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The brand of peace:
The relations between Qatar, Palestine and
Israel

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Sintesi

La storia del Qatar è caratterizzata dalla necessità, vista la sua posizione geografica e le sue dimensioni, di un “patrono”, un alleato che possa proteggerlo e assicurargli sicurezza. Inizialmente tale ruolo fu svolto dalla madrepatria britannica che dal 1916 fino al 1972 creò un protettorato speciale con l'appoggio dello stesso Qatar, il quale temeva una possibile annessione da parte del più grande e più forte vicino saudita. Tuttavia, forte dell'appoggio statunitense specialmente a seguito della rivoluzione iraniana del 1979, l'Arabia Saudita rafforzò la sua egemonia nella regione del Golfo, spodestando di fatto la presenza inglese ed ergendosi a naturale protettore della regione. Lo stato del Qatar fu naturalmente attratto da questa politica di dominio poiché in grado di assicurargli stabilità: entrò a far parte del Consiglio di Cooperazione del Golfo e seguì in politica estera le linee dettate dal suo vicino e protettore. Agli inizi degli anni 90, però, l'invasione in Kuwait dimostrò la debolezza saudita e fece sorgere nuovamente la necessità qatarina di protezione e sicurezza. Furono gli Stati Uniti a colmare il vuoto lasciato dall'Arabia Saudita: si trattava di un'amicizia di mutua convenienza dal momento che gli Stati Uniti potevano assicurare massicci rifornimenti di armi e protezione mentre il Qatar garantiva accesso al suo territorio e dunque la possibilità per gli Stati Uniti di poter controllare una zona bollente. L'apertura verso gli Stati Uniti fu fortemente voluta specialmente da Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, figlio ed erede reale che nel 1995, in circostanze ancora oscure, assunse il potere e guidò il paese verso una rigogliosa crescita, trasformando il paese in uno dei poli più ricchi ed attraenti. La sua visione

rivoluzionò completamente la storia del paese specialmente in termini di politica estera, staccando definitivamente il cordone ombelicale dall'Arabia Saudita, costruendo una politica estera indipendente e definendo la reputazione del suo paese come mediatore imparziale all'interno di conflitti e dispute regionali ed internazionali. La sua strategia di "hedging" o differenziazione dei rischi era caratterizzata dall'identificazione di diversi scenari e l'individuazione di più soluzioni per poter raggiungere gli obiettivi prestabiliti attraverso l'uso delle sue ingenti risorse e la costante ricerca di nuove amicizie (*open door policy*) puntando sempre a garantire la sicurezza del suo piccolo emirato. Una politica estera così "iperattiva", nonostante le difficoltà delle minuscole dimensioni del paese, con una popolazione sparuta nel bel mezzo dei conflitti più accesi della regione, è stata possibile solo grazie alle notevoli risorse di gas e petrolio- il Qatar infatti produce il 30% del gas naturale usato in tutto il mondo-; grazie alla visione strategica e alle grandi capacità di leadership di Sheikh Hamad, il quale ha saputo mescolare l'indole diplomatica, le sopraffine abilità di marketing e la disponibilità di risorse per creare una politica che fosse silenziosa ma influente ed imponente. La riuscita di questo cocktail è legata soprattutto all'utilizzo di tre strumenti: investimenti ed aiuti; strumenti di branding, e politiche di mediazione di dispute e conflitti internazionali. In termini di investimenti, ad esempio, il Qatar è stato in grado di reinvestire i proventi dell'esportazione di gas e petrolio in diverse attività soprattutto grazie alla creazione di agenzie nazionali apposite quali la Yemeni-Qatari Real Estate Investment and Development Company o la Qatar Investment Authority che hanno direzionato gli investimenti qatarini verso gli altri paesi del Medio Oriente –la Siria è il principale recipiente- e verso il resto del mondo controllando colossi bancari come la Deutsche Bank, i grandi magazzini Harrods, il famoso marchio Valentino. Inoltre, il Qatar è uno dei principali donatori in Asia ed Africa sia in termini di aiuti allo sviluppo che di aiuti umanitari.

Per quanto riguarda le strategie di branding, esse sono state essenziali per questo piccolo stato perché hanno contribuito a farlo conoscere, dargli notorietà, affidabilità, qualità irrinunciabili per chi voglia aprire il proprio paese agli investimenti, al turismo e alla politica estera. Tali politiche hanno riguardato diversi settori, quello educativo e culturale, attraverso la promozione di eventi e kermesse internazionali e la presenza di università prestigiose; quello sportivo, emblematico è infatti l'evento calcistico più atteso, il Campionato mondiale che verrà disputato a Doha nel 2022; quello turistico, grazie al fiore all'occhiello qatarino, la compagnia nazionale di volo, la Qatar Airways. Un ruolo importante nel pubblicizzare il nome del Qatar lo ha svolto Sheikha Mozah, madre dell'attuale emiro e seconda delle tre

mogli del precedente emiro, la quale rappresenta non solo un'icona di stile ma anche di solidarietà grazie alle sue numerose iniziative in campo educativo. Anche Al Jazeera è stata fondamentale per accrescere il prestigio qatarino: i due canali, uno in lingua araba e l'altro in lingua inglese sono stati i primi a dar voce al popolo arabo, raccontandone le ingiustizie, le guerre.

Infine, in quanto promotore della pace, il Qatar, con un pool decisionale ridotto all'osso, è stato in grado di rendersi protagonista di conflitti importanti non solo nel Medio Oriente. Una politica estera così dispendiosa di energie e risorse, però, è stata possibile solo grazie ad una grande stabilità interna che progressivamente è venuta a diminuire con l'ascesa al trono nel 2013 di Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, il quale ha dirottato le sue attenzioni verso la politica interna, una scelta non solo dettata dal gusto personale, ma anche dalla necessità di rispondere al calo dei prezzi del petrolio e alle continue richieste di riforme interne spinte sia dalla Primavera Araba che dalle denunce di organizzazioni internazionali ed ONG. Nonostante ciò, al centro della politica estera, una costante è stata rappresentata dalla Palestina.

La questione palestinese è sempre stata in grado di smuovere le coscienze di arabi e musulmani -e non solo- diventando essa stessa parte della storia, della cultura e dell'identità araba: l' "immaterialità" della Palestina si è resa in questo modo materiale grazie anche al flusso migratorio palestinese, che ha portato con sé il peso dell'occupazione e l'ha raccontato nei paesi di emigrazione; grazie alla vicinanza territoriale e all'affinità religiosa. Tutto ciò ha contribuito a fare della Palestina una priorità per la politica estera ed anche un importante partner commerciale.

La storia delle relazioni diplomatiche tra i due paesi iniziò nel 1965 quando si aprì a Doha il primo ufficio di rappresentanza dell'Organizzazione per la Liberazione della Palestina (OLP), riconosciuto ufficialmente dal piccolo emirato come rappresentante degli interessi palestinesi nel 1995, aprendo un suo ufficio di rappresentanza a Gerusalemme, riconosciuta come capitale dello stato palestinese. A partire da allora, diverse dichiarazioni, conferenze, iniziative hanno dimostrato l'interesse qatarino per la Palestina: la proposta di riaprire il dialogo per la pace con una nuova iniziativa targata Qatar durante il biennio al Consiglio di Sicurezza delle Nazioni Unite (2006-2007); il Summit su Gaza, in occasione del primo attacco israeliano sulla fortezza di Hamas, con la presenza degli stessi leader di Hamas a rappresentare gli interessi palestinesi; la presentazione di una nuova versione dell'API, l'Arab Peace Initiative, l'iniziativa di pace presentata dall'Arabia Saudita (2009); il voto favorevole all'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite per la Palestina come "stato osservatore non-

membro” nel 2012; la visita di Sheikh Hamad e Sheikha Mozah a Gaza per la promozione di alcuni progetti di ricostruzione.

Oltre ad aver dimostrato in vario modo il proprio supporto per la causa palestinese, il Qatar ha anche svolto un ruolo cruciale come mediatore e facilitatore non solo tra Israele e Palestina, ma anche tra le due fazioni palestinesi Hamas e Fatah. Da una parte, infatti, il Qatar ha lavorato a favore della pace, come ad esempio in occasione della terza guerra a Gaza nell'estate del 2014, quando il Qatar e la Turchia, insieme al Segretario di Stato John Kerry hanno tentato di mediare una tregua, poi raggiunta grazie al contributo egiziano; dall'altra l'emiro ha cercato di riappacificare le due fazioni politiche palestinesi, definendo un piano per fasi per la creazione di un governo di coalizione con la sigla della Dichiarazione di Doha del 2012, che tuttavia non ha trovato seguito. È proprio analizzando il duplice rapporto tra Qatar e Fatah e Qatar e Hamas che vien fuori una preferenza per questo paese del Golfo per il movimento islamista palestinese, rompendo di fatto la reputazione qatarina di attore neutrale ed imparziale. Il rapporto tra le due si affermò alla fine degli anni '90 quando il gruppo palestinese, essendo stato cacciato dalla Giordania, cercava una nuova sede in cui stabilire il suo quartier generale. Inoltre, lo Stato del Qatar, stato musulmano wahhabita è molto più vicino e partecipa al gruppo islamista con il quale condivide la fede religiosa ed alcune idee politiche piuttosto che al partito laico di Abu Mazen, la cui reputazione, tra l'altro, era messa in discussione da frequenti scandali di corruzione, mentre Hamas sembrava molto più vicino alle esigenze del popolo palestinese e coerente nelle sue scelte politiche. Quando nel 2006, Hamas vinse le elezioni politiche e poi ruppe i rapporti con Fatah, giungendo ad una vera e propria faida militare e alla separazione anche geografica tra i due, con Hamas che controllava Gaza, fu chiaro che il gruppo di resistenza palestinese fosse un attore importante all'interno del panorama politico locale che non potesse essere escluso. In gioco, infatti, non c'erano solo gli equilibri locali ma anche regionali e internazionali: Hamas aveva soprattutto il supporto di Hezbollah e dunque dell'Iran, una situazione particolarmente allarmante per gli Stati Uniti e per Israele. Fu a questo punto che il ruolo del Qatar divenne cruciale: sfruttando la sua politica di “open door”, la vicinanza ideologica e religiosa, e ingenti donazioni e progetti di ricostruzione riuscì a sottrarre all'Iran il primato nella relazione con Hamas. A dimostrazione di ciò, è interessante analizzare la rappresentazione di Al Jazeera del conflitto, non tanto del conflitto Israele-Palestinese in sé, dal momento che tutti gli articoli prendono ovviamente le parti palestinesi, ma della disputa Fatah-Hamas. Infatti, ci sono alcuni articoli di denuncia dei

comportamenti della leadership dell'Autorità Nazionale Palestinese come ad esempio i "Palestinian Papers", un'inchiesta di Al Jazeera English che fa luce sul ruolo dell'Autorità Palestinese durante gli attacchi a Gaza, sulle sue relazioni con Israele. Emblematico è ad esempio l'articolo che racconta l'attività di lobbying adottata da parte dello stesso Abu Mazen in occasione del voto per il Goldstone Report, il rapporto di denuncia delle violazioni di diritti umani da parte israeliana durante gli attacchi di Gaza del 2009, con l'intento di posticipare il voto alle Nazioni Unite per mantenere il dialogo con gli Stati Uniti e Israele. Gran parte del ruolo qatarino in quanto sponsor per la pace e i diritti in Palestina è legato soprattutto all'attività di donatore, operando sia ufficialmente, attraverso progetti direttamente sponsorizzati dal governo o sue agenzie, sia informalmente, grazie ad associazioni e progetti di organizzazioni non-governative ma comunque legate al governo o a membri della famiglia reale. Per quanto riguarda il primo filone, gli aiuti ufficiali e diretti, la Palestina è il terzo recipiente più importante in termini di aiuti allo sviluppo tra cui rientrano i prestiti per il pagamento dei salari dei funzionari pubblici spesso bloccati da Israele come forma di strangolamento dell'economia del paese, e la ricostruzione di Gaza. Per quest'ultima è stata istituita una vera e propria commissione guidata dall'Ambasciatore Al Amadi, la Commissione per la Ricostruzione di Gaza che ha all'attivo attualmente i seguenti progetti: Hamad city, un vero e proprio nuovo plesso cittadino; lo Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Hospital per le vittime della guerra; la ricostruzione delle due strade principali Salah Ed Deen Road e Al-Rasheed Costal Road; il Palestinian Stadium; Hope city presso Khan Younis ed il progetto per la realizzazione di un impianto energetico per Gaza in cooperazione con il Quartetto Internazionale e Israele, il tutto per un totale di circa 800milioni di dollari. In termini di aiuti umanitari, invece, il più recente esempio di generosità qatarina è rappresentato dalla Conferenza dei donatori al Cairo, a seguito della guerra a Gaza nel 2014. Gli attacchi israeliani hanno causato danni tre volte maggiori della guerra del 2008 per un totale di 4.5 miliardi di dollari. Sarebbe questa la cifra stimata dal governo palestinese per rispondere alle iniziali esigenze di ricostruzione e soccorso, a cui aggiungere altri 7 miliardi per la ripresa a lungo termine dell'economia palestinese. La Conferenza dei donatori ha raggiunto un totale di 5.4 miliardi di dollari, di cui un miliardo è stato promesso solo dal Qatar. Nonostante il piccolo emirato preferisca gli interventi individuali che fanno bene al suo marchio, è necessario citare anche l'impegno del Qatar a livello multilaterale. Per quanto riguarda, invece, gli interventi informali ed indiretti, si tratta di una cifra che progressivamente è aumentata, raggiungendo il suo picco nel 2012 per progetti legati all'ambito sanitario, educativo ed umanitario.

Nel primo settore, l'organizzazione non-governativa principale è certamente la Croce Rossa qatarina, responsabile di gran parte dei progetti sanitari a Gaza; nel secondo, l'associazione Al-Fakhoora supporta i giovani di Gaza nello studio con borse di studio e la ricostruzione di strutture destinate allo studio, progetto presentato da Sheikha Mozah e sponsorizzato insieme all'UNDP e UNICEF. Altro importante progetto, finanziato in parte dal Qatari Diar Real Estate Company, è Rawabi, una smart city progettata per sorgere a nord di Ramallah e ospitare famiglie palestinesi e le loro attività commerciali e contribuire fortemente alla ricostruzione del paese.

Tutti questi progetti, gli interventi politici del Qatar per la pace e la salvaguardia dei diritti del popolo palestinese sembrano confermarsi anche nei continui interventi di denuncia contro Israele e nell'adozione di una politica di boicottaggio dei suoi prodotti. Tuttavia, esiste anche un'importante storia di relazioni segrete e nascoste tra Israele e Qatar, una relazione complicata dall'appartenenza a due blocchi contrapposti-da una parte Israele, il paese occupante, dall'altra la Lega Araba nemico numero uno di Israele e la sua politica-, ma in fondo accomunati da interessi comuni come le risorse di gas liquefatto che Israele cercava disperatamente prima di rendersi conto di essere al centro di uno dei bacini più ricchi del Mediterraneo e che per il Qatar rappresentavano un'occasione per stringere nuove amicizie strategiche e rafforzare indirettamente il suo rapporto con gli Stati Uniti e di fatto la sua sicurezza. Un'amicizia del genere, però, non poteva essere pubblica e svolgersi alla luce del sole senza attrarre critiche e destare delusione e rabbia non solo da parte palestinese ma soprattutto da parte degli avversari qatari, Arabia Saudita ed Emirati Arabi Uniti in testa agli altri. Ecco perché spesso tale rapporto è stato tenuto segreto ed intervallato da rotture e denunce ufficiali ed incontri ufficiali e flussi commerciali.

Il momento storico che segnò l'avvicinamento tra Qatar e Israele fu la Conferenza di Madrid del 1991, quando sembrava che con l'imminente processo di Oslo la pace fosse alle porte e che entrambe le parti potessero finalmente risolvere il loro burrascoso passato: in questo clima fiducioso il Qatar, ma anche altri paesi del Golfo pensarono alla normalizzazione con Israele in vista della pace. A partire dal 1994, nonostante il fallimento di Oslo per l'assassinio di Rabin, iniziarono una serie di dialoghi ed inviti da parte dei due paesi come ad esempio la visita dell'allora Ministro degli Esteri Shimon Peres nel 1996 che inaugurò l'apertura di un ufficio commerciale israeliano a Doha. Si trattava di una vera e propria ambasciata dato che non solo il capo missione Roi Rosenblit possiede il grado di ambasciatore, ma perché attraverso quell'ufficio si svolgevano una serie di attività consolari che non si addicevano ad un ufficio commerciale. A chiarificare il rapporto che intercorreva tra le due parti fu la Quarta

Conferenza Economica dei paesi del Medio Oriente e Nord Africa che si tenne a Doha, un'importante vetrina per il Qatar, al quale però l'emiro invitò anche una rappresentanza israeliana. L'evento scatenò non solo il dissenso locale ma anche di gran parte dei paesi partecipanti alla conferenza che minacciarono di boicottare la loro partecipazione. Per placare gli animi Sheikh Hamad fu costretto da una parte a declassare l'incontro da "summit" al quale in genere partecipano i primi ministri o ministri esteri, a "conferenza" dove una qualsiasi rappresentanza ministeriale basta, evitando in tal modo la presenza del Primo Ministro Netanyahu, che fu invece sostituito dal suo ministro dell'economia e uno stuolo di businessmen israeliani; e dall'altra a denunciare duramente la politica di occupazione israeliana per salvaguardare la credibilità del paese. Nonostante ciò, molti paesi boicottarono la conferenza mentre gli altri presenti non ebbero problemi a stringere accordi commerciali con Israele.

Lo scoppio della Seconda Intifada nuovamente misero il Qatar al centro di polemiche a causa della presenza israeliana a Doha, tanto che i paesi membri dell'Organizzazione della Conferenza Islamica minacciarono di boicottare un summit ospitato proprio dal Qatar se quest'ultimo non avesse chiuso l'ufficio commerciale di Israele. La promessa non fu mantenuta e l'incontro si tenne ugualmente nel 1999 insieme ad una serie di altri incontri segreti ed ufficiali tra le due parti, come la visita del Ministro degli Esteri Tzipi Livni e del Primo Ministro Shimon Peres nel 2007-2008.

L'idillio tra i due paesi, però, non era destinato a durare: l'attacco israeliano a Gaza non poteva non trovare seguito, tanto che la stessa Sheikha Mozah organizzò e guidò una manifestazione di denuncia nella capitale contro Israele, fino alla decisione definitiva di chiudere l'ufficio commerciale e allontanare dal paese tutti i suoi funzionari nel 2009. La chiusura dell'ufficio ha rappresentato sicuramente una dura battuta di arresto per i rapporti bilaterali tra i due stati ma di certo non la loro fine definitiva, nonostante il rafforzamento del legame con Hamas e la crescita di un movimento di intellettuali israeliani di denuncia contro lo stato qatarino proprio per questo suo rapporto pericoloso, che comunque ha rappresentato più una copertura che un ostacolo al mantenimento di accordi commerciali. Il Qatar in quanto membro della Lega Araba dovrebbe infatti adottare le misure di boicottaggio dei prodotti israeliani, una norma introdotta nel 1948, anche se non obbligatoria, che prevede tre livelli di boicottaggio: i. il boicottaggio di prodotti israeliani; ii. il boicottaggio di aziende che commerciano con aziende israeliane; iii. il boicottaggio di aziende che commerciano con aziende che a loro volta commerciano con quelle israeliane. Il piccolo

emirato, così come tutti gli altri paesi della Lega, ha deciso di mettere in pratica il primo livello di boicottaggio: nel 1963 lo Stato del Qatar ha adottato la legge per la creazione di un ufficio *ad hoc* per il boicottaggio di Israele con la definizione di sanzioni piuttosto dure per i trasgressori, una legge che non è stata né applicata né rispettata dal momento che il Qatar intratteneva ed intrattiene tutt'ora relazioni commerciali con Israele. Inizialmente, l'interesse principale israeliano era il gas, risorsa di cui il Qatar disponeva in grandi quantità, ma sulla quale non si riuscì mai a trovare un accordo a causa delle pressioni del restante mondo arabo e musulmano sul Qatar, proprio per il suo rapporto con Israele. Oggi, invece, il Qatar è uno dei pochi paesi arabi che autorizza l'entrata di israeliani nel paese senza problemi, consente chiamate dirette da e con Israele, ma soprattutto che commercializza con esso. Il flusso di scambi con Israele riguarda sia le esportazioni, per lo più plastiche e resine, che le importazioni, metalli e materiali da costruzioni, macchinari e strumenti medici più di tutto, registrando ovviamente un calo a seguito della chiusura dell'ufficio a Doha ma si tratta comunque di uno scambio rilevante, almeno dal punto di vista politico. Sulla base anche del rapporto del Qatar con Israele, è possibile tirare le somme del ruolo di mediazione svolto dall'emirato, individuarne i successi e i limiti. Se in termini di natura del conflitto, la difficoltà della situazione in sé fa partire svantaggiato l'emirato, ci sono altri fattori da valutare come il livello d'imparzialità percepita, gli strumenti di leva, il tempismo dell'intervento di mediazione e gli obiettivi della mediazione. Riguardo l'imparzialità, i fatti presentati dimostrano la difficoltà qatarina nel presentarsi come totalmente neutrale rispetto alla questione, non solo rispetto al conflitto Israele-Palestinese, ma anche rispetto alla disputa Hamas-Fatah, dove è evidente che l'ago della bilancia, soprattutto in questo caso, sembra pendere a favore della prima. In termini di leve, le risorse naturali e monetarie che ne derivano contribuiscono a fornire all'emirato una grande forza contrattuale; le tempistiche degli interventi di mediazione, invece, in genere dettati dalle necessità dell'aggravamento della situazione palestinese ad opera degli attacchi israeliani, sono strettamente legati anche agli obiettivi della mediazione, portando la questione al nocciolo. Nonostante le difficoltà dettate da fattori esterni, i limiti strutturali legati alla mancanza di istituzioni diplomatiche durature in grado di poter mediare indipendentemente dal leader carismatico accordi e dichiarazioni, e i dubbi sull'imparzialità, il Qatar possiede tutte le carte, e soprattutto le leve giuste per poter riuscire nella mediazione del conflitto. Se ciò non è avvenuto è legato anche ai motivi di tali interventi: nonostante il paese, infatti, definisca la Palestina una "priorità" della sua politica estera, così in realtà non è dal momento che la Palestina rappresenta una priorità per il Qatar solo quando dona prestigio al marchio

qatarino, costruito proprio sulla promozione della pace. La Palestina, infatti, è l'Excalibur della politica estera in Medio Oriente, poiché chiunque riuscirà a risolvere il conflitto si aggiudicherà la gloria eterna, ed ancora di più chi continuerà a provarci potrà sfruttare ininterrottamente questa fonte di notorietà, cosa che il Qatar continua a fare nella maniera più fastosa e mediaticamente più vistosa. Sarebbe tuttavia ingiusto non riconoscere gli sforzi di mediazione del Qatar che ha comunque più volte contribuito alla facilitazione di accordi e tregue, così come ingiusto nei confronti di tante iniziative soprattutto da parte di organizzazioni non-governative non riconoscere invece il disinteressato intervento di quest'ultime. Nonostante ciò, risulta errato l'approccio qatarino alla questione palestinese, un approccio incentrato soprattutto sull'intervento di ricostruzione e progetti di soccorso immediato, e dunque un approccio umanitario, applicabile però a catastrofi naturali più che alla questione in sé che al contrario richiede maggiormente una strategia politica poiché politico è il problema palestinese. La vera risposta alle necessità palestinesi, dunque, non è umanitaria, perché gli aiuti umanitari creano dipendenza ed è proprio di questa dipendenza che il marchio della pace costruito dal Qatar si alimenta, ma è politica, una politica di *ri*-costruzione delle istituzioni, di *ri*-conciliazione della popolazione e *ri*-creazione dell'autorità dello Stato di Palestina.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to delve into the relations between Qatar and Palestine and between Qatar and Israel, especially referring to the mediation efforts the tiny sheikhdom has made. The interest for this topic is first of all related to the exchange program I did in Qatar through the Overseas project of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice for five months, where I had the opportunity to attend some classes offered by the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies (QFIS). During my stay in Doha, I decided to destiny part of my time to research for my dissertation project.

Qatar has developed rapidly since its formation as independent state, turning from being the smallest desert emirate of the Gulf totally committed only to pearl trade to becoming today not only one of the richest country in the region but in the world. Its principal asset is represented by its large gas sites which contributed to the urban, social, cultural development and to the enrichment of the country. With its skyscrapers, shopping malls it has been the suitable cornice for thousands of sportive manifestations, cultural premiere and political and international meetings.

The most relevant peculiarity of Qatar, however, it is not actually its impressive progress but rather the creation of an *ad hoc* foreign policy able to reach international recognition. The Qatari hyperactive foreign policy has been important for two main reasons: firstly, it assured security to a rich but very small country situated into a region characterized by frequent tensions and secondly, it provided legitimization, prestige and reputation as “mediator” of different conflicts over the region. The Palestinian-Israeli question is one of these which has contributed to the spread and the confirmation of the Qatari “brand of peace”.

The Palestinian issue, in fact, is key for any Arab neighbours, arousing a general sense of identification, compassion and sympathy, calling on the intervention of its brothers and sisters and even more on the global intervention. Palestine is the injustice *par excellence* and Qatar is not deaf to its plight. The Gulf state commitment for the Palestinian issue can be distinguished in terms of diplomacy, mediation, financial and humanitarian aids. However, among the reasons for the Qatari interest for the Palestinian issue, it is necessary to include also the need to challenge its regional counterpart, Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of 2007, in fact, Saudi Arabia tried to find a position within the Lebanese and Palestinian conflicts, presenting itself as an alternative to the Western and the Iranian parts, which supported respectively the moderate faction, Fatah, and the radical one, Hizbullah and Hamas. In order to arrest the hostilities and even more to arrest the great appeal of Iran, Saudi Arabia brokered in February 2007 the Mecca agreement between Fatah and Hamas for a Palestinian national unity government. Nevertheless, the agreement was abrogated by Hamas when, in June 2007, it took the control of the Gaza Strip, underling de facto the failure of the Saudi initiative. In such a context Qatar started to use its diplomatic skills in order to contribute to the end of the political impasse in Lebanon in 2008, and to re-open a dialogue between the two Palestinian parties, even if without any immediate success (Kamrava, 2011 p.109), counterbalancing both Saudi Arabia and Iran especially through Qatari renovated tie with Hamas. Not only my physical presence in Qatar but also my interest for the Palestinian issue contributed to the choice of this topic, in order to clarify the history of the Qatari-Palestinian relations, focusing on its interventions as mediator and finally evaluating it. Furthermore, a particular attention went also to the research regarding the Qatari-Israeli relations, underlining the anomaly of an Arab country which is part of the Arab League and should support the boycott of Israel, which publicly denounces its aberration against the Palestinian people but still has trade relations with it.

The research of the materials has been conducted on the ground through the consultation of public libraries such as the Georgetown University in Qatar Library, the Qatar National Library and the Knowledge Centre of the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics of Qatar. Another crucial contribution has been given by personal meetings and interviews with academic experts and government functionaries.

The first chapter (Chapter I) will present an analysis of the emirate foreign policy and its efforts at delineating its own line, independently from other Gulf actors (Saudi Arabia) and international actors (USA), where Palestine seems to play a key role in determining the Qatari foreign policy. Subsequently, Chapter II will investigate the Qatari diplomatic relations with Palestine on the one hand, in terms of speeches, policies, with and in favour of Palestine, and on the other hand its tools and interventions in terms of development aids, investments, charities' projects in Gaza and West Bank. Particular attention will be paid to the representation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and their actors given by one of the most important soft power's instrument of the Qatari national and foreign policy, Al Jazeera, in order to examine the Persian Gulf country contribution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the Fatah and Hamas break up. The Qatari mediation efforts, in fact, are also addressed to resolve the Hamas-Fatah dispute. Furthermore, since speaking about Palestine is speaking also about Israel, the essay will finally approach to the description of the relations between Israel and Qatar, both public and secret, since Qatar, Oman and Bahrein are the only countries in the Gulf to have established good relations with Israel, especially on the economic and trade level (Chapter III).

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Chapter I

Developments and changes of Qatari foreign policy

1.A historical overview

The need for security has always been a constant in the Persian Gulf, a need that has always led to identify a patron, especially for a tiny state as Qatar. The lack of security for Qatar met the British expansionist desires with the sign in 1916 of an agreement for the creation of a special protectorate, that lasted until 1971 (Roberts, 2013 p. 234). The Qatari decision to be under the British protection was not only a defensive choice, but also a surviving necessity determined by the risk of being swallowed by the bigger and stronger Saudi Arabia, as the Treaty of Jeddah also underlined. The British-Saudi agreement, in fact, recognised the sovereignty of Ibn Saud over the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd in exchange of the Saudi reassurance from future attacks against the British protectorates in the Persian Gulf (Wright, 2011 pp. 77-78). With the independence and the first ruling of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamed Al Thani, Qatar started its state-building process, on the one hand, refusing to be annexed by

Saudi Arabia, and on the other trying to find a new patron that could assure the sheikhdom's protection (Wright, 2012 p. 297).

Paradoxically, this role could be assured only by Saudi Arabia. In fact, after the British withdrew firstly from the Suez zone and then from the Gulf, Saudi Arabia became gradually the natural regional protector, thanks to the US support and the Nixon "twin-pillar" strategy, focused on the parallel empowerment of the two giant of the Gulf, Iran and Saudi Arabia, in order to create a pro-US barrier against the Soviet influence. However, the 1979 Iranian revolution, and basically the failure of the Nixon plan, consolidated the Saudi hegemony. The Iranian-Iraqi war and the Iranian threat to the oil routes convinced Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamed Al Thani to join the Saudi sponsored Gulf Cooperation Council and subsequently to shape the national foreign policy on the basis of a common strategy that was however never directly imposed by the Saudi state, that instead gave full autonomy to the other regional allies in their foreign affairs (Wright, 2011 pp. 90-1).

Nevertheless, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, endangered the entire Persian Gulf, demonstrating the fragility of the Saudi monarchy in guaranteeing a protective edge for its neighbours. An aggravating factor was certainly the resurgence of the ancient border dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the break of the 1965 British-brokered agreement on mutual recognition of the two borders with the al-Khafus incident: a Saudi highway, built on a disputed zone, limiting *de facto* the Qatari direct access to the UAE, resulted in a violent protest in the border city of al-Khafus (Rabi, 2009 p. 445). It was clear that the Saudi umbrella was not safe anymore and there was the urge to find a new friend that could concretely assure to Qatar a massive military protection. Such a friend were the United States which signed in 1992 a Defense Cooperation Agreement, marking the beginning of a long lasting Qatari-US military friendship (Barakat, 2014 p. 7). The worsening of the Saudi-Qatari relations reached a rupture point with the bloodless coup of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir's successor and son, who in June 1995 seized the control of the Qatari state¹. The reasons of the coup are still unclear: some argues that was a US lobbying operation, other that the former Emir was an economic threat, still others reported some rumours related to the potential succession of another member of the family, or still that the Crown Prince could not bear the

¹ The reconciliation between the father Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad and the Crown Prince happened only in 2004 when the father was allowed to come back to be present during his wife's funeral with honours and celebrations and the official recognition of the Emir as "Emir Father" (Wright, 2012 p. 300).

effects of the Saudi influence on his father (Barakat, 2012 p.3). This generational change was not welcomed by the Saudis who expressed their disappointment during the Muscat GCC summit in December 1995, refusing the Qatari candidacy for the Secretary General, with the subsequent Qatari delegation's boycott of the following summit (Rabi, p. 446). Moreover, the Saudis tried to organize a coup in February, but with no success (Barakat, 2014 p. 7; Wright, 2012 p.298). However, it was with Sheikh Hamad that the country saw the most important changes especially in terms of foreign policy, and particularly in playing a more relevant role on the regional level and in creating its name in the international arena (Fromherz, 2012 p.88). He ruled until 2013, when spontaneously abdicated in favour of his son, the current Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Qatar incredibly evolved since the British withdrawal, starting from being a group of pearl fishermen and today becoming one of the richest country in the world. This evolution saw different stages and regional/international protectors.

1.1. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani: a personal vision of Qatar

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani revolutionized the Qatari regime, its foreign policy and its prospects, aiming at transforming Qatar from a small forgotten state of the Gulf to one of the richest and most attractive state not only of the Gulf. He was a young, fresh and visionary leader, graduate from the Sandhurst military college, with a more international view than his father, who distinguished himself occupying important position such as Chairman of the Higher Council for Planning and Minister of Defense in 1977 (Roberts, 2013 p. 234) and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in the 80s, a turbulent period for the sheikhdom's finances, when however, the Crown Prince demonstrated to be able to successfully bear all the responsibilities, contributing to the development of his country. When he assumed the control, his contribution was crucial: not only equipped Qatar with a solid forward-looking program and strategy, but this plan completely excluded any other interferences, especially by Saudi Arabia (Wright, pp. 297-98).

A prominent feature of the Qatari regime is the high level of personalization, deeply based on the enlighten leader's figure, who is responsible for the innovation and reformation process

and where a small elitist group takes part to the decision-making system. As far as Sheikh Hamad, his idiosyncrasy and modern worldview and governing style contributed to a formulation of a long-term plan, linked not only to the young age and psychological capacity of the person but also to his distinctive abilities of analysis, entrepreneurial and compromising attitudes. In fact, a personalized model and a dynasty based on a ruling family has to take into consideration all the intra-family and tribal members' interests and disputes: hence, tribal and religious affiliation is crucial. Certainly, personal skills are not enough for the success of a state and have to be analysed with external factors. In addition to this, because of the dynastic system, there is a limited number of professional figures within the decision-making process, hence a crucial role belongs to intellectuals and technocrats, such as the Brookings Institute or the RAND, two research institutes about policy which helped with their reports, analysis and articles governmental and non-governmental institutions on different topics such as education, health care, energy, security, and other questions of domestic policy concern and on the development of different capabilities of planning, risk evaluation and cost-benefit analysis (Wright, 2011 pp. 80-3).

1.2. From the “mono-dependence” to the “risk differentiation”

Until the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's coronation, the general nature of this little state was the bandwagon of external or regional powers that could assure a substantial protection to Qatar. The first patron were the British, that were able to assure a discrete level of protection especially from the Saudi prospects. Nevertheless, the Saudi attraction force was too strong especially because of the numerous common interests the two countries have. What in fact really justifies the Saudi aspirations as regional power is Islam: both Qatar and Saudi follow the Wahhabism, a particular Islamic juridical school (Khatib, 2013 p. 422). Secondly the two shared concerns over Iran. The Persian state, in fact, with its Islamic revolution called into question the legitimacy of the other Gulf monarchies. In addition to this, the size, the long history made Iran the suitable aspirant as regional ruler, yet the linguistic, religious and cultural differences with the other Gulf countries contributed to the increase of a mutual mistrust and aversion. It is necessary to do not undervalue the sectarian differences between the majority of the GCC countries -mostly Sunni as Saudi Arabia- and Iran, a Shia country, that was able to support and enforce in different contest the Shia minorities such as the Syrian regime, the Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas in Gaza. Not only common interests and worries

allowed Saudi Arabia to be considered the natural Qatari patron, but especially its size and wealth (Kamrava, 2011 pp. 104-176).

Despite this, the Saudi state could not guarantee an effective defence especially a military defence, what instead was and is still essential for the tiny state and the Kuwait invasion demonstrated exactly the weakness of the Saudi umbrella and the need for a new reassurance. Moreover, the new Emir, Sheikh Hamad, completely changed the Qatari foreign policy, especially its reliance on Saudi Arabia. Even if his father tried to depict an autonomous path for its state, it was deeply shaped by the Saudi line. The Crown Prince, instead, started a new era of independence and a turn from the mono-dependence to a risk-differentiation strategy. Such a strategy, in terms of foreign policy is better known as “hedging strategy”. Hedging is “a behaviour in which a country seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple policy options that are intended to produce mutually counteracting effects, under the situation of high-uncertainties and high-stakes.” (Kamrava, 2013 p. 51). Through hedging, Qatar is able to develop different tactics and alternatives in case of failure of one of them, a reality that needs to be considered especially by a small state like Qatar is.

This new strategy represented the adoption of an “open-door” policy for exiled personalities and historical enemies of the region, becoming friends of everyone, as a way to adapt to the regional forces and identify new trends and partners to safe Qatar interests and role. The risk differentiation is the core of the Gulf country foreign policy: disparate tools and relations to reduce the high risks of an enterprising and provident strategy, like the differentiation of relations within the regional panorama for example with Saudi Arabia and its enemy Iran (Khatib, 2013 p.420). Regarding Saudi Arabia for example, this led on the one hand to a pacific and friendly relations, but without a direct dependence from its protection, on the other, it strengthened Qatari relations with Iran and nominated the United States as its new military protector (Wright, 2012 p. 301). As far as Iran, because of the joint control of the Nord Field/South Pars gas field by the two Gulf states, Qatar tried to keep good relations with Iran, even when this signified a singular strategy, far from the GCC and the Saudi one (Wright, 2011 p.88)². However, Iran could not play the substitutive role of Saudi because common strategic interests, the presence of a considerable number of Iranian citizens in Qatar and a discrete military power were not enough to attenuate the differences in terms of culture, religion and politics, especially after the 1979 Revolution. Such a role could be played only

² A clear example is the Qatari opposition to the implementation of sanctions against Iran, as demonstrated by its negative vote during its membership of the Security Council in 2006 (Rabi, 2009 p.446).

by someone who could not really represent a threat for the regional vision of Sheikh Hamad but simultaneously could be essential in assuring peace, security and investment: the United States.

The United States offered protection especially against the two main threats of the Gulf area, Iran and Iraq and military cooperation, that assured to Qatar an access to US equipment and in 1996 the realization of the biggest US airbase for the CENTCOM, Al-Udaid, an investment whose cost was about 1 billion of dollars, achieving the relocation of a part of the US airbase from Saudi Arabia to Qatar after the 9/11, a site that became strategic especially during the Bush administration and its War on Terror and the deterioration of the US-Saudi relations (Roberts, 2013 p. 235), a situation that benefitted especially Qatar-US friendship³. In December 2013, in fact, a new ten-year defence cooperation agreement was signed, followed by a contract to the value of \$11 billion for the purchase of high-tech arms in July 2014 (Congressional Research Service, 2014 p.4). Such a protection was essential in order to have more autonomy and space to act into the regional and international chessboard without any security concern. Despite the massive protection offered by the US, Qatar did not want to be considered a US vassal, affirming in different occasions its autonomy: the relation with Iran and Hamas and the great autonomy and freedom given to Al Jazeera are the two clear instances (Wright, 2012 pp. 293-301).

With the rule of the new Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, another approach has been implemented: His Highness, in fact, defined different priorities, basically more on a domestic and internal level than on the international and regional one. If an impressive foreign policy was possible, it was because of a strong domestic policy. However, on the long term an intense attention on foreign goals distorted the attention from Qatar's domestic priorities⁴. Between 2011 and 2012, sixty Qatari citizens organized public meetings titled "Qataris for reform", listing some key issues of the sheikhdom such as the lack of public consultation,⁵ lack of access to public information (Khatib, 2013 p.430). One of the most important indicator of this shift is the nominee of the Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani as also Prime Minister (Khatib, p. 418). Moreover, the Emir is focusing on some

³ The relations with US did not flourish until 1973 when was opened the first US embassy in Doha but because of a trade dispute was only until after the 1991 Gulf War that the partnership began (Congressional Research Service, p.4).

⁴ Author's interview with Sultan Barakat, Professor at the University of York, Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies at the Doha Institute and former Senior Fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy and Director of Research for the Brookings Doha Center.

⁵ The Emir promised, in fact, in 2011 elections for the first time, elections that never happened.

domestic issues such as the announcement in May 2014 of a Labour reform in order to improve the rights especially of non-nationals;⁶ the increase in expenditure for health, education, infrastructure, transportation, reaching half of the total budget expenditure for 2015; the launch of the first agricultural projects and food security strategies (The Business Year, 2015 p. 13-15).

2. Features of the Qatari Foreign policy

Qatar became very soon a hyperactive pawn on the regional scene and even on the international one, assuming a relevant position despite the lack of some classical features, usually considered essential by International Relations' scholars in order to gain power on the stage.

In the first place, Qatar is situated in one of the most turbulent region of the globe, the Middle East, an area perpetually affected by endless wars and conflicts not only between neighbours but also between international actors, who wanted to protect their personal interests, especially energetic interests. Regarding regional actors, Qatar's attempt to be a GCC states' challenger or at least their peer, led to a constant competition, demonstrated also by the incapability of the GCC to build a multilateral trust (Kamrava, 2013 pp. 27-28). Secondly, it is set on a small surface (11,437 km²) with a small population (2.545,603 in February 2016) that is constituted mostly by non-nationals⁷ (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2016 p. 15): Qatar, in fact, is extremely attractive for labour migration fluxes, as the rest of the GCC countries, a trend that regards Arab and non-Arab workforce, whose positions are basically within the private sector while the public one is still reserved for Qatari people (CIRS, 2015 p. 3).

Being a dwarf in terms of demography in such a region leads to a lot of security issues since it limits the possibility to create a powerful army, resulting in the need for a patron that can provide the military security Qatar cannot provide on its own. On the one hand, being under

⁶ Even if official sources deny that the reform is a consequence of international critiques about workers' conditions (The Business Year, p. 13) –the last one published by Amnesty International in March 2016, denouncing the labour exploitation behind the World Cup 2022 (for further information see Amnesty International,.(2016). *The Ugly Side of the Beautiful Game*. London: Amnesty International Ltd. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/3548/2016/en/>) – it is quite evident that the intervention is not or not only a strategy to regulate the exigencies of the state's workforce but notably to protect the international image Qatar has.

⁷ According the data of February 2016, on a total of 1,965 live births, the 71% is non-Qatari (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, p. 15).

the US umbrella means that there are no more protection concerns because the US wing is strong, well equipped and stable on the Qatari territory, yet, on the other hand this increases the leverage that its protector can use to influence the Gulf state's policies, and the same susceptibility invests Qatar in terms of bilateral relations because of the massive presence of foreign nationals (Wright, 2011 p. 84).

Despite all these negative elements, the Qatari foreign policy followed the strategy of the risk differentiation and focused on its strong points in order to achieve power and escape from anonymity (Kamrava) and vulnerability (Khatib, 2013). This was possible especially because of three main factors: possibility, will, and capability. Possibility in terms of budget, resources and autonomy; will in terms of vision and capability in terms of strategy. As far as resources, the Persian Gulf is the emergent energetic hub of the MENA region, and Qatar one of the richest country of the zone: like its GCC neighbours it has conspicuous hydrocarbon resources and controls the third largest gas fields, leading the country to be the global producer and exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Gas to Liquid Fuels (GTL) (CIRS,2010 p.16 ; Barakat,2012 p.5) - the 32% of LNG in the world is from Qatar - boasting a total of 872tcf of natural gas and 25 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves (The Business Year, 2016).

Table 1. GDP per capita: top five countries and selected West Asia and North Africa states, 2011

Global rating	Country	GDP per capita (US\$)
1	Qatar	102,943
2	Luxembourg	80,119
3	Singapore	59,711
4	Norway	53,471
5	Brunei	49,384
5	Hong Kong	49,137
7	United Arab Emirates	48,158
11	Kuwait	41,961
26	Israel	30,975
33	Bahrain	27,556
35	Oman	26,519
39	Saudi Arabia	24,237
59	Lebanon	15,523

Source: Barakat, 2012 p. 5.

The discovery of gas and oil in the Gulf changed the balance of power in favour of the so-called “rentier states”, demonstrating the importance of energy resources and petrodollars in comparison with traditional criteria of power (Kamrava, 2013 p. 24). Since the reliance on only gas and oil could be too risky, the petro-income were re-invested not only in the energy sector but in other sectors through diverse investments on the basis of the idea of the empowerment of Qatar and through the strategy of “security diversification” (Roberts, 2013 p. 236). Subsequently, an emblematic project is the Dolphin, a project that meets the regional demand especially of UAE and Oman. The Dolphin will provide gas source from the North Field to the United Arab Emirates, with the construction of a submarine pipeline to transport the gas (The Business Year, 2016). Oil and gas revenues guarantee the only form of hard-power Qatar has, wealth, which contributes to a greater level of autonomy also linked to the distance from Saudi Arabia and the security shield provided by US that allow the small state to focus on other goals and to assure internal stability (Kamrava, pp. 9-43). Also will is essential: Qatar has been projected in the future and programmed to assume a central role within the regional area as part of the Sheikh Hamad’s personal vision that was then

concretized through the Qatar National Vision 2030, an ambitious plan for the modernization, the development of a strong and sustainable nation. The last element for the success of Doha is capabilities. They are, however, idiosyncratic capabilities related to the Crown Prince, his vision and strategy of risk differentiation and security diversification.

2.1. Hard vs Soft Power

Foreign policy of a state is a pencil case which offers a wide range of possible colours to be used, shifting from money and guns to propaganda with an infinite number of other nuances and combinations in the middle. Despite this, the gap between hard and soft power appears to be deeper than before and more evident: on the one hand the realistic idea of coercion, of the brutal force to be imposed, to achieve authority and domain, on the other the co-option, “the ability to attract support through idea appeal”. While the soft power is a young concept forged by Joseph Nye (1990) in reference especially to the US soft power – the values of freedom and democracy, the US popular culture – that however has always existed but the concept gained success as valent alternative to the hard power; the hard power, in the dual form of military force (sticks) and economic reward (carrots), represents simultaneously the primordial tool and the last resort under the control of the sole government to achieve the national interests (Gray, 2011 p. 9). The Marshall Plan and the NATO, for instance, perfectly underline the able use of coercion by the US after the Second World War (Nye, 2006 pp. 28-9).

Particularly, in the basic form of force, hard power has been considered by realists as the unique form of power (Chong, 2007 pp. 53-4). Bismarck, in fact, is reported to say “[t]his policy cannot succeed through speeches ...and songs; it can be carried out only through blood and iron”. Nevertheless, the final goal of the German unification achieved by the Iron Chancellor seemed on the edge of the dissolution at the end of the Second World War because of the same recipe of “blood” and “iron”. The Second World War was the emblem of the impracticability of hard power which led only destruction and death (Cooper, 2004 pp. 2-4). The subsequent Cold War was, indeed, based on a subtle equilibrium between a technological race to demonstrate military superiority and the fear for a new war whose consequences could be catastrophic. Consequently, it was quite evident that the fallouts outweighed benefits of the use of force, which progressively lost its utility in the global panorama, becoming counterproductive or even ineffective, as the war in Iraq and the 9/11 demonstrated, and

always in need for a legal or at least a moral justification. Furthermore, the warfare is also linked to taxation and illiberal laws which endanger the protection of basic freedoms and human rights, like the Patriot Act did⁸. In addition to this, a relevant contribution to the negative propaganda of the war is given by media, which globally show the effects of violence (Gray, 2011 p. 5-9).

The effective alternative to hard power seemed to be the so called soft power, “the ability to get what you want through attraction”. The seduction a country produces into others is usually related to its culture, ideas, ideals, language and policies, particularly to foreign policy: once they influence others, they automatically receive a legitimization. Regarding the soft power’s ownership, it is more independent than hard power from the government’s control, since the attractive force can be exercised also by non-governmental actors (Gray, p. 32). Referring to the US soft power, in fact, popular culture was able to promote it thanks to the innumerable emigrated communities which contributed to export the US model in their homeland but also thanks to fashion, media, cinema and music, targeting especially young people who emulated in customs their US peers. In terms of values, there is the need for affinity and association with the principles proposed in order to trigger the attractive effect. The US, for example, presented itself as the bulwark of liberty, democracy, human rights: the two most exemplificative manifestation of this kind of influence are the Goddess of Democracy, the Chinese replica of the Statue of Liberty erected during the protests of 1989 in the Tiananmen Square and the Afghan people asking for copies of the US Bill of Rights after their liberation in 2001 (Nye, 2006 pp. 26-30). Moreover, the instantaneous access to information thanks to IT (information technology), that in many cases makes useless the use of military solutions (Gray, p. 5), and also scientific research contribute to the process of attraction and consensus. Nevertheless, some scholars insist in not considering soft power a real policy tool as arms and money instead are. Influence, they argue, is very volatile differently from hard power, which can be measured for quality and quantity, with the subsequent uncertainty of the outcomes that can even lead to counterproductive effects such as resentment and hostility, especially when the values promoted are arrogantly universalized. Furthermore, on the one hand, the influent needs the support of the recipients, while, with the use of force there is no space for “the luxury of vote”. On the other hand, the coerced can choose to not be coerced while the

⁸ The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 enforces the policy’s powers in order to reduce the risk of terroristic attacks, undermining however people’s privacy and liberty.

fluidity of ideas and ideologies cannot be controlled. As a result, for the hard power's fans, soft power should not be over evaluated: it is undeniable that there is attraction for some societies and that it can fill some gaps of coercion, yet, such an attraction, as in the US case, can be justified and understood only because of the leadership US has. In times of insecurity and terror, then, soft power is too ineffective (Gray, 2011 pp.28-44). In the international discussion between hard and soft power, there is, however, still space for conciliators. In a complex world, hard power needs a softer contribution and vice versa: the US case again demonstrates, in fact, that military intervention alone can provoke dissent and influence needs also authority to be effective (Melissen, 2005 pp. 33-52).

2.2. The “power” of Qatar

In terms of power, usually small states are collocated into the category of power's subjects rather than into the influencers' one. It is possible to validate this idea also for Qatar? How Qatar can be collocated within the dispute between hard and soft power? According to the realist point of view, Qatar does not meet the traditional requirements of a powerful state, since power is related to the ability to control and use resources, especially military ones. Waltz, for example, underlined the importance of demographic dimension as an unavoidable criteria to achieve power. Also wealth, as Mearsheimer stated, is a determining measure but only as a mean to provide military forces (Kamrava, 2013 pp. 47-54). Both wealth and army with geography, three coercive powers, are defined by Nye as “hard power”. In his article (1990), Nye describes the gradual shift from the traditional power resources to give more space to the co-optive form of power such as technology, education, communication, organizational and institutional skills, culture, ideology are particularly attractive, influent and effective since can legitimate a state's power. Traditional hard power is not sufficient anymore to cover all the dimensions of security because a multitude of threats endangers the stability of a country: not only military threats but also nuclear, economic, ecologic, cultural menaces. New circumstances requires new approaches. As small state with no weapons, Qatari coercive force is limited, hence its access to hard power is limited to the only wealth. Nevertheless, its influence is not, as also the so-called “power conversion”, the ability to transform the available resources into power (Kamrava, p. 55). Moreover, a small and modern country with less than one hundred years of history as independent state and with a weak culture cannot really adopt this form of power.

Another possible option is the clever combination of both hard and soft power called “smart power”. Smart power is a “tool kit” to achieve national goals, “[i]t is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels” in order to expand national influence (CSIS, 2007 p. 7). The smart power can be really useful especially for small states in terms of formal and informal alliances with great powers against a common threat, or in terms of membership in multilateral institutions since both can offer disparate benefits to the bandwagoning state. However, the suitable definition for the Qatari case is neither hard/soft power nor smart power rather the “subtle power”.

Subtle power consists of

“a carefully combined mixture of diplomacy, marketing, domestic politics, regional diplomacy, and, through strategic use of its sovereign wealth fund, increasing access to and ownership over prized commercial resources. This bespeaks of a new form of power and influence, one that is more subtle in its manifestations and is less blunt and blatant, one that may more aptly be dubbed subtle power” (Kamrava, 2013 p. 49).

The subtle power is therefore a silent influence, a smart manipulation of the others’ weakness and the capacity to gain success and popularity for the outcomes. Four are the subtle power’s elements: i. safety and security, that can be guaranteed also by a patron ; ii. good reputation, achieved through branding operations; iii. active role within the local and international context, provided by a vibrant diplomacy and hedging strategy; iv. Influence bought by investments and other financial activities (Kamrava, pp. 60-5).

3. The toolkit of Qatar foreign policy

The Qatari foreign policy is characterized by the hardship of balancing contrasting or overlapping goals such as being strategic exporter; feeding constantly the relations with the US while defining its own autonomy; establishing a regional leadership and a convenient partnership; assuring domestic stability and activities (Wright, 2011 p. 88). Such a multiform agenda requires necessarily a variegated asset of tools in order to fulfil the prefixed objectives.

The Qatari toolkit, in fact, is in harmony with the sheikhdom's possibilities, will and strategy and includes investments and aids; branding; and mediation. The first tool are investments and aids, distributed through the sovereign wealth fund (SWF), derived by the oil and gas rents, and the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) in both regional and international contexts. Indeed, being a world exporter and an eminent investor transforms all the stakeholders in potential allies and friends, dependent on Qatari supplies and decisions, transforming its resources in a potent leverage and influent instrument of foreign policy (CIRS, 2010 p.16).

Regarding aid, it is a priority for Qatar: not only they, in fact, represent an important part of the sheikhdom's foreign policy, but they also contribute to the positive reputation of the state within and outside the region. An emphasis on the significance of donations for Qatari foreign policy was stated by the Qatar National Vision, 2030, that announced an increasing involvement of Qatar through multilateral levels (GCC, OIC, Arab League) and the empowerment on the unilateral one, in concomitance with a diplomacy contributing to peace and security. As far as official aids, the official development assistance (ODA) is a governmental form of foreign aid which consists in a money transfer to another government. Especially after the oil and gas discovery, the rentier states became relevant donors for development projects both through governmental offices and NGOs, though they were not part of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Silatech, 2015 pp. 3-11). Qatar, for instances, established with the Law n. 19 of 2002 the Qatar Development Fund (QDF), a public authority related to the Ministries Council, with an independent and commercial budget to coordinate and implement foreign assistance on behalf of the State of Qatar (Al-Mīzān, 2016).

Moreover, in 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs added with the Emiri Decision No. 58 the Department of International Development afferents to the Minister's Assistant for International Cooperation. Its task is to propose national policies in the field of development in conformity with international resolutions assistance, offering also technical support to non-governmental projects in coordination with the QDF and in partnership with other states, civil society ("Department of International Development", 2016). In addition to development aids, substantial initiatives by Qatar regarded also humanitarian aid, the assistance given in case of humanitarian crises of both natural and human cause (Rufini, 2009 p. 1). However, the humanitarian sector lacks of coordination between the private and the public sector as

demonstrated by the decrease of governmental intervention in 2013 counterbalanced by the increase, in the same year of the NGO's one, basically by the Qatar Red Crescent and the Qatar Charity (Silatech, 2015 p. 24). Totally, in 2010-2011, the humanitarian and development response by Qatar was of \$1 billion and \$800 million in 2012, distributed according the guidelines of the Millennium Development Goals and the Qatar National Vision, 2030, and distributed to over 108 countries, adding as new targets African and Asiatic countries (Arab Humanitarian Portal, 2012; MOFA, 2013).

Both investments and aids are part of the country branding strategy. Branding, in fact, is not only a commercial strategy, but it could be valid also for diplomacy. Such a strategy is characterized by the fact that the company/state's brand overcomes the product itself from the consumer's point of view that will consider that brand unique and "distinctive". Subsequently, branding consists in the world's image and trust about a country on the basis of its history, hence the French brand is art, cheese and wine, the Swiss one is banking heaven and neutrality. A global image and reputation, defined and redefined in a globalized era also through media, is a strategic asset for a state's balance of power and even more for a small state as Qatar: only branding campaigns can "put Qatar on the map" and result in international recognition and uniqueness, distinguishing from the regional anonymity and even more offering a form of legitimization essential for the Gulf state's survive and independent foreign policy (Peterson, 2006 pp. 743-8) and also for attracting new foreign business (Barakat, 2012 p. 9).

Lastly, Qatar foreign policy is based on the promotion of international peace, as also expressed by the art. 7 of the Qatari Constitution:

"The foreign policy of the State is based on the principle of strengthening international peace and security by means of encouraging peaceful resolution of international disputes; and shall support the right of peoples to self-determination; and shall not interfere in the domestic affairs of states; and shall cooperate with peace-loving nations."

Doha's involvement into mediation context attributed to Qatar a status of honest peace broker, filling the gap of the traditional big mediator of the region, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The reasons for this tiny state's hyperactive diplomacy are different: first of all it is part of the branding strategy and the creation of a positive reputation on a global level; secondly, it is related to the balance of power and the strategy of risk differentiation, because being a mediator is less risky since it can reduce the number of enemies: the hedging strategy, in fact,

with different options and leverages, even opposite, enhances usually small states ; thirdly mediation also allows Qatar to gain power in some strategic area (Kamrava, 2011 pp. 539-542; Kamrava, 2013 pp. 50-63); lastly it diverted the attentions from domestic issues such as lack of democracy or exploitation and lack of human rights' guarantee denounced by the international community (Khatib, 2013). The strategies adopted as peacemaker are different and the use of Al Jazeera, investments, aids, civil society organizations contributed to its success (Barakat, 2014 p. 21).

3.1. Investments and aids

The “business diplomacy” is twice gainful: investments support diplomacy and diplomacy drives investments especially within the regional context. Even if the biggest slice of Qatar’s official revenues derives from hydrocarbons, amounting at the 40% of the GDP, around \$200 billion are invested or destined for different projects, a multitude related to the World Cup; 23% is represented by the private sector while the 58% will be implemented for transports (The Business Year, 2015 p. 7).

The real estate’s foundations also have heavily contributed to different projects for example in Yemen, through the Yemeni-Qatari Real Estate Investment and Development Company whose investments in Sana’ valued for \$800 million, and in Syria where the Qatari Diar established its subsidiary the Qatari Diar Syria for a total of investments of \$12 billion, listing Syria the biggest recipient of Qatari investments. Also the presence of QIA-related national banks played a crucial role for instance in Lebanon where the Qatar Islamic Bank is one of the most prominent (Gulbrandsen, 2010 pp. 40-76). The Qatar Investment Authority was essential even for international investments, raising its stakes in different banks such as the Deutsche Bank, Bank Credit Suisse, Barclays, Challenger Universal Ltd., and invested \$400 million for a Qatar-UK Clean Technology Investment Fund, a business based on clean energy (Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 2009 p.4). Qatari wealth has also been invested in foreign brands: the London’s skyscraper The Sharp and the popular Harrods store; the Italian fashion label Valentino; the French store Printemps (The Business Year); the German supercar Porche (Barakat, 2012 p. 6). In addition to this, another crucial investment activity is

the land grabbing, where Qatar in 2013 was the tenth land grabbing country in terms of hectares: the two most important food companies Hassad Food and Mawashi invested in Africa, Latin America and Australia (Salacanian, 2013).

Qatar is also a key donor within the Middle East and outside, particularly in Africa and Asia, achieving a high level of support that led to profitable relations (Kamrava, 2013). Compared to other donors, its favourite destination is development assistance, followed by humanitarian aids with a trivial contribution to the multilateral channel. Its development donations, whose priority is the MENA countries, are on the same level of New Zealand, Portugal and Ireland, and it is the 21st among DAC countries for absolute amount of aids and 15th for percentage of GNI devolved to aids: from 2010 to 2012⁹, in fact, Qatar assigned the 0.30% of its GNI to foreign assistance, a percentage even bigger than the whole DAC countries. The humanitarian response, instead, amounted at the 40% (Silatech, 2015 pp. 3-8). A great example of the influence that such aids have also and especially in terms of foreign policy, is Lebanon. Between 2005 and 2009 the two countries' volume of trade reached almost 1 billion of dollars, and Qatar intervened in post-war reconstruction, providing infrastructures, water and sanitary facilities and power services (Kamrava, 2013). As a result, Lebanon exposed some billboards in order to thank the Emir for the Qatari help and financial support, reporting both in Arabic and English "We thank you Qatar". In addition to this, unofficial support was also given by Qatari charities to the Lebanese cause, contributing to exalt the generous image of Qatar all over the world and especially within the region, since the Emir was also the first and the only leader to visit the country after the war (Fromherz, 2012; Khatib, 2013 p. 425). Outside the MENA region, the sheikhdom demonstrated also its generosity, for instance after the Katrina Hurricane (Roberts, 2013 p. 237).

⁹ The only official available data interest this two-year period.

Image 1. Two Lebanese billboards to thank Qatar, 2006



Source: www.khiyam.com

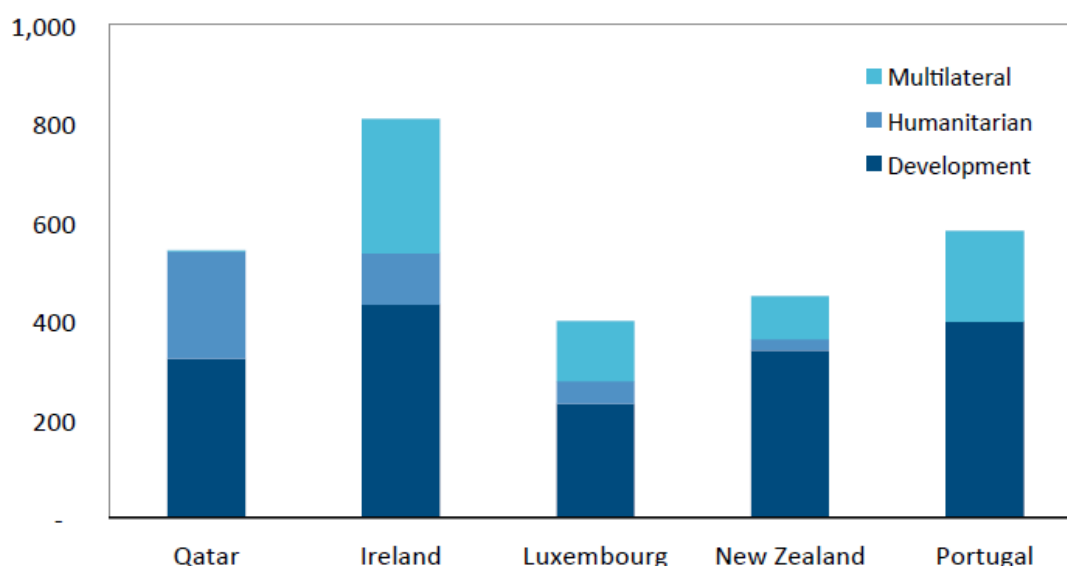


Source: www.islamist-movements.com/3662

Qatari financial support was also addressed to Islamist groups. The kingdom, in fact, as follower of Wahhabism, subsidized various radical group, from the Muslim Brotherhood, the

Libyan Islamic group, Hamas, to the Houthis and Hezbollah through the massive investments in Yemen and Lebanon to simply support these groups or involve them and gain a mutual support for Qatari-brokered mediation (Gulbrandsen, 2010 p.76), demonstrating its understanding and reading of the reality, and in particular the country's will to give voice and backing to an Islamic revival, as was expressed by the Arab Spring, and to include it into the political process, and finally its ability to turn such a support in political influence (Khatib, 2013 pp. 422-5).

Table 2. Development, humanitarian, and multilateral aid, 2012 (millions of dollars)



Source: Silatech, 2015 p. 8.

3.2. Branding

The second instrument is the country branding. The aim is advertising within the Arab region first, and the rest of world then, the existence of Qatar and to attract investments, tourism and depict a positive image of the country as dynamic, progressive and vibrant (Barakat, 2012 p. 7).

The creation of a new brand is not effortless, particularly for states which want to create a

singular brand different from its neighbours, Dubai above all, in order to create a preference, avoiding the risk of being recognized only as gas producer with a modern city, like Doha, similar to everywhere (Peterson, 2006 p. 748).

Such a policy ensures not only the development of an internal identity, but it also challenges its regional rivals particularly Saudi Arabia, UAE. Branding is implemented by the tiny sheikhdom on different levels, educational/cultural, sportive, touristic (Barakat, 2012 pp. 7-8). In terms of education/culture it is possible to list some relevant initiatives like the Qatar Foundation, an important education hotspot well-known also outside the region for its prestige and the presence of renowned Western colleges such as the Georgetown, the Carnegie Mellon, the Northwestern, the Virginia Commonwealth, the Cornell, the Texas A&M and the University College of London. Another important front is the art in all its forms: the MIA (Museum of Islamic Art) designed by the famous architect Ieoh Ming Pei and its unique Islamic collection; the Mathaf, the biggest museum of contemporary art in the region; the still under construction Qatar National Museum, designed by Jean Nouvel; the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra which promotes Arabic heritage in addition to the Western tradition; the Doha Tribeca Film Festival, an important cinema premiere promoting new emergent directors, especially from the Middle East; the Brookings Institution, and the US-Islamic World Forum sponsored by the Brookings Institute of Doha, an occasion of meeting and discussion for policymakers and diplomats. All these examples represent the efforts of Qatar to develop a strong, open and attractive culture based on art, music, cinema, debate. Regarding sport instead, Qatar became one of the most expert in hosting sport events, from the most popular football such as the 2011 Asian Cup and is currently working to host the World Cup in 2022; to tennis, with the professional tournament known as Qatar ExxonMobil Open; and the motoGP Grand Prix; still to niche sports such as gulf, with the institution of the Qatar Masters and multi-sportive events like the 2006 Asian Games. The sheikhdom expertise is not only in the sponsorship, advertisement and management of these sport competitions and the huge amount of fans they attract, but also in the availability of complete structures and facilities. Not only sport, but also conventions, conferences, summits: Qatar proposed to be the hosting country for some important and international events like the Doha Round in 2001, the WTO conference and the OIC summit in March 2003 (Peterson, p. 747).

Despite the lack of relevant historical and artistic sites, cultural and sportive events really

increased the touristic affluence in the country: on the basis the \$45 billion invested in facilities, hotels, infrastructures, Qatari Tourism Authority (QTA) is expecting an increase in the touristic sector contribution to the GDP (The Business Year, 2015 p. 7). This happens also thanks also to the crucial role of the Qatari Airways, giving a great prestige to the state: it is one of the most comfortable and deluxe companies, rewarded in 2011, 2012 and 2015 as the best company and with more than 150 destinations, reporting the Qatar's name around the world (Peterson, 2006).

Another important contribution to the state branding, because of her splendid imagine, is given by HH Sheikha Mozah, mother of the current Emir, whose popularity is both real and virtual: in fact, on the one hand she is the supporter of a lot of constructive education initiatives, like the Qatar Foundation or Al-Fakhoora in collaboration with UNRWA, UNICEF, UNDP, on the other, even on social networks she has a lot of followers as a proper celebrity for her style and charitable projects (Fromherz, 2012; Khatib, 2013 p.427). Because of her global ascendant and propulsive activism, she is not only a model, particularly for women and for women of her region , but she is still a strategic pawn of the national interests and foreign policy. During Sheikha Mozah's last visit in Italy, for instance, she met the Prime Minister and the Pope Francis to discuss about the immigration crisis and renovated her concerns for refugees' impossibility to access to instruction, especially primary education (The Post International, 2016).

Image 2. Sheikha Mozah and Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani with Barak and Michelle Obama



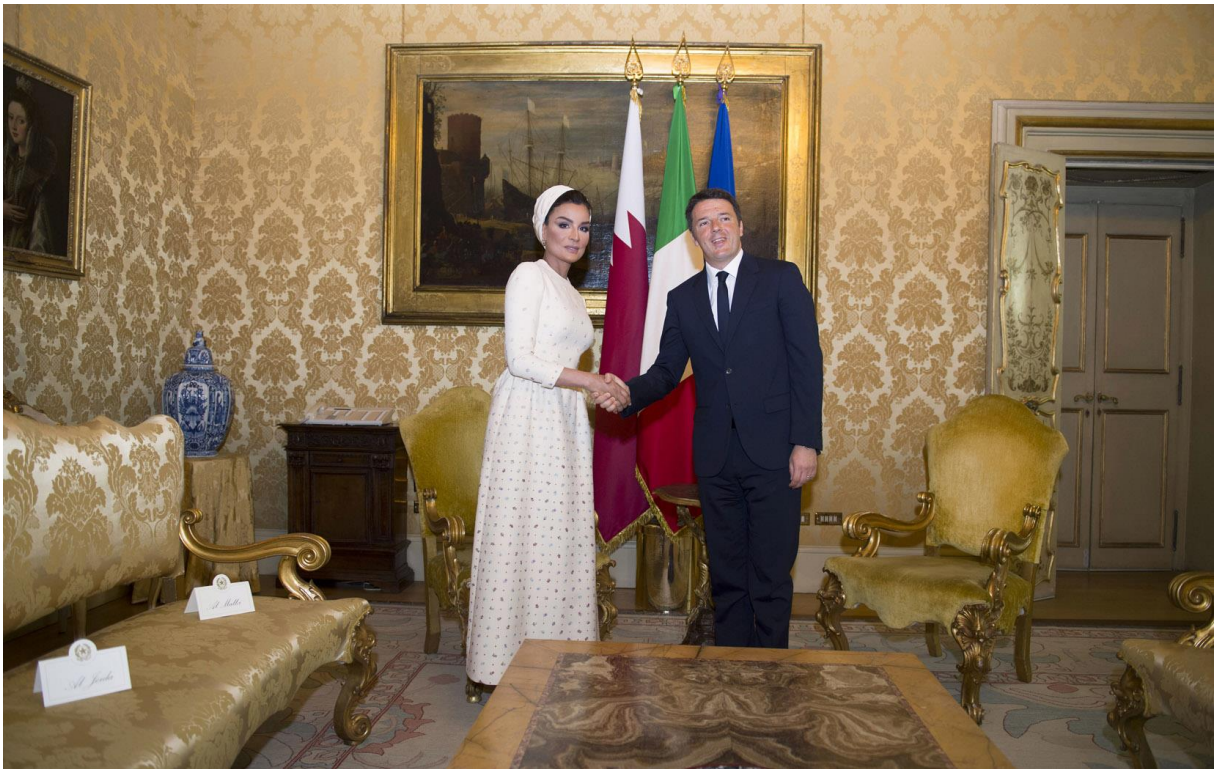
Source: Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/3949395199>

Image 2.1. Sheikha Mozah with the Queen Elizabeth II



Source: <http://stylepantry.com/2014/01/08/style-spotlight-sheikha-mozah-bint-nasser-al-missned/>

Image 2.3. Sheikha Mozah and the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi



Source: <http://www.tpi.it/mondo/qatar/sceicca-qatar-moza-bint-nasser-incontra-matteo-renzi-crisi-migranti>

3.2.1. Al Jazeera

Established by Emiri decree in 1996 after the abolition of the state censorship (Wright, 2012 p. 301) in order to fill the gap between West and Middle East, Al Jazeera, the satellite television station, is another crucial instrument of branding (Barakat, 2012 p. 8). It followed the Anglo-American model, characterized by a worldwide network and a very marginal role of the state, conforming to the liberalisation, deregulation and corporatism of UK-US media (Kasmani, 2014 pp. 594-5).

In 2001 the channel gained popularity among the Arab world especially for its cover of the war in Afghanistan and the distribution of Bin Laden's video messages, obtaining the epithet of "Tele Bin Laden", offering exclusive report and interviews; direct information sources. However the most important moment for Al Jazeera was the Iraqi war. The presence of big media channels such as CNN, BBC, Fox New seemed to overshadow the Qatari television station, that instead succeeded, proposing its own view of the conflict, showing the images of

dead civilians and defining the Western force of liberation as “occupation forces” (Corbucci, 2012 pp. 91-2; Khatib, 2013 pp. 428).

Subsequently, Al Jazeera gained immediately a great success because it represented a valid alternative to other Western brands - the US television station CNN and the British BBC- and Gulf ones -the Saudi MBC- especially in terms of editorial point of view. In fact, the Qatari news station expressed for the first time the voice of Arab people, interpreting their dissatisfaction for a piloted and over controlled information and even welcoming journalists and professionals thrown out by other channels (Kamrava, 2013; Khatib, pp. 426-7). The Al Jazeera’s breakthrough led to a Saudi Arabia reaction. Since the little Emiri television channel was dependent on both public and private funds, the Gulf state imposed an advertisement block that involved also the Lebanese investments. Nevertheless there was no impact on the channel because the biggest source of funding is still public. Other reaction to Al Jazeera were both regional and international: on the one hand Egypt founded Nile TV International, the United Arab Emirates modernized Al Oula and Saudi Arabia launched Al Arabiya; on the other hand the United States created an Arabic channel, Al Hurra, Russia added Rusiya Al Yaum , the European Union constituted Euronews Arabic (Corbucci, p. 93).

One of the strengths of Al Jazeera is the professionalism and the internationality of the working environment, that results one of the most dynamic and productive atmosphere. Even if it was instituted by the government, it was recognized for its great autonomy , impartiality and lack of any interference from the state. Such a prestige contributed to the distinction of Qatar among the other Arab and Gulf countries (Kasmani, 2014 p. 597), and among the rest of the world: in 2006 the Al Jazeera alternative programs even spread outside the Arab world, with the opening of the English branch (Kamrava; Khatib, pp. 426-7). Al Jazeera English is a “global” channel because it perfectly matches the needs of a globalized world, since there is no space for national influence where the transnational one rules out. The targets Al Jazeera English have, in fact, are neither national nor regional, it has a global audience, resulting in a framework of free expression which positively affects both the image of the channel and the reputation of the state (Kasmani, p. 605). Being a global network, however, seemed to be not enough: in 2011 the Qatari group launched Al Jazeera Balkans, another attempt to demonstrate the channel leadership on the transnational and regional level (Corbucci, p. 95).

Despite the initial success, there was also a period of stagnation, because of the absence of

relevant event into the Arab region that lasted until the advent of the Arab Spring. The potential push which the Arab Spring could give to Al Jazeera, confirmed instead the ambiguity of the channel and its alleged neutrality and impartiality. To the professionalism and mobility of the reporters in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria followed simultaneously the total indifference for the closer protests in the Gulf and a biased trend in favour of the Muslim Brotherhood (Corbucci,2012 pp. 94-5; Khatib, 2013 p. 428). In addition to this, some scandals revealed the mutual support of Al Jazeera to the country's foreign policy, like the resignation of the general director of the channel, Wadah Khanfar , replaced by a royal family member, Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani (Khatib, p. 428), or the WikiLeaks scandal about the threat of suspending the Al Jazeera transmission in Egypt, to leverage with Mubarak (Barakat, 2012 p. 8).

3.3. Mediation

Qatar has been discovered for its impressive skills as mediator by both the regional and the international community. The elements of its success are different, yet, above all, it is necessary to notice that what really marks Qatari mediation and makes it unique is not the innovation of its policies and strategies or the wise combination of its tools, but rather the fact that a dwarf state emerged as considerable regional mediator (Kamrava, 2011 p. 541). The features of its mediation skills include surely the decision-making pool. The centralization of the executive office shortlisted to the figure of the Emir and Foreign Minister incentives the fastness and the effectiveness of the decisions, especially in case of emergency and timing is essential for a mediator (Khatib, p. 418). A small team also allows a high level of secrecy that contributes to the reliability of the mediator and simultaneously to a process of promotion of its initiatives and achievements, what Wright (2012 p. 305) defined "backchannel diplomacy and high profile conflict resolution". A characteristic of the Qatari mediation efforts, in fact, is that they are part of the branding strategy, since they are usually media and sumptuous events and conventions in amazing hotels (Kamrava, 2013). Moreover Qatar's prestige is built on neutrality. However, since a complete impartiality could negatively affect the outcomes of the mediation process because there is no reason for the two parts in believing that an unbiased part can take care of their interests, the ability of Qatar is instead also to build closer relations with the involved actors in order to gain their trust. Qatar, in fact, can offer a multitude of material incentives that can be applied as leverages into the process, both official and

unofficial, both economic (business diplomacy) and cultural. In addition to this, such a neutrality also presents a state as interest-free (Kamrava, 2011 pp. 542-4).

On this basis, the Qatari foreign policy tried to find different occasions of mediation, especially within the Middle East and Africa in order to build its reputation as a fair and neutral friend of everybody . This included its involvement in conflict resolution in Afghanistan (Khatib, 2013), Yemen, Palestine, Darfur, Djibuti, Eritrea, Lebanon (Barakat, 2012; Fromherz, 2012; Khatib), Libya, Chad, Iraq, Iran and UAE, Morocco and Algeria. Moreover it hosted a great number of exiled people like Sajida Khayrallah, the wife of Saddam Hussein, the founder of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, Sheikh Abbas Madani, the leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshal and his son, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, close to the Muslim Brotherhood, who received space in Al Jazeera (Kamrava, 2013; Khatib), obtaining in this way a leverage with some regimes (Fromherz; Roberts, 2012).

Because of the specialization of Qatar on a particular region or area, basically the MENA, and because of the economic returns that a diplomatic involvement can produce, the kingdom foreign policy can also be defined as “niche diplomacy”. The niche diplomacy typically belongs to small state with sufficient capacities to influence the disputants but not enough to impose its solutions, focusing on a strategy of communication facilitation and manipulation (Nuruzzaman,2015 pp. 542-3), whose result is being considered and rewarded for its altruism, more than simple economic returns. The kind of influence which characterizes Qatar is neither geographical, because it is a dwarf in a region where there are even stronger countries in terms of territory and population, nor traditional, because it is an emerging country with no previous track in terms of foreign policy unless the one imposed by its patrons. Hence, the Qatari niche is a consensual niche: it is based on the global recognition of its involvement in disputes with the only final goal of achieving peace (Henrikson, 2005 pp. 67-73). However, the Qatari diplomacy has also some drawbacks and maintaining a niche is not easy. The great ability in mediating conflicts and disputes among states, and also among oppositions, with the intention to create a “network” of different partnership and as a part of the hedging policy (Khatib), is not part of an institutional framework, rather it is related to personal skills of the Emir himself and the former Foreign Minister Khalid Bin Mohammad Al-Attiyah, who developed a profile of commitment, flexibility and autonomy for their national policy. Furthermore, the majority of the sheikhdom’s accomplishments are in conflict mediation rather than conflict resolution. Mediation consists of various efforts with the aim of

facilitating the achievement of resolution, but it does not guarantee the sustainability of this policy on the long-term (Barakat, 2012 p. 24), while conflict resolution requires intentions, powers, forces and capabilities Qatar cannot dispose yet (Kamrava, 2011 pp. 552-5), the so called “post-agreement implementation” that guarantees the survive of the peace agreement (Barakat, 2014 pp. 24-5).

Image 3. Qatar’s efforts for peace in Darfur, 2016



Source: UNAMID

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Chapter II

History of Qatari-Palestinian relations in terms of diplomacy, mediation, development aids

1.The importance of Palestine

The Palestinian issue inflames since its beginning the passions of Arab neighbours, in a process of identification, compassion and sympathy, demanding interventions from its brothers and sisters (Kamrava, 2011 pp. 156-7). It is undeniable, in fact, that Palestine is “ an organic part of the Arab people’s history, consciousness, and identity “ (Haddad, 2013 p. 288) that was embodied by the Arab aspiration for self-determinism, especially during the Arab Spring, contributing to identify an ideal Palestine because of its “immateriality”. The revolutionary power of Palestine is not only related to the concrete involvement that the Arab-Israeli wars raised and to the failure of the expectations it created regionally and transnationally, exacerbated also by the terrible and unjust life conditions of Palestinian people, but it is related also to the Palestinian diaspora. The GCC countries represent, in fact, the biggest migratory hub especially for Middle Eastern countries: inequality, poverty, political problems and lack of perspectives pushed MENA citizens to emigrate to the Gulf

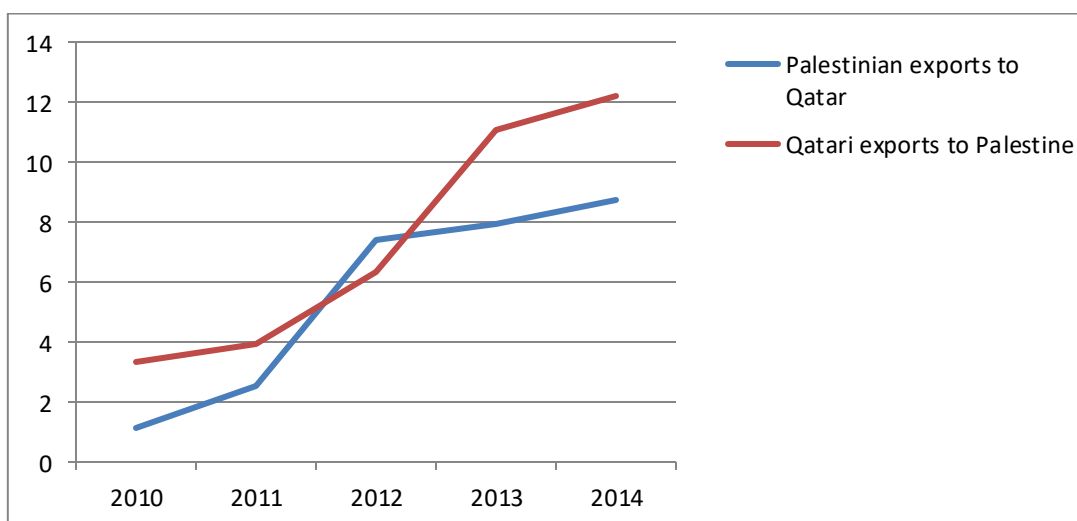
where the economic boom linked to the oil rents required young work forces, amounting at 2.4 million of Arab workers in the Gulf. As far as Qatar, even if the data about the population are very limited, in 2007 the Arab immigration represented the 40% of the total immigrant presence in this country and in 2002 around 50.000 of them were Palestinian and Jordanian (CIRS, 2015 pp. 1-5). The territorial closeness of Palestine increases also the empathy, especially within the Middle East which creates a sort of special kinship which has invested Qatar also (Kamrava, 2011 p. 156). The religious affiliation is also a crucial component, particularly referring to the idea of *Ummah*¹⁰. Such a popular support surely is an important leverage for the Qatari government: the Palestinian question, in fact, is at the “top of priorities” for Qatar, which is not only involved into a support for Palestinian cause but also in the denounce of the Israeli politics (MOFA, n.d.). In a personal interview with the Ambassador Mohammed Al Amadi, Chairman of the National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza, declared that the explanation for the Qatari commitment in Palestine

“ It’s very simple: they are Muslim people and they are needy people and they have been there in three wars”.

Moreover, Qatar and Palestine are related also for the relevant flow of trade the two countries have: in 2014, in fact, Qatar was the fourth importer from Palestine after Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia for a total of almost \$9 million of goods especially in building materials and food products, while Qatar exported in 2014 \$12 million of ethylene polymers (see Table 1; Table 2; Table 3).

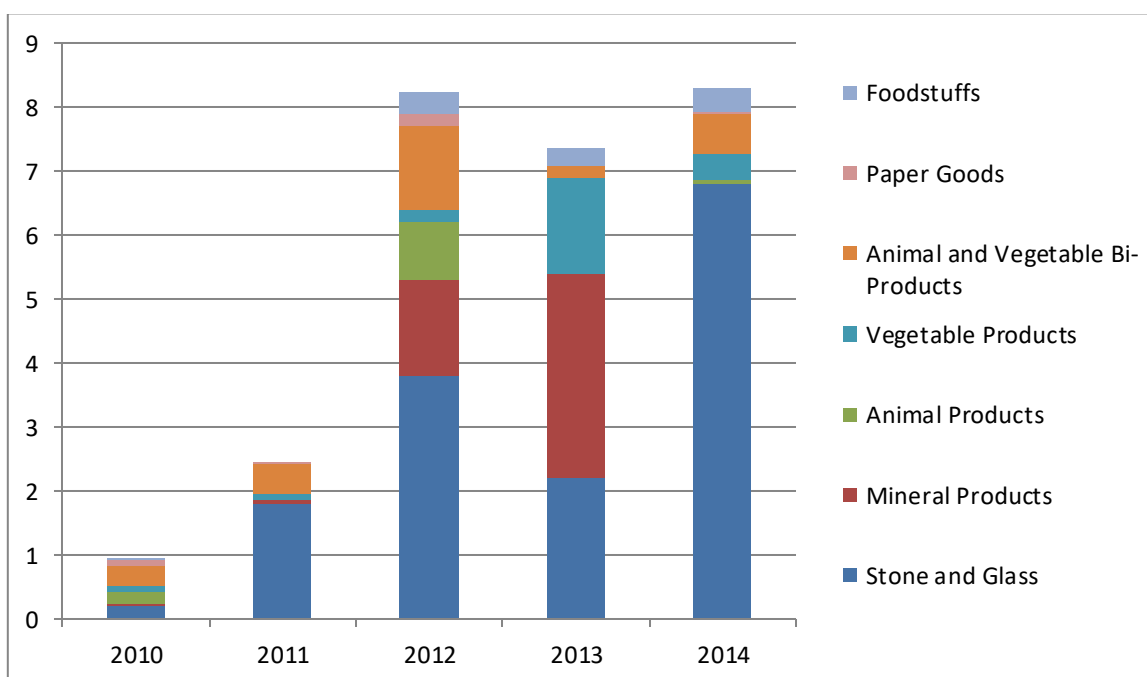
¹⁰ The Ummah is the community formed by all Muslim people.

Table 1. Palestinian and Qatari exports (millions of dollars)



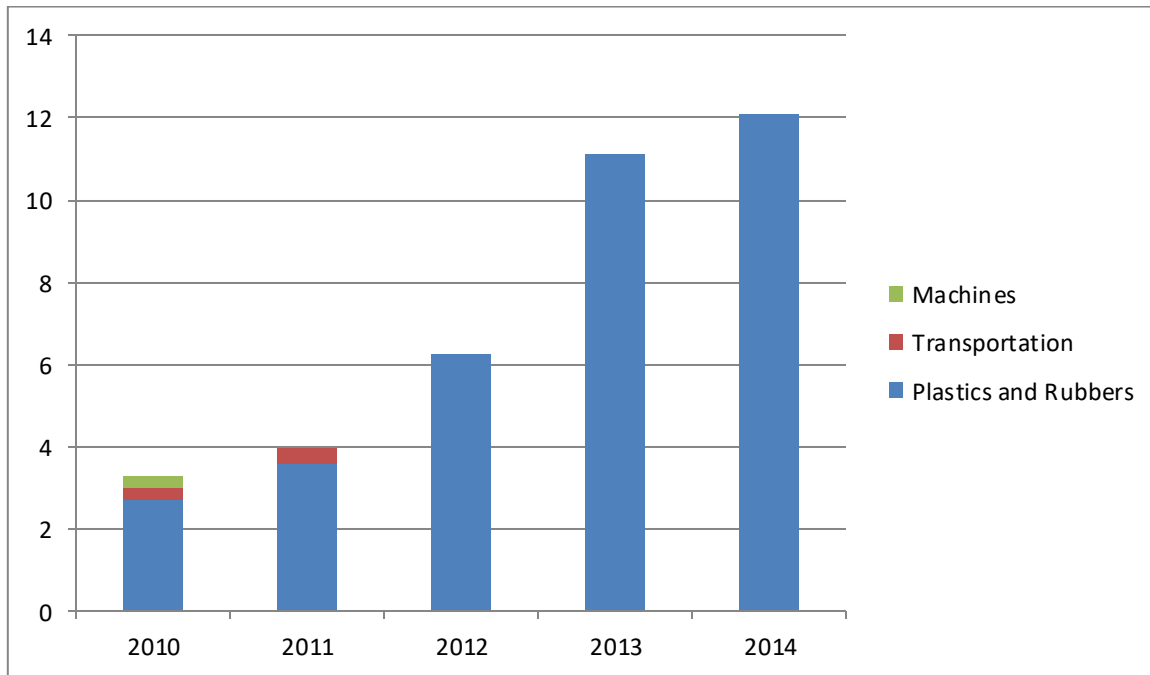
Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) atlas.media.mit.edu/en/.

Table 2. Composition of the Palestinian exports to Qatar (millions of dollars)



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) atlas.media.mit.edu/en/.

Table 3. Composition of the Qatari exports to Palestine (millions of dollars)



Source: *The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC) atlas.media.mit.edu/en/.*

The centrality of Palestine is crucial for the entire region's stability also: indeed, the US chief adviser on countering ISIL, Rob Malley, commenting on ISIL's new attention for Palestine, has recognized that the lack of a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contributes to the nourishment of extremism. Fraihat (2016) , has explained the reason, describing the importance of Palestine. Palestine, in fact, was used by Arab states to gain legitimacy, as Muammar Gheddafi did in 1977 with the creation of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front with Hafez Al-Assad and Saddam Hussein to protest against Egyptian-Israeli talks with the only intent of enforcing their own rule in order to avoid the Palestinian emergencies. Palestine is also a persuasive unifier which is able to overcome any internal division in the name of the "Palestinian injustice". Subsequently, Palestine's call can mobilize people and capital and neither Qatar has been deaf to this call. Its commitment for the Palestinian issue, in fact, can be distinguished in terms of diplomacy, mediation, financial and development/humanitarian aids.

The diplomatic experience of Qatar has also its roots in the Prophet's example of mediation and peace-making, especially thanks to the contribution of the two most important creators of the new diplomatic face of Qatar, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and his Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, who granted prosperity to Qatar in terms of trade,

security and wellness and expressed a clear position about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Fromherz, 2012 pp. 86-91). Another important aspect of the diplomacy of this tiny sheikhdom is cooperation for the implementation of the right to development (RtD) especially directed to countries with lower incomes – basically Arab countries - and with the aim of fight against poverty and promote the human development, but also to assure immediate assistance. The Qatari efforts was both institutional, supported by the government which destined 0,5% of its GDP from the 2008 and the 2013 to development assistance, and private, pledged by the efforts of the civil society organizations and foundations (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015 pp. 123-125).

2. Diplomatic relations between Qatar and Palestine

The history of diplomatic relations between Qatar and Palestine started only in 1965 when was opened one of the first representative offices of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (MOFA, n.d.), because, according to Rabi (2009), the Arafat's position in favour of the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait worried tremendously the GCC countries and Qatar itself, which recognized officially the PLO as the only representative of the Palestinian people's interests only in 1995. However, the importance of Palestine was renewed in 1988 when Qatar was one of the first country to recognize the existence of Palestine with Jerusalem as capital, including the territories before the 1967 war. When in 1995 Qatar opened its diplomatic office in Palestine, this is officially considered the beginning of bilateral diplomatic relations and the beginning of the Qatari diplomatic commitment. In fact, in order to reinforce the Qatari interest for Palestine, in 1998 was established the Qatari Permanent Committee for the Support of Al Quds (QPCSA) to discuss about Jerusalem. The backing for Jerusalem as Palestinian capital was continuous during years and this issue occurred also in different declarations and statements. An example is the so called "Doha Declaration" which was issued by the International Conference on Jerusalem, called by the Arab League and held in Doha in February 2012. The conference discussed four main themes related to Jerusalem: i. Jerusalem and international law; ii. Jerusalem and history; iii. Jerusalem and colonization and Israeli violations; iv. Jerusalem and civil society. The Conference called on the international intervention in order to halt the Israeli occupation that was denounced strongly and recognized as illegitimate and as falsifier of the Holy City's history and identity that is part also of the Arab and Muslim identity, becoming Jerusalem

itself an undeniable condition of the existence of the Palestinian State and the Muslim identity, as expressed by the Emir:

“[T]here is no Palestinian State without Al-Quds [Jerusalem] and there is no Al-Quds without Al-Aqsa Mosque”¹¹ (International Conference on Jerusalem, n.d.)

Furthermore, the final statement denounced the bad conditions of Palestinians living in Jerusalem, exhorting them to resist the Israeli occupation, urging the UN to recognize Jerusalem as capital city of Palestine, and supporting projects and plans for Jerusalem. The meeting underlined the importance of this city for Palestinians, recalling to consider it as a focal point of the entire Palestinian question (International Conference on Jerusalem, 2012). Going back to the beginning of the new century, for Palestinians, this represented the beginning of the Second Intifada, supported all over the world, especially in the Middle East and obviously also in Qatar where the Emir allowed public manifestation to express people encouragement for the Intifada (Rabi, 2009 p. 450). In 2006, Qatar, through His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr Al-Thani, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the U.S.-Islamic World Forum, held in Doha in February 2006, expressed in front of United States above all its strenuous support for Palestine. Moreover, the First Deputy also condemned the feeling of injustice of the entire Islamic World because of the Palestinians' conditions and individuated some procedures and policies, based on “an atmosphere of mutual understanding through open dialogue and permanent deliberations”, such as real and effective works to solve the Palestinian situation with references to international resolutions already adopted (International Business Publications, 2007 pp.121-123).

Another important step for the diplomatic relations between the two countries was the Qatari temporary membership of the Security Council in 2006 and 2007. During this period, that was crucial for Qatar in order to gain international recognition, one of the most important issues was the attempt to turn again the attention to an Arab-Israeli peace plan within the international agenda, through the proposal of the Sustained Peace in the Middle East initiative (Barakat, 2012 p. 4). In occasion of the Open Thematic Debate of the Security council in September 2006 in New York, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar stated the current situation of the conflict, demonstrating that “a military solution to this problem is impossible” and what really lacked to implement alternative and possible tools like

¹¹ It is one of the holiest site for Islam in Jerusalem.

resolutions, projects, plans was “the political will to achieve the common objectives” of peace, security and stability for all the parts. His Excellency also blamed the carelessness of the UN Security Council “which deals with issues of lesser gravity”, forgiving the need for a “just and permanent solution to the Palestinian question” (International Business Publication, 2007 pp. 110-3). Nevertheless, the Palestinian situation worsened instead of improving with the break up between Fatah and Hamas and the first Gaza war in 2008.

The Qatari concerns for the situation were expressed through the convocation of an emergency Summit of the Arab League in Doha in January 16. However, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan did not welcome the Summit with enthusiasm for two main reasons: not only they were bothered by the Qatari initiative because it could take the thunder away from the three most important mediators of this conflict, but also because another Summit of the Arab League had been already called in Kuwait to discuss about some economic issues and a focus on Palestine could distort the attentions from it. Subsequently the three Arab countries decided to boycott the Summit: only 13 votes were in favour of the Summit, out of the 15 necessary for the quorum. Nevertheless, the Emir did not renounce to the meeting in Doha, which was held but with the name of “Gaza Summit” and the His Highness invited other personalities –out of the Arab League circle- like the President of Iran Ahmadinejad, the representative of Hamas Khaled Meshaal, and the representatives of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Zanotti et al., 2009), as a retaliation for boycott. Moreover, the day before the Summit, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani pledged 250 millions of dollars for Gaza, inviting his neighbours to do the same (Rabi, 2009 p. 459). The summit certainly worsened the relations between Qatar and the Palestinian Authority who was not present. The reasons are unclear: while the PA representatives denounced the lack of any official invitation, the Qatari administration replied that the invitation was given but the pressures by the boycotting states were stronger and since the summit’s theme was the Gaza situation it was not possible to do not have any Palestinian representation. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in fact, declared:

“I respect and appreciate President Mahmoud 'Abbas, and from the outset, we didn't ask Hamas and the Palestinian factions to participate in the summit, so as not to give ['Abbas] a pretext to be absent particularly because he is the one involved. But when 'Abbas refrained from attending, we thought that it was essential to invite the Palestinian factions, because it wouldn't have made sense to hold a summit to discuss the Palestinian problem without the

Palestinians. [So] we sent a private plane to bring the resistance leaders, so that they could speak on behalf of the Palestinian people.” (MEMRI, 2009 p. 2).

However in an interview, Sheikh Hamad explained that he did not extend the invitation initially to Mahmoud Abbas, the PA leader, because he agreed with the Hamas front about the end of Abbas’ presidency on the 9th of January.¹² Later Al Tayyeb 'Abd Al Rahim, Secretary General of the PA Presidency replied:

“President Abu Mazen asked, more than once, to visit Doha, but never received a reply. Moreover, all doors have always been closed to us but to the members of the coup, who created a rift in the unity of the homeland, they are always open. The aid they received was on a larger scale than usual, but it does not reach the people instead, it serves to sustain the coup and deepen the rift. We have now realized, more than ever, that Qatar planned an ambush aimed at making the Palestinian rift permanent, and turning it into an Arab rift, so as to create axes [in the Arab world].” (MEMRI, p. 2).

The summit was the first apparition of the Palestinian resistance movements representing Palestinian people. Even if the official seat reserved to Abbas was not occupied by Meshaal, he talked at the presence of other leaders and head of states representing *de facto* Palestine. Regarding the relations between the two Palestinian factions, the final outcome was of course a disaster with reciprocal accusations (MEMRI, 2009 pp. 1-6).

A new summit was held again in Doha few months later on the 30th and the 31st of March and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was a crucial issue discussed between the participants of the 21th Arab League Summit which coincided also with the second edition of the Arab-South American Countries Summit (Qatar Conferences, 2009).¹³ Because of the presence of the Iranian and Hamas’ leaders in the previous Summit in Qatar, the president of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, in sign of protest decided to do not attend the conference in person and sent his minister. The Summit of March was characterized by two fronts: on the one hand the Egyptian-Saudi axis, that wanted to adopt a soft line with Israel, and on the other the

¹² According to the Palestinian Basic Law the Presidential elections coincides with the Legislative Council elections. Subsequently, there are two conflicting rules since on the one hand, the Presidential mandate should last only four years, hence the mandate should have finished on the January 9 of that year, and on the other hand it should last as the Legislative Council mandate and, consequently, until the 25th of January 2010 (MEMRI, 2009 p.1).

¹³ In the first Summit in Brasilia 2005 the Palestinian issue had been already mentioned as object of political cooperation (Qatar Conferences, 2009 p.40).

Iranian¹⁴-Syrian-Qatari front, that called for some changes for the Arab Peace Initiative and for its exacerbation against Israel (MEMRI, 2009 pp. 1-2). The Arab Peace Initiative¹⁵ promoted by the Arab League during the Beirut Summit in 2002 and reaffirmed at the Riyadh Summit (2007), the Annapolis Conference (2007) and the Damascus Summit (2008), promises the recognition of the State of Israel in exchange of (i) the restitution of the 1967 occupied territories, including the Golan area, (ii) a permanent solution for the Palestinian refugees and (iii) the recognition of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as capital, recalling the implementation of the UN General Assembly 194¹⁶ and UN Security Council 242¹⁷ and 338¹⁸ resolutions (Neubauer, 2015). The initial project was ideated by the Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, who, during an interview with Thomas Friedman for the *New York Times* after the 9/11, proposed a solution inspired also to the Madrid Conference of 1991: the “full withdrawal from all the occupied territories, in accord with UN resolutions, including in Jerusalem, for full normalization of relations.”. That interview was then transformed in a concrete plan during the Summit where, however, the formulation “full normalization” with Israel was substituted with “normal relations”¹⁹ (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs , 2009 pp. 14-17).

A news introduced by the Doha Summit (2009) – strongly promoted by the Egyptian-Saudi front and opposed by the Syrian-Qatari one-, was that the conditionality of the API became on

¹⁴ Despite the Iranian absence, the Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jasim bin Jaber Al Thani declared that the Iranian president was spiritually present and that the positions expressed by the Syrian and Qatari representatives included also the Iranian voice (MEMRI, p. 1).

¹⁵ The Arab Peace Initiative (API) is the most important proposal supported by the Arab League, still valid and that inspired partly the Roadmap for Peace sponsored by the International Quartet (USA, UN, Russia, European Union) in 2003 (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs , 2009 p.4) and more recently, during the new French attempt of reconciliation between Palestine and Israel, the Middle East Peace Initiative, it was again promoted as the only strategy the Arab countries can accept (France Diplomatie, 2016).

¹⁶ The resolution adopted on December 1948 established a conciliation commission in order to achieve a truce; defined the steps for the demilitarization of Jerusalem and its administration. Moreover, and this is the paragraph recalled by the API, it is the first one to refer to the refugees, and particularly to the “right to return”. For a deepest analysis see UN General Assembly resolution 194 (III), *Palestine -- Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator*, A/RES/194 (III), (11 December 1948).

¹⁷ The resolution, a retaliation act of the Security Council after the 1967 war, called for the principle of “land for peace”. According to it, a peace could be only realized with: “ (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty [...]”. For a deepest analysis see UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967), *Resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967*, S/RES/242 (1967), (22 November 1967).

¹⁸ The resolution occurred during the 1973 war and exhorted all the involved parts “to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately” with the prospects of a “just and durable peace in the Middle East”. For a deepest analysis see UN Security Council resolution 338 (1973), *Resolution 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973*, S/RES/338 (1973), (22 October 1973).

¹⁹ The new formulation stands, however, for an incredible breakthrough in comparison with the 1967 declaration of the Arab League during the Khartoum Summit which proclaimed “no peace, no recognition, no negotiations”.

Israel's approval and respect of its duties stipulated by the UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. This decision was harshly condemned by both Qatar and especially by Al Assad who declared the initiative "dead and suspended" and recalled that also in the previous Qatari summit (in January) the two countries had expressed their positions in favour of an API's restyle (MEMRI, 2009 pp. 2-3). The Palestinian reaction was of course bipartite: the PA president Mahmoud Abbas praised the adoption of "a unified Arab strategy" as an effective action (Arab Summit Conference- 21ST SESSION, 2009), while the Gaza movement expressed immediately its concerns for the summit's outcome, "We were hoping the Arab leaders would move to lift the siege by acts, not by words" Fawzi Barhoum , a spokesman for Hamas declared, denouncing the weakness and incompleteness of the final solution (Arab Summit Conference- 21ST SESSION- Press Release, 2009).

In 2011, Abbas presented his request for the Palestine's complete admission to the United Nations, and on the 29th of November 2012, the General Assembly voted in favour of the recognition to Palestine of the status of "observer state and non-member" of United Nations, with 138 yes, 9 no and 41 abstentions (General Assembly, 2012). Among the states that expressed their favour, there was also the State of Qatar, that also supported the President Abu Mazen in his bid. Despite this important goal for Palestine and for Abbas, the persistence of the Gaza war was a crucial issue for Qatar which decided to institute in 2012 a Committee for the Gaza Reconstruction, chaired by the Ambassador Al-Amadi, who launched a plan for the city reconstruction and, for the first time from the Hamas' control of Gaza, an Arab leader, the Emir and his wife HH Sheikha Mozah visited Gaza (Khatib, 2013 p.245), where they received a PhD *ad honorem* for their commitment and care of the Palestinian situation and launched the doubling of the Qatari financial support , from \$254 to \$415 million, for five projects: the Hamad Residential Town, the Hamad Medical City, the reconstruction of Salah Ed Deen Road, Al-Rasheed Road, and Al-Karama Street (Doha News Team, 2012) . This visit in Palestine was reciprocated in 2013 when Abbas visited in August Doha and met His Highness (MOFA, 2013).

Image 1. The Emir of Qatar and the First Lady listen the Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Hanyeh at the Islamic University in Gaza



Source: <http://www.gettyimages.fr>.

2.1. Mediation and peace-making: between Israel and Palestine

Qatar tried to implement his acquired skills of neutrality and impartiality also to serve the Palestinian cause, particularly working on two parallel lines: the first one is between Israel and Palestine and the second one is between Hamas and Fatah. As far as the first one, the first attempt of Qatar to propose its own solution was during its presidency at the Security Council in 2006 and in particular with its proposal of the Sustained Peace in the Middle East. In fact Qatar proposed a plan in six steps for achieving peace in the Middle East but without any success (Rabi, 2009 p. 455). However, during the Open Thematic Debate of the Security council in September 2006, already cited, the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs underlined the Qatari efforts to realize a sustainable peace in the Middle East". Such efforts included

“the establishment of relations with the state of Israel and the promotion of dialogue with the followers of the Jewish faith, because we are convinced that the dialogue is the only solution to the perpetual crisis of the region. The State of Qatar did not stop there. We seriously tried to reconcile differences in opinion between the Arabs and the Israelis one the one hand, and among the Arabs themselves on the other.” (International Business Publications, 2007 p. 112).

The tiny state's work for reconciliation between Israel and Palestine, especially between Israel and Hamas did not stop in 2006 despite the failure. There were different occasions and events hosted in Doha, where Qatar tried to bring together these two parts but again without success like the UN sponsored Sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracy held in October 2006; the Eighth Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade in April 2008. Qatar is also a strenuous supporter of the Arab Peace Initiative. Even if it is still cited, the API was never accepted by Israel *in primis*, and then by the past and current US administrations for two main reasons: (i) the Beirut Declaration requires a *full* withdrawal of Israel from the 1967 occupied territories, differently from the UNSC resolution 242, that instead calls for "withdrawal from territories", some but not necessarily from all of the occupied ones; (ii) the reference to the UNGA resolution 194 about the "right to return" because it undermines the Jewish identity and could lead to the creation of a Palestinian State (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009 pp. 14-17).

Because of this, Qatar realized that the Arab Peace Initiative should be revisited and in 2013, when Qatar had the chairmanship of the Arab League's for the API Follow-up Committee, its Foreign Minister revived the Arab Peace Initiative with some attenuations from the original version, strongly supported by US, that hoped to create a new negotiation table between Israel and the Palestinian Authority: instead of the formulation "land for recognition" the Qatari version is "comparable and mutual agreed minor swaps of the land" as the Minister declared, that means that Israel can keep some territories occupied during the Six Days War in 1967 (Neubauer, 2015). Moreover, the Qatari formula does refer neither to the right to return nor to the status of Jerusalem, another key point of the Beirut Summit (Kampeas, 2013).²⁰

The most recent occasion of mediation for Qatar occurred with the last war in Gaza during summer 2014. Initially the position of Egypt, the historical mediator into the Palestinian conflict, with Hamas was tense: the new Al Sisi government demonstrated an opposing behaviour against the Islamist group in Gaza affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and instead its preference for the moderate line of the Palestinian Authority, reaching the peak with the Hamas' interdiction from the Egyptian territories from March 2014; the closure of the Rafah crossing border which contributed to the detention of the Gazan people; the destruction of smuggling tunnels used for the entrance into the Palestinian territory of weapons, food, fuel, construction materials, and medicines (ACRPS, 2014 p. 3; Barakat,

²⁰ It has never been accepted within the Arab world.

2014).²¹ Subsequently, because of Qatari close and unique relations with Hamas, it was involved with Turkey by John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, in a meeting to discuss about a proposal for the ceasefire (IIP Digital, 2014), in a moment when the Egyptian proposal was refused by Hamas (Bakr, 2014). The Egyptian denouncement of the “Hamas-Qatar-Turkey axis” was immediate by the Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri, since it was responsible for the obscuration of Egypt into the truce bargaining (Barakat) . Qatari preference for Hamas, instead of the moderate line of the Palestinian Authority, could procure advantages for the ceasefire: because of this special tie which represents an influent leverage for the negotiations, that Kerry wanted to involve Qatar as moderator with Hamas. Furthermore, the Qatari efforts into the API Committee were highly appreciated by the US, as demonstrated by public declarations of Kerry, who rewarded Qatar and the Minister Al Attiya for its leadership, and because of the unexpected abilities as peace broker Qatar demonstrated (Neubauer, 2015).

On the 19th of July the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani invited the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to discuss about a final and lasting solution to the conflict. “While I was in route to Doha,” Mr. Ban said “dozens more civilians, including children, have been killed in Israeli military strikes in the Shejaiyah neighbourhood in Gaza, [...]I condemn this atrocious action. Israel must exercise maximum restraint and do far more to protect civilians.” . After having expressed his personal concerns for the dramatic situation in Palestine, he stressed his intention to continue a dialogue with Mr. Abbas to find a way for peace (UN News Centre, 2014). His Highness also pushed for a separate meeting between Abbas and the Hamas’ leader living in Doha, Khaled Meshaal. In both the occasions, the Emir and his Foreign Minister confirmed their commitment to the Palestinian cause and unveiled their intentions to give a significant contribution, to the peace process through the offering of “communication channels” between the parts (Barakat).

²¹ After an attempt also by Jordan to mediate for a truce, the role was given to Egypt who achieved a truce between the parts but during the negotiations it completely ignored Hamas, choosing to dialogue and involve instead the Islamic Jihad movement (ACRPS, 2014 p. 3).

Image 2. Ban Ki-Moon meets Mahmoud Abbas in Doha, 2014



Source: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.

Nevertheless, and even if the definitive ceasefire was brokered by Egypt and signed on the 26th of August 2014 between the two parts (MFA, 2014), it is undeniable that the Qatari contribution, in order to establish a contact and an offstage dialogue between the two (Israel and Hamas) was essential (Neubauer, 2015). With the protests at Al-Aqsa Mosque in October 2015, the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs during a conference of the Security Council called on Israel for the implementation of a “just solution” for the Palestinian people before it would be too late to intervene to solve a situation that was foreseeable because of the terrible life conditions of Palestinians, who are under occupation, emphasizing the importance that both Al-Quds and its holy places have for Qatar (Al Jazeera Arabic, 2015). The mediation activity did not stop at all: new talks between the representative of Hamas, Mousa Abu Marzouk, and Israel for a five years ceasefire. Abu Marzouk declared, in fact, to have been to Doha to find a meeting point with Israel for a truce, a meeting that was sponsored by Qatar, Turkey and the UN special envoy for the Middle East Nikolay Mladenov. One of the key issue discussed during the “indirect exchange of ideas” was the creation of a

new port for Gaza, dislocated from the principal one, strongly demanded by Hamas. Again no concrete results were achieved and no other comments on the question emerged: Israel did neither a confirmation nor a denial. The only statement Reuven Rivlin, the Israeli president did was: “I am not opposed to talking with anyone who is willing to talk” (Lazareva, 2015).

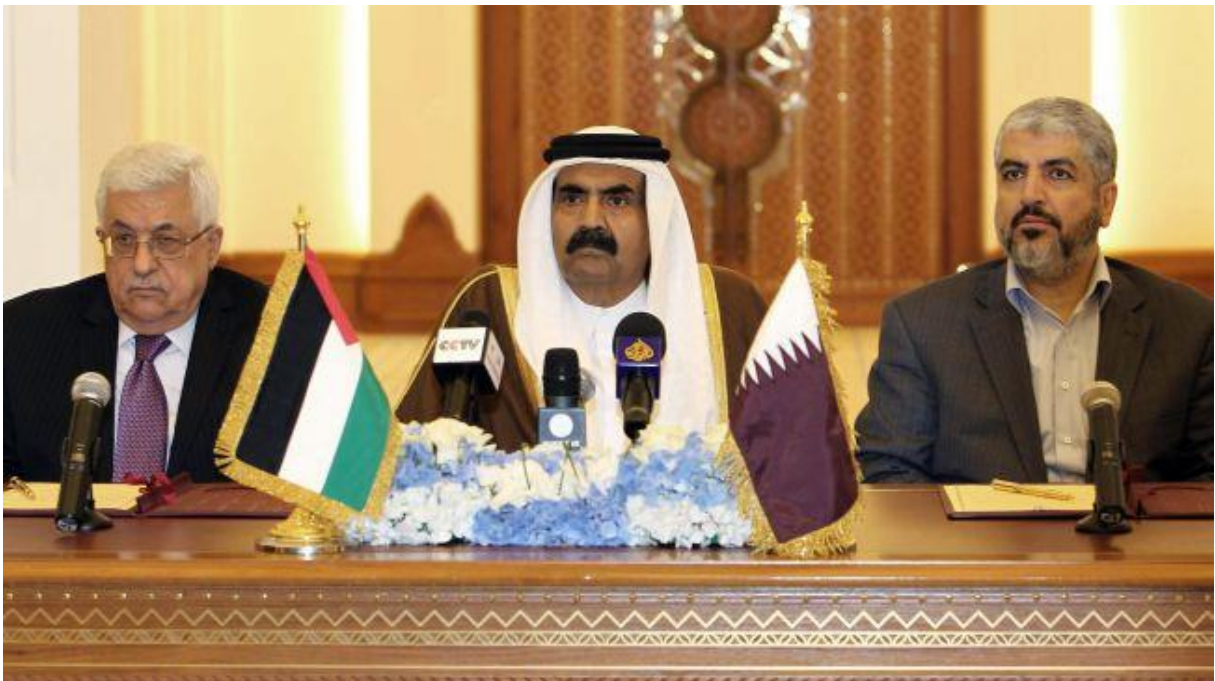
2.2. Mediation and reconciliation: between Hamas and Fatah

Turning to the other level of mediation, between Fatah and Hamas, of course this is more recent since it started with the break up between the two parts after the elections in 2006 and the physical division of the West Bank, under the control of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, and the Gaza Strip, under the control of Hamas. One of the first Qatari intervention is the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in February 2006: Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani expressed its profound respect for the result of the elections and revealed the commitment of the government in inviting Hamas to work in peace and reform “for realizing security, good living, and stability to Palestinian people” (International Business Publications, 2007 p. 122).

However, after the Hamas-Fatah division, the most important Qatari intervention is the Doha Declaration. In 2012 the Emir invited both Khaled Meshaal and Mahmoud Abbas in order to find a path for reconciliation and create a new collegial government with the participation of both. There was the creation of a list of a six points’ plan in order to define an interim technical government, with Abbas President, and with the reconstruction of Gaza as priority. A new meeting was scheduled in Cairo to go ahead with the discussion and to define a date for the elections and the composition of the Palestinian National Council and the PLO Legislative Committee. Nevertheless, the good incipit was not followed by a positive continuation: on the one hand, because of the incomprehension between Hamas and Fatah were avoided some hot issues, especially for Hamas, like the dealing with Israel, on the other hand, because of the non-contribution of Egypt and the condemnation of Israel and the United States for this initiative, considering the inclusion of Hamas in the government as an obstacle to peace (Al Jazeera English, 2012; Barakat, 2012 p. 14; Khatib, 2013; ACRPS, 2014).

The unsustainability of the Doha Declaration was related to the lack of appealing guarantees for both parts, but also to the difficulty of Qatar in mediating on the long term.²² A new dialogue between the two parts was restored only in May when there was a new agreement in Cairo, sponsored by Egypt, restarting from the Doha Declaration. Two hot questions of disagreement between Fatah and Hamas were discussed. The first regarded the Hamas' refuse of registering new voters in the Gaza Strip: "Without elections there will be no reconciliation" Mr. Abbas was reported to say; while the second issue was the continuous adherence of the PA to the Kerry's line, which included also a dialogue with Israel, unacceptable for Hamas (Rudoren & Akram, 2012; ACRPS, 2014).

Image 3. Mahmoud Abbas (Palestinian Authority) and Ismail Hanyeh (Hamas) meet in Doha with the Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, 2012



Source: <http://www.iranreview.org/>.

After the reconciliation between the two parts with the creation two years before of a new Palestinian national unity government, the last Gaza war (2014) again cut off the relations between the two (Mahmoud, 2014; Rana, 2016).

²² Author's interview with Sultan Barakat, Professor at the University of York, Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies at the Doha Institute and former Senior Fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy and Director of Research for the Brookings Doha Center.

The 2014 Israeli attacks in Gaza and the initial Egyptian fail in achieving a truce,²³ offered to Qatar the perfect occasion for a meeting in Doha, brokered by Emir Tamim between President Abbas and Khaled Meshaal on the 21st of August. For the first meeting, including the three parts, there was great expectation for a bilateral confrontation between the two Palestinian leaders and their staffs which did not take place. Instead, to the principal conference, whose main topics were the stopping of the Israeli attacks, a bilateral consensus about a long-term ceasefire and the future of the Palestinian state, followed a private briefing between Sheikh Tamim and President Abbas who discussed about the Qatari-Palestinian relations (Middle East Eye, 2014; Sullivan, 2015 p. 16).

Image 4. PA President Abbas and Hamas leader Meshaal in Doha with the Emir Thamim, 21st August 2014



Source: Qatar News Agency (QNA)

Nevertheless, the Qatari reconciliation failed again because there was no agreement on the further steps in order to implement the Beach Refugee Camp Agreement²⁴ signed in April

²³ The truce brokered by Egypt was declared over on the 20th of August by the Al-Qassam Brigades after an Israeli attempt to kill the Brigades' leader Mohammed Deif, violating according to them the ceasefire (Middle East Eye, 2014).

²⁴ The agreement underlines the reciprocal commitment of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in announcing within six months the consultation for a new government and election for the National Council; in creating the

2014 as demonstration of the mutual will to concretize the previous Doha Declaration and the Cairo Agreement. Not only the traditional controversies between the parts (the blockage of salaries to Hamas-hired public personnel; the interferences of Western countries; the recognition of Israel), but also pressure from Egypt seems to have contributed to the umpteenth disagreement: on the 12th of June 2016 Azzam Al Ahmad, representative of Fatah, was in Cairo to discuss about the reconciliation and there he pushed to do not find any deal in order to let the Doha's attempt failing (Abou Jalal, 2016).

Despite the Qatari alleged neutrality and impartiality, there are some elements that demonstrate how the support for Hamas made the difference compared to the Qatari relations with Fatah. In an interview the Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal referred to the Qatari-Hamas relations with these words:

“The relationship between Qatar and HAMAS is not new. It is public. HAMAS has a broad network of Arab, Islamic and international relations. No one is ashamed of this. We have great appreciation for the popular and official Qatari position and the courage of the Qatari leadership and what it offers to the Palestinian cause. The Qatari support is not for HAMAS as a movement in particular, but for the Palestinian people. Its former emir, Hamad BinKhalifah Al Thani, and the current emir, Tamim Bin-Hamad Bin-Khalifah, have adopted positions toward Gaza, made direct visits, played a role in construction, adopted political positions that support Palestinian rights, and hosted many meetings in Doha between Palestinian forces and between us and President Abbas, as well as the first Gaza summit in 2008 and 2009 war. All of this honorable history of Qatar, which is to be thanked not blamed. For the enemy to attack it, this is a source of pride for Qatar and is evidence of correctness of the Qatari position.” (Sullivan, 2015 pp.16-7).

The strengthening of the friendship with Hamas started at the beginning of the new millennium. In 1999 the Hamas office in Jordan was closed and Sheikh Hamad offered to Khaled Meshaal to relocate it in Doha at the condition of avoiding direct political activities (Fromherz, 2012 p.104). As Muslim state, in fact, a closer affiliation naturally developed between the Qatari leadership and the Muslim Brotherhood first, and Hamas then. As a result, in addition to the Lebanese and the Sudanese leadership, also the Muslim and Palestinian

leadership found welcoming in Qatar.²⁵ After the scission with Fatah in 2006 and the elections' result, then, it was undeniable that Hamas was a political force that could not be ignored and the PA was losing its credibility: while Saudi Arabia and Iran were not giving a lot of attention to the Palestinian issue, Qatar was able to fill the gap not only through its diplomatic abilities and financial means, but also through the religious affiliation.

Clear examples of this closeness were the Qatari donations amounting to \$22 million for the functionaries' salaries of the Hamas government, frozen by Israel, US and EU to avoid any financial support for the terroristic group in 2007 (Rabi, 2009 p. 445) and again in 2014 to respond to the call of Ismail Hanyeh, the former Palestinian Prime Minister and member of Hamas, who reminded that the agreement stipulated in Cairo with the Palestinian Authority for a unity government included also the transfer of salaries and with the new Gaza war in 2014, this request became the Hamas condition for a ceasefire. The money transfer by the Emir through the Arab Bank was suspended (Miller, 2014). All the transfers to Gaza are monitored, as the Qatari Ambassador of the Reconstruction Committee of Gaza, Al Amadi explains:

“[T]he thing here is that if a single dollar goes there from our account to their [Hamas] account, a single dollar that goes to the contractors, they [Israel] know that the money has not gone to anybody else. [They can check the transfer] through banking. It is monitoring everything. If I may transfer for example in Egypt 10000 dollar to somebody they will stop the transfer. We have a company there [in Gaza] and the profit, if we transfer the profit, they can check any single dollars, they stop and check “why are you transferring to Cairo?” so the guys are doing this in their office. This is Egypt, what about Gaza, you know, it is more difficult, ok? they monitor 100%. So first of all we do not take cash and everything is through bank transfer, that is why they know that we are doing a clear work. We are not giving Hamas in anyway.”²⁶

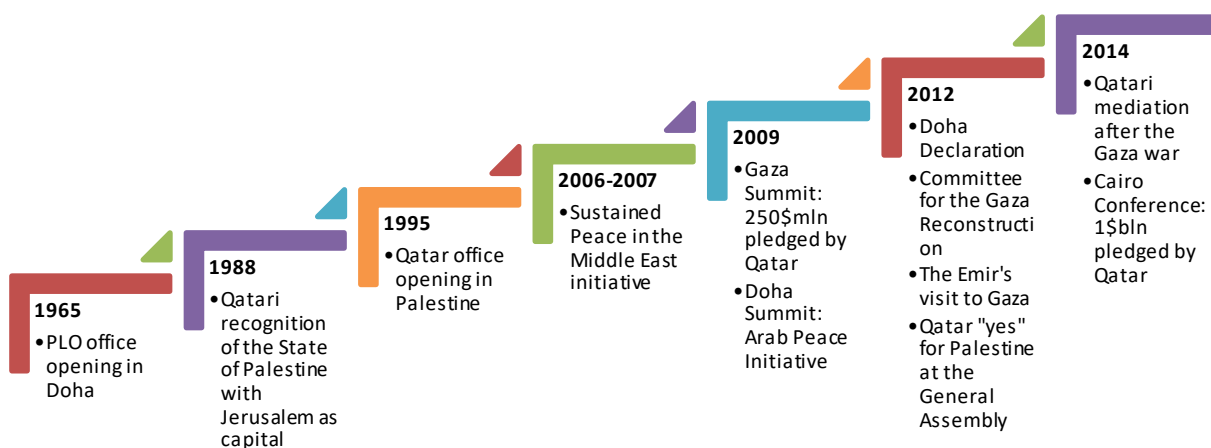
Still, another example of this closeness with Hamas is the visit of His Highness and Sheikha Mozah circumscribed only to Gaza, where they met the leaders of Hamas but there was no meeting with Abbas, who expressed his reservations:

“Such visits give Hamas the impression that the visitors recognize their rule and that would reinforce the split and not help the reconciliation” (Doha News Team, 2012).

²⁵ Author's interview with Abdullah Al-Arian, Assistant Professor of History at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

²⁶ Author's interview with HE Ambassador Mohammed Ismail Al Amadi.

Figure 1. Time line of the Qatari mediation efforts for Palestine



3. Al Jazeera: between Hamas and Fatah

An essential element of foreign policy and branding is for sure Al Jazeera. As already stated, one of the reasons for Al Jazeera appeal was its “independence” from the leadership, differently from the other channels which were used as mere instruments of propaganda. Al Jazeera, instead, seemed to give another alternative point of view that caught the popular consensus (Khatib, 2013 pp. 426-8). Al Jazeera benefitted from its coverage of the Second Intifada, that was crucial for the development of an Arab awareness about the Palestinian situation, that became a central issue. The Qatari channel was really strategic in covering in depth these events: from the Intifada to the Hamas-Fatah separation and the Israeli military operations, the images of Palestinian youths protesting or the images of the Gaza wars entered into the houses, creating a collective consciousness, spreading ideas of resistance against Israel (Haddad, 2013).

Nevertheless, from an analysis of the Al Jazeera articles and its representation of the conflict, it is possible to underline that on the one hand, the references to Israel are always a denounce of its policies and behaviour, with no mention about the Qatari-Israeli relations. For instance,

this is the case of the article describing the Doha Forum 2016 where the Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jasim Al Thani spoke on behalf of Qatar denouncing the Israeli occupation as the cause for the absence of peace in the Middle East. He said: "Repression, tyranny, double standards and violating human rights and basic freedoms constitute the underlying threats to elements of human security,". The Al Jazeera article, written by the journalist Ali Younes (2016), focuses on the difference between the bland accuse of the other Arab countries, while "Qatar's official foreign policy towards the occupation and the plight of Palestinians sets it apart from the majority of the Arab world". On the other hand, instead, there are different articles accusing the Palestinian Authority of plot with Israel at the expenses of Palestinian people. The most enigmatic investigative report is the "Palestinian Papers", secret documents that reveal the truth behind the Arab-Israeli peace process, from 1999 to 2010. Among them, there are two significant revelations. The first one includes some diplomatic conversations that showed that the PA pushed to postpone the vote to approve the Goldstone Report, the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict on the Israeli war crimes in 2009, in order to assure negotiations with US and Israel. The chief of the Mossad, Meir Dagan was reported to say:

"Mossad fears that by acknowledging the report it could give the impression to other terror organisations that highly populated areas could be used as human shields during terror operations. By this a new form of terrorism and warfare could be implemented and could be seen as a victory for terrorism. [...] If the report is accepted it could be a blow to the peace process. Israel will feel that it will not be able to defend itself and will have much more reservations in the peace process. [...] President Abbas (ABU-MASEN) is also having reservations about the success for the Palestinian people, if the report is accepted by the international community. This will play into the hands of Hamas and weaken his position as well as that of the PLA. (Abbas) can however not take this stance in public and have to agree with the report in public. Mossad sees President Abbas as key to stabilising the situation in order for the peace process to continue." (Farhan Mustafa, 2011).

The second one unveils that Mahmoud Abbas was pre-emptively informed by the Israeli military intelligence about the 2009 Gaza attack. "We knew about the war because the Israelis were saying there was going to be a war," Erekat, the chief Palestinian Authority negotiator, told. But "there were never any actual consultations between us and the Israelis before the war," he added. (Poort, 2011). These two references unveil clearly that Al Jazeera was important for two particular reasons: on the one hand, it diverted the attention of the public

from the conversations and meetings Qatar had with Israel and on the other hand it raised the unpopularity of the Palestinian Authority, already weakened by different internal scandals.

4. Qatari governmental aids

In order to increase its positive image and reputation as a rentier State, donations, investments and aids represent a nontrivial part of foreign policy, especially for the Palestinian recipient. It is possible to distinguish between two different channels of aids: official and unofficial. The official channel is the governmental one and includes all the initiatives supported by it, while the unofficial channel is a result of the civil society and non-governmental organizations' projects, which can however be also indirectly economically supported or sponsored by the government or rather by royal members. The first one includes the development assistance. Especially after the launch of the Millennium Development Goals, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani pledged Qatar's efforts in order to eradicate hunger and poverty, improve health and educational conditions of people and assist under development and developing countries: the unicity of the Gulf state's development aids was that thanks to the oil boom Qatar, a developing country was able to destine only in the period 2004-2008 \$1.7 billion for other developing countries (MOFA, 2010). From 2008 and 2013 the 0,5% of the national GDP was destined to the MENA region in terms of ODA: from an initial amount of \$90 million in 2004, the sum Qatar spent for development climbed to \$433 million in 2008 and then reached the \$1.758 million in 2013, a percentage that was even bigger than the OECD countries' one (the 0,87% of the Qatari GDP in 2013 versus the 0,7% of the GDP, the UN target). Palestine represents the third beneficiary from the Arab countries after Syria and Morocco, with a commitment of \$239.2 million only in 2013 (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015 pp. 124-128).

Generally speaking, the development assistance is distributed by Qatar traditionally through four channels: 1. cash or in kind assistance given directly to governments especially in case of emergency; 2. cash amounts for developmental projects in different fields, from education to housing; 3. cash amounts for institutions and charities and individuals such as Arabic teachers; special assistance for peace-keeping forces. In the case of Palestine, the one that is

not used is the latter. Indeed Qatar helped the Palestinian Authority with the payments of salaries for public officials and with the payment of debts, donating \$300 million in 2013 and in 2015 the Qatar Development Fund (QDF) signed an agreement with PA for a 100 millions of dollars loan because of the financial crisis (QNA, 2015). However, the major project in which Qatar dedicated efforts and especially money is the reconstruction of Gaza, through the institution of the Qatari Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza. The Committee, differently from the other national mission in Gaza, has a permanent office with local personnel in order to improve the efficiency of the Qatari intervention. To the locals are reserved technical decisions, while the financial ones are made by the Chairman of the Committee and an affirmed architect, the Ambassador Al Amadi, who also controls the use of materials, “which is not in the hand of Hamas”. In a personal interview he explained:

“The other people are doing [reconstruction projects in Gaza] so through NGOs, mostly UNRWA, UNDP that work in Gaza, American Aid, so everyone is doing it, but we are Qatar doing [it] by ourselves because the cost is much cheaper on us. Our running cost does not cost us as 2% of the overall, to other people it costs them 30%, plus we can manage our projects much better and more efficiently and doing the work faster. We saw a Turkish project, they did a hospital, a big hospital, but now it is not operative yet, so they do not have things that are operative and their projects is taking a lot of time. When I went to Gaza first time in 2000..I think 2011 or 2012 I saw a project that was standing there for eight years and not completed. So we did not like the situation, so we said we do it also, but we are doing [it] much better and faster.”

All the interventions chosen perfectly match the “needs of the Gaza people” and give back thousands of jobs to the Gazan people, who are involved into the reconstruction. Hamad city, the area Qatar is re-building in Gaza, received firstly around 407 millions of dollars in 2012, announced by the Emir himself during his visit; new projects and house complexes were pledged by Al Amadi in 2015, amounting at 32 millions of dollars (MEMO, 2016). The current status of the city, that consists of 2500 housing units, schools and other services with the aim of providing accessible housing is the conclusion of the first package of infrastructures (amounting at the 47.4 millions of dollars) and the beginning of the second package (with a sum of 48 millions of dollars), while the third package has not started yet. The total budget is \$135 million. As far as the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Hospital for Rehabilitation and Artificial Limbs, the building consists of five floors with a 2700m² of area

set on 12000m² of the area site. For the Hamad Hospital \$10 million out of the 14.7 established by the budget have been already spent and the structure is completed for the 70%.

Another important project is the reconstruction of roads, particularly of Salah Ed Deen Road and Al-Rasheed Costal Road: both impressive challenges are vital in order to give mobility back to citizens. The Salah Ed Deen Road reconstruction comprises four packages: the first of 12.8km is almost completed; the second of 5.8km is under preparation; the third of 6km is finished; the fourth of 4km has started. The total budget is 74 millions of dollars. Al-Rasheed Costal Road, instead, whose budget is 50 millions of dollars, is composed of ten package but only the first of 4.8km, the third of 1.8km and the tenth of 2.3km are started (the first and the third also almost finished). In order to support the sportive events in Gaza city, the Committee destined also \$1 million to the reconstruction of the west wing and the playground of the Palestine Stadium, still under progress. Finally, the Qatari efforts focused also on the reconstruction of the destroyed houses: around 1000 house units chosen by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing will be re-built thanks to the fund of \$50 million (MOFA, 2015 pp.1-11). In coordination with the Quartet, the PA and Israel, the Committee is also working to an energy plant: the Qatari part consists in supplying the plant with the gas from Israel through the construction of some pipelines thanks to the European funds. Moreover, on its own, Qatar is also trying to build a solar energy plant.²⁷ In April 2016 the Ambassador Al Amadi signed a new \$20 million package for the Hope city, destined to detainees, for a rehabilitation centre in Khan Younis, in addition to the supply and installation of medical equipment for the Hamad Hospital and the Prosthetics Hospital, and the Ambassador celebrated recently the conclusion of a first part of the housing (MEMO, 2016).

²⁷ Author's interview with HE Ambassador Mohammed Ismail Al Amadi.

Image 5. Ambassador Al Amadi in a press conference in Gaza, 2015

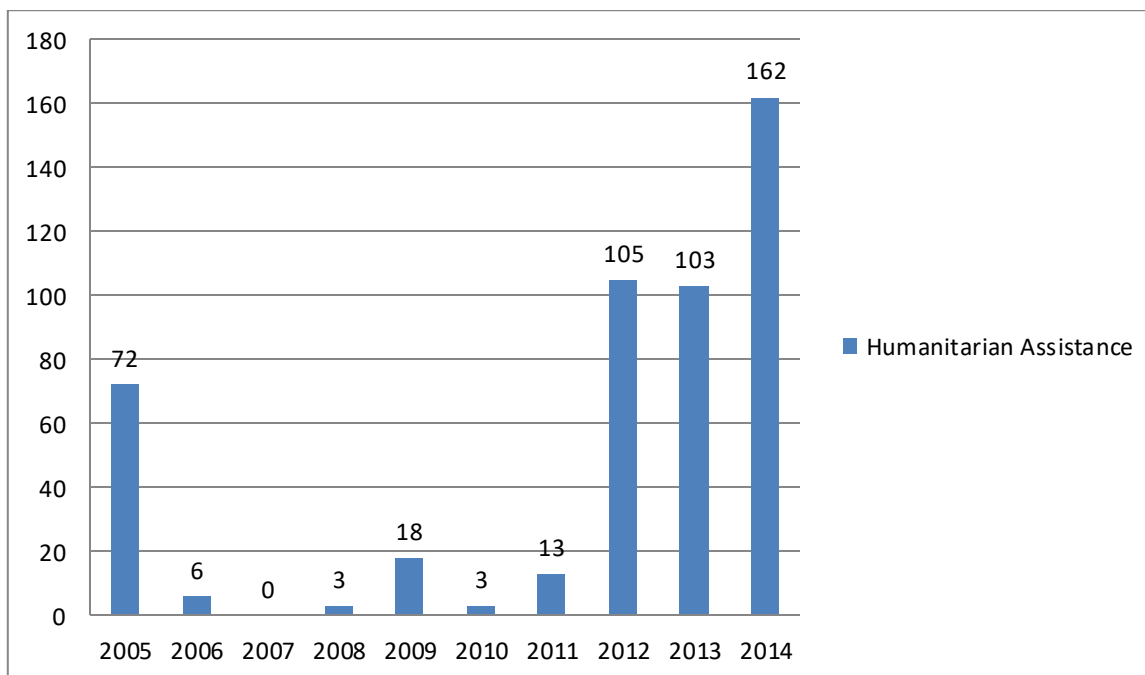


Source: gettyimages.no.

Another component of the Qatari governmental development assistance is the multilateral one, particularly through regional institutions and funds such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the OPEC Fund for International Development; the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) (MOFA, 2010). In particular, the IDB in different occasions demonstrated its involvement for Palestine: it is, in fact, the Coordinator for the GCC Reconstruction Programme in Gaza and for instance in 2011 signed an agreement in collaboration with the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) in order to finance almost 400 refugees house units destroyed by the Israeli attacks in 2009 for an amount of \$6.1 million (UNRWA, 2011). In terms of humanitarian aids, instead, Qatar is the 20th donor who distributed the 1,07% of the global humanitarian assistance in 2012 (see Table 4) (Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015 p. 127). There is no available data on the specific Qatar disbursement for Palestine but the group of the richest six Gulf countries destined the 11% of the 2014 budget

(\$183 million) to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which represented the third recipient after Iraq and Syria, supplying the 20% of the international humanitarian assistance Palestine received that year (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015 p. 34).

Table 4. International humanitarian assistance by Qatar (millions of dollars)



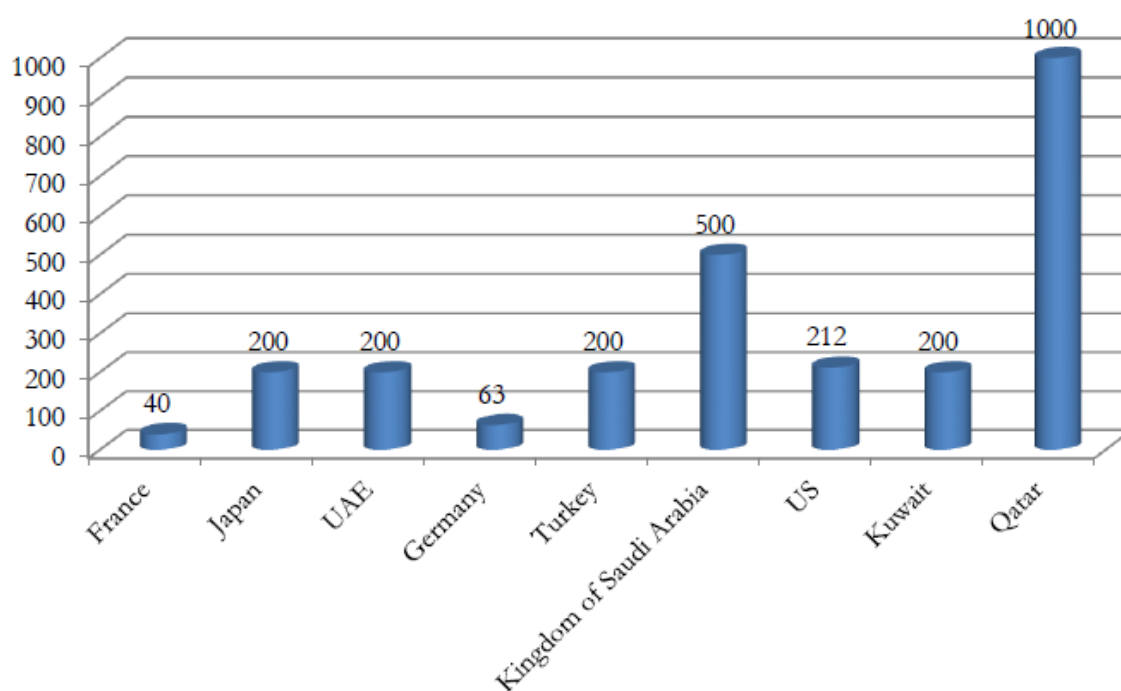
Source: *Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015 p.34.*

Qatar is one of the most generous donors for Palestine, especially after the last Gaza war when it donated 1 billion of dollars during the donors conference in Cairo (Shuttleworth, 2014). After the ceasefire, in fact, 90 countries,²⁸ the IMF, the World Bank, the Arab League, the UN and its agencies such as the UNRWA took part to the “International Conference in Support of the Reconstruction of Gaza” organized by Egypt, Norway and the Palestinian Authority on the 12th of October 2014, in order to support financially Gaza (Mahmoud, 2014; Neubauer, 2015). According to the PA, the global cost of relief and reconstruction is \$4.5 billion, three times more than the 2008 war’s damages: infrastructures and facilities, even the ones donated by the UN, and 60.000 housing units are completely destroyed and also the only power plant. The destruction of private sector’s activities contributed also to the weakening of an already collapsed economy. After that, other \$7 billion are necessary to achieve the long-

²⁸ Israel was not present.

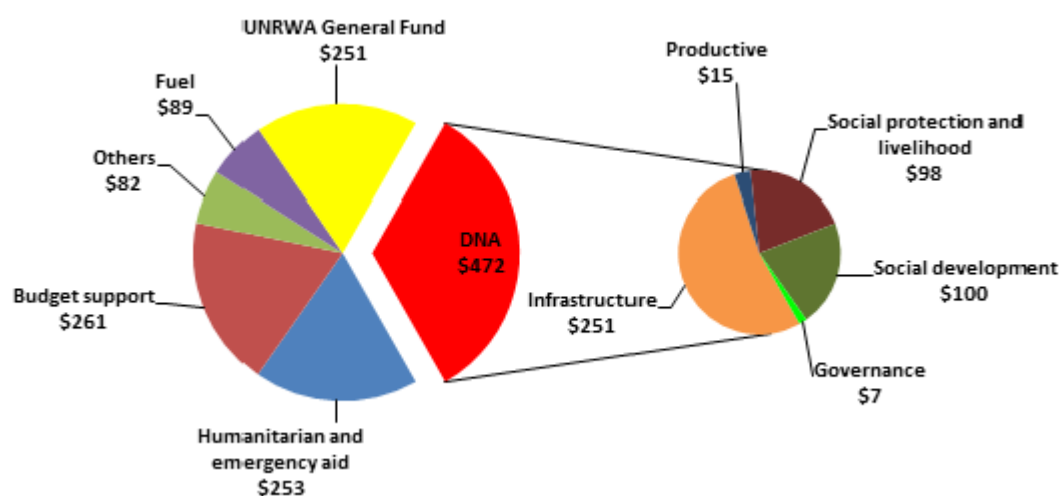
term development goals such as the construction of the Gaza Marine gas site, the international port and seaport; the desalination plant but also housing units, schools and hospitals(State of Palestine, 2014 pp. 14-17). The total amount given by the participants is \$5.4 billion (Table 5) of which \$3.5 for Gaza only in accordance with “The National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza” under the supervision of the World Bank. At the end of March 2016 only 1.409 millions of dollars were disbursed and the biggest percentage (33,5%) is for Gaza Detailed Needs Assessment (DNA) (World Bank, 2016).

Table 5. Pledges by states at the Cairo Conference (millions of dollars)



Source: Mahmoud, 2014 p.2.

Table 6. Disbursements of Cairo Conference support to Gaza by category (million)

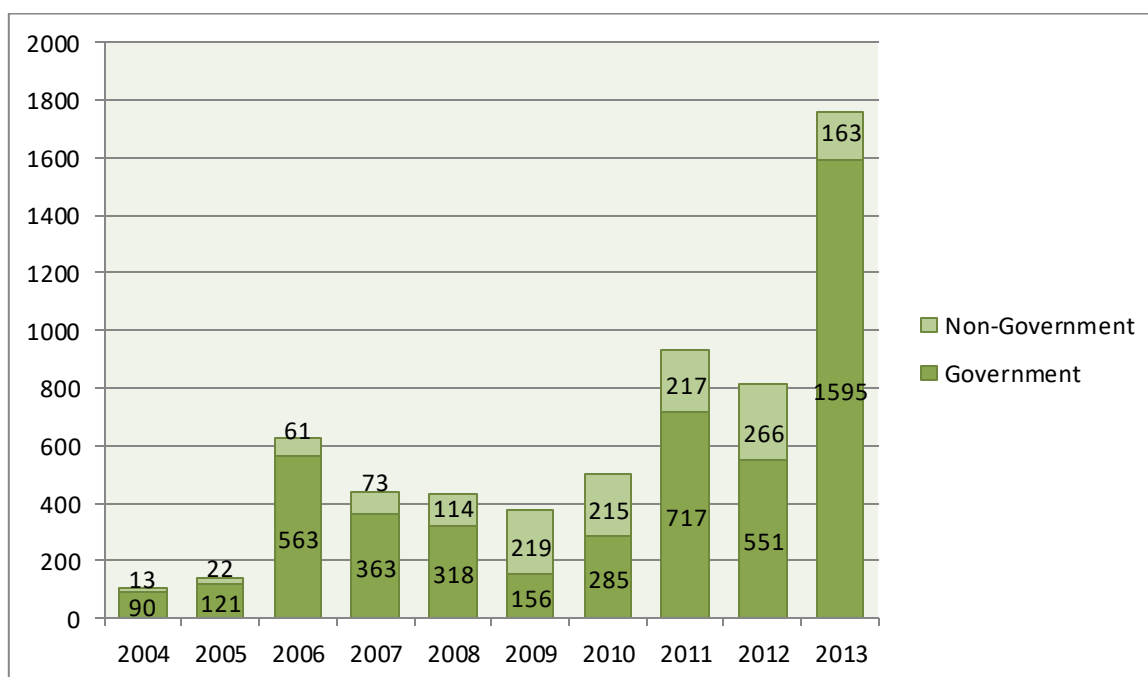


Source: The World Bank, 2016.

4.1. Qatari non-governmental aids

Turning to the unofficial channel, the contribution of the NGOs is relevant: in 2013, the 21% out of \$1.8 billion of the total budget destined by Qatar for development project all around the world, was the result of civil society's commitment. It is evident, from the Table 7 that the NGOs development aids dramatically rose since 2004, even if the 2013 represented a decrease point.

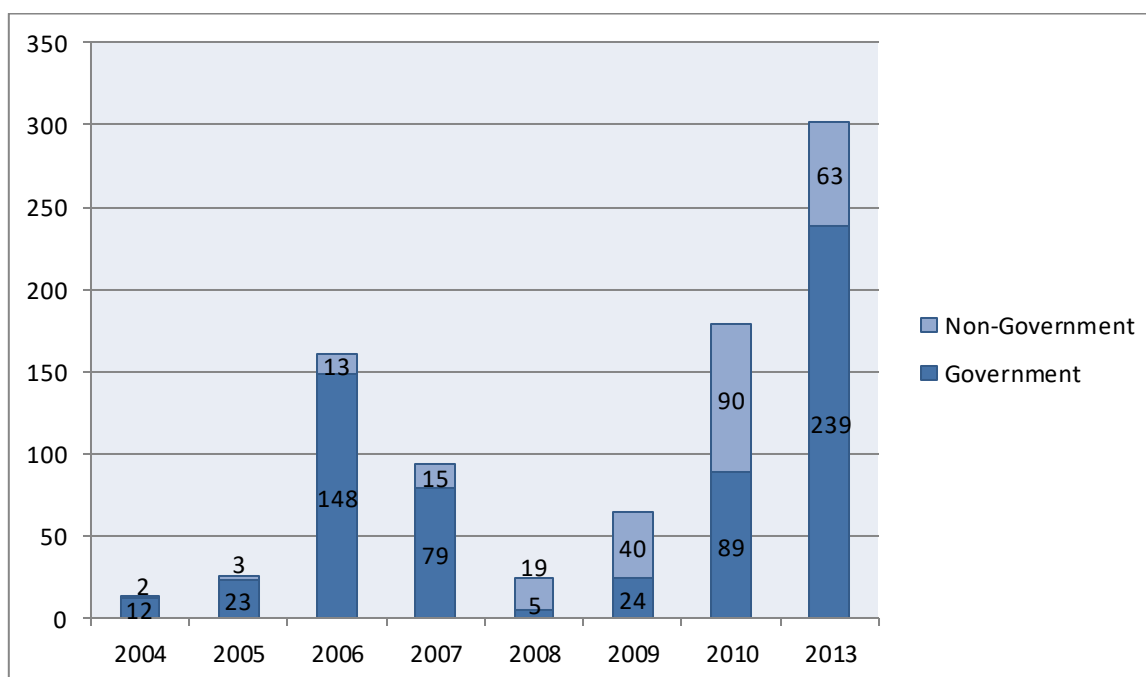
Table 7. Government and non-government development assistance (millions of dollars)



Source: MOFA, 2010; MOFA, 2011 p.73; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015 p.126.

Palestine resulted since the 2004 to be one of the first destination of non-governmental activities with a peak in the period 2010-2011, guaranteeing an assistance of \$90 million (Table 8) and resulted to be the first recipient of non-government association.

Table 8. Qatari development assistance to Palestine (millions of dollars)



Source: MOFA, 2010; MOFA 2009; MOFA, 2011 pp.65-73; Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2015 p.127.

It is possible to define three main categories of intervention: health, education and general humanitarian aids. The Qatar Red Crescent (QRC), founded in 1978 is a humanitarian organization set in Doha that, with the financial support of the IDB (Islamic Development Bank) and the GCC, operates in Gaza. The great success and efficacy it has, it is linked basically to the direct presence on the territory. In fact, the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has an office in Gaza and all its projects are the result of a worthwhile cooperation with the Palestinian Authority who authorizes the Qatari interventions and in certain case cooperates with it. Also the Israeli authorization is essential, since all the materials are transported through the Erez crossing point, controlled by the Israeli authority: however, no direct relations or contacts exist between the QRC and Israel since the Erez's permission is the result of the Palestinian Authority's agreement with Israel.²⁹ The QRCS works in different projects not only linked to the health and water supply sector, but also into the education sector. In terms of medical care the biggest targets are disable people and the aim of the QRC is the construction or reconstruction of specific medical centres for rehabilitation. This is the list of some projects with the relative budget:

²⁹ Personal interview with Mr Said Tijani, Head of the Asia Office - Relief and International Development Department of the Qatar Red Crescent.

- Internal department of clinical rehabilitation at Al Amal Hospital in Khan Yunis (\$540.000)
- Development of Physical Therapy Department at Ahly Arab Hospital in Gaza (\$101.700)
- Specialized centre for the treatment of diabetes complications at Al Wafa Hospital in Gaza (\$247.550)
- Physiotherapy department at the University College of Applied Sciences (\$145.330)
- New unit in the Al-Shefaa Medical Complex (\$600.000)³⁰ (QRCS, 2016)
- 2016-2017 Medical Expertise & Training Project (\$250.000)³¹
- Gastroscopy services at Nasser Hospital and European Gaza Hospital (\$200.000)³² (QRCS, 2016).
- Center of social psychological support in Khan Yunis (\$135.000)³³ (QRCS).
- 913 treatments for poor Palestinians in Hebron and West Bank governorates (\$328.330)³⁴
- Devices for the Urological & Kidney Department of Al-Ahli Hospital (\$460.000)³⁵ (QRCS).

Still, in May 2016 the Qatar Red Crescent Society and the Islamic Development Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding to supply Gaza hospitals in medical stocks for \$5 million (QRCS). Other sectors where the QRC gave its support to the Palestinian people are: food, water and education. For instance, the QRCS helped the Al-Zakah Committee of Jerusalem with the distribution of the *Iftar*³⁶ meals during Ramadan and packages with essential food products for poor families and orphans, improving the conditions of 126thousands of family of the Old City of Jerusalem during the Holy Ramadan. The project started in 2012, and in 2016 the total Qatari disbursement amounted at \$130.000 (QRCS). In terms of water, in 2014 the QRC contributed to the Al-Alami Wastewater Treatment Plant rehabilitation in the Jabalia Municipality (Gaza), in order to solve, especially during winter, the high wastewater level's issue. The project required one millions of dollars and the support of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility and other international organizations. Moreover, the Qatar Red Crescent also promoted a new

³⁰ Project supported by an agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) between the QRCS (Qatar Red Crescent Society) and the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH).

³¹ Supported by an agreement between the QRCS and the Palestinian MOH.

³² Part of the MoU with the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH).

³³ The project is the result of a partnership between the QRCS and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS).

³⁴ In coordination with the non-profit charity Poor Patients Fund.

³⁵ Co-funded with the Kuwait's Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and Al-Ahli Hospital

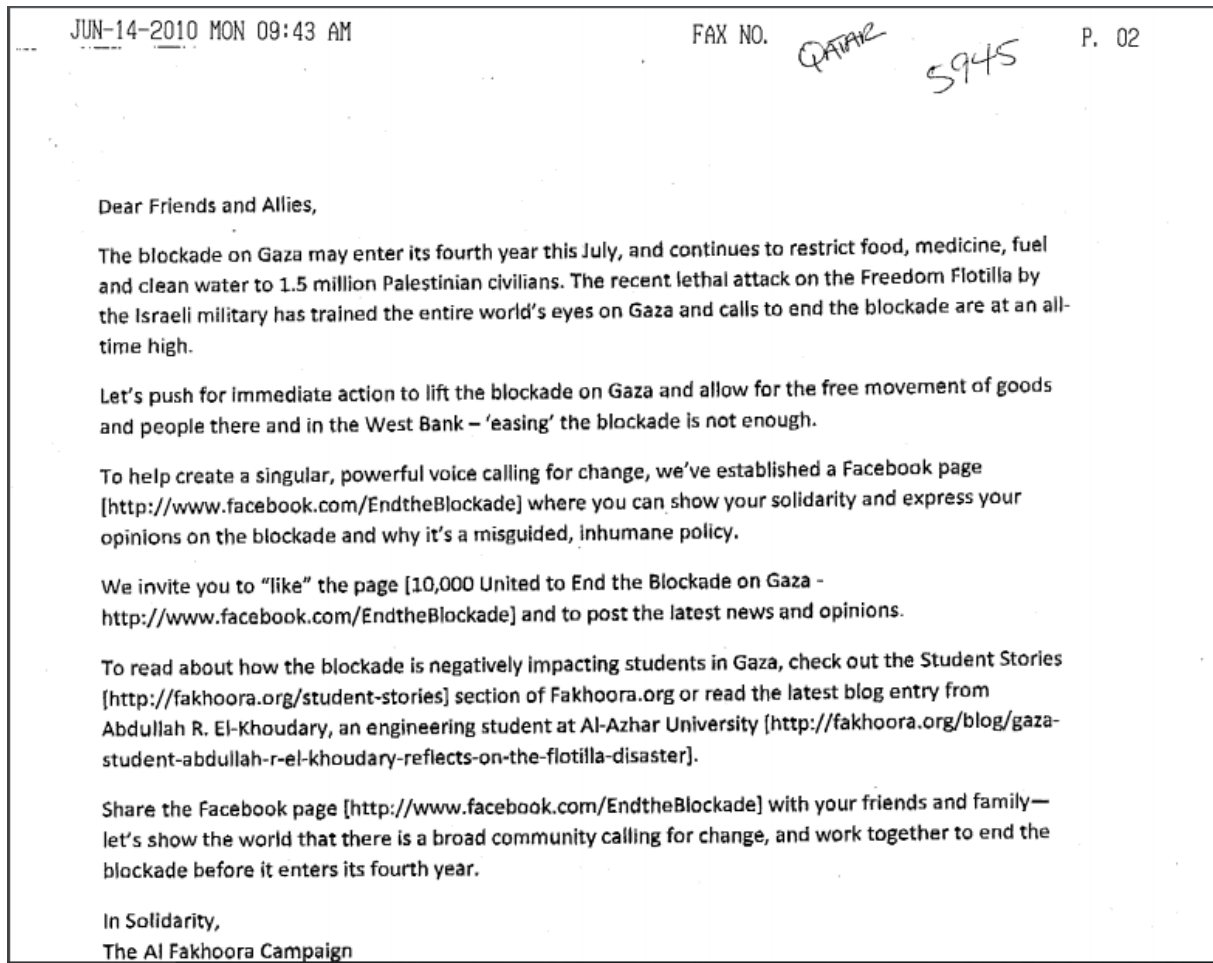
³⁶ The "iftar" is the evening meal which breaks the daily fast during the Ramadan month.

project with the Gaza Municipality in order to build a PS11 sewage treatment plant to reduce the wastewater dumped directly into the sea. Under the monitor of the IDB, the total cost of the two wastewater infrastructures is \$6 million (QRCS). In addition to this, the QRC in collaboration with ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid) launched a 561 millions of dollars' project for the construction of water pipelines in Gaza (IFRC, 2014).

As far as education is concerned, the Qatar Red Crescent contributed to supply medical training and capacity-building for experts and a vocational training project for the people with disability. The latter program, whose budget is \$5 million (the QRCS's part is \$664.240), is also co-funded with the IDB and Al-Fakhoora, a leader Qatari NGO for education. In terms of education, in fact, the biggest Qatari project was launched by Al-Fakhoora, sponsored by Sheikha Mozah, since it is under the umbrella of her project "Education Above All", it gives scholarships to Palestinian students and helps in the Gaza reconstructions of schools and other facilities for education for \$40 million. The name of the project derives from a UN school in Gaza that was destroyed by an Israeli attack in 2009 (Fakhoora.org, n.d.; Qatarisbooming, 2015).

The Sheikha's devotion to the Palestinian cause launched a proper campaign of denigration of the Israeli blockade in Gaza: Fenton Communication, a prominent US public relations office, was designated by March 2009 to promote "international public opinion awareness campaign that advocates the accountability of those who participated in attacks on schools in Gaza" (Fromherz, 2012 p. 103). Working for Sheikha Mozah, the Fenton Communication's staff prepared public statements and campaign for Al Fakhoora (Qatar Fenton Communications, 2010).

Figure 6. Qatar Fenton Communications the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah promoting the “End the Blockade” Facebook Page to stop the Gaza blockade



Source: <http://www.pogo.org/tools-and-data/foreign-influence-database>.

Other generic charitable projects involved into the support of Gaza people are related to different associations like Sheikh Eid bin Mohammad Al Thani Charitable Association, Sheikh Thani bin Abdullah Foundation for Humanitarian Services (RAF), Katara, Al Sailiya Sports Club, Qatar Football Association (QFA), Qatar Fuel (Woqod), ElJaish Sports Club, ROTA, Elevate to Educate, Qatar Charity, Qatar Medical Association (QNA, 2015; Marhaba Desk, 2014; Qatarisbooming, 2014; MOFA, 2010 pp. 28-46). Also the Qatari Diar Real Estate Company³⁷ is involved into the development of the Rawabi city: it is the first planned Palestinian smart city situated 9km north of Ramallah, 25km north of Jerusalem and 25km south of Nablus, in the area under the control of the Palestinian Authority. The city will offer more than 5000 house units and a commercial area and could

³⁷ The company was created in 2005 by the Qatari sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA).

host around 40.000 citizens and could create thousands of new jobs. The project, launched by the Bayti Real Estate Investment Company, jointly owned by the Qatar Diar Real Estate Investment Authority and Massar International, will cost more than \$1 billion and should represent permanent new job generator and sustainable long-term growth catalyser for the Palestinian economy. Rawabi is totally harmonized with the Qatar Diar's mission because of its aim of improving the economy and the development of Palestine and is also harmonized with the intent of the Qatari foreign policy (Rawabi, n.d.).

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Chapter III

Between the official and the unofficial: Qatar and Israel

1.A submersed story of a relation

Between Qatar and Israel a complicated relation exists which is based on silent trade fluxes, public declarations and secret meetings, a relation between the official and the unofficial, where what happened on the stage contradicted what was happening in the backstage. The desire to establish a kind of relation by the two parts, before, because of the impressive gas field Qatar has, and now because of the geopolitical and strategic role the Gulf plays, has been limited by the opposite teams they belong – the Arab League versus Israeli people. Being friends, in fact, has been a convenience for both: for Israel, who has not discovered yet its Mediterranean gas fields , because not only Qatar could guarantee the supply of this resource, but also because it was an important door for the Israeli trade and the process of recognition with its neighbours. On the other hand, for Qatar a friend as Israel could represent instead surely a commercial door towards the Mediterranean and the occasion to demonstrate the ability of the sheikhdom to design an independent foreign policy, working as mediator of

most intricate conflict ever, but even more represented the chance to consolidate and demonstrate the friendship with the US (Rabi, 2009 p. 443).

The new geopolitical situation with the rapprochement between the US and Iran, the discovery of the Israeli gas field³⁸ and the increasing interests and projects of Qatar in Palestine and in the MENA region and its incessant activity as mediator has changed the initial chess board. The advantage of Israel, who does not need Qatar anymore for its gas, has turned to the advantage of having access to the Gulf where Iran, its atavistic enemy, is and eventually monitor it. Moreover, the progressive influence Qatar plays in the Arab and Muslim world (the Arab League, the GCC, the OIC) could be essential for the normalization of relations with the entire region. On the other hand Qatar would see a protection on its investments in the Middle East and particularly in Palestine, where its special relations with Hamas and an eventual one with Israel could enforce its influence in the area and its relation with the United States, demonstrating its consolidated capability in foreign policy. However, as modern Romeo and Juliet, Qatar and Israel naturally belong to two different formations: as member of the Arab League and after the innumerable denounces against it and its occupation policies, an eventual friendship between Qatar and Israel could rise a huge protest against Qatar: its enemies could not miss the occasions to cover it up and denounce its subjugation to the United States. The revolutionary wind of the Arab Spring, in fact, also challenged the Emir with the organization of different manifestation, denouncing Qatari ties with Israel. The protests were not only real, and characterized by violent clashes between police forces and protestors, but also virtual: “The Qatar Revolution 2011” Facebook page, for instance, posted different images of the Emir and Israeli representatives with the question “Why did Al Jazeera not publish these photos?” (Fromherz, 2012 p. 30).

Israel, instead, should explain to its right wing the reasons of the collusion with the supporter of Hamas and would interpret this move as an own goal. Despite the complications, the two were able to create a sort of connection and to dismantle it when it could be more profitable. For this reason, the reconstruction of the Qatari-Israeli relation has been really hard to compose: firstly because when public declarations went into a

³⁸ According the US Geological Survey the Israeli gas field of Tamar, Leviathan and Dalit, which belong to the Levant basin in the Eastern Mediterranean sea, the fifth in the world for its capacity, will provide 900 billion cubic metres of gas and 250 billion of oil barrels. In June 2013 the Israeli government announced that will export the 40% of the Tamar’s gas until 2040 and the rest will be used for national needs, in order to achieve the energetic independence (Dentice, 2013).

directions, facts were into the opposite one; secondly because of the lack of a complete bibliography; thirdly because of the delicate geopolitical equilibrium the question involves.

2. The beginning of the relation

The Madrid Conference represents the moment of the normalization between Qatar and Israel: the peace initiative proposed by the US president Bush Senior was launched on the 6th of March 1991 on the basis of the 242 and 338 resolutions of the Security Council and proposed the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, the normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab countries and the start of reciprocal diplomatic relations (Hubel, 2006). The reasons for this decision could be different: on the one hand, the positive wind of the conference and the announcement of what would have been the Oslo process underlined the fact that a right and peaceful solution to the Palestinian conflict needed to include both parties in a healthy and open dialogue; on the other hand, the cultivation of the relation with the United States, represented an important factor to improve the relations with the most important US ally and consolidate Qatar's security in the region (Fromherz, p.103; Wright, 2011 pp. 92-3). There is no direct proof if it was a US imposition on this approach neither if it was a spontaneous move but what it is evident is that the conciliation between Israel and Qatar coincides with the designation of US as new patron for the Gulf state and the intensification of their relations. A facilitation of this worming was the Arafat's position in support of the Kuwait's invasion by Saddam Hussain: during the Madrid conference in November, Al Jazeera and the Qatari representatives only referred to the need of peace for the regional stability, yet no mentions was given to the PLO as representing the Palestinian interests (Rabi, 2009 p .448).

Qatar was basically one of the first GCC country to give a de facto official recognition to Israel, announcing the opening of commercial relations. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles, Israeli officials moved to Qatar, Oman and Bahrein for exploratory visits. Moreover, Sheikh Hamad also attended the Oslo 2 signing ceremony and when the Oslo process ended with the Rabin's killing, the Qatari Minister of Information was present during the Rabin's funeral (Rabi). However, the decision to open talks and commerce ties with Israel was not only a Qatari initiative but was part of a process of normalization that included also other GCC countries

(Kamrava, 2011). From 1994 the relations between the two countries flourished: in November the Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin officially visited Doha (*The Middle East and North Africa*, 2004 p. 941) and then Shimon Peres did the same in 1996, despite the result of a poll demonstrating the Qataris' reluctance for the Israeli-Qatari exchange. The visit was actually planned for some months before but Qatar, aware of the popular dissent, cancelled it and allowed a Peres' representative, Avi Gil to travel to Qatar in order to discuss the details for a future Peres' visit and discuss about some agreements, especially about gas, even if nothing was concluded (Makovsky, 1997) until Peres came to meet the Emir and the visit resulted in the opening for the first time in the Gulf of the Israeli trade office of Doha in May 1996 (Fromherz, 2012; Kamrava; 2013; Khatib, 2013; Rabi, 2009; Roberts, 2012). The trade office was more than a simple office for trade since it worked as a proper embassy and the head of the mission, Roi Rosenblit, has the rank of an ambassador,³⁹ as a demonstration of the flourishing of diplomatic activities between the two parts which was however camouflaged with simple economic exchange.

The new elections in Israel and the victory of Netanyahu hindered again the complicated Qatari-Israeli relations, especially with the decision to build a wall to separate the Palestinian territories and the Israeli ones. Despite the public condemnation and the decision of some Gulf countries to freeze again their ties with Israel as a form of protest, Israeli ministries were invited instead to take part to the Fourth Economic Conference of MENA countries held in Doha in November 1997: Qatar and Oman were the two countries which still wanted to work with Israel. Such a behaviour, indicative of the new independent line that Qatar desired to assume, rose a lot of disapprovals from other Arab countries, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia above all, whose representatives flew to Doha to lobby the Emir with no results. Also the Qatari population manifested its dissent. According to Al-Watan's poll, a local newspaper, the 91% of the Qatari citizens were in favour of the closure of the trade office. Moreover, concrete alarms came from the Abu Nidal's Palestinian terroristic group which denounced the subjugation of Qatar to "the interests of Jewish groups". As a consequence, in order to assure order and security during the conference the Qatari troops were supported by the presence of 150 French commandos and the local authorities interdicted the entrance to people from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and even from the Palestinian Authority.

³⁹ Roi Rosenblit's public profile on LinkedIn.

All the international dismay could not be completely ineffective: firstly, the event turned from a summit to a conference, so no heads of States but just ministries would be present: hence, neither Netanyahu nor the Foreign Minister, David Levy, would be there but only the minister of commerce and industry, Natan Sharansky, would have represented its country in Doha. Nevertheless, nine countries – Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Palestinian Authority, Bahrein, Syria, Lebanon⁴⁰ and the Secretariat of the Arab League boycotted the conference⁴¹. Yet, because of the evidence of the Israeli irrespective behaviour for Palestinian rights and international law, and even more because of the failure of the conference which was planned also to promote Qatar⁴², the Emir was in a difficult position for justifications: Sheikh Hamad in the opening speech deprecated the Israeli attitude with Palestinians and peace (Teitelbaum, 1997 pp. 603-4).

On the one hand, for the first time the final declaration of the conference recalled the Israeli duty to observe the UN Security Council's resolutions, denouncing the collapse of the Palestinian economy and calling for "the immediate removal" of the "restrictions and closures which hinder the daily movement of Palestinian labor and trade." (UISP, 2007). On the other one, the conference ratified the start of economic agreements between the parts: diplomatic and economic interests were divided as underlined by the strategic presence of the minister Sharansky and an impressive number of Israeli businessmen (MacKinnon, 1998 pp. 20-2).

Furthermore, the Israeli non-compliance of the Oslo agreements and the protests from the Arab part obliged the Foreign Minister to condemn publicly Israel and announce the imposition of some restrictions to the activities of the trade office in Doha and the stop of the project for a Qatari trade office in Israel –never implemented-. Also other signs were given to the public opinion to silence negative voices, like the denial for some Israeli doctors to take part to a conference about medicine in Doha in 1998 (Rabi, 2009 p. 450). New elections were close in Israel and Qatar cautiously supported Ehud Barak from the Labor party, hoping he could be the suitable candidate to restart the peace process (Rabi, p. 451). In September 2000, the Emir and Barak had a highly criticized meeting in New York after a UN

⁴⁰ Syria and Lebanon had never attended any MENA conference.

⁴¹ Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Iran were not invited, hence only Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen represented the Arab countries in Doha (MEDEA, n.d.).

⁴² It was one of the biggest event ever for a small country like Qatar which, for three days, had to host around 2600 guests displaced in ten hotels plus three cruise ships as floating hostels. Moreover the conference was held in a center built for the occasion as an annex of one of the best hotel in the world, the Sheraton Hotel (MacKinnon, 1998 pp.20-2).

millennium summit, a new attempt to restart a dialogue following the Camp David's flop (*The Middle East and North Africa*, 2004 p. 941). Despite the expectations, the surge of the Second Intifada changed the tack: Qatar allowed protests in the country to support the Palestinian cause, and the Emir in different occasions recalled the country's commitment to support the Arab brothers, whose rights were violated by Israel, and to remind to Israel the respect for the United Nations' resolutions. In order to reinforce his disapproval, the Emir also refused to meet Barak, who requested to meet him in Doha, a refusal explained by the Foreign Minister with the following declaration:

“there are Arabs ready to extend their hands to Israel if there is a just and fair peace with the Arabs “ (Rabi, 2009 p. 451).

With a new escalation of violence between Palestinian and Israelis in October, an emergency summit of the Arab League was called in Cairo and the Arab countries discussed about the arrest of relations with Israel again as a form of retaliation, shedding lights on the trade office in Doha, especially after the Omani, Moroccan and Tunisian closure. The Arab countries, Iran and Saudi Arabia above all, were able to find the Achilles' heel of the Gulf country: they would threat Qatar to boycott the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit, scheduled in Doha, 12-14 November, if the Sheikh continued to allow Israeli activities in his country. Qatar ceded to its regional partners' request and announced the closure of the Israeli office, that however was not really implemented neither stopped the sheikhdom's subtle relations with Israel (*The Middle East and North Africa* 2008). In 2000, in fact, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Ben-Ami, and a senior Qatari official met secretly in Genève, and three years later, the two Ministers of Foreign Affair, Sheikh Hamad bin Jasim and Silvan Shalom met in Paris to discuss about the Road Map for Peace, the new peace project brokered by the Quartet, another example of the Qatari diplomatic involvement in order to find a peaceful solution to the Palestinian question which had reached deadlock with the Rabin's assassination and the Second Intifada (Rabi). The meeting happened just a week after the Emir's visit with the US President George W. Bush, alimenting rumours about the existence of a US will in order to involve the little sheikhdom into the peace talks (Congressional Research Service, 2014 p. 18).

Image 7. Qatar's Minister of Foreign Affairs meets Silvan Shalom in Paris, 2003



Source: chronicle.fanak.com

2.1. From the UNSC seat until the current days

The 2006 was the Qatari year at the Security Council and the Qatari Ambassador asked to his Israeli counterpart to vote for Qatar as representative of Asia (Fromherz, 2012 p. 103). As a source close to the Israeli Foreign Minister explained:

“Qatar was one of the only Arab countries that kept ties with us throughout the al Aqsa intifada. Israel has a representation in the Qatari capital and it continued to operate even during the intifada, unlike other countries that demanded the closure of the Israeli representations. Therefore, we decided to recompense it. We hope that as a member of the UNSC, Qatar will remain loyal to the principles of fairness and will not operate against Israel.” (Rabi, 2009 p. 452-3).

Even if Israeli supported the candidacy, the 2006 war in Lebanon demonstrated that the Qatari first and official devotion was all in favour of the Lebanese people, harshly criticizing Israeli violence. Foreign Minister's requests were clear: an immediate Security Council intervention, the ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israel. The Qatari commitment for the Lebanese cause was impressive: in coordination with the UN Security Council Resolution 1701, Qatar, for the first time displayed 300 military troops for the UN peace-keeping mission and the Qatar Airways' flights to and from the Beirut International Airport were reinstated, violating de facto the Israeli air and sea blockade (*The Middle East and North Africa 2008*, 2007 p. 966).

Nevertheless, the Qatari-Israeli dialogue for peace continued: in occasion of the Arab Foreign Ministers' Conference of Beirut 2006, where also the Qatari Foreign Minister was invited, he decided to arrive there passing by Israel, where he met with some officials, to give the message that peace could only be achieved through diplomacy and dialogue, not opposition. Other invitations of the Israeli officials were held in October 2006, when Tzipi Livni, the Foreign Minister, had to take part to the Sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracy in Doha, where however the invitation was declined because of the Hamas' presence, but an Israeli delegation took her seat (Congressional Research Service, 2014 p. 18), and again in 2008 at the Eighth Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, both held in Doha, where she was also invited to give her speech notes. Because of the invitation, Syria and Iran refused to allow their delegations to be present as a form of protest. During the conference, Livni shed lights on its Gulf rival, Iran, identified as the real threat to the peace process and had a private meeting with the Qatari minister⁴³ in order to discuss about some issues such as the kidnap of an Israeli soldier by Hamas, new economic agreements, gas deals and the general regional situation (Rabi, 2009 pp. 455-7).

⁴³ Few days after, Livni also met her Omani counterpart.

Image 8. Israeli minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni meets Qatari Prime Minister in Doha, 2008



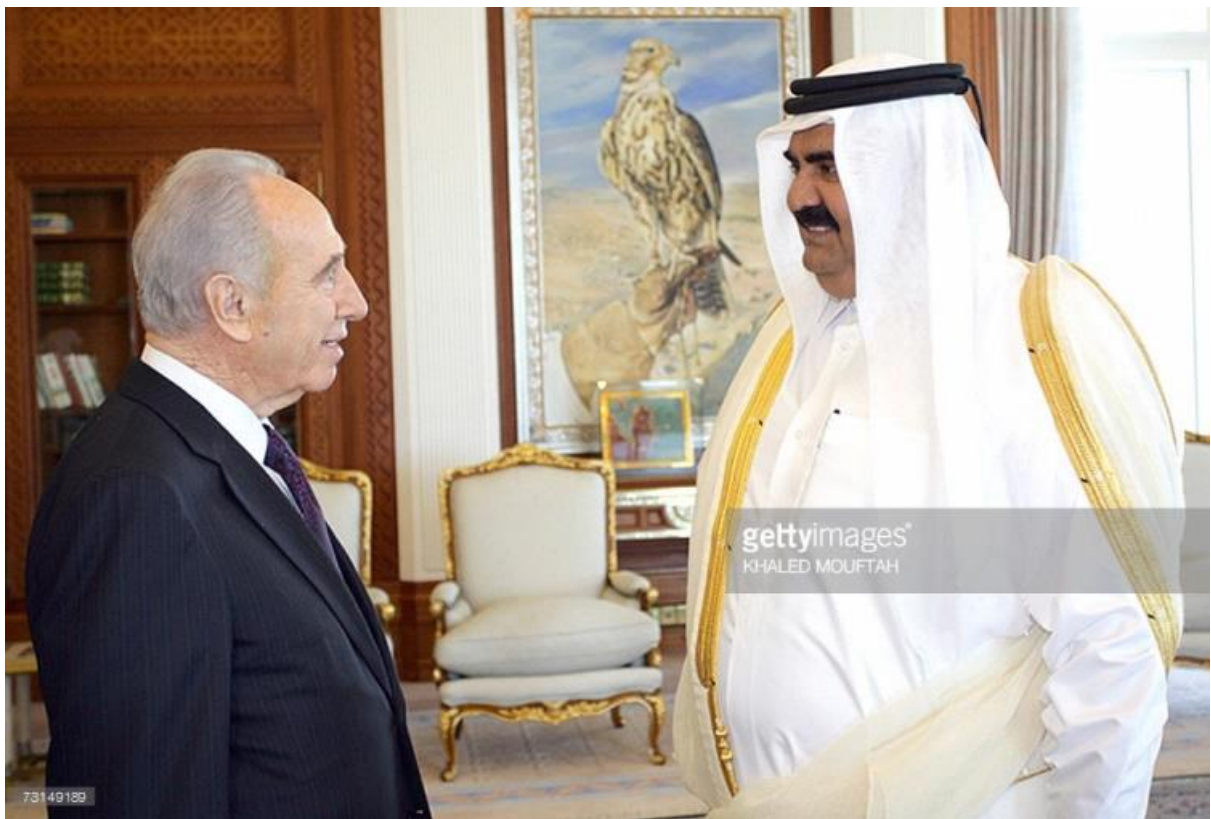
Source: M. Milner/Rex Features

At the beginning of 2007 the cooperation with Israel seemed to increase on a double level. On the one hand, the unofficial one, with the organization of the UN model on regional issues at the Georgetown University in Doha which invited also some Israeli students and the head of the Israeli trade mission in Doha, Roi Rosenblit who tried to explain his presence to a surprised Kuwaiti student:

“Qatar has a special place in being the only country to host an Israeli delegation in the region. I would like to see Qatar use this leverage and special position to further the peace process.” (Harman, 2007).

On the other, the official one with the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres who also flew to Qatar and met his counterpart , an event incredible since ten years, not only because he chose again Qatar, but also because it was a Gulf and Arab country. During his personal meeting with Sheikh Hamad, the main topic was of course the peace process and particularly the role of Hamas. According to the Peres’ office, in fact, Peres discussed with the Emir the impossibility of peace until the Hamas’ deny of Israel’s existence (Harman). Nevertheless, the Qatari proposal of a direct dialogue between the two- Israeli government and Hamas- was rejected (Congressional Research Service, 2014 p. 18).

Image 9. Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres meets Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in Doha, 2007



Source: gettyimages.it

Yet, the dream turned into a nightmare when the 2009 Israeli military operations in Gaza against Hamas challenged Qatar's diplomatic skills and represented a turning point for the two countries: the Sheikha Mozah's demonstration on the Corniche against Israeli attacks in Gaza clarified the priority of the domestic regime survival.⁴⁴ As a result, in fact, the Emir imposed the effective closure of the Israeli trade office in Doha and the ban of the Israeli officials (Kamrava, 2011; Fromherz, 2012; Rabi, 2009).

The break up between the two did not last for so long neither in terms of trade nor in terms of diplomatic relations even after the closer of the office. In 2010, in fact, Qatar restarted an indirect and direct dialogue with Israel and its representatives with a proposal: the re-opening of the trade office in Doha for some reconstruction projects in the Gaza Strip and the import of the relative materials. According to some sources, the proposal, presented two times by the Qatari part, was declined twice: the first under US pressure and the second time because of the Israeli disagreement about the materials' import into Gaza, whose requested quantity was too much for the Israeli authorities and since "[a]llowing such massive amounts of construction material into the Strip, of the sort that Hamas uses to build bunkers and reinforced positions for missile launches against Israel, runs counter to Israel's security interests" (Ravid, 2010).

Two years later, with the launch of a Qatari city and other projects in Gaza through the Qatari Committee of the Gaza Reconstruction a dialogue between the two restarted: it is the Israeli authority to allow construction materials to enter in Gaza. Subsequently, every time the Committee –or other subjects- want to present a new project

"we have to submit the projects, they[Israel] give us approval on the projects. Then we give them the list [of materials], there is a system called the ground system. This ground system is developed by United Nations. So we put the material we need through the ground system and according to them we are going to have all the material we order for each project. You do not need the approval of Hamas, you do not need the approval of PA, Palestinian Authority, only you need to coordinate with PA: that means that we have a project so we send a letter for the

⁴⁴ Author's interview with prof. Mehran Kamrava, Professor and Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Palestinian Authority and the other one for Israel, where we say that we need this material, we need these guys”⁴⁵.

The current status of the relations is always halfway between the will of reconciliation and the incompatible disagreement about the peace process. On the one hand, in fact, the desire of reconciliation was more or less clearly expressed by both parts: on Twitter, the president Benjamin Netanyahu replied to a Mehdi Hassan’s, the Al Jazeera presenter, who asked for an interview in occasion of the #AskNetanyahu, a media event created by the president to talk directly with Israeli people and not only. To the presenter’s invitation, whose TV studio is in Washington, the Israeli Prime Minister asked directly for an invitation in Qatar (Walker, 2016). Furthermore, the US pressure and concerns contributed to tone down the political debate. During the Sheikh Tamim’s visit to the White House on February 25, 2015, in fact, the two allies converged over common concerns such as the developments of the Israeli-Palestinian war and the security issues (ACRPS, 2015).

On the other hand, especially from the Israeli part, continuous denigration happens because of the Qatari. The reasons are multiple: the strenuous opposition demonstrated by the Gulf country during the war in Lebanon and the huge financial support it gave for the reconstruction which was interpreted as a diplomatic affront for Israel; the support –material and immaterial- for the Palestinian resistance and the special tie with Hamas; the closure of the Israeli office in Doha ; the efforts for reconciliation between the two Palestinian parts (Barakat, 2012 p.14); the negative media coverage of the Israeli occupation through Al Jazeera; the last Gaza war in 2014 and the resolute denounce by Qatari officials of the Israeli “crime against humanity” (Congressional Research Service, 2014 p. 16). As a result a proper campaign against Qatar has been promoted by scholars and politicians of Tel Aviv. The former President Peres, for instance, accused Qatar of financial support for terroristic groups; the Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman defined Qatar as “the backbone of the world’s most extreme terrorist organizations, which destabilize the world and the Middle East in particular” and expressed the US intervention to act against Qatar, its money and its television station (ACRPS, 2015); the Israeli Ambassador in the United Nations, Ron Prosor labelled the Gulf country as "Club Med for terrorists” (Guttman, 2014; Keinon, 2014). In September 2014, the National Media Authority, under the Prime Minister’s control, organized a meeting with non-governmental media and communication bodies in order to implement a

⁴⁵ Author’s interview with HE Ambassador Mohammed Ismail Al Amadi.

defamation operation of both Qatar and Turkey⁴⁶ in Western countries' eyes and deteriorate the two countries' relations with the Western ones. The meeting resulted in anti-Qatari reports in the media and proper action plans to debilitate Qatar, such as the Joshua Teitelbaum's, whose paper titled "Playing with Terror: How to Stop Qatar's Support for Hamas" advanced the proposal of boycotting the 2022 World Cup (ACRPS, 2015). The same proposal was presented by Kobi Michael and Yoel Guzansky of the Israel's Institute for National Security studies, who also called for an international trial against Doha in order to impose a great amount of money and the vilification of its international reputation for the exploitation of foreign workers and the status of human rights in the country or the creation of a moderate coalition to halt its foreign policy (Guttman; Michael&Guzansky, 2014).

Image 1. Q&A on Twitter between the Al Jazeera presenter Mehdi Hasan and the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



⁴⁶ The Israeli official outrage was intensified when the US Secretary of State John Kerry engaged with Qatar and Turkey in order to negotiate a truce between Israel and Hamas during the last Gaza war.



Mehdi Hasan ✓
@mehdirhasan



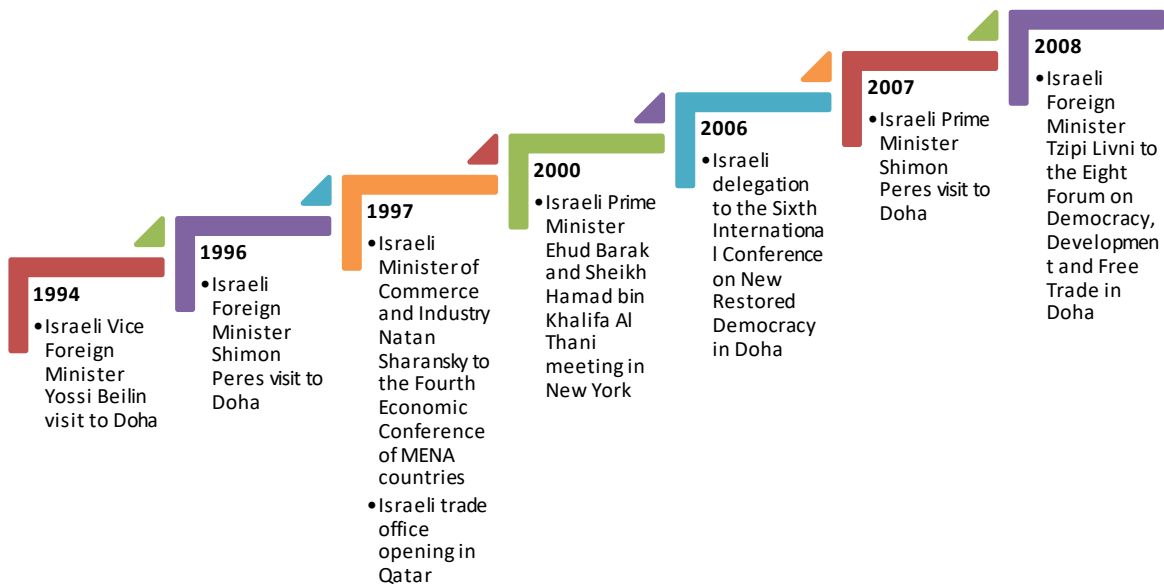
I'm in DC, not Qatar. On the subject of invites, when can come the Palestinian refugees come home pls? #AskNetanyahu
[twitter.com/IsraeliPM/stat...](https://twitter.com/IsraeliPM/status...)

4:36 PM - 12 May 2016

↩️ ↻️ 489 ❤️ 507

Source: dohanews.com

Figure 1. Time line of the Qatari-Israeli meeting



3. The Qatari “buy”cott system

The foundation of Israel, 1948, represented the implementation by the Arab League of the boycott campaign of the Israeli companies and goods, through the creation of an ad hoc department of the Arab League, the Damascus-based Central Boycott Office. The boycott of

the Arab League, composed by 22 countries means that, at least theoretically, the entire neighbouring area of Israel cut immediately its trade relations with it. Nevertheless, the boycott is neither binding nor the same for all the members of the League nor formally implemented anymore by some of the members⁴⁷. In fact there are three different levels of boycott: the primary boycott which outlawed to every member of the Arab League of buying from, selling to and having business with Israelis, both private citizens and government; the secondary boycott enlarges the first one since extends the boycott to anyone –entity or private citizen- who does business with Israel and the Central Boycott Office has the duty of blacklist all the companies and update and distribute it among the members; the tertiary boycott prohibits the country to have trade relations with an entity which trades with a blacklisted one. Generally speaking, the Arab League’s blockade is more symbolical than really implemented for different reasons. Firstly, the majority of the countries opted for a primary boycott and since the flow of trade with Israel is small the effect of the boycott is small too. Secondly, the secondary and the tertiary ones, that were instead more effective, are decreasing (Congressional Research Service, 2014). This is also related to the reaction of other countries, the US above all, whose Congress in 1977 introduced a law to make illegal for every company of the country to take part to the boycott, imposed the examination of any eventual request to the Department of Commerce, and even provided civil and criminal sanctions for the violators (Svane&Mellingen, 2012).

Qatar, as member of the Arab League also joined the boycott, with the adoption of the primary boycott and in 1963 emanated the law n. 13 for the creation of the Office for the Boycott of Israel in Qatar. The law not only lists the characteristics of the banned products, but also introduces punishments in case of violations:

“Shall be punished by temporary hard labour for not less than three years and not exceeding ten years whoever violates the provisions of Articles 5, 6 and 7. The hard labour sentence may also be combined with a fine not exceeding ten thousand (10,000) riyals. If the offender in one of the aforementioned offenses a juridical person the punishment shall be carried out on those who committed the offense who belong to the legal person. In all cases the items seized shall be confiscated by the government, and shall be confiscated as well the means of

⁴⁷ Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority formally stopped the boycott, while Mauritania has never adopted it (Svane&Mellingen, 2012; Congressional Research Service, 2014).

transport used in the commission of the offense whenever the owners are so informed.” (Al Mīzān, n.d., Art.11).

The office, however, has not been created and even before the formalization of the Oslo process in 1991 Qatar proposed the rethinking of the boycott programme in case of a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories (Rabi, 2009 p. 448) and began a process of rapprochement, where a basic topic of discussion was the Qatari gas and new trade relations (Roberts, 2012 p. 235; *The Middle East and North Africa 2004*, p. 941). According to Fromherz (2012), in fact, in October 1993 some Israeli officials revealed a secret discussion with the Qatari government to export its gas to Tel Aviv through the Mediterranean sea for around 2\$ billion: the Energy Minister of Israel Moshe Shahal announced an agreement with an unidentified country of the Gulf and then he met some energy specialists and businessmen of the sheikhdom some weeks before while the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met the Qatari Foreign Minister first in New York and then in Doha (Haberman, 1993). Despite the Gulf country’s denial, because of technical and political issues, it was clear that something was changing into the entire Gulf area, since Qatar was not the only one to start talking and trading with Israel: Oman and Bahrein were also attracted by the possibility of new trade relations with it (Kamrava, 2011 p. 254).

On the basis of this positive wind of change two relevant projects were presented in the following years: in October 1, 1994 the Gulf countries during a GCC meeting announced a reduction of the boycott, basically stopping the secondary and the tertiary boycott in favour of the primary one (Svane&Mellingen, 2012; Congressional Research Service p. 3-17). Moreover, a year later, in accordance to the Shimon Peres’ idea of the regional relaunch in terms of infrastructures and “mega-projects” in several fields, especially the energy one, a new discussion on the Qatari natural gas export was proposed: the US Enron corporation and a Jordan and an Israeli partner, respectively the Near East Energy Company (NEEC) and the consortium including Mashav, the Danker Group and Delek advanced again a plan to export the Qatari gas to Israel crossing Jordan through the construction of the Doha-Aqaba-Eilat pipeline (Bouillon, 2004 p. 76; Feiler, 2011 p. 298; Guttman, 2014).

Nevertheless, the pipeline was abolished during the MENA Conference in Doha in 1997

because of the status of the Israeli occupation (Bouillon).⁴⁸ It seemed that the relations between Qatar and Israel reached a stalemate as confirmed by the MENA Conference and the declaration of the Qatari Foreign Minister, “We have put a halt to opening a commercial office in Israel and we have reduced the activities of the Israeli office in Doha”, yet simultaneously, the trade office continued to operate until its closure in 2009 (Rabi, 2009 p. 450).

Since the closure of the office, however, the trade relations between the two countries still survive: Qatar is one of the countries which allows visas to Israeli citizens with no restrictions and direct phone dials to Israel and also Qatari companies do business with Israeli ones which however sell their products to the Gulf country through third parts in order to bypass the primary boycott because no sign of the origins are shown (Guttman). Generally speaking, the Israeli flow of trade with the rest of the region is bigger than Israel declares: excluding the trade with Europe, the United States, the Americas, Asia and Africa, the manufacturing sectors with the so called “other countries” which can be identified only with the remaining Arab countries, amounted in 1997 at almost 5\$ billion versus the declared 60\$ million by the Israeli Manufacturing Association in the same period (MacKinnon, 1998 pp.20-2). Looking at the status of the imports and exports between Qatar and Israel, it is clear that it was quite high during the existence of the trade mission in Doha, amounting at \$2,141 billion of Israeli exports and \$598 million of imports in 2008. Even if the trend decreased after the office closure, consistent trade exchange are still present and according to the statistics amounted at \$353 thousands of Israeli imports and \$265 thousands of export in 2013, in sectors such as cosmetics, machinery, mechanical appliances and computer equipment, optical, photographic, measuring and medical instruments, plastics (CBS, n.d.).

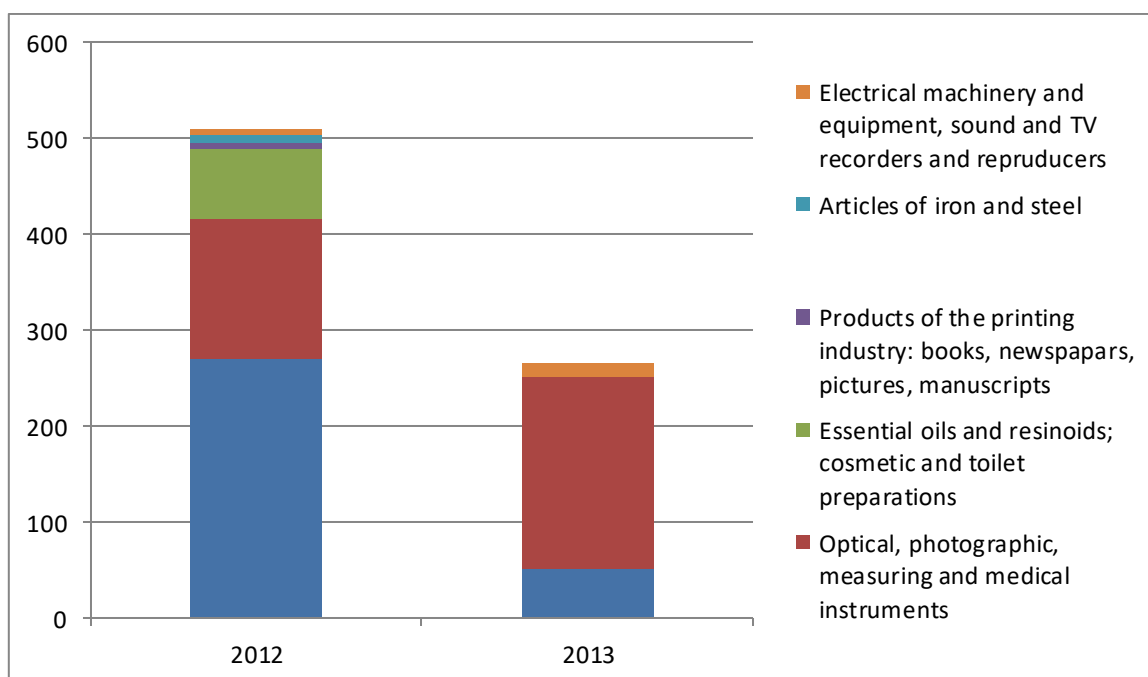
⁴⁸ While the pipeline was not realized as also other projects that were frozen, many others were launched especially in terms of economic cooperation with Jordan and the Palestinian Authority (USIP, 2007). For further information see Bouillon, M. (2004). *The peace business*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Table 1. Israeli exports to and imports from Qatar (in millions of dollars)



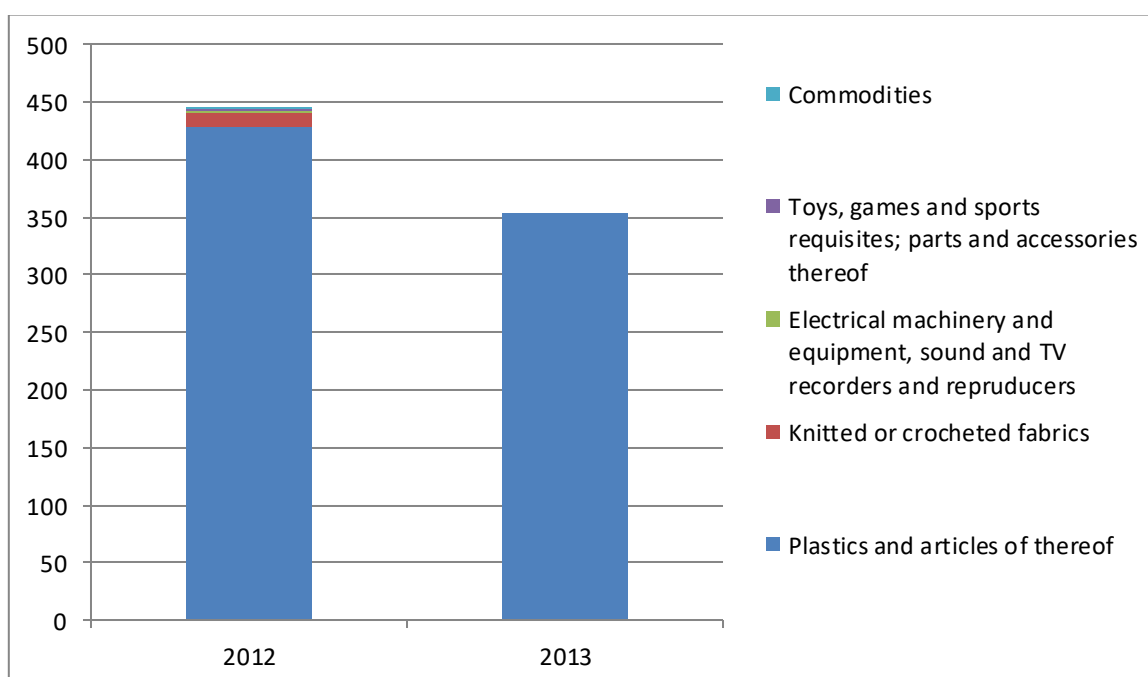
Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

Table 2. Israeli exports to Qatar by products in thousands of dollars)



Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

Table 3. Israeli imports from Qatar by products (in thousands of dollars)



Source: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

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Conclusion

The small Gulf sheikhdom's foreign policy results to be attractive, competitive and effective: its close friendship with the United States guarantees the military shield it lacks and its hyperactive foreign policy assures external security. In fact, its involvement within the Gulf Cooperation Council particularly enhances the Gulf partnership at the expenses of the Saudi leadership projects; the sharing of the North Field gas area with Iran contributes to maintaining good relations with the Persian country; its mediation efforts assures strategic political ties and prestige. In the words of Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, Qatar "[i]s rich, it's small, it lacks the inner turmoil of other countries. It's one of the [Middle Eastern] countries ... that are more internally stable and have more resources" (Kampeas, 2013).

The extensive availability of gas and oil Qatar disposes and the wealth it produces, indeed, asserts an independent foreign policy which supports new friends, has the ability to turn the "hard" face of power (money) into the suitable incentive to shape issues related to the Middle Eastern region as it likes, combining it with a sapient use of marketing strategies, diplomatic events and good reputation.

The miracle of the Qatari rise, however, is the result of the enterprising subtle power adopted by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, a charismatic leader whose merit has been the ability to put Qatar in the middle of regional disputes and questions, acquiring reputation as fair

judge and facilitator in the name of peace and cooperation among people. The change of leadership in 2013 with the succession of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani has unveiled the limits of Sheikh Hamad's personalization of the Qatari brand. What allowed Sheikh Hamad to focus on foreign policy has been the huge availability of economic resources and the domestic stability guaranteed by military expenditure⁴⁹ and the US protection. Nevertheless, the tranquil internal situation that Sheikh Hamad has left, turned into a harassed scenario, complicated by three main reasons: i. the downturn in the price of crude oil and the adoption of austere policies; ii. the wind of democracy of the Arab Spring; iii. the new sheikhdom's leadership.

Despite the \$315 billion of foreign assets have created a strong shield against the low oil prices, for the first time in fifteen years Qatar is facing a "moderate" budget deficit of \$12 billion, amounting to the 0,7% of the GDP.⁵⁰ As a consequence, some austerity measures such as the increase for utility rates and gas price, the cut of expatriate personnel from the Qatar Museum and Al Jazeera, the lack of infrastructure planning apart from the World Cup, have affected the domestic equilibrium. Even if the majority of the interventions will impact more the expatriates than the nationals, as also the other Gulf countries did in order to avoid inner turmoil (Cafiero, 2016), the wind of reform born with the Arab Spring has invested Qatar also. According to the Freedom in the World 2016 index Qatar is "not free", lacking in political rights and civil liberties⁵¹ and for the Democracy index of 2015 it is 134 out of 167 for the total absence of electoral processes and pluralism and low levels of political participation.⁵² Moreover, during my personal experience in Qatar, a frequent topic of discussion among national and foreign students was the lack of political elections for an institution, such as a parliament, able to represent proportionally the populations' interests and counterbalance tribal niches.

⁴⁹ According the Strategic Defence Intelligence (SDI) report (2014) the Qatari military expenditure should reach \$7 billion in 2020, registering an increase of 12,2% CAGR since the 2015 expectations.

⁵⁰ It is necessary to underline that the Qatari decrease is the smallest in the region, as also demonstrated by the Standard&Poor's rating forecasts for Bahrein, Oman and Saudi Arabia which were negative, instead of the Qatari positive ones (Cafiero, 2016).

⁵¹ For further information on the scores see Freedom House, (2016). *Freedom in the World 2016. Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies: Global Freedom under Pressure*. Freedom House. Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2016.pdf; or consult the complete analysis on the Freedom House website at www.freedomhouse.org.

⁵² For further information see The Economist Intelligence Unit, (2016). *Democracy Index 2015. Democracy in an age of anxiety*. The Economist Intelligence Unit. Retrieved from http://www.isie.tn/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Economist_Intelligence_Unit-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf.

The ascent of Sheikh Tamim, then, demonstrates the temporal or rather the generational and the structural limits of the Sheikh Hamad's foreign policy. On the one hand, the new Emir has showed to have a propensity for a scale downed foreign policy, more focused on regional issues-the Gulf area first- than international ones, resulting in a total rearrangement of ministries, substituting them with other technocrats closer to his vision (Cafiero, 2016). The most evident rupture with his father policy is represented by the replacement of his uncle, the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim, whose diplomacy style was too aggressive particularly referring to Saudi Arabia, a rivalry that Sheikh Tamim considers "unproductive". As a consequence, the generational change led to the turn from the hyperactive foreign policy with different goals and tools to a modest one whose main "goal" is the success of the 2022 World Cup (Dazi-Héni, 2014). On the other hand, the discontinuity of political programs, diplomats, ministries underlines the biggest structural limit of Qatar: the lack of institutional capacity based on a personal and traditional form of diplomacy⁵³. In Qatar, as also in the majority of Arab monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula, tribalism is very strong and political parties are substituted by tribes which unlock mobility and reform and even more the creation of a stable skilled bureaucratic personnel. Subsequently, this negatively affects especially the foreign policy because "decisions are made through personal bargaining and compromise" rather than through long-lasting institutions (Wright, 2011 pp. 80-3).

In relation to the Qatari double relation with Palestine (Hamas and Fatah) and Israel these limits as also some merits are necessary to be analysed. Regarding the merits, undoubtedly Qatar has contributed to keep vivid the interest for the Palestinian issues through cyclical meetings, messages, interviews, always recalling on Palestine as key element of the Qatari foreign policy. It played, in fact, an important role as a broker within the Israeli-Palestinian issue and also within the Hamas-Fatah division: even if its intervention was not completely successful, the attempt of mediation during the last Gaza war in 2014, or the Doha Declaration, demonstrate that this tiny state surely triggered in both cases important processes of dialogue and discussion that resulted finally in an Egypt-led ceasefire in August 2014 and in a non-offensive relation between Hamas and Fatah.

Analysing and evaluating the performance of Qatar as mediator of the Palestinian-Israeli

⁵³ Author's interview with Steven Wright, Associate Professor of International Relations and Gulf Studies at the Qatar University.

conflict, it is necessary to consider some parameters, bearing in mind that there is no universal formula for mediation success. The factors which can affect the mediation outcomes can be divided into external and internal ones: the external factors are i. the intensity of the conflict; ii. the nature of the issue. Regarding the first factor, the intensity of the conflict, it fluctuated from moments of high tensions (the Gaza wars, the Israeli blockade of salaries) to more “stable” situations, considering however the seriousness of the Palestinian occupation.

Secondly, the nature of the issue, even if variable also and depending on different *casus belli*, has always reflected the difficulties of living a long-lasting occupation. As a result, the two external factors denote that in terms of intensity of the conflict and nature of the issue, the mediation efforts not only for Qatar but also for any potential mediator are almost useless and unsuccessful because of the general complexity of the conflict *per se*. Turning to the internal elements, instead, it is possible to list four mediation characteristic which can assure success: i. perceived impartiality; ii. leverage; iii. timing and iv. goals and intentions of mediation (Kamrava, 2011 pp.543-54). Since Qatar is a new comer into the international scenario, its short history of diplomacy collocates it into the same class of honest broker. With references to the Palestinian-Israeli question, I report a part of a conversation with the Ambassador Al Amadi⁵⁴

Ambassador: [...]the coordinator normally is one-sided with Israel, when it was Egyptians, Americans, any other was one-side. Qatar is playing a role as a coordinator or mediator, which is in the centre, ok? We are fair with both parts, not only with one part, so this is the role that Qatar is playing

Me: Why do you think that Qatar is succeeding in this? Just because it is in the middle? Because Qatar maybe should be closer to Palestinians

Ambassador: If you want to be a mediator, normally you are a judge ok? So you have to be fair with everyone. You cannot push one guy, the weakest or the strongest guy, so you are a judge and if you are a judge you have to be fair, to both parts

Me: How much is difficult for you?

Ambassador: We have good relations

Me: But looking at what is happening in Gaza, it is hard for you to be impartial?

⁵⁴ Author's interview with HE Ambassador Mohammed Ismail Al Amadi.

Ambassador: We will play fair and square, ok? That is the role of Qatar, that is why we are succeeding in hostage in Lebanon, we succeeded in Africa, two days ago, there was hostages in Gibuti and another place and we release them. We were in Sudan, in Darfur and so on. So because Qatar gained a reputation of fairness with everyone, so everyone expects that one. So we want to establish something new with Israel. Ok, you need a mediator like Qatar to be fair and square with both parts. It won't be pushing Hamas or another, ok?

Nevertheless, the impartiality and neutrality of Qatar can be discussed particularly referring to the Hamas-Fatah level. On the one hand the Ambassador Al Amadi has affirmed that “the only country which have good relations with Hamas is Qatar. I cannot elaborate more on that but a lot of things came through us, we are doing the work ok? Now, they said in summer there would be a war. No there would not be any war in Gaza, because we are coordinating through this work and we are rightly keep quiet Gaza”. On the other hand, Dr. Al Agha, Deputy Chief of the Palestinian mission⁵⁵ in Doha has assured that there are no secret relations between Hamas and Qatar and they are focused only on the fulfilment of humanitarian purposes. Certainly, the most important topic of discussion between Hamas and Qatar is the reconstruction in Gaza, and even if it is not a secret that exists a tie between the two, it is undeniable that there is more affinity with Hamas than with the Palestinian Authority because of the religious affiliation. Furthermore, as Al Jazeera’s article demonstrates, officially there is no difference between the two parts, while unofficially a denounce of the Palestinian Authority performance prevails.

Turning to the other level of mediation (Israel-Palestine), it is also true that Qatar still has good trade relations with Israel. Yet, can this matters more than the loyal and public support that Qatar has always demonstrated and has to demonstrate to Palestine? Or rather, can this loyalty matter more than impartiality? Regarding leverages, the richness of the tiny sheikhdom can assure incentives and rewards to the parts involved into the mediation process. As far as Hamas, for instance, the incredible amounts Qatar pledged and its assurance of protection work towards the “moderation” of the Islamic movement (Neubauer, 2015). However, the particularity of the Qatari case is represented by the fact that differently from traditional brokers, who tends to provide bigger material supports for the weaker part, particularly supplying infrastructural development

⁵⁵ Author’s interview with Dr. Yehia Al Agha, Deputy Chief of mission for the Embassy of the State of Palestine.

projects (Kamrava, 2011 p. 544), the Gulf state has not only financed material reconstruction for Gaza, but it also has disposed incentives for Israel such as mutual invitation for conferences on economics, vivid trade flows. In addition to commercial ties, there is also another crucial reward Qatar can offer to Israel which can overcome the material assets the Gulf state has because of its vitality for the Israeli survival in the region: political recognition. For Israel, in fact, recognition by any Arab country is an added value because represents the Israeli biblical validation and historical and political legitimization.⁵⁶ As far as the timing of mediation, the Qatari interventions generally correspond to the outbreak of the Gaza conflicts such as the mediation efforts during the 2014 Gaza war, even if background actions have continued silently, generally in occasion of summits, with no particular event happening. The timing of mediation, however, as also the leverages are relative to the achievement of goals. Both can advantage the mediation (e.g. the Qatari recognition of Israel could leverage a fairer agreement for Palestine) or fulfil national interests which can range from the need of legitimization for one's position or action to the necessity of support (e.g. the recognition of Israel could assure another friend to Qatar and enforce its regional security).

Consequently, this led the last and central element of the mediation success' analysis. Goals and intentions of the Qatari involvement into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in fact, unveil probably the most influent element for the sheikhdom's mediation success. Despite the doubts about the feasibility of impartiality, the Gulf state has the right stuffs to find a resolution, hence, the question it is necessary to ask is *why* Qatar became a mediator or rather if the Palestinian question is a key element of its foreign policy. The answer is that Palestine is important for Qatar when it can advantage its interests especially in terms of reputation. Palestine represents the modern "sword in the stone" and certainly who will solve the Israeli-Palestinian question will become the regional leader and will gain eternal glory. Supporting the Palestinian cause openly through speeches, initiatives, and concretely, through donations and charitable projects contributes to the security of the country; opens different channels of communication and assures visibility, positive publicity, universal praise and support that is strongly essential to feed the Qatari branding strategy. The brand of peace the Gulf country promoted through five-star hotels' conventions and meetings, pledges of investments and incessant agreement signing, is not directed toward the achievement of peace itself but rather

⁵⁶ Author's interview with prof. Mehran Kamrava, Professor and Director of the Center for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

to advantage its brand through peace. With references to Palestine, the peculiarity of this case is that the Excalibur's power Palestine has, could be even more advantageous when the sword is not extracted from the stone, indeed when the peace is not achieved: keeping the *status quo* is easier and creates a situation that can be better exploited to achieve media resonance and acclamation.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to attest that the only limitation Qatar has as mediator of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is its will. Firstly, because it is undeniable that the sheikhdom intervention in Gaza and West Bank is supported also by the emotive involvement and secondly, because the lack of institutional structures impedes strategic and long-lasting projects, assuring priority to simple initiatives. The Qatari approach, however, refers to Palestine with projects of reconstruction of buildings or facilities as if the Gaza destruction was the result of a natural catastrophe (ACRPS, 2014 p. 8): a political conflict as the Palestinian-Israeli one needs a political solution. As a result, not only political issues like the refugees question are left behind, but such an approach creates dependence, and it is this dependence on aids which feeds the Qatari brand of peace and undermines the real reconstruction Palestine needs: the *re*-construction of a territory, the *re*-conciliation of a population and the *re*-creation of the authority of a State.

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