

Status of Qatar from Foreign Policy: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: Qatar has determined on foreign policy strategy for international relations. In the context of Qatar, the quality of leadership and the strategies employed by that leadership to manoeuvre through structural constraints primarily geography are of equal significance. This is despite the fact that the predominant theories in the field frequently place an emphasis on structural factors to explain state actions, particularly those of small states. This essay makes a number of important points, one of which is that the strategies that have been used by the Qatari elite since 1995 have been of great assistance to the country in avoiding many of the structural issues that it would have otherwise been forced to deal with. Furthermore, Qatar made an effort to shift the political dynamics in the Middle East to its favour during the short Arab Spring that occurred between 2011 and 2013. This was accomplished by opposing the two leading regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, in Egypt and Syria, respectively. According to the findings of the study, geopolitical conditions and the relative capabilities of nations continue to prove to be crucial factors in determining whether or not a state can continue to play a prominent role. This is particularly true in a region where realpolitik continues to be a dominant source of ideas among elites.

Keywords: Qatar Foreign Policy, The Gulf Crisis, Foreign Policy Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Both Arab and international media have shown a great deal of interest in the State of Qatar, its foreign policy, and its alliances in the region. This attention has been fuelled by the United Arab Emirates. In accordance with their feelings on the matter at hand, individuals may either critique or appreciate the country's involvement in regional affairs. Beyond surface political prejudices, ideological views, and media depictions, a more complete discourse is taking place in academic circles concerning Qatar's regional role and foreign policy. This conversation is going beyond superficial differences in political ideology (Abbass et al., 2022).

In light of the fact that it contradicts the fundamental concepts of international political theory and demonstrates how these theories are unable to adequately explain foreign policy and interstate relations, Qatar is a highly relevant case study for scholars. International political theory, particularly its various realist interpretations, is predicated on the assertion that the international system is dominated by great powers; that the existence and foreign policy of small states are inconsequential as they are entirely subordinate to these great powers; and that, to survive in a chaotic environment governed by self-interest and self-sufficiency, these states

must adopt one of two strategies: either aligning with a great power in a 'bandwagoning' relationship for protection against local threats, or forming alliances with other states to counter the threats posed by a stronger power, a strategy referred to as 'balancing.' Qatar used two distinct ways of doing things between the years 1971 and 2011. In the first place, it was dependent on Saudi Arabia for security from Iran, particularly after the Shah's administration was overthrown. beyond that, it protected itself against Saudi threats by signing the Defence Pact in 1992 and maintaining a presence of United States soldiers at al-Udeid Base beyond the year 2002. Finally, between the years 2006 and 2011, it became a member of the "Axis of Resistance" in order to combat the increasing pressure from Saudi Arabia (Ali et al., 2021).

Due to the fact that Qatar's foreign policy is effective and has a significant impact on the surrounding area, the country has received a great deal of media attention throughout the course of the previous twenty years. Nevertheless, Doha has, for the most part, adhered to the typical principles of foreign policy for tiny states, which include balancing or bandwagoning. As a result of the Arab Spring, Qatar became a significant challenge for those who are interested in the study of international relations. Since then, the Qatari government has astonished many people with its actions and has pushed well-known scholars in the fields of international relations and foreign policy to explain how tiny nations react when they are in a crisis. The majority of smaller countries, particularly when things are uncertain or in turmoil, have a tendency to avoid making changes that may risk their safety and survival. Qatar, on the other hand, has adopted a totally different approach than most of these governments. Despite the fact that Qatar does not have a democratic government, it has taken on a leadership position in an effort to make the most of the opportunities and make an influence. It has done this by lending its support to the wave of reform that has swept over the region and by advocating for a democratic transition (Azam et al., 2023).

The relationship between Qatar and its two most significant neighbours in the area has been strained as a result of this behaviour. It battled with Saudi Arabia because it backed the revolution in Egypt that took place in January 2011 against the authority of President Husni Mubarak, and it fought with Iran because it supported the resistance in Syria against the government of President Bashar al-Assad. This occurred at the same time as the United States was lowering its presence in the area, which demonstrated that the United States' objectives and interests were altering and that it was less dedicated to supporting nations that were friendly to a certain degree (Arslan et al., 2022). To put it another way, Qatar's relationship with its two most significant neighbours deteriorated as a result of the fact that it did not get sufficient pledges of safety from the United States. During this time period, it seemed as if Qatar had abruptly ceased using its long-term policies of bandwagoning and balancing in order to safeguard itself and achieve independence. On the other hand, it decided to pursue an aggressive approach in order to establish a new regional order in which it would be in command. This plan was in direct opposition to the desires and interests of the main countries in the area. Qatari political activity reached its highest point between the years 2011 and 2013, but this also made it difficult to describe what was going on using the theory of international relations and how it was happening. Given the widespread public outcry that was taking place throughout the Arab world, Qatar made the decision to not stay in the background of its friends. It was demanding autonomy, which it considered to be unnecessary. As an alternative, it sought to make use of this surge in order to alter the political status quo that had been in place for a very long time

throughout the Arab world. It believed that it was superior to its competitors in the larger conflict that was taking place in the area between the need for change and the desire to remain the same, and it refused to listen to the counsel that its competitors offered in return for safety (Agboola et al., 2021).

The consequence of this was that Qatar adopted a foreign policy that was both autonomous and assertive, not just in the Middle East but also in the rest of the globe. These actions included the deployment of soldiers to Libya, the provision of complete assistance to opposition groups in Syria, and the provision of political and financial support to the Morsi regime in Egypt. During this time period, Qatar not only advocated for democratic reforms throughout the Arab world, but it also had a significant influence on the Arab political discourse on resistance in revolutionary nations, therefore contributing to the establishment of the guidelines for this discourse. As a result, Qatar emerged as a significant actor in a number of crucial regions of the Arab World, including Syria, Egypt, Libya, and the war between the Arabs and the Israelis (Baloch et al., 2023).

Qatar took advantage of the fear and resignation that traditional Arab nations were experiencing in order to maintain its vital position in the region and continue fighting for its existence. Qatar did this while disregarding the responses of regimes that were battling to defend themselves. On the other hand, Qatar went against the conventional wisdom on international relations and foreign policy. For example, the belief that smaller countries either collaborate with larger ones for protection or form alliances that assist them in remaining independent and surviving was challenged by Qatar. The prevalent belief that material wealth prevents states, particularly smaller ones, from adopting proactive foreign policies was challenged by Qatar. Qatar argued that the ruling elite in these states exerts minimal influence on foreign policy in comparison to the systemic regional and international factors and the limitations that they impose (Chien et al., 2023).

During the duration of the Arab Spring, Qatar implemented a lofty strategy with the intention of accomplishing objectives that were not only unattainable but also absurd for a nation of its size. In order to take advantage of the uprisings that were taking place in Arab communities against their despotic rulers, Qatar used its soft power, which included the media and financial resources. In order to secure a significant position, it desired to bring about a shift in the Arab regional structure. It was able to cope with the security danger posed by its two bigger neighbours as a result of the Arab Spring. This was accomplished by helping the establishment of a government in Egypt that was friendly to Qatar in order to counter Saudi Arabia, and by backing the establishment of an allied government in Syria in order to defend against Iran (Chapagain et al., 2022).

In this time period, Qatar desired to be seen as the originator of the new regional structure that was developing at the same time as the previous structure was disintegrating. For a nation of Qatar's status, this duty as a regulator of the regional balance of power is unparalleled in the annals of international relations and diplomacy over the course of human history (Cifuentes-Faura, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to investigate Qatar's position and foreign policy, with a particular focus on the strategies that the governing elite of Qatar has used over the course of the last twenty years in order to overcome structural restrictions and attain optimum autonomy in its foreign policy within the confines of a geographically constrained framework. The

objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the fundamental propositions of international relations and foreign policy theory in order to shed light on the dynamic relationship that exists between agency and structure. Additionally, we will investigate the strategies that are employed by the proficient elite in order to overcome environmental and geographical limitations in their pursuit of their objectives. The actor-structure paradigm is one of the theoretical frameworks that may be used to clarify foreign policy. A nation's foreign policy is the result of a number of factors, both internal and external to the nation, working together to produce the desired effect. These factors have an impact on the rules, alternatives, and choices that are available to those who make decisions. The logic behind these options is that they strive, at the very least, to ensure the existence of the state and to maintain its sovereignty, and at the very most ambitious level, to create dominance over the specific regional or global system in which it operates. It is dependent on the resources and capabilities of a state in comparison to those of other organisations in its geographical region whether or not it is able to accomplish these aims and other difficulties linked to them. What happens is contingent not only on the tactics, policies, and abilities of the individuals who are responsible for making choices in Qatar, but also on the internal and external factors that assist them in accomplishing their objectives. The decision-makers in a particular temporal or spatial context make an effort to select one option or policy from the available alternatives, taking into consideration the various aspects of the regional environment, which may include political, military, social, economic, internal, regional, international, technological, environmental, or geographic factors (Koval et al., 2021).

The academic study of foreign policy is a relatively new field within the discipline of political science. It emerged in the period following World War II, concurrently with the development of realist theories of international relations developed by Hans Morgenthau. These theories had a significant impact on the political thought of the United States during the Cold War. Through the use of these theories, Morgenthau aimed to provide a comprehensive explanation of state behaviour. He did this by a) combining the concepts of power and national interest, and b) highlighting the influence of the external environment on the decisions made by a state, which is dependent on the state's interactions with other entities within its regional and international context, as well as its relative strength (Kumar, 2021).

During this same time period, the behavioural school emerged with the intention of incorporating techniques from the natural sciences into the social sciences in an effort to make them more scientific. Because of this, it was much simpler to go from analysing particular examples in general politics, such as foreign policy, to analysing particular concepts that would assist us in developing theoretical assumptions via the use of cumulative frequency and inference. The behavioural school of thought maintained that changes among elites, regardless of the degree of institutionalisation that a state had, often result in alterations to the policies of the state. This is due to the fact that every elite possessed a distinct vision and philosophy. In the past, there has always been a controversy about the precise role that the elite plays in the process of making decisions and determining the state's foreign policy (Maja and Ayano, 2021).

There are two primary schools of thought that can be found in the field of study that is known as foreign policy. According to the structural school of thought and the several ideas that it promotes, the state is the sole independent player in the realm of foreign policy. On the other hand, the behavioural school of thought considers foreign policy to be an extension of the

activities that the state engages in inside its borders. Consequently, this indicates that choices for the state are made by a political elite. Due to the fact that it is an immaterial, abstract entity that is not considered to be an actor, the state is unable to make judgements. The persons who make choices for the state are known as actors. These individuals are affected by their own values and views, and they also take into consideration the institutions that form their preferences about policy. Graham Ellison's research, which was first published in 1972, is widely considered to be the most well-known and influential classical study on decision-making in the field of foreign policy during the twentieth century. Beginning with President John F. Kennedy's warning that the Soviet Union was about to send mid-range ballistic missiles to Cuba, the study details the thirteen-day period in October 1962 (from October 16 to October 28) that is known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The crisis was resolved by the Soviet Union withdrawing its ships in exchange for the United States removing Jupiter missiles from Turkey. The study concludes with the conclusion that the crisis would be resolved (Kumar, 2021).

It is crucial to investigate the dispute about the relevance of actor versus structure in the study of a state's foreign policy in order to explain Qatar's foreign policy and the role of elite decision-makers in easing the restrictions imposed by the regional and international system. Such an examination is absolutely necessary in order to understand Qatar's foreign policy. Because of this complexity, it is very difficult to make sense of the reasons why a particular state opts for one policy over another. In this part, we shall examine the most significant theories that place an emphasis on the significance of structure rather than the actor, as well as those that place an emphasis on the significance of the actor (representing the elites). In this part, we will evaluate the theories of Qatari foreign policy that were presented before in order to determine which theory provides the most correct explanation of Qatar's behaviour, regional goals, and international interactions. It is one. Perspectives derived from the theory of structuralism. When it comes to defining foreign policy, structural techniques often downplay the significance of people and elites. Instead, they place an emphasis on the significance of structural factors, which may be either material or social, in shaping the behaviour of states and their foreign policies. The following is a list of most prominent theories: (Hajian and Kashani, 2021).

A WITH REALISM

Hans Morgenthau is widely recognised as a pioneer in the study of international relations throughout the twentieth century, and his book, *Politics among Nations*, is widely regarded as an essential piece of literature in this area of study. The realism method was advanced by Kenneth Waltz, despite the fact that he held the belief that international relations theory fails to take into account foreign policy because of its criticism of placing an excessive amount of focus on institutions at the cost of people. Waltz contends that the dynamics and structure of the international system, which are determined by the distribution of power, are the only determinants of the actions and policies of states in their foreign policy. As a consequence of this, the international system is composed of big states that are responsible for establishing norms and establishing boundaries between other nations. In the group of those who follow Morgenthau, those who adhere to the neoclassical realist school of thought think that the major objective of international relations theory is to provide an explanation for state foreign policy.

There are two movements that may be defined within the context of neorealism. These movements are a defensive movement and an attacking movement. As an illustration of aggressive realism, John Mearsheimer is an excellent example. According to him, nations will continue to use aggressive tactics to defend themselves so long as there is no higher authority, legal framework, or enforcement mechanisms in the international system. This is true regardless of who is in charge of the structure of the international system (Nguyen et al., 2023).

When seen through the lens of defensive realism, this Hobbesian perspective on the international order has been challenged by Steven Walt and similar individuals. This argument contends that the structure of the international system cannot alone shed light on the conduct or foreign policy of a state, despite the fact that it has a significant influence on both of these aspects. Defensivists place a higher priority on the origin, magnitude, and direction of immediate threats to countries than they do on the distribution of power among them. They argue that technology, location, offensive capabilities, and intentions have a significant impact on the responses and foreign policy of states. Both neorealists and neoclassical realists are of the opinion that the most significant factors that determine a state's foreign policy are the state's place within the international system, as well as the power and capabilities that it has. Nevertheless, they emphasise that structural variables in the international system have a more intricate and less direct influence on state action than neorealists believe. This is something that cannot be denied. These elements have an effect on foreign policy in a manner that is reflective of the internal requirements of the state as well as the interests of the many groups that are included inside it. This is evident in the decisions made by elites who are attempting to fulfil the requirements and objectives of the state. Steven Walt proposes that domestic policies serve as the variable that mediates the allocation of power within the international system and determines foreign policy. He says this idea is supported by the empirical evidence. He is of the opinion that neoclassical realism is the most effective theoretical framework for describing how domestic and international issues influence the foreign policy of nations, as well as how these aspects may be combined to achieve the desired effect. This is due to the fact that he is a firm believer in systemic and internal causes (Tietenberg and Lewis, 2023).

Despite the fact that its numerous strands vary from one another, realism mostly emphasises on structural or systemic causes rather than people or elites when attempting to explain a state's foreign policy. This is due to the fact that the logic of power, also known as *raison d'état*, is the core notion with which it is concerned. According to this interpretation, the term "structure" refers to the configuration of the international system as it is understood by neorealism, or it may be interpreted as a combination of domestic power resources and international frameworks as described by neoclassical realism. Changes in tangible objects, both inside and outside of the state, have an effect on the state's capacity to act, and the state is the primary player in both of these scenarios (Tauseef Hassan, 2021).

To be liberal Neoliberal institutionalism, which is similar to realism, is a structural-systemic theory that examines the international system from a top-down perspective. Despite this, proponents of this paradigm think that the governing elite exert a large amount of influence over the foreign and security policy of a state. According to the liberal perspective, the state is the dominant player in the international system, and it operates rationally in order to maximise its benefits within the setting of a global environment that is mostly chaotic. From the perspective of liberalism, foreign policy is seen as a restricted range of alternatives that suit the

interests of a state that is focused on strategy. This is similar to the perspective of realism. On the other hand, in contrast to realists, liberalists do not consider these limitations to be part of a capacities distribution structure that exists inside the international system. Instead, they see them in the context of the inherent disorder that exists inside the system. This natural disorder may lead to a state of uncertainty and a predicament about security, but it can also make it simpler to establish a regime or system of norms, customs, laws, values, and conventions that fosters some degree of international harmony and cooperation. These regulators have a significant impact on the behaviour of nations and contribute to the maintenance of an international system that is not too chaotic. In order to prevent governments from prioritising their own interests above those of others, international organisations that place an emphasis on the concepts, customs, norms, laws, and conventions that are essential for the improvement of state policies and behaviours are of great assistance. The more educated the elites are, the greater the likelihood that they will continue to hold on to these beliefs and perspectives (Ulucak and Ozcan, 2020).

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

The theory of constructivism states that reality is a framework, or social construct, that is articulated by overlapping social rules and norms that affect our perspective and knowledge of that reality. To what extent do we understand the world and where we stand within it? Is it possible to determine what it is that we desire and the most effective strategies to get there? Idea and value are the fundamental components that make up the framework of social organisation. People are influenced by them in terms of how they act in a society, as well as who they are and what they do. Those who subscribe to the constructivist school of thought believe that the dynamics and operations of international politics are substantially impacted by widely held beliefs about the appropriate conduct of states. These beliefs are based on the underlying assumptions that underpin the international system (Wassie, 2020).

In this piece of work, a particular model of foreign policy is discussed, and an attempt is made to determine how to support or discourage certain activities by using components that are connected to generally accepted notions. In a nutshell, it seeks to alter the way in which the state perceives the environment that surrounds it. People who subscribe to the constructivist school of thought argue that identity, which is intimately linked to state behaviour and foreign policy, is an extra factor that influences these domains. Because it offers a framework for political leaders to originate, preserve, and shape their relations with other states, identity is vital in establishing the socially produced character of the state and its purposes. This is because identity gives a framework for all of these things (Yang and Solangi, 2024).

PERSPECTIVES DERIVED FROM THE ACTORS

When it comes to the formulation of choices about foreign policy, actor-based approaches, as opposed to structural viewpoints, put a greater emphasis on the role that elites play. They place an emphasis on the competencies, capabilities, and approaches that decision-makers use in order to circumvent structural constraints in order to accomplish certain objectives and meet particular interests. The following are the primary viewpoints that bestow upon the actor a more

considerable impact in terms of influencing the foreign policy to which governments are committed:

A Methodologies That Are Cognitive-Psychological

If the rational actor hypothesis, which is key to structural theories, notably realism and liberalism, proposes that leaders often adapt to the limits created by the system, then cognitive and psychological techniques are dependent on a claim that contradicts this view. Individuals' behaviour, which is not impacted by limitations and external variables, is a result of their dedication to their ideologies, beliefs, and cognitive processing procedures, in addition to other personal and cognitive qualities, according to their assertions.

The long-standing view of humans as "malleable agents" has been replaced with the concept of individuals as autonomous agents and problem solvers as a result of the focus on the study of behaviour and its changes, which has been a significant concern in sociological analysis in recent decades. When it comes to matters of foreign policy, it is abundantly obvious that the qualities, ideas, beliefs, intentions, worldview, and decision-making processes of leaders have a significant impact on the manner in which choices are made and decisions are taken. It is possible for the leadership to consist of a single person or a group of people working together. The ideology of neoliberalism (Yang et al., 2023).

The neoliberal viewpoint employs three primary focal areas in order to provide an argument against neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. In the beginning, it prioritises society actors above political institutions and places an emphasis on a bottom-up model of the political regime rather than a top-down model. In other words, for the purpose of decision-making, people and social organisations are more significant than political variables. This is due to the fact that individuals and organisations define their own interests and work towards achieving those objectives via political negotiation and collective action. In the second place, the decisions and acts taken by the government reveal the desires of certain subsets of the population. The decisions that are made for the state are made by leaders and politicians, and they represent the interests of many institutions and organisations housed inside the state. To accomplish the objectives they have set for themselves, they operate within the parameters of international politics. Thirdly, the conduct of a state in the international system is governed by the convergence of its interests and choices with those of other nations, as influenced by the elites and leaders of those other countries. One of the ways in which this theory differentiates itself from others is that it places more emphasis on the significance of social groupings than it does on the people who dominate political power. When compared to other points of view, it assists in the development of an understanding of foreign policy within a sociopolitical framework that is more comprehensive.

From The Standpoint of The Interpretive Actor

In the same way as structuralism does, the interpretative actor approach necessitates that actors be seen as reflecting entities within a domain of meanings that overlap from one another. The emphasis of this method is on the investigation of foreign policy via the cognitive processes and acts of decision-makers, in contrast to the approach of structuralism, which seeks to explain

individual behaviours within the framework of norms, meanings, and societal circumstances. Understanding political decisions from the perspective of those who make them is the primary emphasis of this study. This is accomplished by investigating the basic reasons and motives that lead decision-makers to make such choices. The perspectives and comprehensions of those in positions of power dictate the judgements that nations make about their foreign policy. In their analysis of decision-making behaviour, particularly in the United States, the former Soviet Union, West and East Germany, Britain, and France during the period of German reunification, Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow argue that the historical narrative of that era would have been profoundly altered if the relevant decision-makers had not thought in a particular manner and made the decisions that they did. This is because the decisions that they made would have completely changed the course of history (Zhang et al., 2021).

In contrast to structural theories, actor-based theories recognise the significance of decision-making elites in the process of creating state foreign policy. This is due to the fact that the viewpoints, ideological stances, and worldviews of these elites have a considerable influence on the process of option selection and decision-making. There is a significant relationship between the political and diplomatic abilities of individuals in charge, as well as the leadership characteristics they possess, and the degree to which they are able to circumvent the constraints that structural and systemic variables impose on actions that are seen to be beneficial for the interests of the state.

Part Two: The Phenomenon of Qatar

A great number of specialists who are researching Qatar and its foreign policy admit the challenges that are involved in understanding Qatar's diplomatic decisions via the frameworks of international relations and foreign policy that are now in place. As a result of this lack of clarity, some commentators have said that the very nature of Qatari foreign policy is incoherent, which makes it more difficult to assess. Some individuals have stated that this approach "defies explanation." Some individuals believe that Qatar has used the substantial quantity of money it has in order to safeguard itself and get respect from other nations and areas for the significance of its position. The primary objective of Qatari foreign policy, according to this point of view, is to make choices on its own; nonetheless, the strategy has evolved into a means of ensuring the country's continued existence (Zahoor et al., 2022).

Qatar has been making efforts to free itself from Saudi Arabia's grip over its foreign policy ever since the year 1995. Apart from the fact that Qatar is not neutral, there is another point to consider. Because of this, ties with Riyadh have deteriorated, and the approach of either complying with or going against the desires of the Kingdom has been abandoned. In spite of the fact that Qatar had already committed to host the American military installation in al-Udeid in 2002, Saudi Arabia continued to exert pressure on Qatar, particularly to the military government.

In order to maintain its autonomy, Qatar has sometimes attempted to counterbalance the influence of Saudi Arabia. As an example, it became a member of the "Axis of Resistance" (which consists of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas) when it joined in 2006. However, as soon as the demonstrations of the Arab Spring began in 2011, Qatar changed its mind about this proposal. During this time, it was engaged in direct conflict with Iran in Syria and Saudi Arabia in Egypt. At the same time, the United States government was withdrawing from the area after two unsuccessful wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, showing little interest in becoming involved once again.

Between the years 2011 and 2013, Qatar did not have the same options available to it as smaller nations often have in order to maintain their independence and continue to exist. In addition to this, it used a combative strategy that compelled its most formidable adversaries to adopt a defensive attitude. In order to go ahead and take the initiative in the process of establishing a new regional framework in which it could play a significant role, it made advantage of the influence of public opinion and the tremendous yearning for change. When it comes to public policy and academic investigations into the foreign policy of smaller states, Qatar comes out as a particularly interesting case study (Kumar, 2021).

III: The Geographical Obstacle and the Security Issues Facing Qatar

It was once said by Napoleon Bonaparte that "to know a nation's geography is to know its foreign policy." As a result of this, it is essential to examine Qatar's geography, which is a significant component in the way states behave from a structural perspective, in order to a) comprehend the impact that it has on Qatar's foreign policy and the role that it desires to play in the region, and b) test the assertion of major theories of international relations that a state's actions and foreign policies are constrained by the environment in which they are situated. At this moment, what is the current condition of the environment in which Qatar is located?

Even by the norms of the Gulf and the Middle East, Qatar is a relatively tiny nation. To put it in perspective, it is the 165th biggest nation in the world, with an area of 11,586 km². When measured from north to south, it is about 160 kilometres long, and when measured from east to west, it is around 80 kilometres broad. It is located on the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Two hundred and eighty thousand individuals, or twelve percent of the entire population, are Qatari nationals. There are 2.3 million people residing there. With this number, it is the 143rd biggest nation in the world in terms of numbers of people. In total the military of Qatar is ranked 91st among the most powerful in the world. Within its military forces, there are no more than 12,000 individuals serving in a variety of capacities. When compared to Qatar's gross domestic product, which was valued at \$156 billion in 2016, Qatar's military expenditures amounted to \$1.9 billion, placing it as the 56th most costly military operation in the world (Wassie, 2020).

Iran and Saudi Arabia are two significant countries that are located in close proximity to Qatar. With a total population of 29 million people, Saudi Arabia is the 47th biggest nation in the world in terms of population, and the 13th largest country in terms of land area, which is 2.149 million km². It has complete control over Qatar's land boundaries, and the only land boundary that it shares is a border with Saudi Arabia that is sixty km long. To put it into perspective, Saudi Arabia has around 200 times more land and 100 times more people than Qatar has. According to data provided by the World Bank in 2016, the gross domestic product of Saudi Arabia was \$646 billion, placing it as the twenty-first biggest economy in the world. More than three times the size of Qatar's GDP is represented by this volume. As to the findings of Global Firepower, the Saudi Arabian military ranks as the twenty-fourth most powerful in the world. Across the different branches of the armed forces, there are a total of 256,000 persons serving in the armed forces.

Iran is the 18th largest nation in the world, encompassing 1.648 million km² and having 82 million inhabitants. It is located adjacent to Qatar across the Arabian Gulf and is the 17th most populated country in the world. It has a significant impact on Qatar's ecology, particularly

with regard to problems that come up in the maritime realm. Bahrain, which is just 765.3 square kilometres in size, is the only exception to this rule. The population of Iran is nearly 400 times more than that of Qatar, while the country's size is 170 times larger. Iran's GDP is over two and a half times larger than Qatar's. After reaching a gross domestic product of \$393 billion in 2016, Iran was ranked as the 27th largest economy in the world. With 934,000 personnel, 534,000 of whom are on active duty and 400,000 of whom are in reserve, it has the 21st most powerful military in the world. The nation's military expenditures amounted to approximately \$6.3 billion in the year 2016.

Qatar has a dry desert environment, with minimal subsurface water and no surface water. In addition to these significant disparities in how people often conceive about military strength in Qatar and its neighbours, the nation also has no surface water. The expansion of both agriculture and industry is hampered as a result of this. The fact that Qatar is in such a precarious position, both physically and politically, demonstrates that it does not possess the attributes that are required to be a big participant on the international scene. These criteria include a huge territory, a large population, and a strong agricultural and industrial foundation. Additionally, it is stuck between two big powers who are vying for dominance in a region that is extraordinarily unstable, with both proxy and direct warfare taking place in a number of different locations. In addition, Qatar, which does not own a great deal of hard power resources, is making use of soft power instruments in order to achieve its objectives and compete with more powerful governments for a sphere of influence in the area. Qatar relied heavily on the media as its primary means of addressing issues and challenges. As a result, Qatar was able to establish a distinctive brand, which has elevated its significance in the politics of the area and attracted attention from all over the world (Ulucak and Ozcan, 2020).

For a considerable amount of time, there was no non-state media organisation in the Arab World that provided people with reliable news. During the year 1996, Qatar made the choice to engage in the media industry by establishing Al Jazeera. This move sparked a near-revolution in the Arab World, which had never previously had access to such media. In the past, the area has depended on Western Arabic-language stations such as the BBC, Monte Carlo, and Voice of America to get news and discuss delicate political matters without encountering any difficulties. Qatar's most significant investment in foreign policy was Al Jazeera, which served as the primary means by which the government attempted to achieve its objectives in the region. It is now widely acknowledged that Al Jazeera is a significant participant in both regional and global affairs. It has been forced to shut down as a consequence of this, and it has also been subjected to persecution from a number of Arab nations. In addition, American missiles have been used to launch attacks on its offices and delegations located in Afghanistan and Iraq (Kumar, 2021).

THE FINAL ASSESSMENT

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the elite of Qatar has been working towards the establishment of a sovereign foreign policy and a robust presence in the region. However, they have been confronted with a geopolitical reality that cannot be altered and that they are unable to control. It is not possible for states to pick the geographical environment in which they operate or the structure of the regional order in which they are functioning. Qatar has admitted

that it is capable of developing tactics that are guided by technological advancements and the concepts of soft power in order to strengthen its strengths and reduce its vulnerabilities, which are caused by the proximity of more powerful states. Qatar's elites have reaped the benefits of the distinctive qualities of the structure of the regional order in which the nation operates. The capacity to benefit from big wars between its competing powers and the fact that no one regional authority can totally rule the nation are two examples of these advantages.

The influence of structural considerations on Qatar's foreign policy and its capacity to have an impact on the region has been significantly mitigated as a result of the combination of Qatar's financial resources and a governing elite that is forward-thinking and active. Qatar has successfully reduced some structural vulnerabilities via the use of soft power tactics and two unique parallel approaches: defensive, which is aimed to prevent challenges from adversaries who are pursuing power, and offensive, which is intended to enhance Qatar's regional influence. A network of regional relationships has been established by Qatar, which has resulted in a reduction in the severity of the security issue that was brought about by Saudi Arabia's unwillingness to acknowledge Qatar's political independence. Together with Iran and Turkey, and occasionally both of them at the same time, it has pushed back against the pressure that Saudi Arabia has exerted. On the other hand, Qatar focused on its soft power tools, which proved to be of great assistance in achieving its objectives that were related to its foreign policy. Taking advantage of the lack of a free Arab media and the fall of cultural and intellectual centres such as Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Beirut, Qatar aimed to become an alternative centre for intellectual, artistic, and media activities. This was accomplished by using the situation.

The organisation has also made efforts to establish a reputation (or brand) as a mediator in international disputes, with varying degrees of success in this endeavour. A broad network of civil society and humanitarian organisations that aim to alleviate poverty and neglect in many regions of the globe has also been established as a result of this initiative. Qatar was able to cultivate a favourable image of itself by shifting its position in order to accommodate the requirements and concerns of the region and the world at large (Cifuentes-Faura, 2022).

CONCLUSION

These are the strategies that Qatari authorities use in order to circumvent the structural issues that they face and the constraints that they put on the country's capacity to have its own foreign policy and to take an active part in the region alongside more powerful nations. Their actions demonstrate the significance of leadership in shaping the foreign policy of a tiny state, regardless of the environmental problems that may arise, whether such challenges are associated with the state's long-term objectives or crisis management.

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