

State Capture in Qatar

Executive Dominance and the
Erosion of Institutional Independence



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Abstract

This study examines executive control over state institutions in Qatar, exploring how political, administrative, and financial decision-making is concentrated at the apex of power and how this affects institutional independence and the capacity for oversight and accountability. It argues that the existence of multiple ministries, agencies, and councils does not, in itself, demonstrate an institutional balance of power unless these bodies possess effective authority to review decisions, challenge them, and hold those responsible to account. Within this framework, the study discusses “state capture” as the subordination of public institutions to the leadership’s priorities and its efforts to sustain its influence, undermining their role in protecting rights and serving the public interest.

Chapter One examines the centralization of decision-making and the subordination of state institutions. It analyzes the concentration of extensive powers at the highest level of government, the leadership’s relationship with the cabinet and public administration, and the role of appointments in shaping institutional leadership. It also explores the overlap between political, administrative, and economic spheres of influence, assesses the extent to which ministries and agencies can perform their duties independently, and exposes the gap between the separation of powers enshrined in legal texts and the actual distribution of power within the state.

Chapter Two analyzes the limits of oversight over the executive, focusing on the Shura Council, the judiciary, and financial oversight bodies. It examines the Shura Council’s capacity to influence legislation and the budget

and to hold ministers accountable, alongside safeguards for judicial independence and the effectiveness of legal challenges to government decisions. It also addresses transparency in the management of public wealth, expenditure, contracts, and major projects. The chapter further considers whether accountability mechanisms can reach those who wield influence and take concrete action to hold officials responsible for violations, remedy their consequences, and prevent their recurrence.

Chapter Three examines the costs of executive dominance for society and the future of the state. It addresses restrictions on criticism and public scrutiny, the limits of citizen participation in decision-making, and the consequences of inadequate disclosure of economic, security, and foreign policy choices and their costs. It also discusses how the absence of effective oversight allows errors to persist and shifts their consequences onto society and future generations. The chapter outlines the requirements for institutional reform grounded in independence, transparency, and the protection of rights.

The study concludes that institutional strength depends on the capacity of institutions to protect society, constrain the exercise of power, and correct its abuses and errors. When institutions are unable to hold the leadership accountable, formal structures of governance and administration become a façade for the concentration of power. Citizens consequently bear the costs of decisions over which they have insufficient influence, both when those decisions are made and when they are reviewed. Addressing this imbalance therefore requires effective constraints on executive power and independent institutions equipped with the information and authority necessary to enforce accountability.

Introduction

State institutions derive their value from their ability to protect the public interest, constrain the exercise of power, and ensure that decision-makers remain subject to the law and accountable for their actions. The mere existence of ministries, councils, courts, and oversight bodies is insufficient to establish a state governed by effective institutions. Their effectiveness depends on their independence and their authority to review decisions, expose abuses, and hold those responsible to account. When their role is confined to implementing directives issued by the highest levels of leadership, the institutional framework becomes incapable of preventing arbitrary action and correcting errors.

From this perspective, the relationship between the executive and state institutions in Qatar raises fundamental concerns about the concentration of political, administrative, and financial decision-making and the limited independence afforded to bodies expected to oversee the exercise of power. The central issue lies in the actual distribution of authority within institutions, their ability to challenge and review decisions, and the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in reaching those who wield influence and compelling them to accept responsibility for their choices and their consequences. The concept of “state capture” describes the subordination of public institutions to the leadership’s priorities and interests, weakening their ability to represent society and protect its rights. This subordination may operate through appointment rules, control over resources and information, restrictions on oversight powers, or arrangements that make officials’ job security dependent on the leadership’s approval. Its

danger lies in its capacity to persist within seemingly orderly legal and administrative frameworks while institutions lack the effective power to constrain those who govern.

In Qatar, the executive's extensive influence demands close examination of the relationship between authority and responsibility, appointment and independence, and the management of public wealth and society's right to know how it is used. Oversight institutions require safeguards that protect them from interference by the bodies they supervise. The judiciary requires sufficient independence to uphold rights even when the state is a party to a dispute. Citizens likewise need access to information and channels of participation that enable them to assess policies and challenge their harmful consequences. The broader the leadership's powers, the greater its responsibility to subject its decisions to independent scrutiny, particularly when those decisions create commitments extending over years or decades. Monopolizing decision-making while weakening accountability allows the leadership to impose its choices and shift their burdens onto citizens and future generations, who bear the costs without meaningful authority to approve or review those choices or hold those responsible to account.

The consequences of this imbalance extend beyond public administration to the relationship between society and the state. When opportunities for criticism narrow and institutions lose the capacity to challenge decisions, errors become harder to detect in time, and remedies for abuses depend on the will of the very authority responsible for them. Under such conditions, citizens lose an essential safeguard: access to an institution capable of providing redress and holding those

responsible for harm accountable, without its ability to act being contingent on the approval of those who wield power.

Chapter One: The Centralization of Decision-Making and the Subordination of State Institutions

1. The Concentration of Powers at the Apex of Authority

The distribution of powers within Qatar's constitutional system reveals a clear institutional imbalance. The Emir possesses extensive powers to form the government, direct policy, organize public bodies, and influence legislation. Article 62 vests executive authority in the Emir, assisted by the Council of Ministers, placing the government within a structure he leads and limiting its potential to function as an independent political institution capable of counterbalancing his authority. The fundamental problem is the breadth of power concentrated at the apex of government without a corresponding degree of political accountability before the Shura Council.

This centralization is evident in the Emir's relationship with the Council of Ministers. Article 72 empowers him to appoint the Prime Minister, accept the Prime Minister's resignation, and remove the Prime Minister from office. Article 73 provides for the appointment of ministers by Emiri order upon nomination by the Prime Minister. The composition of the government's leadership and its continuation in office therefore depend on decisions made at the highest level of authority, without any requirement for the government to secure the Shura Council's confidence upon its formation. This institutional design gives the Emir decisive influence over the composition of the body

responsible for administering state affairs and implementing public policy.

Article 123 reinforces this dependence by making the Prime Minister and ministers collectively accountable to the Emir for implementing the government's general policy, and each individually accountable to him for performing their duties and exercising their powers. Accountability thus flows primarily toward the head of the executive. The leadership that forms the government is also the authority to which it answers collectively for policy implementation. This arrangement weakens the balance between the power to issue directives and the power to assess their consequences, making government accountability primarily a hierarchical relationship within the executive rather than one grounded in the will of society.

The Emir's influence extends beyond the selection of officials. Article 67 empowers him to formulate the state's general policy with the assistance of the Council of Ministers, establish and organize ministries and government bodies, and define their responsibilities. It also authorizes him to establish bodies that assist him in directing and overseeing high-level state policy. In addition, he may convene the Council of Ministers, preside over the meetings he attends, and appoint and dismiss civilian and military officials. The authority to determine the state's overall direction, establish the institutions responsible for implementing it, and influence their leadership is therefore concentrated at the apex of government. This concentration creates structural conditions conducive to subordinating public administration to the leadership's priorities and weakens the capacity of public bodies to maintain lasting independence in the face of its demands.

This imbalance also extends to the relationship with the legislature. Article 77, as amended in 2024, provides for the appointment of Shura Council members by Emiri order. Article 104 further permits the Emir to dissolve the Council when necessity and the requirements of the public interest warrant it, provided that a new Council is appointed within six months. During that period, the Emir exercises legislative authority with the assistance of the Council of Ministers. The institution expected to oversee the executive is therefore constituted by a decision of the head of that same executive and may be dissolved by him under the conditions prescribed by the Constitution. Allowing the head of the authority subject to scrutiny to appoint the members of the oversight institution undermines its independence and weakens its capacity to constrain his influence and hold him accountable.

The procedures for enacting legislation further demonstrate the leadership's extensive ability to shape legislative outcomes. Article 106 allows the Emir to return a bill to the Shura Council and requires him to ratify and promulgate it if the Council passes it again by a two-thirds majority. Yet, where necessary, it also permits him to suspend the law's implementation for a period he considers sufficient to serve the "supreme interests of the country." Even when the Council maintains its position and secures the required supermajority, implementation remains subject to suspension at the Emir's discretion. This weakens the legislature's ability to translate its decisions into binding and enduring legal effect.

Qatar's institutional imbalance therefore goes beyond coordination among state bodies. It is rooted in a structure that grants the apex of power extensive

influence over the formation and direction of institutions without corresponding independent checks. This design allows responsibility for performance to be assigned to subordinate executive officials while leaving the highest authority directing policy beyond the reach of the Council's available mechanisms of political accountability. The state becomes more vulnerable to persistent errors when the decision-maker exercises decisive influence over the institutions charged with reviewing those decisions. Effective oversight requires the independence to challenge decisions and enforce accountability; formal powers constrained by the influence of the very authority under scrutiny cannot fulfil that role.

2. The Subordination of Public Administration and Restrictions on Professional Decision-Making

The problem of independence within government and public administration becomes evident in the relationship between centralized planning and professional decision-making within ministries and public bodies. An institution does not enjoy genuine independence merely because it has staff, experts, and plans. Independence depends on its ability to identify the needs of the sector it administers, weigh alternatives, and raise reasoned objections to costly or economically unsound choices. When these functions operate within a highly centralized system, public administration risks being reduced to implementing priorities set by the political leadership, with limited scope to review them.

The rules governing the National Planning Council provide clear evidence of the centralized determination of government priorities. Article 5 of Emiri Decision No. 13 of 2024 authorizes the Council to formulate and review development policies, resolve conflicts between public bodies, and approve proposed government strategic and operational plans, as well as initiatives submitted by those bodies. In a statement published on 2 May 2024, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers further explained that ministries, government agencies, public authorities, and public institutions are required to implement the Council's policies, decisions, and circulars. Its role therefore extends beyond technical coordination to approving plans and issuing binding directives to implementing bodies.

This framework supports an important conclusion: the scope for initiative within sector-specific institutions is constrained by a central authority that approves and directs their proposals according to national priorities. The concern lies in ensuring that coordinated planning does not become a means of imposing political choices that override technical assessments. The Qatari authorities must explain how disagreements between the relevant ministry's assessment and central policy direction are resolved, and whether professional reservations are documented and meaningfully influence decisions. Without such safeguards, centralized approval displaces institutional deliberation, and expertise becomes a tool for adapting implementation to choices already made.

The Third National Development Strategy 2024–2030 identifies further issues that warrant scrutiny. Its objectives include reducing overlapping mandates, clarifying responsibilities, strengthening policymaking,

and addressing limited access to up-to-date information. Their inclusion points to reform needs acknowledged by the official document itself. Recommendations from the International Monetary Fund [1] reinforce concerns about inadequate transparency in administrative decision-making and expenditure. Its Article IV consultation report published in 2024 recommended greater transparency in public investment and procurement to strengthen financial management and support anti-corruption efforts. This recommendation makes disclosure of projects, contracts, and selection criteria essential to assessing performance. It also underscores that publishing plans or announcing expenditure figures alone does not provide the information necessary for accountability. Society needs to understand the basis for decisions, their costs, and their outcomes to assess whether public administration is using resources in the public interest.

In the concluding statement of its 2026 Article IV consultation mission [2], the IMF again emphasized the need to improve expenditure efficiency, strengthen transparency and risk management, and enhance data availability and quality to support analysis and planning. These recommendations have direct implications for policy continuity: plans are difficult to evaluate and revise when information remains incomplete or risks are insufficiently disclosed. Repeated calls for improvement in these areas leave the authorities responsible for demonstrating progress through published results, rather than merely renewing commitments.

The danger of political interference lies in subordinating professional judgment to the leadership's approval or the protection of its public image. When officials are not protected for recording technical reservations, exposing

unjustified costs, or recommending that a failing project be halted, complying with directives becomes less costly for them than defending the public interest.

3. Appointments and Overlapping Spheres of Influence

The selection of administrative and institutional leaders is a decisive test of the nature of governance in Qatar. Public office gives its holders authority over resources, opportunities, and decisions that affect society. The integrity of appointments must therefore be assessed against clear selection criteria, the ability to verify their application, and safeguards that prevent public responsibility from becoming a privilege reserved for influential circles. The risks intensify when the same individuals hold multiple positions, blurring the distinction between policymaking authority and the management of institutions that benefit from, or are affected by, those policies. Article 8 of the Human Resources Law stipulates that appointments must be based on merit and publicly advertised vacancies, but allows the competent authority to waive the advertising requirement for positions whose nature warrants it. Such exceptions require close scrutiny: dispensing with public advertisement reduces opportunities for open competition and makes it harder to verify that the best candidate has been selected. It also opens the door to favoritism, requiring the Qatari authorities to disclose the reasons for invoking the exception and the criteria used to compare candidates, so that merit does not become a legal principle whose application cannot be verified.

The overlap between political and economic positions is one manifestation of concentrated influence. One example, among others, is provided by QatarEnergy's official website [3], which lists Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi as Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Deputy Chairman of the company's Board of Directors, and President and Chief Executive Officer. This example illustrates the institutional problem created when political responsibility and executive management are concentrated in the same hands, weakening the separation between evaluating sectoral policies and defending the company's interests and performance. Technical expertise cannot replace independent oversight capable of reviewing decisions and holding decision-makers accountable from outside these overlapping spheres of responsibility. Official information published by the Qatar Investment Authority reveals a similar overlap: its Board of Directors is chaired by the Governor of the Qatar Central Bank, Sheikh Bandar Al Thani. The Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sheikh Faisal Al Thani, also holds other positions, including chairing the boards of the Qatar Free Zones Authority, the Qatar Financial Centre Authority, the Qatar Stock Exchange, Ooredoo, and Lesha Bank. These arrangements show how economic and institutional influence is concentrated among a limited number of officials across bodies with distinct functions and interests.

Holding multiple offices creates risks that require disclosure and effective controls. When an official combines government responsibilities with roles in investment and commercial institutions, it becomes all the more important to specify the capacity in which decisions are made, the interests represented, and the matters from which that official must recuse themselves.

Appeals to coordination or expertise are insufficient to justify this concentration. Institutional effectiveness also requires a proper distribution of responsibilities, sufficient time devoted to each role, and safeguards against using accumulated influence to favor one body at the expense of another.

Chapter Two: Restricting Oversight and Accountability

1. The Shura Council and the Limits of Political Oversight

The fundamental problem with Qatar's Shura Council is that it is tasked with overseeing the executive while the head of that same executive selects its members. Effective oversight requires an independent institution capable of challenging the government, reviewing its policies, and holding officials accountable for the consequences of their decisions. When membership is determined entirely by appointment, the Council's connection to the will of citizens weakens, and citizens are deprived of the ability to choose their representatives and replace them on the basis of their performance. Assessing the Council therefore requires examining how it is constituted and whether it can compel the government to change its choices, alongside its constitutional powers.

The 2024 amendments deepened this imbalance. Article 77 had previously provided for the election of thirty of the Council's forty-five members, with the remaining fifteen appointed by the Emir. The amended provision instead establishes a Council of at least forty-five members, all appointed by Emiri decision. This abolished the electoral mechanism through which citizens could choose the majority of the institution responsible for holding the government accountable. The Council's composition became entirely subject to the leadership's will, crushing popular oversight and concentrating power in the hands of the very authority that should be held accountable. Even if members are

selected on the basis of expertise, expertise alone cannot guarantee their independence or compensate for the absence of an electoral mandate. It helps members understand policy, but does not give citizens the right to choose, hold accountable, and replace their representatives through elections. The amendments thus retained the Council's powers under Article 76 while undermining the basis of its independence and giving the leadership the decisive say in selecting those expected to scrutinize it. This entrenched its dominance over the oversight institution and stripped citizens of their principal instrument of influence and accountability.

This imbalance is evident in the review of the state budget. Under Article 107, the Council may approve the draft budget but cannot amend it without the government's consent. Its ability to change spending priorities therefore remains conditional on approval from the very body it is supposed to oversee, allowing the government to reject proposed amendments. Moreover, the continued application of the previous budget when approval of the new one is delayed permits spending to continue during a disagreement, limiting the Council's ability to use budget scrutiny to secure substantive changes in fiscal policy.

Ministerial accountability is likewise subject to conditions that make it more difficult to exercise. Initiating an interpellation requires the support of one-third of Council members, while withdrawing confidence from a minister requires a two-thirds majority following the interpellation. An individual member therefore cannot independently initiate this formal scrutiny procedure, and a simple majority is insufficient to compel a minister to leave office. These restrictions are particularly significant in a Council whose members are

all appointed: challenging the government requires broad agreement within an institution whose members lack an independent electoral mandate.

Executive dominance is further reinforced by the power to dissolve the Council. Amended Article 104 permits the Emir to dissolve it when necessity and the requirements of the public interest warrant it, provided that a new Council is appointed within six months. During that period, the Emir exercises legislative authority with the assistance of the Council of Ministers. The head of the executive can thus terminate the oversight institution's work, while the Council's ability to hold ministers accountable remains subject to stringent conditions. This disparity reveals an institutional imbalance: the Council's continued existence remains subject to the authority it is expected to oversee.

The most serious consequence of the 2024 amendments is therefore the severing of the electoral link between citizens and the Shura Council while retaining the restrictions that limit its influence over government policy. The institution expected to protect society from the authorities' errors has become more dependent on them for its composition, without any expansion of its core accountability powers. Presenting the Council as a sufficient guarantee of accountability consequently obscures the gap between having the right to debate a decision and possessing the power to change it—a gap that gives the leadership extensive influence while leaving citizens without the means to shape the policies whose consequences they bear.

2. The Judiciary and Safeguards for Independence

The strength of the judiciary is measured by its ability to protect individuals when their rights conflict with the will of the authorities or the interests of influential bodies. In Qatar, it is essential to distinguish between declaring judicial independence and providing safeguards against interference in judges' careers, institutional resources, and rulings. A judiciary expected to review state action needs protection that allows it to rule against the state without fear for judges' security of tenure or its ability to perform its duties. Judicial Authority Law No. 8 of 2023 establishes the independence of judges, provides that they may be removed only in accordance with its provisions, and prohibits interference with judicial independence and the administration of justice. These guarantees must, however, be considered alongside the rules governing appointment, promotion, and evaluation. Article 36 provides for the appointment of the President of the Court of Cassation by Emiri order and other judges by decree upon the proposal of the President of the Supreme Judicial Council. Articles 33 and 34 link promotion to seniority and competence assessments based on judicial inspection. These rules require clear safeguards against using appointment, evaluation, or promotion to influence the substance of judicial rulings. Judicial independence requires professional criteria that are open to review and protect judges from favoritism and punishment disguised as personnel decisions.

United Nations bodies have raised direct concerns about judges' security of tenure in Qatar. In its 2018 concluding observations, the Committee against Torture

[4] expressed concern about the impact of the Emir's appointment and dismissal powers on judicial independence, as well as reports that foreign judges were employed on temporary contracts renewed annually. It called for guarantees of security of tenure and the severing of administrative and other links with the executive. In 2022, the Human Rights Committee [5] called for the full independence and impartiality of the judiciary in both law and practice, and for procedures governing the removal of judges to be brought into line with international standards. It also regretted the absence of information concerning the Emir's authority to dismiss judges on public-interest grounds. These concerns underscore the importance of clear safeguards and defined limits on authority over judges' careers. Leaving such matters insufficiently explained makes it harder to verify whether judicial independence is effectively protected.

Security of tenure is closely connected to administrative and financial independence. Article 3 of the 2023 law provides for the courts to have a budget annexed to the state budget, with the draft prepared by the Supreme Judicial Council in agreement with the Ministry of Finance. This gives the Council a role in preparing the budget but leaves the provision of resources dependent on agreement with an executive body. Safeguards are therefore needed to prevent funding from being used to restrict judicial activity, alongside financial accountability that respects the independence of the courts. Judicial independence remains incomplete if the courts cannot secure the judges, support staff, experts, and other resources necessary to adjudicate disputes.

Chapter Three: The Costs of Executive Dominance for Society and the Future of the State

1. Marginalizing Citizens and Eroding Trust in Institutions

The expansion of decision-making power at the highest levels of authority in Qatar, coupled with restrictions on society's ability to participate in and influence those decisions, has substantially weakened citizens' trust in institutions. Trust requires citizens to feel that their voices carry weight in shaping policy, that their objections receive serious consideration, and that institutions respond to their needs and protect their rights. When the leadership unilaterally makes decisions affecting their lives and future while limiting their ability to review those decisions and hold the responsible officials accountable, citizens become less convinced that institutions represent them. Their sense of marginalization within their own country deepens, as public affairs are conducted in their name without their meaningful participation.

The adoption of a fully appointed Shura Council has widened the gap between citizens and the legislature by eliminating their ability to elect its members and hold them accountable through elections. This shift weakens the Council's connection to the will of society and reduces citizens' ability to advance their priorities through representatives whose membership derives from their choice. It thereby undermines a fundamental basis of institutional trust: the belief that those who debate

policies and approve the budget are answerable to citizens for their performance.

This distance grows when channels for complaints and objections are not accompanied by clear responses whose outcomes can be tracked and assessed. Receiving citizens' demands without disclosing how they were addressed, explaining their rejection, or correcting the underlying problems turns engagement into a procedure that consumes citizens' time without reassuring them that redress is possible. As such experiences recur, the willingness to participate declines, and silence becomes an expression of lost faith in the usefulness of participation rather than evidence of satisfaction. This poses a political and institutional danger: the apparent absence of dissent may conceal persistent grievances rather than indicate that they have been resolved.

Trust also erodes when institutions showcase major achievements while citizens receive no convincing explanation of how priorities are set or how the problems they face are being addressed. The scale of expenditure and projects alone does not demonstrate responsiveness to society's needs. That depends on the distribution of benefits, the fairness of procedures, the quality of services, and the ability of those adversely affected to demand change. The more participation and access to information are restricted, the harder it becomes to determine whether official choices reflect those needs.

2. The Costs of Monopolizing Decision-Making for State Efficiency and Public Funds

The monopolization of decision-making in Qatar undermines state efficiency and the protection of public funds by limiting independent debate over policies and the assessment of alternatives before their adoption. When opportunities to challenge decisions are restricted, institutions lose the benefit of expertise that can identify flaws in projects, question their assumptions, and scrutinize cost estimates. This increases the risk of adopting choices based on inadequately examined assessments, then allocating resources to their implementation without sufficient scrutiny of their viability.

These costs intensify when reversing a decision becomes embarrassing for the authority that made it, weakening incentives to acknowledge and correct mistakes. Where criticism and independent review are limited, difficulties may go undetected for longer, or a project may continue to receive funding despite the erosion of its original justification, in order to preserve an image of success. Expenditure then accumulates, and opportunities to redirect funds toward more pressing needs are lost. The problem becomes more acute when institutions are assessed on their ability to implement directives without being held equally accountable for outcomes, costs, and public benefit.

The concentration of power and weak accountability also increase the risks of conflicts of interest and the prioritization of loyalty over competence. When the criteria governing appointments, the assignment of responsibilities, and the awarding of contracts are

neither clear nor open to scrutiny, society cannot readily verify that choices are based on expertise and merit. If securing a superior's approval matters more than the quality of professional advice, critical expertise is excluded and information inconsistent with the official position is withheld. These institutional risks are compounded by a lack of transparency.

Ultimately, society bears the consequences of decisions it lacks sufficient means to review, through depleted resources, fewer opportunities to improve services, and financial commitments extending into the future. Responsibility becomes fundamentally unbalanced when the leadership monopolizes the right to choose while distributing the costs of failure among citizens and future generations.

3. Shifting Risks onto the Future of the State and Coming Generations

The danger of the Qatari authorities' current choices lies in the possibility that their consequences will persist long after those who made them have left office. Debts, long-term contracts, and economic and foreign policy commitments become burdens borne by the state and passed from one generation to the next. They lay claim to future resources before those who will inherit them have any say in their use. When the authorities make these choices unilaterally, without meaningful participation or adequate oversight, they decide on behalf of generations not yet born and compel them to bear risks they never agreed to accept.

Today's abundance of resources does not entitle the authorities to exhaust the state's capacity to face tomorrow. Every long-term commitment requires a clear assessment of the burdens it could impose if revenues decline, economic conditions change, or regional crises intensify. Continually relying on wealth to absorb the consequences of decisions amounts to gambling with the interests of future generations unless safeguards protect their share of resources and limit the burdens imposed on them. Funds committed to servicing past obligations reduce the resources available for future generations' education, healthcare, and housing, and for building an economy that secures their independence.

These risks extend beyond public finances to national security and foreign relations. Choices that create enduring commitments or expose the country to the repercussions of conflicts may leave consequences that are difficult to contain, even after circumstances and officeholders have changed. It is unjust for the leadership to enjoy the freedom to decide today while leaving citizens and their children with the obligation to adapt to the consequences tomorrow.

The Qatari authorities must therefore be held accountable for what their choices leave to the future as much as for their immediate results. The measure is how much wealth, capacity, and security will remain for future generations once existing obligations have been met, and whether they retain the freedom to determine their own course. Policy becomes unjust when it grants the present its benefits while passing the bill and the risks to the future.

Recommendations

1. **End the monopolization of decision-making and expand political participation:** Establish an elected Shura Council, strengthen its legislative and oversight powers, and enable citizens to participate in deliberations on major policies before their adoption. Require the relevant authorities to publish reasoned responses to proposals and objections.
2. **Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and oversight bodies:** Establish legal and institutional safeguards that protect judges and oversight officials from interference and pressure. Strengthen individuals' ability to challenge government decisions and obtain effective redress, and hold public authorities accountable without immunities that obstruct accountability.
3. **Ensure comprehensive transparency in public wealth and expenditure:** Require government bodies, public enterprises, and sovereign wealth funds to publish regular, integrated financial disclosures covering assets, debts, guarantees, major contracts, and project outcomes. Publish audit findings and the measures taken to remedy violations and hold those responsible accountable.
4. **Protect peaceful criticism and public scrutiny:** Review legislation that criminalizes peaceful expression or restricts journalism and the work of civil society organizations. Guarantee the independence of associations and protect journalists, their sources, and whistleblowers from retaliation, enabling society to expose failings and demand corrective action.
5. **Safeguard the state's future and the rights of coming generations:** Subject financial, economic,

and foreign policy decisions with lasting consequences to independent assessment and institutional review before their adoption. Publish estimates of their costs and risks, and establish clear limits on long-term commitments to prevent the depletion of future resources and the imposition of unjustified burdens on future generations.

Conclusion

The failings of Qatar's political model extend beyond the performance of any single institution to the distribution of power and the relationship between state and society. The concentration of decision-making at the highest levels of authority, the limited independence of oversight bodies, and restrictions on criticism and participation constrain citizens' ability to influence policies and hold officials accountable for their consequences. Neither abundant resources nor vast projects can remedy this imbalance. The quality of governance remains inseparable from the protection of rights, transparency in the management of public wealth, and the ability to challenge decisions and correct errors.

The contradiction becomes evident when institutions are expected to scrutinize decisions without sufficient independence from those who make them, while citizens are asked to trust policies without access to the information needed to assess them. Trust cannot be imposed or created by repeatedly invoking achievements. It grows when citizens see that the law protects them, that their voices matter, and that their complaints lead to redress and reconsideration of decisions that have harmed them. Weakening representation and restricting criticism widen the distance between society and its institutions, depriving the state of the warnings it needs to protect itself against accumulating errors.

This imbalance places responsibility for reform squarely on the Qatari authorities. The power to make decisions carries a duty to explain them, disclose their costs, accept their review, and bear responsibility for their consequences. The broader the authority, the greater the

need for safeguards against arbitrary action, conflicts of interest, and the waste of resources. Reform requires restoring the weight of citizens' collective will, guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary and oversight bodies, protecting journalism and civil society, and subjecting the management of public funds to accountability mechanisms capable of examining outcomes and compelling corrective action.

The danger of allowing this approach to continue lies in the fact that its consequences extend far beyond the present. Financial, economic, and foreign policy commitments may constrain the state's resources and choices for many years, leaving future generations to bear the cost of fulfilling them. Policies must therefore be judged by what remains after their immediate benefits have passed: the wealth preserved, the capacity of institutions to withstand crises, and the freedom left to children to shape their own future.

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Executive Dominance and the Erosion of Institutional Independence

State institutions exist to protect the public interest, uphold the rule of law and ensure that those in power are held accountable. This book examines how, in Qatar, political, administrative and financial decision-making is concentrated at the apex of power, and how this has led to the subordination of state institutions and the erosion of their independence.

The study analyses the role of the executive in shaping the cabinet, ministries, agencies and advisory bodies, the use of appointments to secure loyalty, and the overlap between political, administrative and economic spheres of influence. It examines the limits of oversight by the Shura Council, the judiciary and financial control bodies, and assesses whether these institutions have the authority and independence to review decisions, challenge abuses and hold those responsible to account.

The book also explores the wider consequences of executive dominance for society, including restrictions on criticism and public scrutiny, the marginalisation of citizen participation, the risks of inadequate transparency in major policy and financial decisions, and the costs of errors that are passed on to future generations. It concludes with practical recommendations to strengthen institutional independence, transparency and accountability in Qatar.

KEY THEMES EXPLORED



CENTRALIZATION OF POWER

The concentration of authority and the subordination of state institutions.



LIMITED OVERSIGHT

The constraints on the Shura Council, the judiciary and financial control bodies.



OVERLAPPING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Appointments, conflicts of interest and the fusion of political, administrative and economic power.



COSTS TO SOCIETY

Restrictions on criticism, weakened public trust and the impact on state efficiency and public funds.



A PATH FOR REFORM

Recommendations to restore institutional independence, transparency and accountability.

