



**Congressional  
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

---

# **Qatar: Issues for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

Updated February 15, 2024

**Congressional Research Service**

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R47467



**R47467**

February 15, 2024

**Christopher M. Blanchard**  
Specialist in Middle  
Eastern Affairs

## **Qatar: Issues for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

The State of Qatar is a small, energy-rich emirate strategically located near the center of the Persian Gulf. Defense and diplomatic cooperation anchor close-U.S. Qatari relations: Qatar hosts thousands of U.S. troops, allows U.S. military use of Qatari facilities, and consults with U.S. officials on engagements with third parties in the Middle East region and beyond. In January 2022, President Joseph Biden and Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani reaffirmed the multifaceted partnership between the United States and Qatar, and the Biden Administration designated Qatar as a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally.

Qatar holds the third-largest proven natural gas reserves in the world, and is a major exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG): LNG revenues have fueled change in Qatar and enabled Qatar's active foreign policies. Qatar's fewer than 300,000 citizens enjoy one of the world's highest per capita income levels, and, as with other Gulf states, a large expatriate population is critical to Qatar's domestic economy. Since the mid-1990s, Qatari leaders have overseen rapid, expansive economic growth; transformed the global media environment through the founding of the Al Jazeera satellite networks; engaged in complex and at times controversial diplomacy with U.S. partners and adversaries; and pursued a course of limited domestic political liberalization.

While Qatar supports many U.S. priorities, its leaders' pursuit of Qatar's sovereign interests and initiatives have presented both opportunities and challenges. Successive U.S. Administrations have sought to expand military, security, diplomatic, and economic cooperation with Qatar. Issues of immediate priority for the United States include coordinating with Qatar to affect the release of hostages held by Palestinian groups in Gaza, sustaining and strengthening U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, encouraging stability in Qatar's relationships with fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab states, and leveraging Qatar's diplomatic engagement with the Taliban government in Afghanistan and with neighboring Iran. Prior to the Hamas attacks of October 7, 2023, Qatar had not joined the Abraham Accords between some Arab states and Israel but had instead conditioned normalization of relations with Israel on substantial progress toward resolving Israel-Palestinian disputes. Qatar may engage other Arab states to find a consensus position on future normalization.

Qatar voted to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the United Nations, stated its "respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity," and called for a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict in accordance with international law. Emir Tamim and People's Republic of China (PRC) leader Xi Jinping met in Saudi Arabia in December 2022 in conjunction with the Arab States-China Summit and the GCC-China Summit. PRC state-owned firms have provided infrastructure and construction services for some major projects in Qatar. Qatar exports oil products and LNG to China.

Since 2012, successive Administrations have proposed several major U.S. arms sales to Qatar, including items for air defense and missile defense. Qatar is investing in its military facilities to meet current and potential future needs, with planned Qatar-funded development projects at Al Udeid Air Base valued at \$8.4 billion through 2033.

Qatar's constitution provides for elections to a consultative *Shura* Council. The government limits freedom of assembly, expression, religion, the press, and association. Labor and migrants' rights concerns have long drawn public and official attention as Qatar. The U.S. State Department notes reports of human rights violations in Qatar and credits Qatar with taking some steps to improve human rights and labor conditions.

In Congress, foreign affairs, defense, and intelligence committees monitor Qatar's foreign and domestic policies, while Qatar's resources, sovereign wealth, and associated geo-economic clout fuel congressional interest in Qatar's energy and investment policies and in U.S.-Qatari trade and investment ties. In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, a Congressional Caucus on Qatari-American Strategic Relationships is active. Various Members of Congress and congressional staff frequently visit Qatar to attend conferences, consult with U.S. civilian and military personnel, and conduct oversight of U.S. regional policy and U.S. military operations.

## Contents

Overview and Bilateral Relations.....	1
U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Relations .....	3
Arms Sales .....	5
Al Udeid Air Base and Military Construction .....	5
Counterterrorism Issues .....	6
U.S. Security Assistance .....	7
U.S.-Qatar Economic Relations .....	7
Congress and Qatar .....	8
Qatari Politics and Government .....	9
Human Rights.....	10
Women’s Rights .....	11
Labor Issues and Trafficking in Persons .....	11
Religious Freedom .....	12
Qatar’s Foreign Policy.....	12
Qatar and Russia’s War against Ukraine .....	13
Qatar and China.....	14
Qatar and Afghanistan.....	15
Qatar and its Neighbors.....	15
Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab States.....	15
Iran .....	16
Israel and the Palestinians .....	18
Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues .....	20
Outlook.....	22

## Figures

Figure 1. Qatar at-a-Glance .....	3
Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure, 2015 .....	21

## Tables

Table A-1. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022 .....	24
---	----

## Appendixes

Appendix. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022 .....	24
--	----

## Contacts

Author Information.....	25
-------------------------	----

## Overview and Bilateral Relations

The State of Qatar is a small, energy-rich monarchy, strategically located near the center of the Persian Gulf (see **Figure 1**); its natural resources and active foreign policy give it global influence. Qatar holds the third-largest proven natural gas reserves in the world, and is a major exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>1</sup> From 2000 to 2021, Qatar's gross domestic product (GDP) increased tenfold from \$17 billion to an estimated \$179 billion. The country's population, including expatriates, more than quadrupled between 2000 and 2022, growing to over 2.7 million in 2022.<sup>2</sup> Its fewer than 300,000 citizens enjoy one of the world's highest per capita income levels, and, as with other Gulf states, a large expatriate population is critical to Qatar's domestic economy. Since the mid-1990s, Qatari leaders have overseen rapid, expansive economic growth; transformed the global media environment through the founding of the Al Jazeera satellite networks; engaged in complex and at times controversial diplomacy with U.S. partners and adversaries; and introduced constitutional changes to formalize succession and limited consultative governance. International attention focuses on Qatar's roles as an energy exporter and diplomatic catalyst.

U.S. officials recognized Qatar's independence in September 1971 and established diplomatic relations in 1972. Since the 1990s, successive U.S. Administrations have sought to expand military, security, diplomatic, and economic cooperation with Qatar. Qatari leaders' pursuit of Qatar's sovereign interests and initiatives have presented both opportunities and challenges over time. Past U.S. Administrations have scrutinized Qatari policy with regard to some armed conflicts and political unrest in the Middle East and North Africa region and some Qataris' relationships with Islamist groups: at present Qatar supports many U.S. priorities and U.S. officials welcome Qatar's partnership (see below).

Issues of immediate priority for the U.S. government include coordinating with Qatar to affect the release of hostages held by Palestinian groups and leveraging Qatar's diplomatic engagement with neighboring Iran and actors in Lebanon to avoid widening of the Israel-Hamas conflict. Prior to the October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel, Qatar had not joined the Abraham Accords that some other Arab states had signed with Israel beginning in 2020, but has instead conditioned normalization of relations with Israel on substantial progress toward resolving Israel-Palestinian disputes. Qatar hosts a political office of the Palestinian Islamist armed group Hamas (a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization).

Biden Administration officials have thanked Qatar for its role as an intermediary to Hamas in the wake of the group's October 7, 2023 terrorist attacks and taking of hostages in Israel. Qatar, Egypt, and the United States facilitated a multiday pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas in the final week of November 2023. During the pause, 110 hostages held in Gaza (including two U.S.-Israeli dual citizens) and 250 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel were released.<sup>3</sup> Hamas and other groups reportedly still hold around 130 persons in Gaza, including about six Americans, but reports suggest that some of these hostages could be dead.<sup>4</sup> As of early February, Qatar was

<sup>1</sup> In 2015, Qatar National Bank estimated that at then-prevailing production rates, Qatar's gas reserves could last 138 years. Sergio Chapa, "U.S. Holds World's Top LNG Exporter Spot on European Energy Crisis," *Bloomberg*, February 1, 2022; and, Agence France Presse, "Qatar vast gas reserves 'to last 138 years': report," June 21, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Based on figures available from Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, "World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision," accessed February 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Erin Banco, "Gaza hostage talks hit roadblock, raising fears of prolonged captivity" *Politico*, December 7, 2023. Four hostages (including two Americans) were released before the late November pause.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Saidel et al., "Hamas Took More Than 200 Hostages from Israel," *Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2024. On December 15, Israeli forces killed three unarmed Israeli hostages who were attempting to surrender to them.

participating in negotiations regarding a proposed hostage-prisoner exchange that could pause the fighting for several weeks or more.

On October 13, Secretary of State Blinken said in Qatar that “there can be no more business as usual with Hamas,” and press reports citing unidentified diplomats suggest the United States and Qatar “have agreed to revisit the Persian Gulf state’s association with Hamas” following the resolution of the Hamas hostage crisis.<sup>5</sup> More than 100 Members of Congress wrote to President Biden on October 16 urging him to “put significant pressure on Qatar and Türkiye to cease their support for Hamas and expel Hamas leadership that they host.”<sup>6</sup> Qatar-based Hamas officials have travelled to and from Qatar since October 2023.<sup>7</sup>

In January 2022, President Joseph Biden and Emir Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani reaffirmed the multifaceted partnership between the United States and Qatar, and the Biden Administration designated Qatar as a Major Non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ally. A Biden Administration official said that the designation “reflects U.S. commitment to the strategic partnership and the role that we envision for Qatar in the region.”<sup>8</sup>

U.S. priorities include sustaining and strengthening U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, sustaining and strengthening U.S.-Qatari defense cooperation, and encouraging stability in Qatar’s relationships with fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab states. Qatar hosts U.S. military forces under the terms of a defense cooperation agreement, including the forward headquarters of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). U.S.-Qatar security ties have deepened since the mid-1990s, and in May 2022, CENTCOM commander General Erik Kurilla described U.S.-Qatar defense cooperation as “a critically important strategic partnership.”<sup>9</sup>

On several occasions, U.S. officials have acknowledged Qatar’s role in supporting U.S. diplomatic efforts globally. In July 2022, Secretary of State Antony Blinken praised Qatar for its role in supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces, assisting the United States with Afghanistan, and holding indirect talks with Iran.<sup>10</sup> In January 2023, Blinken again acknowledged Qatar for diplomatically engaging on Ukraine, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>11</sup> In January 2024, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Secretary Blinken “expressed gratitude for Qatar’s indispensable mediation efforts, especially since October 7.”<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> John Hudson, “U.S., Qatar to revisit Doha’s ties to Hamas after Gaza hostage crisis,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 2023; and, Humeyra Pamuk, “Qatar open to reconsidering Hamas presence in Qatar, US official says,” Reuters, October 27, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Rod, “Lawmakers reject de-escalation, urge strong action against Iran, Qatar, Turkey,” *Jewish Insider*, October 17, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Agence France Presse and Times of Israel, “Hamas leader Haniyeh said to meet Turkish FM to discuss hostages, ceasefire,” January 21, 2024; and, Reuters, “Iranian state media confirm meeting between Khamenei, Hamas’ Haniyeh in Tehran,” November 5, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State, Special Online Briefing with Major General Matthew McFarlane, Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, and Dana Stroul, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, February 28, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. CENTCOM, “CENTCOM Commander meets with Qatar Armed Forces Chief of Staff,” May 17, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Blinken’s Call with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Al-Thani,” July 3, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> In January 2023, Qatar had proposed hosting Democratic Republic of the Congo President Felix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame for talks over ongoing conflict in eastern Congo, but the talks did not materialize. U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Blinken’s Call with Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Al Thani,” January 21, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Blinken’s Meeting with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Al Thani,” January 30, 2024.

Figure 1. Qatar at-a-Glance



<b>Area</b>	11,586 sq. km (slightly smaller than Connecticut)
<b>People</b>	Population: ~2.7 million, of which nearly ~90% are expatriates Religions: Muslim 65.2%; Christian 13.7%; Hindu 15.9%; 3.8% Buddhist; and 1% other. Figures include expatriates. (2020 est.)
<b>Economy</b>	Gross Domestic Product (GDP): \$249 billion on purchasing power parity (PPP) basis (2021 est.) GDP per capita: \$92,900 on PPP basis Inflation: 2.3% (2021) GDP Growth Rate: 1.59% (2021)
<b>Oil and Gas</b>	Oil Exports: ~900,000 barrels per day (2022) Gas (LNG) Exports: 127.9 billion cubic meters per year (2021)

**Sources:** Graphic created by CRS using data from Department of State and Esri. At-a-glance information from CIA World Factbook (March 2023), U.N. Population Division (March 2023), International Monetary Fund, and Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Annual Statistics Bulletin (October 2022).

## U.S.-Qatar Defense and Security Relations

In the late 1980s, the United States and Qatar engaged in a years-long diplomatic dispute regarding Qatar's black market procurement of U.S.-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.<sup>13</sup> The dispute froze then-planned economic and military cooperation, and Congress approved a ban on

<sup>13</sup> Qatar defended its procurement of the missiles in protest of the sale of similar missiles by the United States to Bahrain, with which Qatar had an unresolved border dispute until 2001. Elaine Sciolino, "Qatar Rejects U.S. Demand for Return of Illicit Stingers," *New York Times*, June 28, 1988; Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Drawn into Gulf Dispute—Stray Stingers Tied to Qatar-Bahrain Tiff," *Washington Post*, October 6, 1988.



arms sales to Qatar (§566(d), P.L. 100-461) that lasted until the months leading up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when Qatar allowed coalition forces to operate from Qatari territory and agreed to destroy the missiles in question.<sup>14</sup>

Deep U.S. defense and security relations with Qatar did not begin until after the 1991 war. In January 1991, Qatari armored forces helped coalition troops repel an Iraqi attack on the Saudi Arabian town of Kafji, on the coastal road leading south from Kuwait into Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province.<sup>15</sup>

In 1992, Qatar signed a defense cooperation agreement with the United States, opening a period of close coordination in military affairs that has continued to the present. In 1995, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa deposed his father and became Emir. The United States promptly recognized Shaykh Hamad's assumption of power, and welcomed his decision to subsequently expand U.S.-Qatar defense cooperation. Shaykh Hamad faced a counter-coup attempt in 1996.

With its small territory and narrow citizen population base, Qatar relies to a large degree on external cooperation and support for its security. With 16,500 personnel, Qatar's armed forces are the second smallest in the Middle East.<sup>16</sup> Since 2013, the government has imposed mandatory short-term (3-4 month) military training and service for Qatari males.

Qatari-U.S. defense relations have expanded since 2001 to include cooperative defense exercises, equipment pre-positioning, and base access agreements. Qatar hosts the forward headquarters for U.S. Central Command. In 2013, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visited Doha, met with Emir Tamim, and signed a 10-year bilateral defense cooperation agreement. The text of the agreement is classified.<sup>17</sup> Unnamed U.S. defense officials told CNN in January 2024 that Qatar and the United States have renewed the agreement for a further 10 years.<sup>18</sup> Qatar is a member of the Combined Maritime Forces coalition, which operates Combined Task Forces (CTF) 150 (maritime security and counter-terrorism), CTF 151 (counter piracy), CTF 152 (Gulf security and cooperation), and CTF 153 (Red Sea security). The Qatari military and the West Virginia National Guard cooperate under the U.S. National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

Qatar's 2022 designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally qualifies Qatar to purchase certain U.S. arms, receive excess defense articles (EDA), and engage in defense research cooperation with the United States, for which it would not otherwise be eligible.

---

<sup>14</sup> The ban was formally repealed by the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 1991 (§568(b), P.L. 101-513). The conference report on H.R. 5114, Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1991 (H.Rept. 101-968) inserted Senate language (Amendment No. 144) that repealed the ban based on information provided by the Secretary of Defense "that it is in the national interest to reestablish United States-Qatari security relations because of their support for United States troops in the Middle East."

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Ferraro, "Allies Retake Saudi City," *United Press International*, January 31, 1991; and Joseph Albright, "Marines Take Credit for Khafji Victory," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, February 3, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Bahrain's armed forces are the smallest. Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2022*.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," Fact Sheet, July 30, 2021. In addition to this agreement, as of 2021, the United States and Qatar had the following agreements for defense cooperation: 2012 General Security of Military Information Agreement, 2013 Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, 2013 Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence, 2016 Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement, and 2020 Maritime Implementing Agreement.

<sup>18</sup> Alex Marquardt and Natasha Bertrand, "US quietly reaches agreement with Qatar to keep operating largest military base in Middle East," CNN, January 2, 2024.

Over the past several years, the number of U.S. military personnel who are deployed at the various facilities in Qatar, including Al Udeid Air Base (see below), has ranged from about 8,000 to more than 10,000.<sup>19</sup>

## Arms Sales

Since 2012, successive Administrations have proposed several major U.S. arms sales to Qatar, marking a shift in Qatar's defense planning toward the use of advanced U.S. attack and transport helicopters and other weapons systems, including items for air defense and missile defense (see **Table A-1** in the **Appendix**). France previously had provided approximately 80% of Qatar's arms inventory. Qatar collaborates with Italy and Turkey in support of its naval development efforts.<sup>20</sup> Qatar's purchase of U.S. weapons systems, including U.S. air and missile defense systems, corresponds to increased interest in such systems from some other governments in the region, ostensibly to defend against and respond to potential attacks from Iran. In 2021, the U.S. Department of State reported

Qatar has over \$26 billion in active government-to-government cases under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system making Qatar the United States' third largest FMS partner in the world. Recent and significant FMS sales focused on integrated air and missile defense and include the PATRIOT long-range air missile system, the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System, and the AN/FPS-132 Early Warning Radar; F-15QA fighter aircraft—the most advanced F-15 in production; and AH-64E Apache attack helicopters. Each of these programs includes facility construction and extended munitions, logistics, and training support.<sup>21</sup>

## Al Udeid Air Base and Military Construction

Qatar invested over \$1 billion to construct the Al Udeid air base southwest of Doha during the 1990s. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also awarded over \$100 million in Military Construction Air Force (MCAF) contracts for the initial construction of U.S. storage, housing, service, command, and communication facilities. Qatar's financing and construction of the runways and most of the facilities at Al Udeid and its granting of permission for the construction of U.S.-funded facilities facilitated gradually deeper cooperation with U.S. military forces.

In 2003, the U.S. military moved its Combat Air Operations Center for the Middle East from Prince Sultan Airbase in Saudi Arabia to Al Udeid. Al Udeid then served as a logistics, command, and basing hub for U.S. operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) AOR.<sup>22</sup>

Qatar has invested more than \$8 billion to support U.S. and coalition operations at Al Udeid since 2003, expanding and enhancing the facility in conjunction with U.S. military construction

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Qatar," February 2023, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/qatar>; U.S. Department of State, "Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Nathan A. Sales Travels to Qatar," August 12, 2020; and Department of Defense, "U.S. and Qatar Sign MOU Reaffirming Qatar's Commitment to Supporting U.S. Military Activities at Al Udeid Air Base," January 14, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Agnes Helou, "Qatari navy's new amphibious ship to help fulfil nation's 'unique' needs," *Breaking Defense*, February 2, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Qatar Integrated Country Strategy*, July 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Rebecca Grant, "The Short, Strange Life of PSAB," *Air and Space Forces*, July 1, 2012.



funding.<sup>23</sup> From FY2003 to FY2011, Congress appropriated and authorized more than \$457 million for U.S. military construction activities in Qatar.<sup>24</sup>

Qatar plans further investment in its military facilities to meet current and potential future needs. Planned development projects under the Qatar Development of Al Udeid program are valued at \$8.4 billion with construction plans through 2033 set to adapt base facilities from an expeditionary to an enduring nature and to enable them to house more than 15,000 personnel and support additional fighter, transport, and helicopter aircraft.<sup>25</sup>

Nearby Camp As Sayliyah housed significant U.S. military equipment pre-positioning and command facilities for the CENTCOM area of operations prior to its closure and a repositioning of U.S. equipment in mid-2021.<sup>26</sup> In April, the Administration stated that facilities at As Sayliyah serve as the main processing center for U.S. resettlement efforts for evacuees from Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> The Administration does not publicly report how many Afghans remain in Qatar awaiting onward travel. U.S.-Qatar bilateral agreements provide terms for the hosting in Qatar of evacuees from Afghanistan under U.S. auspices.<sup>28</sup>

## Counterterrorism Issues

U.S. policymakers have considered alleged material support for terrorist groups by some Qataris, including reported past support by members of the ruling family, over time alongside Qatar's counterterrorism efforts and its broader, long-term commitment to host and support U.S. military forces.<sup>29</sup> U.S. officials have described Qatar's counterterrorism cooperation since 2001 as significant, and the State Department report on terrorism for 2021 states that "Qatar has made strides in addressing state-sourced internal support for educational and religious content espousing intolerance, discrimination, sectarianism, and violence, although examples can still be found in textbooks and disseminated through satellite television and other media."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Qatar," Fact Sheet, July 30, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Specific legislative text available from CRS.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. CENTCOM response to CRS Inquiry, January 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Staff Sgt. Neil W. McCabe, "Curtain falls on ASG-Qatar after three decades supporting readiness, resilience," U.S. Army 310<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Sustainment Command, June 24, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Akmal Dawi, "US Continues Relocating Afghans Even Under Taliban Rule," Voice of America, April 4, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. State Department, Office of Treaty Affairs, *Qatar (22-919)—Protocol Amending the Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement of November 12, 2021*, September 19, 2022; and, *Qatar (21-1112)—Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement*, November 12, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> In 2022, media reports described a lawsuit involving allegations of terrorist financing by Qatar Charity and Qatar National Bank, and a reported investigation of similar allegations concerning the Emir's half-brother. See Alan Suderman, "Qatar, key US ally, faces new accusations of terror funding," May 13, 2022; and, *Sotloff et al. v. Qatar Charity et al.*, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, May 12, 2022. According to the 9/11 Commission Report and former U.S. government officials, Qatari royal family member and later Interior Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani provided support to Al Qaeda figures, including the suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks, Khalid Shaykh Mohammed. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (The 9/11 Commission Report), pp. 73, 147-8, 488-9. See also, James Risen and David Johnston, "Qaeda Aide Slipped Away Long Before September 11 Attack," *New York Times*, March 8, 2003; Josh Meyer and John Goetz, "Qatar's Security Chief Suspected of Having Ties to Al Qaeda," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Qatar," February 2023, available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/qatar>.

## ***Qatar and Hamas***

Qatar hosts a political office of the Palestinian Sunni Islamist group Hamas (a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization). The U.S. government and government of Israel have engaged Qatari officials as interlocutors of Hamas prior to and in the wake of the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel. (See “Israel and the Palestinians” below.) In October 2023, the U.S. Department of the Treasury named Muhammad Ahmad ‘Abd Al-Dayim Nasrallah as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224, describing Nasrallah as “a longtime Hamas operative based in Qatar with close ties to Iranian elements,” who “in recent years ...was involved in the transfer of tens of millions of dollars to Hamas, including Hamas’s military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassim Brigades.”

## ***U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance***

Qatar uses its own funds to pay for participation of Qatari personnel in the U.S. State Department’s Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) training program, including training that was pertinent to Qatar’s preparations to host the 2022 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) soccer World Cup. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security reached cooperative security agreements with Qatar related to the World Cup, and in July 2022 signed memoranda on border and cybersecurity cooperation.<sup>31</sup>

## ***U.S. Security Assistance***

The George W. Bush Administration requested \$10,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance funds for Qatar in FY2010, and requested an additional \$10,000 for FY2011 but did not allocate funds for Qatar during that fiscal year. The nominal IMET assistance had the administrative effect of making Qatar eligible to purchase other U.S. military training at the reduced cost level available only to IMET recipients.<sup>32</sup> The Obama, Trump, and Biden Administrations have not requested IMET assistance for Qatar, though Qatari personnel continue to participate in IMET and other U.S. training programs.

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

Qatar and the United States have not negotiated a Free Trade Agreement, but Qatar has used a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) to undertake large investments in the United States. The joint statement of a 2018 U.S.-Qatar Strategic Dialogue “recognized” the Qatar Investment Authority’s (Qatar’s sovereign wealth fund) commitment of \$45 billion in future investments in U.S. companies and real estate. U.S. exports to Qatar consist mainly of aerospace equipment. U.S. imports from Qatar consist mainly of petroleum products. Total bilateral trade in 2022 was valued at \$6.5 billion.<sup>33</sup> Qatar Petroleum has jointly developed LNG export infrastructure at the Golden Pass facility in Texas with ExxonMobil.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “DHS to Expand Security Cooperation with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates,” July 12, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> The Senate version of the FY2013 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 2467, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong.) would have amended existing law to make Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia eligible for such reduced cost purchases without having to receive IMET. §1204 of S. 2467 would have amended Section 546(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. §2347e(b)).

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Census Bureau data via U.S. International Trade Administration, TradeStatsExpress, February 2023.

<sup>34</sup> ExxonMobil, “QatarEnergy and ExxonMobil to independently market Golden Pass LNG,” October 27, 2022; and, at <https://www.goldenpasslng.com/about/about-golden-pass>.

Qatar's airline, Qatar Airways (QA), has been a major buyer of U.S. commercial aircraft and in January 2022 announced that it would purchase up to 50 cargo aircraft and up to 50 737 Max passenger aircraft from Boeing.<sup>35</sup> Qatar Airways and Airbus in 2023 announced they had reached a settlement of their dispute over paint on QA-purchased Airbus aircraft.<sup>36</sup> In the past, some U.S. airlines challenged Qatar Airways' benefits under a U.S.-Qatar "open skies" agreement based on the Qatari government's support for QA aircraft purchases.<sup>37</sup> The United States and Qatar reached a set of "understandings" on civil aviation on January 29, 2018, committing Qatar Airways to financial transparency and containing some limitations on the airline's ability to pick up passengers in Europe for flights to the United States. European officials reached an open skies agreement with Qatar in 2021, but not all European Union member states have ratified it.<sup>38</sup>

Several prominent U.S. universities have established satellite faculty campuses in Doha at Qatar's Education City, where Qatari, American, and other students pursue undergraduate and graduate coursework across a broad range of subjects: Carnegie Mellon, Virginia Commonwealth University, Georgetown University, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Northwestern University. In February 2024, Texas A&M University announced plans to close its branch in Qatar by 2028 citing regional instability.<sup>39</sup> The Qatar Foundation (QF) criticized the decision saying it was "influenced by a disinformation campaign aimed at harming the interests of QF."<sup>40</sup>

## Congress and Qatar

In Congress, legislative action related to Qatar has been relatively limited with the exception of appropriations and authorization legislation that affects U.S. defense programs and congressional review of proposed foreign military sales to the Qatari military. Congressional foreign affairs, defense, and intelligence committees monitor Qatar's foreign and domestic policies, while Qatar's resources, sovereign wealth, and associated geo-economic clout fuel congressional interest in Qatar's energy and investment policies and in U.S.-Qatari trade and investment ties.

Since October 2023, some in Congress have increased their scrutiny and/or criticism of Qatar for its relationships with Hamas and Iran. In December, the House adopted H.R. 5961, the "No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act," which would impose U.S. sanctions on financial institutions that transact in Iranian funds that were transferred in September 2023 from South Korea via Europe to a restricted Qatari account for potential humanitarian use by Iran in conjunction with Iran's release of U.S. detainees (see "Iran" below). The act as adopted in the House would state the "sense of Congress that the Government of Qatar should publicly condemn Hamas, turn Hamas leadership over to the United States or Israeli control, and pledge never to facilitate the transfer of any covered Iranian funds to Iran or any agency or instrumentality of Iran." Another bill H.R. 6431 would suspend Qatar's major non-NATO ally designation absent presidential certification that "the State of Qatar no longer directly supports, financially or otherwise, acts of international terrorism or foreign terrorist organizations." Legislation introduced in the House and Senate (H.R. 6000 and S. 3049) would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to act to remove exemptions on transactions involving Iranian funds via Qatar and would rescind the related September 2023 waiver. Other proposed bills would direct the President to confiscate any of the Iranian funds

<sup>35</sup> "Boeing lands huge airplane order from Qatar Airways." Associated Press, January 31, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Airbus, "Qatar Airways and Airbus reach amicable settlement in legal dispute," February 1, 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Kane, "Open Skies Dispute Between US and Gulf Airlines Escalates," *The National*, January 30, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> European Commission, "Aviation: EU and Qatar sign landmark aviation agreement," October 18, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Susannah George and Mohamad El Chamaa, "Texas A&M to close Qatar campus, citing regional instability," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2024.

<sup>40</sup> Qatar Foundation (@QF), X post, February 9, 2024, at: <https://twitter.com/qf/status/1755827488364564599>.

subject to U.S. jurisdiction (S. 3081) or to reimpose the threat of U.S. sanctions on transactions involving the funds (S. 3041).

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 118-31) directs the Administration to report to Congress on the legal protections afforded to U.S. service personnel in Qatar and other countries. The act also directs the Administration to report on efforts by the People's Republic of China to increase its influence in the Middle East, including in Qatar.

Congress has acknowledged Qatar's support for U.S. military operations, including efforts to evacuate U.S. personnel and third country nationals from Afghanistan. The Senate in 2022 adopted S.Res. 390, expressing appreciation for Qatar's "pivotal role and support of Operation Allies Refuge; and ... support to temporarily house thousands of evacuees [from Afghanistan] until they are cleared for follow-on movement." In 2022, Congress designated U.S. veterans who served on active duty in Qatar and several other countries on or after August 2, 1990, as "covered veterans" under the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-168), which expands health care eligibility for veterans subject to toxic exposure. In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, S. 302 would provide for related cancer screening.

The FY2022 National Defense Authorization Act P.L. 117-81 did not include a provision from the House-passed version of the bill (Section 1251 of H.R. 4350) on U.S.-Qatar relations, but the joint explanatory statement accompanying the bill repeated that provision's operative statement that "the United States should continue to strengthen the relationship between the United States and Qatar, including through security and economic cooperation."

In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, a Congressional Caucus on Qatari-American Strategic Relationships is active.

## Qatari Politics and Government

Qatar declared its independence from the United Kingdom on September 3, 1971.<sup>41</sup> It is a constitutional monarchy governed by the Al Thani family; in an April 2003 referendum, Qatari voters approved a new constitution that outlined plans to elect some members of the consultative National Assembly (*Majlis al Shura*) and recognized women's right to vote and run for national office. The Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani (age 42), began his rule in June 2013 when his father, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa, abdicated, marking the first voluntary and planned transition of power in Qatar since its independence.<sup>42</sup> Al Thani family members lead several government ministries and hold board seats on important state and private companies; the ruling family retains ultimate political authority but its relationships with other leading families appear cooperative. In March 2023, Emir Tamim bin Hamad announced a cabinet reshuffle and named Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani as Prime Minister: Sheikh Mohammed has served as Qatar's Foreign Minister since 2016.<sup>43</sup>

Qatari authorities delayed the holding of national elections envisioned in the 2003 constitution until October 2021, when Qatari voters selected 30 members for the 45-seat National Assembly. The onset of political unrest in other regional countries from 2011 onward, the 2013 transition

---

<sup>41</sup> Treaties signed in 1868 and 1916 between the Al Thani family and the United Kingdom recognized the Al Thani family's authority in Qatar but placed mutually agreed restrictions on Qatari sovereignty from 1868 through 1971.

<sup>42</sup> The former emir, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa, raised Qatar's global profile and influence after replacing his own father in a palace coup in 1995. Qatar's constitution reflects the previously contested principle that successors to the throne will follow the hereditary line of Shaykh Hamad's male offspring (Article 8).

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Mills, "Qatar's emir names top diplomat as premier, reappoints energy and finance ministers," Reuters, March 7, 2023.

from former emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to his son Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the 2017-2021 confrontation between Qatar and some neighboring states may have contributed to Qatari decisions to delay the election. Turnout in the 2021 election exceeded 63% of eligible voters. Citizens categorized as naturalized, including members of the numerous Al Murra tribe, were ineligible to stand as candidates or vote, leading to some protests and arrests in the run up to the election.<sup>44</sup> Qatari officials argued that procedural remedies were available to challenge election-related complaints and that the new Shura Council could review “any amendments to the laws governing the elections process.”<sup>45</sup> None of the female candidates who stood for office were elected, but the Emir appointed two women among the 15 additional members whose appointments he controls in accordance with the constitution. Qatar last held Central Municipal Council elections in 2019. Qatar convicted four elections protestors on related charges in May 2022, sentencing two individuals to life terms.<sup>46</sup>

Although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, the Emir appoints all judges.

## Human Rights

The 2022 U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights in Qatar cites

credible reports of: serious restrictions on free expression, including the existence of criminal libel laws; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental organizations and civil society organizations; restrictions on migrant workers’ freedom of movement, access to justice, and vulnerability to abuses, including forced labor; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully in free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation, including a complete prohibition on political parties; lack of investigation and accountability for gender-based violence; existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct; and prohibitions on independent trade unions.<sup>47</sup>

A National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) investigates allegations of human rights abuses and appears to operate independently. It is funded largely by the Qatar Foundation that is run by the Emir’s mother, Shaykha Moza bint Nasser Al Missned. The nongovernmental organization Freedom House classifies Qatar as “not free.”<sup>48</sup>

The European Parliament (EP) in December 2022 suspended consideration of Qatar-related legislation pending resolution of allegations of corruption involving Qatari nationals, the NHRC, and some EP Members.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Some members of the Al Murra tribe have contested the leadership of Emir Tamim bin Hamad and his father, and Qatari authorities have stripped some members of the tribe of their Qatari nationality in related disputes. In 2017, some Al Murra tribal figures supported Saudi efforts to isolate Qatar. Human Rights Watch, “The Shura Council Elections,” September 9, 2021; and Reuters, “Qatar’s new electoral law stirs up tribal sensitivities,” August 12, 2021. For more background see Jill Crystal, “Tribes and Patronage Networks in Qatar” in Uzi Rabi (ed.), *Tribes and States in a Changing Middle East*, Oxford University Press, June 2016, pp. 37-56.

<sup>45</sup> Qatar Government Communications Office statement in response to HRW report regarding “The Shura Council Elections,” September 9, 2021.

<sup>46</sup> Reuters, “Qatar jails four election protesters, including three for life,” May 13, 2022.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, March 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Joshua Posaner, Mari Eccles and Hanne Cokelaere, “EU Parliament to stop work on Qatar airline, visa laws,” *Politico*, December 15, 2022; and, Eddy Wax and Ana Fota, “How Qatar used a secret deal to bind itself to the EU Parliament,” *Politico*, February 17, 2023.



## Women's Rights

Women in Qatar drive and own property, and work in the government and private sector. Qatar's constitution recognizes the right of women to vote and hold office. According to the State Department, social and legal discrimination against women continues, despite the constitutional assertion of equality.<sup>50</sup> The application of Islamic law, which is not gender-neutral on marriage, divorce, child custody and guardianship, and inheritance, contributes to this gender inequality, as does a lack of laws against domestic violence.<sup>51</sup> Guardianship laws require young women to obtain permission from their male guardians to travel alone, as well as "to marry, obtain a government scholarship to pursue higher education, work in government, and obtain some reproductive health care."<sup>52</sup> In the labor market, as of 2021, women (citizens and expatriates) constituted nearly 57% of the workforce.<sup>53</sup> The World Economic Forum's 2023 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Qatar 133 out of 146 countries assessed. The report ranked Qatar among countries that have made the most progress in closing the gender wage gap and in women's educational attainment, but also found that health and survival outcomes in Qatar demonstrate a 5% or more gap between men and women based on Qatari men's longer life expectancy.<sup>54</sup> Qatar is a member of the executive board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

## Labor Issues and Trafficking in Persons

Domestic and international observers and officials have raised labor and migrants' rights concerns for decades as Qatar has implemented large-scale infrastructure projects, including in preparation for hosting the 2022 FIFA soccer World Cup. Press analysis citing government data from labor source countries reported in 2021 that thousands of foreign workers had died while employed in Qatar since 2011, but cited statistics that were not categorized "by occupation or place of work."<sup>55</sup> Amnesty International has said some labor conditions have amounted to the equivalent of "forced labor"; Qatari officials have highlighted labor law changes, acknowledged some shortcomings, and rejected some foreign criticism.<sup>56</sup> Qatari officials emphasize their commitment to ending abusive and exploitative labor practices and have established minimum wage rules and banned some components of the *kafala* [migrant labor sponsorship] system. Official enforcement reportedly has remained uneven and some reports suggest continuing abuses by private employers, including firms that supported World Cup-related projects.<sup>57</sup>

According to the State Department's 2021 human rights report, "the government made efforts to prevent and eliminate forced labor but did not in all cases effectively enforce the law; the *kafala* system left migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation." The State Department's 2023 Trafficking

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights: Qatar*, March 2023.

<sup>51</sup> For more information and sources, see CRS Report R46423, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress*, by Zoe Danon and Shannon L. Smith.

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Women and Qatar's Male Guardianship Rules*, March 29, 2021.

<sup>53</sup> World Bank, Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled International Labor Organization estimate)—Qatar, December 2022.

<sup>54</sup> World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*, Tables 1.1 and 1.2, June 20, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> "Revealed: 6,500 migrant workers have died in Qatar since World Cup awarded," *The Guardian*, February 23, 2021.

<sup>56</sup> Amnesty International, "Qatar: Security guards subjected to forced labour," April 7, 2022; Reuters, "Qatar minister slams hypocrisy of people calling for World Cup boycott," November 4, 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Migrant Rights, "Job mobility in Qatar is still a mirage despite reforms; domestic workers most affected," October 5, 2021; and, Pramod Acharya, "Months before World Cup, workers forced to return home early and with pending dues," Migrant Rights, September 4, 2022.



in Persons report classifies Qatar as a Tier 2 country and describes increased prosecutions and investigations, improved intra-government information sharing, and improved victim identification measures. The report notes, “the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas,” and cites observers’ reports that “prosecutors consistently used the Qatari penal code to address trafficking crimes rather than the anti-trafficking law.”<sup>58</sup> In November 2022, the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a report describing “significant progress” in Qatar’s efforts to reform its labor system and noting “universal recognition that the work is not complete.”<sup>59</sup> In March 2023, the ILO rejected allegations that “lobbying” and financial support from the government of Qatar had altered its reporting on conditions in the country.<sup>60</sup>

## Religious Freedom

Qatar’s constitution guarantees the freedom to practice religious rites in accordance with “the maintenance of public order and morality.” Islam is the state religion and *sharia* is “a main source” of legislation. Most citizens are Sunni Muslims, and some citizens are Shia Muslims. Non-Muslims comprise most of Qatar’s non-citizen expatriate population, including Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Copts, Orthodox Christians, Baha’i, and others. Expatriate non-Muslim religious groups must register with the government. The law prohibits public worship or proselytization by non-Muslims. The State Department’s report on religious freedom conditions in Qatar during 2022 reported that Qatar

continued to host the headquarters of the IUMS, a group widely viewed in the press and academia as being affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni transnational organization that promotes political Islam. Although IUMS stated it was an independent association of scholars, observers said its close relationship with the government helped it to serve as an instrument of the country’s soft power.<sup>61</sup>

The report states that “members of the government-allied International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) publicly framed homosexuality as an affront to Islam.”

## Qatar’s Foreign Policy

Qatar’s multidirectional foreign policy, financial resources, and unique international relationships have raised its global diplomatic profile since the early 2000s, and appears to lead other governments to view Qatari initiatives variously as useful or vexing depending on their discrete perspectives and interests. Qatar’s 2011 deployment of military aircraft to support NATO-led operations in Libya signaled a new assertiveness, as did reported Qatari support for armed elements of the Syrian opposition during the height of Syria’s civil war. Some of Qatar’s positions have drawn U.S. attention and have been scrutinized by some of Qatar’s Arab neighbors, including its contacts with the government of Iran and groups such as Lebanon’s Hezbollah, the Palestinian group Hamas, various other Islamist groups (including members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement), and Afghanistan’s now-ruling Taliban.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Department of State, *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Qatar*, June 2023.

<sup>59</sup> ILO, *Labour reforms in the State of Qatar: Coming together around a shared vision*, November 3, 2022.

<sup>60</sup> ILO, “Statement following the New York Times story on the ILO’s work in Qatar,” March 11, 2023; and, Rebecca R. Ruiz and Sarah Hurtes, “In World Cup Run-Up, Qatar Pressed U.N. Agency Not to Investigate Abuses,” *New York Times*, March 11, 2023.

<sup>61</sup> U.S. State Department, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Qatar*, May 15, 2023.

## Qatar and Russia's War against Ukraine

In response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Qatar has stated its "respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders" and called for a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict in accordance with international law.<sup>62</sup> Qatar also has provided \$5 million to support humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons and in December 2022 participated in a Ukraine solidarity conference organized by the government of France.<sup>63</sup> Qatar's diplomatic statements on the Russia-Ukraine war and related humanitarian crises outline the Qatari government's "full readiness to contribute to any international and regional effort aimed at alleviating the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and is in line with its position supporting peaceful solutions through dialogue and mediation."<sup>64</sup> Qatar has had close energy related ties to fellow natural gas exporter Russia, and has reportedly considered closer security cooperation with Russia at times in the past.<sup>65</sup>

Qatar's Foreign Minister visited Moscow in March 2022 to offer mediation, and, in October 2022, the Emir spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky by telephone and separately met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Kazakhstan during a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>66</sup> Qatar has signed a memorandum of understanding to become a SCO Dialogue Partner, as have Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>67</sup>

In October and December 2023, Russia released several Ukrainian children through mediation by Qatari officials at the request of the government of Ukraine.<sup>68</sup> In January 2024, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke to the Emir and "expressed gratitude for the important mediation role of Qatar and personal position of the Sheikh in the return of Ukrainian children illegally deported by Russia."<sup>69</sup> President Zelenskyy further acknowledged a Qatari donation of \$20 million to Ukraine's 'Grain from Ukraine' initiative.

Qatar has voted in favor of U.N. General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but abstained, along with other GCC members, in the April 2022 vote on expelling Russia from the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Qatar has committed to maintaining (and expanding as possible) its supplies of natural gas to Europe during the crisis. However, Qatari officials have said they will not divert to Europe gas already contracted for delivery to Asia, emphasizing that, "Qatar is absolutely committed to the

<sup>62</sup> Qatar "calls for a ceasefire and the start of seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict, based on its keenness on the Charter of the United Nations and the well-established principles of the international law, its obligations stipulated in the Charter to settle international disputes by peaceful means, and its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of states." Qatar Foreign Ministry, "Qatar Participates in Humanitarian Meeting of Senior Officials on Ukraine," September 27, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> Qatar Information Office, "Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Affirms Qatar's Support for UNHRC in Facing Global Challenges," February 28, 2022; and, *Gulf Times*, "Ukraine's envoy hails Qatar's humanitarian support," August 18, 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Qatar Foreign Ministry, "Qatar Participates in 'Solidarity with Ukrainian People' Conference in Paris," December 13, 2022.

<sup>65</sup> *Al Jazeera*, "Qatar FM: Doha buying S-400s 'not anyone's business,'" March 4, 2019.

<sup>66</sup> "Foreign Minister meets Russian Foreign Minister." *The Peninsula*, March 14, 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Abhishek G Bhaya, "SCO to induct Egypt and Saudi Arabia as dialogue partners," *CGTN*, July 15, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Siobhán O'Grady, "Russia releases four Ukrainian children after mediation by Qatar," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2023; and O'Grady, "Russia to release six more Ukrainian children after Qatar mediation," *Washington Post*, December 5, 2023.

<sup>69</sup> Office of the President of Ukraine, "Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Amir of Qatar discussed further coordination in the return of Ukrainian children deported by Russia," January 8, 2024.

sanctity of contracts.”<sup>70</sup> Entities purchasing Qatari gas may have discretion to divert gas to Europe, which Qatari officials have not said they oppose. Qatari energy officials have stressed that no combination of major gas exporters can supply enough natural gas to Europe, on short notice, to completely compensate for a shutoff of gas supplies from Russia.

Qatar has announced plans to expand its gas output and exports in coming years and has discussed new long-term purchase agreements with European customers.<sup>71</sup> In October 2023, Qatar announced 27-year natural gas sale and purchase agreements with TotalEnergies of France and Shell of the Netherlands beginning in 2026.<sup>72</sup> (See “Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues” below.) In January 2023, Qatar announced it would replace a Russian firm in a joint natural gas exploration venture in Lebanese waters in partnership with ENI of Italy and TotalEnergies.<sup>73</sup> Delivery delays to Europe may result from shipping disruptions in the Red Sea associated with maritime attacks by the Yemen-based Houthi movement.<sup>74</sup>

Qatari officials at times have observed that multilateral financial sanctions could motivate some energy producers to develop alternative, non-U.S. dollar-based means of marketing oil and gas exports.<sup>75</sup>

## Qatar and China

Emir Tamim and People’s Republic of China leader Xi Jinping met in Saudi Arabia in December 2022 in conjunction with the Arab States-China Summit and the GCC-China Summit. PRC firm China Railway Construction Corporation partnered with Qatari firms to build the Lusail stadium that hosted the 2022 World Cup final. China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) played a central role in Qatar’s Hamad Port and Emiri Naval Base construction projects.<sup>76</sup> In 2015, Qatar launched the first *renminbi* clearing hub in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, primarily to settle payments in China’s currency for exports of oil and gas.<sup>77</sup> Oil, natural gas, and petroleum products comprise most of Qatar’s exports to China. In November 2022, China’s Sinopec and QatarEnergy agreed to a 27-year LNG supply deal. China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) and QatarEnergy signed a similar 27-year deal in June 2023.<sup>78</sup> China-based press sources reported in January 2024 that QatarEnergy may expand its LNG shipping fleet with large ships built in China.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>70</sup> QatarEnergy CEO Saad Al Kaabi quoted in Andrew Mills, “QatarEnergy expanding in LNG, won’t divert supplies to Europe,” Reuters, October 18, 2022.

<sup>71</sup> “Germany agrees gas deal with Qatar to help end dependency on Russia,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> “QatarEnergy, TotalEnergies sign 27-year LNG supply agreement,” Reuters, October 11, 2023; and, Yousef Saba, “Qatar supplies gas to Europe, vying with US to replace Russia supply,” Reuters, October 18, 2023.

<sup>73</sup> Bassem Mroue, “Qatar boosts influence in Lebanon amid multiple crises,” Associated Press, February 4, 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Maha El Dahan, Emily Chow and Andrew Mills, “QatarEnergy halts Red Sea LNG shipping amid attacks, seeking security advice,” Reuters, January 15, 2024.

<sup>75</sup> “Ukraine-Russia crisis is driving countries to explore new ways of pricing oil, Qatar says,” *CNC*, March 26, 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Qatar New Port Project at <http://www.npp.com.qa/Construction.html>.

<sup>77</sup> SWIFT, “The United Arab Emirates and Qatar drive RMB adoption in the Middle East,” press release, January 28, 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Mills and Maha El Dahan, “Qatar strikes second big LNG supply deal with China,” Reuters, June 20, 2023.

<sup>79</sup> The Maritime Executive, “Qatar Goes Big Reportedly Ordering World’s Largest LNG Carriers from China,” January 11, 2024.

## Qatar and Afghanistan

Following the Taliban's August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan, Qatari diplomats in Kabul helped U.S. evacuation efforts, including by escorting small groups of Americans into the Kabul airport.<sup>80</sup> Since the completion of the U.S. withdrawal on August 30, 2021, Qatar Airways charter flights have evacuated additional U.S. and other nationals. President Biden and senior U.S. officials have thanked Qatar for its help in U.S. relocation efforts and for Qatar's ongoing engagement in talks with the Taliban on issues of mutual concern to Qatar and the United States. U.S. Embassy Kabul closed in conjunction with the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover, and its diplomats transferred to Embassy Doha, where they operate an Afghan Affairs Unit. The Biden Administration sought \$41.9 million in FY2023 State Department funding to support the Protecting Power Arrangement (PPA) between Qatar and the United States to protect certain U.S. interests in Afghanistan.

Qatar has maintained contact with Taliban officials and in January 2023, Foreign Minister (and then-Deputy Prime Minister) Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani described Taliban actions to impose limits on the education and employment of girls and women as "very disappointing."<sup>81</sup> In May 2023, in his capacity as Prime Minister, Sheikh Mohammed travelled to Kandahar, Afghanistan for a direct meeting with Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada. Planned U.N.-led talks on Afghanistan in Doha in February 2024 may include Taliban participants.

As noted above, Qatar and the United States have bilateral agreements regarding Qatar's hosting of Afghan nationals for a limited period to complete their vetting and processing for onward migration.<sup>82</sup> Qatar's Camp As Sayliyah, a former pre-positioning site for U.S. military equipment, has served as the main operations center in Qatar for U.S. resettlement efforts of evacuees from Afghanistan.

## Qatar and its Neighbors

### Gulf Cooperation Council and other Arab States

The United States has encouraged intra-Arab rapprochement following a period from 2017 through 2020 in which Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt worked to isolate Qatar diplomatically and economically in the hopes of changing Qatari officials' policies toward sensitive regional political issues.<sup>83</sup> By 2019, having realized few benefits from the blockade, Saudi Arabia and the UAE apparently began to look for a resolution—an outcome urged by the Trump Administration.<sup>84</sup> At the 41<sup>st</sup> GCC summit in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia, on

<sup>80</sup> "Biden says safe zone around Kabul airport to expand, as Pentagon enlists commercial airlines to aid evacuations," *Washington Post*, August 22, 2021.

<sup>81</sup> Reuters, "Davos 2023: Qatar says engagement with Taliban needed despite 'disappointing' actions," January 17, 2023.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. State Department, Office of Treaty Affairs, *Qatar (22-919)—Protocol Amending the Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement of November 12, 2021*, September 19, 2022; and, *Qatar (21-1112)—Temporary Relocation Transit Agreement*, November 12, 2021.

<sup>83</sup> In June 2017, those countries cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed limits on the entry and transit of Qatari nationals and vessels in their territories, waters, and airspace. The group initially demanded that, as a condition for ending the boycott, Qatar close the Al Jazeera satellite network, sever relations with Muslim Brotherhood organizations, downgrade relations with Iran, and end the deployment of Turkish military personnel in Qatar. See "List of demands on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, other Arab nations," Associated Press, June 23, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> "US Secretary of State in Qatar urges end to Gulf diplomatic rift," *Deutsche Welle*, January 13, 2019.

January 5, 2021, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Egypt announced that they would restore diplomatic relations with Qatar, though Qatar did not commit to meeting any of their demands.

Following the Al Ula summit, Qatar reengaged with its former antagonists, and Emir Tamim visited Egypt in June 2022 and participated in the GCC+3 Summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he met with President Biden. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi visited Doha in September 2022. Qatari authorities reportedly requested that several Egyptian nationals affiliated with Islamist groups relocate from Qatar in June 2023. Qatar joined other Gulf states in announcing billions of dollars of planned investments in Egypt in 2022, as the Egyptian government sought Gulf-state financial support in exchange for Egyptian state assets, including Egyptian government-held stakes in several companies. In February 2023, Saudi Arabia hosted officials from Qatar and Bahrain to launch talks to resolve a series of outstanding issues between Qatar and Bahrain. Emir Tamim visited Saudi Arabia for the April 2023 Arab League summit, but reportedly departed before Syrian President Bashar al Asad spoke following his government's reinstatement by the League. Qatar's Prime Minister visited Saudi Arabia in February 2024 for consultations with other Arab ministers on the Israel-Hamas war and conditions in Gaza (see below).

## Iran

Qatari leaders have pursued dialogue with Iran, while cooperating with U.S. efforts to counter Iran strategically. Qatar hosted Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi in February 2022, and the two sides signed several agreements.<sup>85</sup> Qatar turned to Iran to help it cope with the GCC rift, including by importing Iranian foodstuffs and by overflying Iranian airspace, a privilege for which Qatar Airways paid Iran over \$130 million per year in overflight fees.<sup>86</sup> Qatar did not support the May 8, 2018, U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 multilateral Iran nuclear agreement, the JCPOA, instead stating that efforts to “denuclearize” the region should not lead to “escalation.”<sup>87</sup> Qatar and Iran exchanged mutual visits of high-ranking officials in 2019 in an initiative reported as seeking to de-escalate U.S.-Iran tensions,<sup>88</sup> and Qatar has encouraged dialogue between the GCC countries and Iran to lower Gulf tensions.<sup>89</sup> Qatar and Iran share the large North Field natural gas reserve in the Persian Gulf.

Qatar has supported Biden Administration efforts to restore full Iranian and U.S. adherence to the JCPOA; the Emir visited Iran in May 2022, and in June hosted U.S. negotiators for indirect talks. In January 2023, Qatar's Foreign Minister visited Iran and is reported to have said he shared a message from the U.S. government “about a topic related to the [2015 nuclear] agreement that may not be directly linked to it.”<sup>90</sup> In February 2023, NBC News reported that Qatari officials had served as intermediaries in U.S.-Iran talks about possible prisoner exchanges.<sup>91</sup>

In September 2023, the United States and Iran conducted a mutual prisoner exchange and the U.S. government waived the potential imposition of sanctions to facilitate the transfer of \$6 billion in Iranian assets, accrued from petroleum sales to South Korea, to a financial institution in

<sup>85</sup> Anna L. Jacobs, *Qatar and Iran Expand Ties Amid Broader Gulf De-escalation*, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, March 11, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> “UN aviation ruling could deny Iran hundreds of millions of dollars,” *Fox News*, July 14, 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Qatar Foreign Ministry Statement, May 9, 2018.

<sup>88</sup> The Latest: Qatar trying to defuse tensions amid Iran crisis, *Fox News*, May 16, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Erin Cunningham, “Qatar urges dialogue between Persian Gulf states,” *Washington Post*, January 19, 2021.

<sup>90</sup> Amwaj Media, “Qatar carries US ‘message’ to Tehran as IAEA chief set to visit Iran,” January 31, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Dan De Luce and Abigail Williams, “The U.S. and Iran are holding indirect talks on a possible prisoner exchange, with the help of the U.K. and Qatar, sources say,” NBC News, February 15, 2023.



Qatar. The actions by the governments of Iran and the United States occurred in the context of broader diplomatic engagement to de-escalate tensions.<sup>92</sup> A Treasury FAQ published September 18, 2023, reads

In partnership with the Government of Qatar and financial institutions operating the HC [humanitarian channel] — all of which have committed to stringent due diligence measures — the United States will closely monitor the HC and will take appropriate action should Iran attempt to use these funds for purposes other than permitted humanitarian purchases.<sup>93</sup>

An October 12 press report said that Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo told legislators that, in the wake of Hamas's assault on Israel, U.S. and Qatari officials had agreed to prevent the use of the funds to finance the purchase of humanitarian goods for export to Iran for an unspecified period of time.<sup>94</sup> Going forward, the United States could impose sanctions on any foreign financial institution or entity involved in a transaction involving the funds, including restricting access to the U.S. financial system. In December, the House adopted H.R. 5961, which would direct the President to impose sanctions on foreign financial institutions determined to transact in the transferred funds.

The Qatari prime minister said, on October 13, that Qatar is “always committed to any agreement” that Qatar has entered into, a likely reference to the Qatari government's position that it has made commitments both to the United States and Iran in relation to the transfer and potential future use of the funds. On October 30, Secretary of State Blinken said in Senate testimony

The money in that South Korean account that accrued from the sale of these proceeds, for technical reasons related to Korean banks, was unable to be used even though it lawfully could be. So, it was moved to an account in Qatar where it could be used for humanitarian purposes, just as the previous administration established another account in another country for these very purposes. The money never goes and would never go to Iran. It can only be used for authorized transactions overseen by our Treasury Department and only for things like food, medicine, and other authorized humanitarian purposes. To date, not a single dollar has been expended from that account. There are currently no plans to expend a single dollar from that account. And in any event, that money never touches Iran directly.<sup>95</sup>

Some Members of Congress are urging or seeking to compel the Administration to act in a demonstrable, transparent way to ensure the funds in Qatar are not used for Iran-related transactions. Related legislative proposals are discussed below. (See “Israel and the Palestinians.”) If Qatar or the United States act with regard to the funds in ways that the government of Iran perceives as violating the understanding previously reached, Iran could decide to no longer engage Qatar as an intermediary for the United States on issues such as Iran's nuclear program, U.S. nationals unjustly detained in Iran, negotiations with Hamas or other Iran-backed groups, and/or other regional security matters.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Karen DeYoung et al., “U.S. and Iran in indirect talks over nuclear program and prisoners,” *Washington Post*, June 20, 2023; Chase Winter et al., “What's driving Biden's Iran sanctions policy,” *Energy Intelligence*, September 7, 2023.

<sup>93</sup> Treasury FAQ 1134, <https://ofac.treasury.gov/faqs/1134>.

<sup>94</sup> Jeff Stein and Jacob Bogage, “U.S., Qatar agree to stop Iran from tapping \$6 billion fund after Hamas attack,” *Washington Post*, October 12, 2023.

<sup>95</sup> “Senate Appropriations Committee Holds Hearing on National Security Supplemental Request,” CQ Congressional Transcripts, October 31, 2023.

<sup>96</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a joint press availability,” October 13, 2023.



## Israel and the Palestinians

Qatar's policies toward Israel and the Palestinians are receiving additional international attention following the October 7, 2023 terrorist attacks by the U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Hamas on Israel, the seizure by Hamas and other armed groups of hostages from Israel, and Israel's military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which Hamas has controlled since 2007.

Qatar has had high-level contacts with Israel since the mid-1990s, and has allowed some small-scale direct Israel-Qatar trade and visits to Doha by Israeli security officials, athletes, doctors, and other Israelis, in spite of abiding policy differences.<sup>97</sup> Emir Tamim and other Qatari officials have accused Israel of abuses against the Palestinians and express support for Palestinian efforts to establish a state with East Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>98</sup> Qatari officials say they have ruled out joining other Arab states in normalizing relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords until there is substantial progress toward resolving the Israel-Palestinian dispute.<sup>99</sup> Following Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani's February 9, 2024 meeting with Arab foreign minister counterparts in Saudi Arabia, the Qatari government said the ministers "emphasized the importance of taking irreversible steps to implement the two-state solution, recognizing the State of Palestine along the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant international resolutions."<sup>100</sup>

Since October 7, the Qatari government has been vocal in its calls for an immediate ceasefire,<sup>101</sup> has criticized the Israeli military's conduct,<sup>102</sup> and has voiced opposition to attacks against civilians.<sup>103</sup> Qatar's government said on October 7 that it held "Israel solely responsible for the ongoing escalation."<sup>104</sup> On October 13, the Qatari government rejected "the attempts to forcibly displace the brotherly Palestinian people from Gaza Strip," called for "lifting the blockade on the Strip and providing full protection to civilians under international law and international

<sup>97</sup> Uzi Rabi, "Qatar's Relations with Israel: Challenging Arab and Gulf Norms," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 63, no. 3 (Summer, 2009), pp. 443-459; and, Guy Azriel, "Qatar-Israel talks fail over Israeli demand to go public," *i24 News*, August 31, 2022.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, "Israel Doesn't Want Peace: Emir," *The Peninsula*, September 29, 2015. In March 2023, Qatar's permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva stated Qatar's position "supporting the Palestinian people and their just cause until they reclaim all their legitimate rights, and establish full sovereignty as independent state based on the borders of 1967 with East Jerusalem as the capital." Qatar Foreign Ministry, "The State of Qatar Reiterates Position of Supporting Palestine," March 3, 2023.

<sup>99</sup> "Interview: Qatar's FM rules out normalization with Israel, Syria," *Axios*, February 2, 2022.

<sup>100</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Participates in Consultative Meeting in Riyadh to Discuss Developments in Israeli War on Gaza," February 9, 2024.

<sup>101</sup> On October 8, Qatar's Foreign Ministry called for "all parties to halt the escalation to attain calm and entirely halt the armed confrontations on all fronts." Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatar Reiterates Call for Halting Escalation to Protect Region from Danger of Descending into a Wider Cycle of Violence," October 8, 2023.

<sup>102</sup> On October 31, Qatar's Foreign Ministry decried an Israeli attack that killed Palestinians in Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza as a "new massacre against the defenseless Palestinian people, especially children and women," Israeli officials stated the strikes targeted Hamas facilities and personnel. See Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatar Strongly Condemns the Massacre at Jabalia Refugee Camp in Gaza," October 31, 2023.

<sup>103</sup> Qatar joined other Arab League members states in endorsing an October 11 resolution that condemned the killing and targeting of civilians "by both sides" and acts contrary to international law. See League of Arab States Resolution 8987, "On Ways to take political action to stop Israeli aggression and achieve Peace and Security," October 11, 2023.

<sup>104</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatar Expresses Concern over the Developments in Gaza Strip and Calls for Deescalation," October 7, 2023.

humanitarian law,” and affirmed the Palestinian right to statehood with East Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>105</sup> Qatari officials have repeated these views since October 2023.

For years, Qatari officials have asserted that their engagement with Hamas can help foster Israeli-Palestinian peace and contribute to de-escalation of conflict, a view they have reiterated since October 2023.<sup>106</sup> In an October 13 press conference with Secretary Blinken, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman said the Hamas office in Doha “was started to be used as a way of communicating and bringing peace and calm into the region, not to instigate any war. And this is the purpose of that office.”<sup>107</sup> Hamas leaders continue to meet in and operate from Doha, including the current leader of its political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh.<sup>108</sup> U.S. officials have not stated publicly whether they have formally requested that Qatar close the Hamas political office in Doha or otherwise act to expel Hamas figures from the country. Secretary of State Blinken has expressed U.S. gratitude for Qatari efforts “to secure the exit of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals from Gaza, the release of hostages held by Hamas, including two American citizens, and continued efforts to prevent the conflict from spreading.”<sup>109</sup>

Qatar’s main engagement with the Palestinians prior to the October 7 attacks and ensuing conflict appeared to come through the substantial financial aid it has provided to the people of Gaza, which Israeli officials supported as a means of promoting calm on the Israel-Gaza border.<sup>110</sup> Aid efforts have been provided through a “Gaza Reconstruction Committee” headed by Qatari official Mohammad al Emadi, who serves informally as an envoy to Israel.

Qatar was a key mediator to end eleven days of clashes between Israel and Hamas in May 2021, efforts that were reportedly facilitated, in part, by additional Qatari pledges of aid to Gaza.<sup>111</sup> Before the 2021 conflict, Qatar had provided cash assistance for Gaza, but due to Israeli concerns about the potential for its diversion, Qatar agreed to arrangements in late 2021 to provide money transfers for needy families through the United Nations, and send fuel from Egypt into Gaza so it can be sold to pay for civil servants’ salaries.<sup>112</sup>

In August 2022, Qatar supported Egyptian efforts to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine Islamic Jihad (another U.S.-designated terrorist group) militants in Gaza, while expressing “strong condemnation and denunciation” of Israeli settlers’ actions at the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.<sup>113</sup> In December 2022, the Qatari government expressed “its strong condemnation and denunciation of the Israeli government’s plans for settlement expansion, its continued attempts to Judaize Al Quds [Jerusalem] and Al Aqsa mosque, considering them a

<sup>105</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Qatar Announces Its Categorical Rejection of the Attempts to Forcibly Displace the Palestinian People from Gaza Strip,” October 13, 2023; and, Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Holds Phone Call with UN Secretary-General,” October 13, 2023.

<sup>106</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Press Conference of His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris,” June 12, 2017.

<sup>107</sup> U.S. State Department, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani at a Joint Press Availability,” October 13, 2023.

<sup>108</sup> “As Young Gazans Die at Sea, Anger Rises Over Leaders’ Travel,” Associated Press, January 8, 2023.

<sup>109</sup> U.S. State Department, Office of the Spokesperson “Secretary Blinken’s Call with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Al Thani,” Readout, October 30, 2023.

<sup>110</sup> Neville Teller, “What Do You Make of Qatar?” *The Jerusalem Post*, September 19, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> “Israel and Hamas Near Cease-Fire Amid Mounting Pressure,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2021.

<sup>112</sup> Aaron Boxerman, “UN to begin dispensing Qatari cash to needy Gazan families Monday under new deal,” *Times of Israel*, September 12, 2021; Ahmad Abu Amer, “Egypt, Qatar agreement with Israel, Hamas provides boost for Gaza economy,” *Al-Monitor*, November 23, 2021.

<sup>113</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs (@MofaQatar\_EN), “Qatar Strongly Condemns Settlers Storming Al-Aqsa Mosque,” Twitter, August 7, 2022, 5:34 AM.

severe violation of the UN Charter, international law principles, related UN resolutions, and a blatant assault on the rights of the brotherly Palestinian people.”<sup>114</sup> The Qatari government made similar statements in February and May 2023 in response to announced Israeli settlement plans and the visit of Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir to the Al Aqsa mosque area in Jerusalem. Qatar has called on international actors “to compel Israel to stop its settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories.”<sup>115</sup> Qatar and Egypt again helped broker a ceasefire following May 2023 fighting between Gaza-based groups and Israel. In June 2023, delays were reported in Qatari financial transfers of assistance to Gaza-based households.<sup>116</sup>

## Fiscal, Economic, and Energy Issues

Qatar’s active diplomacy is at least in part a result of its considerable financial resources and economic influence. In June 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised Qatar’s response to the economic pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, noted non-hydrocarbon growth in Qatar’s economy, and projected that the planned large-scale expansion of natural gas production and exports from Qatar’s North Field in the Persian Gulf (**Figure 2**) would support state finances over the medium term.<sup>117</sup> The IMF describes the North Field project as “the largest single LNG expansion ever” and expects the project to “further increase Qatar’s reliance on fossil fuel.”<sup>118</sup> According to the IMF, non-oil and gas revenues provide only roughly 20% of the government’s revenue.<sup>119</sup> Qatar does not have a value added tax (VAT).

New challenges have accompanied Qatar’s economic success in areas such as social cohesion; education; labor; preservation of local traditions; national infrastructure; and energy, water, and food supplies. To respond to these challenges, Qatari authorities have pursued a series of national development strategies based on a comprehensive national vision document that seeks balanced, sustainable growth by the year 2030.<sup>120</sup> Emir Tamim bin Hamad chaired the implementation oversight body for the *Qatar National Vision 2030* project in his former role as heir apparent. The national development strategy for 2018 through 2022 set targets for economic infrastructure development and diversification, natural resource protection and use, performance management, and international partnership informed by Qatar’s experiences in implementing its first national development strategy from 2011 to 2016.<sup>121</sup> Qatar’s isolation by neighboring Saudi Arabia,

<sup>114</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs Media and Communication Department, “Qatar Condemns Israeli Government’s Plans on Developing Settlements,” December 30, 2022.

<sup>115</sup> Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs Media and Communication Department, “Qatar condemns in the strongest terms the occupation government’s vote to legalize settlement outposts,” February 13, 2023.

<sup>116</sup> Ahmad Abu Amer, “Delay in cashing Qatari aid slows Gaza economy,” *Al Monitor*, June 7, 2023.

<sup>117</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), Qatar Article IV Consultation and Staff Report, IMF Country Report No. 22/175, June 2022.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

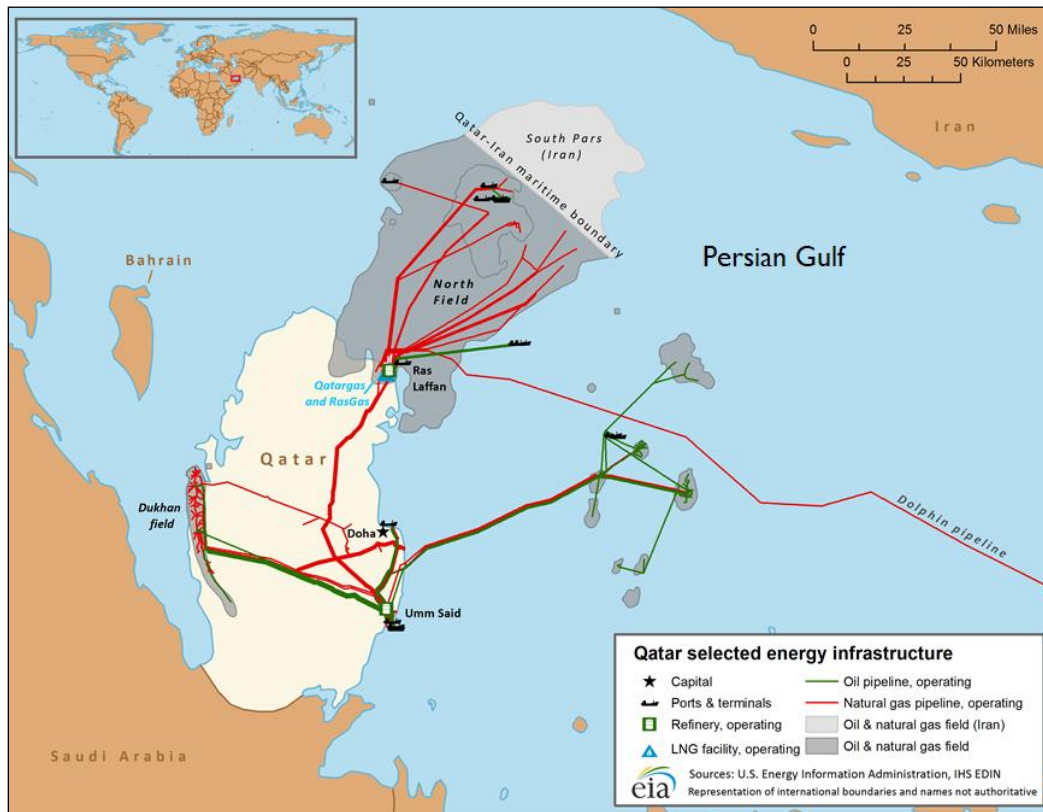
<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> According to Qatari authorities, Qatar’s *National Vision 2030* initiative “aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country capable of sustaining its own development and ensuring high living standards for its people for generations to come by seeking to develop a diversified economy coupled with diminishing dependence on hydrocarbons, where investment is moving towards a knowledge-based economy and the private sector is growing in importance.... The QNV 2030 identifies five main challenges: modernization and preservation of traditions; balance between the needs of this generation and those of future generations; managed growth and uncontrolled expansion; the size and quality of the expatriate labor force and the selected path of development; and economic growth, social development and environmental management.” For more information, see the Qatar Government Communications Office at <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/about-qatar/national-vision2030/>, and Qatar Planning and Statistics Authority website at <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>121</sup> For Qatar’s National Development Strategy documents see <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/nds1/Pages/default.aspx>.

Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates from 2017 through 2020 may contribute to Qatar's pursuit of greater self-sufficiency in some areas, and of extra-regional economic partnerships. Preparations for the 2022 World Cup and preservation of Qatari culture were core elements of the 2018-2022 strategy.

**Figure 2. Map of Qatari Energy Resources and Select Infrastructure, 2015**



**Source:** U.S. Energy Information Administration, Qatar Country Analysis Brief, October 2015.

With proven oil reserves of 25.2 billion barrels, Qatar has far less oil than the major Persian Gulf producers. QatarEnergy, the state-owned oil and natural gas company, increased crude oil output from 593,000 barrels per day (b/d) in 1999 to approximately 1.3 million b/d in November 2022.<sup>122</sup> Qatar withdrew from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as of January 2019.<sup>123</sup> Qatar also withdrew from the 25-member OPEC+ group in 2019. Qatar has not coordinated its production decisions with OPEC or OPEC+ since, as Qatari officials have prioritized LNG development and criticized both OPEC and OPEC+ as primarily reflecting the influence of larger producers.<sup>124</sup> Leading importers of Qatari oil include Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore.

<sup>122</sup> U.S. International Trade Administration, *Qatar—Country Commercial Guide*, November 2022.

<sup>123</sup> Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Opinion: Why Is Qatar Leaving OPEC?" *New York Times*, December 10, 2018; and Verity Ratcliffe and Simone Foxman, "Qatar Says Rejoining OPEC Would Not Fit with Its Strategy," *Bloomberg*, October 11, 2021.

<sup>124</sup> In 2020, Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi said, "The big players make the decisions in OPEC. We didn't see a place for us there because we are a gas producer, and we are really growing in gas." S&P Global, "INTERVIEW: Qatar thrives outside OPEC as minister warns over market flood legacy," April 20, 2020.

Qatar has the third-largest natural gas reserves in the world, an estimated 23.86 trillion cubic meters (tcm).<sup>125</sup> Qatar borrowed internationally and invited foreign investment in order to expand gas extraction and liquefied natural gas production and export facilities in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>126</sup> The Export-Import Bank of the United States provided more than \$1 billion in loan guarantees to support the early development of Qatar's gas production facilities in cooperation with a range of U.S., European, and Asian companies, banks, and export credit agencies.<sup>127</sup> Qatar expanded annual natural gas production from 29.6 billion cubic meters in 2002 to 167 billion cubic meters in 2019, and since 2020 has been the world's top exporter of LNG alongside the United States.<sup>128</sup> South Korea, Japan, and China were the top importers of Qatari LNG by volume in 2021.<sup>129</sup> Qatar is a member of Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) and hosts the GECF headquarters.

Following a pause in development of gas production and LNG export infrastructure in the 2010s, Qatari authorities embarked in 2020 on a further expansion of North Field operations and LNG facilities under a \$30-\$50 billion initiative that seeks to expand LNG export capacity by 60% to 126 million tons per year by 2027. Qatar in 2021 raised \$12.5 billion for this expansion through a series of international bonds.<sup>130</sup> The North Field-East expansion project includes four LNG trains and the North Field-South expansion project includes two LNG trains.<sup>131</sup> U.S. companies, particularly ExxonMobil, have long been partners in Qatar's LNG operations: Qatari officials chose ExxonMobil to participate in the North Field-East project along with ConocoPhillips. In addition to its domestic expansion, QatarEnergy is increasing its presence globally, including through marketing, liquefaction, regasification, and shipping.<sup>132</sup>

## Outlook

Qatari-U.S. security cooperation appears likely to continue to anchor the bilateral relationship, with U.S. officials paying close attention to Qatar's energy exports and its multidirectional foreign policy. Congress may continue to conduct oversight of the U.S. military's presence and programs in Qatar and may monitor Qatari foreign and domestic policies, especially concerning Russia's war on Ukraine, China, Iran, Afghanistan, and human rights. Qatari officials may continue to seek defense, economic, and diplomatic coordination with the United States while pursuing Qatar's discrete interests and priorities.

Following the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel and ensuing Israeli military operations, developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Qatar's role as a host to and interlocutor with Hamas are playing a more prominent role in U.S.-Qatar relations. U.S. and

---

<sup>125</sup> U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, 2021 estimate. Qatar's supply of natural gas doubled in 2002, when surveyors discovered new gas deposits in Qatar's North Field.

<sup>126</sup> See Kohei Hashimoto, Jareer Elass and Stacy Eller, "Liquefied Natural Gas from Qatar: The Qatargas Project," Stanford University Program on Energy and Sustainable Development and Rice University James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, December 2004.

<sup>127</sup> See Export Import Bank of the United States, "Ex-Im Bank \$930 Million Guarantee Supports U.S. Exports to Build LNG Plant in Qatar," November 18, 2004; and Export Import Bank of the United States, "Ex-Im Bank Finances QatarGas 3 Liquid Natural Gas Complex, December 15, 2005.

<sup>128</sup> BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2022.

<sup>129</sup> S&P Global Commodity Insights, "Infographic: Where do Qatar's LNG exports go?" April 12, 2022.

<sup>130</sup> Yousef Saba, "Qatar Petroleum grabs \$12.5 bln in emerging market bonds record," Reuters, June 30, 2021.

<sup>131</sup> Andrew Mills and Maha El Dahan, "QatarEnergy signs deal with TotalEnergies for North Field South expansion," Reuters, September 24, 2022.

<sup>132</sup> Rafiq Latta, "QatarEnergy 2.0: The New LNG Industry Hegemon," Energy Intelligence Group, February 28, 2023.

Qatari leaders may reevaluate each other's approaches to Israel and the Palestinians when considering future cooperation, in parallel with other interests and goals.



## Appendix. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022

**Table A-1. Proposed Major U.S.-Qatar Arms Sales 2012-2022**

Items	Estimated Cost (\$ million)	Notification Date
UH-60M BLACK HAWK Helicopters	\$1,112	June 13, 2012
MH-60R and MH-60S SEAHAWK Helicopters	\$2,500	June 26, 2012
AH-64D APACHE Block III Longbow Helicopters; Related Missiles	\$3,000	July 12, 2012
HELLFIRE Missiles	\$137	July 12, 2012
Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) Fire Units	\$6,500	November 5, 2012
PATRIOT Configuration-3 Missile Fire Units and Missiles	\$9,900	November 7, 2012
M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS); M57 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) Block 1A T2K Rockets; M31A1 Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) Rockets	\$406	December 24, 2012
Javelin Guided Missiles	\$122	March 28, 2013
Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) Systems	\$110	May 15, 2013
C-17 Globemaster III Equipment and Support	\$35	June 27, 2013
A/N FPS-132 Block 5 Early Warning Radar	\$1,100	July 29, 2013
RIM-116C and RIM-116C-2 Rolling Airframe Missiles	\$260	April 21, 2016
Javelin Guided Missiles	\$20	May 24, 2016
Mk-V Fast Patrol Boats	\$124	August 23, 2016
Logistics Support Services and Equipment Continuation	\$700	December 8, 2016
Spare C-17 Engines	\$81	December 8, 2016
F-15QA multirole fighter aircraft	\$1,100	November 1, 2017
Upgrade of Qatar Air Operations Center	\$197	March 7, 2018
Advanced Precision Kill Weapon Systems (APKWS) II Guidance Sections	\$300	April 9, 2018
Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) for National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS)	\$215	November 27, 2018
AH-64E Apache Attack helicopters and related equipment	\$3,000	May 9, 2019
AN/AAQ-24(V)N Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) systems for Head of State Aircraft	\$86	September 24, 2019
Fixed Site-Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft System Integrated Defeat System (FS-LIDS)	\$1,000	November 29, 2022

**Source:** U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Does not reflect Direct Commercial Sales approved by U.S. Department of State.

## Author Information

Christopher M. Blanchard  
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.