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

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

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

backlash against Qatar led by fellow GCC states Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, joined by Egypt and a few other governments, severed relations with Qatar and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. The Trump Administration has sought a resolution of the dispute, in part because the rift is hindering the United States, the GCC, and other Sunni-led countries in the region to counter Iran. Qatar has countered the Saudi-led pressure with new arms purchases and deepening relations with Turkey and Iran. Some signs that the rift might be soon be resolved emerged in late 2019, but progress apparently stalled in January 2020.

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

from GCC patterns of governance in which leaders generally remain in power for life. However, Qatar is the only one of the smaller GCC states that has not yet held elections for a legislative body. U.S. and international reports criticize Qatar for not adhering to international standards of labor rights practices, but credit it for taking steps in 2018 to improve the conditions for expatriate workers.

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



## **Contacts**

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# Brief History

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Table 1. Senior Leaders of Qatar

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

Source: Central Intelligence Agency & K L H I V R I 6 W D W H D Q G & D E L Q H W 0 H P E H U V R I ) R U H L J

<sup>1</sup> Information in this section is taken from the Peacebuilding Resource Centre, February 2013.

Figure 1. Qatar at -a-Glance



Area	11,586 sq km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)
People	<p>Population 2.3 million, of which about 90% are expatriates</p> <p>Religion Muslim 68%, of which about 90% are Sunni; Christian 14%; Hindu 14%; 3% Buddhist; and 1% other. Figures include expatriates</p> <p>Ethnic Group Arab 40%; Pakistani 18%; Indian 18%; Iranian 10%; 14% other. Figures include expatriates. Virtually all citizens are Arab</p>
Economy	<p>Gross Domestic Product (GDP) \$125 billion (2018) on purchasing power parity (ppp) basis</p> <p>GDP per capita \$125,000 (2018) on ppp basis</p> <p>Inflation 1% (2017)</p> <p>GDP Growth Rate 5% (2019)</p> <p>Export Partners (in descending order) Japan, South Korea, India, China, Singapore, UAE</p> <p>Import Partners (in descending order) United States, China, UAE, Germany, Japan, Britain, Saudi Arabia (pre-2017 GCC rift)</p>
Oil and Gas	<p>Oil Exports Slightly more than 700,000 barrels per day and Negligible amounts to the United States.</p> <p>Producer of condensates (light oil) vital to S. Korean petrochemical industry.</p> <p>Natural Gas Exports Almost 125 billion cubic meters in 2014</p>

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

# Governance

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<sup>2</sup> Shaykh is an honorific term.

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<sup>4</sup> Shura

<sup>5</sup> Department of State. Human Rights Report for 2015: Qatar. p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265728.pdf>.

## Human Rights Issues<sup>7</sup>

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## Freedom of Expression

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

<sup>8</sup> Bidoon

<sup>9</sup> State Dept human rights report on Qatar: 2017, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Qatar: Repressive new law further curbs freedom of expression. Amnesty International, January 20, 2020.

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<sup>12</sup> Lawmakers Seek FARA Evaluation of Qatari-owned Al Jazeera. Office of Senator Tom Cotton press release. June 19, 2019.



### Qatari Leadership



Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani was born on June 3, 1980. He is the fourth son of the former Amir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the ninth Al Thani ruler in Qatar. He was appointed heir apparent in August 2003 when his elder brother, Shaykh Jasim, renounced his claim, reportedly based on a bloodless seizure of power while then-Amir Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani was on a hunting trip in Iran. Amir Hamad stepped down voluntarily to pave the way for the accession of a new generation of leadership. Amir Tamim was educated at Great School and graduated from its Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in 1998, from which his father graduated in 1971. Concurrently, Amir Tamim heads the Qatari Investment Authority, which has billions of dollars of investments in Europe and the United States. He is reportedly highly popular for resisting international pressure in the intra-GCC crisis.



Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani took power in June 1995, when his father, Amir Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, was in Europe. In 1972, after finishing his education in Britain and assuming command of some Qatari military units, Hamad had helped his father depose his grandfather in a bloodless seizure of power while then-Amir Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani was on a hunting trip in Iran. Other children remain key figures in the ruling establishment. Qatari media refer to Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani as the "father of the nation." His favored wife (of three), Shaykha Mozah Al Thani, continues to chair the powerful Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Culture. Several Western universities have established branches and which is a large investment in the United States and Europe. One daughter (and full sister of the current Amir), Shaykha Mayassa, chairs the Qatar Museums, a major buyer of global artwork. Another daughter, Shaykha Hind, is vice chairman of the QF. Both daughters graduated from Duke University. Another relative, Hamad bin Jasim Al Thani, former Amir Khalifa bin Hamad, died in October 2016.

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

## **Women's Rights**

## **Trafficking in Persons and Labor Issues<sup>13</sup>**

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<sup>13</sup> This section is based on the State Department report <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/qatar/>.

<https://www.state.gov/>

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## **Religious Freedom<sup>17</sup>**

## **Foreign Policy**

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<sup>14</sup> . Amnesty International, September 19, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Qatar 2022: FIFA admits violation of workers' standards. Deutsche Welle, June 6, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Statement by Human Rights Watch, September 27, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> This section is based on the State Department report on International Religious Freedom for 2018.

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

## Qatar and the Intra-GCC Dispute

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

<sup>20</sup> The list of demands can be found at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/list-of-demands-on-qatar-by-saudi-arabia-other-arab-nations/2017/06/23/054913a6-57d0-11e7-840b-512026319da7\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.5bde2f68b6b1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/list-of-demands-on-qatar-by-saudi-arabia-other-arab-nations/2017/06/23/054913a6-57d0-11e7-840b-512026319da7_story.html?utm_term=.5bde2f68b6b1).

<sup>21</sup>

Intelligence Officials. *Washington Post*, July 16, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Various press; Author conversations with a wide array of Gulf officials and experts on the Gulf. 2017-2019.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41209610>.

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## **Iran**

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<sup>25</sup> GCC summit calls for unity amid hopes of easing Gulf crisis. Al Jazeera, December 10, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Qatar says talks to end GCC crisis were suspended in January. Al Jazeera, February 15, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> UAE restores postal service to Qatar despite protracted dispute. Reuters, February 10, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Author conversation with visiting Qatari official. September 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Al Arabiya,

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## **Egypt**

## **Libya**

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

<sup>31</sup> The Latest: Qatar trying to defuse tensions amid Iran crisis. Fox News, May 16, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> -12, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> New York Times, April 21, 2017.

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## **Yemen**

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## **Syria, Iraq, and Anti-Islamic State Operations**

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

<sup>35</sup> Author conversations with Qatar Embassy personnel. 2019.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Times*, January 23, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Al Jazeera, December 2, 2015.

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

<sup>39</sup> Erodgan Says Qatar backs Turkey plans to settle Syrian refugees: NTV. Reuters, November 26, 2019.

## Israeli-Palestinian Issues/Hamas

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April 27, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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Qatar The Peninsula September 29, 2015. <http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/qatar/353598/israel-doesn-t-want-peace-emir>.

<sup>43</sup> Qatar welcomes US Mideast peace plan, but urges changes. AFP, January 29, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs Julia Frifield to Rep. Peter Roskam. November 21, 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Julia Frifield, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, to Rep. Peter Roskam. November 21, 2014.

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<sup>47</sup> Israel Oks more Qatari Funds for Gaza to Contain Escalation. Al Monitor. March 5, 2020.



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## **Afghanistan/Taliban Office**

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## **Other Qatari Relationships and Mediation Efforts<sup>51</sup>**

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New York Post September 21, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Author meeting with Pugwash representatives, June 2015.

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

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Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Final-PDF-English.pdf>.

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## **U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Cooperation**

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<sup>52</sup> See Natalie Koch. Qatar and Central Asia. PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 484, 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>

**New York Times** June 28, 1988.

Congress responded to the Qatari Stinger acquisition by enacting a ban on arms sales to Qatar (Section 566(d) of P.L. 100-461). The ban was repealed by Section 568 of the foreign aid appropriations act for FY1991 (P.L. 101-513).

## Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA)

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## Al Udeid Air Base (Air Force/CENTCOM)<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> U.S. Library of Congress. Country Studies: Persian Gulf States. Some provisions are discussed in Sami Hajjar, *U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects*. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute), March 2002, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> State Department Country Reports on Terrorism: 2018. Released October 2019, p. 148.

<sup>57</sup> Department of State. Joint Statement of the Inaugural United States-Qatar Strategic Dialogue. January 30, 2018.

<sup>58</sup> Washington Post, August 24, 2019.

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Military

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## **As Saliyah Facility (Army)**

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## **Hamad Port**

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## **U.S. Arms Sales to Qatar**

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<sup>60</sup> Figures compiled by CRS.

<sup>61</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> See Global Security.org at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/camp-as-sayliyah.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Qatar, Kuwait told U.S. they will join naval coalition, official says. Reuters, November 25, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Qatar Defense Attache in Washington, DC, press release, July 24, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Informa

<sup>66</sup> DSCA Transmittal Number 16-58. The FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1278 of P.L. 114-92) required a DO

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<sup>68</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Transmittal Number 16-07.

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<sup>70</sup> Why is Qatar Showing Off its New Short-

Al Arabiya English December 20, 2017.

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## Other Defense Partnerships

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### France

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

<sup>72</sup> h Wall Street Journal April 26, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/lockheed-says-qatar-budget-woes-could-delay-defense-deal-1461692108>.

<sup>73</sup> International June 17, 2016. , +6 -DQH¶V 1DY\

<sup>74</sup> AFP, June 6, 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Xinhua, March 28, 2019.

## **Turkey**

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## **Russia**

## **Counterterrorism Cooperation<sup>78</sup>**

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<sup>76</sup> Voice of America News May 10, 2016,

<sup>77</sup> Turkey expands its military base and influence in Qatar. The New Arab. September 10, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Much of the information in this section is taken from: Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. "Qatar." October 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Washington Post July 11, 2017.

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## **Terrorism Financing Issues**

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## **Countering Violent Extremism**

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<sup>81</sup> Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

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## Economic Issues

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July 10, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Qatar Announces 2020 Budget, its Biggest in Five Years. Al Jazeera, December 19, 2019.

<sup>85</sup> CIA, The World Factbook June 2016. [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print\\_qa.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/print_qa.html).

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## **U.S.-Qatar Economic Relations**

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<sup>86</sup> Qatar Taps into Giant Argentinean Shale Reserve. UPI, June 4, 2018.

<sup>87</sup> Dolphin Energy website. <http://www.dolphinenergy.com/en/6/about-dolphin-energy/about-us>.

<sup>88</sup>

e Trade, February 4, 2019.

<sup>89</sup>

Associated Press, May 24, 2016.

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## **U.S. Assistance**

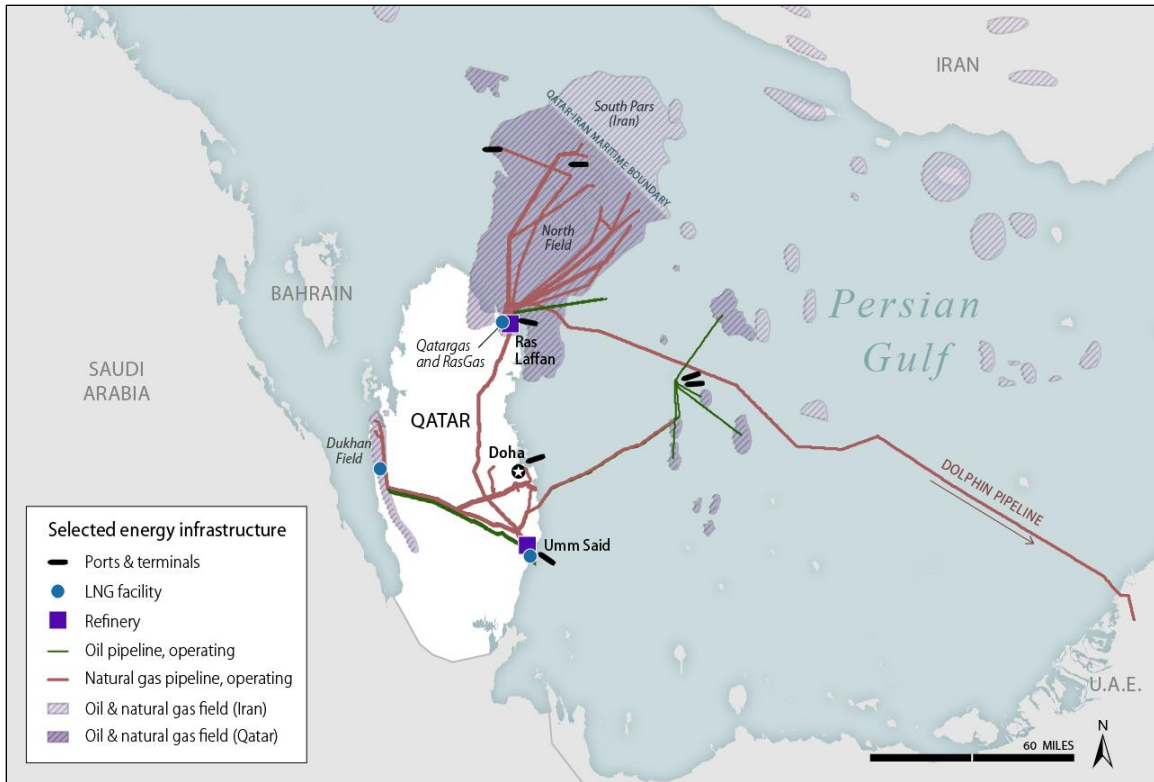
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<sup>90</sup> Joint Statement, July 9, 2019, op. cit.

<sup>91</sup>

UAE theNational, January 30, 2016.

Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure



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

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