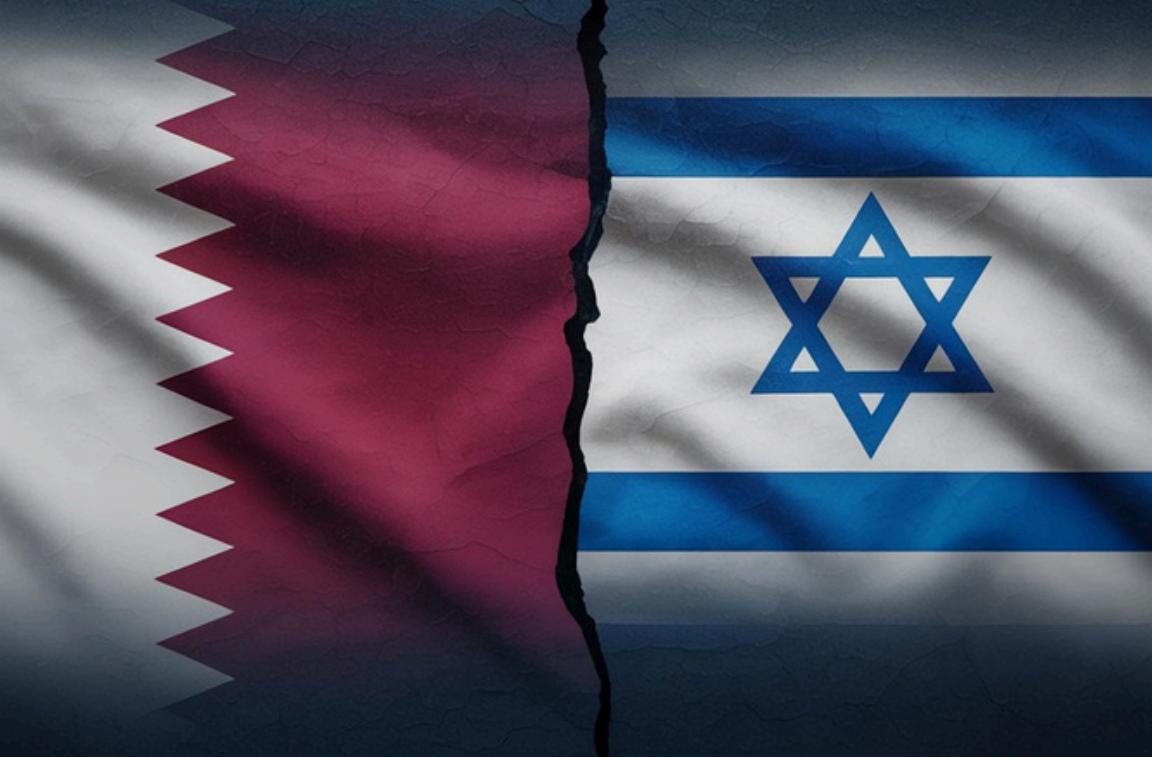


QATARI-ISRAELI NORMALIZATION

THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN
DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE
IN QATAR'S FOREIGN POLICY



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PRACTICE IN QATAR'S FOREIGN POLICY

Dar Al Thani

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This book, Qatari-Israeli Normalization: The Contradiction Between Discourse and Practice in Qatar's Foreign Policy, proudly edited, published, and distributed by Dar Al Thani, presents a comprehensive compilation of evidence drawn entirely from publicly available international sources. Its purpose is not to assert opinions, but to gather, organize, and preserve documented facts, official statements, diplomatic records, and global reporting, so future researchers, policymakers, and citizens may examine Qatar's foreign policy with clarity, transparency, and historical precision.

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ABSTRACT



This study examines the historical and political foundations of Qatari-Israeli relations from their emergence in the 1990s to the present, highlighting how this relationship evolved from limited clandestine contacts into political, economic, and security coordination serving Israeli interests in the region under the guise of diplomatic mediation and neutrality. The study analyzes the development of these relations during a pivotal phase in the history of the Palestinian issue, identifying the factors that shaped and advanced this trajectory, and assesses their negative implications for the Palestinian cause. It also seeks to underscore the potential repercussions of these relations on Qatar's political and strategic sovereignty.

The study reveals that, despite Doha's public rhetoric supporting the Palestinian cause, Qatar was among the first Gulf states to establish undisclosed channels of communication with Tel Aviv. It sought to consolidate its regional influence by leveraging this relationship as a means of pressure on neighboring Arab countries and as a tool to gain Western and American protection. The study further highlights Qatar's dual role, whereby it employed the slogan of supporting "resistance" to bolster its popular image while simultaneously coordinating with Israeli officials in areas such as energy, communications, and mediation with Hamas to serve Israeli security strategies. This approach, the study argues, reflects not so much political independence as a strategic subordination to the dictates of Washington and Tel Aviv, using soft diplomacy to undermine the unified Arab stance on normalization.

In conclusion, the study asserts that Qatari-Israeli relations exemplify a striking case of political duplicity in the Arab world, combining emotive resistance rhetoric with pragmatic normalization policies, which have rendered Qatar an effective instrument in advancing the Israeli project of reshaping the alliance map in the Middle East.

INTRODUCTION



Since its independence in 1971, the State of Qatar adopted a traditional Arab stance grounded in support for the Palestinian cause and the perception of Israel as a hostile entity to the Arab nation, criminalizing any form of normalization with it. During that period, Qatar's discourse in international forums was characterized by a clear and consistent defense of the Palestinian cause and the rejection of Israeli occupation policies, in line with the prevailing Arab consensus. Doha expressed this position through its participation in the oil embargo imposed on countries supporting Israel during the 1973 and 1982 wars, in adherence to the Arab solidarity policies established by the League of Arab States and viewing oil as a political instrument to serve pan-Arab causes, foremost among them the Palestinian issue.

Qatar also provided both political and financial support to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), hosted its representatives on its territory, and actively participated in Arab summits that reaffirmed the collective Arab position rejecting any form of normalization with Israel prior to its withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. This stance remained consistent throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as Qatar adhered to a nationalist discourse linking Arab liberation movements with opposition to the Zionist project—reflecting its commitment to Arab solidarity and the defense of Palestinian rights.

In the early 1990s, the normalization trajectory adopted by some Arab states toward Israel represented one of the most significant political transformations of recent decades. What had previously been limited to covert contacts and informal meetings evolved into official and public agreements, constituting a fundamental breach of the traditional Arab consensus, which had conditioned recognition or engagement with Israel upon its withdrawal from occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The 1993 Oslo Accords opened a new chapter in Israel’s relations with the Arab world, reshaping both secret and public ties between Israel and several Arab countries. This led either to official normalization or to the expansion of long-standing clandestine contacts—some of which dated back to before Israel’s establishment, when certain Arab figures maintained communication with Zionist representatives.

With the rise to power of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani following his ousting of his father, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatari foreign policy underwent a profound transformation in its position toward the Palestinian question. This political shift marked a decisive turning point in Doha’s regional and international orientation. The new leadership redefined Qatar’s strategic priorities, with openness toward Israel emerging as one of the most distinctive features of this new phase. This shift signaled the beginning of an unprecedented normalization trajectory in the Gulf region and reflected directly on Qatar’s stance toward the Palestinian issue as well as its broader regional relations—particularly amid the momentum generated by the Oslo Accords and the broader Arab-Israeli peace process of the 1990s.

While most Arab states maintained their opposition to normalization, viewing it as a betrayal of national and pan-Arab principles, Qatar chose a divergent path by establishing both overt and covert communication channels with Tel Aviv under the banners of “mediation” and “peace.” However, the evolution of these relations later revealed that Qatar’s motives went beyond mediation or conflict-resolution efforts. They were part of a broader Qatari strategy aimed at expanding its political influence and securing a Western—particularly American—protective umbrella against regional pressures. Normalization also served as a tool to strengthen Doha’s bargaining position in its disputes with some of its Gulf neighbors, as Qatari leadership perceived ties with Israel as a gateway to Washington and as a means to consolidate its regional role under an implicit political and security cover facilitated through the Israeli connection.

Conversely, Israel had long exerted considerable efforts to penetrate Gulf societies and institutional frameworks, promoting normalization by emphasizing the absence of direct borders and thus the absence of territorial disputes with Gulf states. This rationale facilitated Israel's accelerated push toward formal and informal engagement with Gulf monarchies—a process rooted in a long-term Israeli strategy aimed at infiltrating the Arab regional system from within and reshaping the regional balance of power to its advantage. Tel Aviv recognized that the Gulf regimes, endowed with immense financial resources, growing media influence, and expanding political weight, offered an ideal gateway for advancing its political, security, and economic objectives.

Qatar was by no means an exception to this strategy. Owing to its geopolitical position and prominent media and diplomatic presence, it represented a particularly suitable case for subtle, undeclared Israeli penetration.

Through unofficial diplomatic channels, mediation initiatives, and openness toward Western and Israeli circles, Doha sought to portray itself as a “neutral mediator.” Meanwhile, Israel exploited this openness to cement its foothold in the Gulf, shape Arab attitudes toward the Palestinian cause, and achieve strategic objectives extending beyond political normalization. These included economic, security, and media infiltration designed to erode the collective Arab stance, transform the historical enemy into a potential partner against other regional powers, and ultimately recalibrate Arab politics in favor of Israel's strategic and security vision—thereby legitimizing its regional presence and expanding its influence across the Gulf, particularly through the Qatari gateway.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF QATARI-ISRAELI RELATIONS



1. The Early Contacts in the Early 1990s



Image of the Madrid Conference for Middle East Peace, 1991

The origins of Qatar's orientation toward normalization with Israel date back to the early 1990s, particularly following the Second Gulf War of 1991, which contributed to reshaping the regional balance of power and weakening the unified Arab stance. Qatar's participation in the 1991 Madrid Conference for Peace in the Middle East, alongside most Arab countries, represented the first step in its gradual openness toward a U.S.-sponsored political settlement with Israel.

In the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, an atmosphere of “cautious normalization” prevailed in several Arab capitals, including Doha. During this period, Qatar began to soften its media discourse toward Israel and expressed a willingness to re-evaluate its boycott policy, though without taking any direct official steps at that stage. In this context, the same year witnessed the first officially acknowledged political contact between the two sides, when Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani met his Israeli counterpart on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. This was followed in 1994 by the first direct public diplomatic meeting, during which Yossi Beilin, then Israel’s Deputy Foreign Minister, held talks with Qatar’s ambassador to the United States, Abdulrahman bin Saud. In that meeting, the Qatari envoy expressed his country’s readiness to cooperate with Israel and to support what was known as the “peace process.”

In 1995, Qatar’s Minister of Information, Abdulaziz bin Hamad Al-Kuwari, participated—on behalf of the Qatari government—in the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in a symbolic gesture reflecting the continuation of contact between the two sides. This phase of the 1990s thus laid the practical foundation for the construction of Qatari-Israeli relations, through a series of meetings and political gestures that later paved the way for the establishment of more explicit political and economic communication channels.

Sami Ravel, the first head of the Israeli trade representation office in Doha, reveals in his book “Qatar and Israel: The Secret File of Relations” details about the actual beginnings of the normalization process between the two states. According to Ravel, this period witnessed intensive diplomatic exchanges between Israeli officials and senior Qatari figures. Among the most notable was the meeting between Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani and his Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak on the sidelines of the Conference of Donor States for the Palestinians in Paris in January 1996. Subsequent meetings followed with decision-makers in Doha and their close advisors in the ensuing months.

These contacts were followed by discussions on the possibility of moving toward a new phase of formal relations, including the establishment of mutual representation offices, similar to the arrangements pursued at that time by Morocco, Tunisia, and Oman.

However, unlike those countries, Qatar faced intense regional pressure from its Gulf environment, particularly from Saudi Arabia, which held considerable political weight and adopted a more conservative position. This pressure prompted the Qatari leadership to act with caution and to await the politically opportune moment to take such a step. Ravel emphasizes that the initiative did not originate from Israel, but was rather a direct Qatari initiative that surprised political circles in Tel Aviv. He notes that the former Emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, personally extended an official invitation to Shimon Peres and persistently sought to establish relations with Israel in an attempt to gain external legitimacy that would consolidate his political position following his coup against his father and secure international recognition.

According to Ravel, Qatar offered Israel economic cooperation and trade facilitation in exchange for the support of the pro-Israel lobby for Doha's influence in the United States. The Qatari leadership thus presented rapprochement with Tel Aviv as a gesture of political loyalty and goodwill. Ravel cites a statement by the Emir in an interview with MBC Television only three months after assuming power, in which he declared the existence of a gas project involving Qatar, Israel, and Jordan, and called for the lifting of the Arab economic boycott against Israel.

This trajectory marked the first genuine Israeli breakthrough into the Arabian Gulf region, as Qatar opened the door to an unprecedented diplomatic, economic, and media presence for Israel in the Gulf. This development constituted a dangerous precedent that undermined the Arab consensus and weakened the collective stance in support of the Palestinian cause.

Israel's attempts to open communication channels with Gulf states were not spontaneous moves driven by a quest for peace; rather, they formed part of a well-calculated strategic plan aimed at penetrating the Gulf region—given its geopolitical significance and vast economic resources—and at weakening what remained of the unified Arab position toward Israel. For decades, Israel had failed to obtain recognition from Arab populations regarding its legitimacy, and it therefore viewed certain Gulf regimes—foremost among them Qatar—as an ideal gateway for gradual and subtle normalization that would serve its interests and help reshape its aggressive image within the Arab consciousness.

2. The Opening of the Israeli Trade Office in Doha, 1996



Image of Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Receiving Shimon Peres

In 1996, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres paid an official visit to Qatar during the reign of Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, where he received a full state welcome that included a military salute, the hoisting of the Israeli flag, and the playing of Israel's national anthem. During the visit, Peres held meetings with the Emir and the Qatari Foreign Minister, culminating in the opening of an Israeli trade office in Doha, marking the beginning of a new phase of overt relations between the two countries.

The establishment of this office was not a passing gesture nor the result of external pressure, but rather part of a deliberate Qatari policy aimed at repositioning Doha on the regional political map—even at the expense of long-standing Arab principles and the unified stance toward Israel. Qatar was among the first Gulf states to establish secret communication channels with Tel Aviv before publicly announcing the relationship under the pretext of “economic cooperation.”

Although Doha officially declared that the office was strictly economic and technical in nature, its structure and functions effectively rendered it an embassy in all but name. It was headed by a diplomat holding the rank of ambassador within the Israeli Foreign Ministry and performed duties similar to those of an official diplomatic mission, including coordination with Qatari authorities and facilitation of contact with local companies and institutions. Nevertheless, Qatar insisted that this step did not amount to political normalization, but rather fell within the framework of benefiting from Israeli expertise in areas such as agriculture, energy, and water management, in line with the spirit of “peace” that followed the Oslo Accords and the Madrid Conference. Doha maintained that the office did not signify official recognition of Israel, but merely a temporary economic channel in support of the peace process.

A U.S. diplomatic cable leaked by WikiLeaks later revealed that the Israeli trade office functioned *de facto* as an embassy, given the scope of its assigned tasks and activities.

For its part, Israel presented the office to the international community as a diplomatic breakthrough and a step toward “regional peace,” portraying it as evidence of Qatar’s willingness to foster cooperation among the peoples of the region in fields such as economics, technology, and education. In reality, however, the office constituted a clear breach of the Gulf and Arab consensus, serving as a gateway for gradual normalization and a vehicle for Israeli penetration into the Gulf through economic, media, and communication networks. It thus became the first formal channel for such infiltration, paving the way for similar normalization efforts in other Arab states—efforts that nonetheless bore the distinct imprint of Qatar’s precedent-setting initiative.

Upon its opening, the Israeli trade office in Doha began intensive operations, with initial days witnessing the signing of preliminary economic understandings. Two Israeli companies announced interest in investing in Qatari energy projects and held direct talks with Qatari officials and businessmen. In a move of profound symbolic significance, Qatar became the first Gulf state to link its telephone network directly with Israel, signaling an advanced level of infrastructural and communicative openness between the two sides.

The office was inaugurated at a time when the Palestinian Intifada was still ongoing, making the step highly controversial and shocking to Qatari and Arab public opinion. Over time, it became evident that the office was not merely a framework for economic cooperation, but rather a cover for expanding political and security relations. Even after its formal closure, channels of communication between the two parties remained intact, albeit at more discreet levels.

Thus, the experience of opening the Israeli trade office in Doha represented a turning point in Qatari foreign policy, as the state adopted “political pragmatism” as a slogan to justify its rapprochement with Israel—while, in essence, this approach reflected a concession of principles, an abandonment of support for the Palestinian cause, and a disregard for popular Arab opposition to normalization, all in pursuit of limited regime interests.

3. Periods of Public Disruption and Renewal in Political Contact



Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad and Barak Shaking Hands at the Qatari Mission in New York

Since their inception, Qatari-Israeli relations have followed a turbulent trajectory, marked by fluctuations between periods of overt political openness and others of declared rupture that rarely extended beyond the realm of rhetoric. In reality, such interruptions were merely symbolic gestures aimed at absorbing regional pressure and appeasing public anger, rather than reflecting any substantive change in Doha's political stance.

A close examination of the evolution of these relations reveals that Qatar adopted a policy of deliberate duality, allowing it to maintain open channels of communication with Tel Aviv even during periods when it publicly proclaimed a break in ties. This duplicity was explicitly

acknowledged by Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who stated in an interview with Fox News that Qatar's relations with Israel had never been severed since 1997.[4].

Qatar's Position During the Second Intifada (2000)

With the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, Qatar faced a major test of its proclaimed commitment to the Palestinian cause, particularly as it hosted the Islamic Summit Conference in November of the same year. While most Arab states responded by severing their relations with Israel in solidarity with the Palestinian people, Doha insisted on maintaining its open channels with Tel Aviv, a stance that provoked widespread Arab and Islamic criticism.

Several member states demanded the closure of the Israeli trade office in Doha as a precondition for holding the summit on Qatari soil, threatening to boycott the conference or downgrade their level of representation should Qatar refuse to comply. In response to mounting pressure, Doha announced the closure of the Israeli office shortly before the summit, citing "solidarity with the Islamic position." However, the decision proved to be largely symbolic, as Qatar never issued an official notification to Israel regarding the termination of the office's activities.

Israeli sources later confirmed that the suspension of the office's operations was temporary and had been initiated by Israel itself for security reasons. This was corroborated by Eli Avidar, then head of the Israeli trade office in Doha, who stated in a televised interview that the office continued its work despite the Qatari government's public claim of closure. Avidar accused the Qatari leadership of deceiving its own citizens and the Islamic world by falsely announcing the shutdown of the office, an assertion later supported by a leaked diplomatic cable published by WikiLeaks.[5]

This episode reflected the structural contradiction at the core of Qatari foreign policy—between a political discourse seeking Arab and Islamic legitimacy and practical conduct that maintained covert openness toward Israel, even amid rising popular opposition to normalization.

Continued Qatari-Israeli Contacts (2001–2007)



The Qatari and Israeli foreign ministers held a meeting in Paris in 2003.

Between 2001 and 2005, Qatari-Israeli contacts continued both formally and informally. On the official level, this period saw the participation of Israeli Minister of Cooperation and Environment Roni Milo in a World Trade Organization conference held in Doha. Informally, diplomatic sources reported a meeting in May 2003 between Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani and his Israeli counterpart Silvan Shalom, marking the first time an Arab official agreed to hold an official meeting with an Israeli foreign minister during that period.

In January 2005, the two ministers met again on the sidelines of the United Nations meetings in New York, where they discussed the possibility of organizing a Qatari-Israeli summit. During the meeting, the Qatari foreign minister called on Arab states to adopt “positive steps” toward Israel following its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and proposed the convening of an Arab-international conference, with U.S. participation, to formulate a shared vision for the post-withdrawal phase.

According to Israeli statements at the time, both sides were actively working on arrangements for a high-level meeting, reflecting Doha's growing inclination to reactivate political engagement with Israel and to employ normalization as a pragmatic diplomatic tool.

In 2007, despite Qatar's public support for the Palestinian resistance and its hosting of Hamas leaders, political communication with Israel continued. In January 2007, Shimon Peres, then Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, paid an official visit to Doha, where he met with several senior Qatari officials. This visit underscored that political channels between Doha and Tel Aviv remained open, despite the apparent contradiction between Qatar's declared positions and its actual diplomatic behavior.

The 2008 Visit of Tzipi Livni to Doha



The Emir of Qatar received Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in Doha in 2007.

The year 2008 marked a significant development in Qatar's trajectory of openness toward Israel, exemplified by the official visit of Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to Doha to participate in an international forum. During her visit, Livni met with Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, as well as the Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. In her address, she called for the establishment of normal relations between Arab states and Israel, praising what she described as the "Qatari model" in engaging with Tel Aviv.

The visit sparked sharp criticism within Arab circles, as it was perceived as a form of Israeli penetration into the Gulf region through Qatar, which leveraged Doha's rhetoric on "dialogue and openness." This openness was widely interpreted as part of a Qatari strategy aimed at presenting itself as an acceptable mediator to both the West and Israel, enhancing its international profile while balancing regional sensitivities.

Qatar's Response to the 2009 Israeli Offensive on Gaza

Following the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip in early 2009, Qatar officially announced the severing of its political relations with Israel and the closure of the Israeli trade office in Doha. Qatari media, led by Al Jazeera, presented this move as a genuine expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

However, this decision was largely symbolic, as it quickly became evident that unofficial channels of communication between the two sides remained operational, whether through side meetings at international conferences or via covert intelligence and diplomatic channels. This approach reflected Doha's desire to maintain a delicate balance between its public image as a supporter of the Palestinian resistance and its interest in sustaining political contacts with Israel.

The October 2023 Visit of Mossad Director David Barnea to Doha

In the last week of October 2023, the visit of Israeli Mossad Director David Barnea to Doha marked a new milestone in Qatar-Israel relations, underscoring the continuity of communication between the two sides despite the absence of formal diplomatic representation. Reports from the American news site Axios revealed that during the visit, Barnea met with senior Qatari officials to discuss mediation efforts aimed at securing the release of Israeli and foreign hostages held by Hamas during Operation “Al-Aqsa Flood” on 7 October 2023.

This visit, which took place amid a highly sensitive regional context, reflects the depth of security and diplomatic coordination between the two parties, even though it remained shrouded in secrecy due to the sensitive nature of the issues under discussion.

The September 2025 Israeli Attack in Doha and Its Implications



Smoke rises over Doha following the Israeli attack.

On 9 September 2025, Israel launched an attack on residential premises in the Qatari capital, Doha, resulting in the death of a Qatari officer and members of the Hamas negotiating delegation, and injuring several civilians. The attack represented a turning point in Qatar–Israel relations, exposing the reality of Qatar's stance, which appeared to prioritize narrow political interests over national dignity. Instead of adopting a firm position in response to the violation of its sovereignty, Doha opted to absorb the shock through undisclosed diplomatic channels, settling for an informal Israeli apology that was circulated in restricted circles as merely a “technical miscalculation.”

Although Qatar had strived to cement its role as a key mediator in securing the release of Israeli hostages—acting in a capacity assigned by the United States and Israel—the Israeli strike represented a severe blow, carried out amid U.S. silence and inaction, despite Washington's assumed role as guarantor of Qatari security. Consequently, Doha confronted a profound destabilization of one of its security pillars and a direct assault on its sovereignty, undermining its regional image and weakening the prestige it had long sought to consolidate.

The paradox lies in the fact that Qatar's mediation efforts were intended to enhance its own security, based on the assumption that greater international importance would translate into stronger external guarantees for its stability and protection.

In light of these events, it would have been expected that Qatar might reconsider many of its policies, including potentially scaling back its mediation efforts, or even intensifying diplomatic measures opposed to Israel as a reaction to what was perceived as an affront to its dignity and political role. However, the controversy intensified when, weeks after the incident, the Qatari foreign minister was seen embracing an Israeli intelligence officer during a meeting in Sharm El-Sheikh, a gesture that revealed the practical closeness between the two sides. To many observers, this act appeared as a reassuring message to Israel that communication and coordination would continue, despite the apparent tension or restraint in public discourse.



An embrace between the Qatari Foreign Minister and retired Israeli Major General Nitzan Alon in Sharm El-Sheikh.

4. Covert Normalization and the Gradual Public Re-Engagement



Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad shaking hands with Israeli President Isaac Herzog in Dubai.

Since the early 2000s, Qatar has maintained a policy of covert normalization with Israel, employing its media and diplomatic tools to justify this approach. During this period, relations between the two sides expanded noticeably, running parallel to Doha's efforts to cement its image as a “neutral regional mediator” in conflicts, particularly the Israeli–Palestinian dispute. While this role bore a humanitarian and diplomatic veneer, it primarily served as a means to rationalize Qatar's gradual openness toward Israel, with actual normalization being framed under the banner of “humanitarian mediation” as a diplomatic initiative purportedly serving the Palestinian cause.

This approach became particularly pronounced following the Israeli blockade of Gaza in 2007, when Qatar positioned itself as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, justifying its engagement through humanitarian obligations to alleviate the suffering of Gaza's population and the necessity of communicating with all parties to achieve a ceasefire. However, while these efforts were widely publicized, they were accompanied by increasing political and security coordination with Tel Aviv, including public meetings between officials and the establishment of direct communication channels under the guise of "humanitarian mediation."

Doha leveraged this role to present itself as a key actor in the Palestinian issue, aiming to convince both Qatari and Arab public opinion that its contacts with Israel were driven by pragmatic and diplomatic considerations. Yet, the results on the ground revealed the limited impact of these mediations, as they did little to ease the suffering of Palestinians. Instead, they provided Israel with a secure channel to engage with Gaza, and a political outlet to mitigate international pressure stemming from the blockade and military operations.

What distinguishes Qatar's approach is not merely its engagement with Israel, but the rhetorical and strategic logic used to justify it. While most Arab states, even at a symbolic level, maintain formal rejection of direct engagement with the occupation outside a just and comprehensive settlement, Qatar frames its policy as "functional mediation", claiming it serves regional peace. Through this ambiguous rationale, Doha has normalized its interactions with Israel under the cover of diplomatic and humanitarian discourse, bypassing traditional Arab consensus and using its mediator role as a political and ethical justification for dealing with Israel without confronting domestic public opposition.

As a result, Qatar's practices have weakened one of the foundational pillars of the Arab position on the Palestinian cause: the principle of political boycott. Following the Abraham Accords, Doha no longer conceals the extent of its coordination with Israel, evident in hosted meetings and agreements facilitating the transfer of Qatari funds to Gaza under direct Israeli supervision.

CHAPTER TWO:

POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SECURITY NORMALIZATION



1. Qatari Mediation Between Humanitarian Posture and Functional Role

Over the past two decades, Qatar has positioned itself as a model in regional politics, carefully presenting itself as a “neutral” mediator in Middle Eastern crises, leveraging its financial resources and extensive international network. However, an analysis of its mediation, particularly in the Israeli–Palestinian file, reveals that Qatar has moved beyond its declared humanitarian role to assume a political function executed within the framework of U.S. and Israeli interests, using humanitarian rhetoric to mask strategic objectives defined by Washington and Tel Aviv.

This functional dimension became especially apparent in Qatar’s management of aid to Gaza. The aid was not purely humanitarian, but served as a mutual political and security tool, provided or withheld according to the timing dictated by Israel, in line with the balances Washington and Tel Aviv sought to maintain.

The humanitarian role thus became a mechanism of control implemented through Qatar under the guise of “humanitarian mediation”, with close Israeli and American oversight of financial transfers and aid channels, effectively limiting Qatar’s actual independence. As the Israeli ambassador to Washington expressed on social media, he publicly thanked Qatar for facilitating aid transfers to Gaza in a manner aligned with Israel’s short-term strategic interests [7].

In February 2025, the French-language site Kapitalis reported that Mossad Director Yossi Cohen visited Doha, a visit later confirmed by former Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman in an interview on Channel 12. Lieberman explained that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had dispatched Cohen and Herzl Halevi, then commander of the Israeli Southern Command, to Qatar to “urge Qatari officials to continue transferring funds to Hamas.” According to the Israeli news site Walla, the visit lasted less than 24 hours, during which the Israeli delegation met with Qatari envoy to Gaza Mohammed al Emadi and Qatari National Security Advisor Mohammed bin Ahmed al-Mesned [8].

Strategically, Qatar’s mediation has contributed to “managing the conflict” rather than resolving it, treating the Palestinian issue as a technical and administrative file rather than a matter of liberation and rights. Each Qatari mediation round results in temporary calm, followed by renewed escalation, a cycle that ensures continued Israeli control on the ground and reduced international pressure, while granting Israel time to pursue its settlement policies.

Qatar's rhetoric demonstrates a striking duality, publicly expressing solidarity with Gaza while maintaining open relations with Washington and Tel Aviv. This duality is not merely a political contradiction but a deliberate strategy, allowing Doha to maintain two contrasting images: one as a defender of the Palestinian cause for Arab public opinion, and another as a trusted partner capable of managing ceasefires and controlling Hamas for the U.S. and Israel. In this way, Qatar markets itself as a mediator acceptable to all parties, while in reality serving the interests of the American and Israeli regional hegemony.

It should also be noted that Qatar hosts the largest U.S. military base in the region, making independent foreign policy nearly impossible. The Al-Udeid Air Base, a central hub for U.S. operations in the Middle East, places Qatari mediation squarely within the implementation framework of broader American strategy for crisis management. Accordingly, Doha does not exercise independent mediation but fulfills a functional role, moving according to the demands of Washington and Tel Aviv, from ceasefire negotiations to exerting pressure, and from mediation to aid suspension.

In essence, Qatari mediation has become an instrument of U.S. and Israeli influence, prolonging crises rather than resolving them. While cloaked in humanitarian work, it serves strategic interests that maintain the status quo, keeping Gaza under a “manageable calm” blockade. Instead of alleviating Palestinian suffering, Qatar has become a component of the system that enforces and manages the blockade.

This functional dimension was particularly evident during the latest war in Gaza, where Qatar promoted Israel's official narrative, framing the conflict around objectives such as “recovering hostages” and “neutralizing Hamas's military capabilities”, despite field evidence showing these goals were largely pretexts for continuing military operations.

Therefore, Qatari mediation cannot be regarded as an independent humanitarian stance, but rather as a political function integrated within U.S. strategy, rendering Doha a dependent actor executing the policies of major powers under the banner of “humanitarian mediation,” effectively serving as a gatekeeper of the blockade rather than a facilitator for its removal.

2. Qatar Gate: Manifestation of Covert Qatar–Israel Relations

The “Qatar Gate” case represents a prominent example of the unofficial dimensions of Qatar–Israel relations. Israeli investigations in 2025 revealed that several aides to the Israeli Prime Minister had received funds from entities linked to the Qatari government aimed at improving Qatar’s image in Israel. Evidence indicates that Qatar utilized public relations firms and financial instruments to promote its interests and enhance its image among Israeli decision-makers and the general public.

“Qatar Gate” reflects the secretive and multifaceted nature of relations between the two countries, which extend beyond formal diplomacy to encompass media influence and financial leverage. The case demonstrates that Qatar–Israel ties go beyond visible cooperation in mediation or official diplomacy, with Doha deliberately employing money, media, and public relations companies to influence Israeli public opinion and policymakers to improve its image and advance its interests.

This episode also highlights a dual discourse in Qatari policy, wherein public positions appear to support the Palestinian cause, while practical actions lean toward covert normalization with Israel.

3. Economic Normalization

The economic relationship between Qatar and Israel represents a unique and complex case, characterized by ambiguity and the absence of official channels for direct commercial cooperation. While there are no direct flights between the two countries, no official representative offices, and no publicly declared bilateral agreements regulating economic exchange, reports indicate the continuation of unofficial forms of cooperation, often conducted through intermediaries and multinational companies in third countries.

Limited official trade statistics provide some insights into this indirect cooperation. Israeli exports to Qatar in 2012 amounted to approximately \$1.2 million, mostly consisting of machinery, computer equipment, and medical devices. Conversely, Qatari imports from Israel in 2013 totaled around \$353,000. Although these figures are modest, they indicate a continuing, albeit limited, commercial exchange in the absence of formal diplomatic recognition.

Periodic leaks and economic reports reveal the existence of financial and commercial transactions exceeding the officially reported figures. For instance, a WikiLeaks cable noted that while the official trade volume appears limited, the actual economic exchange between the two sides is considerably higher than publicly acknowledged [9].

- **1995 Gas Memorandum**

October 31, 1995, marks the starting point of officially declared economic cooperation between Qatar and Israel, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on gas transfer. This was the first agreement of its kind in the history of Israeli economic relations with the Gulf region. The agreement was signed by then Israeli Energy Minister Yonin Sagiv and Rebecca Mark, Vice-Chair of the U.S. company Enron, representing its Qatar branch. The memorandum granted “Enron Qatar” the rights to exploit natural gas extracted from the North Field, a move considered an important step toward breaking the Arab economic boycott of Israel at the time, making Qatar the first Gulf state to openly engage in such an agreement.

During the first two decades of the 21st century, Qatar played a pivotal role in fostering indirect cooperation in the energy sector, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG). As Qatar emerged as the world's largest gas exporter, it became a significant partner in advancing Western and Israeli economic interests, either through limited commercial channels or multinational companies. The energy sector thus served as a functional instrument for informal rapprochement between Doha and Tel Aviv, especially in the context of competition over gas projects in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Qatar had also expressed its readiness in 2011 to supply Israel with gas indefinitely at symbolic prices, following the suspension of Egyptian gas supplies due to repeated pipeline bombings in Sinai. Media reports in both Arab and Israeli outlets highlighted Qatar's willingness to provide Israel with gas, reflecting the country's strategic approach to energy diplomacy.

- **Diamond Trade Cooperation**

In November 2021, Qatar and Israel signed an unprecedented trade agreement in the diamond sector, allowing Doha to join the list of countries recognized under the global diamond trade system. The agreement also opened the door for Israeli traders to enter Qatari territory and establish representative offices.

This trajectory continued with the participation of an Israeli delegation in an international diamond conference in Doha in 2025, reflecting the persistence of unofficial economic engagement, despite Qatar's publicly stated political opposition to normalization agreements.

The agreement is seen as an expression of Qatar's dual track approach, combining political rhetoric rejecting normalization with pragmatic economic interests aimed at diversifying channels of influence.

- **Military and Security Deals**

Qatar's economic relations with Israel expanded to include the defense and military-industrial sector, despite a high level of secrecy surrounding these transactions. Former Israeli officer and MEMRI Institute director Eyal Karmon noted that Qatar had acquired advanced air force equipment from Israeli companies, including modern combat helmets.

On June 10, 2025, the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported that Elbit Systems signed contracts with Qatar exceeding \$100 million, while Rafael Advanced Defense Systems concluded deals worth tens of millions. The newspaper also highlighted that the head of the Israeli aerospace company had visited Doha more than twenty times and had hosted a high-level Qatari delegation in Israel for on-site tours at the company headquarters, before these contacts ceased following the events of October 7, 2023.

4. Security and Intelligence Coordination

Despite Qatar's efforts to keep the nature of its security relations with Israel highly confidential, sporadic data and leaks periodically reveal a level of intelligence and security coordination between the two countries. Documents and reports indicate that this coordination was not incidental, but rather developed into a discontinuous institutional framework since the early 2000s.

These indications suggest that the security dimension of Qatar-Israel relations represents one of the most sensitive and opaque aspects of normalization, given its connection to intelligence operations and the management of so-called "shared regional threats". While this coordination is kept out of the public eye, it remains a critical component for understanding the unofficial dimension of Qatar-Israel relations.

The Washington Post published an investigative report, based on leaked U.S. military documents, revealing ongoing military cooperation between Israeli officers and counterparts from six Arab countries from 2022 to 2025, within the framework of these countries' membership in U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), headquartered at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

According to the report, the six countries are Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE. They operate under what the documents describe as a "regional security structure," a U.S.-supervised coordination framework that includes joint military meetings, exercises, and the exchange of surveillance and radar information, even during Israel's war on Gaza.

The newspaper noted a prominent meeting in May 2024 at Al Udeid, which gathered senior military officials from Israel and several Arab states. One document revealed that the Israeli delegation arrived at the base via closed military channels to avoid civilian checkpoints in Qatar, thereby preventing any media exposure.

The joint meetings and training sessions continued during the Gaza war, including U.S.-based programs on tunnel detection and destruction, referring to tunnels used by Hamas. Kuwait and Oman did not participate directly but were briefed as "potential partners" for future operations. The report also highlighted that Arab Israeli cooperation within CENTCOM intensified, particularly in the exchange of radar data and air defense coordination.

The investigation noted that Qatar felt betrayed following an Israeli strike on its territory, which occurred without prior warning from U.S. intelligence agencies, despite the ongoing security partnership. This caused widespread outrage in Doha, prompting official condemnations, alongside similar protests from other Arab states involved in the coordination.

The report concludes that military cooperation continues, including joint projects in cybersecurity and cyber operations, as well as future plans to coordinate media responses to regional adversarial campaigns [10].

In a related development, the French-English intelligence news site Intelligence Online reported that a public revelation of Qatar–Israel cooperation emerged due to a legal dispute in Israel. It revealed that the Israeli security firm SDEMA Group, linked to Shin Bet and Mossad personnel, had sought to provide security and technical services to Qatar in this context [11].

In April 2025, Qatar participated in the Eniwachos 2025 multinational air exercises in Greece, alongside Israel. This participation carries geopolitical significance for the future of their relations. The exercises, conducted annually, aim to coordinate participating states, strengthen strategic partnerships, exchange expertise, and improve combat readiness through varied air operations in a realistic training environment.

These exercises produce coordination and cooperation at the security and military levels, including technical and intelligence sharing, thus extending beyond pure training into a form of unofficial security collaboration, reflecting the evolving nature of Qatar–Israel relations.

CHAPTER THREE:

MEDIA AND CULTURAL NORMALIZATION



1. Al Jazeera: From Professional Justification to Political Instrumentalization



Al Jazeera during its broadcast featuring a spokesperson from the Israeli military

Since its establishment in 1996, Al Jazeera has not merely functioned as a free and independent media outlet, as it often claims, but rather as a strategic tool in the hands of the Qatari state, managed according to the objectives of Doha's foreign policy. Qatar realized early on that its geographic and economic strength alone would not suffice to secure significant regional influence. By founding Al Jazeera, it leveraged media as an instrument of soft power to compensate for its limited hard capabilities, enabling it to build greater political presence. Through this platform, Doha has intervened in regional crises and influenced Arab public opinion in ways that serve its domestic and international agendas.

Behind the channel's purportedly progressive discourse lies a clear political function. Al Jazeera selectively tailors its coverage to serve Doha's agendas, highlighting the achievements of Qatari allies through indirect promotional programs while employing investigative or aggressive reporting against its adversaries to undermine their political standing. This approach reshapes Arab public consciousness in line with Qatar's strategic interests and its alliances with Western and regional powers.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this duality is particularly evident. While presenting itself as a platform for Palestinian resistance, Al Jazeera simultaneously broadcasts Israeli officials and military spokespeople under the guise of "providing both sides of the story." This contradiction reflects the official Qatari approach: balancing a pro-Palestinian stance in the public eye while maintaining close relations with Washington and Tel Aviv. The tension reached a point of public acknowledgment when Walid Al-Omari, Al Jazeera's bureau chief in Israel, published an article in Haaretz titled "Killing the Messenger", admitting that the channel played a pivotal role in breaking Israel's media isolation. He urged Israeli authorities to support Al Jazeera as the only Arab channel giving Israeli officials direct access to Arab audiences, noting that before Al Jazeera's launch, most Arabs had never seen an Israeli on television, highlighting the channel's role in normalizing Israeli visibility in Arab media.

Internal deliberations within the Israeli government further confirm Tel Aviv's recognition of Al Jazeera's strategic value in improving Israel's international image. Israeli Foreign Ministry officials reportedly warned the Prime Minister's Office against imposing restrictions or sanctions on the channel, emphasizing that any interference could harm Israel. These discussions reveal that Al Jazeera is seen not as an adversary but as a functional partner in reshaping Israel's image in the Arab world.

Despite continuing to produce documentaries critical of the occupation and highlighting Gaza's humanitarian crisis, the channel provides Israeli officials with platforms to defend their actions under the pretext of professional neutrality. This creates a subtle but powerful form of media normalization, introducing Israeli terminology—such as “Israeli army” instead of “occupation forces” and “clashes” instead of “attacks”—gradually embedding an acceptable narrative of occupation into Arab media discourse.

Through this dual media and linguistic strategy, Al Jazeera has reshaped collective perceptions of Israel, transferring normalization from political rhetoric into the very structure of language. What was once considered media representation of an enemy has become, through systematic exposure, a normalized and psychologically acceptable presence. Thus, under the guise of professionalism and impartiality, the channel has effectively become an indirect promoter of Israeli policies and a soft arm of Doha's strategic agenda, serving Qatari and allied interests at the expense of central Arab causes.

The recent Israeli aggression on Gaza further exposed this duality in Al Jazeera's Arabic and English channels. While the Arabic channel adopted an emotional narrative sympathetic to Palestinian resistance, the English channel employed a Western-oriented discourse, prompting the U.S. State Department to urge Qatar to temper the Arabic coverage without affecting the English one. According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, this bifurcation allows Qatar to present two different narratives to distinct audiences, preventing a unified perception of the conflict.

This dual standard also extends to content priorities: the Arabic channel focused on the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, while the English channel addressed broader international topics appealing to Western audiences. Terminology differences—using “martyr” in Arabic versus “dead” in English, or “security wall” instead of “apartheid wall”—dilute distinctions between oppressor and victim. Moreover, the English channel appears more open to Israeli analysts, offering them platforms to present Tel Aviv’s perspective, contrasting sharply with the Arabic narrative.

As Reville notes in *Qatar and Israel: The Secret Relations File*, the Qatari leadership deliberately enabled Al Jazeera to host Israeli figures, a move aimed at normalizing Israel’s presence in Arab consciousness and improving its image. This policy represents a profound shift in Qatar’s stance toward the Palestinian issue.

2. Cultural and Sports Normalization



Israeli team participating in the School Handball World Championship in Qatar, March 2018

In the cultural and sports dimensions of Qatar–Israel relations, multiple manifestations of covert rapprochement have emerged over the past two decades, through initiatives in education and sports, reflecting a Qatari tendency to demonstrate cultural and athletic openness that goes beyond the officially declared severance with Israel.

In the cultural and educational sphere, the Israeli “Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education” noted in a report dated 8 December 2021 that Qatar had implemented modifications to its school curricula, including the removal of texts deemed anti-Semitic or glorifying Hamas. These revisions included deleting passages from the 11th-grade social studies textbook that spoke of the “Jewish control of global financial markets,” describing Jews as “traitors and unethical killers of prophets,” and removing texts that glorified Hamas’s rocket attacks on Israel or called for jihad. The institute’s director, Marcus Shiff, described these changes as a “significant improvement” in Qatari educational discourse, though he noted that much work remained to eliminate all forms of incitement from the curricula [13].

In the context of cultural normalization, Reville notes in his book that during Shimon Peres's visit to Doha in January 2007, he met with students enrolled in branches of American universities located in the "Education City," one of Qatar's most prominent educational projects costing billions of dollars. The visit was particularly notable when Emir Hamad bin Khalifa extended an open invitation to Israeli students to enroll in these academic institutions [14].

In 2017, the Doha Film Institute financed a film titled Cup of Victory directed by an Israeli filmmaker who had previously served in the Israeli Air Force. This sparked protests within Qatar's cultural circles, with dozens of Qatari artists signing a petition to the institute, expressing strong opposition to funding a project by an Israeli national.

In the sports domain, athletics have been one of the most prominent arenas for Israeli participation in Qatar, reflecting a form of soft diplomacy between the two sides. The Qatari Olympic Committee, together with Israel, contributed to the funding of the Doha Stadium in Sakhnin, Israel, named after the Qatari capital. This initiative followed a meeting between Arab Knesset member Ahmad Tibi and the Secretary-General of the Qatari Olympic Committee, Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Signs of sports cooperation continued when Qatar, after winning the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup, announced that Israel would be allowed to participate if it qualified, marking a precedent in public athletic engagement between the two sides. Israeli athletes have since participated in various competitions organized in Qatar.

- In 2008, Shahar Pe'er became the first Israeli tennis player to participate in a professional tournament in the Arabian Gulf, competing in the Qatar Ladies Open, and she repeated her participation in 2012.
- In 2014, Israeli swimmers took part in the World Swimming Championships held in Doha.

- In 2016, the Israeli beach volleyball duo of Sean Faiga and Ariel Heilman competed in the Qatar International tournament.
- In 2018, Doha witnessed a series of Israeli participations in tennis, school handball, gymnastics, and equestrian competitions.
- In 2019, the Israeli national anthem was played in Doha after Israeli gymnast Alexander Shatilov won the gold medal at the Artistic Gymnastics World Cup, and Israeli athletes also participated in the World Athletics Championships that same year.
- Qatar's promotional campaign for hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup featured a scene including an Israeli child, shown to the FIFA Executive Committee. During the presentation, the child expressed support for Qatar hosting the tournament and looked forward to the day when the Israeli national team would participate alongside Arab teams, reflecting a "spirit of handshake and rapprochement" between the sides. The scene concluded with a handshake between the Israeli child and an Arab child, symbolically emphasizing the idea of "coexistence and peace" that Qatar aimed to project to FIFA.

These events highlight that the cultural and sports arenas have been transformed into instruments of symbolic and political rapprochement between Qatar and Israel. Doha has leveraged them to project an image of a "tolerant and open state," while Israeli circles have regarded such initiatives as indicative of de facto normalization, despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations. In this sense, the cultural and sports track represents a distinct dimension of the normalization process between the two sides, facilitated through channels of education, culture, and athletics.

CHAPTER FOUR:

MORAL AND SOVEREIGN CONTRADICTIONS



1. Contradiction with the Principle of Supporting the Palestinian Cause Claimed by Doha

The Qatari regime has long employed the Palestinian cause as a means to enhance its regional influence and consolidate its presence, presenting itself since the early 2000s as one of the foremost supporters of Palestine, whether through humanitarian aid to Gaza, media narratives claiming alignment with the resistance, or diplomatic mediation efforts. However, an analysis of the actual relations between Doha and Tel Aviv reveals a fundamental paradox that undermines this claim. While Qatar publicly proclaims the defense of Palestinian rights, it simultaneously develops multifaceted relations with Israel encompassing political, economic, media, and even security domains. This renders its declared rhetoric closer to a tool of political utility than to a principled commitment.

The humanitarian aid that Qatar claims as a moral obligation toward Palestinians is in fact administered and coordinated with Israeli authorities under strict oversight, granting Tel Aviv additional leverage over the daily lives of Gazans. Israel recognized early on that the fragile and potentially volatile situation in Gaza could threaten its internal security, and thus found in Qatar an ideal partner to fund reconstruction projects, ensuring a semblance of calm without addressing the root causes of the conflict. This reflects a functional duality in Doha's regional role.

This contradiction is further reinforced through the performance of Al Jazeera, the most prominent arm of Qatari foreign policy, which has contributed to whitewashing the image of the occupation and reproducing its narrative within Arab media discourse. This has facilitated a form of soft normalization with Israel at the cognitive and public levels. Similarly, Qatar's diplomatic mediations have not been aimed at ending the occupation or safeguarding Palestinian rights but have served functional purposes that advance U.S. and Israeli interests.

Thus, Qatar's relationship with Israel stands in clear contradiction with its proclaimed support for the Palestinian cause. It is managed according to a logic that treats Palestine as a tool for regional influence rather than a principled commitment to the justice of a people under occupation. Consequently, the Qatari stance appears as part of a strategy aimed at consolidating political and media influence rather than expressing genuine alignment with the resistance or the values it claims to uphold.

2. The Qatari Public's Position on Normalization

Despite the multiple channels—both direct and indirect—through which Qatar has maintained contact with Israel, public opinion in Qatar has consistently rejected any path toward normalization with the Israeli entity. A key reference on this subject is the memoir of the architect of these relations and the first director of the Israeli representative office in Doha, diplomat Sami Revell, entitled *Qatar and Israel: The Secret Relations File*. The book provides a crucial account of the background behind this Israeli penetration, the evolution of these relations through periods of advancement and retrenchment, the role of the Qatari government in promoting them, and the popular resistance that confronted them, as well as the underlying interests involved and the positions of Gulf and Arab states, which fluctuated between public opposition and discreet acquiescence.

Revell notes in his book that there was widespread popular opposition to the opening of an Israeli representative office in Doha. Civil society organizations, alongside ordinary citizens, expressed a quiet but firm resistance to official policies promoting normalization. This popular stance aligned with broader Arab public opinion, particularly the anti-normalization sentiment in Saudi Arabia, which contributed to curbing the pace of Qatari normalization efforts and led the authorities to partially retract or politically manage the issue. Revell adds that many Qataris were astonished by the presence of Israelis in their country, as most had only heard theoretically about the establishment of an Israeli office in Doha and believed that the idea of opening a commercial office remained purely abstract.

He further reports that numerous officials in positions of authority, as well as ordinary citizens, opposed normalization with Israel. The difficult position of Israel in the Qatari public's perception can be illustrated by a rare opinion poll conducted in May 1997, one year after the opening of the Israeli interests representative office in Doha. The results, published in a headline by the Qatari newspaper Al-Watan, showed that 91% of respondents supported the closure of the Israeli office in Qatar, while only 4% opposed this measure, and 5% abstained from expressing an opinion.

3. The Impact on Qatari Sovereignty: Independent Actor or Tool for Major Alliances?

After Hamas leadership left Damascus in 2012, Qatar hosted the movement's leaders and established an office in Doha under the pretext of providing a safe political haven. This made Qatar a key hub for indirect communications between Hamas and both the United States and Israel. However, the establishment of the office was not an independent initiative or the result of purely Qatari convictions; rather, it was carried out in direct coordination with Washington and Tel Aviv.

According to reports by The Washington Post, Qatar's hosting of Hamas leaders was part of a U.S.-engineered framework intended to maintain a controllable and monitorable channel of communication. Qatar later acknowledged this role through statements by its ambassador in Washington. In an opinion piece in The Wall Street Journal, Sheikh Mishaal bin Hamad Al Thani stated that Qatar's office for Hamas was opened in 2012 at the request of Washington to establish indirect lines of communication with Hamas. He clarified that the office was often used in mediation efforts "to calm conflicts in Israel and the Palestinian territories" and stressed, "The existence of a Hamas office should not be confused with endorsement; rather, it establishes an important channel for indirect communication."

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani confirmed the same information following the recent Israeli attack on Doha.

In other words, Qatar was tasked with functioning as a "mailbox" through which messages were transmitted between the conflicting parties. This relieved the United States of political burdens while providing Israel with an Arab partner capable of passing along agreements without incurring direct political costs. The evidence indicates that Qatar does not act as a fully independent actor; rather, it operates within narrowly defined margins set by the United States and Israel.

TESTIMONIES ON QATARI NORMALIZATION WITH ISRAEL



- The Israeli Institute for Security Studies, one of Israel's leading strategic research centers involved in policy analysis and national/international decision-making, noted in one of its studies that the Qatari regime played a significant role in serving Israeli interests on multiple occasions, despite criticizing certain Qatari policies.[18]
- Brigadier General (Ret.) and Strategic Expert Dr. Omar Al-Raddad: Following the Israeli attack on Doha, he stated that the Israeli-Qatari intelligence relationship remains strong and will not be affected by the attack, pointing out that Mossad chief "Brenya" and other Israeli intelligence officers, as well as negotiating delegations, visited Doha more frequently than they visited the capitals of the so-called "Abraham Accords" states, and more than they visited Amman and Cairo.
- Palestinian writer and political analyst Hafez Al Barghouthi: He stated that the Qatari regime played a destructive role in the Palestinian arena and contributed to consolidating Palestinian division.[19]

- International Relations researcher Sami Al-Murshid: He emphasized that the Qatari regime acted as Israel's tool to implement its agenda, particularly the division of the Palestinian front, which severely harmed the Palestinian cause.[20]
- Member of the Political Bureau of the Palestinian (Al Shaab) Party, Walid Al-Awad: He noted that the Qatari regime uses certain gifts and financial resources to cover up its normalization role, which has increasingly followed political and security tracks.[21]
- Research paper from the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policy (Metafim), authored by researcher and lecturer on Gulf states at Ben-Gurion University, Michael Yaari, entitled "Israel and Qatar: Shadow Relations and the Palestinian Cause", highlighted the relations between Israel and Qatar and called for further activation of these ties through "continuous trust-building between the two sides." According to the research, Qatar over the years adopted a positive stance toward Israel dictated by its national interests.[22]

RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Activating Popular Rejection of Qatari-Israeli Relations

It is recommended to place greater emphasis on the popular Qatari opposition to normalization with Israel, as it reflects the collective Arab and Islamic consciousness supporting the Palestinian cause. This rejection should be leveraged as a pressure tool to prompt a review of official policies that contradict this public sentiment.

2. Strengthening Popular and Media Channels Opposing Normalization

Support should be provided to media and community platforms that express public opposition to relations with Israel, ensuring the formation of an informed public aware of the dangers and political and cultural implications of normalization. This contributes to building resistance grounded in awareness and initiative.

3. Enhancing Tools of Soft Resistance Against Normalization

It is necessary to strengthen political, media, cultural, and academic activities and initiatives that highlight the risks of normalization and its effects on the Arab and Islamic world, as well as its implications for the Palestinian cause.

4. Encouraging Internal Arab Economic Cooperation

Efforts should be made to promote economic collaboration among Arab states to mitigate any negative impact of Qatari-Israeli relations on shared Arab interests.

5. Promoting Alternative Media

Support independent Arab media outlets that provide critical and objective analyses of regional relations.

6. Encouraging Independent Studies

Support research that examines Qatari-Israeli relations without political influence or censorship.

7. Documenting Evidence

Establish a comprehensive archive of statements by Qatari and Israeli officials and official documents to facilitate future analysis.

CONCLUSION



The study of the trajectory of Qatari–Israeli relations demonstrates that Israel was the sole beneficiary of this pathway, achieving two strategic objectives simultaneously. On the one hand, it succeeded in breaking the regional isolation that had long surrounded it since its establishment, while consolidating its political presence within the strategically significant Gulf region. This significance stems from the Gulf’s vital position along trade routes and maritime passages, whose importance has grown with the eastward shift of the global economic center of gravity. Additionally, the Gulf, with its vast oil and gas reserves, substantial financial surpluses, and influential investments in the global economy, as well as its role as a key supporter of the Palestinian resistance—politically, financially, and through media—has remained a constant target for Israeli penetration efforts since the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Its importance increased further after the fall of the Shah’s regime in Iran, which had been Israel’s main oil supplier. On the other hand, Israel reaped significant gains from security coordination, as well as economic benefits from commercial cooperation and undisclosed arms deals conducted indirectly through intermediaries and private companies.

The Qatari experience in its relations with Israel reveals that Doha derived no substantive benefits from this relationship except for a symbolic diplomatic gain, which suggested its capacity for mediation. In contrast, it sacrificed the core of its political and moral independence and suffered clear political and moral losses, most notably the decline of its standing in the Islamic world and the exposure of the limitations of its sovereign decision-making.

Qatar's role was reduced to merely executing policies pre-designed by the United States and Israel, as explicitly acknowledged by its Foreign Minister, who confirmed that the “veiled normalization” under the guise of humanitarian mediation served an American plan to open an indirect channel between conflicting parties, rather than being an independent national choice. This marked the first infringement on its sovereignty, followed by the Israeli bombardment of its territory, which further revealed the fragility of that sovereignty—often presented in official discourse as evidence of strength and neutrality.

Moreover, Qatari normalization with Israel constitutes one of the main factors enabling Israel to persist in violating the rights of the Palestinian people. It encourages the continuation of massacres, violations of holy sites, and the confiscation of Palestinian lands, while providing the United States with a pretext to propose even more biased peace initiatives against the Palestinians. The U.S. administration perceives this type of normalization as an expression of full Arab acceptance of Israel at the expense of Palestinian rights, especially under the Trump administration, which was openly hostile to the Palestinians. Qatari normalization policies thus create an environment for decision-makers in Washington that facilitates the adoption of solutions serving Israeli interests without regard for Palestinian demands.

Qatari normalization with Israel, masked under the guise of independent humanitarian mediation, has evolved into a tool ensuring the strategic objectives of the U.S. and Israel in “crisis management,” aimed at controlling Palestinian actors and containing them within negotiation tracks that do not challenge the core of the occupation. Consequently, Qatari diplomacy has become a façade for implementing externally designed policies, within a security and military system led by the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base, representing the most prominent manifestation of the structural linkage between Doha and Washington.

This approach is also evident in media normalization, exemplified by Al Jazeera, which functions as a soft instrument serving Western agendas in the region. The network has contributed to introducing Israeli presence into the Arab media sphere in a “neutral” framework, thereby weakening public resistance to the idea of normalization at the expense of the Palestinian cause.

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