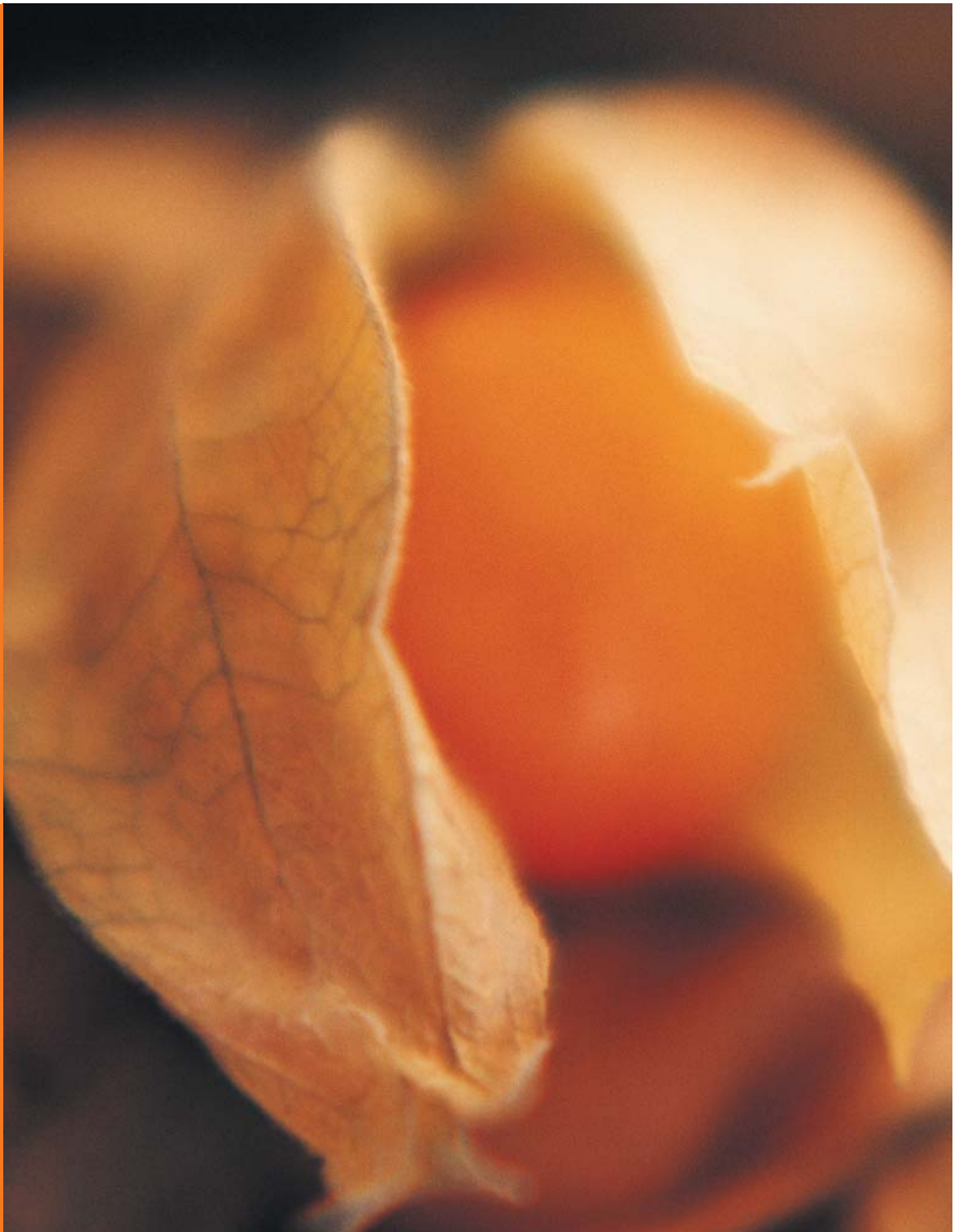


RELIGION, PRESTIGE AND WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY? (QATARI PEACE MAKING AND FOREIGN POLICY ENGAGEMENT)

EDITED BY STIG JARLE HANSEN, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
MOHAMED H. GAAS, STIG J. HANSEN AND HALVARD LEIRA

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Religion, Prestige and Windows of Opportunity?
(Qatari peace-making and foreign policy engagement)

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Stig Jarle Hansen,
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Noragric Working Paper No. 48
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**Department of International Environment and Development
Studies, Noragric
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INTRODUCTION

Stig Jarle Hansen

Qatar is an enigma: a world actor yet a small country with approximately a quarter of a million citizens. It does not have a socialist system or a democracy, rather an enlightened monarchy. It has a large academic sector, yet few professors study Qatari politics, even inside Qatar.

As will be indicated in this report, Qatari politics with its global impact should be studied thoroughly; Qatar has influenced strategic conflicts around the wider Middle East, including the Somali conflict in the south, the Malian conflict in the west, the Afghan conflict in the east, and the Syrian conflict to the north of Qatar. Qatar has frequently attempted to mediate, often in high level mediations in areas as the Horn of Africa and in Lebanon. Perhaps less known, it has interfered diplomatically to assist in resolving kidnapping cases in Yemen, and to secure the release of confiscated fishing boats in Eritrea. A large span of activities for a small kingdom, a kingdom that has been transforming itself quite rapidly over the last century, from a peripheral area stricken by poverty to a booming global metropolis.

Qatari traditions influence its politics. Several observers claim that religion does not influence Qatari politics, yet it has engaged only with Muslim countries, and has shown a tendency for supporting religious political factions. As suggested later in the report this is perhaps because Islam is a part of the Qatari identity, rather than religious elites influencing policies directly; Islam creates a space and limits to a repertoire of action for the Qataris.

The Qatari tribal monarchy, led by the Al Thani family since 1825, but also influenced by rival families such as the Al Attiyah, can roughly be divided into four layers, *rulers*, *movers*, *spacers* and *tellers*. The **rulers** are the Emirs themselves, of whom three are important in order to understand present day Qatar: firstly, Sheikh **Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani**, the Emir from 1973 until 1995 who built the foundations of independent Qatar and modernized the country. Under his reign, in 1991, Qatar participated alongside Saudi Arabia in the bloody battle of Kafji during the second Gulf War between Saddam Hussein and an international coalition led by the United States, establishing itself as an ally of the United States in that war and later signing a defence

cooperation agreement with the United States, an agreement that has been a pillar in Qatari politics and subsequently led to the establishment of the As Sayliyah (CENTCOM) and Al Udeid military bases, crucial for the military operations of United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad's reign, border clashes with Saudi Arabia ended, some say because of the defence cooperation with United States¹. The nucleolus of a stronger Qatari foreign policy was seen in, for example, Yemen.

It is nevertheless more common to say that modern Qatari foreign policy was formed from 1995 and onwards under the reign of the next Emir, **Hamad bin Khalifa** who deposed his father in 1995. Under his reign Al Jazeera was established and the diplomatic engagements studied in this report took place. His heir, Sheikh **Tamim bin Hamad**, was allowed increasing responsibilities within Qatari foreign policy until he took over as an Emir in 2013.

In Qatari politics the persona of the Emir is sovereign, and the Emir is central in all decisions. There are, however, individuals who have a strong influence on the Emir, who are able to influence decisions directly: the *movers*. During the reign of Hamad bin Khalifa, it seemed his second wife **Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned**, the mother of the current Emir, was such a person; with a keen interest in humanitarian affairs and with a rumoured influence both in the Palestinian issue and the Libyan issue². The veteran diplomat **Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber bin Muhammad Al Thani**, Prime Minister under Hamad bin Khalifa, as well as foreign minister for both Hamad bin Khalifa and his father, was also one of these³. His replacement when Tamim bin Hamad took power illustrates how the movers are dependent on the will of the rulers. Although the new Foreign Minister, long-time Deputy Foreign Minister and a part of the close circle around the current Emir when he was crown prince, **Khalid al-Attiyah** illustrates a form of continuity ensured through network, and may definitively be considered a mover. It is highly likely that Mozah and the former Emir also will remain in this category.

¹ Stig Jarle Hansen (2013) "Qatar, en utenrikspolitisk stormakt fra Enevoldstiden?", policy brief for the Norwegian ministry of foreign Affairs

² ibid

³ His predecessor is Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, the former Minister of the Interior from 2005 and onwards and the third cousin of the current Emir. He has a background as a police officer and is a graduate from Durham Military College and the Arab University of Beirut.

Spacers are of a different type, but partly overlapping with movers: they are members of the larger powerful families that are allowed space for relevant foreign policy decision making within a quite narrow sub-field of foreign policy, an example being the first chairman of Al Jazeera **Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani**.

The last group are the *tellers*: basically individuals with access to the movers or the Emir, often through informal networks, so-called *wasta*, through business associations, sport and media organizations and friends and families. This group can, to a certain extent, set focus on issues and attract the interests of the movers and rulers.

At the bottom is a formal bureaucracy. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Qatar is not without importance, but it is often reduced to a mere logistics institution, having limited policy influence and performing as a tool to enhance the efforts of the ruler. As claimed later in this report, the Qatari system, although different from most other systems, is able to take advantage of the available competence and resources; it can be flexible and efficient. It should not be underestimated.

Qatar has been active in many countries around the world. In Syria and Libya, Qatar has taken on a more aggressive role; in Darfur it actively attempted to mediate, and Taliban managed to open an office in Doha indicating a Qatari interest in Afghanistan. This report could not explore all of these cases but chose to concentrate on a wider exploration of Qatari peace efforts in Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen and the Horn of Africa. The case studies run deeper than the mere peace processes, studying both Qatari policy changes and Qatari efforts to have political influence beyond the peace process itself, to understand both Qatari motivations and Qatari *modus operandi* in foreign policy making. The cases also allow for a study of Qatar's more militaristic turn, as Syria definitively had an impact on the case of Lebanon, and cover the majority of the cases of Qatari peace-making. The field research conducted in relation to the case studies ended during the spring of 2013 and the impact of the important removal of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt can only loosely be assessed, but potential consequences, based on the empirical pre-2013 findings in the various case studies, will be discussed in the conclusion.

The case studies go in-depth to make the empirical foundations for our conclusions clear, and are based on field studies, at least one week in each country, drawing upon local partners. Two of these partners, the Abaad Studies Centre in Sanaa, Yemen and the Council for Palestinian European Relations in Gaza, and their respective leaders Abdusalam Al Harbi and Ramy S. Abdu respectively, deserve many thanks for their help, as do Bjørn Brenner, Michael Brown and Charbel Moussa respectively, all proving insights into the different cases.

The report itself consists of this introduction, a chapter based on the case studies, suggesting theoretical angles in order to understand Qatari foreign policy, and the actual case studies. The major findings are summarised in the conclusion.

QATARI AS A FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR, THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Halvard Leira

The preceding pages present us with varied cases of Qatari mediation with some common traits. Before we can deal with these commonalities, it is nevertheless necessary to conceptualize and contextualize Qatari mediation in some more detail. In this more general part of the report, I first discuss some broader perspectives on how we can understand small state activism more generally and Qatari activism more specifically; why does Qatar engage in foreign policy activism? Here I suggest that existing perspectives could be fruitfully coupled with considerations of systems maintenance and status. Following from this, I discuss the general mode of operations, the “how” of Qatari foreign policy activism. Drawing on insights from the last decade, I discuss the mode of operation often labeled “public diplomacy” and its relevance to understanding Qatari mediation. Finally, I discuss the specific means, some of the more detailed case-specific traits of Qatari public diplomacy and mediation, such as the use of media, the smallness of the policy apparatus and the reliance on diaspora networks.⁴ Throughout the analysis, I emphasize comparison, particularly with the Norwegian case.

The current literature on Qatari foreign policy activism tends to be drawn between befuddlement and certitude. On the one hand, a number of authors find the activities of Qatar hard to explain. Cooper and Momani e.g. argue that “the traditional International Relations literature is unable to explain Qatar’s diplomatic choices and behavior”,⁵ while Kayaoglu, who does provide excellent insight nevertheless observes that the activism “defies easy explanations”.⁶ Closely tied to such bewilderment is the notion that there is little rhyme and reason to Qatari foreign policy, as when Khatib suggests that “its [Qatars] foreign policy does not appear to be based on a coherent political strategy”.⁷ And, if one is steeped in the theoretical tradition of International Relations, where a core maxim (dating back to Thucydides) has been that “the strong do what they can and

⁴ An analysis following a relatively parallel trajectory, albeit with some different conclusions, can be found in Mehram Kamrava (2011): “Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Journal* 65(4): 539-556.

⁵ Andrew F. Cooper & Bessma Momani (2011): “Qatar and Expanded Contours of Small State Diplomacy”, *The International Spectator* 46(3): 113-128, quoted at p. 114.

⁶ Turan Kayaoglu (2013): “Thinking Islam in Foreign Policy: The Case of Qatar”, Paper presented at the annual ISA conference, San Francisco, April 3-6.

⁷ Lina Khatib (2013): “Qatar’s foreign policy: the limits of pragmatism”, *International Affairs* 89(2): 417-431.

the weak suffer what they must”, small state activism can be befuddling.⁸ On the other hand, a substantial number of authors have few problems explaining Qatari activism, relating it to the hyper-rational pursuit of (most importantly) regional security and general name recognition (i.e. “branding”), separately or tied together.⁹ Peterson e.g. argues that Qatari policy initiatives “seem to have been deliberately designed to put Qatar on the map”, and that they amount to “a strategy of branding the state for survival”,¹⁰ while Kamrava argues more specifically that “the primary motivation for Qatari mediation efforts is a combination of small state survival strategies and the desire for international prestige”¹¹ and Yetim maintains that “it is far-sighted for Qatar to devise multiple and occasionally, as is the case with the Arab Spring, seemingly inconsistent strategies that are likely to enhance its sovereignty and survivability”.¹² Thus, concludes Kamrava, “much of Qatari diplomacy, including the country’s mediation efforts, is based on a broader survival strategy that is aimed at ensuring the security of the ruling Al Thanis”.¹³

Where some observers see chaotic and haphazard policies, others see a cunning overall plan. My approach here falls somewhere between these two poles. On the one hand, I will argue that if Qatar is hard to understand, this is indicative of faulty tools rather than an inherent lack of possibility of comprehension. A number of the traits of Qatari activism should for instance be recognizable to Norwegians; some mechanisms are fairly similar, even if the specific situations and the cultural contexts are different. On the other hand, I will suggest that even if the rationalist approaches do shed important light on Qatari activism, they miss out on important parts of the story, and risk falling prey to a banal hermeneutics of suspicion, where all Qatari foreign policy actions are in the last instance interpreted as tools for the survival of the current regime.

Most theorizing about state behaviour and the state system is based on, and deals with, the actions of great powers. For better or worse, these have been seen as the ones dictating both

⁸ As Shushan points out, given Qatar’s wealth and military weakness, traditional theorizing would lead us to “expect a small state like Qatar to bandwagon with strong regional powers or to keep a low profile in foreign affairs to avoid irking more powerful states”. Debra Shushan (2011): “Bold Moves for a Small State: An Analysis of Qatar’s Foreign Policy” Paper presented at the annual ISA Conference, Montreal, quoted at p. 2.

⁹ I owe this point to Kayaoglu (2013), although he organizes the literature somewhat differently.

¹⁰ J. E. Peterson (2006): “Qatar and the World: Branding for a Micro-State”, *The Middle East Journal* 60(4): 732-748, quoted at p732-733.

¹¹ Op. cit. p. 540.

¹² Mustafa Yetim (2013): “State-led change: Monarchical country, democratic stance?”, Paper presented at the annual ISA conference, San Francisco, April 3-6.

¹³ *ibid.* 556.

whether other states live or die, and the overall structure of the system.¹⁴ A case in point is the categorizing of state systems according to the number of dominant great powers (or poles); as multi-, bi- or unipolar. During the 1950s and 60s, a number of scholars started exploring the possibilities for small state action in systems dominated by great powers. Some headway was made, but problems relating both to the lack of a common definition of small powers and the overall theoretical commitment to the structural constraints of power-struggle implied that this literature largely petered out in the early 70s.¹⁵ When reduced to a pre-determined choice between ‘bandwagoning’ with, or balancing against, the great powers of the region, small power politics seemed largely inconsequential. From a Norwegian perspective, one central outcome was nevertheless the idea of a “Nordic balance”, where the small Nordic powers were seen to have some leeway for foreign policy action, even within the framework of the bipolar order, due to the local balance amongst the Nordic countries.¹⁶ Nevertheless, small states were still largely left out of general theorizing, and most work on such states tended to be empirical.

During the last decades of the Cold War, a number of different processes, such as the one leading to the establishment of CSCE, lead to renewed interest in the activities of small states. Again from a Norwegian perspective, a key insight was captured (or articulated) by Jan Egeland, when he argued that small states might actually have an advantage vis-à-vis the greater powers in humanitarian work.¹⁷ Although Egeland’s central claim must be understood as a hypothesis rather than a conclusion, he did point out that small states can change the practices of the international system, even under conditions of fierce superpower competition. With the end of the Cold War, new possibilities emerged for small powers, and new ways of assessing small power action started to make inroads into International Relations scholarship. One oft-repeated, and fairly well substantiated, claim has been that small states can act as “norm entrepreneurs” in

¹⁴ Classical instances of such theorizing include Hans Joachim Morgenthau (with Kenneth. W. Thompson) (1985 [1948]): *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 6th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Kenneth Waltz (1979): *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, Hedley Bull (1977): *The Anarchical Society* (Houndsmills: Macmillan).

¹⁵ A useful review can be found in Andreas Løvold (2004): “Småstatsproblematikken i internasjonal politikk”, *Internasjonal Politikk* 62(1): 7-31.

¹⁶ Arne Olav Brundtland (1966): “The Nordic Balance. Past and Present”, *Cooperation and Conflict* 1(2): 30-63, cf. Halvard Leira (2009): “The Nordic Balance” – Arne Olav Brundtland *Internasjonal Politikk* 67(4): 780-783.

¹⁷ Jan Egeland (1988): *Impotent Superpower – Potent Small State: Potentials and Limitations of Human Rights Objectives in the Foreign Policies of the United States and Norway*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.

the international system, helping to nurture and push through new commitments, such as the anti-personnel-mine ban, the R2P and climate change awareness.¹⁸

Thus, whereas the small-state literature of the 60s and 70s focused on constraints and vulnerabilities, the recent wave of small-state research has focused on opportunities. If we apply these frames to Qatar, it is easy to see how global and regional balances of power matter. The local balancing between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the importance of the US as an external guarantor of Qatari independence must not be underestimated. On the other hand, the security afforded by the alliance with the US does enable Qatari activism. However, neither of the cited theoretical approaches gives us any clue as to why Qatar has decided to pursue the specific policy which it has chosen. Although Qatar does pay attention to the local balance of power, there seems to have been no consistent balancing policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran. On the contrary, Qatar has at times over the last decade pursued policies which have angered at one time or another not only the US, but also Saudi Arabia and Iran. Conversely, we see no explicit attempts to push a specific normative agenda, at least not one recognizable along the standards of western small states.¹⁹ If Qatar had been a thorough security-maximizer, as suggested by a number of writers, we would on the one hand have expected to see a much more consistent policy towards both the external hegemon (the US) and the local great powers (Saudi Arabia and Iran). On the other hand, if branding, soft power and normative activism had been the central values, we would expect such activism to have been focused on one or two specific issues or high-profiled cases. Neither of these expectations is borne out by the Qatari case. *This suggests that a more nuanced approach to Qatari foreign policy activism is needed.*

As indicated above, the traditional approaches to small state policy are rooted either in a view of states as security-maximizers, or in a view of (small) states as idealistic do-gooders. This dichotomy belies the mixed motives underlying most human action, and thus also the varied reasons for specific foreign policies. In the following sections two alternative (and partly overlapping) understandings of state action are highlighted. The point is not that these

¹⁸ Christine Ingebritsen (2002). "Norm Entrepreneurs: Scandinavia's Role in World Politics" *Cooperation and Conflict* 37(1), 11-23.

¹⁹ The idea of small states acting as norm entrepreneurs rests on an unarticulated Eurocentric and liberal vision; the "relevant" norms are all "good" norms, associated with the west and an ever increasing certitude that western norms are in one way or another "natural"

understandings should replace a focus on interests and ideals; it would, for instance, be ridiculous to claim that regime survival and Islamic unity were irrelevant to Qatari foreign policy. The point is rather that these two perspectives enhance our general understanding of small state policy, and hopefully also Qatari foreign policy.

Systems maintenance

In traditional accounts, systems maintenance has typically been seen as the prerogative of great powers.²⁰ However, as Neumann has recently argued, small states might actually have more vested interests in the perpetuation of the system, and thus be more eager to maintain it.²¹ Small western states, such as Norway, have been very well served by a multilateral system with regularized interaction, where treaties are most often upheld, where many important decisions are made based on the notion of equality in statehood and which is largely governed by law. Thus, they have sought to uphold the system as such, and a state such as Norway has been willing to engage in mediation efforts across the globe. However, it bears mention that during the 1930s, the small states of Europe were “only” concerned with maintaining peace in Europe; in a more dangerous regional system, the emphasis was on regional systems maintenance, rather than overall systems maintenance.

Just as the small western states, Qatar has been well served by the set-up of the current international system. Heavily dependent on the export of a single commodity and located in the vicinity of much larger states, the very survival of the Qatari state is predicated on a systems-wide respect for state sovereignty, and Qatari ability to influence the world around it relies on a situation where crude power is not the sole determinant of outcomes. However, Qatar is located in a much more troublesome region than the western small states, and should thus be assumed to be more concerned with the maintenance of the regional system. This is a system which keeps the Americans in, Iran and Saudi Arabia balanced and potential new leaders positively disposed towards Qatar. It is noteworthy that Qatar has not engaged in any attempts at mediation outside of the broader Middle East. As Kayaoglu emphasizes, it is impossible to make full sense of

²⁰ Bull (1977)

²¹ Iver B. Neumann (forthcoming): “Institutionalising Peace and Reconciliation Diplomacy: Third-Party Reconciliation as Systems Maintenance”, in Vincent Pouliot, Ole Jacob Sending & Iver B. Neumann *The Future of Diplomacy*.

Qatari foreign policy without acknowledging how Islam is constitutive of Qatari identity. Islam thus shapes both worldviews and foreign policy action.²² To the extent that Qatar is particularly concerned with the maintenance of a regional system of co-religionists, one might actually gain some relevant insights by comparing their actions to the actions of the confessional states of 16th century Europe.²³

But there is even more to systems maintenance. At least before the active involvement in the war in Libya, Qatar had repeatedly stressed relatively impartial mediation and sustained diplomatic ties with actors that most like-minded states shy away from. Thus, Qatar could be seen to maintain that most basic mode of interaction – diplomacy. Keeping open channels of communication to all parties and not refusing anyone are traditional hallmarks of diplomacy, and maintaining a competent diplomacy is one of the ways in which states gain and safeguard status in the current international system.

Status

In classical accounts of state action, such as those written by Thucydides and Hobbes, states were seen to be driven by what we can summarize as security, wealth and prestige. Later theorizing about international relation has prioritized the first two elements, while still acknowledging that prestige or status matters to states. Over the last 5-6 years, interest in status has increased substantially. However, much as with systems maintenance, focus has been on how great powers seek status.²⁴ Nevertheless, again in parallel to the literature on systems maintenance, an argument has been made that small powers might be even more concerned with status than great powers.²⁵ Being unable to fall back on hard power, they pursue status as a virtue of necessity.

²² Kayaoglu (2013)

²³ The obvious caveat here is that these states defined themselves against states adhering to other forms of Christendom, while Qatar has consciously tried to mediate between Moslems belonging to different denominations.

²⁴ William C. Wohlforth (2009) “Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War” *World Politics* 61 (1): 28-57, Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, & Paul Huth (2013, forthcoming) “Reputation and Status as Motives for War” *Annual Review of Political Science*, as well as the broader discussions in Deborah Larson, T. V. Paul, & William Wohlforth (2013, forthcoming) *Status and World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

²⁵ The following paragraphs draw substantially on the general discussions in Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho (forthcoming) “Introduction: Small States Seek Status, Too”, in Neumann & de Carvalho (eds) *Small states seek status, too*, and for the Norwegian case, Halvard Leira (forthcoming) “Norway - the obsessive status-seeker”, in Neumann & de Carvalho (eds.) *Small states seek status, too*.

Status is here understood as a relational concept; it emerges out of interaction, and is strongly connected to hierarchy. As Dafoe *et al* put it:

“Status” is often employed to refer to standing. Standing refers to an actor's position in a social hierarchy, and consequently what rights, respect, and patterns of deference from others they should expect. It is in this sense of rank that we can speak of status as a uni-dimensional metric: e.g. “an action increased the U.S.'s status”, “the U.S. has high status”.²⁶

Thus, even though they are closely connected, status is analytically distinct from reputation, which the same authors define thus:

When others hold beliefs about persistent characteristics of an actor, we say that the actor has a reputation for those characteristics, or for the behaviors implied by them. Since a state can have a reputation for beliefs about any persistent characteristic, a state can have reputations for many different traits, such as a reputation for military capability, for a public that tolerates the costs of war, for reliable generals, etc...²⁷

Within the literature, there are two broad explanations for why states seek to increase their status and enhance a positive reputation. The first is instrumental, status is perceived as a means to achieve other ends, such as security, wealth or access to great powers. By way of example: when Britain and Norway were debating territorial waters rather hotly in 1911, the British minister to Norway reported back to his government that it was “morally impossible ... to coerce Norway by force”²⁸; Norwegian status had repercussions for Norwegian security. Likewise, it has been argued that Norway’s reputation as a peace-mediator has given Norway access to important policy-makers from the great powers. In the Qatari case, Shushan argues that foreign policy can best be understood through the lenses of prestige.²⁹ Prestige and status are often used synonymously in the literature, and Shushan’s use of the term comes close to the instrumentalist

²⁶ Ibid. 5-6.

²⁷ Ibid. 4.

²⁸ Quoted in Roald Berg (1995) *Norge på egen hand. 1905-1920. (Volume II of the History of Norwegian Foreign Relations.* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.)

²⁹ Shushan (2011)

understanding of status. Specifically, she suggests that “Internally, the accumulation of prestige is designed to win public approval by enabling citizens to take pride in their country’s new notoriety on the international scene. Externally, the regime seeks to use its newfound prestige to insulate itself from expansionist threats by making Qatar an indispensable player in regional affairs”.³⁰

While status is obviously related to both self-perception and the safeguarding of absolute position in the system of states, this instrumental approach to status-seeking excludes the possibility that status matters in and of itself. The alternative approach sees status less as a causal variable and more as a constitutive one. Status is about having a place in a hierarchy, and related to the expression and recognition of state identity. Again, the Norwegian case is instructive. Whereas peace-mediation is seen to create a positive reputation, and even increase status, Norwegian politicians have stressed time and again that this is not the reason for engaging in such policies; peace-mediation is presented as inner-driven and an expression of whom we are. The status that follows from mediation is seen as its own justification. Likewise, while Norwegian politicians have been eager to underscore how mediation has led to access, they have had a hard time pointing to any specific results stemming from such access. Thus, the point of status is not necessarily to achieve something else, but status itself.

It is also important to distinguish and specify how status is sought in different circles of recognition. Small states generally want to be recognized for their positive contributions by great powers, and here a link to the previous point about systems maintenance is obvious – great power recognition of how smaller powers help “grease the wheels “ of international society is an important incentive for such status-seeking. On the other hand, small states do not, in general, strive to be accepted as great powers. They stress how they are states of a different kind (“good powers” rather than great powers),³¹ and thus measure themselves against other similar states. For Norway this implies the other Nordic states, as well as states such as the Netherlands, Canada and Switzerland.³²

³⁰ibid.

³¹ Neumann & de Carvalho (Forthcoming)

³² If one so desires, one can subdivide, and argue that the immediate circle of recognition consists of Sweden and Denmark, and “build outwards” from that starting point.

As mentioned above, the notion of Qatar seeking status to achieve security, wealth and domestic calm is acknowledged in the literature.³³ However, it also makes good sense to see Qatari actions as driven by a desire for status as such. But, importantly, where western small powers will tend to seek similar kinds of status within different circles of recognition, this is not necessarily the case for Qatar. For Qatar there are four obvious circles of recognition. **First** there is the global one, where Qatar has succeeded tremendously in moving from the status of a “micro power” less than a decade ago,³⁴ to an acknowledged small, but important state today. This status change has been paralleled with a reputation as a reliable partner in Middle East security, a safe haven for investments, a relatively enlightened domestic rule, an open-minded mediator, host of Al-Jazeera, and global patron of sports, arts and culture.

The **second** and **third circles** of recognition are partly overlapping, and consist of the Arab world and the Muslim Ummah. Status here is much more related to being recognized as a state working for unity within these circles. Within the global circle of recognition, mediation can increase Qatar’s status, and lead to a reputation as a state engaged in systems maintenance, but might on the other hand lead to status loss, when Qatar engages groups which the west consider to be beyond the pale. In these other circles, mediation efforts might rather lead to a reputation as an honest broker, as a state which refuses to take dictate from the west and as a state facilitating a broader unity.

The fourth circle of recognition consists of the other Gulf States, particularly within the GCC. Here, status is related primarily to being the first among the small-state equals. Such relatively benign status-competition among small, like-minded states is something which Norwegians are well used to. In the Qatari case, Shushan provides a telling (if anecdotal) example: “During the celebrations in Doha that followed Qatar’s victory in its bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, a friend overheard someone proudly exclaim, —Now when people ask ‘Where’s Dubai?’ others will respond: ‘Next to Qatar!’”³⁵ Within this circle of recognition, one can also observe Qatari attempts at pre-empting (and thus bypassing) Saudi-Arabia, such as was the case in Yemen. In

³³ Shushan (2011)

³⁴ Peterson (2006)

³⁵ Shushan (2011), 7.

the perspective of this immediate circle of recognition, mediation might be understood in the light of one-upmanship, being faster and perceived as “better” than the neighboring states might be more important than the actual content of mediation.

If we are to sum up thus far, we should first acknowledge that the strict rationalist accounts of Qatari foreign policy (and mediation) leave us with a severely distorted picture. They do provide important insights about utility-maximisation, but by ignoring, among other things, the importance of religion, the value associated with systems-maintenance, the multiple circles of recognition and the importance of status as such, they leave us ill equipped to actually understand Qatari mediation. On the other hand, two immediate reasons seem to suggest themselves for why it is seemingly so hard for a number of writers to understand Qatar. The first factor is again religion; ignoring the inherent religious character of the Qatari state is bound to lead to miscomprehension. The second factor is related to the different circles of recognition. If, as suggested here, different Qatari initiatives are directed at different audiences, interpreting them all in light of a western audience is bound to lead to confusion. The difficulties are compounded when we add that a lot of Qatari activity is obviously directed against populations, rather than states.³⁶

Reaching out to hearts and minds – public diplomacy in action

Perhaps a **fifth circle** of recognition should be added to the four discussed above; the populations of the world’s states. Over the last decade, scholars have taken a keen interest in public diplomacy,³⁷ how states try to influence not only other states, but also broader populations.³⁸ The reasons for this are manifold, from increasing tourism to affecting state policy indirectly, but all

³⁶ Although she might be overstating the intentional aspects, Khatib is thus correct in stressing how “Qatar proved to be a shrewd political player, able to gain friends on both diplomatic and popular-public levels by reaching out to different constituencies using tools tailor-made for each audience” 428.

³⁷ See *inter alia* Jan Melissen (2005): “The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice,” Chapter 1 in Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 3-27, Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, (2007) “Advancing the New Public Diplomacy: A Public Relations Perspective” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2 (3): 187-211, Eythan Gilboa (2008): “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 55-77, Geoffrey Cowan & Amelia Arsenault (2008): “Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 10-30.

³⁸ Public diplomacy is related to the idea of branding, but where branding is usually concerned relatively narrowly with reputation, public diplomacy is broader, and, at least potentially, more directed towards policy-outcomes. Benno H. Signitzer & Timothy Coombs (1992): “Public relations and public diplomacy: Conceptual convergences” *Public Relations Review* 18(2): 137-147, Peter Van Ham (2002) “Branding Territory: Inside the Wonderful Worlds of PR and IR Theory”, *Millennium* 31(2). 249-269.

kinds of states are seen to be engaging in public diplomacy these days, from the superpowers to micro-states.³⁹

Qatar's foreign policy activism is often viewed through the lenses of public diplomacy.⁴⁰ And sponsoring sports and arts, hosting big events and securing a seat in important decision-making forums are all examples of strategies which form a broad impression of Qatar abroad. By most accounts Qatari public diplomacy has been very successful.⁴¹ The hosting of Al-Jazeera has also brought broad recognition and respect, perhaps most importantly so among the populations of the Arab and Moslem world.

More specifically, mediation-efforts can be interpreted in the light of public diplomacy. Kamrava suggests that Qatar has sought to establish an "image of an experienced mediator with a proven track record, a regional diplomatic powerhouse, and of an honest broker, a wise and mature player interested in peace and stability both in its immediate neighborhood and beyond".⁴² While this policy has quite clearly been related to global status, it has also had the effect of creating a broader image of Qatar. This has probably been particularly important among the populations of the Arab and Muslim world, where Qatar has emerged as a state with a strong desire to see an ending to Moslems being killed by other Muslims (or, in the case of Lebanon, killed in general). When combined with generous monetary gifts, the positive reaction can be strong, as demonstrated in the case study from Palestine. That Qatar (and Al-Jazeera) supported the uprisings of the Arab spring (with the notable exception of the one in Bahrain) can be seen in the same perspective – as an attempt to curry favour with the people of the Arab states. However, because of Al Jazeera's perceived support for the Muslim Brothers (see later chapters), this backfired in Egypt. Compared to this broad outreach, the focus on elites in a number of mediation-processes can seem counter-intuitive, but it must necessarily be related to the

³⁹ Bruce Gregory (2011): "American Public Diplomacy: Enduring Characteristics, Elusive Transformation," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 6 (3-4): 351-372., Yiwei Wang (2008): "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616(1): 257-273, Josef Bátorá, (2006): "Public Diplomacy Between Home and Abroad: Norway and Canada", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 1(1): 53-80, Geoffrey Allen Pigman (2012): "Public diplomacy, place branding and investment promotion in ambiguous sovereignty situations: The Cook Islands as a best practice case", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 8(1): 17-29.

⁴⁰ Although the term «branding» is more commonly used. John Mark King (2008): Nation Branding: Coverage and Perceptions of Qatar in Major World Newspapers", in García & Payne (eds): *Building bridges in a global economy*, Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (2013): "Qatar and the Arab Spring: From Diplomatic Mediation to Regional Intervention", Paper presented at the annual ISA conference, San Francisco, April 3-6.

⁴¹ King (2008)

⁴² Ibid 542.

smallness and centralization of the Qatari decision-making elite. General public diplomacy can be directed towards the people through the media as amplifier, but personal negotiations and relationships must be limited when there are only four to five key players involved in the mediation-processes.

A number of writers have stressed how Qatari mediation has had a relatively low success-rate,⁴³ and our case-studies give the same impression. Initial mediation might work, and hostilities might abate for a while, but permanent resolution is elusive. As Kamrava puts it:

If tension reduction has been the primary goal of Qatari mediation, then in this sense it has been an unqualified success. But if the mediators' intended purpose has been to resolve the conflicts that they mediate and to foster lasting peace among the disputants, then their record leaves much to be desired.⁴⁴

To anyone with some knowledge of Norwegian mediation efforts, this is an unsurprising finding. Mediation often comes with setbacks, and resolution can only come if the parties themselves are willing to compromise. However, in the perspective of public diplomacy (and status for that matter), the success-rate of mediation becomes a secondary concern, at least in a broader perspective. The most important thing is to be seen to be doing something good, what happens in the aftermath is of less importance. The obvious caveat here is if mediation is construed as unfair, or if the failure is blamed on the mediator (as has been the case with Norwegian mediation in Sri Lanka). However, by and large, and again as described in the case-studies, Qatar seems to have been able to work both sides in most conflicts. It remains to be seen whether this can be sustained after Qatar's more assertive support of the Arab spring and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere.

The means of Qatari mediation

The literature is fairly unanimous in its description of how Qatari foreign policy activism is carried out and what the key features of its mediation are. Among the factors singled out is the

⁴³ Ulrichsen (2013). Kamrava (2011)

⁴⁴ Ibid 554-555.

possibility of media coverage through Al-Jazeera, the ability to act quickly, a focus on elites, the availability of money and in particular the smallness of the decision-making structure. As Kamrava underscores, “Qatar’s mediation efforts have been intensely personal, capitalizing on the personalities of the Emir and other chief policymakers who have acted as objective, dispassionate, well-informed, and well-intentioned mediators interested in turning intractable disputes into win-win scenarios”.⁴⁵ The compactness of the decision-making structure has nevertheless also been presented as an obstacle for conflict resolution. Qatar might have the capacity to get actors to the negotiating-table and to get a deal signed, but it lacks the capacity to sustain engagements and help guide processes all the way through to completion.⁴⁶

The lack of diplomatic capacity and the strong centralization of the decision-making process also make for some confusing absolutist trait to Qatari foreign policy. Under absolutism in Europe, the king would have complete control over foreign affairs, but due to the nature of communications, ambassadors were usually given a lot of leeway to find a viable course of action. With the current technology, the decision-makers can direct actions from afar or simply get all the parties to a conflict to come to Doha for negotiations. While this reduces principal-agent transaction costs, it also implies that the broader Qatari Foreign Service is not able to build competence, and that the processes become vulnerable to changes in personnel.⁴⁷

Unlike Norwegian mediation-efforts, NGOs matter little proactively in Qatari mediation. The organizations are largely reactive, moving only when mediation has been initiated. They might be useful tools for implementation and money-transfer, but not for establishing contacts and initiating processes. This should not be read as if Qatari mediation is not networked and multi-stakeholder, as many other mediation-efforts are. But in the Qatari case, the networks and stakeholders are different. Here, our case-studies add to the existing literature. What is amply demonstrated in the case-studies, is how *Wasta*-networks are of key importance, how cross-national family-ties within the policy-making elite influences mediation, how religious

⁴⁵ Ibid, 555.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kamrava (2011), Ulrichsen (2013), Khatib (2013).

⁴⁷ Transaction costs are here costs encountered when attempting to create a political or economical agreement between two parties; it can be divided into three *Search and information costs* to find the right partners, *bargaining costs* over the agreement itself (time used etc) and *policing and enforcement* costs of upholding an agreement. See for example Carl J. Dahlman, (1979). "The Problem of Externality". *Journal of Law and Economics* 22 (1): 141–162.

organizations are actively used before, during and after mediation, and how all of these networks are tied to Diaspora-networks.⁴⁸ With a large population of non-nationals in Qatar, contacts can be made and utilized to create openings for mediation.

⁴⁸ Wasta is a reference to "who you know" personal networks

THE START OF QATAR AS A FOREIGN POLICY ACTOR. QATAR'S ENGAGEMENT IN YEMEN

Stig Jarle Hansen

The Qatari Yemen engagement can be traced back to Emir Khalifa ibn Hamad (1971-1995), making it one of Qatar's first solid foreign policy engagements, to a certain extent it created a foundation for later engagements and was itself a product of the strengthening of Qatari security *vs* some of its neighboring countries which allowed Qatar to play a larger role in the world without having its existence threatened.

The engagement seems to have been spurred partly by a new self-confidence found by Qatar after the 1991 Gulf War, partly by rivalry with Saudi Arabia. Qatar had, since independence in 1971, allowed Saudi Arabia to have a large influence on Qatari foreign policy in order to guarantee Saudi support in a military crisis and perhaps in order to avoid any Saudi invasion. However, on the eve of the Gulf War in 1991, the Americans established a deeper military cooperation with Qatar, and in the end created prepositioned depots and an airbase, a kind of 'tripwire' which could mean that any invading power would face the United States which would discourage Saudi military adventures against Qatar.

Clashes Between Saudi Arabia and Qatar over Khofous, a small hamlet that was contested by both sides, took place in 1992. This ensured that Saudi Arabia and Qatar were on unfriendly terms during the early 1990s.⁴⁹ Qatar attempted to block Saudi powers, both in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and in general, in the Arab Peninsula.

Geopolitically it was understandable that Qatar should seek regimes that had a troubled relationship with Saudi Arabia yet were not hostile to the United States. One such candidate was the relatively new Yemeni state, based on a merger in 1991 between the old North and South Yemen. Yemen had admittedly supported Iraq in the first Gulf War but had managed to repair

⁴⁹ Staff writer (1992): "Saudi, Qatari Reports Differ on Border Clash Leaving at Least 2 Dead" *Associated Press*, 1 October.

their relationship with the United States somewhat.⁵⁰ The Saudi sanctions against Yemen due to the latter's support for Iraq was, however, so draconic, even including large scaled expulsion of Yemeni nationals, that the Yemeni/ Saudi relationship was at a low point. Yemeni state building was also hindered by the Saudi Arabian payment to northern tribal chieftains, empowering them vs the central Yemeni government.⁵¹

In 1994 a civil war broke out in Yemen. Ali Sahlm Al Bayd of the southern based Yemeni Socialist Party engaged in a war with President Ali Abdalleh Saleh. Saudi Arabia had been opposing the union between the two Yemens in the early '80s, but their interest in the project waned, perhaps as a result of the weakening of both South and North Yemen on the eve of the Union in 1991. However, by 1994 the Saudis took the side of the separatists in the South.

It was in this situation that Qatar acted, rhetorically often claimed to be because of 'Arab nationalism' to keep the union, but many observers also saw it as an attempt to promote geopolitical interests of Qatar through weakening Saudi interests, and as an effort to increase Qatari influence in the GCC.⁵² Indeed, Qatar at the time initiated a policy to attempt to get Yemen into the six nations GCC.⁵³ After this it continued to push for such membership and according to the general secretary in Islah continues to do so today.⁵⁴ Qatar was quite active and the then Emir appeared on TV, as well as Prime Minister Hamad Bin Jazim. The perception amongst some observers was that the diplomatic engagement was crucial.⁵⁵:

“There was a GCC meeting at the end of the war. They had agreed before that they would recognize the new democratic republic, Qatar vetoed it. There was even an official

⁵⁰ Mark N. Katz (2010): "Yemen, the evolution of a Problem" *ISS Opinion*, February issue

⁵¹ Sharif Ismael (unknown): "The unification of Yemen", Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, 23, International Crisis Group (2003) *Yemen: "Coping With Terrorism and Violence in a Fragile State"*, *ICG Middle East Report N°8*, 8 January, 22

⁵² The first version is often maintained by observers that was supporting the ruling alliance at the time as the members of the General Peoples Congress and Islah; In an interview with Dr Ali Athrab this was maintained. However, other Political analysts as Abdulkani Iriani maintain that Geopolitics mattered.: Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013; Interview with Abdulkani Irian, 29 March 2013, interview with Saeed Shamsan Al Maamari (Head of the political department), 31 March 2013.

⁵³ Ibid. Interview with Ali Athraib, Sanaa, 30 March 2013; Interview with Abdulkani Irian, Sanaa, 29 March 2013

⁵⁴ interview with Saeed Shamsan AlMaamari (Head of the political department), 31 March 2013.

⁵⁵ Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013

announcement addressed by the Foreign Minister. The proposal was discussed in a meeting in southern Saudi Arabia, and the Qataris voted against it.”⁵⁶

The Qatari engagement was the forerunner of later engagements, being the first major international relations engagement since independence in 1971. It took various forms and the ruling party of President Saleh in Yemen, the General People’s Congress, seems to have appreciated highly the active role Qatar took diplomatically to protect the interests of the more northern based pro-Saleh forces, pushing the case in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the regional organizations for the gulf countries.⁵⁷

As a forerunner to the later activities of Qatar abroad, it was Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani (Emir 1995-2013), then crown prince, who took an active role in the efforts with the clearance from his father, the Emir at the time. The current Prime Minister, Hamad Bin Jassim, was also active. At this time a special and close and friendly relationship between the Yemeni government and Qatar was established. Yemen’s largest party, the Islah, also had a very positive impression of the Qatari effort but did not engage the Qataris directly; this was to be important for later Qatari engagements.⁵⁸

The first Qatari engagement in Yemen created a foundation for later mediation, creating sympathy for Qatar amongst actors in Yemen. This first engagement also acted as a springboard for later Qatari engagements in the Horn of Africa. Another conflict, and the first Qatari venture into mediation in the region, was to enhance this springboard even more. In 1996 a conflict between Yemen and Eritrea broke out over the small Hanish islands in the Red Sea. The Arab League and the GCC were relatively unified on the issue and backed Yemen, as did Qatar. Qatar did so to the extent of supplying the Yemeni Navy with patrol ships.⁵⁹ Qatar also supplied Yemen with international lawyers to support Yemen’s claim towards a United Nations appointed commission that both of the parties had agreed to support. However, in an early phase Qatar, as many other actors sent a delegation to bring the parties together, and thus engaged the Eritreans,

⁵⁶ Interview with Abulkani Ariani, 29 March 2013.

⁵⁷ Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013

⁵⁸ interview with Saeed Shamsan AlMaamari (Head of the political science department), 31 March 2013.

⁵⁹ Interview with Abdukulani Irian, 29 March 2013

creating what was ironically to become another close relationship for Qatar that was in turn to form Qatari diplomatic efforts in Somalia. Qatar did not have a strong role in the mediations that solved the Hanish Island crisis, but it put itself on the international map and was viewed positively by both sides although Qatar in reality was not neutral.

The Houti Rebellion and the Qataris

In January 2003, President Saleh visited the northern province of Sada and was met by protests in a mosque, criticizing him for friendliness towards the USA and Israel, and allowing Wahhabism, the Saudi type of Islam, to threaten Shia Islam in northern Yemen.⁶⁰ The protesters were all Zaydi Shias, a specific kind of Shiism, the type of Islam that emphasizes Ali compared to the other four early caliphs. However, Zaydism was different to the dominating twelver Shiism found in Iran, and perhaps one of the Shia types closer to Sunnism. When the President decided to act decisively and government forces attempted to arrest the person they believed incited the problems, Sheik Hussein Al Houti, in his home, the situation turned into an outright war. Small scale fighting continued until 10 September when Hussein Al Houti was killed. Al Houti nevertheless gave the name to the insurgents, branded Houtis, but referred to themselves as Ash-Shabab al-Mu'min. The fact that the Houti family claimed to be Hashemite, meaning relatives of the prophet Mohamed, gave them more prominence in the Shia community.

In March 2005 a second round of fighting ensued when the government accused Hussein's father Badr al-Din al-Houti, and parliamentarian Abdallah al-Ruzami for wanting to re-start the fighting.⁶¹ However, the following fighting saw an enlargement of the conflict as the Houtis enlisted rural support and used the mountains to their advantage. The government claimed victory in May 2005 but failed to achieve its targets. An amnesty for the Houtis was in the end declared but not properly implemented.⁶²

A third round, from late 2005 to early 2006, started when tribesmen loyal to both Houtis and the government clashed and their allies followed suit. Husein al-Houti's brothers, Abd-al-Malik and

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group (2009): "Yemen: Defusing the Saadaa Time bomb" *Crisis Group Middle East Report N°86*, 27 May, 3

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² Christopher Boucek (2010): "War in Saada: From Local Insurrection to National Challenge", *Carnegie papers* 110, April 2010, 6

Yahya, now emerged as new rebel leaders. The round was settled by government concessions, where prisoners were released and a new governor was appointed in Saada, this perhaps because of the upcoming elections in 2006. A fourth round broke out in February 2007 and lasted to June 2007, the fighting spread to new areas, and again the scale of the fighting had increased.

It was at this stage the Qataris re-entered Yemeni affairs. And they had credibility with both sides. The Yemeni Government still had a positive attitude towards Qatar, partly because of the close relationship in the early and mid 90s.⁶³ According to Ali Bokhaidi, the Houtis were also positive, as Qatar was seen as an alternative to Saudi Arabia.⁶⁴ Saudi Arabia was in itself viewed very negatively by the Houti movement since it was regarded as a promoter of aggressive wahabism, threatening the Zaidi version of Shiism that the Houties believed in.

The efforts of the Qataris were initiated by Emir Hamad Kahlifa Al Thani when he visited Yemen during May 2007, approaching President Saleh directly.⁶⁵ The Qataris had some problems dealing with a non-state actor as the Houtis, particularly in achieving contact with them, first attempting to use Houti friendly journalists to approach the Houtis. Later Yahya al Houti became a more important Qatari point of entry, when he, in January 2007, fled to Germany and became more accessible. Perhaps that is why it was Yahya al Houti on the Houti side who first was invited to Qatar to set the stage for peace, and a delegation was, as mentioned earlier, sent to Saada combining Qatari foreign ministry delegates and Yemeni civil society activists, as well as several trips by the Yemeni presidential advisor Dr. Abdulkarim al-Iryani.⁶⁶ This early and more centralized effort in Doha resulted in a cease-fire agreement.

The principles for the agreement was kept secret but leaked out afterwards. A general amnesty and cease fire arrangements were crucial components. However, the terms of the amnesty caused some friction between al-Iryani and Saleh, as the latter thought the concessions were too large, perhaps indicating the lack of communication between the two, not a trait too uncommon in

⁶³ Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013,

⁶⁴ Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013; There might have been some Eritrean involvement in upholding the Hanish island agreement in 2001-2004, but this was very limited.

⁶⁵ International Crisis Group (2009), 3

⁶⁶ Ibid 21, Christopher Boucek (2010),7, Wikileaks (2008)" SAADA: WAR IS OVER, BUT CAN ROYG NOW WIN THE PEACE?" <http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=07SANAA1133&q=doha%20peace%20yemen>

Qatari negotiations that often tend to go fast.⁶⁷ A committee appointed to do for further work on the details of the peace treaty containing Houtis, government representatives, and Qataris was to be established. It scheduled out a rough development programme of the Saada province and the handing over of heavy weapons to the government. A cease-fire was in the end achieved in mid June.⁶⁸

The early diplomacy was rather centralized with the exception of the visit to Saada by foreign ministry officials and the use of Yemeni civil society. However, there were strongly decentralized elements in the Qatari effort as well. The Qataris understood how the third round of fighting was sparked by tribal allies rather than the main belligerents. A solution thus needed a tribal element and Qatar engaged several tribal leaders in direct negotiations, in some cases paying a generous salary to make the leaders more inclined towards peace. Abdulkani Ariani, close to the process at the time, saw how the Qataris practiced an intensive dialogue by having Hamad Bin Jassim calling the relevant, and sometimes irrelevant, leaders on both sides of the conflict, almost daily.⁶⁹ In this day-to-day peace lobbying, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Al Mouhid, also played an important role but the sides felt that the Emir was in control of the process.⁷⁰

In the end the process again turned more centralized. In November, the Yemeni government felt that the peace process was derailing and attempted to restart it by facilitating direct negotiations between Dr. Abdulkarim al-Iryani and Abdulmalik Al Houti, although this demand was dropped.⁷¹ In February 2008, the Emir personally invited four Houti leaders, Abdulmalik Al Houti, Saleh Habra, Yahya 'Badrdeen' Al Houti and Abdallah Alrazami, directly to Qatar for more direct negotiations.⁷² Several government leaders such as Ali Mushin, later to grow close to Qatar, and Abdelkarim Ariyani, were also invited and direct negotiations started, managed by

⁶⁷ ibid

⁶⁸ Christopher Boucek (2010),7

⁶⁹ Interview with Abdulkani Irian, 29 March 2013

⁷⁰ Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013., Interview with Abdulkani Irian, 29 March 2013

⁷¹ Wikileaks (2008b) "Two Sides Agree To Revive Qatari Mediation In Saada"

<http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08SANAA240&q=doha%20peace%20yemen>

⁷² Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013.

Hamed bin Jassim.⁷³ The negotiations were, however, complicated by low scale clashes between the parties on the ground and a helicopter crash that created conspiracy theories.

Parallel to this, Qatar continued the ‘tribal track’, inviting tribal leaders to Doha, offering them monthly stipends in a technique aimed at bringing them on board, but also in the process creating a strategic network of potential supporters of Qatar. The Qataris managed to decentralize a peace process despite publicly having a very centralized system of governance themselves.

In Doha, the negotiations focused on finding common principles for a more permanent agreement, focusing on some of the previous issues discussed in 2007, as well as setting up reconstruction and compensation committees. It was indicated that three major Houti leaders, Abdul Malik al-Houti, Abdul Karim al-Houti and Abdullah al-Ruzami, should go into voluntary exile.⁷⁴ Qatar actively used the promise of funding for reconstruction, which was claimed to be around 500 million dollars.⁷⁵ The aid was supposed to be distributed by a Qatar charity but in a committee with Yemeni members as well as Qatari. The money was to be contested between the parties and Houti leaders would later accuse President Saleh for trying to control the money.⁷⁶ The reason is unknown but various actors would claim that the money never emerged, and created rivalries, and disappointment on the Saleh side. The Qatar Red Crescent did, however, distribute help to refugees.⁷⁷

A public peace agreement was in the end signed, widely known as the Doha agreement, but the agreement lacked follow-up mechanisms.⁷⁸ Over time, the cease-fire and the treaty encountered several problems.⁷⁹ Insecurity or unwillingness on behalf of the Houtis delayed disarmament and the top level Qatari players had left the more low-level embassy in charge of aiding the agreement.

⁷³ Interview with Abdulkani Irian, 29 March 2013

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013; International crisis group claims that the amount was between 300 to 500 million \$; International Crisis Group (2009) ,22. *Ali Bokhadi must be emphasized as a source as he was close to the Houti delegation*

⁷⁶ Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013.

⁷⁷ International Crisis Group (2009),,23

⁷⁸ *Ibid*:22

⁷⁹ *Ibid* 21; footnote 160; Christopher Boucek (2010),7

More structural problems occurred; the balance of power between the signatories was changing as Saudi Arabia increased their involvement in Yemen. Observers indicated that Saudi pride had been hurt by the Qatari effort, and Saudi Arabia increasingly got involved in funding the Yemeni government. Because of Saudi support, President Saleh became more secure in his power and less willing to abide by the Doha Treaty.⁸⁰ Saudi involvement might also have been spurred by the fact that Qatar paid some of the Houti affiliated tribal leaders, potentially dangerous for Saudi Arabia since it had a Shiia minority.

Tensions again increased and from March to July 2008, the fifth round of the Saada war was a fact. Some domestic actors attempted to review the Doha process, as tribal sheiks, and there were also some attempts from the Qataris to re-engage in the process.⁸¹ Qatar itself paid a price when a convoy carrying three Qatari mediators and Yemenis came under fire in the summer of 2008, perhaps making Qatar more reluctant to re-engage.⁸²

By June 2008, the Qatari peace mediation was declared a failure.⁸³ At this stage, the forces of the Houtis reached quite close to Sanaa. In 2009, tensions again started to rise. Saudi-Qatari relations were now at a freezing point, as were the relations between Qatar and President Saleh. The key was events taking place in another part of the Middle East, the Israeli operation “Cast Lead”, the intervention in Gaza. Qatar reacted strongly and attempted to create its own Arab league meeting, allegedly this was also because Saleh had encouraged the move. The Qatari efforts were undermined by Egypt and Saudi Arabia which created their own alternative meeting that undermined the Qatari effort. Yemen’s President Saleh refused to attend the Qatari sponsored meeting and Qatari's were also suspected of have a pro-Iranian streak to them.⁸⁴ The Qatari relationship with GPC was seriously damaged and the trust that had been built from 1994 onwards was gone.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ International Crisis Group (2009), , footnote 122

⁸¹ Christopher Boucek (2010), 7, Wikileaks (2008c)” Al Houti Rebellion: No End In Sight”
<http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=08SANAA1165&q=al-houthi%20doha%20peace%20yemen>

⁸² Ibid 22, footnote 169

⁸³ ibid

⁸⁴ Interview with Abdulkani Irian, 29 March 2013

⁸⁵ Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013,

However, the Qataris and the Houtis had previously built up contacts and the relationship with the oppositional Islah party had not been damaged. By 2009 a new round of fighting started, this time the Saudis were directly involved but the Houti's prevailed. Saudi Arabia engaged tribal leaders to end the war and in the end it was curtailed, partly by tribal mediation, but the Qatari-Yemeni relationship had changed forever, and the old allies, the Saleh regime and Qatar, were now on hostile terms.

The Arab spring: the new Qatar

From 10 December 2010, a political earthquake that was to change the Arab world had started in Tunisia and spread across the Arab world. In January student demonstrations started in Sanaa. Mass demonstrations first occurred on 27 January 2011 and the demonstrations spread to other cities.

One institution based in Qatar, Al Jazeera, took sides quite early, supporting most of the popular movements in the Middle East by giving them positive coverage. Under its director, Wadah Khanfar, Al Jazeera transmitted pictures from the Arab revolution over the borders, making media stars of many of the new activists, and putting the youth in a positive light.⁸⁶ It can be argued that Al Jazeera, as maintained by themselves, was an independent actor with little influence from Qatar and little influence on Qatar itself. However, this was far from the case; WikiLeaks indicated that Al Jazeera was used as a tool in bargains in negotiations by the Qatari, and the case studies of Somalia and Palestine in this research project showed how Jazeera's heads also influenced Qatari policies in return.⁸⁷ During the Arab Spring, Qatar also enhanced their control over Al Jazeera, as Khanfar was replaced by a member of the royal family, Sheikh Ahmad bin Jassim bin Mohammad Al Thani, in September 2011.⁸⁸

Al Jazeera's editorial line towards the events in Yemen created anger in the ruling party but also brought Qatar closer to the opposition demonstrating in the streets.⁸⁹ Several observers in Yemen, including members of the opposition, also maintained that it 'created' several

⁸⁶ Mehdi Hassan (2012) "Voice of the Arab spring", *New Statesman*, 7 December 2011.

⁸⁷ See for example Robert Booth (2010): "WikiLeaks cables claim al-Jazeera changed coverage to suit Qatari foreign policy" *The Guardian*, 6 December

⁸⁸ Layal Haddad (2011): "Al Jazeera's Waddah Khanfar: The End of an Era" *Al Akhbar English* 21 September 2011.

⁸⁹ Interview with Ali Athraib 30 March 2013; interview with Saeed Shamsan Al Maamari (Head of the political department), 31 March 2013.

oppositional characters such as Tawakul Karman, the future Nobel peace laureate. On some occasions, local observers claimed that Jazeera would postpone filming and call Tawakul to the demonstrations, and wait for her to come⁹⁰

Some would maintain that the first contacts between Islah and Qatar were created through the above described informal channels.⁹¹ However, while mutual sympathy was increasing, there was little high-level contact before the GCC started their negotiation attempt in April 2011. The GCC engagement also presented an occasion where Saudi Arabia and Qatar were again drifting towards each other. The 'love' relationship between Saudi Arabia and President Saleh had grown cold after the Saudi intervention in the last Houthi conflict, in which Saudi Arabia had felt manipulated into bombing the headquarters of Ali Musini, the general who rebelled and turned his first armoured division into the most efficient protection force of the demonstrating youths during Yemen's Arab Spring.⁹² Qatar was not central in the negotiations that led to President Saleh leaving power; however, it was central in consolidating the view within the GCC that Saleh had to leave office.⁹³

The original GCC proposal, presented on the 10th of April, did not directly contain this point. It stipulated that Ali Abdullah Saleh hand over power to Vice President Abdu Rabu Mansour Al-Hadi, not directly stipulating that the President should resign immediately, only "remove himself from power", which opened the possibility that he could remain in the position as President while yielding practical power.⁹⁴ This point was also crucial in the opposition's rejection of the agreement, the latter being afraid that President Saleh could use any formal position to maneuver himself back into power. The Prime Minister of Qatar automatically sided with the oppositional forces when he claimed that Saleh should resign in an interview. Saleh reacted strongly and publicly requested Qatar to remove itself from the peace process. Qatar sent a personal letter from the Prime Minister to Saleh's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qirbi, probably

⁹⁰ Interview with Abulkani Ariani, 29 March 2013.

⁹¹ *ibid*

⁹² Edward Burke (2012): "One blood and one destiny"? Yemen's relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council" *Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States*, number 23, June,

⁹³ *Ibid*, 6

⁹⁴ IHS Staffwriters (2004): "GCC Steps Up Mediation Effort in Crisis-Stricken Yemen" *IHS Global insight* 4/21 2011

excusing the move but making it clear that they expected Saleh to step down in the end.⁹⁵ Simultaneously, Qatar re-engaged with Yemen but also with other actors than previously. The Qatari top leadership established contact with the larger oppositional parties as a part of the GCC attempt.

In May, Qatar withdrew from the GCC process, citing that the Yemeni President was the cause of Yemen's problems and that he blocked peace.⁹⁶ In one sense this was another low point in Qatari relations with Saleh, and Qatari leaders were to attack him in the media until he stepped down. However, this did not damage the long term relationship with Yemen; Qatar had picked the winning side. Qatar was seen as supporting the "Yemeni street", the actor that supported democracy.⁹⁷ Nor was Qatar completely isolated in the GCC. The territorial conquest by Al Qaeda of the Abayan province, partly because of the split the Arab Spring had created in the Yemeni army, the deployment of the best units to the capital had weakened the army in areas where Al Qaeda was strong, worried other GCC countries and also the West. Moreover, Saleh's refusal to sign later versions of the agreement (although he had agreed orally on the 24th of April) while members of the ruling party professed loyalty to it, indicated an emerging split within the governing party, the General Peoples Congress (GPC), and even tested the tolerance of Saudi Arabia towards the Yemeni regime.⁹⁸ In May, the entire GCC withdrew from the mediation process, indirectly indicating that Saleh's refusal to sign an agreement made further negotiations impossible after the leader of the GCC, Abdullatif al-Zayani, personally failed to get a signature from President Saleh when visiting Yemen.⁹⁹ Increasingly the world, and indeed Qatar's rival Saudi Arabia, grew impatient with Saleh, and on the 28th of April, Saleh claimed that "he would not sign any agreement with the Qatari President", a statement that led to quick condemnation by the GCC countries, also by Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ahmed Al-Haj (2011): "Yemen's Saleh holds on as thousands stage protest" *Associated Press* 10 April

⁹⁶ Staff writer (2011): "Qatar quits Yemen mediation attempt" *The Independent*, 13 May 2011

⁹⁷ interview with Saeed Shamsan AlMaamari (Head of the political department), 31 March 2013; Interview with Ali Bokhaidi, Sanaa , 28 March 2013

⁹⁸ Staffwriter (2011): "GCC-backed Yemen deal 'postponed'" *Al Jazeera*, 6 Mai
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/20115601713251894.html>

⁹⁹ Staff writer (2011): "GCC withdraws mediation efforts in Yemen: Al-Jazeera" *Xinhua*, 23 May

¹⁰⁰ Ginny Hill and Gerd Noneman (2011): "Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States: Elite Politics, Street Protests and Regional Diplomacy" *MENAP BP* 2011/01

By taking a stand, Qatar, although formally distancing itself from the GCC process, Qatar rather consolidated the GCC stand on the necessity of President Saleh's resignation, and definitely was consulted in the process. Of course, this was not necessarily the result of Qatari diplomacy but of power changes inside the Saudi administration, an increasing understanding that President Saleh's position was unattainable, and that support for the opposition and the humiliation of GCC diplomats by President Saleh. The GCC attempts did not end and by autumn 2011, a plan involving a two phase transition was introduced. Increasingly, USA, France, Great Britain and the EU leadership also put pressure on Saleh. Qatar continued with media attacks on the President, and Qatar's religious establishment, including Sheik Qaradawi, launched attacks on the 'un-Islamic' president.¹⁰¹ This was a larger pattern, with Qataris taking the lead in the Arab world in condemning Kaddafi in Libya, Mubarak in Egypt and Assad in Syria. In Syria, Saudi Arabia followed suit, and a Saudi-Qatari-Emiratian hawkish line came to dominate the GCC, subsequently enabling Qatar and the United States to grow closer, as the two countries now had very similar ideas about several conflicts in the Middle East, perhaps with Qatar more willing to use military power than the latter. By November 2011, Saleh finally signed the GCC agreement and stepped down from power, the new President becoming Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi

Qatar had slowly been gliding towards supporting Islah, the closest Yemen had to the Muslim brotherhood, and the opposition General Ali Muhsin, and this faction gained seats in the cabinet.¹⁰² In one sense the case of Yemen illustrated that Qatar now stepped up to support the Muslim Brotherhood, as it did in Palestine, Egypt and to a lesser extent in Syria. Saudi Arabia had, however, also kept their influence. Qatar and Saleh, the latter now desperately trying to keep his remaining tools of power, remained at odds; Qatar, for example, aiding the new regime in tracking the former President's foreign assets.¹⁰³ The ruling party now divided into two, a Hadi friendly faction and a Saleh friendly faction, and the latter accused Qatar of supporting Yemeni insurgent movements.¹⁰⁴ However, by 2013 Saleh again tried to reproach Qatar.

¹⁰¹ Staffwriter (2011) "Qaradawi rebuts Syrian minister's charge", *Gulf news*, 24 April

¹⁰² Interview with Abulkani Ariani, 29 March 2013.

¹⁰³ Catherine Shakdam (2013): "Following the Saleh money trail" *your middle east*, 29 January.

¹⁰⁴ Mohammed Al-Samei (2012): "Dr. Saleh Basurra speaks to the Yemen Times" *Yemen Times*, 20 September

Qatari influence in Yemen was proven useful for western countries, as for example in the case of a kidnapping of a Swiss national in 2012, where Qatar acted as a broker and secured her release.¹⁰⁵

Lessons from the Case of Yemen

The history of Qatar's Yemeni engagement shows how Qatari mediation was influenced by its regional rivals, in this case Saudi Arabia, and how Saudi Arabia was able to undermine the Qatari engagement but nevertheless not able to see through its own strategies to the end. That is, until Saudi Arabia and Qatar were aligned in 2011, an alignment that mirrored a similar move around the Middle East. In Yemen, Qatar were dependent on windows of opportunity, where the attention of rivals were weakened, aligned or turned elsewhere. The example of Qatar's role in the GCC is an interesting example of Qatar seemingly going 'at it alone' taking a more Hawkish position vs Saleh's regime, but again the position became aligned with Saudi Arabia, it nevertheless clearly gave Qatar advantages in the Arab opinion.

The Yemeni engagement strengthened Qatar and showed that it could handle decentralized tribal negotiations as well as centralized top-down negotiations. It provided the staging ground for Qatar's Africa engagement and the pattern was repeated in other areas with Qatari engagement. They ended up siding with the Islah party, the party that contained the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood, although Qatar ironically was closest to the tribal based part of the Islah. It is important that Qatar still are close to Islah, despite the change of Amir, despite the setbacks of the Muslim brotherhood in the middle east, and Saudi and Emirati hostility towards the wider brotherhood movement.

¹⁰⁵ Staffwriter (2013): "Qatari mediation wins freedom for Yemen hostage" *Gulf News*, 13 March

HOLY GROUND? QATAR'S INVOLVEMENT IN PALESTINE

Stig Jarle Hansen

Qatar's interest in Palestine and Palestinian reconciliation has been a central feature of Qatari foreign politics, and also an area where Qatar actually challenged the United States directly by maintaining a close relationship with an organization, Hamas, that the United States defined as a terrorist organization. However, Qatar also maintained its close relationship with the USA despite the strains. Qatar entered the negotiations with a bias; it was seen as being close to Hamas, but this did not hinder its role in the negotiating process. It should also be noted that the main tenants of Qatari foreign politics towards Palestine, clearly stating that Hamas can be swayed into a more peaceful relationship with Israel through engagement rather than isolation, has been relatively stable, at least until 2013.

The first phase of the Qatari relationship with the Palestinian peace process consisted of building Qatari credibility in Palestine through aid and through the use of Qatari media outlets. The Palestinian engagement became more direct after Hamad bin Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani removed his father from power in Qatar 1995. The first sign of change was an escalation of the humanitarian effort, some of it channeled through a Qatari charity started up in 1992 and established in Gaza and the West Bank, becoming fully registered in the Palestinian areas in 1997.¹⁰⁶ The second change was through Al Jazeera, although this institution nominally was independent from the Qatari authorities. Al Jazeera gave favorable coverage to the Palestinian case and this was noticed by both Fatah and Hamas politicians. It provided legitimacy to Qatar in relations to Palestinian issues, despite nominally being independent.¹⁰⁷

This legitimacy did not necessarily transform into neutrality, Al Jazeera was often seen as being pro-Hamas and anti-Fatah. Some observers would claim that a previous director of Al Jazeera, Wadah Khanfar, was influencing Al Jazeera in the direction of becoming more positive to Hamas, e.g. the Al Jazeera TV producers were clad in black after the killing of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin in 2004.¹⁰⁸ Some of the respondents went even further, claiming that Khanfar was

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Imad Al-Alami 13 February 2012; Interview with Jamil Rabbah 17 February 2012

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Ramy S Abdu, 11 February 2012

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; Interview with Imad Al-Alami 13 February 2012; Interview with Jamil Rabbah 17 February 2012

influencing Qatari politics toward Palestine itself, tilting the Emir in the direction of a more pro-Palestinian and pro-Hamas policy, although, if this is the case, this did not manifest itself before 2005-2006, as Qatari diplomatic engagement remained relatively limited.¹⁰⁹

The perception of Al Jazeera does, however, highlight that the station was perceived as a voice of Qatar. It also highlights the fragmented aspects of Qatari politics, the station itself having a somewhat independent position partly due to ‘turfs’ occupied by different actors inside Qatar. The powerful leader of Al Jazeera, its chairman Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al Thani (chairman from 1996), the cousin of the current Emir, had resisted Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, the Prime Minister, and seems to have been acting rather independently as he had the ‘ear’ of the Emir, as claimed in the intro he was a **spacer**. Al Jazeera, although claiming to be independent, enhanced an image of Qatar as caring and engaged in Palestine; moreover, that Qatar was biased towards Hamas, one of few friends in a hostile world.¹¹⁰ In this sense it was important as it prepared legitimacy for further Qatari involvement in Palestine. Qatari pre-2006 engagement in reconciliation was, however, limited to aid and media attention.¹¹¹

Qatar enters into the negotiation process

There were parallel signs of a more direct Qatari involvement after the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections of 2006. Wikileaks documents for example explore how the Qataris led by Sheikha Mozahh tried to convince the United States into supporting the so-called Arc project, a project developing a railroad between the West Bank and Gaza in 2006, the plan itself had originally been created by the American Rand Corporation, but the United States was reluctant to become engaged and to accept Qatari involvement.¹¹² By late 2006 the Qataris also engaged more directly, especially after the Hamas/Fatah relationship hit ‘rock bottom’ on the 1st and 2nd of October, after an Egyptian agreement had broken down.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ramy S Abdu, 11 February 2012; It is also interesting to note that the Palestinian case is not the only case where Wadah Khanfar made his mark, also in the Somali case respondents believe that he had influence. Khanfar him-self was an interesting person, who started out as an Al Jazeera journalist in Pakistan, Afghanistan and South Africa, becoming Director of the Al Jazeera channel in 2003, although stepping down in 2011. <http://www.wadahkhanfar.com/bio> , Scott Mac Leod (2006):“The Al Jazeera Invasion” *Time Magazine* November 14.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Bassem Naim, 11 February 2012; Interview with Imad Al-Alami 13 February 2012

¹¹¹ There was however no direct political involvement in the various political processes, both reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah and reconciliation between the Palestinian and Fatah. Other states had started such reconciliation, as Sudan’s good house, for the Khartoum negotiation in 1992, but Sudan was to keep a low profile. Egypt on the other hand, who started the second major peace attempt between Hamas and Plo through the 1996 dialogue in Cairo

¹¹² Wikileaks (2011) Das Gordon Gray Meeting With Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-thani (hbj) - Doha, Qatar, 1 December 2005

¹¹³ Greg Myre (2006):“ Qatar Emerges as a Mediator Between Fatah and Hamas “ *New York Times* 10 October

The work on the so-called six point agreement in 2006 started. Allen Fromhertz indicated that the first meetings took place in Qatar between Khaled Meshal (chairman of Hamas Political Bureau) and Mahmoud Abbas (President of Palestine, and one of the leaders of Fatah).¹¹⁴ If this is the case, it is interesting that Qatar used its contacts with the Qatari-Palestinian diaspora to start up negotiations, as both Meshal and Abbas had lived in Qatar; Meshal from 1999-2001, and Abbas had a much older relationship to Qatar, acting as the emirate's Director of Personnel in Civil Service in the early 60s, even joining Fatah during these years.¹¹⁵ In one sense, this set the tune for Qatari politics, the diaspora, symbolized through persons as Wadah Khanfar, was at least to be perceived as important, presenting a kind of 'navigational map' to the Qatari politicians.

There were several other notable trends that continued until the present day that also set the stage for the future. The Qatari engagement was partly because of the Egyptian failure to produce tangible results dealing with Fatah-Hamas relations, partly because these relations grew poorer.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the Egyptian failures were easily explainable as Hamas saw Egyptian foreign policy towards Palestine as highly pro-Fatah, inspired by a desire to weaken Hamas due to Mubarak's own fear of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Egypt was also in contact with the United States which at this stage also attempted to undermine Hamas, defining it as a terror organization.¹¹⁷ In one sense this was a major situation for the Qatari engagement in Palestine until the Mubarak regime was removed in Egypt, and might quickly become it again after the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power in 2013. Moreover, Egypt was skeptical towards Qatari engagement, partly justifying this due to Qatar's friendship to Iran but it was rather clear that Egypt also felt that its status and prestige was threatened because of Qatar, an impression confirmed by Egyptian diplomats quoted by Wikileaks.¹¹⁸ According to Imad Al Alami (political council member of Hamas): "Omar Suleiman [the head of Egyptian intelligence, whom several Hamas leaders claimed was important for Egyptian pre-revolution Palestinian

¹¹⁴ Allen Fromhertz (2012), *Qatar, a modern History*, (New York: I.B Tauris)

¹¹⁵ Staff Writer (1999) "Reaction to Hamas Crackdown" *BBC Monitoring*, Caversham 31 Aug

¹¹⁶ Manuella Paraipan (2006): "Qatar's Progressive Diplomacy" *world security*

¹¹⁷ Dov Waxman (2012): "Hagel on Hamas: U.S. Engagement Is In Israel's Best Interest" *The Daily Beast*, 19 December.

¹¹⁸ Wikileaks" Scen setter For Special Envoy Mitchell's April 20-21 Visit To Qatar", <http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09DOHA253&q=egypt%20prestige%20qatar%20rivals>

politics] was Fatah all the time; Egyptians were totally apart of Fatah.”.¹¹⁹ Egypt was, and is, seen as a partner that could spoil agreements that were felt to be belittling Egypt’s position as a regional hegemony although the Egyptian-Qatari relationship improved after the Arab spring.¹²⁰

Qatari authorities were skeptical to the American strategies to keep Hamas from power and isolate it. The Qatari alternative was to claim that the democratic election in 2006 should have been respected, that Hamas had to be engaged in order to solve the Palestine problem, and that the Hamas leadership was flexible as long as they were in interaction with the international community and would be willing to accept a two state solution in principle, as long as they could do it in a way that pleased Hamas’ own grassroots constituency, was by 2006 clearly crystallized.¹²¹ Qatar maintained that they would have the ability to get Hamas and Israel to talk, partly because of their good relationship with Israel, and they also maintained that Hamas was a better development actor than the Palestinian authorities and Fatah, Hamas being less corrupt and more trustworthy.¹²² The engagement in 2006 also illustrated an important division of labour between Sheik Jassim and the then-Emir, as Jassim traveled intensively, also to Gaza city, while the Emir hosted low key, top meetings in Doha. Another modus operandi was established in Qatar-Palestinian relations, top level meetings hosted by the Emir, established as a pattern, re-emerging until today.

US-Qatari tension

Tensions within the Palestinian camp rose in January 2007 when Fatah attempted to abolish the Hamas controlled forces of the Ministry of the Interior.¹²³ However, the Saudi attempt to address the situation, the Mecca agreement, utterly failed to address the core issues, and in May 2007 a new round of fighting started, in June-July the crisis was obvious to most observers when Hamas

¹¹⁹ Interview with Imad Al-Alami 13 February 2012

¹²⁰ Hamas leaders claimed that Egypt was the reason for the failure of the Mecca talks 6 to 8th February 2007, although the resulting declaration had a separate clause acknowledging the Egyptians role in mediating in the conflict

¹²¹ See wikileaks (2005) “Das Gordon Gray Meeting With Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-thani (hbj) - Doha, Qatar, 1 December 2005”, <http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=05DOHA1961&q=hamas>; see also Staff writer (2006): “Qatar criticizes international pressure on the Palestinians”, *Gulf News* - 12 April, 2006

¹²² See wikileaks (2006) “Brief Readout On Emir’s Meeting With Hamas Leaders”, <http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06DOHA237&q=hamas><http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=05DOHA1961&q=hamas>;

¹²³ Boudreaux, Richard (January 7, 2007). “Abbas outlaws Hamas’s paramilitary Executive Force – *The Boston Globe*”. *Boston Globe*. http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2007/01/07/abbas_outlaws_hamas_paramilitary_executive_force/. Retrieved March 27, 2011.

threw Fatah out of Gaza during the summer.¹²⁴ The effect was an escalation and a diplomatic defeat for the Saudis who were the main sponsors of the Mecca agreement (although Qataris participated). And the Saudis seemed to be reluctant to intervene again, partly due to disappointment with the two parties.¹²⁵ Egypt feared that Hamas-Fatah negotiations could upset the ongoing Palestine–Israeli negotiations, again there was a vacuum created by the absence of other credible mediators¹²⁶

Yemen’s President Saleh managed to get the parties together to sign a common declaration, the Sana declaration, but internal Fatah disagreement led to the end of the agreement. It was at this stage that Qatar entered the scene; it seems as if Qatar was asked amongst others by the Yemeni President to engage and the parties were called to a round of negotiations.¹²⁷ However, the move was stalled by the Mubarak regime in Egypt who pre-empted Qatar’s peace move.¹²⁸ The Egyptian attempt was, however, moving slowly and Egypt was seen as anti-Hamas and indeed might have expected the negotiations to fail and Hamas to be blamed.¹²⁹ Hamas was rather skeptic towards Egypt and withdrew from the process.

On 27 December 2008, Israeli armed forces attacked Gaza as a reply to Hamas rocket attacks, and to quell smuggling. The fighting lasted until the 18th of January and caused a rapid Qatari reaction which in one sense emerged as a failure, alienating the United States from Qatar, while in another sense strengthened the bond between Qatar and Hamas, and also gave it sympathy on the West Bank. On 1 January 2009, large crowds (estimated by the United States to be as much as 15,000) were amassed in a football stadium in Doha demonstrating against Israel; the whole event was sponsored by The Doha Youth Center, Qatar Charity, Qatar Student Network and the Qatar Sports Club.¹³⁰ Meetings with African leaders were postponed in order for Hamad bin Jassim to travel to the United Nations to attempt to sway the Security Council in a more strict

¹²⁴International Crisis Group (2007) “After Mecca, Engaging Hamas” *Report* n62, Hamas grew increasingly nervous because of US and EU support for Fatah, and regional isolation. Of course, there were reasons for this, as Hamas refused to acknowledge the existence of the Israeli state, pay heed to existing agreements on the Israeli Palestine issue, and to renounce violence.

¹²⁵ Ibid 5: ICG provides no reference for this information

¹²⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁷ *ibid*

¹²⁸ International Crisis Group (2008) “Palestine Divided” *Middle East Briefing* N°25, 17 December.

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ Wikileaks “QATARI LEADERSHIP SEEKS TO SHOW ACTIVISM ON GAZA”, 4 Jan 2009, <http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09DOHA3>

direction with regard to Israel. The Qataris also sponsored a famous TV Sheik, Yusuf Qaradawi's round tour in the Middle East to harness support for Gaza. The Emir also attempted to gather an emergency meeting of the Arab League in Doha, but other close Arab allies of the United States signaled that they were hostile towards such a meeting.¹³¹ The Emir then downscaled the meeting to a 'forum' although 13 of the 22 Arab League member countries nevertheless participated.

The following meeting created serious problems between the United States and Qatar. The first problem was perhaps that Qatar invited the United States' traditional enemies to participate, while the United States' traditional friends (Saudi Arabia and Egypt) boycotted it. Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad used Qatar as a platform to criticize Israel and the West, standing in Doha, in the same country that hosted the United States central command, responsible for the Iraqi campaign, as well as the important Al Udeid base. Ahmadinejad was not the only a Head of State that created problems, President Omar Bashir of Sudan was actually wanted for crimes against humanity by the international criminal court. Syria's President Assad and the President of the Comoros also had serious problems with the United States.

The Americans reacted and criticized the Qataris for drawing closer to the 'radicalized' camp in the Middle East and the meeting also created hostility from Egypt. It did however definitely gain credentials for Qatar inside Palestine, and the Qataris managed from 2010 to ease the tension with the United States. The Qatari initiative was interpreted as a diplomatic failure by United States diplomats, partly because of the Egyptian, Saudi Arabian and Fatah boycott, but which was in reality a propaganda success, befriending Hamas without, in the long run, breaking off with the United States, Qatar enforced their image of being "aligned with the Arab street", also through their vocal criticism of Egypt's posture to keep the Rafah border crossing closed for the Palestinians.¹³² For a short period of time, the mirage of a divided Middle East, with a rival Qatari-Syrian camp aligned with the 'Arab street' facing a more Western-friendly Saudi/Egyptian alliance, emerged. However, Qatar's special relationship with the United States, their importance for the US war effort in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Qatar's previous relatively

¹³¹ Newscast (2010): "Emir of Qatar calls for Arab summit on Gaza" *Al Jazeera*, 26 December

¹³² Interview with Iyad Alami, 11 February 2013. (Gaza)

close (for an Arab state) relationship with Israel might have lowered tension, and the United States and Qatar remained in close discussion over the future of the Middle East.

Peacemaking Rivalries

Qatar continued to strengthen its relationship with Hamas and according to Qatari media, which tends to be State-controlled and thus contains information that underlines the official line of government, the Emir called Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah of Gaza on 21 August 2009 to pledge 10 million US dollars, directly through Hamas, to improve the fishing industry in Gaza, again a move that had to irritate the United States which attempted to channel aid to Gaza through other channels than Hamas itself. The move seemed well coordinated and Qatar's own Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Abdul Rahman bin Hamad Al-Attiyah embraced the Emir's announcement, praising Qatar for its steadfast support of the Palestinian people, seemingly making the most of the move in the media.¹³³ The move was however changed, and in the end the money was channeled through the Red Cross and through the United Nations.¹³⁴ Qatar did not only work through such high profile moves but also channeled 250 million US dollars through the GCC that was to be managed by representatives of the GCC and a representative of the Islamic Development Bank.¹³⁵ This in turn was an element in what was supposed to be more stable mechanisms to develop Gaza, managed by the Gulf countries together.¹³⁶ Qatar also eased its more controversial strategies and withdrew plans for a meeting to coordinate aid to Palestine that would rival an Egyptian meeting in April/ March 2009, seemingly after pressure from the United States and France.¹³⁷ For the United States it nevertheless seemed to be out of the question to allow a new actor to take the initiative for negotiations in Palestine.

For Hamas, it became important to create a negotiation process with Fatah preferably through the actors in the Middle East that were friendly to them, Qatar and Turkey, but of course this did not

¹³³ Wikileaks (2009) "QATAR TO DONATE \$10 MILLION TO GAZA" Mon, 24 Aug 2009

[http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09DOHA526&q=hamasQATAR TO DONATE \\$10 MILLION TO GAZA](http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=09DOHA526&q=hamasQATAR TO DONATE $10 MILLION TO GAZA)

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ International Crisis Group (2009): "Gaza's Unfinished Business" *Crisis Group Middle East Report N°85*, 23 April, 29

¹³⁶ *ibid*

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 43

emerge.¹³⁸ However, the ‘peace negotiations conflict’ did mean that it was advantageous to wait. Not surprisingly, Egypt in the end became the only ‘game in town’ for peace negotiations.¹³⁹ Egypt, however, was severely criticized in the Arab media for its closing of the Gaza border, and also by the main Egyptian opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. There were also active strategies to sway the United States into allowing Qatar a larger role in the Hamas-Fatah, and also the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations; the Qataris seemingly attempted to use promises of support to the Palestinian Authorities to sway the United States into a more positive view of the Qatari role, while Qatar in their meetings, often between the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and the American ambassador, underlined that Hamas feared the US trained security forces of the Palestinian Authorities hampering peace. Qatar also refused to remove Yusuf Qaradawi from his position on the alms (Zakat) councils as a counter measure to prevent the latter to channel money to Hamas.¹⁴⁰

Events in 2011 were to change the picture somewhat as the effects of the Arab Spring spread throughout the Middle East. Qatar had a traditionally good relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, some say just because Yusuf Qaradawi was so close to the Emir. The Arab Spring and the revolutions in Egypt created possibilities for Qatar, and weakened the Fatah structure, as claimed by Ramy Abdu:” PA was always an international project, but the main proxy (*sic*) was Egypt and Jordan, Jordan’s Abdullah cannot do anymore. The death box we received was the collapse of Egypt (the main strategic donor)”. It is interesting that this could change after the removal of the Muslim Brothers from power in Egypt.¹⁴¹

The Muslim Brothers, Qatar and Palestine

The Muslim Brothers of Egypt were slowly taking power in that country, and Fatah, Hamas, and the Israelis were aware of how close the Brotherhood had been to Hamas rhetorically. Indeed, the last major meeting of the international Muslim Brotherhood movement had been just to gather money for Hamas.¹⁴² At first both Israel and Fatah were gloomy about the disappearance

¹³⁸ International crisis group (2009):” *Ending the War in Gaza*” *Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°26*, 5 January

¹³⁹ *Ibid* 44

¹⁴⁰ See wikileaks (2009):” H PASS TO SENATOR KERRY FROM AMBASSADOR LEBARON”

<http://cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=10DOHA52&q=hamas%20qatar>

¹⁴¹ Interview with Remi Abdu 10 February 2013 (Gaza)

¹⁴² Stig Jarle Hansen & Atle Mesøy (2009)” *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa*” *Nibr report* 2009:33,13

of the Mubarak regime in Egypt.¹⁴³ However, the Arab Spring and the strengthening of both the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and Syria also put pressure on Hamas, as their relationship with the increasingly anti-Muslim Brotherhood regime in Syria became an embarrassment in their relationship with the Brothers. Hamas was evacuating from Syria, and one of its major leaders, Khalid Meshal, reallocated to Qatar.

The troubles in Syria enabled the Qataris to argue with the United States that they attempted to sway Hamas away from Syria and Iran, and that Hamas could be distanced from the two, there was a stronger opening for Qatari attempts. The new regime in Egypt also worked on reconciliation and hosted the negotiations that led to the May 2012 Cairo Agreement. In one sense the Cairo Agreement was handled by the Egyptian military, leaving Hamas with the feeling that little had changed on the Egyptian side.¹⁴⁴ The Agreement itself was focused on bringing up technocrat leaders instead of Hamas and Fatah leaders.¹⁴⁵ The increased closeness between Qatar and Egypt did, nevertheless, seem to transform into closer cooperation with the Palestinian Peace process.

The then Crown Prince of Qatar (now Emir), perhaps signaling his takeover of power, was stepping up the work with reconciling the Hamas with various relatively skeptical countries in the region. In January 2012, King Abdullah of Jordan met with Khaled Meshal and the Crown Prince of Qatar, the latter according to Hamas members, using money to persuade Jordan to accept Hamas as a representative for the Palestinians (not the only one).¹⁴⁶ However, the Qataris also directly attempted to take advantage of the synergy of the Cairo meeting by inviting Muhamed Abbas and Kahlid Meshal directly to Doha.

In one sense the Doha meeting illustrated another aspect of Qatari diplomacy, again the centralized nature of direct Qatari engagement, perhaps a necessary consequence of Qatar's hieratical and centralized structures of governance, as the two Palestinian leaders were involved

¹⁴³ International Crisis Group (2011): *Palestinian Reconciliation: Plus Change...* Middle East Report N110,11

¹⁴⁴ Ibid 13; Interview with X1 In Gaza,

¹⁴⁵ Staff writer (2011) "Cairo Accord Sets Stage for Peace", *The Economist* 11 May

¹⁴⁶ Abdullah III (2012) "Interview with King Abdullah II", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 03/12/2012,

<http://www.turkishpolicy.com/article/680/interview-with-king-abdullah-ii-winter-2012/>; Rana Sabbagh (2011), "Rapprochement between Jordan and Hamas with the help of Qatar", *Dar Al Hayat*, 8 November

directly without a more broad dialogue with their organizations. The Doha engagement could potentially illustrate the faults of such a strategy. The respondents in Fatah and Hamas later complained that they had been exposed to undue pressure from the Emir, and that the agreement had been rushed by the Emir.¹⁴⁷ Later problems might also indicate that the agreement that was struck was regarded as being detached from the two organizations, that the two leaders involved did not have the necessary mandate to sign such agreements. Meshal was, for example, accused of overstepping the Hamas Polite Bureau, especially on the acceptance of Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah as the President of Palestine.¹⁴⁸

The Doha Agreement itself was a loose agreement with various points that were to be carried out later. It also credited Egypt for the previous Cairo Agreement and the Egyptian reactions; Egypt now being ruled by the Muslim Brotherhood and much ‘friendlier’ than before.¹⁴⁹ In fact, Egypt was returned into the fold of the peace process when a further round of negotiations was conducted in Egypt in May 2012. While Hamas still perceived the Egyptian role as being led by the old Mubarak era intelligence services, the relationship between Egypt and Qatar had definitively improved and it seemed to have forms of coordination. One indication of the new relationship was Qatari-Egyptian cooperation over sending oil to Gaza. Qatar supplied the oil but Egypt approached Israel for gaining access and allowed the oil to pass through their checkpoints.¹⁵⁰ Egypt also later restricted transport through their checkpoints into Gaza, but Qatar became known as a state that could strike deals with Egypt for transports into the Gaza strip. In this situation the Qatari Emir and Sheika Mozah also struck a major propaganda victory in Palestine when the Emir was the first foreign Head of State to visit Gaza since 2007.¹⁵¹ The popularity of the Qatari royal family in Gaza was boosted when Sheika Mozah showed strong emotions when Palestinian schoolchildren were singing about the loss of Jerusalem, impressing also Hamas leaders. The symbolism in the Emir canceling a trip to the Fatah dominated West

¹⁴⁷ Interview with X2 in Gaza, Interview with x3 in Ramallah

¹⁴⁸ International Crisis Group (2012) “The Emperor Has No Clothes: Palestinians and the End of the Peace Process”, *Middle East Report* N°122, 7 May 2012

¹⁴⁹ “Full text of the Doha Declaration signed between Hamas and Fatah – Palestine” Accessed at <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com/2012/02/08/full-text-of-the-doha-declaration-signed-between-hamas-and-fatah-palestine/>; Staffwriter (2012): “Egypt welcomes Fatah, Hamas deal in Doha” *Maan News Agency* 06/02 2012.

¹⁵⁰ Raha Mohammad Tahat (2012) “Sinai attack – Repercussions on the Gaza blockade”. *Daily News* 7 August .

¹⁵¹ Jodi Rudoren(2012) “ Qatar’s Emir Visits Gaza, Pledging \$400 Million to Hamas ” *New York Times*, 23 October, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/middleeast/pledging-400-million-qatari-emir-makes-historic-visit-to-gaza-strip.html>

Bank was not lost on the Palestinians, although Fatah controlled West Bank authorities were becoming more willing to accept Qatari support since their financial situation deteriorated.

Qatar again took an active anti Israeli stance during Israel's "Operation Pillar of Defense" in November 2012, when Qatar's support for Hamas became relatively vocal. Observers expressed a trend where Egypt, Turkey and Qatar, countries with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, seemed to replace the old Syrian and Iranian allies of Hamas. However, Qatari humanitarian aid could not replace Iranian arms shipment, and it is also possible to see the crisis as an Iranian victory as the Iranians and Hamas publicly acknowledged that arms had been supplied.¹⁵²

In one sense the history of Qatar and the Palestinian peace process ended in a situation where Qatar was a more powerful actor than before, first because of a closer relationship to Egypt, second because of a weakening of Syria and indirectly Iran. However, again the military coup against the Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 2013 changed this, the window was again closing.

There are several perceptions amongst Palestinian leaders that are important for the future potential of Qatar. It is notable that several Hamas leaders are somewhat skeptical to the sustainability of the Qatari effort as one man, the Emir, is seen as being the brain behind the engagement. Hamas officials expressed fears of policy changes if the Emir passed away, if the Crown Prince (the current Emir) took over, or if he changed his mind.¹⁵³ Second, the Palestinians saw Qatar's role as increased due to the Arab Spring, the vacuum created in Syria, but they also see the potential for a conflict between the Brotherhood and Qatar on one side, and Saudi Arabia on the other in a post-Syrian revolution Middle East, although the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood from power in Egypt might have weakened this perception, and Qatar is seen as weaker.

Lessons from the Palestinian Case

The case of Palestine illustrates several points, Qatar had several advantages in Palestine, and one of the advantages was that it actually was biased towards Palestine but nevertheless kept

¹⁵² Jonathan Schanzer(2012):"A Pillar of Problems" *Foreign Policy*, 16 November 2012.

¹⁵³ Interview with X1 In Gaza, Interview with X2 in Gaza

channels open to both Israel and the United States. It was vocal in its critique against the United States, also through Al Jazeera, and this created legitimacy. The fact that in many ways Qatar remained so close to United States, hosting the United States Central Command and one of the largest US airbases in the Middle East, enabled Qatar to go quite far in supporting Hamas without alienating the United States, this also showed how Qatar took relatively large risks because of symbol politics, even going against its main granter of Security vs both Iran and Saudi Arabia, the United States..

At the same time Qatar was inhibited by its small size, mainly because other regional actors, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, seemed insulted by the large role of Qatar. Size did matter, and it was held against Qatar. Qatar could operate only when it was allowed to operate, but made the most of such windows of opportunity. Qatar has a wider negotiation approach in Palestine, and support efforts in mediation with humanitarian donations and funds. They enhance their efforts by drawing upon the competence of the Palestinian diaspora in Qatar, of which leaders of both Hamas and Fatah used to be a part. Qatar was not a neutral party, it was pro Hamas, but it did use money to quell worries by Fatah, and managed to still attract Fatah's goodwill. There is also a long term, but clear line in Qatar's policy towards Palestine, which is to support the Islamist alternative, Hamas, it seems like again Qatar prioritized a religious political organization, as it does in Yemen today.

The actors in the Palestinian negotiations were highly limited. It was strongly governed by the Emir, while the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister acted as emissaries with substantial powers at times. Sheika Mozah also played a very important role in gaining sympathy for Qatar amongst the Palestinians. The centralization of negotiations sometimes created problems, as democratic processes within Hamas and Fatah failed to be respected.

QATAR'S GREATEST SUCCESS? MEDIATION AND FOREIGN POLICY IN LEBANON

Stig Jarle Hansen

The complex setting of Lebanon is challenging for any peace-maker, and Lebanon was, and is, also closely influenced by the interest of the neighboring states. Of these neighbors, Syria has been the strongest, at least since the Taif Agreement in 1989 until the Syrian civil war started in 2011.¹⁵⁴ From 1989 until 2005 Syria dominated so strongly, that there was little space for any other actor, also Qatar, to play any role. Ironically, the Syrian Hegemony also promoted a hegemonic form of peace, enabling a relatively peaceful decade, with the exception of the clashes with Israel. It was, however, not a neutral peace although Syria's allies inside Lebanon clearly benefited from the Syrian Hegemony.

The Syrian Hegemony, and indeed peace itself, was to be challenged by the so-called Cedar Revolution in 2005, which started with the assassination of the popular Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on the 14th of February 2005. The events that followed, large scale demonstrations, were a watershed in Lebanese history, in the sense that they led to the withdrawal of Syria's direct armed presence in Lebanon, and the total Syrian domination was seriously weakened; this does not mean that Syria was without power, it rather became weakened enough to allow other countries to play a role. The events also led to a reconfiguration of Lebanese politics. An anti-Syrian alliance, the March 14 Movement, consisting of the Christian phalangists, the Christian "Lebanese force", the Christian Qurnet Shehwan, the Sunni-based Future Movement, and the Druze under Walid Jumblatt, was created and the small party of the Lebanese Brotherhood was soon to join them in the alliance. A pro-Syrian counter alliance, the 8th of March Alliance, was also formed.

This period saw the entry of Qatar into Lebanese politics seemingly through a back door, the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict. In July 2006, Israel intervened in Lebanon after Hezbollah had shelled border towns and attacked an Israeli patrol and captured two soldiers. The conflict

¹⁵⁴ During 1989 western powers, (not sure Saudi Arabia ever supported Michel Aoun) ended their support for Michel Aoun, thus removing the last obstacle to Syrian domination. The Taif peace agreement opened up for large scale Syrian influence in Lebanon, although also opening up for a Christian (better to replace by Muslim – before the agreement Christian 55%, Muslim 45%; after it became 50/50) 50% quota in parliament.

produced perhaps as much as one million refugees and damaged civilian infrastructure.¹⁵⁵ Qatar was actively criticizing Israel and tried diplomatically through an Arab league engagement where Hamad Bin Jassim spoke on behalf of the league (since Qatar at the time had a UN Security Council seat) to encourage cease fire and push for the full withdrawal of Israeli forces at an early stage.¹⁵⁶ Qatar also actively positioned themselves as more hawkish towards Israel compared to other Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁷ The irony of the situation was that at the time, Qatar, as one of the few Arab states, maintained its diplomatic relationship with Israel and hosted an Israeli diplomatic mission.¹⁵⁸ Qatar's symbolic gestures in defying the Israeli air blockade over Lebanon by sending the first airliner to Beirut after the war, and the fact that the Emir was the first foreign Head of State visiting damaged areas, was also noticed, as was Qatar sending a small contingent of 205 soldiers to UNIFIL; when this was withdrawn in early 2008, the media barely noticed it.

Qatar engaged itself in the post war reconstruction of Lebanon, including the total reconstruction of the Shia-held towns. The most famous being Bint Jbeil, but also other towns like Aita al-Shaab, Ainata and Khiam, Qatar in one sense positioned it-self towards better terms with the Shias in the Hezbollah Movement .¹⁵⁹ Qatar also supported UNICEF in Lebanon and had other projects, including two mobile field hospitals and one stationary hospital.¹⁶⁰ The donations were not without problems, as a small conflict developed between the Prime Minister of Lebanon and the Emir over Qatari control of the aid, which was kept by Qatar, while Saudi Arabia allowed Lebanese authorities more control. Central in this dispute were accusations that Qatar channeled some of their funds through Hezbollah.¹⁶¹

It should however be noted that Qatar and the Lebanese government had a close relationship in other areas; Qatar was cooperating with the Lebanese army, supplying spare parts and

¹⁵⁵ Staff writer (2006) "Middle East Crisis: Facts and Figures", *BBC*, 31 August

¹⁵⁶ Staff writer (2006b): "Qatar fears Lebanese civil war TV NZ, August 9, accessed at <http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411749/810764>

¹⁵⁷ Meena Janardhan (2006): "MIDDLE EAST: Tiny Qatar Gains Big From Lebanon Crisis" Interpress services, 26 September , <http://www.ipsnews.net/2006/09/middle-east-tiny-qatar-gains-big-from-lebanon-crisis/>; Qatar criticized Egyptian and Saudian Critique of the Hesbollah kidnappings

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

¹⁵⁹ Nora Boustany (2006): "Lebanon Offers Aid for Rebuilding " *Washington Post*, August 31.

¹⁶⁰ Wikileaks (2006) "Siniora on UNSCR 1701, Reconstruction, Way Forward", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>, 19 August: See also Ulrike Putz (2007): Qatar's Reconstruction Aid in Lebanon: Envy, Conspiracy and a Lebanese Motor City" *Der Spiegel* 13 March

¹⁶¹ The Lebanese government maintained that "even Iran" allowed the government in Lebanon to have more control.

ammunition, and it was noted by Lebanese authorities that Qatar at several occasions defended the Lebanese freedom of press when it came under attack from other Arab countries, also in relations to meetings between Arab states. Qatar also took notice in treating all sides as equals in diplomatic procedures, and during the visit of Crown Prince Sheikh Tameem bin Hamad in 2007 all sides in the Lebanese rivalry, including Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and President Emile Lahoud, emphasized their support for rebuilding Christian sites in the south of Lebanon.¹⁶²

At the same time one can observe Qatar, and the former hegemon in Lebanon and Syria, drawing closer. A joint investment fund was created in 2005. Qatar had engaged itself in attempting to end Syrian isolation; handling the situation in Lebanon was a component in this as the Syrians were accused of being involved in the Hariri killing, also by the United Nations initiated Mehlis Report. Qatar had defended Syria against the accusations of being involved in the Hariri assassination and had argued for a “change through interaction” strategy when discussing with the Americans, arguing against Syrian isolation.¹⁶³ Qatar in the end also abstained when Resolution 1757 was voted upon in the Security Council in 2007, creating an international tribunal for the Hariri case.¹⁶⁴ The Qatari attempts were viewed with hostility by the United States, but definitively brought Syria and Qatar closer together. In one sense the activities of Qatar definitively being pro Syrian, and pro Hezbollah, the latter to the extent that the Hezbollah even arranged “Thank you Qatar” demonstrations, paved the way for future engagements on behalf of the Qataris.¹⁶⁵

Qatar had rivals, Saudi Arabia had also re-entered the Lebanese scene and supported the circle around Saad Hariri, and there seemed to be some rivalry between the two, seemingly supporting rival media outlets, as the new TV, which in general were seen as more neutral.¹⁶⁶ However, by 2007, Qatar had a relatively good relationship with most Lebanese actors, although being closest

¹⁶² Nada Bakri (2007) “Qatari crown prince visits Lebanon, pledges continued support” *The Daily Star*, February 07, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Feb/08/Qatari-crown-prince-visits-Lebanon-pledges-continued-support.ashx#axzz2TwGtK5VZ>

¹⁶³ wikileaks (2005) “Qataris see truth in Mehlis Report But are cautious”, <http://cablegatesearch.net/>, 25 October

¹⁶⁴ Staffwriter (2007): “Why did Qatar abstain?” *Now Magazin*, June 9

¹⁶⁵ Anonymous respondent (member of the Doha negotiation team for March 14th, Interviewed in Lebanon 3, April 2013

¹⁶⁶ wikileaks (2005) “New Tv’s Criticism Of Judiciary Crosses Gol Redlines”, <http://cablegatesearch.net/>, 21 March

to the Hezbollah, and a thaw in the relationship with Saudi Arabia meant that the Saudis were positive towards Qatari intervention.¹⁶⁷

Qatar finest hour? Qatar's role in the 2008 mediations

During the spring of 2008, the fragile balance inside Lebanon was again upset as the Government moved to disassemble Hezbollah's parallel telecommunication system and remove an airport security chief at the Rafik Hariri airport that was allied to Hezbollah. A demonstration over increased costs of living on the 7th of May added to the tension and became the excuse for action by Hezbollah. In the end, Hezbollah, together with its allies, most importantly the Amal Movement and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party took control over the Sunni inhabited West Beirut.¹⁶⁸

On the 10th of May, the Government backed down, allowing the army to decide the fate of the measures that were suggested to deal with the head of security at the airport and the telecommunication system of Hezbollah, although clashes continued between Druze militias and Hezbollah allies until the 14th.¹⁶⁹

Qatar moved very fast to ease the crisis and as early as the 14th of May, the country took the initiative to invite (?) a nominally Arab League delegation, led by the head of the Arab League, Amer Moussa, jointly with Qatar's Sheik Hamad Bin Jassim, who landed in Beirut on the 14th. The delegation was promoting a cease fire based on the withdrawal of a controversial proposal regarding Hezbollah structures (including the removal of the alleged Hezbollah supporting head of security), a new technocrat led government, and a national reconciliation dialogue.¹⁷⁰

Qatar had a golden opportunity to work with Lebanon because of their new close relationships with Syria and Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia was open to Qatari involvement, observers

¹⁶⁷ Saudi Arabia, which in 2007 had attempted to sway Sunni dominated Arab countries away from the influence of Iran, and had reproached Syria, and had stroke a deal with Qatar over Al Jazeera's critical coverage of Saudi politics, ending Al- Jazeera's critique of the country. There were many signs of a increased friendship between the two counties , Al Jazeera was allowed to cover the Hajj in Saudi Arabia in 2007, and the Saudis sent an ambassador to Qatar the same year.

¹⁶⁸ International crisis group (2008):" *Lebanon: Hizbollah's Weapons Turn Inward*" *Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°23, 15 May,1*

¹⁶⁹ Diego Baliani(2008):"The Doha agreement ends the first restructuring phase" *CASD CeMiSS Quarterly Summer*

¹⁷⁰International crisis group (2008),,2

stressing that the successes of the Qataris would have been impossible without this.¹⁷¹ The fact that Qatar nominally acted along the Arab League and allowed the head of the Arab League, Amer Moussa, and an Arab ministerial committee a role in the initial process, might also have smoothed Saudi Arabia's attitude towards the Qatari engagement.¹⁷² At the same time Qataris kept the proximity to Iran and Syria. Indeed, Iran's President had been invited to the meeting of the Arab League by the Qataris, the first time this ever happened, in December 2007.¹⁷³ Regionally, Qatar could thus draw upon support of the most important actors. It could not draw on the sympathy of all Lebanese actors; Walid Jumblatt was highly skeptical towards Qatar which he saw as Syrian controlled, perhaps also because his Druze forces fared better than the other factions of the March 14 Alliance, but a special visit by Hamad bin Jazim to his mountain stronghold created enough trust to convince him to join.¹⁷⁴ Amine Gemayel, the leader of the Christian phalangists expressed the same doubts and internal cables of the United States signaled similar expectations.¹⁷⁵

Qatar managed to host the meeting just one week after the outbreak of violence, and candidates were on-site on the 16th of May. This is impressive, despite the fact that Lebanon had been in turmoil for 18 months (over the issue of oppositional veto in the Cabinet) and cooperation between the parties had broken down well before the outbreak of violence. Furthermore, the meeting was well planned and the draft agreement, as a point of departure for the negotiations, was already prepared by the Qataris.¹⁷⁶

Observers describe a relatively hot tempered but neutral Hamad bin Jassim leading the negotiations directly, not leaving the venue of the negotiations.¹⁷⁷ The participants were kept together until tangible results were found but were given ample time to contact their own organizations, highly necessary since organizations like Hezbollah did not send their top leader.

¹⁷¹ Anonymous respondent (member of the Doha negotiation team for March 14th), Interviewed in Lebanon 3, April 2013

¹⁷² The Arab ministerial committee nominally consisted of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Republic of Djibouti, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Yemen

¹⁷³ Amira Howeidy (2008) "Doha steps in" *Al Ahram weekly* 29 May

¹⁷⁴ Wikileaks (2008) "Lebanon: Jumblatt Wants To Be Ready For The "next Round"", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>; jumblatt continued to point to the "Iranian-Syrian-Qatari" Axis after the negotiations

¹⁷⁵ Wikileaks (2008b) "Lebanon: Gemayel, Dubious But Ready, For Doha", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>.

¹⁷⁶ Anonymous respondent (member of the Doha negotiation team for March 14th), Interviewed in Lebanon 3, April 2013

¹⁷⁷ Alistair Lyon (2008) "Qatar pulls off mediation coup in Lebanon crisis" Reuters, May 22 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/05/22/uk-lebanon-qatar-analysis-idUKL2274043520080522>

The Qataris had running contacts with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United States during the crisis, and the Emir also attended the negotiations from the third day. However, by May 20 some sources indicate that Hamad bin Jassim stepped back from direct interference and allowed more space for the Lebanese to interact.¹⁷⁸

The agreement itself was in one sense a victory for Hezbollah; as the informal veto for the 8th of March Alliance was granted, the moves towards dismantling the Hezbollah telecommunications systems were stopped, as were any mentioning of disarming Hezbollah itself. However, this has to be understood in the light of the battlefield victories of Hezbollah, which left the military chances of the Future Movement and their March 14th allies in doubt. The text in the agreement was relatively moderate and simple, dealing with the election of a new President, Suleiman, from the army, perceived as relatively neutral, forming a national unity government with a majority of March 14th representatives, changing constituency borders as well as asking the partners to strive for “strengthening the sovereignty of the government”, a loose formulation that probably satisfied a small amount of the opposition’s quest for disarmament of Hezbollah and their allies.¹⁷⁹

Qatar definitely became empowered by the treaty; symbolically the Qatari Emir was the only foreign Head of State present by the side of the new President during his inauguration. Qataris were in demand in other parts of the Middle East as a result and were actively wooed by the Lebanese parties, the March 14 alliance actively trying to get Qatar “on board”.¹⁸⁰ Qatari engagement continued during 2008 through Qatari-French engagements attempting to draw Syria and also the Lebanese March 14th Movement into dialogue, giving the start of the so-called Qatari-French entente, measures that created some confidence but few stable results.

During the fall of 2008, the Qatari absence from the follow up meetings on the national dialogue were noticeable as they chose to hold a lower profile. During the start of 2009, the troubles within the Arab League over Qatar’s Doha initiative (that was seen by Egypt and Syria as

¹⁷⁸ Wikileaks (2008c) “Lebanon: Speaker Berri Pleased With Doha Agreement”, <http://cablegatesearch.net/>.

¹⁷⁹ Various parties (2008): “The Doha Agreement ‘on the results of the Lebanese National Dialogue Conference’” Doha, 22 May 2008

¹⁸⁰ Alistair Lyon (2008): “Qatar pulls off mediation coup in Lebanon crisis” *Reuters*, May 22 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/05/22/uk-lebanon-qatar-analysis-idUKL2274043520080522>

backing Hamas) diluted the chances of Qatar playing a role in Lebanon, the thaw in Qatar's relationship with Saudi Arabia was disappearing; however, the Arab revolution was soon to appear.

Lebanon, Qatar and the Arab spring

The problems in Saudi-Qatari relations were again decreased as a consequence of the increased sectarianisation of the Middle East after the Arab Spring had spread into the region. In one sense Al Jazeera committed Qatar to a certain policy, as the coverage from the TV stations was highly positive and favourable towards the activists in the first Arab revolutions. In large, it depicted secular dictators as Hosni Mubarak and Bashar al Assad in a bad light and enhancing the effect of social media by expressing its importance.¹⁸¹ The demonstrations had little impact on Lebanon itself but were to change the dynamics in the region, which subsequently were to have a bearing on Lebanon. The first change was a slow deterioration of the Syrian-Qatari relationship, first partly over the TV coverage by Al Jazeera, which in turn led to Syrians attempting to use their press to print stories about Qatari abuses of their own population. The diplomatic relationship also deteriorated after the Qatari embassy was attacked on 21 July 2011.¹⁸² There were already rumors of Qatar funding rebel movements inside Syria, but some of these might initially have been Syrian backed as well, as the Fatah Al Islam, that had been viewed by many in 2005-2006 as Syrian puppets in Lebanon, ended up fighting the regime in 2012.¹⁸³ Qatar actively seemed to attempt to get the Arab League to take a more interventionist stand on Syria, aligning itself with Saudi Arabia which fell back to an anti-Iranian strategy. It is, however, not given that this was the final end of Qatar's peacemaking role as it actively was a mover of the Arab League peace plan for Syria in the autumn of 2012.

The Syrian crisis aligned Qatar seemingly with the United States and their own rival Saudi Arabia. This was also increasingly the case in Lebanon, where Qatar increasingly withdrew its support from the March 8 Alliance and Hezbollah, without gaining new allies in the March 14th Alliance, which was used to see Qataris as pro- Hezbollah. Qatar was, however, alleged to have

¹⁸¹ Heidi A. Campbell and Diana Hawk (2012): "Al Jazeera's Framing of Social Media During the Arab Spring" *CyberOrient* vol 6, issue 1

¹⁸² Ian Black (2011): "Qatar breaks Arab ranks over Syria", *The Guardian*, Thursday 21 July 2011

¹⁸³ Staffwriter (2007): "Qatar brokered escape to Syria for leaders of insurgency in Lebanon" *Geo-Strategy Direct*;9/26/2007, p7

supported Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir, who increasingly challenged Hezbollah from a Sunni Islamist point of view and managed to take recruits from the Future Movement.¹⁸⁴

However, major strains in the Saudi-Qatari relationship developed throughout 2012 and into 2013, partly because of the successes of the Qatari efforts in Syria. Qatar managed to get the opposition to take the seat in the Arab League, and, last but not least, to gain favorable positions for the factions inside the insurgency that were close to them, namely the Muslim Brothers. According to local journalists this topped itself when the Qataris intervened against the Saudi's wish to have Ghassan Hitto in charge of the Syrian oppositional Cabinet, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs in Qatar (now Foreign Minister under the new Emir), Khalid al-Attiyah, was said to have intervened directly.¹⁸⁵ The writer cannot confirm or deny the story, but it was symptomatic for rumors in the Middle East of a divide between the two. Saudi Arabia also reasserted itself on the Lebanese scene by re-approaching Hezbollah, and more specifically Aoun's political movement, perhaps in typical Saudi fashion in order to weaken Iran's influence in the wake of the Syrian war and influence Hezbollah to stay out of the latter war (which was not successful). In one sense this meant that by 2013, Qatar's special role in Lebanese politics was severely weakened. Its ability to play a peacemaking role had gone, despite the Saudi Arabian-Hezbollah detente which might have been weakened by the strong Hezbollah military deployment in Syria and the possibility that victories by the Assad regime could push Qatar and Saudi Arabia together again.

Hegemony and Vacuum

The Lebanese case illustrates several important points. Firstly, it illustrates the efficiency of Qatari diplomacy in reacting to a crisis and the ability of the Qataris to play a role despite not being neutral, but also its long-term weakness. Qatar was to a certain extent playing along with Syrian hegemony, it aligned it-self with Syria , through support for Hezbollah, although the relationship with the latter could have been a product of Qatar's symbolic protest line against Israel. The Qatari policies actually worked fine for a substantial time, enhanced by a keen Qatari eye for symbol politics, as their short UNIFIL deployment that was very visible in the media (but

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Corbeil (2012):" Lebanon's Salafists Challenge Hezbollah Dominance" *Foreign Policy association*, 11 Nov

¹⁸⁵ Mohammad Ballout (2013) "Qatar Trumps Saudi Arabia On Syrian Opposition Leader" *Al Monitor* 21 Mars

the withdrawal of them was rather invisible), and the reconstruction of Bint Jbeil,, which also was very visible in the media. The combination of alignment with the local hegemon and media strategies worked entirely fine until Syria and Qatar fell out over the Syrian civil war, when Qatar lost its own allies in Lebanon, without gaining new, as potential candidates for new friendships remembered Qatars old favoritism of the pro Syrian parties,

In this sense the Lebanese case is different from other cases in this report, in other cases Qatar was not aligned fully with a Hegemon, but rather took advantages of windows of opportunity when such hegmons had their focus on other issues, or where hindered from interacting. In Lebanon, the traditional allies of Qatar, the Muslim brothers , were so weak that it made no sense to depend on them, making the case different from other cases as well.

Qatar also at times aligned them-selves with other regional great powers, they needed support from regional hegemons to achieve the Doha Agreement in 2008; this reassembles the importance of regional great powers in destroying or enhancing Qatari diplomatic efforts in Yemen, Somalia and Palestine. Qatar plays a role as long as circumstances either align regional hegemons with them, or removes them from the diplomatic game.

Religion does play a role in Qatari foreign policy; it gives symbolic meaning to Qatari efforts to deal with Israel and as in Palestine, Qatari re-engagement started after an Israeli intervention/invasion. It tends to support Islamist organizations which it also did when it supported Hezbollah. However, the outbreak of the Syrian civil war changed much in the region. Qatar now has a hostile Syria and its successes inside Syria have also increasingly alienated Saudi Arabia.

QATARI INVOLVEMENT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: A KINGMAKER AND A SUCCESSFUL MEDIATOR?

Mohamed Husein Gaas

Qatar's progressive peace-making and involvement in the Horn of Africa begun indirectly through its engagement in the Eritrean-Yemeni Hanish Island crisis of 1996, leading to a special relationship with Eritrea that lasted until 2013. Though other States and actors as Djibouti, Ethiopia and various Somali factions, viewed this special relationship with suspicion it did not hamper Qatar from mediating a successful cease fire between Djibouti and Eritrea, and attempted to facilitate contact between various Somali factions.¹⁸⁶

Although entering into the Horn through the Eritrean-Yemeni conflict in 1996, the Qatari engagement was relatively limited until the emergence of the short-lived Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) that ruled over much of the south-central regions in Somalia in 2006.¹⁸⁷ Ever since, it has directly and indirectly tried to mediate between the UIC and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2006, between the former UIC factions in 2007/2008, between the Alliance for Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) in 2008, between Hisbul Islam (HI) and the TFG, between Al Shabaab (AS) and the TFG, and today between the Muslim Brothers in Somalia, who saw a split in 2006.¹⁸⁸

Somalia

Qatari involvement in Somalia can be distinguished into an informal humanitarian and relief aid phase followed by an escalation and formalization phase. Qatar engaged with Islamist factions of various types, and often took sides. Often, the Qatari influence went through networks, personal networks, diaspora and religious networks as well.¹⁸⁹

Qatar's humanitarian involvement in Somalia started as early as 1996 through targeted aid programmes, support to schools and hospitals, often through institutions owned and run by the

¹⁸⁶ Wikileaks (2008) "Qatar clarifies policies and action on Somalia", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>; Interview with Ali August 2012

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Abdi 14 November 2012; Interview with Ali 11 December 2012

¹⁸⁸ Ibid; Gaas and Hansen(2010) feasibility study for the "Revealed Political Preferences and Political Behavior of Conflict Parties in South-Central Somalia" project, December 2010 LPI-Nairobi, Kenya

¹⁸⁹ Phone interview and Email correspondences with a former TFG minister March 2013

official Muslim Brotherhood chapter in Somalia, the Al Islah. Support was limited in scale and without the actual presence of any Qatari humanitarian organizations in the country. However, this support has provided an important entry, building up local connections and a positive image that, along with its Islamic credentials, enhanced its legitimacy not necessarily in the wider Somali population but in the eyes of Islamic charities and Islamic organizations including the Muslim Brotherhood in Somalia.¹⁹⁰ According to local sources, the Qatar foundation provided support to hospitals in Mogadishu and educational facilities such as Mogadishu University, established by Al Islah.¹⁹¹ In Puntland, North East Somalia, and Somaliland, Qatar supported the Nawawi schools that are run by the Islamic organization.¹⁹² However, in general, the Qatari efforts were limited, and were unnoticed by the average Somalis. This trend of Qatari involvement has, however, changed in 2006 at the time when various Sharia courts supported by many of the business leaders in Mogadishu, joined forces to defeat the Somali warlords of Mogadishu, and Qatar now entered directly into Somali politics. Parts of the renewed efforts nevertheless were humanitarian; Qatari medical doctors arrived in Mogadishu and were hosted by the International Red Crescent and Red Cross alliance where they provided much needed treatment.¹⁹³

Qatar had no peacemaking involvement in the region until 2006. Several factors may well explain this absence. The Horn of Africa region is highly volatile with an unparalleled history of ethnic, clan, succession and border conflicts meaning that a small State like Qatar had limited leverage due to the absence of local connections and legitimacy, secondly, before 2006, there were few substantial Islamist factions, and the depiction of the sharia courts as creating peace through sharia in Mogadishu might have attracted the Qataris. Qatar engaged directly with the UIC leadership. With the help of Somali diaspora members in Qatar, then leader of the UIC, Sheikh Sharif, met with the Emir and the Foreign Minister of Qatar in 2006.¹⁹⁴ Following this, a Qatari needs assessment team was dispatched and eventually the Qatari Red Crescent established its presence in Mogadishu, Somalia, and Sheikh Sharif was to remain close to the Qatari efforts up

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Omar August 2012; Interview with Boodaaye February/March 2013

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Interview with Yusuf July 2012; Ibid via phone March 2013

¹⁹³ Interview with Ali and Abdi July 2012

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Ali (who travelled with Sharif to Qatar) July 2012

to 2012.¹⁹⁵ Seemingly, Qatar also attempted to convince the United States to talk to Sheik Sharif, although this strained the Qatari-US relationship.¹⁹⁶

In December 2006, Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia and fighting on different scales took place between Ethiopian troops and the UIC forces in the Bay, Bakool, Hiiraan, and Galgudud regions. At the height of this conflict, and on December 27, the UN Security Council chaired by Qatar ended in a deadlock. Qatar demanded the exclusion of Ethiopian troops and their immediate withdrawal from Somalia.¹⁹⁷ Somali diaspora members through their contacts with important Qatari individuals, paved the way for the arrival of some of the UIC leadership into Qatar. Initially, Sheikh Sharif, along with some of the top UIC officials, arrived in Qatar early in 2007.¹⁹⁸ Sheikh Sharif, after meeting with Qatari leadership, was even interviewed and broadcasted by Al Jazeera TV.¹⁹⁹

The former UIC leader, free parliament members of the TFG, as well as Somali nationalists, held a conference in Doha in July 2007 where they rejected reconciliation, seemingly also indicating that Qatar had become a hub for unifying efforts for achieving Ethiopian forces withdrawal.²⁰⁰ A conference was held from 6 - 14 September 2007 in Asmara, Eritrea, where the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) was announced.²⁰¹ Although Eritrea hosted the conference, Qatar played a major role in facilitating the developments.²⁰² A future modus operandi was now established, the Eritrean-Qatari Axis co, although it was a price to pay for the close relationship with Eritrea, the Qatari-Ethiopian relationship. Despite this, Qatar was until 2012 playing along Eritrean as well as its own channels of influence, to the extent that it

¹⁹⁵ Ibid; interview with Boodaaye March 2013

¹⁹⁶ Wikileaks (2008) "Cda Meeting: Somali Ambassador To Qatar Plays Down Talk Of Impending Mediation", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>;

¹⁹⁷ Ibid; Interview with Osman August 2012;

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomatic_and_humanitarian_efforts_in_the_Somali_Civil_War#cite_note-SOMALI-PEACE-TALKS-STALL-AT-UN-11

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Abdi(via skype) February 2013

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Ali July 2012; Interview with Abdi(via skype) February 2013

²⁰⁰ Wikileaks (2011) "Somalis Meet In Qatar Reject Reconciliation Conference", 1 Sep. 2011 Doha embassy Doha, Qatar

²⁰¹ Interview with Abdi(via skype) February 2013; see also Gaas and Hansen(2010) feasibility study for the "Revealed Political Preferences and Political Behavior of Conflict Parties in South-Central Somalia" project, December 2010 LPI-Nairobi, Kenya

²⁰² Mohamed Gaas & Stig Jarle Hansen Hansen(2010)"Revealed Political Preferences and Political Behavior of Conflict Parties in South-Central Somalia" project, December LPI-Nairobi, Kenya

occasionally planned to use Eritrea as a facilitator for its peace attempts, particularly in relation to Hizbul Islam and Hassan Dahir Aweys.²⁰³

The fact that Al Jazeera gave ample coverage of the conflict in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, including violent abuse by the Ethiopian army against the population in the region, also led to worsening relations with Ethiopia. Indeed, in April 2008, Ethiopia cut its diplomatic ties with Qatar accusing it of supporting its arch enemy Eritrea, and aiding insurgent groups opposing Ethiopian troop's presence in Somalia. Qatar denied the Ethiopian allegations and stated its belief in a peaceful resolve of all conflicts.²⁰⁴ However, Qatar engaged in a war of words with Ethiopia even claiming that "Ethiopia threatens the security and stability of a number of States in the Horn of Africa".²⁰⁵

Qatar continued to attempt to unify the oppositional forces in Somalia; a new round of talks between these factions was held in Yemen with Qatari and Libya mediation that failed.²⁰⁶ The rumors of attempts to bring the radical Al Qaeda affiliated Al Shabaab into negotiations were also strong, although this cannot be confirmed by the writer, and such attempts seemed to have been blocked by the United States.²⁰⁷ By 2009, Qatar's old favorite, Sheik Hassan, had, through negotiations hosted in Djibouti, gained the presidency of a new unitary government consisting of former elements of the UIC and the TFG. In one sense it seemed that Qatar had succeeded, and Qatar and the United States were reconciled, as the latter ended up supporting its old enemy, Sheik Sharif.

However, it seemed that the Qataris wanted to pressure Sharif to expand the government towards including other Islamist organizations such as Hassan Dahir Aweys and his Hizbul Islam, and also the radicals in Al Shabaab. According to Somali Cabinet leaders, the Qataris attempted to put conditionality on aid in order to get the new Cabinet to negotiate with oppositional groups,

²⁰³ Wikileaks (2008) "Qatar clarifies policies and action on Somalia", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>;

²⁰⁴ Staff writer (2008) "Ethiopia breaks off diplomatic relations with Qatar" *New York times* 21 April (available at : <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/21/world/africa/21iht-21ethiopia.12201267.html>

²⁰⁵ Akhlu Shiketa(2013): "Qatar: Peacemaker in the Horn of Africa", *Africa Portal* <http://www.africaportal.org/articles/2013/01/31/qatar-peacemaker-horn-africa>

²⁰⁶ Interview with Ali July 2012; Interview with Abdikarijm and Ibrahim via phone March 2013

²⁰⁷ Stig Jarle Hansen and Muhamed Gaas(2010) "Suggestions for project designs for "the Revealed Political Preferences and Political Behavior of Conflict Parties in South-Central Somalia" project December 2010 LPI-Nairobi, Kenya

although Qatar denied this.²⁰⁸ Perhaps the most astonishing Qatari effort was the sponsoring of Yusuf Qaradawi's peace mission to Somalia in 2009, where the goal was to put pressure on the President to engage with in particular Hassan Dahir Aweys and his Hisbul Islam.²⁰⁹

By 2012 the situation in the Horn was changing, as was Qatar's policies. Qatar was engaged in Syria and saw Iran's friendship with Eritrea as potentially problematic; moreover, it was more or less clear that Eritrea and their ally, Hassan Dahir Aweys, were a spent force in Somalia. A new Somali President was elected, hailed from the fringes of the Muslim Brotherhood. Local commentators quickly claimed that Qatar was 'changing horses', accusations of Qatar supporting the candidacy of Hassan Sheik Mahmoud with money.²¹⁰ The new President and Qatar grew closer, and Qatar became to be seen as a backer of the re-invigorated Mogadishu-based Somali government, a move that many saw as facilitated by members of the Qatari-Somali diaspora. Qatari connections with oppositional groups as Al Shabaab, weak from the start, seemed to fade away.²¹¹ In fact, in the end, Qatar was seen as such a staunch ally of the new Federal Somali Government that a Qatari convoy was targeted by a Shabaab suicide bomber in May 2013. Interestingly, Qatar chose to support a, albeit former, Muslim Brotherhood activist, with ties to a Muslim Brotherhood break-out group, the so-called *Dam Jadiid* (new blood). Interestingly, as in Syria, it was seen as acting very similar to Turkey, another ally of the new government, although the writer is not aware of any coordination mechanisms.

The Somalia case illustrates a number of points. In many ways Qatar was an ardent supporter of the UIC and ARS, and the more Islamist Hisbul Islam (HI) at some stages, along with Eritrea, which it had a close relationship with, cost Qatar its diplomatic relation with Ethiopia. Despite having relationships with actors defined as terrorist organizations by the United States, Qatar was able to keep its close relation with the latter.

Qatar supports its wider involvement approach in Somalia with building up social infrastructure such as schools, supporting hospitals and funding other humanitarian efforts often through local

²⁰⁸ Wikileaks (2008) "Cda Meeting: Somali Ambassador To Qatar Plays Down Talk Of Impending Mediation", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>;

²⁰⁹ *ibid*

²¹⁰ Phone interview with a former minister March 2013; Interview with Yahya July 2012; Interview with Ali, July 2012

²¹¹ Roland Marchal (2012): "Somalia on Hold" *NIS foundation Paper*

Muslim Brotherhood NGOs and the diaspora. Such approach is backed with funds and an increased presence of Qatari NGOs. They draw their competence from the Somali diaspora in Qatar, especially qualified individuals working at Qatari institutions as connectors, and front runners.

Qatari Mediation of the Eritrean-Djiboutian border conflict

The border conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti was in many ways influenced by the Somali case, and influenced it in return. It was a mediation between two very unequal partners, a mediation where Qatar and one of the parties, Eritrea, had cooperated politically since 2006. Again Eritrea came out as the 'biased negotiator' but it also came out as a very successful mediator.

The border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti was rooted in disagreements over the Ras Doumeira mountains that in general are claimed to belong to Djibouti (but are deserted). The border was regulated in a Franco-Italian treaty in 1900, but France yielded territory in order to secure Italian support against Germany in Europe in 1935; the latter treaty was never ratified properly by France, but Eritrea publicly maintains the position that this was the correct interpretation, while the international community in general preferred the 1900 treaty. This almost led to serious clashes between the two countries in 1996, but tensions eased eventually.²¹²

Eritrean troops mobilized along the border in the early months of 2008. In response to this, Djibouti sent its troops to reinforce its border control and on June 10 the fighting between the countries broke out which resulted in the death of nine Djiboutian soldiers.²¹³ It seemed like the situation was uneven, as the Eritrean army was 22 times larger than the Djiboutian army, the largest per capita in the world, and the largest in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Djibouti had strong friends. During the border tensions the late Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, stated that 'the recent Eritrea-Djibouti row was a threat to the peace and security of the whole Horn of Africa'. He added that 'Ethiopia has a capacity of protecting the safety of the Ethiopian-

²¹² Mesfin, Beruk (2008), "The Eritrean-Djiboutian border dispute" *ISS situation paper*, 2

²¹³ Kumaran Ira and Alex Lantier(2008) "Fighting erupts over Eritrean armed incursion into Djibouti" available at: <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2008/06/djib-j18.html>

Djibouti trade corridor'.²¹⁴ He did this partly because Djibouti was the best port Ethiopia had and has access to. France and the United States also had bases in Djibouti, and France in the end shared intelligence with the Djiboutians.

According to the Djiboutian, there were attempts to bring in a variety of mediators, France even suggesting to bring in Iran due to its political closeness to Eritrea and its investments in Djibouti.²¹⁵ Both Libya and Sudan tried to mediate between the two countries but to no avail. However, both Eritrea and Djibouti enjoyed a good relationship with Qatar, the former due to negotiations over a business partnership.²¹⁶ In June 2010, a seven point agreement was announced by Qatar. As a result, Eritrea withdrew from Ras Doumeira and both countries accepted the establishment of a committee consisting of two members from each country led by the Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim to be appointed for resolving the demarcation of the border.²¹⁷ The committee would be set up under the chairmanship of the Qatari Premier with a member each from Eritrea and Djibouti 200 peace keepers from Qatar was stationed along the border, some were actually Somalis.²¹⁸ The so-called Gordofa Agreement also included provisions for the exchange of prisoners of war and the demarcation of the border conducted by a private company.

The agreement was partly brokered directly by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who also was the Qatari signatory. Unlike Qatar's Somalia approach, its mediations between Eritrea have been largely formal.²¹⁹

The writers believe the Qatari mediated a cease fire between the two countries which should hold for the foreseeable future, and even possibly seeing a new Qatari initiative of mediating the unresolved Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict as a Qatari strategy for final resolution of the Eritrea-

²¹⁴ Mesfin (2008)

²¹⁵ Wikileaks (2008) "Djibouti Fonmin On Somalia, Eritrea", <http://cablegatesearch.net/>;

²¹⁶ AC(2013) "Qataris Cold Shoulder" Africa Confidential Vol 54 N^o 4: 15th February 2013; Interview with anonymous may 2012

²¹⁷ Staff Writer (2013) "Qatar to mediate between Djibouti and Eritrea on border dispute". *The Free Library* 8 June

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Qatar+to+mediate+between+Djibouti+and+Eritrea+on+border+dispute.-a0228381086>

²¹⁸ Email correspondence with Abdulrahman January 2013

²¹⁹ AC(2013) "Qataris Cold Shoulder" Africa Confidential 4 (54): 15th February 2013; Interview with anonymous may 2012

Djibouti case but also for stabilization of Somalia. However, the Eritrean friendship with Iran brings clouds in the sky of the Eritrean-Qatari relationship.

Patterns of Qatari engagement in the Horn

In the Horn Qatar expanded into Africa, and this is perhaps why it used existing friendships and networks, even when those networks challenged the Hegemon of the Region, Ethiopia. It aligned with Eritrea, the weak party of the Ethiopian-Eritrean rivalry, an actor ostracized and isolated in the Horn, and again an actor that was perceived as an enemy of Qatar's main granter of security, the United States. Although Eritrea was a very secular state, Eritrea's allies were very much a fit according to Qatari preferences, in large being Islamists.

Qatari closeness to Eritrea did not hamper its mediation attempts between Eritrea and Djibouti, again Qatari money helped persuade Djibouti that Qatar could act as a mediator, and the role of Qatar was very successful. In Somalia, Qatari diplomacy was a big failure, partly because of it going against Ethiopia and after a while, also Kenyan interests, powers with resources the Qataris could not match at a local level.

Ethiopian withdrawal, and Qatar's changed focus away from Eritrea, as well as Qatar's old friendship with the Muslim brothers aided the Qatari resurgence in Somalia, and today Qatar is perhaps the most important Arab actor in Somalia, even surpassing the old Arab power with a Horn engagement, Egypt. In the Horn Qatar did not align with the local Hegemon, and lost out, there were no windows of opportunity, until the Djibouti-Eritrean conflict, in which Ethiopia had little leverage, and until a weakening of Ethiopian interests in Somalia, and lastly a slow change of focus away from Eritrea on behalf of Qatar, again a window of opportunity presented itself. It should be clear that this window of opportunity still is there, Qatar is stronger at the Horn than ever.

CONCLUSIONS

Stig Jarle Hansen

Qatar has developed an impressive range of diplomatic tools and its system of governance has enabled it with much flexibility for handling crises and to promote its policy.

The flexibility has created some strong paradoxes in Qatari politics. As for regional allies, these have changed drastically over the last 20 years. Syria, the regime of President Saleh in Yemen, Sheik Sharif Sheik Hassan in Somalia, Hezbollah in Lebanon, all were at times seen as close allies of Qatar, with the latter providing funds and international diplomatic support. At times the support was very costly and Qatari support of the Sharia courts of Mogadishu, of Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria was costly for its relationship with the United States. However, Qatar chose to uphold these despite the potential threats against their relationship with their main provider of security, the United States. Yet Qatar also disbanding the relationships when the situation in the Middle East changed, and Qatari preferences changed. Qatari politics thus shows the combination of considerable pragmatism but also considerable will to follow a separate Qatari line of politics despite pressure from foe example United States and Saudi Arabia, Qatar is not out to just to appease or get recognition from these actors, but do care for the support from the 'Arab street'.

Some observers claimed that Qatar's engagements with organizations hostile to the United States was intentionally agreed upon by the United States to gain channels of contact to organizations that they, due to American anti-terror legislation, yet cables from WikiLeaks show a different picture, one showing the USA often as angered with Qatar, although the military agreement with the United States lied firm while Qatar's relationship with the actors in the region fluctuated.

After the Arab Spring, it seemed that Qatar had discovered another strategic ally, the various Muslim Brotherhoods in the Middle East. However, after the Egyptian military coup in 2013 the newly found ally seemed to disappear, although Qatar was relatively vocal in criticizing the military coup. There are, however, several notable trends that should indicate that Qatar is not entirely alone. In Syria, Egypt and Somalia, Qatar has played along with another actor in

regional politics, Turkey, where the ruling party, the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), and the future might hold a closer relationship.

Second, respondents interviewed for this report underlined that the pragmatism and former friendship with Iran quickly can draw the two together again when a Syrian civil war is settled. Thirdly, it should be remembered that the Muslim Brothers remain important actors in Yemeni and Somali politics, their removal from power in Egypt is not the end of the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in the Middle East or Africa. The transfer of power in Qatar means that a less experienced team is in charge, but this is a team that will take advantage of competence within the old ruling circle, and thus probably, admittedly after suffering defeats in 2013, could re-bounce as an actor, for example in Palestine and future Yemeni conflicts, indeed even as an actor in the Egyptian conflict. In the Horn, Qatari influence has not received any blows at all, and is on the increase. It should be noted that the troubles in Egypt also can present Qatar with new openings for negotiations as the Egyptian ability to intervene in its close vicinity, as in Palestine and Sudan, again is destabilized, and the Qataris traditionally have been good at taking advantage of such opportunities.

There are many very stable traits of Qatari foreign policy, one is an inclination to support symbolic Islamic issues (as shown in this report), high profile issues that draw media attention, as resistance towards Israel when it intervenes in neighbouring countries, or support of the Sharia courts of Mogadishu when the latter brought peace to that city. Indeed, Qatar has had a clear pattern when engaging with non state actors, namely to support Islamist organizations of various shades and types. Before the Arab Spring, this pattern was more flexible, Qatar engaging Shia's and Sunni's alike. After the Arab spring, it became more Sunni focused. The flexibility in religious matters perhaps indicates that this support is an identity issue rather than theologically founded, a matter of showing Muslim identity rather than interpreting the Koran, giving flexibility to Qatari policies.

When Qatar engaged in peacemaking, it was seldom neutral, having a closer relationship to Eritrea at the Horn, to Hamas in Palestine, and until the Arab Spring to Hezbollah and Syria in

Lebanon, as well as Islah in Yemen. However, it seemed that the lack of neutrality seldom was a problem. The flexibility of Qatar in choosing its friends, and their successes in peace making despite lacking neutrality, shows that Qatar has a potential in peace making even in a post-Arab Spring Middle East, even if the Assad regime were stay in power.

The last Emir, and the network around him, also understood how to take advantage of windows of opportunity. The history of Qatari engagements is indeed how Qatar has carried out these, often in relation to regional hegemony that either has weakened or has failed so much in its diplomatic efforts leaving space for the Qataris. However, Qatari weakness shows when resisted by regional hegemons as Egypt in Palestine, or Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Then Qatar usually loses.

Qatar has several tools in its tool box; first they use aid packages to 'sugar' diplomatic efforts, often tightly controlled aid programs, often through non State actors, but seldom containing direct military support in a conflict zone (Syria and perhaps Yemen before the Eritrean-Yemeni war being the exception). The distribution of aid is sometimes cumbersome and can create conflicts over the distribution, as it did in Yemen.

The second tool is a broad dialogue, inclusive, even when Qatar has partners; the enemies of these partners tend to be included. The third is the centralized negotiations, thoroughly planned by the Qataris, the fourth is regional organizations as GCC and the Arab League, the fifth, seldom used but very valuable, is the Yemeni understanding of Arab tribal systems, and patronage networks. A last strategy was actually to sponsor affiliated non State actors, as Yusuf Qaradawi's missions to gather support for the Palestinians and to create peace in Somalia.

As indicated by Halvard Leira, Yemen uses these tools to play to five audiences: the global audience of States, the Arabs, the Muslims, the Gulf countries, and the global population. Indeed, this has often been overlooked. Al Jazeera has definitely been formed as a tool by the Qatari government but formed Qatari policies in return. Qatar has always been formed by the perceived opinion of the Arab street and/or the global population; this has been one of the more common

threads in Qatari foreign politics. Its high profile support of the Arab Spring, resulting in the engagement in Syria, Libya and Yemen, as well as its symbolic support of the organizations on the frontline against Israel, is perfectly understandable if one studies the perceived opinion of the Arab masses and Qatar's environmental engagement, given that one understands the global masses. One should be careful not to believe that this only is instrumentalism, it is becoming a part of Qatari self- perception, making it a more stable part of Qatari foreign policy.

Qatar will remain an important foreign policy actor in the future. However, it will have the strongest influence when other more traditional actors, as regional hegemony, have been weakened by external circumstances.