

"Qatar Is Hamas!"

Its royal family are relative newcomers. Why not get tougher on them?



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President Donald Trump poses for a photo with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Lusail Palace, Wednesday, May 14, 2025, in Doha, Qatar. White House Photo by Daniel Torok.

Key to understanding Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza is realizing the significance of the role played by Qatar—and analyzing who the Qataris are and how they got there.

Qatar-Hamas Ties

When Israelis or American mediators go to negotiate indirectly with Hamas about potential ceasefire or hostage-release deals, they either go to Qatar or meet Hamas leaders who arrive from Qatar. The Al Jazeera television network that the Israeli military and government says serves as cover for Hamas terrorists and as its propaganda arm is owned and controlled by Qatar.

"Qatar is Hamas!" Israel's minister of Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism, Amichai Chikli, [wrote](#) in an August 26 social media post about the importance of the need to "strip away the mask of the Qatari terror mafia." Chikli was commenting on a now-deleted post by the editor-in-chief of Qatar's leading daily newspaper, Al-Sharq, Jaber Al-Harmi, that "openly encouraged the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers."

In an August 21 Wall Street Journal opinion piece, James Kirchick [described](#) Qatar as "a theocratic monarchy that is Hamas's main financial and diplomatic sponsor."

On August 25, Brigadier General (Reserve) Amir Avivi, the founder and chairman of Israel's Defense and Security Forum, blamed Qatar for the kidnapping of Israeli hostages. "One of the reasons there is no deal is that the Qatari leadership are puppets of Hamas and Egypt. They don't want Israel to win." Unlike the nearby Arab Emirates and Bahrain, Qatar did not join the 2021 Abraham Accords, which normalized relations with Israel.

Qatar-U.S. Ties

Yet despite the obvious and close ties between Qatar and the U.S. government and American businesses and individuals, the U.S. has maintained deep ties with it.

In March 2022, President Biden [designated](#) Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism, marking the waning days of his presidency [reportedly](#) re-considering the designation. The Biden administration extended for a decade the American presence at Al Udeid Air Base there. President Trump visited Qatar in May 2025, [declared](#) "our growing friendship is blossoming into a full-fledged economic and security partnership," and announced trade deals the White House said would "generate an economic exchange worth at least \$1.2 trillion." The U.S. government accepted a 747 jumbo jet from Qatar for possible use by Trump as Air Force One.

Bloomberg runs an annual Qatar Economic Forum in Doha. The 2025 [event](#) featured Michael Bloomberg, JPMorgan Chase executive Mary Callahan Erdoes, KKR partner David Petraeus, and Donald Trump Jr., along with many Qatari government officials and members of Qatar's ruling al-Thani family. A repeat is scheduled for May 12–14, 2026.



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Dow Jones, parent company of the Wall Street Journal, is planning a [WSJ Tech Live event in Doha, Qatar](#) on December 2-4, 2025. A promotional website promises that attendees will “hear from visionaries and network with deal-makers in a city at the crossroads of global commerce and innovation.” An October 2024 press release about the event said it was announced jointly by “**Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor Al Thani**, Director of the Government Communications Office of the State of Qatar, and **Almar Latour**, publisher of The Wall Street Journal and CEO of Dow Jones.”

“We are delighted to be partnering with Qatar,” Latour, the Wall Street Journal publisher, was quoted as saying in the [press release](#).

Dow Jones did not reply to questions from The Editors about why it was having an event in a country that Kirchick’s own Wall Street Journal-published piece described as “a theocratic monarchy that is Hamas’s main financial and diplomatic sponsor.” It also didn’t reply to other questions I sent: “Will Israeli companies and businessmen be welcome at the event or will they be banned? Can Dow Jones assure prospective participants that there will be no Hamas terrorist representatives staying at the hotel where the Dow Jones event is taking place? Do you have any concerns about the Qatar-Hamas ties?”

American universities including Arkansas State University, Carnegie Mellon University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Weill Cornell Medicine operate extensively in Qatar. The [Brookings Institution](#), a Washington think tank full of former and future government national security and economic policy officials, opened a [\\$5 million center](#) in Doha. Qatar hired a former congressman, Jim Moran, as a lobbyist. Qatar [showered](#) consulting contracts and speaking fees on former American government and military officials, which has its own way of skewing behavior by current officials thinking about their post-government career options. Qatar bankrolled the filmmaking of New York mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani’s mother, Mira Nair, and has been boosting Mamdani on social media, the New York Post [reported](#) on August 31. The Free Press wrote about some of this in its piece, “[How Qatar Bought America](#).”

Characteristics of Qatar

The two outstanding and somewhat well-known features of Qatar are that it is small and rich.

Small—geographically smaller than Connecticut, and with a population of only about 300,000 Qatari citizens (the remainder of the [2,552,088 residents](#) of the country are

foreign workers, largely from countries like India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Egypt, and the Philippines.) As Freedom House [puts it](#), “Qatar’s hereditary emir holds all executive and legislative authority and ultimately controls the judiciary. Political parties are not permitted, and public participation in the political arena is extremely limited. While Qatari citizens are among the wealthiest in the world, most of the population consists of noncitizens with no political rights, few civil liberties, and limited access to economic opportunity.” (There’s no religious freedom, either; earlier this month, as Elliott Abrams [noted](#), “Qatar sentenced the leader of that country’s tiny Baha’i community to five years in prison for the crime of belonging to the Baha’i faith.”)

And rich—one of the top ten countries in the world as measured by GDP per capita, largely because of oil and gas revenues.

The Origins of Qatar

Yet there’s another aspect of Qatar that is less well known. I didn’t realize it until talking with former Pentagon official Harold Rhode, who is knowledgeable about the history, religion, and culture of the Middle East. It turns out, Rhode explained to me, that the Al-Thani family ruling Qatar are relatively recent arrivals. Their tribe, Banu Tamim, used to live in the Najd region of what is now Saudi Arabia; they only arrived in the Qatar peninsula in the 1720s after being defeated and forced out. It took years of violent conflict with Bahrain’s Al Khalifa family, the Ottoman Empire, and the neighboring Saudis before the al-Thani family consolidated control. Key milestones include a 1868 [letter](#) from a British diplomat, Lewis Pelly, recognizing Muhammad bin Thānī, as the “ruler of ‘the Guttur tribes,’” and the 1893 [Battle of Al Wajbah](#), a victory by Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani over Ottoman forces. A 1913 agreement between Britain and the Ottoman Empire gave Great Britain control of Qatar, and, after World War I, Qatar existed as a British protectorate from 1916 to 1971. It only declared independence in 1971.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia

The Najd region of Saudi Arabi is a tough neighborhood, one of the most violent places on earth. Not for nothing does the Saudi Flag feature the phrase “there is no God but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger,” along with a sword.

The Qataris and the Saudis are both Wahhabis, a kind of radical and extreme variety of Islam. They hate each other going back to the 18th century, when the Banu Tamim were pushed out to the coast.

For the context of the Saudi-Qatar conflict, a brief detour into the recent history of Saudi Arabia will be helpful. In 1979, an ultra-extreme faction took over Mecca, a story that Yaroslav Trofimov tells in his 2007 book "[The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of al-Qaeda](#)." The Saudis brought in French Muslim forces to help retake the mosque. The Saudis also negotiated a deal with the extremists in which the Saudis funded jihad worldwide (including in Afghanistan) in exchange for the ultra-extremists not pushing inside Saudi Arabia.

When Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, "MBS," took over control of Saudi Arabia in 2017, he changed the deal. Qatar picked up the sponsorship of the extremism—and it meddled inside Saudi Arabia, too. That generated more conflict. From 2017 to 2021 Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates imposed a blockade on Qatar.

The foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, Adel al-Jubeir, explained it publicly in a 2019 talk at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Qatar continues to fund extremists and terrorists and continues to involve itself in our internal affairs," al-Jubeir [said](#). "Allowing clerics to go on television and justify suicide bombings is not acceptable. Allowing people to spread hate is not acceptable. Funding people in other countries who spread these ideas is not acceptable. Using your media in order to cause mischief in our country is not acceptable. Providing hundreds of millions of dollars toward Hashd al-Shaabi and Hezbollah in Lebanon in order to bring your hostages out is not acceptable. So that's the problem that we have with Qatar. Other than that, they're a wonderful country."

Al-Jubeir went on, "we finally said enough is enough. So when you decide you want to come over from the dark side, we'd be happy to embrace you."

Al Jazeera

The "media" reference is to Al Jazeera, which the Qatar monarchy totally and completely controls. The English version of it is bad enough, but the Arabic version is toxic, "inflammatory," "an aggressive mix of anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism," as Fouad Ajami explained in a landmark 2001 article, "[What the Muslim World is Watching](#)." Irritating, from the Saudi point of view, is even the name of the outlet, which is the Arabic world for an island or peninsula. It is a reference to "*Jazeerat al-Arab*," the peninsula of the Arabs. For tiny Qatar to usurp the name of the entire Arabian Peninsula is a humiliating insult to the Saudis.

The Bottom Line

The al-Thanis, in other words, are not indigenous to Qatar. They aren't some ancient civilization. They are a bunch of desert nomads, defeated by the Saudis. The Al-Thanis are what the campus leftists would call settler colonialists or imperialists. That is, if the term were applied with any principled consistency rather than as an insult against Israelis and Americans. They came from somewhere else (in this case, today's Saudi Arabia), and used colonial power (that of the Ottoman and British empires) to seize the local resources (in this case, land on which was eventually discovered oil and gas) and enrich themselves.

All of this might just be historical or geographical trivia except that Qatar is hosting Hamas terrorists who are part of an organization that kidnapped and killed Americans. And it is sponsoring a network, in Al Jazeera, that is spreading the worst worldwide propaganda aimed at demonizing and delegitimizing Israel and America.

A Policy Option

An administration serious about changing Qatari behavior might inform the Al-Thani family that the Al-Thani family has choices and that America also has choices. Maybe the Gaza Riviera would make a better U.S. air base than Al Udeid.

The conversation could go like this: "We are freezing all your bank accounts in the West. You have no right to this area historically. You are hurting Western interests. From now on, we decide Al Jazeera content, not you. If you continue to fund these things, you are finished."

As President Trump is fond of reminding people, America is a hot country right now. Trump got elected in part because Americans know from "The Apprentice" that he's capable of saying "you're fired." We have lots of other possible partners and allies. If the Al-Thani family doesn't shape up, it could wind up in London, again under British protection, not America's. Or it could end up facing investigation in the U.S. for financing and harboring terrorism. A post-Al-Thani Qatar—and its petroleum resources—could become part of Saudi Arabia, or Bahrain, or the United Arab Emirates. Or Trump could have the U.S. take a share in the post-Al-Thani Qatar petroleum resources as he advised doing in Iraq.

The aftermath of October 7, 2023, has already reshaped the Middle East, eliminating the Assad regime in Syria, weakening Hezbollah and the Iranian nuclear program. If Qatar isn't careful it could be next. People will scoff that it'd be improbable after the 747 jet and after Trump's visit to Doha. But one of the few things Trump likes better than deals is renegotiating deals. Instead of traveling to Doha again, Trump could

summon the emir to Washington and demand he surrender both the Hamas leadership and Al Jazeera. If the answer is "no," it'd be a fine moment for Trump to strike a blow against imperialism and tell the Al-Thani family that it is fired.

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ASP 3d

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Recall that It was Al Gore who sold his media empire to Al Jazeera. He turned down an American offer because he didn't like their conservative politics.



Ayn 3d Edited

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Excellent reporting. "Qatar is Hamas" - a point as obvious as "water is wet." That they can buy off US leadership - including the US president with an airplane - while they sponsor violent terrorism against an ally is absurd. Meanwhile they've bought off elite US universities with billions of dark Islamist \$\$ in exchange for pumping out graduating classes of Israel hating Islamist loving leftist drones. Hopefully Trump comes to his senses soon.

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