovereign states. In *Introduction to Global Politics*, Lamy et al. (2019, p. 112) define foreign policy as the “assertion of national interests and the ways selected to secure those interests, both material and ideational in the international field.” Material interests include security, capital, trade, natural resources, and sovereignty, whereas ideational interests include morals, standards, ideals, and political and economic structures. In his book, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction*, Breuning (2007, p.32) wrote, “The purpose of foreign policy study is to get information about foreign policy decision making, performance, and consequences. Foreign policy analysts consider independent and dependent variables.”

Foreign policy is one of the critical drivers that guides interactions in international politics and relations between different countries. In most cases, national policies are part of foreign policy and enable countries to further their national interests with regard to other states (Breuning, 2007). Thus, foreign policy is often comparatively

examined in terms of how different countries within a regional subsystem cooperate on international issues and concerns. A state-level analysis of foreign policy reveals internal factors within a country that necessitate its involvement in specific foreign policy actions. According to Breuning (2007), it is important to consider a nation's institutional framework, government structure, economic state, and history when investigating these influences and their impact on IR. In "The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy Decision Making," Renshon and Renshon (2008, p. 509) wrote, foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) is the choices people, groups, and alliances make that impact a nation's activities on the international stage. They add that foreign policy choices are typically pigeonholed by high stakes, huge doubt, and significant risk.

In *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, Mintz and DeRouen (2010, p.5) indicate that academic interest in FPDM dates back to *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (1954) by Richard Snyder, Henry Bruck, and Burtin Sapin. The study of foreign policy decisions can reveal the cognitive processes that lead to foreign policy making and provide insights into the minds of leaders. Mintz and DeRouen (2010) add that psychological factors have a considerable effect on foreign policy decisions, especially during a crisis. They conclude that focusing on decision making is important for understanding foreign policy actions, the world, and the strategies of nations, as FPDM contains many theories that can contribute to a better understanding of how prejudices, mistakes, doubt, internal politics, and different decision units engage in decision making.

Holsti (1995), in *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, argues that foreign policy is influenced by internal and external factors. External factors include

the structure of the international system, the world economy, the actions of other states, and global and regional issues. Internal factors include geography, size, population, economy, governmental structure, political parties, and bureaucracy (Holsti, 1995). In particular, foreign policy choices and outcomes in small states are influenced by the international environment. Small states have greater foreign policy options and achieve better outcomes in international environments that are peaceful, stable, and institutionalized. In more restrictive environments, small states tend to have fewer foreign policy options and less successful outcomes. While small states are restricted by their size, there is significant margin for maneuvering; however, this depends on the time, effort, and resources that small states invest in diplomacy (Thorhallsson & Steinsson, 2017).

Based on the available literature, the following definition of foreign policy is adopted in the current research: foreign policy consists of the policies espoused by a state towards another state or non-state actor to achieve particular goals at the domestic or international levels. To assess Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is also important to investigate the literature on small states and examine whether Qatar's foreign policy towards the conflict aligns with the toolkit of small states.

Small states: definitions and history

The current section provides an overview on the history, definition, characteristics, terminology, and security strategies of small states. This overview is crucial, as Qatar is a small state with a security dilemma that arises from its location between two regional hegemonic powers: Saudi Arabia and Iran. The traditional image

of small states is that they do not have an independent foreign policy and instead follow decisions made by large states in the international system. This led to a lack of studies on the foreign policies of small states and the external factors that affect the behavior of these small states.

The number of small states increased in the 20th century with the end of World War I and World War II, decolonization in the 1960s, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Over half of UN states have a population of less than 10 million. Thus, it is important to study the foreign policies of small states in order to document lessons learned for foreign policy analysis and IR (Thorhallsson & Steinsson, 2017, Kassimeris, 2009). In the 1980s and 1990s, the study of the foreign policies of small states or powers was limited; the end of the Cold War illuminated this research gap due to the emergence of small states and powers in the international system (Kassimeris, 2009).

Within the literature, there is still a lack of agreement on the features of small states. While a lack of power was considered to be a key feature of small states from the 19th to the mid-20th centuries, vulnerability emerged as a dominant characteristic in the 1980s and was in turn replaced by a lack of resilience in the present day. In addition, scholars remain divided over whether the definition of a small state should be based on quantitative (i.e., size) or qualitative criteria (i.e., the standing of a small state within the international environment; Mass, 2008). Peterson (2006) has indicated that there is still a debate on what constitutes a small state and on the distinction between microstates and small states. In general, the term “microstate” is more appropriate for describing states with a population of 1 million or less.

According to Hey (2003), a state should be considered small if it views itself as such or if others view it as such. He added that small states usually demonstrate a low level of involvement in world matters, handle few foreign policy issues, limit their performance to their geographic area, employ diplomatic and economic foreign policy tools, emphasize internationalist principles, secure multinational treaties, remain neutral, depend on superpowers for defense, and use their assets to ensure their security and survival. By contrast, Keohane (1969) believed that a small power was a country in which its elites leaders consider acting alone or in a small group but never had an important impact on the international system. Furthermore, instead of focusing on definitions of small or weak states or powers, scholars such as Long (2107) have called for further study on the dynamics of asymmetrical relationships because focusing on asymmetry brings small states into more nuanced discussions about power in IR.

Neumann and Gstöhl (2004) have highlighted the importance of studying small states, as several of the more than 200 states in the world fit this descriptor. In addition, powerful states in the world have capabilities that will use them against small states, as the powerful states are the ones in charge of the international system. Neumann and Gstöhl (2004) added that, although large states may have institutional privileges such as a permanent seat in the UN Security Council or extra voting power, international institutions make the effects of power more visible, because world rules are formalized and require justification. Therefore, small states value international law. The study of small states would contribute to the field of IR by providing findings on topics such as the importance of international institutions as foci of foreign policy, and relations between the different units of a state system (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). According to Veenendaal and Corbett (2014), small states are sometimes excluded from political

science research due to their limited populations, the perception that they are not “real” states, their relatively minor role in international politics, and a lack of data.

Population, territory size, military force, and Gross domestic product GDP are viewed in the political literature as determinants of small states (Luša & Kurečić, 2015). However, the most important factor is a debatable issue. Peterson (2006), Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017), and Easterly and Kraay (1999) have claimed that the most common element used to determine a state’s size is population. However, various scholars have disagreed on the definition of size itself. Some consider countries of up to 30 million people to be small, while others consider countries with less than 10 or 15 million people to be small. Meanwhile, the UN defines a small state as one with less than 1 million people (Peterson, 2006).

Debates have also emerged on the usefulness of using population as a metric. Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017) have argued that population size is an outdated way to measure power. Many scholars have highlighted that the issue of small size is relative. A state with a large population may be completely surrounded by a superpower, making it comparatively small. Likewise, a country with a population of less than 15 million people may have unique features that expand its impact (Thorhallsson & Steinsson, 2017). Luša and Kurečić (2015) have noted that all EU states are small, except for France, Germany, and Britain, which makes the size issue too selective and simplified (Bueger & Wivel, 2018; Bueger & Wivel, 2018). They believe that large states have more voting power in the Council of the European Union; however, older small member states tend to be more effective in the EU than new small member states due to their experience, influence, and networks. Moreover, a country

can be large in terms of geography, economy, or population but small compared to its neighbors. Kazakhstan, for example, is the ninth largest country in the world by geographical size, but it is a small state in political, economic, and military terms compared to its neighbors, Russia, China, and Uzbekistan (Kevlihan, 2014). According to Peterson (2006), country size is important; a state may not be able to operate as efficiently as a regular-sized state, because it lacks the human capital needed to defend itself or to build its economy (e.g., Qatar and the UAE). Small state may be the target of land expansionism, as was the case with Iraq's claims in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's claims in Qatar. It may also rely on economic aid, as is the case with Bahrain, which receives crude oil from Saudi Arabia. Finally, its legitimacy may be doubted, as seen in small Gulf states after they achieved independence (Peterson, 2006).

In general, despite differences within the literature, there appears to be some degree of consensus. According to Miller (2018), a few thinkers (e.g., Maurice East, David Vital, Robert Keuhan, and Robert Jervis) agree on three general principles that relate to the place of small states in the global system:

1. Small nations are more affected by changes in the international arena than superpowers.
2. Small states understand their challenging position.
3. Small states' awareness of their vulnerability leads them to focus on addressing security concerns.

Security strategies of small states

According to Kassimeris (2009) and Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017),

internal stability, alliances, and the international system are vital to the success of small powers' foreign policies. Scholars generally agree that small states prefer multilateralism in order to influence and limit the power of larger states and create power in order to offset deficiencies in their own power (Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017). Prioritization, coalition, and image building are all tactics that small states use to survive (Thorhallsson and Steinsson, 2017). The authors have added that small states achieve better results in an international environment that is nonviolent and institutionalized. Furthermore, they believe that small states' influence depends on the time, effort, and resources that they invest in diplomacy.

Long (2017) has indicated that small states can exercise power based on relationships to leverage the power of larger allies and to enhance their situation and impact in international society through coalitions and institutions which are more important today because military power is less acceptable, interdependence between states is greater, and institutions are more significant. However, the weaker a state's military and economic strength, the more it must employ the abovementioned approaches to power. Such states must also highlight power based on relationships in order to impact the power of larger allies and to boost their position internationally through coalitions and institutions. Similarly, Mushelenga and Wyk (2017) found that small states unite through multilateralism in order to overcome vulnerability and collectively face challenges in the international system. In the global trade system, small states focus on forming partnerships and coalitions in order to jointly speak in trade negotiations. They maintain diplomatic practices that lean towards liberalism (a theory in IR studies), which underscores cooperation, while large states practice diplomacy that leans towards realism, which includes threatening other states with

sanctions. In IR, research on small states or microstates has focused on the realist idea that small states must bandwagon with a superpower or balance against larger power alliances with other states in order to gain power (Kaussler, 2015). Balancing means a state aligns itself with another power against a threat to achieve a balance of power. Bandwagon occurs when a state aligns with the threatening power to protect itself, acting on the assumption it has joined the winning side (Rosman-Stollman, 2004).

One of the approaches used by small states is “niche diplomacy,” which means focusing resources in one area in order to obtain the widest international recognition. Gareth Evans, Australia’s former foreign affairs and trade minister, was the first person to use this term (Henrikson, 2017 as cited in Lakatos, 2017). Preconditions for success include political support from the government, coherence between internal and external politics, the existence of a vibrant civil society, and training for multilateral diplomats. The fact that small states do not have a global agenda in the same way that larger states do often helps them to become honest brokers that are trusted by all parties (Lakatos, 2017).

In addition, criteria related to power have changed. Goetschel (2000) has argued that, due to the complexity of the international environment, traditional power resources have lost importance and new resources have developed. There are situations in which quantitative power (as measured by geography, population, and GNP) is no longer essential, because international organizations have become centers of decision making. Small states have a strong interest in improving the impact of their political decisions; however, they risk losing their autonomy if they succeed. For instance, they may not be allowed to participate in decision making as equal partners, the values of their foreign

policy might be questioned, or they might be forced to participate in international actions that do not align with their interests (Goetschel, 2000).

Since small states operate in a setting in which, as Thucydides observed, “the strong do what they will, while the weak suffer what they must,” the challenges of the external environment can leave a permanent mark on them. Environmental pressures originate from traditional schools of thought that emphasize the vulnerability of small states. Realism, for example, requires that small states balance or bandwagon to ensure their survival. While critical and Marxist perspectives are associated with doubts about the ability of small states to transcend economic dependence on larger states (Mohammadzadeh, 2018).

The dilemma of Qatar’s smallness and Its regional role

Qatar is a small state with a surface area of 11,610 km² and a population of 2.88 million people. It is located between two regional superpowers, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Qatar gained independence from Britain in 1971. Since then, it has largely followed Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy under the umbrella of the GCC. By the end of the Second Gulf War in 1991, Qatar began to reevaluate its foreign policy choices in order to achieve security, ensure its survival, and protect its interests. The first step was to sign a defense treaty with the United States in 1992 following the GCC’s failure to protect the small state of Kuwait. After Britain withdrew from the region at the end of the 1960s, the United States replaced it as the main protector of Arab Gulf states. Qatar has also hosted the United States Central Command forces in Al-Udaid and Al-Sailiyah

bases since 2002 in order to protect itself from territorial threats posed by Saudi Arabia after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the Al Khosuf border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, and a failed coup attempt on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain in 1996. Although Qatar began to look for a solution to its security dilemma after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1991), this goal was combined by the desire to brand Qatar as a regional player through soft power after Sheikh Hamad's rise to power in 1995.

Since 1995, decision makers in Qatar—particularly Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani; his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani; his wife, Sheikha Moza Al Missned; and his prime minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani—focused on the development of the country's soft power capabilities in order to achieve security, survival, growth, and prosperity. They worked to address Qatar's traditional weaknesses (e.g., territory size, small population, and lack of natural resources) by deploying soft power tools such as the media, financial resources, and mediation. In 1996, Qatar allowed an Israeli trade office to open in Doha as part of its vision to become a regional actor and honest broker. Furthermore, Qatar launched Al Jazeera in 1996, a revolutionary soft power tool that enhanced the Qatari government's new direction. In 1997, Qatar hosted the fourth annual MENA Economic Conference with the participation of an Israeli representative. In 1999, Sheikh Hamad visited Palestine in support of the peace process. In 2001, Qatar sought the ICJ's help to address its border disputes with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. In 2002, U.S. troops relocated from Saudi Arabia to Qatar. In 2004, Qatar began to export gas, and the economy grew rapidly as a result. After realizing that its economy was built on energy, Qatar begun a diversification process to make its economy more sustainable and resilient and protect

its national security. The diversification of economic resources is designed to provide Qatar with alternative capital in case its oil and gas reserves are depleted. To this end, Qatar launched its National Vision (2030) in 2008. The strategy aims to convert Qatar into an innovative country by 2030, one that is capable of sustaining its development and providing a high standard of living for all citizens, including future generations (Qatar National Vision 230, 2008).

In addition, Qatar has maintained a cordial relationship with Iran, as both countries share the world's largest gas field, which Iran calls "South Pars" and Qatar calls "North Dome." This relationship is also aimed at balancing Qatar's relationship with Saudi Arabia and ensuring regional security. Lolwah Al-Khater, the Assistant Foreign Minister and Spokesperson the spokesperson for the Qatar foreign ministry, explained that Qatar has always dealt with Iran through the lens of Gulf security. It ensured over the years that, when it comes to Gulf security, the relationship with Iran has its constraints and that Gulf regional security is always a priority (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020).

Maintaining Qatar's national security, sovereignty, and interests is main objective of the country's foreign policy. Because of its small size and sensitive geopolitical location, Qatar cannot face external challenges alone. Thus, Qatar has historically followed the lead of regional and international powers. For example, in 1872, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammad welcomed Ottoman protection (despite it being nominal) and held a truce with Britain in 1868 (Krane & Wright, 2014). After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement in 1916, under which Qatar became a British protectorate. After gaining

independence from Britain in 1971, Qatar allied with Saudi Arabia under the umbrella of the GCC to protect itself from Iran. Krane and Wright (2014) have described Qatar as a small state in an unstable neighborhood, adding that Qatar and other Gulf monarchies generally follow Saudi Arabia's lead on foreign relations and oil export policy. Iran, on the other hand, poses a greater threat to the region, particularly after the 1979 revolution. Krane and Wright (2014) believe that Iran is a key factor in Qatar's drive to boost national security. However, Haykel (2013) posits that the principal threat to Qatar is Saudi Arabia rather than Iran, as the Saudis have long regarded Qatar's independence as an anomaly and have been suspected of being involved in several plots to unseat the Qatari Amir. According to Rabi (2009), both countries are a threat to Qatar. He emphasizes that, after the Second Gulf War (1991), Qatar distanced itself from Saudi Arabia and allied with the United States. Rabi (2009) has argued that, after 1990, regional security was shattered, and Qatar and other Gulf states could not ignore threats from Iraq and Iran. Thus, Qatar allied with the United States as part of its new security plan and adopted an independent regional policy by building relationships with many of its neighbors—including Hamas—to promote itself as a peace broker. Cooper and Momani (2011) have underlined Qatar's geographical position and the volatility of the region due to ongoing hegemonic policies pursued by Iran and Saudi Arabia, both of which seek to legitimize their claims to political and religious leadership.

Playing a regional role in Middle Eastern politics is a challenging endeavor for a small state. Lacking the necessary hard power (e.g., military, coercion), Qatar began to rely on soft power to guarantee its security and pursue its political ambitions. The country's leadership recognized Qatar's geographic constraints and perceived that the international system was dominated by power and influence. Qatari elites decided to

adopt a strategy that is atypical for small states located between larger regional powers. According to Kabalan (2017), Qatar's small geographic and demographic size and its bold foreign policy present a unique case study and a challenge to common theories of foreign policy. Theories about foreign policy, especially realism, stem from the basic idea that the international system is the system of major powers. Kabalan also quoted Wall (1990), who stated that small states have two options to survive in an environment characterized by chaos and governed by interest and self-help: bandwagoning or balancing. However, at the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010, Qatar's foreign policy was questioned because Qatar's stance on the Arab Spring surprised those who saw its behavior as being opposed to the typical behavior of small states during a crisis (Kabalan, 2017). Small states usually avoid any role that could affect the status quo in order to protect their security and sovereignty, but Qatar did the opposite by encouraging democratic change in Arab countries where the people revolted against the prevailing regime (Kabalan, 2017). Similarly, Kaussler (2015) compared Qatar's behavior to those of other small states. He claimed that Qatar's foreign policy aligns with the small state traditional role in its deployment of soft power. For example, Qatar's winning bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup contributed to its status as a regional mediator that can be relied upon by external powers, along with its involvement in development, provision of humanitarian aid, and maintenance of an independent foreign policy. Similarly, Miller (2018) wrote that Qatar's ambitious leadership demonstrated that small states could play a pivotal role in politics. In his opinion, Qatar's emergence as a natural gas exporter and its security partnership with the United States was the foundation of Qatar's ambitious program to finance diplomacy, mediation, crisis resolution, and the prevention of other crises. Peterson (2006) provided additional examples of Qatar's status-building activities, including the

fourth annual MENA Economic Conference held in Doha in November 1997, the Doha round of the World Trade Organization trade negotiations, the establishment of Qatar Airways and various sports tournaments, world-class museums in Education City, the massive campus funded by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. In addition, hosting the Organization of Islamic Conference in March 2003 boosted Qatar's profile in the Islamic world (Peterson, 2006). Similarly, Mohammadzadeh (2018) believes that Qatar's regional and international status was shaped by the policy ambitions of Qatari leaders after 1995, who strategically linked nation building with the ability to implement an independent and ambitious foreign policy.

According to Ulrichsen (2012), Qatar's foreign policy should be understood within the context of the GCC's increasing visibility on the global stage, which was fueled by the GCC members hydrocarbon reserves and geographical position between the East and the West. Ulrichsen (2012) emphasized that the accumulation of capital and changes in the world order enabled small states such as Qatar to play a role in the rebuilding of a new international system. However, Cooper and Momani (2011) indicated the contrast in behavior between Qatar and other small GCC states that derive wealth from the hydrocarbon sector, namely Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Moreover, Qatari policy departed from typical Middle Eastern patterns of either pro-Western or anti-Western tendencies; rather, the regime's focus was on building a reputation as a trusted and powerful international mediator and partner (Cooper & Momani, 2011).

Wright (2011) also cautioned against framing Qatari foreign policy as being part of a larger transformation of foreign policies among GCC states; rather, it has been

shaped by country-specific factors. These include Qatar's position as global leader in the natural gas sector, which enabled it to move away from an exclusive security partnership with the United States and construct a global security matrix in which it is in the interest of multiple foreign powers to guarantee Qatar's security. Moreover, Krane and Wright (2014) emphasized that Qatar's international network of powerful trading partners has brought it protection from larger and formerly dominant neighbors. In particular, Qatar's relationship with the United States has given it the time needed to develop its gas export infrastructure. In addition, disputes with regional trading partners over gas imports strengthened Qatar's determination to diversify its client base and move away from Egypt and Iran towards the powerful economies of the East (Krane and Write, 2014).

Many scholars believe that Sheikh Hamad transformed Qatar. According to Roberts (2017), Sheikh Hamad was the engineer of Qatar's new pragmatic foreign policy. Qatar's security alliance with the United States and domestic stability encouraged the country's leaders to adopt bold policies. Sheikh Hamad's vision was to overcome Qatar's small size, small population, and lack of hard power by raising the country's domestic, regional, and international profile (Roberts, 2017). Moreover, Sheikh Hamad recognized that the Muslim Brotherhood would become a significant fixture in the Middle East and chose to side with the group as a result. He sought to build relations with all players, regardless of their politics. According to Hansen (2013), Qatari foreign policy demonstrates a combination of pragmatism and autonomy. Despite pressure from the United States and Saudi Arabia, Qatar's goal is not only to appease or obtain recognition from these players but also to support the Arab world.

Mediation is a fixture of Qatari foreign policy. That and its balancing between regional powers such as Israel and Iran comprise a survival strategy for a small state located between more powerful neighbors (Ulrichsen, 2014). During the Arab Spring, Ulrichsen (2014) argued that Qatar shifted from a diplomatic mediator to an advocate of change in the MENA region. Regional players viewed Qatar's approach as overreaching and became increasingly skeptical of its motivations. Qatar's comparative advantage in mediation is its ability to serve as an intermediate for back-channel communications between rivals and to balance relations with mutually opposed enemies (Ulrichsen, 2014). According to Fromherz (2012), mediation accounts for a considerable part of Qatar's success. Through mediation, Qatar has maintained its independence and raised its profile in the international arena. In addition, Akpınar (2015) believes that mediation has been notable as a feature of Qatari foreign policy, adding that Qatar's use of mediation changed from a tool to ensure stability prior to the Arab Spring to a tool for to foster change. In addition to Qatar's well-publicized mediation in regional disputes, Cooper and Momani (2011) assert that diplomacy has brought Qatar the most attention at the international level, citing its skillful use of its seat on the UN Security Council between 2005 and 2007 to increase its global influence. According to Nuruzzaman (2015), Qatar has leveraged its image as a small and inoffensive country by engaging in mediation while adopting an open-door policy and using soft power to gain political and diplomatic benefits.

However, Khatib (2013) claims that Qatari's diplomatic interventions have only had a short-term effect. For example, the 2007 agreement between the government and the Houthis in Yemen did not last very long, and while the Doha Accords of 2008 may have reduced violence in Lebanon, they have had little or no impact on the longer-term

political rivalry between various Lebanese coalitions. Khatib (2013) emphasized that, before the Arab Spring, Qatari interventions took place in a climate of regional stability; however, since the volatile transition to democracy after 2010, it has been more difficult to mount such interventions. However, this observation proved to be inaccurate, as Qatar mediated between the United States and Afghanistan in 2020. Like Khatib (2013) and Kabalan (2017), Fromherz (2012) finds Qatar's foreign policy to be controversial. He has discussed Qatar's paradoxes, indicating that it adheres to the Wahhabi form of Sunni Islam, yet its relationship with Saudi Arabia is tense. Qatar is a staunch supporter of Palestinians, yet it welcomes the Israelis on its territory and on Al Jazeera. It hosts both the anti-American Al Jazeera network and the largest American base in the region.

Furthermore, Qatar's foreign policy does not always align with the security strategies of small states, which conventionally aim to remain neutral or in the shadow of a larger power. In one way or another, Qatar has deviated from Saudi Arabia and the GCC. This deviation occurred in two phases. The first phase took place after 1995, when Qatar took independent political and economic steps and involved itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second phase spans Qatar's involvement in the Arab Spring in 2010. Kaussler (2015) believes that Qatar has challenged these norms by refusing to remain in the shadow of its allies or rivals; therefore, it has pursued a distinct and influential foreign policy.

According to Kabalan (2017) and Kaussler (2015), Qatar has subverted expectations of how small powers should behave, which typically means seeking protection or alliances with larger powers in exchange for protection. According to Soubrier (2017), the end of the Cold War in 1990 led to the emergence of a unipolar

global system. For small states, this system increased the incentive to adopt a cooperative strategy through an alliance with the United States, which had become the only global superpower. Small Gulf states found themselves in a regional environment characterized by immature and anarchic power struggles between Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran and threats such as the 1990 invasion of Kuwait (Soubrier, 2017). In the literature, it was assumed that small states could not combine autonomy and influence due to a lack of resources; this offensive strategy was restricted to great powers (Soubrier, 2017). However, Qatar challenged assumptions about the security options of small states, since it managed to adopt both cooperative and defensive approaches tailored to its need for relative autonomy. According to Soubrier (2017), this hedging strategy was made possible by the emergence of the United States as the world's only superpower, although Qatar also sought to balance this relationship through the diversification of strategic partnerships. Kamrava (2013) has argued that Qatar's power cannot be characterized as hard power, soft power, or smart power (combination of the two); rather, it derives from a combination of marketing, domestic politics, regional diplomacy, and—through strategic use of its sovereign wealth fund—increased access to and ownership of prized commercial resources. Kamrava has added that this signals of a new form of power and influence, one that is more subtle in its manifestations and may be more aptly described as subtle power. In other words, subtle power in his opinion combines three powers: the exercise of influence, the ability to create conditions that are favorable to the attainment of one's goals, and the exploitation of other parties' biases to mold their perceptions.

In research from Al-Horr et al. (2019), Qatar's approach is hypothesized as “nested power”. According to the authors, nested power is the use of multiple tools

joining them to multi-dimensional goals of positioning, branding, attracting, and hedging. The nested power allows small states to protect their sovereignty, resources, and become global or international actors. Qatar employs nested power tools, particularly various cultural diplomatic relations, and mediation tactics. The basis of the Qatar power is strong, as they are built on a collaboration and coordination among numerous actors in the QNV 2030 national pathway.

Tables 1 demonstrates the differences between different kinds of power

al-Hor, Tok, and Capabilize

Table 1: Comparison of Definitions

	Soft Power	Hard Power	Smart Power	Subtle Power	Nested Power
Definition	"The ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments"	"Hard power is the use of coercion and payment" *focus on military intervention, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions to enforce national interests"	"the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing...that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently"	"Combines three classical forms of power" Exercise of influence. Create conditions favorable to one's goals. Mobilization of bias"	"the use of multiple tools and means, at all levels, and harnessing them to multidimensional purposes of branding, positioning, attracting, and hedging"

However, Sulaib (2015) believes that Qatar has internalized lessons learned from Kuwait. He explained that, before the Second Gulf War of 1991, Kuwaiti foreign policy resembled that of Qatar after 1995; Kuwait's direction was independent of regional and international powers and ran counter to Saudi Arabia and the United States' interests on several occasions. In addition, Kuwait's geography and demographics resembled those of Qatar, as it was located between two large powers, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, Sulaib (2015) believes that Kuwait's foreign policy principles mostly

changed after 1991; it isolated itself from regional affairs and mostly abandoned its role as a mediator until the Gulf Crisis of 2017. Although Kuwait pursued an ambitious foreign policy, it was not backed by a military protector and refused to allow U.S. military presence on its territory (Sulaib, 2015). Thus, it is clear that Qatar learned from these events and avoided Kuwait's fate by relying on the United States for protection. This strategy not only saved Qatar but also allowed it to focus on its foreign policy goals.

Theories and approaches used to explain Qatar's foreign policy

In general, academic works on Qatar's foreign policy have been limited, as Qatar is a relatively new state that gained independence in 1971. In most studies on Qatar's foreign policy direction, there is a consensus that the main driver of its new direction is a desire to protect Qatar's national security, sovereignty, prosperity, and growth. Some studies posit that Qatar is competing with Saudi Arabia to lead the region. Other studies claim that Qatar is executing a foreign agenda, perhaps that of the United States.

Different theories and approaches have been used in these studies to explain Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including democratic peace theory (e.g., Al Thani, 2017), subtle power (e.g., Kamrava, 2013), small state strategies (e.g., Kablan, 2017; Kaussler, 2015; Miller, 2018; Rabi, 2009), pragmatism (e.g., Khatib, 2013), political economy (e.g., Wright, 2011), decision making (e.g., Al Tokhli, 2017), soft power (e.g., Boateng, 2013; Zureik, 2017), a descriptive analytical approach, and content analysis (e.g., Rantissi, 2012).

The current research employs soft power theory to examine Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad's rule (1995–2013). Soft power theory was chosen, because Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only took place through soft power. All foreign policy tools, whether soft or hard, are dependent on and influenced by the domestic situation. Thus, soft power tools do not exist in a vacuum but are instead deployed by individuals who are influenced by their domestic environment. Accordingly, the soft power tools used by Qatar in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were based on Sheikh Hamad's vision and personality, Qatar's rich hydrocarbon revenue, and the country's stability, which was a result of U.S. protection and Al Jazeera's influence.

Although Qatar in 2011 during the reign of Sheikh Hamad used hard power under the umbrella of Nato to overthrow Muammar Al Qadhafi's regime and backed the opposition in Syria, its foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained within the soft power option. Therefore, the soft power theory is the best approach to study Qatar's stance towards the conflict. However, before examining Qatar's use of soft power tools, it is important to define soft power.

The theory of soft power

Soft power is a relatively new concept and remains ignored by many states. Global superpowers tend to rely on hard power, but small states may be more willing to rely on soft power due to their lack of the latter. Joseph Nye, a professor at Harvard University and a former senior national security official for the United States, first

mentioned soft power at the end of the Cold War in his book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990). He elaborated on the concept in a follow-up book called *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004). In the latter, Nye explains that soft power is the ability to affect others through attraction (“carrots”) rather than coercion (“sticks”) or payment in order to achieve desired outcomes. He clarifies that a state’s soft power is based on its assets (i.e., culture, values, and policies), while smart power includes properties of both hard and soft power. Nye also asserts that soft power extends beyond mere influence; it constitutes attractive power, and soft power resources have properties that can produce such an attraction, which can be assessed through surveys or focus groups. Nye believes that soft power has three aspects, which are:

1. “Pushing others to do what they do not wish to do”.
2. “Make others set their priorities and preferences according to what you want”.
3. “The ability to create and shape the perceptions and beliefs of others without them realizing that you are doing so to them”.

However, Nye admits that soft power has its shortcomings. In his opinion, soft power is more difficult to employ than hard power, numerous of its resources are not in the control of governments, and their effects rely on acceptance by the recipients. He adds that soft power resources usually work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and occasionally take decades to get the desired result.

According to Nisbett (2016), the concept of soft power evolved around the Cold War, when American art and culture such as jazz were exported around the world, promoting intellectual freedom and democracy through creativity and self-

expression—values that directly opposed the alternatives presented by the communist Soviet Union. However, because American culture has been intensively marketed around the world, the terms “soft power” and “cultural diplomacy” became associated with cultural imperialism and propaganda. Nye developed the soft power term in response to scholars, analysts, and advisors in the 1980s who believed that the United States had overextended its resources during the Cold War and that this would weaken its position in the international system (Nisbett, 2016).

With regard to Qatar’s soft power, Boateng (2013) has argued that Qatar relies on attraction or “carrots” in its practice of soft power. He believes that, within Qatar’s regional sphere of influence, the main sources of attraction are its political stability as a result of its alliance with the United States and the efficient redistribution of capital among Qataris. In addition, Al Jazeera’s image as the voice of the helpless and access to advanced education has attracted many people in the Middle East. According to Boateng (2013), Qatar’s generous provision of foreign aid, investment in sports, and diplomatic efforts are key factors in the growth of its soft power.

However, Qatar’s soft power could potentially be undermined by its support for Islamist groups, lack of democratic reforms, and mistreatment of laborers. Reiche (2014) analyzed how Qatar uses sports as a domestic and foreign policy tool to build relationships around the world in order to gain soft power and strengthen its security. He believes that there is a need for substantial changes in order for Qatar to effectively use sports as a national and foreign policy tool. Some practices, such as the kafala system, damage Qatar’s reputation in the international media. If Qatar wants other countries to feel accountable for small states in case of an attack, such as Iraq’s

occupation of Kuwait, it needs to be more open to critique and reform in areas such as the labor market. Reiche highlighted that soft power is not acquired from short-term projects such as hosting large-scale sports events; rather, it depends on building long-term relationships in other domains, such as culture, education, economics and politics. The main obstacles to developing sports in Qatar are cultural barriers such as low female participation and the unwilling of Qatari people to participate in sports.

According to Nuruzzaman (2015), Qatar has successfully used soft power tools such as Al Jazeera and the Qatar Investment Authority to its advantage, which have promoted the country's image and influence worldwide. Surrounded by Saudi Arabia and Iran, Qatar has cultivated an image as a small and harmless state by pursuing diplomacy. It has mediated various regional conflicts and navigated relations with its large neighbors to its benefit, while avoiding being caught in the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah alliance or the Saudi Arabia-Egypt-United States coalition. Qatar has pursued an open-door policy to friends and enemies and used its soft power tools to gain political and diplomatic advantages, which has brought it a certain degree of influence in political and diplomatic platforms at the regional and international levels (Nuruzzaman, 2015).

According to Boyce (2013), Qatar may have the best soft power tools of any small state after the Vatican. This is attributable to Al Jazeera, public recognition of sports, and the country's economic progress. For instance, Qatar will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the Qatar Foundation logo is printed on Barcelona Football Club shirts, and Qatar Sports Investments owns the Paris Saint-Germain Football Club. Economically, Qatar has the highest per capita GDP in the world. With its small population and an output of approximately 6 million barrels of oil per day, Qatar

generates massive surpluses that have enabled it to purchase Harrods and other landmark properties and have important stakes in some of the world's best-known companies. In Boyce's view, Qatar's distinctive foreign policy means that it sits at the table in global negotiations for every main event in the Middle East. According to Ulrichsen (2012), Qatar adopted state branding to portray itself as a Middle Eastern country with political stability, a liberal economy, and a safe climate for investment. Ulrichsen explains that soft power, as established by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability to appeal to and influence others using the attractiveness of the culture, political ideals, and policies of a country.

Kaussler (2015) has highlighted that an examination of Qatari foreign policy reveals the extent to which Qatar's soft power has influenced IR in the Middle East. The recognition of Al Jazeera and Qatar's successful bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup are underpinned by a deep cultural and political influence that has been strategically used to advance Qatar's interests. Along with its proactive foreign policy, dedication to development, and humanitarian aid to disadvantaged countries and countries in crisis, Qatar has emerged as a trusted regional mediator (Kaussler, 2015). In Kaussler's opinion, this role has caused Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United States to question the nature and direction of Qatari foreign policy. However, Qatari leaders have earned the trust and respect of state and non-state actors at both the regional and international levels.

Qatar's position demonstrated a shift away from diplomatic mediation in favor of intervention in 2010 (Ulrichsen, 2012). This was translated and conveyed through Al Jazeera's coverage of the Arab Spring and military intervention in Libya under the

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to overthrow the Libyan president, Muammar Al Gaddafi. Qatar's position on the Arab Spring has led to tensions with its neighbors. Its economic diplomacy and support for the Muslim Brotherhood antagonized other GCC states and led Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain to pull their ambassadors from Qatar in March 2014 (Soubrier, 2017). According to Almezaini and Rickli (2017), instabilities in many Arab countries and the rise of non-state actors such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) have forced small GCC states to adopt new external behaviors that broke with their foreign policies. For example, Qatar and the UAE's intervention in Libya as part of NATO in 2010 mystified many observers.

Discussion and conclusion

The abovementioned studies investigate the tools and impacts of the new foreign policy strategies adopted by Qatar. Almost all of these studies concurred that Qatar was able to follow an independent and pragmatic foreign policy thanks to the Defense Cooperation Agreement signed with the United States in 1992, its oil and gas reserves, and its visionary leadership. Many studies also focused on Qatar's often contradictory foreign policy, in which Qatar presents itself as a friend to the United States while attacking the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 through coverage on Al Jazeera. Nevertheless, Qatar simultaneously maintains good relations with the United States, Iran, Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Moreover, many studies focused on mediation as the main tool of Qatari foreign policy. However, researchers disagreed about the effectiveness of this tool. Some viewed mediation as a temporary success, while others considered it to be one of the most successful tools in Qatari foreign policy.

Nearly all of the researchers recognized Qatar's security dilemma and its impact on the country's foreign policy. They agreed that Qatar's small size and its geopolitically sensitive location between two hegemonic regional powers are the main drivers of Qatari foreign policy. However, they disagreed about whether Saudi Arabia or Iran posed the most serious threat to Qatar. Some claimed that it was Iran because of its desire to export the revolution of 1979, while others claimed that it was Saudi Arabia because of its territorial disputes with Qatar and failed coup attempt on Qatari leadership in 1996. A third scholarly faction believed that both countries are a constant threat to Qatar.

Regardless, Qatar is vulnerable due to its small size, low population, and lack of hard power and natural resources (except oil and gas). Therefore, Qatar's foreign policy choices and options are based on these geopolitical threats. Several studies discussed Qatar's constraints as a small state and its reliance on soft power to compensate for deficiencies in hard power; examples include international investments, Al Jazeera, humanitarian aid, mediation, sports, Qatar Airways, world-class museums, and Education City. However, several researchers emphasized that Qatar's small geographic and demographic size and its bold foreign policy was a challenge to common theories of foreign policy. Furthermore, many scholars pointed to Qatar's ideology, which is not a factor in its strategic alliance building. Qatar's stability, lack of domestic rivalry, and the integration of the Shiite minority has enabled it to focus on its domestic and international affairs. Some scholars examined Qatar's supportive role in the Arab Spring and the consequences of Qatar's policies on the country and the region.

There is a clear connection between studies on small states and Qatar. It could be said that some—but not all—features and objectives of small states apply to Qatar. Qatar has sought the help of regional and global powers to overcome its vulnerabilities as a small state with a sensitive geopolitical location. After gaining independence from Britain in 1971, it followed the lead of its large neighbor, Saudi Arabia, in order to secure protection from Iran. Following the Second Gulf War of 1991 and the GCC's inability to protect Kuwait, it pivoted to an alliance with the United States through a 1992 defense treaty.

However, Qatar challenged the traditional approaches of small states when it became involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict is very complex, as it includes many opposing parties. First, the Israelis and the Palestinians both claim a right to the land of Palestine. Secondly, Fatah and Hamas have different perspectives on how to solve the conflict; Fatah believes in negotiation for the liberation of Palestine, particularly after 1991 (which explains its decision to attend the Madrid Peace Conference), while Hamas believes in military resistance and opposes the peace process. To support any of these parties means angering the other and the country or countries that back it. For example, Hamas is backed by Syria (until 2011), Turkey, Iran and Hizbullah, while Fatah is backed by most of the other Arab states. In addition, Israel is supported by the United States and the EU and opposed by Arab states. Therefore, Qatar's involvement in the conflict is a risky decision that angered one side at the expense of another. Qatar's support of Hamas, especially after it won the second legislative Palestinian election in 2006, infuriated Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and Fatah. If Qatar wanted to abide by the "rules" of a small state, it would not have involved itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Initially, its involvement in the conflict

irritated Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which viewed Qatar's role as a threat to their traditional role as leaders in the region. Then, Qatar's public support for Hamas after 2006 also angered Egypt, which viewed Hamas as the Palestine branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Israel, and the United States, which all opposed Hamas.

Qatar deviated from the typical behavior of small states once again when it supported the Arab Spring in 2010, which led to the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in many Arab states. Qatar backed the people in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen through Al Jazeera's live coverage of the revolutions and encouraging the revolted nations. It also supported NATO to overthrow Muammar Al Qadhafi's regime and backed the opposition in Syria. Qatar's position angered Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as they were staunchly opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, which they viewed as a threat to their regimes and the status quo.

Through its actions, Qatar challenged conventional thinking on the features of small states and proved that small states can play a larger role, take the initiative, and adopt an independent foreign policy. Although Qatar is lacking in these characteristics, it has benefited from energy wealth, visionary leadership, and external protection from the United States, leveraging these advantages to overcome its weaknesses and play an influential role in Middle Eastern politics.

Qatar surprised many scholars and observers by adopting a daring foreign policy. Qatar could have stayed neutral like Oman and Kuwait, but it chose to become involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab Spring. However, this research

does not focus on Qatar's reaction to the Arab Spring but on its stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As shown in the following chapters, Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has largely taken place through soft power tools. Since the 1990s, Qatar's overarching foreign policy paradigm has been based on the belief that soft power, particularly for small states, is as important as hard power. Regardless of a country's structural constraints, it can be autonomous and act as a regional and global player. Driven by its solidarity with the Palestinians, its pursuit of a regional role, and a desire to protect its own interests—particularly those related to security and sovereignty, given its geographic and demographic vulnerability—Qatar has relied on “carrots” (Al Jazeera Network, Financial aid and mediation) in its exercise of soft power and involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was made possible by Qatar's oil and gas revenues, visionary leadership, and the security provided by the United States.

CHAPTER 4: OBJECTIVES AND FEATURES OF QATAR'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISRAELI- PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines Qatar's foreign policy objectives towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995-2013). The second part investigates the features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the same period.

Objectives of Qatar's foreign policy

As we mentioned before, there are three objectives for Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995-2013). These objectives aim to fulfill three main purposes: maintain Qatar's national security and sovereignty, solidarity with just Arab and Muslim causes, and the desire to play a regional role in the Middle East region.

National security

Qatar has a number of geographic and demographic constraints. Geography is the primary determinant of Qatar's foreign policy, as Qatar is a small state that occupies a surface area of only 11,610 km² and is located on the coast of the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East. Approximately 2.8 million people live in Qatar; however, only 12% are native Qataris (psa.gov.qa, 2019). In 2019, the GDP per capita in Qatar was \$64,781 (Data.worldbank.org, 2019). In 2020, Qatar ranked 82 globally in terms of military strength (Globalfirepower, 2020).

Moreover, Qatar has a sensitive geopolitical location, as it is positioned between two larger rival Gulf neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Iran. By comparison, Saudi Arabia, which is located to the south of Qatar, has a landmass of 2,149,690 km² and a population of 34.2 million. In 2019, GDP per capita in Saudi Arabia was \$23,139 (Data.worldbank.org, 2019). Qatar’s only land border is with Saudi Arabia. Otherwise, it is surrounded by maritime borders with Iran, the UAE, and Bahrain. In terms of military strength, Saudi Arabia ranked 17th globally in 2020 (Globalfirepower, 2020). To the north, Iran is a large state that is located on the opposite coast of the Arabian Peninsula from Qatar. It occupies a surface area of 1,628,760 km² and, as of 2020, a population of around 82.9 million. In 2019, GDP per capita in Iran approximately \$5,520 (Data.worldbank.org, 2019). In 2020, Iran ranked 14th globally in terms of military strength (Globalfirepower, 2020). For a comparison of all three countries, see Table 1 below.¹¹

Table 1
A comparison Between Qatar, Iran, and Saudi Arabia

	Qatar	Iran	Saudi Arabia
Population (in millions)	2.8	82.9	34.2
Area (in km ²)	11,610	1,628,760	2,149,690
Gross domestic product	64,781	5,520	23,139

¹¹ This comparison is adapted from Kabalan (2017). However, the numbers are updated from various resources.

	Qatar	Iran	Saudi Arabia
product (GDP) per capita (in U.S. dollars)			
Military strength world ranking	82	14	17

The table above is a comparison between Qatar, Iran, and Saudi Arabia

Table 1 shows that the populations of Saudi Arabia and Iran are 12 times and nearly 30 times larger than that of Qatar, respectively. In addition, the land areas of Saudi Arabia and Iran are 185 times and 140 times larger than that of Qatar, respectively. However, GDP per capita in Qatar is nearly 13 times and over three times greater than those of Iran and Saudi Arabia, respectively. In other words, Qatar is much smaller and weaker than its two large Gulf neighbors with respect to every hard power metric (i.e., size, population, and military power), except GDP per capita.

Qatar's vulnerable position has forced it to continually seek protection. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Qatar and Britain signed an agreement that made Qatar into a British protectorate. Britain left the Gulf region in late 1960s, and Qatar gained its independence in 1971. The country's geographic, demographic, and military vulnerability has been a constant concern for Qatari leadership. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have expansionist aspirations in the Gulf region, which would likely take place at the expense of small states that cannot defend

themselves, as evidenced by the invasion of Kuwait. In fact, Qatar has historically felt threatened by Saudi Arabia. Amir Faisal bin Turki Al Saud (1785–1865), the second ruler of the Second Saudi State, claimed in 1835 and again in 1851 that Qatar was one of his territories (Wright, 2011). After the fall of the Iranian Shah's regime and the eruption of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Gulf Arab states feared that Iran would export the revolution, as its leaders had called for. According to Rakel (2007), during the first decade of the rebellion, Iran's foreign policy was imbued with the ideology of the Islamic Republic and the spread of revolution to other Muslim countries in order to emancipate these countries from their tyrannical rulers (Elman, 1995).

With the start of the Iran-Iraq War)1980–1988(and the threat that Iran posed to oilroutes, the six Gulf Arab states established the GCC in 1981 to protect their security and sovereignty. Their fears were realized after an Iran-backed coup attempt took place in Bahrain in 1981 (Wright, 2011). Given the unique conditions under which the Gulf Arab states were formed, the primary question has concerned how these nations have coped with the full range of political and economic challenges both from within and outside the Gulf (Peterson, 2001). Since its establishment in 1981, the GCC has managed to overcome many hardships due to competent leadership, in which Gulf leaders have pursued the preservation of their countries' sovereignty and legitimacy (Peterson, 2001). The integration of six nations into the GCC has fostered a relatively stable state of tranquility in the region. Nevertheless, the nuclear ambitions of Iran have been a constant threat to the GCC.

The Arabian Gulf represents a significant part of the world largely because of its oil wealth, which has been the main reason for the wars in the region. According to

Takeyh (2008), the dramatic downfall of Iraq led to the rise of Iran as a significant influence in the region; to demonstrate its power, Iran has established a nuclear program that represents an important threat to regional balance. Within the Gulf region, the positions of GCC states on Iran's nuclear program have been diverse. Various countries, including Qatar, have recognized the imminent threat of Iran's actions, which are seemingly aimed at facilitating a nuclear arms race within the Peninsula. Abdulla (2010) affirmed that many negative impacts would likely arise from Iran's activities, given that GCC states are within range of Iran's missiles. There has been considerable uranium fortification and plutonium separation, which may signal that Iran is stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) under the guise of researching nuclear energy and technology.

As a result of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the UN has imposed embargos and sanctions in an attempt to compel Iran to concede to international pressure over its actions (Nonneman, 1997). The GCC states have played an active role in these restrictions. The increasing cooperation between Gulf states has rapidly isolated Iran economically, which has been a significant impediment in its diplomatic attempts to salvage ties with the GCC states over the past decade (Hertog, 2013). However, Iran continues to advance its nuclear aspirations regardless of sanctions that have been enforced. If a military solution were to be executed as a last resort, such a move would have negative consequences in the region. As Nusair (2016) has remarked, the main fear over the armed option is that Iran may retaliate by cutting off production routes for and exports of Gulf oil, which could have devastating effects for economies that rely on oil. Additionally, the military alternative could be counterproductive in that it could increase Iran's resolve to rebuild its nuclear program. The above considerations

underline the fact that the concern of the security at the Gulf region does not have a quick solution.

However, some analysts, such as Cordesman (2008), believe that the main threat that the GCC states face is their own leaders who lack unity and effective leadership. In his opinion, Iran cannot deploy ground forces across the Gulf region unless the GCC states and their allies (US, UK and France) remain passive. Besides, the GCC states have spent an average of more than seven times as much on national security as Iran. The author emphasizes that they have signed new arms import orders that are some 16 times larger since the end of the Gulf War (\$89 billion for the GCC versus \$5.6 billion for Iran).

Compared to other GCC states, Qatar has relatively good relations with Iran. The two countries have extensively cooperated on economic treaties because of their vast shared reserves of gas deposits. The world's largest gas field is situated in the body of water between Qatar and Iran; the point where they converge is known in Qatar as North Field and as South Pars in Iran. The two countries' maritime territorial boundary was demarcated in a 1969 agreement to avoid future border conflicts, but the accord failed to stipulate how revenues from gas fields should be allocated (Chalk, 2008). For a long time, the situation did not present any challenges for Qatar and Iran—until 1990, when Iran declared that the gas reserves should be cooperatively developed, which Qatar did not agree with. Although Qatar was not prepared to provoke its much more powerful neighbor across the Gulf, there was a looming dispute that threatened the security of both states. However, the two countries decided to independently develop their portions of the gas field after they reached an agreement to defuse potential

conflicts (Al Makhawi, 1990).

After the Second Gulf War in 1991, Qatar began to reevaluate its foreign policy options and assess how to ensure its own security in order to avoid Kuwait's fate. The first step was to sign a defense treaty with the United States in 1992. In accordance with the DCA signed by Qatar and the United States, Qatar hosts the CENTCOM headquarters and up to 11,000 U.S. and coalition forces at various military facilities, including the Al Udeid Air Base (Katzman, 2020). Qatar is also a significant buyer of U.S. weaponry (Katzman, 2020). According to Mintz and DeRouen (2010), one way to address a security dilemma is to form or join strategic alliances. In addition, countries may form alliances in order to counter another country that challenges the status quo. Qatar's goal was to secure itself from territorial threats posed by Saudi Arabia after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the Al Khosuf border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, and the coup attempt on Qatar in 1996. Allying with the United States allowed Qatar to have a degree of autonomy with regard to its foreign policy. Since Qatar felt secure, it was able to adopt bold policies initiated by visionary leaders after 1995, such as permitting an Israeli trade office to open in Doha (1995), launching Al Jazeera (1996), and hosting the MENA conference with an Israeli representative in attendance (1997). Qatar's goal was to attract the attention of other countries and thus make them accountable for its security. To this end, Qatar's security pact with the United States has proved beneficial. An alliance with the United States has simultaneously protected Qatar's sovereignty and enabled Qatar to play the regional role to which it aspired. Qatar has not been attacked by any other country since gaining independence in 1971; there have been occasional tensions or crises, but they have not escalated into wars or invasions.

The skills and ambitions of Qatari leaders have played a significant role in diminishing the importance of structural factors and geographic constraints. In particular, Sheikh Hamad Al Thani, his wife Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, his son Sheikh Tamim, and his prime minister and foreign minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani adopted a strategy that was not typical of a small state that is located between two regional powers. Their aim was to ensure Qatar's security and survival and to protect its main source of income and prosperity through soft power tools. Using financial resources derived from the export of natural gas, Qatar diversified its economic partnerships and built strong trade connections with the United States, Japan, South Korea, India, and China. Moreover, Qatar has significant investments around the world and contributes generous aid to other countries during crises. Furthermore, Qatar has adopted a strategy of mediation to resolve regional and international conflicts. It has also branded itself as a cultural hub that has hosted annual conferences and sports tournaments and opened eight branches of international universities. Finally, Al Jazeera is one of Qatar's most influential soft power tools and has helped brand Qatar regionally and internationally.

In summary, Qatar's geopolitical location is a constraint and the main factor in its foreign policy. However, Qatar's leadership has succeeded in turning this weakness into a strength through an alliance with the United States and the deployment of soft power tools.

Solidarity with just Arab and Muslim causes

After the occupation of Palestine in 1948, many Palestinians were forced to relocate to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. From there, many travelled to GCC states in search of security and better living conditions. After the 1967 war, Palestinian immigration to the Arab Gulf states intensified; many were able to find a safe home and build communities. Qatar has welcomed Palestinians since the 1950s, even before becoming an independent state. Furthermore, the PLO opened one of its first offices in Doha. In 1971, the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the “right of Palestinians to reclaim their land” during Qatar’s independence speech (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020). Qatar and other GCC states have provided financial support to Palestinians at home and abroad in refugee camps. According to Zahlan (2016), financial aid started in the 1930s, when the Gulf states were still poor, and has increased throughout the years as they have become wealthier. Zahlan emphasized that this financial aid has been the main source of support for Palestinians at home and in the diaspora. Although Qatar has long been supportive of Palestinian rights, its diplomatic and financial support to Palestinians increased after 1995 with the rise of Sheikh Hamad and the new policies and initiatives that he implemented. Furthermore, Qatar’s involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict significantly increased with the founding of Al Jazeera, which has extensively covered the conflict. In addition, revenues from oil and gas have enabled Qatar to donate generously to the Palestinians and to intervene in mediation efforts between Fatah and Hamas.

As an Arab and Muslim nation, solidarity with the Palestinian people and their

just cause to fight the Israeli occupation has been a main reason for Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arab Gulf states are attached to Palestinians, as they share the same ethnicity, origin, language, heritage, and civilization. As an occupied Arabic and Islamic state, the religious importance of Palestine is second only to Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. There are two main holy cities in Palestine: Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem; thus, the city is very important to both Arab and non-Arab Christians around the world. Jerusalem hosts Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the first Qibla (prayer direction) of Muslims and the third holiest shrine in Islam after Makah and Medina. In addition, Palestine was part of the last Islamic Empire, the Ottoman Empire, which collapsed in 1914. Therefore, for Arabs, defending the Palestinians demonstrates solidarity with their fellow Arabs and aligns with core Muslim values of cooperation, unity of feeling, and emotions. One Quranic verse reads, "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (9: 71). Moreover, Muslims often cite two famous Prophetic *hadiths* (sayings) in solidarity with Palestinians: "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other" (Al Bukhari: kitab al-Adab, 5680) and "A believer to another believer is like one body in which if any part is not well then the whole body shares the sleeplessness and fever with it" (Al Bukhari: kitab al-Adab, 5665). According to Majid Al Ansari (2020), a professor of sociology at Qatar University, Qatar believes that, despite its small size, it can prove its importance in the international arena by playing a role in resolving disputes and alleviating the injustice experienced by oppressed people. This role is well-known in Qatari culture and originates with the founder of the state, Jassim Bin Mohammad who said that "Qatar is the Kaaba of the oppressed" meaning the destination of the powerless people (M. Al Ansari, personal communication, June 20,

2020).

Every year, an important event called Al Israa and Miraj is celebrated on the 27th day of the Islamic month of Rajab (March) at Al-Aqsa Mosque. It marks the night that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) went on a miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, then to heaven, and back to Makkah in a single night. The journey is mentioned in the Quran in Surah Israa: “Holy is He Who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque (in Makkah) to the farther Mosque (in Jerusalem) - whose surroundings We have blessed - that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed, He alone is All-Hearing, All-Seeing” (17:1). Therefore, Palestine is a special and holy place for all Muslims, and the story of Al Israa and Miraj is revealed in the Quran that they recite daily in their prayers.

Ahmad Raissouni, the vice president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars and a professor of Islamic jurisprudence, explained what he saw as Islam’s stance towards Palestine and the Israeli aggressions. He emphasized that, in the Islamic worldview, Israeli assaults should be stopped, the perpetrators should be punished, and the victims should be compensated. Among the Islamic legislative rules, Raissouni highlighted the one expressed by Omar Bin Al-Khattab (the third Muslim Calipha), who said that “the truth is old.” Jurists have explained this as “The truth does not lapse by prescription,” which means that the rights of Palestinians remain fixed through time and include their lands, blood, and money. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims to believe that Palestinian rights do not die, because it is part of the Muslim creed, just as it is their duty to reveal the truth about the violations of Palestinians rights to the best of their ability. Raissouni cited another Islamic rule in contrast to “the truth is old”: “the

damage is not old,” which means that the damage does not acquire legitimacy with time, and it cannot become accepted and true once it is old and established. Therefore, the liberation of Palestine is not exclusive to the Palestinian people; rather, it is the duty of the entire Islamic nations. Raissouni concluded by saying that scholars have issued fatwas to prohibit the concession of even an inch of Palestine. Furthermore, the recognition of Israel is considered to be a violation of the rights of future generations and an obstacle to liberating Palestine when Arabs and Muslims are able to free it (Hilal, 2006).

In his speeches, Sheikh Hamad has continually reiterated Qatar’s support for Palestine. For example, at the opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session, Sheikh Hamad indicated that “Qatar has always underscored from an Arab, Islamic and human perspective that peace may only be achieved when the Arabs and Palestinians have access to justice” (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session*, 2009). Furthermore, to demonstrate the importance of Palestine and Jerusalem, Sheikh Hamad hosted an International Conference on Jerusalem in Doha. In a speech, he read a verse related to Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Quran:

Glory is to Allah who took His Servant for a journey by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al- Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed... I would like to pay tribute to Holy Jerusalem, its people and all the resisting men and women in the Land of Palestine. It is the site from which the great Prophet (PBUH) had his night journey, and his gateway to heavens. It is indeed a blessed land.... To the Palestinian people I say: We, in the State of Qatar, stand by your side and support your resistance in Jerusalem, your legitimate demands to

establish the independent Palestinian State, and your confrontation with the acts and agenda of the Government of Israel. (*His Highness speech at the International Conference on Jerusalem, 2012*)

In view of some Islamic scholars, helping Palestinians financially is part of the Islamic religion, which urges followers to show compassion and humanity both as an obligatory and supererogatory act of worship. There is a fixed and reasonable contribution that is charged to each Muslim as Zakah (obligatory charity), which is to be given to the poor and the needy. Furthermore, there is an unfixed and optional form of charity (Sadaqah), which each Muslim is advised to give to poor fellow Muslims. In the Quran, there is a verse that reads, “Those who spend their money night and day, secretly and publicly – they will have their reward with their Lord. And no fear will there be about them, nor will they grieve” (2:274). Therefore, many Muslims donate generously to Palestinians as part of their commitment to their religion. Reemphasizing the significance of helping Palestine, Sheikh Hamad said in a speech on October 23, 2012 that “Qatar helping Gaza and Palestine is neither a favor nor verbal promises; it is a duty” (*His Highness speech in Gaza, 2012*).

Ismail Hanieh, the chief of Hamas’s political bureau, emphasized that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the central issue of the larger communities of Arabs and Muslims. Qatar’s role is in harmony with this understanding and with the nature and essence of the Palestinian cause and the belief that this issue requires national intervention. This intervention stems from the national pride that the leaders of Qatar and in particular, His Highness Sheikh Hamad and his son His Highness Sheikh Tamim

enjoys (I, Hanieh, personal communication, December 14, 2020).

According to Al Ansari, Qatar has a number of reasons for engaging with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A core motivation is solidarity with the Arabic and Islamic causes, which is evident in the official positions that the country has taken with regard to Palestine. In Al Ansari's opinion, Qatar has distinguished itself through its support for Palestine, even when there was negative regional consensus towards some Palestinian issues, such as the 2008 war on Gaza and the siege of Gaza which started in 2007 and still going on (M. Al Ansari, personal communication, June 20, 2020).

Mohamad Al-Misfer, a Qatari professor of political science at Qatar University, emphasized that Sheikh Hamad had a personal interest in helping Palestine; in middle school and high school, many of his teachers had been Arabs from Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and other Arab countries. The Arab nationalist movement was very strong at the time, and all the Arab nations paid special attention to occupied Palestine. Therefore, the school curriculum focused on the Arab nationalist movement, and mornings began with a song that contained lyrics to the effect of "Arab countries are my homeland" and "Palestine is our country" (M. Al Misfer, personal communication, June 04, 2020). This is a key point, as Mintz and DeRouen (2010) have indicated that several psychological factors inform decision making, including a leader's personality and leadership style. The researchers believe that studying leaders' personalities can provide a better understanding of why different leaders make different decisions in a similar situation and shed light on the decision-making process itself. Thus, it is clear that Sheikh Hamad's decision to support Palestine partially stems from his personal perspective and interests.

Although Qatar's support Palestine is part of its creed, patriotism and national solidarity, it is important to mention that being part of the Arab League, the OIC, the GCC the UN and other regional and international organizations makes it imperative to support Palestinians as this is part of its international engagement. In fact, many observers believe that Qatar is branding itself by its generous donations to the disadvantaged countries. It is a kind of marketing for the country that was unknown globally for many decades due to its small size and little influence. These donations raise its status and has allowed it to play a mediation role in many regional crises. The Qatari money has been used as incentives to sit at the negotiation table in the Lebanese, Sudanese and Palestinian cases.

Desire to play a regional role

In addition to ensuring its national security and expressing solidarity with the Palestinians, Qatar also has an ambition to play a regional role in Middle Eastern politics. To fulfill this objective, Qatar can count on a number of advantages, including wealth, elite leadership, an influential media outlet, and security pact with a world superpower. In addition, Qatar has benefited from opportunities for small states in the age of globalization. According to Ulrichsen (2014), Qatar's regional role has been facilitated by changes to the international system. Opportunities for small states flourished, as the link between size and power diminished and globalization made it easier for small states to project soft power. Qatar has effectively used this opportunity to involve itself in the longest and most complicated conflict in the Middle East by providing financial support, media coverage, and mediation to the Palestinians. According to Hanieh (2020), the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict attracts the attention of all political actors in the region that play important roles, each according to its belief in the importance of the issue and their political ability. There is no doubt that Qatar has taken real action at the political, humanitarian, and national levels (I. Hanieh, personal communication, December 14, 2020). Abdul Qassim Sattar (2020), a Palestinian political analyst and a university professor, believes that Qatari leadership aimed to elevate Qatar's regional and international role by engaging with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his opinion, Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also part of Qatar's rivalry with Saudi leadership. The regional role that Qatar plays provides it with a high status. Therefore, Qatari leadership established and improved relations with different conflicting parties in the region, such as Israel, the PNA, Hamas, Iran, and the United States (A. Qassim, personal communication, April 17, 2020).

Qatar has succeeded in playing the regional role that it aspired to by providing humanitarian aid, Al Jazeera coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and mediation, although the latter has not been successful due to various complications. Qatar's aim was to protect its security and sovereignty and to brand itself. Branding provides Qatar with economic and political gains. According to Peterson (2006), Qatar has hosted major international conferences such as the MENA economic summit in November 1997, which included Israeli representation, in order to brand itself. Thus, Qatar's branding is designed to create a distinctive identity and differentiate the country from its neighbors. In addition, branding increases Qatar's prestige and recognition around the world (Peterson, 2006), enabling it to become more than just an exporter of oil and natural gas but also a modern tourist destination. More importantly, branding assures the legitimacy of the state and leads to increased awareness of Qatar in domestic and external terms, thereby enhancing its survival (Peterson, 2006).

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, there are three main objectives with regard to Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first is national security, which has been established through an alliance with the United States and urging superpowers to take an interest in its safety. The second is solidarity with just Arab and Muslim causes, which are part of the Qatari Muslim creed. The third is Qatar's desire to play a regional role and brand itself, thereby achieving its political and economic ambitions.

Features of Qatar's foreign policy

The current section focuses on the six features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: support of Arabic and Islamic identity; support of peaceful resolutions and international law; support of political Islamic movements; bold, visionary, and ambitious leadership; divergence from the GCC; and pragmatism.

Support of Arabic and Islamic identity

According to Qatar's constitution, which was ratified on June 6, 2004, Qatar is an Islamic Arab country in which Sharia law is the main source of legislation. Article 6 of the Constitution of Qatar states a commitment to the defense of Arab and Muslim identity, respect for international agreements, the preservation of peace and security, and the recognition of human rights (diwan.gov.qa, n.d).

Sheikh Hamad usually began his speeches by praising God, stating the Islamic phrase "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate," and emphasizing Arab and Islamic unity between countries. With regard to Palestine, he always reminded his people and the audience of the sanctity of holy places in Palestine, particularly Al-Aqsa

Mosque. He also stated that it was a duty of all Qataris to help the Palestinians—not as a favor, but because they were oppressed and because Palestine was part of the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Support of peaceful resolutions and international law

In Article 7 of the Constitution, it is stated that Qatari foreign policy aims to maintain peace and security, recognize other peoples' right to self-determination, observe the principle of noninterference in the affairs of other states, and cooperate with peace-seeking nations (diwan.gov.qa, n.d). Therefore, Qatar has consistently supported the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis. It backs the right of Palestinians to self-determination in accordance with UN Resolutions 242¹², 194¹³, and 3236¹⁴. It also backs Palestine financially as part of its commitment to just Arab and Muslim causes. However, this financial aid is directed towards civil purposes in accordance with Qatar's belief that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be resolved through the principles of the Madrid Peace Conference (1991) and the Arab Peace Initiative (2002). In 2012, Qatar mediated the Doha Agreement between Fatah and Hamas and frequently coordinates with Israel to deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Support of political Islamic movements

Qatar is well-known for its support of the political Islamic movements, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood. This is part of Qatar's pragmatic foreign policy,

¹² 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories of 1967

¹³ 194 is a resolution defines principles for reaching a final settlement and returning Palestinian refugees to their homes.

¹⁴ Resolution 3236 reaffirmed the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, independence and sovereignty, as well as to return to their homes and property.

which recognizes that the Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest and most popular Islamic movement in the Arab and Islamic worlds. According to Abdul Hadi (2020), a former consultant of Prince Hassan bin Talal, Head of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), Qatar was one of the first Arab Gulf countries to embrace leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, who left Egypt and Sudan in 1954; they were led by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who worked in education and had an influence on Qatari society (A. Hadi, personal communication, May 05, 2020). Qatar's support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip could be linked to its broader support for the Muslim Brotherhood, whose Hamas is its branch in Palestine. It is worth noting that Hamas ended its association with the Muslim Brotherhood in a document presented in Doha by its leader, Khaled Mishaal (Al-Mughrabi & Finn, 2017). In line with Abdul Hadi, Hansen (2013) indicated that Qatari foreign policy has tended to support Islamist organizations of various types. Before the Arab Spring, Qatar engaged with both Shias and Sunnis. However, after the Arab Spring, it became more Sunni-focused, which in Hansen's view indicates that this support was related to identity rather than theology—in other words, a way of asserting Muslim identity rather than interpreting the Quran. In fact, Qatar has supported the Muslim Brotherhood for decades (Khatib, 2013). Qatar's military and financial support to Islamists after the Arab Spring is part of a pragmatic foreign policy adaptation to political trends. This, in Khatib's view, is a shortcoming of Qatari foreign policy.

However, Qatar has paid a large price for its support of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. This support has resulted in two major crises for Qatar: one in 2014 and another in 2017. Nevertheless, Qatar insists that its support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip is in recognition of the group's rise to power through free elections in 2006 and the idea

that it was chosen by the Palestinian people. Sheikh Hamad highlighted that “the Palestinian government formed by Hamas a few months ago based on the Palestinian people’s free will should have been given an opportunity to work for the people who have chosen it” (*His Highness speech at the European Parliament, 2006*).

Bold, visionary, and initiative leadership

Sheikh Hamad Al Thani, his wife Moza Al Missned, his son Sheikh Tamim, and his prime minister and foreign minister Hamad bin Jassim were ambitious and visionary leaders who prioritized Qatar’s interests. During Sheikh Hamad’s reign, Qatar became a hub of education, culture, and sports. This success helped ensure Qatar’s security, autonomy, and recognition at the regional and international levels.

According to Mintz and DeRouen (2010), a leader’s job is to guide and cooperate with other officials in the state to protect and advance its interests. Good leaders set guidelines, map out directions, work efficiently and wisely, and have a vision to build. Sheikh Hamad was a leader who had a vision to reform his country, ensure its independence, and raise its profile on the world stage. He effectively used Qatar’s resources and security pact with the United States to establish Al Jazeera, build economic relationships with the world’s strongest economies, and engage in mediation. Wright (2011) emphasized that Qatar’s approach to foreign relations showed that it sought a global diplomatic role and international status by maintaining an independent foreign policy. This desire appeared to be personal for Sheikh Hamad, as the changing of the sheikhs in 1995 was accompanied by a new, world-facing view and an ambition to attain recognition through profile-building (Wright, 2011). Kaussler (2015) has

argued that Qatari foreign policy is influenced by regional factors and the country's political elite. Qatar's elite can be seen to desire a leading role in the Middle East—a desire that has determined Qatar's foreign policy choices and policies.

Steven Wright, a professor of International Relations at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar argues that Sheikh Hamad had a world view and a vision and realized the need for regional development. The Middle East was falling behind and faced insecurity due to a lack of development caused by political insecurity, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, the region suffered from political systems that were authoritarian and barriers to freedom of speech (Wright, personal communication, April 19, 2020). According to Fayez Abu Shamala, Qatar's interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a response to the decisions and resolutions of the League of Arab states. Rather, Qatar had a pioneering role in supporting the Palestinian rights, especially because there is a lack of a just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is affecting the overall Arab situation in the region. Abu Shamala has added that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is taken as an excuse for the lack of reform in the Arab world. Many Arab countries claim that their focus is on solving the conflict and that this Israeli-Arab conflict is the root of all the problems in the region. (F. Abu Shamala, personal communication, December 08, 2020).

Abdullah Baabood, an Omani professor at the National University of Singapore, explains that Sheikh Hamad was motivated by the Palestinians' plight and the fact that the traditional leaders of the Arab world were not doing their utmost. This left a power vacuum that Qatar could fill to provide support for regional issues. Sheikh Hamad also wanted to raise Qatar's international profile to ensure that other countries knew about

it and its role to prevent threats such as the invasion of Kuwait (A. Baabood, personal communication, May 25, 2020).

Mohsen Saleh, the general manager of the Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut, argued that, although Qatar is small and is not a frontier state, its leadership is very ambitious and has highly utilized Qatar's wealth and succeeded in developing the economic, educational, sports and media sectors in addition to raising its regional and international profile. Qatar's influence in the Arab, Islamic, regional, and international arenas far outstrips its size. During Sheikh Hamad's rule, Qatar leveraged its open, balanced relations with the PNA and Hamas to enlarge its role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it accomplished this not only by providing political, diplomatic, and financial support to Palestinians but, most importantly, through coverage on Al Jazeera (M. Saleh, personal communication, June 05, 2020).

Basem Naim, the head of the Council on International Relations in Gaza and the former Palestinian minister of health, explained that Sheikh Hamad's foreign policy reflects a deep and comprehensive vision and an astute reading of history and its lessons. From a strategic perspective, Sheikh Hamad understood that the determinants of Qatar's foreign policy should be its national interests as well as Arab and Islamic solidarity with the Palestinians. The policy was ambitious, positive, bold, and sought to balance between the goal of Palestinians and Arabs to liberate Palestine and feasibility, as Sheikh Hamad was aware of regional and international complexities. Ultimately, the Qatari stance was biased towards the rights and suffering of Palestinians (B. Naim, personal communication, December 15, 2020).

Mohammad Al-Rumaihi, a professor of sociology at the University of Kuwait, stated that Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was calculated to

develop and reinforce the country's regional role after the economic boom and to help Palestinians while also trying to convince the Israelis to seek peace.

To achieve this leading role in the region, Sheikh Hamad was aided by a small elite of circles, which included Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani, Sheikh Moza bint Nasser Al Missned, and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. The following sub-sections provide a brief overview of each figure.

Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani

Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani was born in 1959 in Doha. He graduated from high school in Qatar and completed his university education in Britain. He was the prime minister of Qatar and the minister of foreign affairs for nearly 21 years and promoted Qatar's profile at the regional and international levels. From 1982 to 1989, he was the director of the Office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture. In 1990, he was put in charge of the Ministry of Electricity and Water for two years, in addition to his duties as the minister of municipal affairs and agriculture. He was also the chairman of the Central Municipal Council and a member of the board of directors of Qatar Petroleum, the Supreme Council for Planning, and other bodies. He became the minister of foreign affairs in September 1992 and the first deputy prime minister on September 16, 2003. On April 3, 2007, he was appointed prime minister by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and retained his position as minister of foreign affairs.

Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al Thani represented Qatar in various Arab

and international forums related to the Middle East and participated in conflict resolution in a number of Arab and African countries. He supervised the Lebanese dialogue meetings in Doha in May 2008, which ended in a crisis that threatened civil peace in Lebanon. He also contributed to the agreement reached between Sudan and Chad in 2009 and sponsored the agreement reached between the Sudanese government and the Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement in Doha. In 2010, the Lebanese University of Beirut awarded him with an honorary doctorate for Qatar's efforts to end conflicts in several regions. After Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani assumed power on June 25, 2013 and formed a new government, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani became prime minister, and Dr. Khalid bin Muhammad bin Abdullah Atiyah became minister of foreign affairs (*Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jaber Al Thani*, 2014).

Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned

Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned was born on August 8, 1959 in Doha. Her father, Nasser bin Abdullah Al Missned, was a merchant and a well-known political activist. In 1977, Sheikha Moza was married to Sheikh Hamad. At the time, Sheikh Hamad was the heir apparent of Qatar. When he became the Amir in 1995, Sheikha Moza became the first wife of an Amir to appear in public and participate in domestic and international events. With Sheikh Hamad, Sheikha Moza has five sons and two daughters: Sheikh Jassim (the heir apparent until 2003), Sheikh Tamim (the heir apparent from 2003 to 2013 and the current Amir of Qatar), Sheikha Al-Mayassa, Sheikha Hind (director of the Amir's Office since 2009), Sheikh Joaan, Sheikh

Mohammed, and Sheikh Khalifa (*H.H. Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned*, n.d).

Sheikha Moza is the chairperson of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), which was founded in 1995. Its main project is Education City, which hosts branch campuses of international universities. Sheikha Moza was also the vice chair of the Supreme Council of Health from 2009 to 2014 and the vice chair of the Supreme Education Council from 2006 to 2012. She also chairs Sidra Hospital, which was established in 2016. In addition, Sheikha Moza founded Education Above All in 2012, which focuses on poverty, conflict, disasters, and the empowerment of youth and women around the world. She also launched the Silatech initiative in 2008 to address youth employment in the MENA region, which followed her appointment as an Alliance of Civilizations Ambassador by the UN Secretary General.

In addition, Sheikha Moza was appointed a UN Advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016 and was previously a member of the UN Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group, with a special emphasis on universal primary education. She serves as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education, which enabled her to launch several projects, such as the International Fund for Higher Education in Iraq. In 2012, she was appointed a steering committee member of the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative. Sheikha Moza has been awarded honorary doctorates from Texas A&M University, Carnegie Mellon University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Imperial College London, and Georgetown University, as well as the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy and the George Bush Award

for Excellence in Public Service. In 2009, she was inducted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France. In 2007, Sheikha Moza was presented with the Chatham House Award for her contributions to IR (*Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser*, n.d).

According to Al Mutairi, Sheikh Hamad's open-mindedness and audacity influenced his wife and other Qatari women. For instance, Sheikh Hamad was the first Amir in the Arab Gulf region to formally appear with his wife, Sheikha Moza, in public. In Al Mutairi's opinion, this was intended to raise the value of women in society and dispel taboos that limited women from appearing in public and restricted their role in society. Sheikh Hamad and Sheikha Moza's public appearance was a message for all women in Qatar and in the Arab Gulf region to play a role in the development of their societies. This appearance contributed to the liberation of Gulf women from many of the restrictions imposed on them (S. Al Mutairi, personal communication, April 23, 2020).

According to Khatib (2013), Sheikha Moza enjoyed a high public profile for the wife of a Gulf leader and was internationally recognized for both her many initiatives and her fashion sense. She often appeared alongside the Amir at public engagements, such as during their visit to Gaza in 2012. Khatib added that, although it is not certain how much autonomy Sheikha Moza enjoys with regard to the endeavors that she was associated with, her image and her active international agenda transformed her into a pillar of Qatari public diplomacy.

Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani became the Amir of Qatar on June 25, 2013 after his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, decided to transfer power to him. Sheikh Tamim was born on June 3, 1980 in Doha, where he finished his primary education. He then attended Sherborne School in Britain, where he graduated high school in 1997. Then, he attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and graduated in 1998. He joined the Qatar Armed Forces, combining military study and field experience. On August 5, 2003, he was appointed heir apparent and deputy commander-in-chief of the Qatar Armed Forces.

Upon rising to the Qatari throne in 2013, Sheikh Tamim became the head of state and supreme commander of the Qatar Armed Forces. He also assumed chairmanship of the Supreme Council for Economic Affairs and Investment, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, and the National Security Council. During his tenure, Qatar became the first in capital flows, and GDP per capita and achieved a low unemployment rate. Qatar was also ranked the first in the Higher Education Quality report, in the provision of humanitarian aid, the Global Peace Index, and the Human Development Index (diwan.gov.qa, n.d).

The three abovementioned Qatari individuals were at the forefront of assisting Sheikh Hamad to achieve his vision for Qatar. All of them had charismatic personalities and wide international networks that enabled them to play a significant role in transforming Qatar into a high-profile country.

Divergence from the GCC

The GCC was established in 1981 after the Iraq-Iran war (1980–1988) to counter Iran's influence in the Gulf region. Its membership includes Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar. The GCC promotes economic, cultural, social, and security-related cooperation between member states and organizes an annual summit to discuss regional affairs. Because of their geographic proximity, GCC member states share similar political systems and common sociocultural positions. Collectively, the GCC countries own nearly half of the world's oil reserves (*What is the GCC?* 2017).

Before 1995, Qatar was under the umbrella of Saudi Arabia through the GCC. Saudi Arabia is the largest GCC country by population, territory size, economy; it also hosts the two holiest cities for Muslims, Makah and Medina. Thus, Saudi Arabia has both religious and geopolitical weight in the Gulf and the Middle East. During Sheikh Hamad's reign, Qatar deviated from the GCC on several occasions as part of the Amir's vision to increase the country's independence. To this end, Sheikh Hamad worked with Hamad bin Jassim, Sheikh Moza Al Missned, and Sheikh Tamim to portray Qatar as an oasis of peace. Their goal was to develop Qatar and free it from the security tangles imposed on it by its geographic location and small population. Furthermore, their ambition extended to making Qatar an influential player in regional affairs.

Sheikh Hamad was able to launch this strategy thanks to Qatar's oil and gas revenues and the presence of CENTCOM and one of the largest U.S. airbases in the world. The goal was to achieve semi-independence from the GCC through a series of

bold and unprecedented steps. First, Qatar established Al Jazeera in 1996, which became a revolutionary channel in the Arab world through its taboo subjects (Boyce, 2013). In particular, Al Jazeera played an influential role during the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, the Afghanistan War in 2001, the Iraqi War in 2003, and the Arab Spring in 2010. Second, in 1996, Qatar allowed an Israeli trade office to open in Doha (Rabi, 2009). Third, Qatar hosted the fourth annual MENA Economic Summit in Doha in November 1997 with the attendance of the Israeli trade minister (Peterson, 2006).

The 2006 legislative elections in Palestine led to a division between Hamas and the PNA, with Gaza under Hamas's rule and the West Bank under the PNA's rule. This exacerbated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only for Palestinians but also for the Gulf states. The internal conflict and split between the PNA and Hamas showed that Gulf Arab states were more heterogeneous than they appeared to be; the GCC could not unite them when the GCC was tested. Unlike the other Gulf states, Qatar supported Hamas. Abdul Jabar Said (2020), the vice president of the Palestine Scholar Association in Diaspora and head of the Quran and Sunnah Department at Qatar University, explained that Qatar has always supported the rights of Palestinians; its positive position on Hamas does not run counter to this stance. This is because Hamas was democratically chosen in the 2006 elections, as it is a movement that represents a part of the Palestinian unity government and part of the PNA; it is not a terrorist movement, nor is it outside of the Palestinian political context. Said added that Qatari support for Hamas was clear, frank, public, and preceded the 2006 elections. In fact, Qatar had welcomed Hamas leaders in the 1990s when they were deported from Jordan (A. Said, personal communication, April 16, 2020).

Qatar's divergence from the GCC became obvious during the Gaza War from

2008 to 2009. Qatar hosted a summit after Israeli aggressions against the will of some Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia who preferred to wait and discuss the issue two days later in the Kuwaiti economic summit. Michael and Guzansky (2018) have argued that disagreements among Gulf states are reflected in their policies towards Gaza. Qatar's neighbors want to weaken its connection to Gaza through the transfer of humanitarian aid from the UAE to the Gaza Strip. The PNA is concerned that Hamas will gain strength through Qatari aid. Moreover, Qatari support for the Muslim Brotherhood is clear in the Gaza Strip through its ties with Hamas (Michael & Guzansky, 2018). Qatari involvement in the Gaza Strip is aggravating for Egypt, which opposes the Muslim Brotherhood. In summary, Qatar's foreign policy has caused many problems, mainly for Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which view Qatar's rise as a challenge to their traditional role in leading the region.

Pragmatism

Lastly, Qatar's foreign policy is based on pragmatism. Lolwah Al Khater explained, one of the reasons why Qatar has maintained its bold foreign policy is its ability to take a pragmatic approach towards many of the regional and international issues and players. Qatar's ability to hold several rounds of negotiations and mediation efforts between different fractions and during many crises in the Middle East has given Qatar the credibility it needs to pursue a more independent and bold foreign policy (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020). Therefore, Qatar's ability to maneuver between the PNA, Hamas, Israel, and the United States has offset many of its structural weaknesses, such as its small size, and has enabled it to grow into a regional mediator.

Conclusion

Qatar's foreign policy has a number of features with regard to the country's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: support of Arab and Islamic identity; support of peaceful resolutions and international law; support of political Islamic movements; bold, visionary, and ambitious leadership; divergence from the GCC; and pragmatism. Some features could be seen as being typical of small state strategies and soft power theory, such as Qatar's support of peaceful resolutions and international law. However, other features, such as a divergence from the GCC and support of political Islamic movements, challenge small state approaches. As a small state, it is assumed that Qatar would stay in the shadow of the GCC to survive. However, events such as the Second Gulf War of 1991, the Al-Khafus border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, and the coup attempt on Qatar in 1996 led Qatar to reconsider its foreign policy options and adopt a more pragmatic autonomous strategy. Furthermore, although political Islamic movements, particularly Muslim Brotherhood are part of the Arab and Muslim nations, the GCC—in particular Saudi Arabia and the UAE—are against them. Therefore, in its support for political Islam, Qatar has challenged its large hegemonic neighbor, Saudi Arabia. This behavior is not in line with the traditional security strategies of small states.

CHAPTER 5: ASSESSING QATAR'S STANCE TOWARDS THE ISRAELI-
PALESTINIAN CONFLICT THROUGH THE SPEECHES OF SHEIKH HAMAD
AND THE COUNTRY'S SOFT POWER TOOLS

This chapter addresses Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through two means: Sheikh Hamad's bin Khalifa Al Thani's speeches about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over his 18 years of rule and Qatar's soft power tools, particularly financial aid to the Palestinians, Al Jazeera's coverage of the conflict, and Qatari mediation between Fatah and Hamas to end their political division.

Sheikh Hamad's speeches

This section outlines Qatar's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as seen in Sheikh Hamad's official speeches. The decision to use Sheikh Hamad's speeches was based on the fact that the Amir of Qatar represents the official position of the state and sets policies and directions for the country. The Amir uses speeches to announce key positions and policies. Sheikh Hamad made 210 official speeches throughout his rule (1995–2013) and mentioned Palestine/Israel in 73 of them. This means that one third of Sheikh Hamad's speeches referred to Palestine/Israel. Two out of 73 speeches were wholly dedicated to the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One was given in Doha on February 26, 2012 at the International Conference on Jerusalem, and the other was made during Sheikh Hamad's visit to Gaza on October 23, 2012. During Sheikh Hamad's reign, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reached major milestones, which are reflected in his speeches. Table 2 presents a summary of major events related to the conflict.

Table 2. Major Milestones in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (1995–2013)

Year	Event	Notes
September 24, 1995	Oslo II Accord	Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin sign an agreement to transfer further territory to the PNA.
September 28, 2000	Al-Aqsa Intifada	The intifada breaks out after Ariel Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
March 29, 2002	Israeli invasion of the West Bank	This event represents the largest operation since the 1967 Six-Day War.
March 28, 2002	Adoption of the Arab Peace Initiative by the Beirut Summit	The Arab Peace Initiative calls for normalization between Arab countries and Israel based on the principle of land for peace.
June 2002	Erection of separation wall on the West Bank	The Israeli-built wall isolates Jerusalem and leads to the confiscation of many Palestinian lands.
September 20, 2002	Israeli siege of Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah	Israel lifts its 34-day siege after the Palestinians transfer six men wanted by Israel to a prison in Jericho as part of a deal brokered by the United States.
March 22, 2004	Death of Ahmad Yassin	Yassin was the founder of Hamas.
November 11, 2004	Death of Yasser Arafat in Paris	Arafat was the chairman of PLO (1969–2004) and the president of the PNA (1994–2004).
January 9, 2005	Mahmood Abbas's rise to the presidency	Abbas is the second president of the PNA and the leader of the PLO and Fatah.
April 30, 2003	Roadmap for peace	The United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations propose a roadmap to resolve the Israeli-

Year	Event	Notes
		Palestinian conflict by creating a Palestinian state that peacefully co-exists with Israel.
September 12, 2005	Israel's withdrawal from Gaza	This event marks an end to 38 years of Israeli occupation. Israel retains control over Gaza's airspace, water supply, and borders.
January 2006	Hamas's victory in Palestinian parliamentary elections	This event marks the second legislative elections after the elections that took place in 1996, which Fatah won.
June 14, 2007	Division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip	Fatah refuses to acknowledge Hamas's rule over Gaza, and Hamas refuses to give up its right to rule.
December 27, 2008	Israel launched a war on Gaza	Israel claimed the war was to stop rocket attacks on Israel. Hamas said the rockets were a reaction to the blockade.
March 9, 2012	Beginning of Israel's second war on Gaza	The war is a result of conflict between Israel and Hamas.
October 23, 2012	Sheikh Hamad's visit to Gaza	The purpose of the visit is to provide political and financial support to Gaza.

To assess Qatar's official stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the Amir's speeches, the content analysis approach was used for the current research. Qualitative content analysis is a research method designed to analyze and interpret data (Schreier, 2012). In their book, *Content Analysis: A Methodology for Structuring and Analyzing Written Material* (1996), Brian Crowley and Joseph Delfico specify that researchers categorize key ideas in a written communication as part of the approach.

Researchers identify themes, issues, topics, and more. Then, researchers can count the frequency of topics, examine differences in their intensity, or analyze issues over time in different settings. Content analysis helps to summarize the content of written material and describe the attitudes of the material's author (Crowley & Delfico, 1996). Many researchers follow the content analysis approach, because it employs a systematic process that other investigators can easily replicate, yielding highly reliable results.

Previous studies that have used content analysis include Mohamed Selim's (1987) *Nasari Political Analysis – A Study in Foreign Doctrines and Policy*, in which the author analyzes Jamal Abdel Naser's speeches; Chang Pu's (2007) "Discourse Analysis of President Bush's Speech at Tsinghua University, China"; Hind Ismail's (2012) "Discourse Markers in Political Speeches: Forms and Functions," in which the researcher analyzes two of Barack Obama's 2012 speeches; and Mazen Al-Ougaili and Suzan Yaqoub's (2019) "Analysis of the Political Discourse of King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein and Its Impact on Human Development in Jordan (1999–2015)."

After defining the text of interest, the content analysis approach entails the following steps:

1. Defining themes and keywords
2. Setting rules for searching keywords
3. Extracting relevant sections according to the keywords and rules
4. Analyzing the extracted sections and drawing conclusions

For the present study, the researcher collected official speeches given by the Amir (1995–2013) from the Amiri Diwan Archives. In total, 210 of Sheikh Hamad's official speeches are publicly accessible at the Amiri Diwan Archives of the State of Qatar's

website (diwan.gov.qa ,n.d). They are available as videos and as Arabic and English texts. The researcher conducted an initial screening and a shortlist of relevant speeches by searching for the main keywords, “Palestine” and “Israel.” This resulted in a subset of 73 speeches. Next, the researcher defined the main themes and relevant keywords to cover the major events that shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad’s reign. These themes and relevant keywords are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Relevant Themes and Keywords from the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Themes	Keywords
Peace process	Madrid Peace Conference (1991), Oslo Accord (1993), Arab Peace Initiative (2002), two-state solution, UN Resolutions
Jerusalem Settlements	Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque, capital of the Palestinian state
Gaza	Settlements, confiscation of land, extorting the land
Second Intifada	Blockade, Hamas, aggression, reconciliation, division
	Uprising, intifada

Then, the researcher searched the 73 shortlisted speeches for the above keywords and categorized them into themes. The next step was to extract and analyze relevant statements from the 73 speeches. The analysis of the extracted statements focused on answering the following questions:

- What was Qatar’s position on the defined themes?
- How many times was a given theme mentioned?
- Did the position on a given theme change with the time, audience, or venue of the speech?

The peace process

Officially, the peace process began with the Madrid Conference in 1991 and

culminated with the signing of the Oslo I Accord in 1993 between the Israelis and the Palestinians and Wadi Araba Treaty between the Israelis and the Jordanians in 1994. The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative was an extension of the peace process. After the Second Intifada of 2000, the peace process was put on hold due to the aggressive policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing government against the Palestinians.

Five main keywords were listed under the theme of “peace process”: “Madrid Peace Conference,” “Oslo Accord,” “Arab Peace Initiative,” “two-state solution,” and “UN Resolutions.” A search was performed for these keywords in Sheikh Hamad’s 73 shortlisted speeches about Palestine. The frequency of these themes is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency of Keywords Related to the Theme of the Peace Process in the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Keywords	Frequency
Madrid Peace Conference	6
Accord	1
UN Resolutions	5
Arab Peace Initiative	2
Two-state solution	5

The researcher extracted the statements before and after these keywords from the speeches and summarized Qatar’s stance on the peace process as outlined in the following section.

Qatar’s Stance on the peace process

As seen through Sheikh Hamad’s speeches, Qatar supported the peace process.

In total, he discussed the importance of resuming the peace process 19 times in his speeches. Throughout his speeches, Sheikh Hamad emphasized that the peace process was the main concern with regard to stability in the Middle East and should be given priority. The failure of a peace process was a threat to security and stability in the region and also endangered international peace and security. Sheikh Hamad called for the achievement of fair and comprehensive peace for all people of the region on the basis of the Madrid Peace Conference (1991); UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425; and the principle of Land for Peace. He confirmed that peace could not be achieved under Israel's occupation, Judaization attempts, or provocative acts, threats, and violation of sacred Arab and Muslim sites. He blamed Israel for its refusal to commit to what was agreed upon in Oslo 1 Accord and for its hindrance of the peace process. For instance, at the opening of the 25th Advisory Council Session in Doha, Sheikh Hamad said, "There is no doubt that full responsibility before the international community for the lack of commitment to these principles and the hindering of peace efforts lies with the Israeli government" (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 25th Advisory Council Session, 1996*).

Sheikh Hamad explained that Qatar wants peace and takes responsibility for it. As a practical step towards peace, Qatar hosted the MENA Economic Summit in Doha in November 1997. This step was controversial for some Arab and Islamic countries, because the Israeli minister of trade was in attendance. However, Qatar viewed the invitation of the Israeli delegate as a gesture of goodwill. In a speech at Georgetown University's campus in Doha, Sheikh Hamad said, "We, in Qatar, are willing to take our responsibility for peace. Therefore, we will proceed with our preparations to host the Middle East-North Africa Economic Summit that will be held in Doha next

November.” In the same speech, he added, “We are doing that in spite of the noncompliance of Netanyahu’s government with the international legitimacy resolution, the Madrid terms of reference, the Land for Peace principle, and the agreements concluded with the Palestinians” (*His Highness speech at Georgetown University, 1997*).

For Sheikh Hamad, peace could only be achieved through a just, comprehensive, and permanent settlement; Israel’s withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967; and the restoration of the Palestinians’ rights, primarily the right to establish a state with Jerusalem as its capital. At the opening of the 25th Session of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers, Sheikh Hamad stated, “We in Qatar affirm our commitment to peace as an indispensable strategic choice: equitable, comprehensive and permanent peace, at all fronts, including the Syrian and Lebanese fronts. Such peace should be based on international legitimacy resolutions, the Madrid Conference and the principle of Land for Peace, including full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon, and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital” (*His Highness speech at the opening of the 25th Session of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Minister, 1998*).

However, the peace process deteriorated in 2000 with the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Hostilities between the Palestinians and the Israelis continued. Israel continued to build settlements, persist with the Judaization of Jerusalem, and maintain aggressive policies towards Palestinians. Meanwhile, the latter reacted by bombing and attacking the Israelis. Sheikh Hamad heavily criticized Netanyahu and his government

for the severe setbacks in the peace process. Recognizing that the Arabs alone were too weak to stop Israeli aggression or to force Israel to fulfill its commitments, Sheikh Hamad frequently called on the United States, Russia, the EU, and the UN to take responsibility. He asked them to provide Palestinians with protection and to reactivate the peace process. He also urged them to exert pressure on Israel to implement the signed agreements and respect the rights of Palestinians, as established through international resolutions. At the Second Doha Conference on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Sheikh Hamad said,

Our Islamic World wonders why the international community does not exert pressure on Israel to compel it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, while all pressures that are exerted apply solely to the Arab side. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary for the United States, which is the sponsor of the peace process, and for the international community to strengthen their efforts to end continuous violence so that negotiations and implementation of the road map can be resumed in order to achieve the positive vision of president George Bush, which is in line with the principles of freedom and justice in which the U.S. believes, namely, the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel. (*His Highness speech at the 2nd Doha Conference on Relations Between the US. and Islamic World, 2004*).

Sheikh Hamad reiterated that Israel's violence and provocative actions enflamed the sentiments of Arab and Islamic nations. In his opinion, Israel's actions against the Palestinians were intended to disrupt regional peace and to avoid fulfilling its commitments as part of the peace process. At the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, Sheikh Hamad said that "the peace process has stopped because of the Israeli

policy of settlement in the Palestinian Territories and Jerusalem and refusing to cede them” (*His Highness speech at the 67th Session of UN General Assembly*, 2012).

To conclude, Sheikh Hamad was consistent in his stance towards the peace process throughout his 18 years of rule (1995–2013). He emphasized that peace was important for the security of the Middle East and of the world. For Qatar, peace meant the Israelis’ withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, based on the legitimacy of international resolutions. Sheikh Hamad’s stance towards the peace process did not change based on the time, audience, or venue of his speeches.

Jerusalem

Three main keywords were established under the theme of “Jerusalem,” namely “Jerusalem,” “Al-Aqsa Mosque,” and “Judaization.” Their frequency in Sheikh Hamad’s speeches is listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of Keywords Related to the Theme of Jerusalem in the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Keywords	Frequency
Jerusalem	73
Al-Aqsa Mosque	11
Judaization	9

Qatar’s Stance on Jerusalem

Israel occupied West Jerusalem in the 1948 war, while East Jerusalem fell to Israeli occupation in the 1967 Six-Day War. East Jerusalem is home to Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the first *qibla* (prayer direction) for Muslims and the third holiest shrine in Islam after the two mosques of Makah and Medina. As seen through Sheikh Hamad's speeches, the official Qatari position on Jerusalem is that it is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and should be given top priority because Arabs and Muslims will never abandon it. Sheikh Hamad believed that protection should be provided for Arabs in Jerusalem and that peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through a just, comprehensive, and permanent settlement involving the full withdrawal of Israel from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the restoration of Palestinians' legitimate national rights, particularly the right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. Sheikh Hamad reiterated that there was no Palestinian state without Jerusalem and no Jerusalem without Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In his speeches about Jerusalem, Sheikh Hamad frequently emphasized the importance of maintaining the city's Arab and Islamic identity. To affirm his responsibility to and love for Jerusalem, Sheikh Hamad hosted the International Conference on Jerusalem in Doha in 2012. At the conference, Sheikh Hamad discussed the suffering of Palestinians, illegal Israeli settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the separation wall, the blockade of Gaza, Jerusalem's Judaization, violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque, the ethnic cleansing of the people of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the city's Islamic and Christian heritage. He believed that Arab rulers were not doing enough to protect Jerusalem and urged them to act quickly in order to stop the Judaization of the city and help Muslim and Christian Palestinians to resist "the Zionist scheme of Greater Jerusalem" (*His Highness' Speech at the International*

Conference on Jerusalem, 2012).

Sheikh Hamad blamed the Israelis for the suffering of the Palestinians and the stalling of the peace process. He repeatedly highlighted that the Israelis were in violation of international law and UN Resolutions on the rights of the Palestinian people. He proposed that the UN Security Council pass a resolution to establish an international investigation committee to examine Israel's actions since its occupation of Arab Jerusalem in 1967 to eliminate the city's Islamic and Arab heritage. He also called on civil society organizations to fulfill their responsibilities to protect Jerusalem and its Arab and Islamic identity. His last call was to the Palestinian leadership to reconcile and prepare projects in Jerusalem, and he offered Qatar's help to implement these projects. He concluded the speech by calling on Arab leaders to support Palestinian unity and help Palestinians regain their rights (*His Highness' Speech at the International Conference on Jerusalem, 2012*).

Three months before stepping down from his position as the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad reiterated the importance of finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict for the security and stability of the Middle East at the opening session of the 24th Arab Summit on March 26, 2013. Peace should guarantee the Palestinians' rights, particularly the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital (*His Highness speech at the Opening Session of the 24th Arab Summit, 2013*). This was the first time Sheikh Hamad that explicitly referred to "East Jerusalem" in his speeches. He used the term twice in this speech. Mohammad Al Hajiri, a professor of International Affairs at Qatar University and a journalist, commented that Sheikh Hamad began using the term "East Jerusalem" after Mahmood Abbas used it in one of his own speeches in

2012 in Ramallah. Therefore, Qatar followed the Palestinian stance on East Jerusalem (M. Al Hajiri, personal communication, January 10, 2020).

In this speech, Sheikh Hamad also blamed Israel for its violation of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Judaization of East Jerusalem, the building of illegal Israeli settlements, and detention of Palestinians. He warned that all of these actions increased tension in the region and frustration among Palestinians and that they only served to delay the faltering peace process. He took a practical approach by proposing a smaller Arab Summit in Cairo for Palestinian reconciliation in accordance with the Cairo Agreement (2011) and the Doha Agreement (2012), which would include the establishment of a transitional government to oversee legislative and presidential elections. Finally, he called for the establishment of a \$1 billion fund to support Jerusalem and declared that Qatar would contribute \$250 million (*His Highness' Speech at the Opening Session of the 24th Arab Summit*, 2013).

To conclude, Sheikh Hamad was consistent throughout his speeches about what should be done for Jerusalem and its people. He was also consistent in referring to Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian state, with the exception of the reference “East Jerusalem” at the opening session of the 24th Arab Summit during the last year of his rule (*His Highness' Speech at the Opening Session of the 24th Arab Summit*, 2013).

Settlements

Three keywords were established under the theme of “settlements”: “settlement,” “confiscation of land,” and “extorting of land.” Their frequency in Sheikh Hamad’s speeches is listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Frequency of Keywords Related to the Theme of Settlements in the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Keywords	Frequency
Settlements	20
Confiscation of land	1
Extorting of land	1

In all of his speeches, Sheikh Hamad called for Israel to stop building settlements, because they are illegal, undermine the two-state solution, and obstruct the peace process. He added that the settlement policy creates tension in the region, increases frustration among Palestinians, and delays the peace process. This position was expressed in different platforms within and outside of Qatar. For example, at the opening of the 25th Advisory Council Session, Sheikh Hamad warned against Israel’s attempts to change the status quo in Jerusalem. He said, “Israel has to refrain from any measures to alter the geographic and demographic characteristics of Arab Jerusalem as defined by its boundaries prior to the 4th of June 1967; to freeze colonialist settlement activity in the occupied territories” (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 25th Advisory Council Session, 1996*).

Sheikh Hamad explained that Israel has changed the face of Palestinian land through the construction of illegal settlements and Judaization in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem. Israel was able to undertake these actions due to divisions in the Arab world, the international community’s failure to protect the rights of Palestinians, and the siding of the great powers (USA, EU) with Israel. These great powers embrace a double standard policy that is biased towards Israel and serves their own interests and denies Palestinians the right to return to their homeland and establish an independent

state. Sheikh Hamad asserted that the peace process stopped due to Israel's insistence on a settlement policy. He wondered why the UN Security Council would not adopt a resolution to force Israel to stop building settlements, arguing that Israel should refrain from practices that hinder the future achievement of peace. He asked for bold steps to be taken on the path to peace, which should be based on the cessation of settlements, a return to 1967 borders, and a two-state solution. At the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, Sheikh Hamad said that "the peace process has stopped because of the Israeli policy of settlement in the Palestinian Territories and Jerusalem and refusing to cede them" (*His Highness speech at the 67th Session of UN General Assembly, 2012*).

Sheikh Hamad believed that Israel took advantage of the Arab Spring in 2010 to intensify its illegal settlement activities. He added that Netanyahu had even thought of amending the status of the West Bank to a non-occupied territory so that settlement activities would be subject to Israeli law, without taking into account the West Bank's international status as an occupied territory. In Sheikh Hamad's opinion, all of the Israeli settlements are illegal, regardless of labels used by the Israeli government. Overall, Sheikh Hamad was consistent when addressing the topic of settlements. His position remained firm throughout his 18 years of rule and did not change based on the time, audience, or venue of his speeches.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000)

Two keywords were searched under the theme of "Al-Aqsa Intifada," namely "uprising" and "intifada." *Intifada* is the Arabic word for "uprising." The frequency of these keywords in Sheikh Hamad's speeches is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Frequency of Keywords Related to the Theme of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Keywords	Frequency
Uprising	2
Intifada	8

Qatar's Stance on the Al-Aqsa Intifada

When Ariel Sharon (1928–2014), the 11th prime minister of Israel, visited Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000, the second Palestinian uprising began in protest to his visit. Although the Al-Aqsa Intifada ended in 2005, assaults on Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Israelis continued. Therefore, Sheikh Hamad frequently mentioned the issue in his speeches. He viewed the intifada as a legitimate way for Palestinians to defend themselves and achieve their right to live in peace in an independent Palestinian state. He added that hundreds of Palestinians were killed and injured in “the blessed Aqsa Uprising” for claiming their right to life, existence, and national sovereignty. He elaborated that the courageous Palestinian uprising stood against attempts to violate the sanctity of the first of the two *qiblas* and the third holiest shrines, which demonstrated that Jerusalem was the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the opening session of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference, Sheikh Hamad stated, “The sanctity of the Islamic and Christian sacred sites in Palestine is being defiled; hundreds of Palestinians are being killed, in addition to thousands of injured victims in the blessed Aqsa Uprising for no reason other than claiming their right to life, existence and national sovereignty, all of which have been established by heavenly laws and international conventions” (*His Highness at the Opening Session of 9th Islamic Summit Conference*, 2000).

At the opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session, Sheikh Hamad said, “We denounce continued Israeli attacks on the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Islamic sacred places. We warn that these practices are not only inhuman but also involving dangerous political agendas to annex and Judaize Jerusalem;” He called for a firm Arab, Islamic, and international response to stop Israeli aggressions (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session*, 2009). Sheikh Hamad justified the Al-Aqsa Intifada as the result of oppressive Israeli policies and practices. He recognized that the Arabs’ support was limited. He explicitly said that Palestinians were self-dependent in their fight and conscious that other Arabs only helped them through condemnations of Israeli aggressions and the provision of some financial assistance. Finally, Sheikh Hamad viewed the intifada as a way to enforce peace in the region. He noted that Arabs and Muslims sought peace. However, if the intifada was the way to enforce peace, then Arabs and Muslims had to support it. They had to support Palestinians by alleviating their suffering and enabling them to endure the aggressions that they faced due to the imbalance of power between Israelis and Palestinians. In doing so, Arabs and Muslims would not only help Palestinians but also defend their holy places and rights. Although the Al-Aqsa Intifada ended in 2005 and Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, assaults on Al-Aqsa continued. Therefore, Sheikh Hamad brought up the issue frequently. The intifada lasted five years (2000–2005). During this time, Sheikh Hamad’s position did not change according to the time, audience, or venue of his speeches. He fully supported the uprising and considered it a legal act of self-defense.

The Gaza Strip

Six keywords were included under the theme of “the Gaza Strip”: “Gaza,”

“ Hamas,” “blockade,” “aggression,” “division,” and “reconciliation.” The frequency of these keywords in Sheikh Hamad’s speeches is given in Table 8.

Table 8. Frequency of Keywords Related to the Theme of the Gaza Strip in the Speeches of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013)

Keywords	Frequency
Gaza	70
Blockade	10
Aggression	5
Division	9
Reconciliation	7
Hamas	3

Qatar’s Stance on the Gaza Strip

In 2006, Hamas won the second legislative elections in Gaza. Fatah, under the leadership of PNA President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, engaged in a bloody confrontation after Hamas’s victory. Fatah refused to recognize Hamas’s control over Gaza, and Hamas refused to give up its right to rule. Hence, a division occurred between the West Bank and Gaza. In addition to restrictions from the PNA, Israel and Egypt have imposed a blockade on Gaza since 2007.

Qatar supported the Hamas government in Gaza and argued that it had the right to rule because it had won the 2006 elections. Sheikh Hamad criticized the PNA and some Arab and non-Arab countries’ refusal to acknowledge Hamas’s victory; he considered it a form of hypocrisy to tout democracy, then refuse its outcomes. At the sixth Doha Forum, Sheikh Hamad said that “the parliamentary elections were held with transparency recognized by all observers, including those who have been unable to accept the will of the Palestinian people... This important Arab experience should be supported and encouraged rather than putting pressures on it, interfering with its

people's right to choose their leaders or threatening to cut off aid" (*His Highness speech at the 6th Doha Forum, 2006*).

By showing solidarity with the Palestinians, Sheikh Hamad clearly signaled that their actions stemmed from a legitimate right to resist the Israeli occupation and did not constitute terrorism. In 2006, ISIS was terrorizing the Middle East and the world. At a speech at the European Parliament in the same year, Sheikh Hamad explained that Qatar was "keen on distinguishing between terrorizing safe civilians, which should be rejected no matter what, and the legitimate right to resist occupation, which is supported by international laws and norms." He added, "The Palestinian government formed by Hamas a few months ago based on the Palestinian people's free will should have been given an opportunity to work for the people who have chosen it." Rejecting the way that the PNA and some Arab and non-Arab countries had reacted to Hamas's victory, he said, "Instead of rewarding the Palestinians for practicing democracy standard which can hardly be matched in our region, they have been punished. I do not understand how a democratically elected government is besieged and an entire people is sanctioned just because it has practiced its democratic right to choose its government. Isn't it double standards to demand democracy then object to its results?" (*His Highness speech at the European Parliament, 2006*).

Qatar stood with Gaza throughout the three wars that Israel launched on the Gaza Strip in December 2008, November 2012, and July 2014. The first and second offensives occurred during Sheikh Hamad's rule. During the first Israeli war of 2009 which Israel called "Operation Cast Lead" while Hamas named the "Battle of al-Furqan", Sheikh Hamad gave a speech in Doha. He called for a ceasefire, the lifting of

the siege on Gaza, the organization of an extraordinary Arab Summit to take a position on the war. He condemned the Israelis' assaults on Palestinians and called on Arabs, Muslims and all peace-loving countries in the world to help stop the aggressions, prevent repeated attacks, and lift the siege on the Gaza Strip. He also reminded all countries, including the ones that met after the 2009 war in Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt,¹⁵ that the siege was ongoing and that the reconstruction remained only "ink on paper" (*His Highness' Address to the Arab Nation on the Occasion of the Israeli Aggression on Gaza*, 2009).

After the second war of 2012 which Israel called the "Operation Pillar of Defense", Sheikh Hamad visited Gaza to offer his support. At the time of the visit, Gaza was under Palestinian rule, as it had been since the Oslo I Accord in 1993. Sheikh Hamad's first visit took place after the establishment of the PNA in 1999, when he met Yasar Arafat in Gaza. His second visit occurred in October 2012 in an attempt to end Israel's blockade on Gaza. According to Ismail Hanieh, the Qatari funding had risen from the \$254 million to \$400 million in investments and assistance to be spent on housing projects and infrastructure, which were greatly needed in the Gaza Strip after the siege and the Israeli war in 2008-2009 (*Qatari emir in historic Gaza visit*, *AL Jazeera*, 2012).

Upon his arrival, Sheikh Hamad delivered a speech to the Palestinians in which he reiterated that the Palestinian cause was the Arab cause, asserted that Israel was changing the Palestinian landscape through settlement and Judaization, and recognized

¹⁵ An international conference to help reconstruct the Gaza Strip was held in Sharm Elsheikh in Egypt on 2nd March 2009 within a participation of more than 80 countries and organizations. The most famous participants were the United States, Gulf Arab states, the European Commission and Britain.

Gaza's suffering since the Israeli war in 2008 and as a result of the blockade. He emphasized that the Palestinians' sacrifices were an important contributing factor in the Arab Spring and the best motivation for Arab peoples to restore their lost dignity. He stressed the importance of unity and that the split between the West Bank and Gaza affected the joint Palestinian and Arab cause. Furthermore, he emphasized that standing with the Palestinians was a duty for all Arabs, including Qataris (*His Highness speech in Gaza*, 2012). According to Ezet Rishaq (2020), a member of Hamas's Political Bureau and the head of its Office of Arab and Islamic Relations, Hamas appreciated Qatar's embrace of leaders from the movement and considered this embracement to be a consolidation of relations and a strengthening of Qatar's role in supporting Palestinians' defense of their rights and land in spite of the pressures to which Qatar was subjected.

Sheikh Hamad believed in the importance of ending the division between the West Bank and Gaza. To support Palestinian national unity, he worked on creating the conditions necessary to achieve it through dialogue between different Palestinian factions. For example, at the opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session, he said,

We support the Palestinian national unity and are working on creating the appropriate conditions to achieve it through dialogue among different Palestinian forces and factions. However, we call for noninterference in this internal matter to avoid outweighing the interest of one party at the expense of the other and also avoid deepening differences among the Palestinians lest it should become impossible to find a solution. The failure of many countries to recognize the results of the democratic elections in Palestine and punishing its people by besieging them have undermined their credibility when they speak

about democracy and elections under occupation and siege. (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session, 2009*)

This call for unity was reaffirmed at the opening of the 39th Advisory Council Session. (*His Highness speech at the Opening of the 39th Advisory Council Session, 2010*) and the International Conference on Jerusalem. Sheikh Hamad called on Palestinian leadership to work towards reconciliation, as any dispute would be meaningless while Jerusalem remained under occupation. He advised Palestinian leaders to make Jerusalem a catalyst for ending the division as a natural way of restoring the Palestinians rights (*His Highness speech at The International Conference on Jerusalem, 2012*).

In 2012, under the sponsorship of Sheikh Hamad, Fatah and Hamas met in Doha in an attempt to reconcile. As a result, the Doha Agreement was reached. Sheikh Hamad suggested holding elections, establishing a government of national consensus, reconstructing Gaza, and activating the Cairo Agreement of 2011. In his speech during his visit to Gaza on October 23, 2012, Sheikh Hamad urged the Palestinians to reconcile: “If the owners of a house do not fortify it, it will not be fortified by others” (*His Highness speech in Gaza, 2012b*). In other words, Palestinian factions needed to work together to reconcile and end their division. If they did not have the will to do so, nobody would. Finally, at the opening session of the 24th Arab Summit, Sheikh Hamad proposed holding a smaller Arab Summit in Cairo to achieve Palestinian reconciliation in accordance with the Cairo Agreement (2011) and the Doha Agreement (2012). He suggested establishing a transitional government to supervise legislative and presidential elections and agreeing on a date to hold them (*His Highness speech at the*

Opening Session of the 24th Arab Summit, 2013). Sheikh Hamad was consistent in his financial, diplomatic, and political support of Gaza. This exposed Qatar to criticisms about its support of terrorism, since Hamas advocated for military confrontation with Israel while Fatah sought a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiation.

To conclude, there are 210 official speeches on record made by Sheikh Hamad during his 18 years of rule from 1995 to 2013. In 73 of these speeches, he explicitly mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This means that one third of Sheikh Hamad's speeches referred to the conflict, demonstrating its importance in Qatari foreign policy. Two out of 73 speeches were wholly dedicated to the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; one was given in Doha in February 2012 at the International Conference on Jerusalem, and the other was made during Sheikh Hamad's visit to Gaza in October 2012. After the content analysis method was used to examine Sheikh Hamad's speeches, it was determined that Jerusalem was the most frequently occurring theme (73 mentions). This shows that Jerusalem was central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its importance to Muslims as a holy city, the first *qibla* (prayer direction), and home to the third holiest mosque in Islam after the ones in Makah and Medina. The Gaza Strip was the second most frequent theme in Sheikh Hamad's speeches (70 mentions), which highlights the strong rapprochement between Qatar and the Hamas government in Gaza. A summary of the themes, keywords and main points in Sheikh Hamad's speeches presented in the table below.

Table 9. Summary of Analysis of Sheikh Hamad's Speeches

Theme (no. of mentions)	Theme – Keywords (no. of mentions)	Main Points Covered in the Speeches	Notes
Peace Process (19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madrid Peace Conference (6) • Two-state solution (5) • UN resolution (5) • Arab Peace initiative (2) • Accord (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the peace process (Madrid Peace conference (1991), Oslo Accord (1993), Arab Peace Initiative (2002)) • Peace process is the main concern with regard to stability in the Middle East • Peace could only be achieved through Israel's withdrawal from to the 1967 borders; and establishing a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. • Sheikh Hamad visited Ramallah in 1999 to support the PNA 	Sheikh Hamad's stance did not change with time, audience, or venue
Jerusalem (93)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jerusalem (73) • Al-Aqsa Mosque (11) • Judaization (9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core of the Arab-Israeli conflict • Capital of future Palestinian state • Called for maintaining the city's Arab and Islamic identity • Hosted a conference on Jerusalem in Doha in 2012 • Contribution of \$250M to Jerusalem fund. 	Sheikh Hamad's stance did not change with time, audience, or venue except for his last speech in 2013 when he said "East Jerusalem" instead of Jerusalem
Settlements (22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Settlements (20) • Confiscation of land (1) • Extorting of land (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal • Undermine the two-state solution • Obstruct the peace process • Change the demography of the country • Intensified after the Arab Spring 2010 	Sheikh Hamad's stance did not change with time, audience, or venue

Al-Aqsa Intifada (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intifada (8) • Uprising (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A legitimate way for Palestinians to defend themselves and achieve their right to live in peace in an independent Palestinian state. • A right to defend the sanctity of the first of the two qiblas and the third holiest shrines, which demonstrated that Jerusalem was the core of the Arab Israeli conflict 	Sheikh Hamad's stance did not change with time, audience, or venue
The Gaza Strip (104)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaza (70) • Blockade (10) • Division (9) • Reconciliation (7) • Aggression (5) • Hamas (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qatar supported the Hamas in Gaza since 2006 elections. • Qatar stood with Gaza throughout the two wars in 2008 and 2012 • Sheikh Hamad urged Fatah and Hamas to end the division. • Sheikh Hamad visited Gaza in 2012 • Sponsored the Doha Agreement between Hamas and Fatah in 2012 • Pledged a fund of 350 million US dollars to reconstruct the Gaza strip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Hamad's stance did not change with time, audience, or venue • More supportive of Gaza and Hamas after 2006 because of free election and blockade

In all of his speeches, Sheikh Hamad called for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiation rather than violence. He believed that a solution to the conflict could be achieved through Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied in the 1967 war and respecting the right of Palestinians to build a state next to Israel. To achieve security and stability in the Middle East, Sheikh Hamad called on Israel to accept the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

Qatar's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was very similar to that of the

GCC and other Arab countries in most occasions. However, Sheikh Hamad interestingly diverged from the GCC when he allowed an Israeli trade office to be opened in Doha in 1996, hosted an urgent summit on Gaza in 2009 and a conference on Jerusalem in 2012 and visited Gaza in 2012. It is evident that Qatar's position on the ongoing conflict also aligned with that of the Arab League and UN Resolution 242. Sheikh Hamad also addressed the importance of Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state, an idea that is in accordance with UN Resolution 194. Furthermore, Sheikh Hamad stressed the Palestinians' right to have their own state, which is a right that the UN emphasizes in Resolution 3236. Finally, Sheikh Hamad frequently reiterated the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as a solution to the conflict and for the stability of the region.

Throughout his rule, Sheikh Hamad's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained consistent in his speeches. This stance did not change based on the time, audience, or venue of the speech. However, it is crucial to note that, during his last year of rule, he referred to East Jerusalem rather than Jerusalem as the designated capital of the future Palestinian state in his speech to the Doha Forum in 2013. This represented a change in his position on Jerusalem, which itself reflected a change in the Palestinian leadership's position in 2012 (M. Al Hajiri, personal communication, January 10, 2020).

Soft power tools through financial aid

Qatar contains approximately 12% of the world's natural gas reserves, ranking third in the world after Russia and Iran. As a result, the Qatari economy has experienced rapid economic growth. Qatari leadership has partly channeled the country's wealth

into sovereign investments (Ulrichsen, 2012). The Qatar Investment Authority and Qatar Holding were established in 2005 and 2006, respectively; in addition, Qatar has acquired a stake in internationally renowned brands such as Porsche and Harrods.

This newfound wealth has become a strength for Qatar. The country's great financial capabilities, the presence of ambitious and visionary rulers, and U.S. protection have helped to offset potentially limiting structural factors and enabled Qatar to adopt an effective and independent foreign policy. According to Ulrichsen (2012), growth in wealth, the availability of choices on how best to utilize it, and changes in the world order have enabled small states such as Qatar to play an important role in the construction of a new international system. Krane and Wright (2014) have argued that Qatar's foreign policy with regard to energy exports and national security is an example of how a small state has exploited its comparative advantage to achieve a disproportionate international presence. They added that Qatar's ambitions can be credited to its ruling elites and are powered by its economy. In fact, Qatar's strong economy has enabled it to develop itself, invest abroad, and make trade connections with strong economies. Furthermore, Qatar has been able to deliver humanitarian aid and engage in mediation through generous incentives to conflicting parties. Krane and Wright (2014) have highlighted that Qatar's natural gas reserves have provided it with security and political power. Moreover, international connections with strong trading partners have enabled Qatar to develop its gas export infrastructure. Disagreements with regional partners over gas imports have prompted Qatar to diversify its customer base and turn towards the strong economies of the East (Krane & Wright, 2014).

In recognition that its economy is built on energy, Qatar has begun a

diversification process to protect this commodity. Diversification would make Qatar's economy more sustainable and resilient, while also protecting its national security. To this end, Qatar National Vision was launched in 2008. The strategy aims to convert Qatar into an innovative country by 2030, one that is capable of sustaining its development and providing a high standard of living to all citizens, including future generations (Qatar National Vision 230, 2008). Diversification of economic resources would also provide Qatar with alternative capital when its oil and gas reserves are depleted.

Qatar's economic power has been leveraged to build the nation at the domestic level, mediate between opposing factions at the regional level, and develop projects at the international level. Qatar's economy has compensated for a lack of traditional hard power components (i.e., geographical size, demographic size, and military strength). Ulrichsen (2014) emphasized that Qatar's regional role has been facilitated by changes to the international system; opportunities for small states have flourished as the link between size and power has diminished. He believes that globalization and the shifting nature of power have made it easier for small states to project soft power and to integrate with the global economy. The fourth annual MENA Economic Conference in 1997 and the Doha round of the World Trade Organization negotiations in 2001 were both held in Doha and are two examples of Qatar's use of the economy as a foreign policy tool to reinforce its international economic relationships and to brand the country (Peterson, 2006). Ulrichsen (2014) has noted that Qatar wishes to diversify sources of external security through its export of LNG to economies around the world and to increase the number of trading partners that have a stake in its stability in order to rely on their support in case of a threat. He added that the international response to the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 reinforced this

point. In fact, A coalition of 39 countries came to the rescue of the small state of Kuwait when Saddam Hussein occupied it in 1990.

It is important to note that not all small countries in the Gulf have used their economy in the same way as Qatar. Cooper and Momani (2011) explained that Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait chose to stay neutral in disputes across Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. Qatar, by contrast, has demonstrated bold behavior by hosting an Israeli trade office in 1995, coordinating with Israel to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, and mediating between Hamas and Israel and between Hamas and Fatah. These actions show that Qatar has employed its energy revenues and financial resources to resolve conflicts.

The Government Communications Office website (GCO) states that Qatar is committed to helping people impacted by all types of crises through humanitarian aid while following the principles of neutrality. It adds that Qatar has expanded its international aid program through donations from the government and through Qatari charities and donors. In addition, Qatar supports the UN and international organizations in the areas of development and humanitarian aid (gco.gov.qa, 2020). In addition, Qatar views Palestine as a disadvantaged country in urgent need of humanitarian help. The GCO website states that Palestine is under occupation, has many refugee camps, suffers from a weak economy, depends on donations from Israel and external organizations, and experiences frequent uprisings, wars, and a blockade on Gaza, all of which have increased misery and poverty among Palestinians. In addition, Palestine is part of the Arab and Islamic world.

Qatari aid to Palestine has flowed for decades, ever since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began in 1948. However, before Qatar's independence in 1971, Qatari aid came from the public through fundraising campaigns or charities, in addition to contributions from some Sheikhs and merchants. After Qatar became an independent state, financial aid to the Palestinians became institutionalized through the GCC, the Arab League, the UN, and Israel. It is difficult to document the precise amount that Qatar has spent on Palestine; Zureik (2017) argues that little is known about the exact amount that it has contributed to conflict zones in the Middle East and other parts of the world.

Donating to the poor and needy is part of the Muslim creed. It is either mandatory through *zakat* or voluntary through charity. *Zakat*, or almsgiving, is one of the five pillars of Islam, along with prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and belief in Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad. *Zakat* is the annual payment that Muslims make to support the neediest in society. Many donations from the Islamic world to Palestinians have been in the form of *zakat* money. In this light, Qatar donates to Palestine for religious reasons, in solidarity with Arab and Muslim causes, and for political and economic gain through branding.

Qatari aid to Palestine has been very substantial and covered multiple projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. More than 550,000 people in the Gaza Strip and tens of thousands of people in Jerusalem and the West Bank have benefited from the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) (L. Al Khater, personal communication, July 05, 2020). QFFD has initiated eight projects in Palestine; for instance, it allocated \$1.405 billion towards infrastructure reconstruction, which helped build 384 residential units in 32 buildings (Gaza Reconstruction Program, 2016). According to Ibrahim Naser

Eddin, the vice president of Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, Qatar's financial aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has been enormous and greatly appreciated from the Palestinians. These aids helped solve urgent problems such as housing, infrastructure, and assistance for orphans and the needy. It has also played a significant role in helping Palestinians to withstand the difficult living conditions that they have been subjected to due to the Israeli occupation (I. Naser Eddin, personal communication, December 15, 2020). Zureik (2017) confirmed that the bulk of humanitarian aid of Qatar was directed to the besieged Gaza Strip to support health, education, and infrastructure projects, such as electricity, housing, and road repair.

To explain Qatar's generous aid to the Palestinians, Kuwaiti economic expert Maytham Al Mushakhes revealed that Arab and Islamic agreements to support Palestine, according to which each country must contribute a share to the provision of aid. Sometimes, this aid is used for political gain, such as achieving an international position, affecting others' decisions, or even showing off. With the emergence of new vision of Qatar in 1995, the country wanted to play an essential international role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The volume of Qatar's aid reflects this new role, given that other Gulf Arab states have donated generously much more than Qatar throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (M. Al Mushakhes, personal communication, April 24, 2020). Mohammad Al Misfer, a professor of political science at Qatar University, has emphasized that aid is a national and humanitarian necessity and duty; the Palestinian people need help, especially in Gaza, which has been besieged by various Arab, Palestinian, Israeli, and international parties (M. Al Misfer, personal communication, June 04, 2020). Moreover, Al Ansari (a Qatari professor of political sociology) has explained that political stability in Gaza can only be achieved if the Authority in Gaza

(Hamas) can manage its daily affairs, which requires external support. This support came from Qatar due to its positive relations with Hamas; at the same time, Qatar can manage its relationship with Israel to ensure that aid reaches the Gaza Strip. In Al Ansari's opinion, this political stability has helped the Gaza Strip to weather attempts by the PNA, Israel, and others (Egypt, UAE) to frustrate Hamas and restore balance (M. Al Ansari, personal communication, May 26, 2020). However, Fayez Abu Shamala, the former mayor of Khan Yunis in Gaza, emphasized that Qatar has helped the Palestinian people with a patriotic, national, religious, and moral duty. Qatar provided assistance to those in need of assistance without asking them for anything in return; it did not ask the Palestinians to take a position on Qatar's enemies, nor to befriend its friends. This confirms that Qatari aid was based on the belief that the Palestinians and the Qataris are part of one Arab nation and that the victory of an Arab country and its stability represented the stability of the Arab nation as a whole. Furthermore, Qatari aid to Palestinians does not distinguish between the PNA and Hamas; Qatar provides aid to all parties, which reflects the belief of Qatari leadership that it provides assistance to the people, not to individuals or organizations (F. Abu Shamala, personal communication, December, 08, 2020). On the other side, Sahar Qawasmi, a former member of the Palestinian Legislative Council believes that the financial aid in general, is one of the entitlements that the Arab countries pledged in favor of supporting Palestine and the Palestinian people. Palestinians are very grateful to every Arab country that provides support for this central cause. But the problem with the mechanisms of its provision is whether it contributes to strengthening the Palestinian internal front, and does it lead to the desired result? I believe that the role of money should serve to reinforce the sovereignty of the state and not the opposite. Also, the delivery mechanism may be without going through and agreeing to the

conditions of the Israeli occupation (S. Qawasmi, personal communication, September 20, 2020).

Some scholars and political observers have questioned why Qatari aid goes more to Gaza than to the West Bank and whether Qatar is biased towards Gaza and thus Hamas. According to Zureik (2017), Qatari aid is directed to the Gaza Strip more than the West Bank because Qatar has an established relationship with Hamas and because Gaza has frequently been the target of Israeli aggressions, which have resulted in widespread destruction. Furthermore, he stated that Arab and non-Arab donors, including UN agencies, have criticized Israel's restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid due to the blockade on Gaza. In addition, Al Ansari said that Qatar supports Gaza and the West Bank equally, but the suffering in Gaza is greater (M. Al Ansari, personal communication, May 26, 2020).

Qatar channels its donations through Israel, since Egypt closed the Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip. The Qatari envoy to Gaza, El-Emadi, stated that sending aid to the Gaza Strip would not be possible without Israel and that Qatar aims to prevent the next war in Gaza (Michael & Guzansky, 2018). In addition, Qatari aid to Gaza exceeds aid from any other Arab state and strengthens Hamas's ability to control the Gaza Strip, particularly by paying salaries and promoting humanitarian and infrastructure projects (Michael and Guzansky (2018). However, Israel views this cooperation with Qatar as a way to reduce Iran's influence on Hamas. In addition, Qatar could serve as a mediator due to its influence on Hamas. Moreover, Israel has an interest in directing Qatar's aid to civilians in order to alleviate their plight and postpone hostilities with Hamas, which could seek military escalation to divert public criticism from itself to Israel and to legitimize its status in the Gaza Strip.

However, this aid is conditional by Israel on not being used for military purposes. For example, Israel opposes the import of cement and other construction materials into Gaza on the pretext that Palestinians can use them for military purposes. Israel and the United States direct Qatar's aid towards civilian and humanitarian purposes, provided that it eases human suffering and postpones possible hostilities with Hamas (Neubauer, 2018). Both countries classify Hamas as a terrorist organization. Juan Cole, a U.S. academic and commentator on modern-day Middle East and South Asia, has argued that Qatar sends hundreds of millions of dollars to Gaza for humanitarian aid, but it does so carefully through the Israeli government and Israeli banks to avoid accusations of supporting Hamas (J. Cole, personal communication, May 05, 2020). Indeed, the ability to engage both Hamas and Israel are a key part of Qatar's mediation efforts.

Mehran Kamrava, the director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University Qatar, has argued that Qatar's foreign policy is based on hedging. Hedging means maintaining friendly relations with as many countries as possible and having as few enemies as possible; a country that follows this strategy places one large bet one way and a number of smaller bets the other way. Thus, with regard to security, Qatar's large bet is to maintain an alliance with the United States, and its smaller bet is to maintain relations with countries such as Iran and nonstate actors such as Hamas. Then, Qatar makes itself a strategic conduit and is able to talk to Hamas on behalf of others who cannot. Kamrava's view of Qatari foreign policy was manifested not only through Qatar's mediation between Hamas and Israel but also the peace talks that took place between the United States and the Taliban in Doha in September 2020 (M. Kamrava, personal communication, July 18, 2020).

However, many political observers have wondered whether Qatari aid truly helps Palestinians. Hever (2015) has estimated that at least 72% of international aid to Palestine ends up in the Israeli economy. She believes that the main harm is that international aid reinforces the Israeli economy and funds the Israeli government's occupation of Palestine. In addition, Israeli companies offer goods and services to aid agencies, Israeli employees work for them, and Israeli ministries levy tolls and fees on them. Aid agencies pay these costs in foreign currency, which further contributes to Israel's foreign currency reserves and increases the demand for Israeli currency. Therefore, international aid to Palestinians ultimately contributes billions of dollars to Israel's GDP.

Soft power tools through Al Jazeera

The current section discusses Al Jazeera's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which Qatar has used as a diplomatic soft power tool to wield its influence. Al Jazeera is the second most important soft power tool of Qatari foreign policy after financial aid to Palestinians. While financial aid has a direct effect on the daily lives of Palestinians and enables them to survive, its impact remains limited. By contrast, Al Jazeera coverage, which aims to spread awareness about the conflict and mobilize Arabs to advocate the rights of Palestinians, has a wide audience and impact.

Established in 1996, the Al Jazeera news network represented a critical and pragmatic diplomatic tool in Qatari foreign policy. Al Jazeera has promoted an image of Qatar as a modern and open Gulf state that accepts differences and respects all views. Al Jazeera's promotion of Qatar, coupled with visionary leadership and revenues from

gas exports, has helped Qatar increase its influence and encourage foreign investment in the country. Al Jazeera is the first 24-hour news network in the Arab world and presents an alternative to international outlets such as Cables News Network (CNN) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). It has also served as a counterweight to Saudi Arabia's Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC). Al Jazeera's bold coverage of taboo issues, criticism of Arab governments, and semi-independence—in contrast to regional state media—have increased its popularity. The network's viewership increased after its broadcast of video messages from Osama bin Laden after the September 11, 2001 attacks and its coverage of the War on Iraq in 2003, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Arab Spring in 2010. In 2006, Al Jazeera launched an English-language platform to reach international audiences, becoming the first Arab network to compete with international channels such as CNN, Fox News, and the BBC.

Therefore, Al Jazeera's impact is both regional and international. Countries can exert their soft power by promoting their ideals via a medium that the audience trusts or derives its information from (Boateng, 2013). For example, the United States and Britain have promoted their ideals through CNN and the BBC. However, Al Jazeera interrupted the duopoly of U.S. and British media dominance and has influenced the attitudes of viewers across the Middle East (Boateng, 2013). This influence makes Al Jazeera a powerful foreign policy tool for Qatar. According to Cooper and Momani (2011), Al Jazeera has transformed Arab countries' responses to sensitive news; this is known as the "Al-Jazeera effect" and is similar to the "CNN effect" observed among Western audiences. Calling the Egyptian revolution in 2011 "Al-Jazeera's moment," antigovernment activists used Al Jazeera's English and Arabic networks to make their voices heard. They emphasized that, during the Arab Spring of 2010, Al Jazeera played

a major role in mobilizing the Arab population. Haykel (2013) noted that Al Jazeera's coverage helped accelerate the spread of revolutions in Arab countries. In fact, regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with Al Jazeera's policies, the network has undeniably succeeded in stirring up the Arab world.

Al Jazeera has become a point of pride for Qatar and the main source of information for many Arab viewers who seek reliability but lack the English-language competency to watch international news channels. In addition, audiences enjoy watching the many talk shows and heated live debates on Al Jazeera that were unprecedented in the Arab world, such as Faisal Al Qassim's show, *The Opinion and the Other Opinion*. Many Arab viewers believe that Al Jazeera's influence is much greater than that of Qatar. Although Qatar contains major gas reserves, hosts branches of renowned foreign universities, features luxurious airports and airways, the impact of Al Jazeera remains greater for Arab viewers. The Kuwaiti journalist, Saleh Al Mutairi, explained that the establishment of Al Jazeera enabled Qatar to play a strong role by wielding the network as a soft power tool, proving that Al Jazeera was indeed a media, political, and security arm that protected Qatar and promote it at the regional Arab and Islamic levels as well as the international level. Al Jazeera expressed the feelings of many Arabs, and its content was completely different from that of other channels and diverged from the Arab political discourse. It represented the emotions of the majority of Arabs (S. Al Mutairi, personal communication, April 23, 2020).

Although many perceive Al Jazeera as a trustworthy network, others have questioned its reliability due to its sponsorship by the Qatari government. Sheikh Hamad contributed \$137 million to Al Jazeera's founding team towards the creation of

the channel, which enabled the recruitment of many Western-trained Arab journalists who had recently been hired at the BBC (Sharp, 2003). However, the Qatari government has publicly asserted that Al Jazeera is independent from Qatar's interests. Sheikh Hamad has asserted that Al Jazeera's staff members are trained to adhere to professional norms, regardless of the station's funding sources. Al Jazeera officials have also indicated that the network has embroiled Qatar in clashes with Iran and several Arab countries due to its criticism of various regimes, including Tunisia, Jordan, Kuwait, and the PNA. According to Ulrishsen (2014), the discrepancy in content and tone between Al Jazeera English, which was established in November 2006, and Al Jazeera Arabic towards the Arab Spring has led to doubts regarding the network's independence; this was exacerbated by the replacement of Al Jazeera's Palestinian director general, Wadah Khanfar, with Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassem Al-Thani.¹⁶ In addition, while Al Jazeera portrayed the Egyptian and Libyan uprisings as legitimate rebellions, its weak stance towards Bahraini revolts in 2011 appeared to be inconsistent with its claim to be a platform for Arab freedom (Khatib, 2013). Qatar has joined the rest of the GCC in supporting the Bahraini ruling family, Al Khalifa in the face of the uprisings.

As an influential media channel, Al Jazeera has proven that a small state can use its soft power tools to play a role in regional and world politics. Furthermore, Al Jazeera has undoubtedly assisted Qatar's branding efforts.

Al Jazeera's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

¹⁶ Sheikh Ahmad bin Jassem Al Thani is an engineer, businessman and a politician. After Wadah Khanfar stepped down from Al Jazeera, Al Thani became the director general of the channel in 2011. He left the channel in 2013 when he became the minister of economy and trade.

Qatar has used Al Jazeera's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a diplomatic soft power tool to influence it. Qatar realizes that the conflict is a major issue for Arab audiences; thus, Al Jazeera has frequently provided live coverage of Israeli aggressions towards Palestinians and aired a number of documentaries and discussion panels on the situation. In addition, Al Jazeera's broadcasts of images from the second Palestinian intifada in 2000 and the three wars on Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014 have greatly promoted the plight of Palestinians. The network has helped mobilize Arab viewers to engage in street protests, fundraising events, and cultural events to support Palestinians. Ismail Hanieh, Hamas's political chief, explained that Al Jazeera represents an important Arab national platform for discussing various Arab issues; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the heart of these. Al Jazeera has highlighted the ugliness of the occupation and Israel's repeated attacks. In addition, the English-language channel has raised global awareness about the Palestinians' suffering (I. Hanieh, personal communication, December 14, 2020).

At the same time, Al Jazeera has provided Israelis with a space to air their views. This has irritated many Arabs, who view this as a normalization of the Israeli occupation. In addition, the PNA has expressed anger with Al Jazeera's coverage, claiming that it is biased towards Hamas and has damaged the image of the PNA by hosting guests who have insulted the PNA. Furthermore, the PNA has accused Al Jazeera of reinforcing the division between Hamas and Fatah because of its bias towards Hamas, which Qatar is seen to favor due to its support for political Islamist parties in the region. During the Arab Spring, Al Jazeera uncovered documents of concession that the PNA presented to Israel. Three days later, Egyptians revolted against Mubarak's regime and Al Jazeera made the documents publicly available online and focused on

the revolts in Egypt (Al-Arian, 2011). Tariq Shorati, a Palestinian activist and IR researcher, believes that Al Jazeera tends to align with Hamas's stance and highlight the PNA's mistakes while ignoring Hamas's abuses and slip-ups in Gaza (T. Shorati, personal communication, October 05, 2020). Abdul Sattar Qassim, a Palestinian political analyst and university professor argues that Qatar broke one of the main taboos in the Arab countries by hosting Israelis on its screens and it even cites Israel on the map instead of Palestine (A. Qassim, personal communication, April 17, 2020). While Juan Cole, a professor of history and commentator on modern-day Middle East and South Asia theorizes that Al Jazeera contributed to the Palestinian cause: land, people, leaders, rights, institutions, events, and documentaries, as an entry point for building a local, Arab and international public opinion on the issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It was one of the first media platforms to host many experts and officials in most countries, including official and private Israeli institutions!! He adds that the "Uncovering the Hidden" program that talked about the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and 1,600 secret documents over 10 years is one of the most exciting media and political programs in Palestinian circles. The method and vocabulary of the dialogue in that subject are biased, if not "confrontational" of the approach, style and performance of the Palestinian negotiator in that historical era. But this "bias" did not last long because of changing times, places, and changing media professionals at Al Jazeera (J. Cole, personal communication, May 05, 2020).

Wadah Khanfar, the former director general of Al Jazeera, has denied these accusations. He explained that Al Jazeera hosts all Palestinians factions and is not biased towards Hamas. Rather, the bias is towards the suffering of people; regardless of the case, journalistic standards are respected. Wadah added that Al Jazeera frequently

faced such claims from many Arab governments, including the PNA. On the other hand, whenever Al Jazeera presented the opposition's views, Arab regimes often accused it of not being objective enough (W, Khanfar, personal communication, June 08, 2020). Rabbani (2012) has noted that Arab media criticized Palestinian leaders more than other Arab leaders; however, Al Jazeera set new professional and political standards in this regard. The network's in-depth coverage of the Al-Aqsa uprising and Israel's efforts to restore the status quo significantly raised Doha's political capital among Palestinians (Rabbani, 2012: 43). In summary, Qatar has used Al Jazeera as a soft power tool to maintain solidarity with Palestinians while also playing a regional role in the ongoing conflict.

Compared to other Arab and international media outlets, Al Jazeera is by far the most supportive of Palestine. It has produced more than 300 programs dedicated to the topic. For example, *Under the Microscope* is a well-known weekly documentary program that began in 1999 and discusses political issues related to the daily lives of Arabs. Between 1999 to 2014, a total of 257 episodes of *Under the Microscope* aired on Al Jazeera. A regular segment called "Palestine in Focus" began broadcasting in 2003; 83 episodes were eventually aired, including "Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon" (1999), "Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli Prisons" (2002), "The Wall" (2003), "The Balfour Legacy" (2007), "Gaza: We Come" (2008), "The Palestinian Authority and its Accountability Mechanism" (2012), and "Normalization" (2014). Another well-known Al Jazeera program is *The Rest of the Story*, a 30-minute weekly show that discusses issues that are of general interest to Arab viewers. Between 2018 and 2020, 19 episodes on contemporary topics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were aired, including "March of Return" in 2018, "Jerusalem in the Face of Judaization" in 2019, and "The Annexation Decision" in 2020. In addition, Al Jazeera produced 198 short

films on Palestine between 2008 and 2016 on issues ranging from relevant UN resolutions (e.g., UN Resolutions 3236, 181, and 242) to different aspects of life within and outside of Palestine; titles included *The Martyr Child* (2009), *Palestinian Traditional Dance "Dabke"* (2010), *Al Aqsa Women* (2013), *Arab 48* (2013), and *I Will Not Die as a Refugee* (2013). All of these programs have shed light on the Palestinians' situation, suffering, and the means to support them to a wide Arab audience.

Massaab Al-Aloosy, a professor at the Critical Security Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, argued that the wealth that Qatar accumulated after signing many deals with foreign companies enabled it to invest in nontraditional foreign policy tools. A lack of human capital has hindered Qatar from becoming a military power in the region. Therefore, Qatari leaders focused on cultivating soft power in the form of a media outlet. Al Jazeera grew into a global news channel and presented a different reality than Western media. It reported on the suffering of Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank, not only exposing Israel's policy of settling Palestinian lands but also its hypocrisy regarding the peace process. Thus, Qatar projected its influence through public diplomacy with media at the tip of the spear (M. Aloosy, personal communication, June 15, 2020). According to Naser Laham, the editor-in-chief of Palestine's largest media outlet, Ma'an, Al Jazeera coverage has largely been professional, and the network has dedicated time and space to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestine has gotten more coverage than Israel on Al Jazeera in terms of programs, guests, and live broadcasts. However, there have also been shortcomings in Al Jazeera's coverage of the conflict, namely the hosting of Israeli generals and journalists on its programs. In addition, Al Jazeera has negatively affected local Palestinian media; rather than supporting the latter, it has supplanted it (N. Laham,

personal communication, May 06, 2020).

In summary, Al Jazeera and Qatar are inextricably linked. Many regional and international observers agree that the Qatari government has successfully used Al Jazeera as a foreign policy tool to promote its vision and to carve out a place in the international arena. In addition, Al Jazeera has played an important role in covering Israel's aggressions towards Palestinians.

Soft power tools through mediation

The UN defines mediation 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.” Three conditions must be fulfilled for a mediation to be successful. First, parties to the conflict must be willing to negotiate a settlement. Second, a mediator must be accepted, credible, and supported. Third, there must be general consensus at the regional and international levels to back the mediation (peacemaker.un.org, 2012).

Qatar has employed a number of tactics to support the Palestinians, which reflect its broader foreign policy strategy. It has used mediation as a soft power tool and views it as a key principle of its foreign policy. Qatar has mediated in Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, Eritrea, and Palestine, among other countries. Its involvement in mediation efforts is based on article 7 of the constitution that was adopted in April 2003. Qatari foreign policy is founded on “enhancing international peace and security through encouraging the resolution of international conflicts by peaceful means, supporting the right of the peoples to self-determination, abstaining from interference in the affairs of

other countries, and cooperating with nations that seek peace” (*Article 7, The Constitution of the State of Qatar*).

One of the shrewdest features of Qatari mediation is that it is not based on ideological rapprochement, nor does it require it. This has allowed Qatar to gain an advantage over other Arab countries and develop into a mediator for conflicting parties, including state and nonstate actors such as Israel and Hamas. In addition, Qatar has the advantage of being a homogenous country in terms of language, religion, and ethnicity, with almost no political opposition; this has shielded it from the many internal conflicts that have taken place in neighboring countries and enabled it to enjoy the stability needed to mediate between conflicting parties. However, without visionary leadership, financial capabilities and the US security protection, Qatar would not have been able to grow into a mediator. The commitment of Qatari elites and the abundance of Qatari wealth have served well in many global mediation efforts.

Since 2008, Qatar has mediated over 10 regional and international crises. According to the GCO website, Qatar brokered an agreement between Lebanese factions in 2008 and the Doha Accord between Sudan and Chad in 2009. From 2008 to 2013, Qatar hosted the Sudan peace talks in Doha between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese Liberation and Justice Movement. In 2010, Qatar mediated a ceasefire agreement over a border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. In 2011, Qatar mediated between Sudan and Eritrea. In 2012, it brokered the 2012 Doha Agreement between

Fatah and Hamas (Bukhari, 2020).¹⁷

Qatar's choice of mediation was a wise strategy for securing its territories, since Qatar is a small state located between two rival powers and raising its international profile. Qatar's willingness to liaise with all parties to a conflict, host them at luxury hotels in Doha, and offer generous aid to support the infrastructure of countries in crisis have incentivized both state and nonstate actors to seek its help. Qatar has secured its territory and made many countries invested in its security by establishing itself as a trusted mediator that generously invests abroad; sends humanitarian aid to disadvantaged areas; maintains economic partnerships with strong economies such as the United States, China, and the EU; has a defense treaty with the United States (1992); and hosts its largest military base in the Middle East (2002).

Qatar's ambitious security strategy was developed by its leaders. In particular, Sheikh Hamad Al Thani; his wife, Sheikha Moza; his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad; and his prime minister and foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jabir Al Thani (2007–2013) have transformed Qatar from a small state into a peaceful land. They protected it from its two larger neighbors and ongoing conflicts in the region, such as the Iran-Iraq War (1980), the first and second Gulf Wars, and the Arab Spring. Military conflict did not reach Qatar despite its sensitive geographic location. According to Nasser Al-Duwailah, a member of the Kuwaiti National Assembly, Sheikh Hamad's insightful vision of the future of the region and future challenges prompted him to adopt a

¹⁷ In 2015, Qatar mediated between Libyan factions, leading to the signing of a peace agreement in Doha. In 2020, Qatar mediated the signing of an agreement between the United States and the Taliban in Doha.

completely new approach to governance in Qatar. In his view, Sheikh Hamad understood the path that international conflict would take after the fall of the Soviet Union and its impact on the world, in addition to the regional and international issues surrounding his country. He was able to ride the appropriate wave at every stage and change his tools to prevent Qatar from being drawn into rival plots. This exhausted his opponents, preserved Qatar, and protected its independence (N. Al-Duwailah, personal communication, May 06, 2020).

According to Ulrichsen (2014), Qatari foreign policy is controlled by a small group of elites, which has allowed it to focus on its goals. He added that Qatar's role as a mediator was facilitated by its leadership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (2000–2003), the GCC (2002), and the G-77 and China grouping at the UN (2004). These responsibilities culminated in a two-year seat on the UN Security Council (2006–2007). Ulrichsen's observations are valid, and it is evident that having a small circle of elite decision makers allows for faster decision making and facilitates the achievement of goals, particularly if the country is small and has a limited population.

Qatar's mediation between Fatah and Hamas

Sheikh Hamad once said, "If the owners of a house do not fortify it, it will not be fortified by others" (2012). In 2006, the second Palestinian elections occurred and led to the victory of Hamas over Fatah in Gaza. Fatah, under the leadership of PNA President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas, led by Prime Minister Ismail Hanieh, were embroiled in conflict after Hamas's victory. Fatah refused to grant Hamas control of Gaza, and Hamas held on to its position because it had won the popular election. This

led to a split between Fatah and Hamas and thus a split between the West Bank and Gaza. A sea, land, and air blockade has been imposed on Gaza since 2007. This political division remains a pain point for Palestinians and has harmed their cause. Many countries have attempted to mediate between the two Palestinian factions in hopes of ending the dispute. However, all attempts have failed due to ideological differences between Fatah and Hamas. While Fatah prefers negotiation with Israel to solve the conflict, Hamas advocates for military resistance and refuses to relinquish its weapons.

With regard to mediation efforts between the two parties, Abdul Hadi summarized the main attempts in which more than one regional party participated and continues to participate:

- The Mecca Agreement (2007), under the auspices of King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, to stop hostilities and form a government of national unity
- The Egyptian Document (2009) sponsored by the General Intelligence Directorate in Cairo after Israeli assaults on the Gaza Strip and the killing of 1,200 Palestinians
- The Cairo Agreement (2011), under the patronage of Omar Suleiman, the director of Egyptian Intelligence, in which all Palestinian factions (including independents) participated in
- The Doha Agreement (2012), under the auspices of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who suggested holding elections, forming a national consensus government, rebuilding Gaza, and activating the PLO and the five reconciliation committees for the previous Cairo Agreement in 2011. This mediation effort took place with the participation of

President Abbas and the head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, Khaled Mishal (A. Hadi, personal communication, May 05, 2020).

During his visit to Gaza on October 23, 2012, Sheikh Hamad urged the Palestinians to reconcile. He told them, “If the owners of a house do not fortify it, it will not be fortified by others” (*His Highness speech in Gaza*, 2012). In other words, Palestinian factions must work together to reconcile and end their division; if they do not have the will to do so, no one does. However, Hansen (2013) believed that Qatar entered the mediation with a bias towards Hamas. In his opinion, Qatar believed that Hamas could be persuaded into maintaining a more peaceful relationship with Israel by engaging rather than isolating it. Qatar can convince Hamas and Israel to negotiate, because of its good relations with Israel. In Hansen’s opinion, Qatar’s involvement in mediation between Fatah and Hamas was slightly possible because Egypt failed in achieving reconciliation between the two main Palestinian factions. Furthermore, Hamas viewed Egypt as pro-Fatah due to Mubarak’s distress over the Muslim Brotherhood who are in oppose of the Egyptian government (Hansen, 2013). Hansen concluded that Qatar used its own wealth as incentive to influence Fatah. In fact, this was typical of Qatari foreign policy, which often used material incentives to encourage rival factions to reconcile.

According to Al Ansari, Qatar is a country with economic potential that can support a positive political will to resolve disputes. It owes its strong position to two factors. First, it has positive relations with Hamas. Second, the Israeli trade office in Qatar facilitates communication with Israel. Thus, Qatar has the ability to move between Israel, Hamas, and the PNA (M. Al Ansari, personal communication, May 26,

2020). Qatar's success in using mediation as a soft power tool has allowed it to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians while retaining diplomatic relations with all sides of the conflict. However, Hamad Abu Tier, a Palestinian researcher and the head of the Al-Aqsa Mosque Library, said that, although the mediation conducted between Hamas and the PNA by Qatar was efficiently, sincerely, and cautiously managed, neither Qatar nor any other state could reconcile the two factions, as Fatah and Hamas are opposed in their strategies, ideologies, and approaches (H. Abu Tier, personal communication, April 21, 2020). Mohammad Al-Rumaihi, a professor of sociology at the University of Kuwait, stated that Qatar's mediation between Fatah and Hamas reached a dead end as the Egyptians and the Saudis' efforts failed because of differences in ideology and interests between the two parties. Thus, Al-Rumaihi believes that future reconciliation efforts will also fail (M. Al-Rumaihi, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

According to Fromherz (2012, p 60), Qatar sponsored mediation between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip to achieve reconciliation. He believes that Qatar's involvement upset Egypt, the traditional mediator between the Palestinian factions. Qatar's plan called for a two-state solution and the implicit recognition of Israel. In addition, the failure of Qatar's mediation efforts led some observers to think that Qatar was a lightweight actor; however, this was disproved after Qatar's successful mediation in Lebanon in 2008 (Fromherz, 2012).¹⁸ However, Naser Laham, the editor-in-chief of Palestine's largest media outlet, Ma'an believes that Qatar managed a crisis but did not solve a crisis. In this regard, there is no difference between Qatar and Egypt or any other Arab country. From his point of view, the Arabs do not have their decision and that the United States is preventing Qatar and other Arab capitals from succeeding.

¹⁸ On August 31, 2020, Qatar mediated between Hamas and Israel to end the hostilities between them that began on August from the same year.

Qatar's mediation is mechanical, not dynamic. It can be said that it is a media phenomenon more than a solution to the crisis (N. Laham, personal communication, May 06, 2020).

Overall, Qatar's support for Palestine through the deployment of mediation as a soft power tool has raised Qatar's profile in the Arab world. Qatari leaders realized that the majority of Arab and Muslim nations remained firm in their belief that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a primary issue, despite the occasional decline of its importance due to internal problems in Arab countries. From Qatar's perspective, supporting the Palestinians is a religious, national, and humanitarian issue, but it is also a tool for protecting Qatar's security and brand. Like most Arab and Gulf states, Qatar is well aware that the road to the White House passes through Israel. Qatar needs the United States' protection, because it is the world's superpower, as evidenced by the United States various bilateral defense agreements.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present research is to examine the objectives, tools, and features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (1995–2013). It also explores the extent to which Qatar has overcome its constraints as a small state located between two rival regional powers (i.e., Saudi Arabia and Iran) and become an influential player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finally, the study analyzes Qatar's official position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through Sheikh Hamad's speeches and Qatar's soft power tools.

The study's central argument revolves around the opportunities seized by Qatari leaders in the wake of the GCC's powerlessness and the political vacuum that occurred after the Second Gulf War of 1991. Qatar's visionary leadership adopted a pragmatic foreign policy to overcome the country's constraints as a small state, aided by Qatar's enormous financial resources and the security umbrella of the United States. The resources generated from LNG production and export enabled Qatar to build economic relations with major international players, such as the United States, the EU, Russia, and China. It also enabled it to prosper in a dynamic geopolitical landscape and to develop the influential tools required to be a key player in regional affairs, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The significance of the current research derives from the importance of the Gulf region, which holds approximately 40% of the world's oil reserves and 23.6% of the world's gas reserves. The Gulf region is also important because of its strategic location

as a pathway between the East and the West through the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, Qatar has the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Russia and Iran and the largest LNG reserves. As a small state, Qatar has received relatively little attention, as it is a newly independent state (1971) that was in the shadow of Saudi Arabia until 1995. However, changes to its foreign policy after the rise of Sheikh Hamad in 1995, its gas wealth, and its growing regional role have prompted many researchers to study Qatar's foreign policy. However, Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still has not received much scholarly attention. In the context of studies on Arab states' relations with Israel, the focus has mostly been on large states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Of the few studies that have examined Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most have focused on Qatar's overall foreign policy and only mentioned the conflict in brief or as an example of Qatar's regional and international involvement.

Therefore, this research fills a research gap by focusing on Qatar's relationship with the key conflict in the region during a very important period of the country's contemporary history: Sheikh Hamad's reign, which lasted for 18 years. No studies have covered the entirety of Sheikh Hamad's reign, which justifies the need for an in-depth examination of Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during this very significant period. Before 1995, Qatar followed Saudi Arabia's lead through the umbrella of the GCC to protect itself from Iran, particularly after the fall of the Shah's regime and the beginning of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Following the Second Gulf War of 1991, the Al Khfous border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, and the failed coup attempt on Qatar in 1996, Qatar adopted a more pragmatic foreign policy as part of Sheikh Hamad's vision to solve the country's security dilemma.

A case study approach was adopted for this qualitative study, as it allows for a thorough understanding and interpretation of the topic and can provide answers to the research questions rather than simply describing a phenomenon. The case study approach was used to conduct an in-depth analysis of a small state's foreign policy in a particular context. In this research, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was used as a case study, because Palestine is primarily an Arab and Muslim country, and its occupation is a major reason for instability in the Middle East. The research covers the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where Qatar has been directly and intensively involved. More importantly, focusing on the small state of Qatar provides greater depth to the research and enables the collection and analysis of all of Sheikh Hamad's speeches about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which have not been previously examined. Therefore, this research fills a gap in the literature on Qatari foreign policy and contributes much-needed knowledge on the role of small states at the regional and international levels.

With regard to data collection, the research relied on two types of sources: primary and secondary. Three main primary sources were used: Sheikh Hamad's speeches about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the documents of government institutions and international organizations, and interviews. Secondary sources included books, peer-reviewed journals, videos, websites, research center reports, and semi-official newspapers. SSCI was used to identify frequently cited articles and authors and relevant journals. By following this scientific method, Qatar's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was assessed using various materials that spanned a wide range of scholarly perspectives on the topic.

In addition, soft power theory was used to examine Qatar's stance towards the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Sheikh Hamad's rule. Soft power theory was chosen for the present research, because Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only took place through the use of soft power tools. The choice of the latter was based on Sheikh Hamad's vision and personality, Qatar's rich hydrocarbon revenues, and the country's domestic stability, which resulted from its harmonious society and protection from the United States. Driven by a solidarity with the Palestinians, the pursuit of a regional role, and a desire to protect its own interests—particularly with regard to security and sovereignty, given the country's geographic and demographic vulnerability—Qatar relied on “carrots” (i.e., financial aid, Al Jazeera coverage, and mediation) to exercise its soft power and engage with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This research potentially contributes to advancing the debate on the regional and international role of small states in IR and creating a basis for future research on wealthy small states in the Gulf region. Its findings are particularly useful for scholars and students of Middle Eastern studies, foreign policy analysis, and IR. They could be helpful for foreign policy decision making in the GCC region, mainly for small Gulf states such as Qatar and Bahrain.

The limitations of the study

In this research, the focus is on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and excludes the other Arab countries to give more depth to the study through focusing on the small state of Qatar and its interaction with the conflict. In addition, Qatar as a small state didn't receive enough attention as other big states in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq throughout the 72-year-old history of the conflict. Therefore, this intensive study is hopefully fulfilling this purpose.

The study also does not cover all historic Palestine or what is known after 1948 as Israel because Qatar has no official relations with Israel. It covers West Bank and the Gaza Strip which is recognized by 138 UN member states as Palestine and which Qatar has been involved in intensively since 1995.

Results

Overall, it was found out that during Sheikh Hamad's reign (1995-2013), Qatar supported the rights of Palestinians, demanded Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, and called for the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Additionally, Qatar repeatedly condemned Israeli policies in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and urged the international community to take responsibility for stopping aggressions against Palestinians.

With regard to the first research question about the objectives, tools, and features of Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the reign of Sheikh Hamad, it was found that Qatar's support and involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was based on several factors. The first was to protect Qatar's national security and sovereignty by following a hedging strategy that required Qatar to maintain friendly and cordial relationships with as many players in the region as possible (including Israel) and having as few enemies as possible. Qatar's status as a small state located between two large, competing, and hegemonic powers prompted Qatari leadership to protect the country's security in order to avoid Kuwait's fate. The small state of Kuwait was invaded by its Gulf Arab neighbor, Iraq in 1990. To this end,

Qatar chose mediation as a foreign policy tool that would allow it to wield influence. This choice was backed by Qatar's enormous revenues from gas industry, its visionary leaders and the protection of the United States. To be seen as a trusted and neutral mediator, Qatar befriended state and nonstate actors alike, including Iran, Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah. Qatar's security dilemma became even more pressing after the Second Gulf War of 1991, the Al-Khafus border dispute with Saudi Arabia in 1992, and the coup attempt on Qatar in 1996. Qatar's evolution into a trusted peace broker and a strong economic partner was calculated to convince large world powers to have a stake in its security in case of a crisis or invasion.

A second factor in Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was solidarity with Arab and Muslim causes. Palestine is a very important part of the Arab and Muslim world, as it hosts the third holiest mosques in Islam: Al-Aqsa Mosque. Qatar supported Palestinians through coverage of the conflict on Al Jazeera, generous financial aid, and mediation between Fatah and Hamas.

The third factor in Qatar's engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was its desire to play a regional role through mediation. Qatar mediated between Fatah and Hamas which culminated in the Doha Agreement in 2012, although the Palestinian factions did not adhere to the agreement's principles due to ideological differences. Qatar's mediation role aims to end the split between the two main Palestinian factions which serve the Palestinian cause. Qatar also coordinated with Israel to deliver financial and humanitarian aid to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This coordination aims to ease the suffering of the Palestinians, lessen the tensions between Israel and the Palestinians and promote Qatar as a trusted peace maker.

Regarding the second research question on whether Qatar had an impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the period examined in the study (1995–2013), it was concluded that Qatar had a great impact on the conflict. This was evidenced by Al Jazeera's role in raising awareness of conditions in Palestine, especially during the Second Palestinian intifada in 2000 and the wars on Gaza (2008, 2012). Arab nations became more aware of Israeli aggressions through Al Jazeera's live coverage, reports, and documentaries. Moreover, Al Jazeera English (2006) conveyed the Palestinians' plight to international viewers, allowing them to hear another side of the story that is rarely presented on global networks such as CNN, Fox News, and the BBC.

Qatar also influenced the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through frequent humanitarian and financial aid, which were aimed at alleviating the suffering of Palestinians and postponing hostilities between Hamas and Israel. Moreover, Qatar supported Palestine's request to become a nonpermanent member state of the UN in 2012 and hosted Hamas leaders after they left Jordan in 1999 and Syria in 2012. Furthermore, Qatar held an urgent summit after the Gaza War in 2009 and a conference on Jerusalem in 2012 in which money was allocated towards helping Palestinians. In all 73 of his speeches on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Sheikh Hamad condemned Israeli aggressions towards Palestinians and called on the international community to intervene in the abuse of Palestinian people and land. Additionally, Sheikh Hamad paid two visits to Palestine in 1999 and 2012 to show solidarity with the Palestinians.

It was also found that Qatar's position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not always align with that of the GCC. Qatar permitted an Israeli trade office to open in Doha in 1995, which enraged parts of the Arab world. Qatar's actions reflected its goal of establishing itself as a noteworthy mediator on the regional and international stage. Qatar viewed its relations with Israel as a way to push Israel into more peaceful relationships with Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular; to this end, Qatar provided Israel with economic (i.e., gas) and diplomatic incentives. At the same time, Qatar supported Gaza in the 2008–2009 war and held an emergency summit in Doha to condemn Israeli violence. Many Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, declined to attend. Al Jazeera has also hosted Israeli commentators on its programs, and Qatar has received Israeli diplomats, athletes, and other delegates. Qatar views these actions as part of its pragmatic foreign policy. By engaging in mediation, branding, and economic partnerships with global powers, it is Qatar's hope that its international allies would intervene in its protection if Qatar fell under attack. Qatar learned this lesson from the invasion of Kuwait in 1991, when a coalition of 39 states banded to save the country.

Qatar's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also did not align with the traditional security strategies of small states. The latter tend to stay neutral and in the shadow of powerful allies. However, Qatar took a bold step when it engaged with the complicated Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which encompasses many opposing parties such as Hamas, the PNA, and Israel. On the one hand, Qatar has angered many Arab states through its daring foreign policy towards Israel (e.g., opening of an Israeli trade office in Doha, visits from Israeli delegates, and Israeli guests on Al Jazeera). On the other hand, it has also angered Israel and the United States by supporting Hamas. Therefore, Qatar's foreign policy is built on hedging, which explains many of its foreign

policy choices and decisions.

Qatar was accused of bias towards Hamas by several researchers and interviewees, especially after 2006 (e.g., Hansen, 2013). In their opinion, Hamas officials were given more space to present their views on Al Jazeera than PNA representatives, and Qatar donated more to the Gaza Strip than to the West Bank. Furthermore, many interviewees accused Qatar of defaming the PNA by focusing on its shortcomings. For example, Al Jazeera aired a documentary in 2011 that exposed the PNA's concessions to Israel during the peace process. In addition, Al Jazeera has allegedly ignored Hamas's faults. However, network representatives have insisted that it is objective and professional and has presented both views by hosting guests from Hamas, Fatah, and Israel. Al Jazeera has emphasized that it is not a political party that exclude others but a free press (ex., Wadah Khanfar; Mohamad Al Misfer; Majid Al Ansari;). In sum, we can say that, Al Jazeera is Qatar's strongest soft power tool. It exposed the Israeli aggression, but at the same time gave a voice to the Israelis on its screen.

Some interviewees accused Qatar of reinforcing the division between Fatah and Hamas. However, the evidence refutes this accusation, as Hamas and Fatah have two different approaches to solving the conflict; Fatah believes in negotiation, while Hamas believes in armed resistance. Several researchers viewed Qatar's support for Hamas as part of its larger support for political Islamist movements. They argued that Qatar is well aware that the Muslim Brotherhood and its various branches in Arab states are important components of Arab society. Therefore, Qatar backs them to raise its own status in the Arab world. However, Qatar has denied these accusations and insisted that

it does not take any sides. According to Qatari officials, Qatar supports Hamas, because it was freely elected by the Palestinian people and is part of the Palestinian community. Other interviewees and researchers highlighted that Qatar's relationship with Hamas is part of its foreign policy hedging strategy, in which Qatar maintains good relationships with as many political players in the region as possible and having as few enemies as possible in order to be seen as a neutral and trusted mediator.

In the literature and among some interviewees, there has been debate about Qatar's relationship with Israel. Some claim it is to please the United States, while others view it from an economic lens as a way to export the Qatari gas to Israel. A third group of people believe Qatar's relation with Israel aim to serve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by facilitating negotiations, whereas a fourth team think it is to serve its interests of the Qatari state through playing a regional role. However, there was no evidence to support that Qatar tried to curry favor with the United States or export gas to Israel. In fact, Qatar closed the Israeli trade office in Doha after the Second Intifada in 2000. By analyzing Qatar's foreign policy, it can be seen that Qatar's relations with Israel are part of its strategy to play a regional and international role by securing its territory (especially after the failed coup attempt on Qatar in 1996) and presenting itself as a trusted mediator and peace broker.

There was a consensus between interviewees, scholars, and political observers that Sheikh Hamad was a visionary leader who led Qatar to growth and success. However, this does not mean that all of them agreed with his policies and decisions. Many claimed that Qatar interfered in the affairs of other Arab countries either through Al Jazeera or by supporting the opposition. They believed that Al Jazeera ignored Qatar's internal problems, such as human rights abuses or regime misconduct, while

covering dissidence and misdemeanors in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and the PNA.

After the Arab Spring of 2010, many people were surprised by Qatar’s supportive stance towards the revolutions, and Qatar’s foreign policy direction evolved from neutrality to intervention. However, Qatar’s foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained consistent. Qatar continued to engage with the conflict through its soft power tools: financial aid, mediation between Fatah and Hamas, and coverage on Al Jazeera. Although many interviewees noticed that coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Al Jazeera decreased as the network increased its coverage of revolutions in the Arab World, this did not coincide with a change in Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As seen through the use of Qatar’s soft power tools and diplomatic stance in the Arab League, the GCC, and the UN, the country remained supportive of palestinians rights.

Through the research, Qatar’s foreign policy was found to have certain features: support of Arab and Islamic identity; support of peaceful resolutions and international law; support of political Islamist movements; bold, visionary, and ambitious leadership; divergence from the GCC; and pragmatism. A summary of the interviewees perspective on the questions posed to them can be found in the below table

Table 10. Summary of Interviewees’ Replies to the Interview Questions

Question	Summary of Replies
Reasons for Qatar’s Rise	<p>Qataris: wealth, and visionary leaders. Palestinians: wealth, competition with Saudi Arabia and U.S protection.</p>

	<p>Other interviewees: combination of different factors - wealth, political ambition, leadership, competition with Saudi Arabia and the U.S protection.</p>
<p>Objectives of Qatar's involvement in the conflict</p>	<p>Qataris: Solidarity with an Arab and Muslim cause, pushing the peace process, Qatar's security by being mediator, helping the needy and political ambition to be a regional player.</p>
	<p>Palestinians: Qatar's political ambition, solidarity with Arabs and Muslim.</p>
	<p>Other interviewees: security, competition with Saudi Arabia and Egypt as well as solidarity with an Arab and Muslim cause.</p>
<p>Soft power tools used by Qatar</p>	<p>1- Al Jazeera</p>
	<p>Qataris: Al Jazeera is very supportive to Palestinians and not biased.</p>
	<p>Fatah- Al Jazeera is biased towards Hamas and deformed the Image of PNA.</p>
	<p>Hamas- Al Jazeera is not biased.</p>
	<p>Others: Al Jazeera is biased towards Hamas.</p>
	<p>2- Financial Aid</p>
	<p>Qataris: Financial aid is sent to Gaza and the West Bank.</p>
	<p>Fatah: Financial aid is sent to Gaza more and strengthened Hamas at the expense of PNA.</p>
	<p>:Hamas Financial aid is delivered to Gaza and the West Bank.</p>
	<p>:Others Financial aid is provided more to Gaza.</p>
	<p>3-Mediation</p>
	<p>Qataris: Mediation failed due to Fatah and Hamas' differences .and disruption from regional countries</p>
	<p>Fatah- Qatar is biased towards Hamas as part of its support to the Muslim brotherhood.</p>
	<p>Hamas: Qatar is doing great effort, but some regional countries are not in favor of mediation.</p>
	<p>Other interviewees - Qatar is biased towards Hamas.</p>
<p>Impact on the conflict</p>	<p>Qatar has an impact on the conflict. However, interviewees disagreed if it's a positive impact or a negative one.</p>

Recommendations for Future Research

The present study investigates Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the 18-year reign of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's Al Thani (1995–2013), a crucial phase in Qatari history. Studying Sheikh Hamad's ruling period that is complete and over eight years ago is very beneficial for the researcher to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Future studies could benefit from this research and build on it to examine Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the rule of Sheikh Hamad's son, Sheikh Tamim. Such research could aim to compare and contrast the two periods and assess whether there is a change in Qatar's foreign policy with the rise of the new generation of Qatari leadership. Each Amir brings with him a new vision and administrative team and could have a different agenda from the previous Amir. It seems that Sheikh Tamim is following Sheikh Hamad's steps in supporting the Palestinian rights and being actively involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is evident by hosting Hamas leaders in Doha, financial aids to Palestine, particularly to Gaza, welcoming the PNA leaders in Qatar and supporting the peace process. Lately in May 2021, Al-Jazeera intensive and live coverage of the of the Israeli settlers' invasion of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the evacuation attempt of the Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem and the war on the Gaza Strip is another proof of Qatar's continuous involvement of the conflict. Additionally, Sheikh Tamim has announced the donation of 500\$ million to reconstruct the Gaza Strip after the recent war of 2021. This is another clear sign of Qatar's continuous engagement in the strip during Sheikh Tamim's reign.

It will be also interesting to examine the impact of the Qatar-Turkey Alliance during Sheikh Tamim's rule on shaping the Qatari foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, new developments have taken place in the region including the signing of individual peace treaties between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco in 2020 in clear contradiction to the Arab Peace Initiative (2002). Therefore, taking into consideration the new geopolitical developments in the region, a comparative study on the position of small Gulf states (UAE, Bahrain) with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the signing of the peace treaties could contribute more knowledge on their security strategies and foreign policy options.

Finally, Qatar's foreign policy changed in 2010 following the Arab Spring. For the first time since achieving independence in 1971, Qatar used hard power as part of a NATO coalition in Libya. It also supported the opposition in Syria and briefly participated in the Yemeni Civil War (2014) between Saudi-backed pro-government army and the rebellious Houthi movement. This change in Qatar's foreign policy represented a turning point that surprised many researchers and political observers. Although Qatar's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained firmly rooted in a soft power approach, its use of hard power (i.e., intervention) is worth studying.

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APPENDIX 1

Speech Number	Date	Speech Title	Website Link
1	14 November 1995	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 24th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1995/nov/14/24th-advisory-council-session
2	18 November 1996	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 25th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1996/nov/18/25th-advisory-council-session
3	14 June 1997	His Highness speech at Georgetown University	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1997/jun/14/georgetown-university-washington
4	15 March 1998	His Highness speech at the opening of the 25th Session of the OIC Foreign Ministers	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1998/mar/15/25th-session-of-oic-foreign-ministers
5	16 November 1998	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 27th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1998/nov/16/27th-advisory-council-session
6	10 August 1999	His Highness speech before the Lebanese Parliament	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1999/aug/10/lebanese-parliament
7	9 November 1999	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 28th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/1999/nov/9/28th-advisory-council-session
8	07 September 2000	His Highness speech at the UN Millennium Summit Conference	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2000/sep/7/un-millennium-summit-conference
9	24 October 2000	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the	

		29th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2000/oct/24/29th-advisory-council-session
10	12 November 2000	His Highness speech at the opening session of 9th Islamic Summit Conference	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2000/nov/12/opening-session-of-9th-islamic-summit-conference
11	27 March 2001	His Highness speech at the 24th Arab Summit Conference	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/mar/27/24th-arab-summit-conference
12	26 May 2001	His Highness speech at the Emergency Meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/may/26/emergency-meeting-of-oic-foreign-ministers
13	10 October 2001	His Highness speech at the Opening Session of the 9th Emergency Meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/oct/10/9th-emergency-meeting-of-oic-foreign-ministers
14	10 November 2001	His Highness speech at the UN General Assembly	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/nov/10/un-general-assembly
15	19 November 2001	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 30th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/nov/19/30th-advisory-council-session
16	29 December 2001	His Highness speech at the Opening Session of the 3rd Conference of Ministers of Culture of OIC Member States	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2001/dec/29/3rd-conference-of-ministers-of-culture-of-oic-state-members?
17	15 May 2002	His Highness speech before the Parliament of South Africa	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/may/15/south-african-parliament
18	17 May 2002	His Highness speech at the Dinner Banquet hosted by President of Côte d'Ivoire	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/may/17/cote-divoire-dinner-banquet

19	10 June 2002	His Highness speech at the Dinner Banquet hosted by the President of Finland	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/jun/10/finland-dinner-banquet
20	31 January 2002	His Highness speech at the World Economic Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/jan/31/world-economic-forum
21	12 November 2002	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 31st Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/nov/12/31st-advisory-council-session
22	21 December 2002	His Highness Speech at the Opening Session of the 23rd GCC Summit	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2002/dec/21/23rd-gcc-summit-opening-session?
23	07 April 2003	His Highness speech at the opening of Qatar Forum on the Islamic-Christian Dialogue	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2003/apr/7/qatar-forum-on-the-Islamic-Christian-dialogue
24	14 April 2003	His Highness speech at the 3rd Qatar Conference on Democracy and Free Trade	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2003/apr/14/3rd-qatar-forum-on-democracy-and-free-trade
25	08 May 2003	His Highness speech at Brookings Institution	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2003/may/8/brookings-institution
26	16 October 2003	His Highness speech at the 10th Islamic Summit Conference	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2003/oct/16/10th-islamic-summit-conference
27	18 November 2003	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 32nd Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2003/nov/18/32nd-advisory-council-session
28	10 January 2004	His Highness speech at the Opening of the 2nd Doha Conference on Relations Between the US. and Islamic World	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2004/jan/10/2nd-doha-conference-on-relations-between-us-Islamic-world
29	05 April 2004	His Highness Speech at the 4th Qatar Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-

		on Democracy and Free Trade	remarks/2004/apr/5/4th-qatar-forum-on-democracy-and-free-trade
30	03 June 2004	His Highness speech at the Opening of the Conference on Democracy and Reform in the Arab World	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2004/jun/3/conference-on-democracy-and-reform-in-the-Arab-world
31	21 September 2004	His Highness speech at the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2004/sep/21/59th-session-of-United-Nations-General-Assembly
32	29 September 2004	His Highness Speech at James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2004/sep/29/james-baker-institute-for-public-policy
33	02 November 2004	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 33rd Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2004/nov/2/33rd-advisory-council-session
34	29 March 2005	His Highness Speech at the 5th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2005/mar/29/doha-5th-forum
35	10 April 2005	His Highness Speech at the US-Islamic World Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2005/apr/10/us-islamic-world-forum
36	15 April 2005	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet Hosted by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2005/apr/15/dinner-banquet-by-Bangladesh-pm
37	13 July 2005	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet Hosted by the President of Italy	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2005/jul/13/dinner-banquet-by-president-of-Italy
38	11 April 2006	His Highness Speech at the 6th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2006/apr/11/doha-6th-forum
39	14 November 2006	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 35th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2006/nov/14/35th-advisory-council-session

40	15 November 2006	His Highness Speech at the European Parliament	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2006/nov/15/at-the-european-parliament
41	23 April 2007	His Highness Speech at the 7th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2007/apr/23/doha-7th-forum
42	06 November 2007	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 36th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2007/nov/6/36th-advisory-council-session
43	03 December 2007	His Highness Speech at the Opening Session of the 28th GCC Summit	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2007/dec/3/28th-gcc-summit-opening-session
44	04 November 2008	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 37th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2008/nov/4/37th-advisory-council-session
45	04 January 2009	His Highness address to the Arab Nation on the Occasion of the Israeli Aggression on Gaza	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/jan/4/to-the-arab-nation-on-the-occasion-of-the-Israeli-aggression-on-gaza
46	15 January 2009	His Highness Address On Qatar's Request For Convening an Emergency Arab Summit to Discuss Israeli Aggression on Gaza	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/jan/15/on-qatar-request-for-emergency-Arab-summit-to-discuss-Israeli-aggression-on-gaza
47	16 April 2009	His Highness Speech at Gaza Emergent Summit	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/jan/16/gaza-emergency-summit
48	20 April 2009	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of Portugal	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/apr/20/dinner-banquet-by-president-of-Portugal
49	22 June 2009	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of France	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/jun/22/dinner-banquet-by-the-president-of-France

50	03 November 2009	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 38th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2009/nov/3/38th-advisory-council-session
51	18 January 2010	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of Argentina	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/jan/18/dinner-banquet-by-president-of-Argentina
52	20 January 2010	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of Brazil	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/jan/20/dinner-banquet-by-president-of-brazil
53	27 March 2010	His Highness Speech at the Opening Session of the 22nd Arab Summit	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/mar/27/22nd-arab-league-summit
54	21 April 2010	His Highness Speech at the Luncheon Banquet by the President of Cyprus	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/apr/21/luncheon-banquet-by-the-president-of-Cyprus
55	31 May 2010	His Highness Speech at the 10th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/may/31/doha-10th-forum
56	20 July 2010	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of Slovenia	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/jul/20/at-the-dinner-banquet-by-Slovenia-president
57	31 July 2010	His Highness Speech at the Inauguration Ceremony of Bint Jbeil Hospital	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/jul/31/inauguration-ceremony-of-bint-Jbeil-hospital
58	18 August 2010	His Highness Speech at the Paraguay Senate	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/aug/18/at-the-paraguay-senate
59	23 September 2010	His Highness Speech at the 65th Session of UN General Assembly	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/sep/23/65th-session-of-united-nations-general-assembly
60	09 November 2010	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 39th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/nov/9/39th-advisory-council-session

61	30 December 2010	His Highness Speech at the Dinner Banquet by the President of Austria	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2010/dec/30/at-the-dinner-banquet-by-president-of-Austria
62	08 April 2011	His Highness Speech at Los Angeles World Affairs Council	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2011/apr/8/los-angeles-world-affairs-council
63	24 May 2011	His Highness Speech at the Regional Conference on the International Criminal Court	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2011/may/24/regional-conference-on-international-criminal-court
64	20 October 2011	His Highness Speech at a Dinner Reception by the President of Poland	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2011/oct/20/dinner-reception-by-polish-president
65	01 November 2011	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 40th Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2011/nov/1/40th-advisory-council-session
66	26 February 2012	His Highness Speech at the International Conference on Jerusalem	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2012/feb/26/international-conference-on-Jerusalem
67	20 May 2012	His Highness Speech at the 12th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2012/may/20/12th-doha-forum
68	25 September 2012	His Highness Speech at the 67th Session of UN General Assembly	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2012/sep/25/67th-session-of-un-general-assembly
69	23 October 2012	His Highness Speech in Gaza	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2012/oct/23/hh-speech-in-gaza
70	06 November 2012	His Highness Speech at the Opening of the 41st Advisory Council Session	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2012/nov/6/41st-advisory-council-session
71	27 February 2013	His Highness Speech at the 5th Global Forum of the UN	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2013/feb/27/5th-global

		Alliance of Civilizations	forum-of-the-un-alliance-of-civilizations
72	26 March 2013	His Highness Speech at the Opening Session of the 24th Arab Summit	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2013/march/26/opening-session-of-the-24th-arab-summit
73	25 May 2013	His Highness Speech at the 13th Doha Forum	https://www.diwan.gov.qa/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks/2013/may/25/doha-13-forum

APPENDIX 2

Interview Number	Interviewee Name	Nationality	Position	Date	Interview Mode
1	Lolwah Al Khater	Qatari	Assistant Foreign Minister and the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	July 05, 2020	Online Interview through WebEx
2	Majid Al Ansari	Qatari	Professor of sociology at Qatar University	June 20, 2020	Voice recording through phone
3	Mohammad Al Misfer	Qatari	Professor of political science at Qatar University	June 04, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
4	Mohammad Al Hajiri	Qatari	A professor of International Affairs at Qatar University and a TV presenter of "Al Haaqeeqa" program on Qatar TV.	January 10, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
5	Ismail Hanieh	Palestinian	The chief of Hamas's Political Bureau	December 14, 2020	Written answers through a Qatar University professor
6	Wadah Khanfar	Palestinian	The Former Director General of Al Jazeera	June 08, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
7	Mahdi Abdul Hadi	Palestinian	Former consultant of Prince Hassan bin Talal and Head of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs	May 05, 2020	written answers

			(Jerusalem)		
8	Mohsen Saleh	Palestinian	The General Manager of the Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut	June 05, 2020	Written answers
9	Ibrahim Nasereddin	Palestinian	Assistant General Manager and Financial Director in the Department of Islamic Endowments and Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem	December 15, 2020	Online interview through Skype
10	Abdul Qassim Sattar	Palestinian	A political Analyst and a University Professor in Nablus	April 17, 2020	Written answers
11	Basem Naim	Palestinian	The Head of the Council on International Relations in Gaza and the Former Palestinian Minister of Health	December 15, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
12	Sahar Qawasmi	Palestinian	A Former Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Hebron)	September 20, 2020	Written answers
13	Abdul Jabbar Said	Palestinian	The Vice President of the Palestine Scholar Association in Diaspora and head of the Quran and Sunnah Department at Qatar University	April 16, 2020	Written answers

14	Izzat Al-Risheq	Palestinian	A Member of the Political Bureau and Head of the Office of Arab and Islamic Relations in Hamas	December 14, 2020	Email through a professor at Qatar University
15	Naser Laham	Palestinian	An Editor-in-Chief of Palestine's Largest Media outlet, Ma'an in Bethlehem	May 06, 2020	Written answers
16	Fayez Abu Shamala	Palestinian	The Former Mayor of Khan Yunis in Gaza	December 08, 2020	Written answers
17	Tariq Shorati	Palestinian	An Activist and IR Researcher in Ramallah	October 05, 2020	Written answers
18	Hamad Abu Tier	Palestinian	A Researcher and the Head of the Al-Aqsa Mosque Library in Jerusalem	April 21, 2020	Written answers
19	Mehran Kamrava	Iranian	The Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University in Qatar	July 18, 2020	Voice recording over phone
20	Abdullah Baabood	Omani	A Professor at the National University of Singapore	May 25, 2020	Voice recording over phone
21	Steven Wright	British	A Professor of International Relations at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar	April 19, 2020	Zoom meeting
22	Juan Cole	American	A Professor of History and Commentator on Modern-Day Middle East and South Asia	May 05, 2020	Written answers
23	Nasser Al-Duwailah	Kuwaiti	A Member of the Kuwaiti	May 06, 2020	Written answers

			National Assembly		
24	Saleh Al Mutairi	Kuwaiti	A Journalist	April 23, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
25	Mohammad Al-Rumaihi	Kuwaiti	A Professor of Sociology at the University of Kuwait	November 10, 2020	Voice recording over the phone
26	Maytham Al Mushakhes	Kuwaiti	An Economic Expert	April 24, 2020	Written answers
27	Massaab Al-Aloosy	Iraqi	A Professor at the Critical Security Program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies	June 15, 2020	Written answers