

QATAR, NEUTRAL MEDIATOR OR TARGETED ACTOR?

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Abstract

The rise of Qatar has been witnessed over the last three decades. Despite having limitations in population and geography, a small state emerged as a regional power, playing a pivotal role in the contemporary politics of the Middle East. Father Emir (Hammad bin Khalifa Al Thani) set the stage, based on critically utilizing wealth, diplomatic engagement, and media power, and has expanded its international outreach. The article analyzes the role of Qatar in the evolving political dynamics of the Middle East while focusing on its meticulous position in the regional conflict between Israel and Palestine. When Arab countries are struggling to find ways to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, it has successfully attained the status of neutral mediator. Preserving its deep-rooted policy based on the ideological support for the Palestinian cause instituted by its leadership. Another layer of complexity has been added by the Qatar-US security alliance. **Research** also analyzes the recent Israeli attack on Qatar's soil, undermining not only the sovereignty of Qatar but also questioning the defense shield of the US. Ultimately, Qatar's trajectory illustrates how small states can exercise disproportionate simultaneously facing heightened risks from regional rivalries and shifting global alignments. The research study is based on the qualitative approach involving content analysis of literature, academics, official reports, stakeholders, and policymakers, aimed to provide a complete picture of Qatar's role in the shifting regional dynamics and its implications on the geopolitics of the Middle East.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, smaller states are becoming more influential and prominent in the international arena while clearly challenging the World Bank's definition of small states based on geographical and population measurements (*The World Bank*, 2021). Qatar, a tiny Gulf state having a population of around 2.5 million people, has emerged as one of the most complex and highly influential states in the Middle East and beyond. Often referred to as "small state with big power," Qatar's rise to prominence is linked with a series

of regional upheavals, from US US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to the Arab Spring of 2011 and the recent development(so-called) of the Abraham Accord in 2020. With its vast natural gas fields, determined foreign policy, and mastery of soft power instruments such as the Al Jazeera channel, "carrot diplomacy" and "sport diplomacy", Qatar has successfully transformed itself into a state that punches above its weight. Yet, as every success brings some new challenges, Qatar's rise also brings contradictions and challenges, specifically

in its relations to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Qatar's foreign policy is carefully designed on a balancing act that some scholars identify as "Hedging Strategy" while others describe it as "Dual Alignment". On the one hand, Qatar positions itself as a neutral mediator in global conflicts, hosting negotiations between rival factions in Afghanistan, Sudan, Lebanon, and most notably between Israel and Hamas. On the other hand, it faces allegations of playing a "Double Game", simultaneously hosting the largest US airbase in the region while providing political space to the groups that are adversaries to the US. This duality raises an important question: can Qatar continue to claim its neutrality while being directly targeted by regional rivals and, more recently, by Israel itself through an unprecedented attack on Qatari soil?

While academically there has been a bulk of scholarly writings on Qatar's expanding influence in recent years, most work has focused on Qatar's energy diplomacy, its resilience during the Gulf Cooperative Council Blockade (2017-2021), and its growing influence in media and sports. Less attention has been paid to Qatar's post-Abraham Accords positioning, particularly how it distinguishes itself from other Gulf States such as the U.A.E. and Bahrain, which normalized their relations with Israel and established proper diplomatic ties. Moreover, literature scarcely addressed the significance of the recent Israeli attack on Qatari soil and its implications for the state's security, diplomacy, and credibility as a neutral broker. The study seeks to fill the gap by examining Qatar's foreign policy as a paradox of neutral mediator versus targeted actor within the shifting regional dynamics.

The main argument of the research critically analyzes the dual play of Qatar in the international arena, which, on one side, was the leading cause of its rise, while on the other, also constrained it. While its reputation as a neutral actor grants it international legitimacy, its refusal to join normalization with Israel also exposes its hostility and resilient support for Palestinian statehood, following the principle of resistance. While this resistance also has costs, as illustrated by the recent Israeli attack, it underscores Qatar's vulnerability

despite its global influence. The significance study lies not only in Qatar's case study but also has far-reaching implications for small state diplomacy and understanding of the practical implementations of International relations theories and debates on strategic hedging, soft power, constructivism, and small state strategies. This paper is divided into different sections. Firstly, inspect the rise of small states as regional powers, highlighting their leading strategic and political tools. Secondly, looked into the implications of the Abraham Accords in the regional context and Qatar's stance. **The third** section analyzes Qatar's position in the Israel-Palestine conflict and its evolving policies. Forth section investigates the implications of the recent Israeli attack on Qatar, situating it within the broader debate on whether Qatar remains a neutral mediator or has become a targeted actor. Finally, concludes by assessing the future of Qatar's foreign policy and its ability to maintain strategic autonomy amid growing external pressure.

Historic Context

Power games remain always part of geopolitics, but the Middle East has appeared as the most turbulent region of this century, facing numerous conflicts, wars, and revolutions. Major Powers such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Syria remain very active and have always tried to sideline others while creating their own hegemony in the region by utilizing economic means and establishing high military setups. In such a scenario, it is almost impossible for a small state like Qatar to think about finding a place between these giants. Qatar appeared on the world map as an independent state in 1971 but remained overshadowed by its Gulf neighbor and much stronger Saudi Arabia due to the alliance made by its Emir Khalifa Al Thani, but in practice, it became an independent actor of the Middle East in the last decade of the 20th century. Qatar was in dire need of its security and autonomy. There are several factors that contributed to the transformation of Qatar into a regional power. Qatar's rise began in the late 1990s with the discovery of large fields of Liquefied Natural

Gas(LNG), followed by the establishment of the Al Jazeera channel in 1996. It took place alongside the assumption of power by Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in 1995. Who sought to uplift the country's stature in the international arena? Emir Hamad, focusing on the security and stability of the region, played a prominent role in formulating the foreign policy. He adopted different techniques that not only uplifted the status of the country but also changed the regional dynamics. Emir Hamad was anxious to ensure the security of the country by finding a military alliance. Playing smartly, he was able to sign an alliance deal with the superpower United States of America, based on mutual interest. Throughout his era from 1995-2013, he utilized soft power and smart power in diplomatic engagement with the world. There are multiple strategies that have been utilized by Qatar on the domestic to international front. Being an autocratic monarchy for the survival of its political system, Qatar maintains effective distribution of wealth, which proves to be the pillar for its internal political stability. This was the reason for Qatar's survival in the Arab Spring when almost all Middle Eastern states were facing revolutions; it had having stable environment. At the international level, Qatar has adopted the policy of "Carrot Diplomacy". As Joseph Nye said that "one can affect others' behavior in three main ways: threat of coercion(sticks), inducements and payments(carrots), and attraction that makes others want what you want".

While Qatar, rather than the development of its military, prioritizes political and military alliances with form US for its security, and focuses on its growth utilizing soft power. So, actually rejecting the idea of sticks as explained by Nye gives more weight to the Carrots. Qatar finds a wider scope in terms of Carrots, ranging from foreign aid to investments in sports, cultural promotion, to the creation of branches of Western universities in Qatar. Qatar has become a source of attraction not just for the region but for the world, although it is not a democratic state, but established a unique track of combining economic power with strategic diplomacy. Its military alliance with the United States of America is also a source of soft power that has expanded the outreach of Qatar and also

created its better image being a stable Gulf country. Moreover, it has also made high investments for higher education, having a literacy rate of 93.5% and a female literacy rate of 94.7%(*World Population Review, 2025*). Qatar has enjoyed international legitimacy due to its role as a neutral mediator in many regional conflicts. "Soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture(in places where it is attractive to others), its political values(when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policy(when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)"(Nye, 2008, p. 97). Although Qatar does not have a perfect political system from a liberal point of view but still its internal stability, high literacy rate, high GDP, per Capita income, and neutral foreign policy played a dominant role in shaping the positive world opinion about its character. The ideal situation for a country to promote its values and culture is by the development of trust in the targeted audience by exerting its soft power, as done by the USA and Great Britain through media channels CNN and BBC during the Cold War. Al Jazeera, once a small media outlet, has become a primary source of unprecedented exposure of Qatar in the world. Due to the impartiality of Al Jazeera and the duopoly of Western media, it has become a trusted and leading source of unbiased information all around the world. In fact, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did not hesitate while saying, "You've got a global, a set of global networks, that Al Jazeera has been the leader in, that are literally changing people's minds and attitudes. Viewership of Al Jazeera is going up in the United States because it's real news" (*Folkenflik, 2011*).

Historically, different powers utilized different techniques to appear powerful and achieve diplomatic objectives, such as Saudi Arabia's projects of influence through religion, the United States through democracy, and China through its economy. Qatar used its financial power to mediate between rival parties, providing them huge amount in exchange for peaceful settlements. For a worn-torn country provision of healthy provision is not less than a new life.

Legitimacy of the Abraham Accords and Qatar's stance

The United States of America played a very active role in the normalization and establishment of diplomatic relations between the Arab world and Israel in the name of peace and prosperity of the region. The testimony in this matter happened in the form of the Camp David Accords that led to the establishment of the first Arab state in formal relations with the Jewish state. This was followed by the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994. The recent venture is the result of tireless efforts made by the active and 47th president of the USA in his previous term, known as the Abraham Accords in 2020. Initiated by Bahrain in September 2020, accompanied by the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan in September 2020, December 2020 and January 2021 respectively. The Abraham Accords were entitled as agreements for peace, prosperity, development, security, cooperation, mutual benefits, and based on common interests. Now the question emerges on the legitimacy of the Abraham Accords, whether it was truly based on the interests of the people of all countries or just based on the interests of their leaders?

To answer this question, various research studies have been carried out based on surveys across the Arab world which clearly revealed the public opinion that was against the Abraham Accords and does not consider it a development. In a survey across 7 countries, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, almost 10 % people favored it, the rest were against. While it was a bit more in Lebanon, around 20% due to the Christian population. This questions the legitimacy and vulnerability of these accords (Robbins, 2021). Similarly large disapproval has been seen in the data collected from Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Kuwait, and Qatar as well (Kassin & Pollock, 2022). These states recognized Israel based on the personal interests of their autocratic leaders, as the US granted Morocco sovereignty over the disputed region of the Western Sahara Desert, while Sudan got incentives from the USA in the form of its exclusion from the terror states list of the State Department of the USA. Qatar has

been seen as a Gulf country following its independent, divergent foreign policy from the other regional powers. In his reign, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani consistently favoured "Open and pragmatic foreign policy". As a small state pursued a hedging strategy to balance between the GCC states and Iran, and the USA, while striving to maintain friendly ties with all neighboring states as well as with the active regional groups. From the use of soft power to hosting foreign military bases (US and Turkey) for its security, and prioritizing multi-alignment over bloc-based loyalty, completely makes its foreign policy distinguished from the Middle Eastern states. As a result of this determined approach, Qatar has undergone multiple phases, most notably experiencing the Arab Spring in a markedly different manner than other Middle Eastern States, and later enduring the GCC blockade (2017-2021). GCC blockade was the ultimatum to curb down Qatar's divergent and open foreign policy by putting 13 stringent demands ranging from severing ties with the regional groups such as Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Al Qaida, to ending its diplomatic relations with Iran and scaling back its alliance with Turkey, and shutting down the Al Jazeera network, which stood among the leading demands. Qatar was forced by the GCC states to act accordingly within the given deadline of only 10 days. Though it was a severe emergency for Qatar, facing various social challenges including food shortage, economic upheavals, transportation issues, and trade ban due to blockage of sea and air routes, land border with Saudi Arabia was also banned, it stood resilient while not compromising on its foreign policy did not accept any demand, which was supposed to breach its policies. Ultimately, after 4 years 4-year-long period, GCC itself ended the blockade, finding zero success. Qatar's attitude towards the Abraham Accords was very clear from the very first day. While adhering to its diplomatic stance of a two-state solution on the Palestinian cause, Qatar did not support the Abraham Accords and rejected their development, considering it would only weaken the Palestinian position on the two-state solution, and Israel is the sole beneficiary.

Along with Palestinians, Qatar contemplates it as a stab in the back by Arabs (*DAILY SABAH with AA, 2021*). Qatar affirmed its position that it will not sign the Abraham Accords “in the absence of real commitment to the two-state solution” (*Qarjouli, 2022*).

Israel-Palestine Conflict and Qatar’s Stance

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the longest disturbing, and most prominent conflicts of this century, which is still in dire need of being addressed. It is the primary cause of contention between the Arab world and Israel since the Balfour declaration of 1917, and reached its peak after the emergence of Israel as a Jewish state. Arab intimacy for Palestinians and loathing for Israel has been clearly reflected in the wars that they fought against Israel in the 20th century. The foreign policies of the Arab states have been shaped by seeking the Palestinian cause due to its centrality in the regional political affairs. Before the 1990s, Qatar was not very influential in the regional politics due to its close foreign policy with the Regional power Saudi Royal Crown. With the start of the last decade of the 20th century, regional political dynamics took a new turn because of the Israel-Palestine peace negotiations. The reconciliation process paved the way for engagement between the two rival sides. This was the fledgling point for the direct entry of Qatar into the Israel-Palestine conflict by joining the Madrid conference in 1991. This further led to the development in the form of the opening of the Israeli trade office and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres' visit to Doha in 1995 and 1996, respectively. Along with Muscat, which was also following a similar path, Doha was forefront in relations with Israel relative to other Gulf countries (*Israel Policy Forum, 2025*). Correspondingly, Qatar also took the responsibility for the development of Gaza and the West Bank, providing high financial assistance to the newly developed Palestinian Authorities when the OSLO Accords were ongoing. The eruption of the second Intifada in 2000 nullified all the developments of the Israel-Palestine mediation process and the ongoing relations between Doha

and Tel Aviv. However, a short window opened in 2005 in Doha-Tel Aviv but was permanently banned with the breakout of Operation Cast Lead in December 2008. Inclined to Amir Hamad’s consistent diplomatic approach, Qatar's leadership remained rigorously active, backing the Palestinian stance for the creation of a state system.

Emir Hamad, in his entire reign almost 210 speeches and raised his voice for Palestine 73 times (*Eddin, 2021*). He urged the International community to for the formation of a comprehensive and permanent settlement, pondering it inevitable for the establishment of a lasting peace in the region. At the opening of the 25th Session of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers, Sheikh Hamad stated, “We in Qatar affirm our commitment to peace as an indispensable strategic choice: equitable, comprehensive and permanent peace, at all fronts, including the Syrian and Lebanese fronts. Such peace should be based on international legitimacy resolutions, the Madrid Conference, and the principle of Land for Peace, including full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon, and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights and establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital” (*Eddin, 2021*). Qatar was very clear in its support for Palestine under Sheikh Hamad, demanding three major withdrawals of Israel from the Arab territories taken by Israel after the 1967 war. Creation of the Palestine State and Jerusalem as its capital. Later on in the last year of Emir Hamad’s rule, the stance was changed from “Jerusalem” to “East Jerusalem”. While addressing the opening session of the 24th Arab Summit on March 26, 2013. Peace should guarantee the Palestinians' rights, particularly the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital (*Eddin, 2021*). This shift also coincided with the Palestinian leadership under Abbas. The same path was followed by Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Fatah. Qatar has been labeled as financing the Islamist movements in the late 2000s and early 2010s by Israel. One such occasion was in 2006, when

Qatar played a significant role in reconciliation and mediation between a US-backed Sunni Arab group, Al Fatah, and the emerging political wing Hamas for the establishment of the Hamas-Fatah coalition government. Later, with the complete takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007, relations between Hamas and Qatar reached their peak. Qatar appeared as a patron of Hamas, as Hamas leadership shifted to Doha from Damascus in 2011. This soft support brought Qatar closer to Hamas. Israel's misadventure of Operation Protective Edge in 2014 was the turning point for Qatar's direct engagement in Gaza. Following the ceasefire resolution brokered by Egypt and the UN, for the next decade, Qatar emerged as the primary source of investment for Gaza, which was also embraced by Israel. Israel clasped the Qatar-led initiative for the reconstruction and development of Gaza, considering it a stabilizing force (Israel Policy Forum, 2025). From 2018-2021, Israel instituted a direct diplomatic channel for cash transfer of millions of dollars from Qatar to Gaza every month to keep running its power plant and payment of salaries for the ease of the social sector. In 2021, this diplomatic channel turned out to be a formal agreement between Israel and UN bodies to move Qatari funds in Gaza after periodic conflict (Ayyub, 2021). Consistently inclined to its distinct and deep-rooted ideological foreign policy for the Palestinian cause, Qatar did not follow the same path chosen by the UAE, Bahrain, and other Middle Eastern states for normalizing relations with Israel in 2020 in the name of the Abraham Accords. However, the Abraham Accords influenced its decision-making to allow Israeli direct commercial flights in Qatar for the very first time during the FIFA World Cup 2022. The outbreak of war following the October 7 blunder made by Hamas increased regional tensions. The state of Qatar showed serious apprehension over the alarming situation and called upon both parties to stay calm and avoid further escalation. Doha accused Israel solely of the escalation that was the outcome of the human rights violations of Palestinians and the frequent invasion of Al-Aqsa Mosque, shielded by its Police. Doha also urged the International community to play its role in the ceasefire while demonstrating

its readiness to play the role of mediator (Doha - Media & Communication Dept, 2023). Qatar, alongside Egypt, actively engaged in dialogue with both actors and was successful in holding a ceasefire for two times in exchange for hostages. Additionally, Doha initiated several proposals and negotiation rounds for a ceasefire that did not fully materialize, and continued to engage in mediation between rival parties in pursuit of a peaceful resolution up until the attack by Israel on Hamas leadership in Qatar. Qatar's financial support for the development projects in Gaza has been characterized by Israel as indirect financing of Hamas. Qatar has a very clear position on this matter as it responded to France 24 TV that "Qatar is not a financial backer of HAMAS.. It extends aid to Gaza, and the target of its funding is very clear. Qatari aid is fully coordinated with Israel, the UN, and the US" (Azem, 2024). Still, the Ministerial Committee for Legislation has recently endorsed a bill to designate, though its progression to the Knesset remains uncertain. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who played a central role in the Qatari payments scheme, has not formally addressed the negative implications of Qatar's involvement (Israel Policy Forum, 2025). Qatar has consistently reaffirmed that a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian question, anchored in the establishment of an independent state on the border before 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, remains the only path to lasting peace. In this regard, Qatar categorically rejects any measures aimed at the displacement or expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza.

Neutral Mediator of Targeted state?

Qatar has attained a prestigious status of mediator in the contemporary politics of the Middle Eastern region in a very short period of time. This is the result of its "Open foreign policy" shaped by Emir Hamad bin Fatah Al Thani and followed by current Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Fatah Al Thani, which was based on neutrality. Since 2004, Qatar has been very active, mediating in numerous regional and global disputes for conflict resolution, refugee release, ending border disputes, restoring diplomatic relations, and

emphasizing the importance of dialogue. Demonstrating its role as impartial mediator, these efforts encompass the 2008 Doha Agreement in Lebanon, the Yemen ceasefire of the same year, the 2012 Fatah-Hamas Doha Agreement, and the 2010 negotiations between North and South Sudan. Qatar has also been active in mediating disputes in Western Sahara, Algeria, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Djibouti-Eritrea, Somalia, US-Afghanistan, and Chad, and more recently, US-Iran-EU over the restoration of the JCPOA nuclear deal and Israel-Palestine conflict. It is because of its constitutional commitments defined in Article 7 of the Constitution to resolve International and regional disputes for the creation of a peaceful world, working as a mediator(MOFA, 2025).

Qatar's emergence as a prominent actor in the humanitarian world can be attributed to its vigorous domestic stability and gigantic financial capacity, which underpin its international activism. Having one of the finest GDP per capita of around \$110,900 in 2024(*The World Factbook*, 2025). Qatar illustrates the economic resilience necessary to sustain costly humanitarian and mediation initiatives. This material foundation grants the state to exert influence through soft power, diplomacy, and financial assistance, relying less on military might. In this regard, Qatar championed the practice of Niche Diplomacy. In the words of Dr Hani al-Bassous, Associate Professor of Security and Strategic Studies in Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defense Studies, "Qatar is using its bilateral relations and influence to provide solutions to many crucial issues, pointing out that Qatari policy has great merit in humanitarian and diplomatic work, and combining them in many files"(Lamari, 2024). Qatar acted as a regional Maverick, having the US as a closer ally, and also established deeper links with the regional proxies disliked by the US. In the same way, it has successfully cultivated relations with Iran, Turkey while remaining an active member of the GCC and the Arab League, an achievement that reflects its perfect execution of small state strategy and Niche diplomacy.

Small states can "punch above their weight", but when they deliberately do it unilaterally or

bilaterally with strong powers, their limited capabilities leave them vulnerable to coercion or sanctions. The same is the case with Qatar; due to its independent foreign policy, it has come under the criticism and scrutiny of its allies and regional powers. Qatar has been accused of Hedging and breaking Arab concords for having relations with Israel and Iran in the 1990s and early 2000s. Even Qatar's brokering of the Doha agreement of 2008 was seen by many as "overreach" by a small state, meddling in the regional affairs. The Arab Spring was a turning point, when the Arab countries were backing the status Quo regimes. Qatar, sharply contrasting with them, started supporting revolutionary movements and Islamist groups, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, culminating in the GCC crisis of 2014 and ultimately the complete GCC blockade in 2017, demanding changes in the policies of Qatar. Accusations were supporting and harboring terrorism, interference in internal affairs, having ties with Iran, and Turkey. Qatar interpreted the Gulf countries' 13 demands as directly challenging its sovereignty. Thus 2017 crisis marked Qatar's shift from "Bridge Builder" to "Targeted State". Gulf blockade compelled Qatar to deepen its ties with Iran and Turkey in search of alternatives, thereby diminishing its previous neutral posture in regional affairs. Meanwhile, the U.S also broke the silence, expressed its concerns on Qatar's supportive role for regional factions initially under Barack Obama rule when in 2014 U.S. Department of treasury sanctioned Abd al-Rehman al-Nuaimi, a Qatari national, for transferring millions of dollars to Al-Qaida affiliates in Syria, Iran and Yemen("Treasury designates al-Qa'ida supporters in Qatar and Yemen," 2013). To Emir, and later during the blockade Trump administration also accused Qatar of having a long history of funding terror groups, and the time has come to stop them from doing this (Lederman, 2017). The same year U.S. House of Representatives concluded "entities and individuals in Qatar continue to serve as a source of financial support to terrorist and violent extremist groups," which pushed Qatar to sign a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Treasury to combat terrorism subsequently also

updated its anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing laws("Assessing the U.S.-Qatar relationship," 2017). By 2018, Washington had adopted a mediating role in the Gulf blockade, and in 2021, it designated Qatar a Major non-NATO ally. The Israel-Palestine conflict becomes Qatar's real tension. It has been actively trying to mediate the issue for almost last two decades. Though initially admired by Israel, the October 7 attack shifted the dynamics. As a consequence, Qatar has not only been criticized by the Israeli public for backing Hamas military buildup but also harsh speeches delivered by ministers, and the Al-Jazeera channel has been banned in Israel. The Ministerial Committee for Legislation passed a bill declaring Qatar an enemy state; it is ambiguous whether it will advance to the Knesset or not(Israel Policy Forum, 2025). The recent attack carried out by Israel has further reinforced Qatar's role as a targeted actor in the regional political landscape. Once the enforcement stemmed primarily from ideological and political by Gulf blockade has now turned out to be a direct territorial breach of sovereignty and has opened up a new phase of vulnerability. Also raised a question on Qatar's strategic partnership and security alliance with the US.

Conclusion

Qatar's status is transforming from an admired mediator to a targeted state, which showcases the weakness of a small state. This encompasses the paradox of small state diplomacy in the violent global arena. The contemporary regional politics have exposed the open diplomacy, once its tool of success, has turned out to be a reason for territorial attack. Doha was successful in navigating solutions to the Gulf Blockade with its regional alliance, but the recent Israeli attack has deepened the transformation. Qatar's experience depicts the complexity of the Middle Eastern region, where neutrality itself becomes a source of hostility. Now Qatar has to reshape its foreign policy and should find a regional partner from the emerging powers, such as Pakistan, Turkey, to stabilize its over-reliance on the US partnership. It can further enhance the regional security system by the creation of an early warning and

intelligence sharing mechanism under the GCC and OIC. Finally, Doha must continue its mediation efforts, but with a clear framework of neutrality.

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