

Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy

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Uniquely for a country its size, Qatar has emerged as one of the world's most proactive mediators in recent years. Motivated by a combination of international prestige and survival strategies, the country has sought to position itself as a neutral peacemaker in many of the international and intra-national conflicts brewing across the Middle East region. In three of the most notable cases in which it has involved itself — Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen — Qatar has proven itself to be a capable mediator in reducing tensions but not, crucially, in resolving conflicts. Qatar's successes have been facilitated by a combination of its perceived neutrality by the disputants, the vast financial resources at its disposal to host mediation talks and offer financial incentives for peace, and the personal commitment and involvement of the state's top leaders. These successes, however, are often checked by limited capabilities to affect long-term changes to the preferences of the disputants through power projection abilities, in-depth administrative and on-the-ground resources, and apparent underestimations of the complexities of the deep-rooted conflicts at hand. Qatari mediation efforts are likely to continue in the foreseeable future, but their outcomes are also likely to remain mixed.

Since the mid-2000s, Qatar has become one of the world's most active mediators in regional and intra-national conflicts across the Middle East and parts of Africa. The most notable of these have involved mediation efforts in Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen, with similar though lower-profile efforts undertaken in Palestine and in the border conflict between Djibouti and Eritrea. In the process, Qatar has actively cultivated an image for itself as an honest broker interested in peace and stability.

This article examines the motivations and modalities of Qatar's mediation efforts in the regional and global arenas. For a state its size, Qatar's proactive efforts at mediation and conflict resolution stand out in several respects. Why and how has a country with the size and geostrategic position of Qatar emerged as one of the most prolific — and in some respects the most successful — mediators in the Middle East region and beyond? What tools and mechanisms do Qatari mediators employ in their efforts to foster conciliation and resolve international and intra-national conflicts? And, in the end, to what extent do Qatari mediators succeed in their mediation efforts? This article analyzes the underlying reasons and *modus operandi* of Qatar's regional conflict resolution efforts, looking at three of the more high-profile and consequential cases of mediation in which Qatar has participated, namely the internal conflicts in Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen.

The article posits three main points. First, it examines the underlying reasons for Qatar's proactive efforts at mediation despite its small size and its traditional role at the

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regional and sub-regional levels in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf basin, respectively. The article argues that the primary motivation for Qatari mediation efforts is a combination of small state survival strategies and the desire for international prestige. Second, the article looks at the actual means and mechanisms through which Qatar seeks to foster mediation between various disputants. In pushing forward the country's mediation efforts, Qatari authorities appear to employ a two-pronged approach, namely intense personal diplomacy and engagement coupled with implied or explicit promises of vast financial investments once the dispute is settled. Third, the article offers a balance sheet of the successes and failures of Qatari mediation efforts. It argues that although Qatar has had what appear to be significant successes in conflict *mediation*, those successes, at least for the time being, have not necessarily meant successful conflict *resolution*. Mediation in conflicts, whereby disputants pledge to resolve their conflict, does not necessarily mean resolving the conflict. The two require different skill-sets and resources. Qatar has demonstrated its skills and resources at conflict mediation. Whether it can translate those same skills and resources to conflict resolution remains to be seen.

THE CONTEXT OF QATARI MEDIATION

In a region known for its cross-border crises and intra-national sectarian strife, Qatar has quickly emerged as an actor adept at diffusing and mediating conflicts. Doha's "niche diplomacy" has led to its reputation as a reliable peace broker.¹ As an integral part of its foreign policy pursuits, Qatar's insistence on playing a mediating role has, at times, provoked the ire of other regional actors hoping to assume such a role for themselves. For instance, Egypt, which has long viewed itself as Sudan's primary patron, initially sought to take the initiative away from Qatar in solving the Darfur crisis. In the end, Qatar, with richer pockets and less of a history in relation to Sudan, won out.² Similarly, Qatar's efforts at mediating an end to the Huthi rebellion in Yemen met with Saudi resentment and, at times, outright disapproval, a point to which we will return later.

Insofar as international mediation efforts by state actors are concerned, several aspects of Qatari mediation efforts stand out. To begin with, mediation often takes place under the aegis of one of the major powers such as the United States (Secretary Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" designed to bring the 1973 Arab-Israeli War to a conclusion), the former Soviet Union (Moscow's 1966 efforts to end the Indo-Pakistani conflict), or France and Britain. Sometimes "middle powers" also involve themselves in international mediation efforts, as was the case with Austria during the premiership of Bruno Kreisky (1970–1983), Algeria and its role in negotiating an end to the hostage crisis in Iran in 1981, and, more recently, Brazil and Turkey's efforts to resolve

1. Niche diplomatic strategies often "serve as a catalyst on a particular international issue or to build international coalitions for a particular issue." Justin Robertson, "Introduction: The Research Direction and a Typology of Approaches," in Justin Robertson and Maurice A. East, eds., *Diplomacy and Developing Nations: Post-Cold War Policy Making Structures and Processes* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 4.

2. R. Green, "Solving the Darfur Crisis: The U.S. Prefers Qatar to Egypt as Mediator," *The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)*, August 19, 2009, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/3572.htm>.

the stalemate over the Iranian nuclear program in 2010. Rarely do small states involve themselves in international mediations as a principal mediator, with Norway's role in sponsoring the secret talks that led to the 1993 Oslo Accords being a major exception.³ In specific relation to the Middle East, the role of mediator has traditionally been played by the regional heavyweights, in particular Egypt and Saudi Arabia, each of whom views itself as the protector of the regional status quo.⁴ For their part, none of the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have ever engaged in substantive mediation efforts.⁵ Qatar's prolific mediation efforts are unique both regionally and, given its size, globally.

In itself, there is nothing new or innovative about international conflict mediation in the Middle East by regional actors, with many of the region's presidents, prime ministers, and kings at one point or another seeking to resolve simmering conflicts between neighbors and former allies.⁶ The Arab League has also been a persistent, if not wholly successful, actor in regional conflict resolution initiatives.⁷ What is new and different is that it is Qatar — one of the Middle East's smallest countries, and up until the mid-1990s generally seen as a Saudi vassal — that has emerged as the region's most prolific and visible mediator.

Qatar's motivations for emerging as a serious mediator of regional conflicts are not that different from those of other states wishing to shine on the world stage. As early as the 17th century, diplomats in the court of Louis XIV advised him of the prestige attached to mediating international conflicts, and today the spread of the global media has only added to the veracity of that advice.⁸ States may also engage in mediation because the potential costs of standing by as a conflict rages on are seen as greater than the risks involved in becoming a mediator. The dangers of spill-over, particularly for conflicts that are nearby or may directly affect a state's interests, often serve as powerful motivators for mediation efforts. Similarly important are calculations of regional or global power-politics that are perceived as enhancing the mediator state's position within the international system.⁹ Moreover, for many mediator states, media-

3. For a first-hand account of the secret negotiations that led to the Oslo Accords, see Jan Egeland, "The Oslo Accords: Multiparty Facilitation through the Norwegian Channel," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler-Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), pp. 529–546.

4. For Egyptian and Saudi foreign policies, see, respectively, Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt," in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 91–114; and F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 193–211.

5. See Abdulla Baabood, "Dynamics and Determinants of the GCC States' Foreign Policy, with Special Reference to the EU" in Gerd Nonneman, ed., *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 145–173.

6. Egyptian presidents have a long tradition of mediating international conflicts (Nasser between King Husayn and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1970, and Mubarak between Saddam Husayn and the Kuwait leadership in 1990, among others).

7. For the Arab League's futile attempts at averting Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, see Clovis Maksoud, "The Arab World's Quandary," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 551–559.

8. G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 239.

9. R. P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (London: Pearson Education, 2006), p. 239.

tion is not simply a response to specific, emerging developments. Rather, mediation is foreign policy; it is a “broader framework of strategic action within the international and domestic political systems.”¹⁰ Insofar as Qatari diplomacy is concerned, mediation appears to be an integral part of its toolbox.

In addition to these broad objectives, for Qatar mediation efforts serve specific purposes related to branding. Qatar is seeking to carve out for itself the image of an experienced mediator with a proven track record, a regional diplomatic powerhouse, and of an honest broker, a wise and mature player interested in peace and stability both in its immediate neighborhood and beyond. The fanfare with which Qatari mediation efforts are often accompanied bespeak their importance to the country’s carefully crafted image. Secrecy is often considered to be one of the central elements of any mediation effort. “If elements of secret negotiations are leaked,” according to diplomatic historian R. P. Barston, “difficulties occur in that possible concessions by one party are exposed, thus weakening its position; the credibility of the mediator may be called into question; or an incorrect or misinterpreted version of the ‘contract’ discussions or negotiations may be presented by the media.”¹¹ Invariably, however, Qatar’s mediation efforts have taken place in the limelight and often before local and regional media outlets, with high-ranking Qatari diplomats frequently granting media interviews as the process is still underway and reflecting on the country’s role in positive, often glowing terms.¹² Keenly aware of the advertising value of their mediation efforts, long after the mediation process is over, Qatari leaders continue to refer to these efforts as major accomplishments and an important contribution to regional stability. As such, by concentrating its efforts and resources in high-profile mediation cases, Qatar is embarking on a deliberate effort aimed at carving out what is, at times, referred to as “niche diplomacy.”¹³

This role is not adopted for the sake of vanity or appearances alone — rather it can be viewed as an essential component of Qatar’s national security strategy. Enhancing its stature as an “impartial mediator” can reduce the number of regional or global opponents Qatar might face otherwise, through a venue it is uniquely situated to participate in (without requiring a large population, landmass, or army). Furthermore, it allows Qatar to gain influence in strategic areas. In Sudan, for example, in addition to supplanting historically-linked Egypt, Qatar gained the opportunity to buy up farm land for food security purposes. By involving itself in the global diplomatic scene, Qatar seeks to prevent itself from being elbowed aside by larger rivals.

An important element to consider in relation to Qatari mediation efforts is the country’s perceived impartiality in regional politics. As a relative latecomer to regional and international diplomacy, Qatar has yet to accumulate the kinds of baggage that Egypt or Saudi Arabia have accumulated over decades of regional activism. Scholars of mediation have often wondered about the possibility, and even the desirability, of

10. Saadia Touval, “Mediation and Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2003), p. 92.

11. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, p. 240.

12. See, for example, Alistair Lyon, “Qatar Pulls off Mediation Coup in Lebanon Crisis,” Reuters, May 22, 2008, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL2274043520080522>.

13. Alan Henrikson, “Niche Diplomacy in the World Public Arena: The Global ‘Corners’ of Canada and Norway,” Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

neutrality by mediators.¹⁴ Touval and Zartman, for example, argue that since leverage is key to successful mediation, it can be effectively deployed to extract concessions from the parties, especially the party that sees itself as closer to the mediator.¹⁵ Along similar lines, other case studies of the outcomes of mediation efforts suggest that “in order to be believed when they provide ... information, mediators must be biased. An unbiased mediator who simply wants to prevent conflict will not be credible to the parties involved in the negotiations because she cannot be trusted to send messages that might increase the likelihood of conflict ... Only a biased mediator that shares the preferences of one of the parties in the negotiations will be credible in this context.”¹⁶ If a mediating state is perceived to be biased in favor of one of the parties, the favored party will believe it only if it counsels restraint.¹⁷ Moreover, even if a mediator is perceived to be biased at the beginning of the mediation process, it is its conduct throughout the negotiations that reveal its intentions and affect its credibility.¹⁸

These studies appear to overlook two facets of mediation, one of which applies across the board while the other appears somewhat unique to the case of Qatar. First, insofar as the role of bias and impartiality in mediation is concerned, an important distinction needs to be made between *initial assumptions* about the perceived impartiality of the mediator and the *success* of the mediation process. Disputants often assume that an unbiased mediator whose sole interest is to reduce the level of conflict is far more likely to be believed by both disputants, and therefore be successful, as compared to a mediator perceived to be biased in favor of one of the parties.¹⁹ This assumption prompts the disputants to seek out an impartial negotiator or to welcome offers of negotiations by a third party that they perceive to be unbiased. Perceived impartiality is critical to the chances of success in mediation efforts.²⁰ In the Middle East, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are perceived to have manifold agendas and interests across the region, as does, by association, the Arab League, which is often perceived to be an instrument of Egyptian foreign policy. Their mediation efforts are therefore frequently seen as means of furthering their own specific interests. As a new player in Middle East politics without a history of diplomatic or military involvement in the region, Qatar is perceived to be an honest broker, an image that it proactively cultivates. “We’re only interested in peace,” a Qatari diplomat maintained in a confidential interview, “and they come to us because we don’t have any other agendas or ulterior motives.”²¹

A second consideration, one that is somewhat unique to Qatar, is the material in-

14. See, for example, Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediation in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–79* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

15. Saadia Touval and William Zartman, “Mediation in International Conflicts,” in K. Kressel and D. G. Pruitt, eds., *Mediation Research: The Process and Effectiveness of Third-Party Intervention* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 1989), p. 129.

16. Andrew Kydd, “Which Side Are You On? Bias, Credibility, and Mediation,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (October 2003), pp. 607–608.

17. Kydd, “Which Side Are You On?,” p. 598.

18. Peter J. Carnevale and Dong-Won Choi, “Culture in the Mediation of International Disputes,” *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2000), p. 108.

19. Kydd, “Which Side Are You On?,” p. 598.

20. Asaf Siniver, “Power, Impartiality, and Timing: Three Hypotheses on Third Party Mediation in the Middle East,” *Political Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2006), p. 809.

21. Confidential interview, July 2010, Doha, Qatar.

centives or rewards that the mediator offers to the warring parties in return for resolving their conflict. Studies of mediation have demonstrated that material incentives offered by mediators to disputants can have different outcomes in different cases. Although largely inconclusive, these studies suggest that material incentives and cooperation offered to the weaker party do indeed tend to decrease the level of conflict.²² Both official and unofficial tracks of diplomacy “that have more resources and leverage than other interveners are more likely to apply more enforcing strategies. This also yields more effective outcomes.”²³ These material incentives may be overt — in the form of direct cash payments, for example — or, more commonly, they may revolve around perceptions of the economic benefits associated with settling the conflict, the most common being investments in infrastructural development projects.²⁴ Not surprisingly, Qatar has invested heavily in all the countries in which it has played a mediating role, having emerged as one of the biggest investors in southern Lebanon and a notable player in Sudan (more on this below). Interestingly, Qatar’s broader global investment strategy has largely pivoted around Western and especially British enterprises and real estate, with the notable exceptions in the Middle East being those countries in which it has mediated conflicts.²⁵

The success or failure of mediation efforts depends on a number of variables, ranging from the readiness of disputants to reach a resolution to the resolve of the mediator to press ahead despite seemingly intractable differences. Mediation outcomes are affected by one or more combinations of “conflict ripeness” (opportune moments when disputants may be amenable to negotiations), the intensity of the conflict, and the nature of the issues at the heart of the conflict.²⁶ The timing of when mediation occurs can also play a critical role in its success or failure: mediation is more likely to succeed when the conflict has reached an “escalatory stage.”²⁷ In other words, warring parties are likely to welcome mediation when they sense that a military victory in the on-going conflict is unattainable, domestic and international support for their position is waning, and the economic and military costs of the conflict are becoming untenable.²⁸ They generally seek outside mediation when they perceive that doing so serves their interests on a variety of fronts. Some of these perceived advantages include (re)gaining the political initiative by seizing the moral high ground; enhancing the legitimacy of one’s own position, actions, and policies; relieving international pressure; maintaining the cohesiveness of their own constituency; generating political, technical, or financial support; and/or buying time to regroup and regain strength.²⁹ According to one Qatari diplomat, the country has carefully

22. Philip A. Schrodt and Deborah J. Gerner, “An Event Data Analysis of Third-Party Mediation in the Middle East and Balkans,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (June 2004), p. 322.

23. Tobias Bohmelt, “The Effectiveness of Tracks of Diplomacy Strategies in Third-Party Intervention,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2010), p. 168.

24. Saudi Arabia, for example, has promised \$1 billion worth of investments in Yemen over a five-year period beginning in 2010. “Saudi to Pump \$1b Investment into Yemen,” *The Saudi Gazette* (Jidda), August 13, 2010.

25. Sven Behrendt, “Gulf Arab SWFs — Managing Wealth in Turbulent Times,” *Policy Outlook* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), p. 4.

26. Kleiboer, “Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation,” p. 362.

27. Siniver, “Power, Impartiality and Timing,” p. 806.

28. Hans J. Giessmann and Oliver Wils, “Conflict Parties’ Interests in Mediation,” *Berghof Policy Brief*, No. 1. (Berlin: Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, September 2009), p. 6.

29. Giessmann and Wils, “Conflict Parties’ Interests in Mediation,” p. 4.

selected those conflicts in which it has played a mediating role, concluding beforehand that its chances of success are fairly positive.³⁰ If this is indeed the case, then Qatar appears to capitalize on the opportunities presented in its surrounding neighborhood.

SUDAN

Qatar's involvement in the Sudan conflict began in earnest in 2008 with the efforts of the country's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ahmad bin 'Abdullah al-Mahmud.³¹ Throughout the year, before establishing in-depth contacts with any of the Sudanese parties involved in the conflict, Minister al-Mahmud travelled to various world capitals to meet with those international actors who were either already involved in Sudanese mediation efforts or who were among the conflict's stakeholders. This included meetings with officials from the US State Department, the French, Libyan, and Chinese Foreign Ministries, the United Nations, the African Union, and the Arab League. The primary purpose of these meetings was to collect as much information about the conflict as possible, to learn the perspectives and preferences of the international actors involved, and, perhaps most importantly, to secure their approval for Qatar's substantive involvement — in fact, leadership — in mediation efforts. Simultaneously, al-Mahmud embarked on a fact-finding mission to Khartoum and the Darfur region, traveling also to Sudan's neighbors that had been either involved in previous mediation efforts (Djibouti) or which housed Darfurian refugees (Chad). His travels in the Darfur region and in refugee camps in Chad were especially extensive and substantive, prompting one Sudanese diplomat, who recounted the Minister eating and sleeping in refugee camps, to claim that "he got to know Darfur better than we do."³²

Besides on-the-ground information gathering, one of the most important side effects of these trips was to build confidence among the disputants that Qatar was indeed sincere in its claim to objectivity and even-handedness. Al-Mahmud's trips also generated considerable goodwill toward Qatar among the disparate Darfur groups. The Darfurians had been particularly skeptical of the involvement of yet another Arab government in their affairs, having already become weary of previous or ongoing mediation attempts by Egypt and the Arab League, most of which they had come to view as biased in favor of Khartoum. Moreover, there had been a number of drawn-out, often difficult negotiations in the past, followed frequently by grand declarations and impressive signing ceremonies — in Addis Ababa in 2004 and in Abuja in 2004 and 2005 — all of which had come to naught.³³ According to both Sudanese and Darfuri officials involved in the negotiations, Qatari mediators approached the conflict from a completely different perspective as compared to all of those who had tried mediating among the Sudanese before. Al-Mahmud's efforts at gaining detailed, in-depth knowledge of the

30. Confidential interview, July 2010, Doha, Qatar.

31. Much of the research in this section on Qatar's mediation efforts in Sudan was done through confidential interviews in Doha with principal negotiators belonging to both the Sudanese government and the Darfurian Justice and Equity Movement. Grateful acknowledgment goes to the Sudanese Embassy in Doha and to Professor Rogaia Abusharaf for facilitating a number of these interviews.

32. Interview by the author, July 2010, Doha, Qatar.

33. See, for example, the text of *The Darfur Peace Agreement*, available online at <http://allafrica.com/peaceafrica/resources/view/00010926.pdf>.

situation on the ground had been a first, having previously only been attempted by international humanitarian and relief agencies working with the refugees. No other would-be mediator had become so intimately involved in learning the lay of the land and the specifics of the issues involved, and none had garnered in the process as much goodwill among the disputants as did the Qataris.

Qatari Foreign Ministry officials contend that the country involves itself in mediation efforts only after it is asked and invited to do so by the disputants.³⁴ Evidence indicates, however, that the country proactively seeks to involve itself in selected mediation and conflict resolution efforts, the Sudanese case being a prime example. Their approach has been quite methodical and deliberate. Qatari officials first made a calculated decision to secure the approval of the relevant international parties and also did due diligence to ensure that interested members of the international community supported their efforts, or, at least, did not disapprove. A second step involved in-depth and meaningful fact-finding, taking the country's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to places where no mediators had gone before. Only then, once the Qataris had established their credentials as knowledgeable and unbiased, did they invite the disputants to Doha for negotiations.

The Doha-based negotiations between the Sudanese government and one of the largest Darfurian rebel groups, the Justice and Equity Movement (JEM), commenced in February 2009 and resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that committed both sides to "goodwill and confidence building for the settlement of the problem in Darfur." The disputants agreed in the MOU to designate "Doha as the venue for the talks between them" under the "kind auspices [of] H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and the mediation by the esteemed Government of the State of Qatar and the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator."³⁵ Since then, as stipulated in the MOU, Doha has become the primary location where representatives from the Sudanese government and the various Darfuri rebel groups meet. Although the Qatari government recognized the Republic of South Sudan, as of this writing negotiations between the Khartoum government and the Darfurian Justice and Equality Movement continue apace.

To be certain, the negotiations have been extremely complicated and difficult, punctuated several times by bitter acrimony and at times even prolonged hiatus.³⁶ On numerous occasions the talks have come close to collapse, made all the more arduous by the deep fractiousness and divisions that mark the many rebel groups operating in Darfur.³⁷ Throughout, the Qatari mediators have impressed the disputants with their patience and their determination to see the negotiations through, remaining gracious and generous hosts by housing representatives from both sides, especially the rebel

34. Confidential interview, July 2010, Doha, Qatar.

35. Text of the Memorandum of Understanding, signed on February 17, 2009, supplied to the author courtesy of the Sudanese Embassy in Doha.

36. A chronology of the Darfur peace process is available at the website of the Geneva-based Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment, www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/.

37. Apart from the JEM, which is by far the most significant armed group operating in the Darfur, some of the other notable rebel groups include the Sudan Liberation Army, which is divided into the Abdel Wahid and the Minni factions, each named after a leader, and the so-called Addis Ababa and Tripoli groups, although the latter two groups are reported to have merged in early 2010.

groups, in Doha's luxury hotels for months on end.³⁸ As of this writing the future of the talks and of the whole Darfur issue is far from settled and is still hanging in the balance. Were they to fail or to have catastrophic consequences it certainly will not be due to lack of effort or due diligence on the part of Qatari mediators.

LEBANON

Around the same time that Qatar's Deputy Foreign Minister al-Mahmud was traveling to various African cities and towns to learn about the Darfur crisis and to build confidence in Qatari mediation efforts, political tensions in Lebanon were coming to a head. A political crisis that began in November 2007 over Lebanese politicians' inability to agree on a consensus candidate for the presidency slowly built up to what amounted to a brewing civil war by May 2008 between Hizbullah forces and the government. The government's attempts to reduce Hizbullah's powers by shutting down its telecommunications network and sacking officials suspected of sympathizing with it brought the crisis to a boiling point, resulting in fighting in the city of Tripoli that left 81 people dead.³⁹ Hizbullah occupied parts of Beirut and closed down the city's international airport and seaport. Lebanon faced by far the gravest internal threat to its political system since the civil war ended in 1990.

Under the rubric of the Arab League, on May 17, 2008, 14 negotiators representing Lebanese political factions gathered in Doha and entered into negotiations over two principal points: agreeing on who would become the country's president, a point on which they had failed to agree on 20 previous occasions, and redrafting the electoral laws in preparation for the next parliamentary elections. Although a cross section of Lebanese factions were represented in the negotiations, the principal disputants were Hizbullah on one side and the March 14 Movement, which constituted the government led by Prime Minister Fou'ad Siniora, on the other. Earlier, the government had reversed its decisions regarding Hizbullah that had sparked the latest crisis, and in return Hizbullah had pulled back its forces from the Beirut neighborhoods it had occupied. In the ensuing six days of intense negotiations, Lebanese politicians worked out an agreement whereby General Michel Suleiman was picked as the country's next president. They also agreed to give Hizbullah 11 positions in a 30-member government of national unity, effectively giving it veto power over those government decisions with which it did not agree. This had long been one of Hizbullah's key demands. Another 16 seats were reserved for the March 14 Movement, with the president choosing the three remaining cabinet posts.⁴⁰ The two sides also agreed on a framework for new parliamentary elections in 2009, and, under the auspices of the new president, to also start a dialogue that would lead Hizbullah to lay down its arms.

By all counts, the agreement was a major diplomatic coup for Qatar. Lebanese and Qatari papers hailed Doha's "historic achievement." "Beyond any doubt," declared one of Qatar's Arabic dailies, "what happened in Doha is considered a proud achievement

38. Interview by the author, July 2010, Doha, Qatar.

39. Jason Koutsoukis, "Lebanon Peace Hopes Rise," *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 16, 2008, p. 9.

40. Nicholas Blanford, "Qatari Deal Defuses Lebanese Crisis," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 22, 2008, p. 1.

for Qatar, for Arabs, and for the Lebanese people. Qatar managed to achieve a diplomatic victory by hosting the national dialogue session.”⁴¹ It did in fact appear as if Qatar had saved Lebanon from the brink of catastrophe. Long a battleground for regional powers, to the public eye the Syrians, Iranians, and Saudis had either stood idly by or had actively pushed Lebanon toward the abyss, and, had it not been for the 11th-hour intervention of the Qataris, the country would have once again imploded. Throughout the negotiations, held at the Doha Sheraton, the Qatari negotiators kept open lines of communications with diplomats from Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iran in order to secure their buy-in insofar as the negotiations and the final deal were concerned.

Although the negotiations took place under the umbrella of the Arab League, Qatar was seen, correctly, to have been the primary force that made the negotiations possible. More specifically, Shaykh Hamad bin Jassim, Qatar’s Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, was personally involved in the negotiations. According to those who were present, he played a key role in fostering a collegial and friendly atmosphere, doggedly persisted in moving the talks forward despite days of deadlock, and diffused tensions when the talks came close to collapsing. After five days of intense negotiations, it became apparent that the pro-Syrian factions led by Hizbullah were unwilling to compromise and that the talks had reached a standstill. On the evening of the fifth day, the Emir telephoned Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and bitterly complained about Syria’s intransigence in the matter, reminding Asad that Qatar had stood by him regardless of the costs the shaykhdom had incurred. Within hours, early in the morning, Hizbullah negotiators convened a meeting in which they announced their assent to the terms of the agreement that had been hammered out.⁴² Whether the talks would have succeeded or failed without the personal stewardship of senior Qatari leaders is difficult to tell. What is obvious is that they played a key, personal role in helping the fractious Lebanese leaders come to a meeting of the minds.

In addition to the Qatari Emir and Prime Minister’s personal involvement, two broader forces formed the larger context within which a successful outcome to the Doha summit was possible. First, once Hizbullah and pro-government militia forces engaged one another militarily in the streets of Beirut, there appears to have been a sober realization by the Lebanese political elite that yet another catastrophic civil war was imminent.⁴³ Internally, therefore, there was a sudden momentum for negotiations concurrent with Qatar’s offer to mediate. Although on a few previous occasions Qatar had offered to mediate in Lebanon, by regional standards it had not been a major player in the country.⁴⁴ Instead, Syria and Iran had a close ally in Hizbullah, and therefore were much better positioned to influence the course of events on the ground, while Saudi Arabia had powerful allies within the March 14 organization, not the least of whom were the supporters of Sa’d al-Hariri, son of the late Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and heir to an influential political and commercial dynasty. Similarly, Egypt was too close

41. “The Doha Agreement: A Historic Achievement,” *Al-Rayah* (Doha), May 22, 2008.

42. Confidential interview with foreign diplomat, January 2011, Doha, Qatar.

43. Alia Ibrahim, “Lebanese Political Leaders Meet in Qatar to Resolve Stalemate,” *The Washington Post*, May 18, 2008, p. 20.

44. When in September 2007 fighting erupted between Lebanese government forces and the Fatah al-Islam group in the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Barid, Qatar sought to mediate an end to the conflict and safe passage for women and children out of the camp. See, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), September 11, 2007, p. 1.

to the Saudi and American camps to be seen by the different factions as an honest broker. For a country long victimized by foreign meddling in its internal politics, the very fact that Qatar had been a relative non-player in Lebanon was a major advantage.

Moreover, the coverage by *Al-Jazeera* of the summer 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon — in the words of the country's president, the station's "very important role" in showing to the world Israel's "massacre" of innocent Lebanese⁴⁵ — and the subsequent outpouring of Qatari reconstruction aid and investment, had won the country much goodwill.⁴⁶ Of all the regional actors, Qatar was perfectly poised to host the negotiations and to play the role of the mediator. In the end, its success in mediating among the Lebanese factions was a product of both Lebanese fear of the catastrophic alternative and Qatar's own position as an honest broker with no historical or sectarian baggage in Lebanon, and instead much goodwill.

YEMEN

Qatar's mediatory involvement in Yemen started in earnest in May 2007, almost exactly three years after the Huthi rebellion got underway, when the Emir traveled to Sana'a on a state visit. Simultaneously, he dispatched a team of Qatari Foreign Ministry officials to accompany a group of government-appointed Yemeni mediators to the Sa'ada governorate, the heart of the rebellion, to begin mediation efforts with the Huthi rebels. The Huthi rebellion had started in 2004 at the instigation of Husayn al-Huthi, a locally respected *mujtahid* [a scholar of Shi'i Islamic law] with some 3,000–4,000 students, who advocated a revival of the true essence and spirit of Zaydi Islam. Combining rabid anti-Americanism with Zaydi revivalism, al-Huthi was able to tap into pervasive feelings of resentment, neglect, and discrimination that had plagued much of the country's Zaydi community since the 1990s.⁴⁷ In what turned out to be the first of many such rounds of bloody fighting, Husayn al-Huthi was killed on September 10, 2004. But the insurgency he had started continued and resulted in successive rounds of fighting, or "wars" as the Yemeni press began calling them, between March–May 2005, late 2005 to early 2006, and February–June 2007. It was during this fourth round of fighting that Shaykh Hamad travelled to Sana'a and announced Qatar's willingness to mediate between the government and the Huthi rebels. If the parties agreed to end the war, Shaykh Hamad declared, Qatar would be willing to allocate funds for the reconstruction of much of the Sa'ada governorate.⁴⁸ On June 16, 2007, government and Huthi forces declared a ceasefire, and, following several trips by Qatari mediators to both Sana'a and Sa'ada, representatives from the Huthi rebels and the Yemeni government signed a formal peace treaty in Doha on February 2, 2008.

The Doha agreement was initially met with considerable excitement and optimism,



45. BBC Worldwide Monitoring Service, quoting Al-Jazeera Satellite Television, August 21, 2006.

46. "Berri in Qatar Ahead of Trip to UAE To Discuss Expulsions," *The Daily Star* (Beirut), October 12, 2009.

47. Ayman Hamidi, "Inscriptions of Violence in Northern Yemen: Haunting Histories, Unstable Moral Spaces," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (March 2009), p. 168.

48. International Crisis Group (ICG), *Yemen: Diffusing the Saada Time Bomb* (London: ICG, 2009), p. 4.

and both sides soon began taking tangible steps toward the implementation of its main provisions. At the core of the agreement was the Qatari pledge of reconstruction funds, estimated at around \$300–500 million.⁴⁹ Qatar also agreed to serve as home to several Huthi rebel leaders who would go into exile in Doha. But the optimism was short-lived. The actual fighting on the ground never quite stopped, and both the rebel movement as well as government forces proved less unified and cohesive than the Qataris or each of the disputants had assumed.⁵⁰ From the beginning there were voices of dissent against Qatari mediation within the Yemeni establishment,⁵¹ and a number of Huthi rebel leaders also refused to attend subsequent meetings in Doha. By the following October, fierce fighting once again engulfed the northern Huthi areas. Intermittent fighting continued throughout the remaining months of 2008, and in the summer of 2009 the Yemeni government launched a full-scale assault on rebel stronghold areas. Earlier in March, President ‘Ali ‘Abdullah Salih had confirmed that the Doha agreement was indeed dead.⁵²

As intermittent fighting continued throughout 2009 and 2010, Qatar once again resumed its mediation efforts in the summer of 2010, beginning with another visit by the Emir to Sana‘a in July and follow-up meetings in Doha in August by negotiators from the Yemeni government and the Huthi rebels. In late August, both sides renewed their commitment to a truce by signing another agreement in Doha, with the Emir having personally encouraged President Salih to help move the agreement forward in a telephone call.⁵³ The new agreement was signed in Doha bearing the signatures of an advisor to President Salih who represented the Yemeni government, one of the leaders of the Huthi rebels, and, on the Qatari side, Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim. The fact that the Emir and President Salih remained in the background is not without significance.

From the very beginning, two features distinguished Qatari mediation efforts in Yemen from similar undertakings in Lebanon and Sudan. First, as alluded to above, although both the Emir and the Prime Minister have remained involved and engaged in the mediation efforts from the start and have tried to shepherd the process along, neither of them, nor for that matter any other key official within the Qatari establishment, invested the same amount of personal time and energy into these negotiations that the Prime Minister invested in the Lebanese mediations or Minister al-Mahmud invested in the case of Sudan and Darfur. Instead, the bulk of the fact-finding, negotiations, and mediations have been done by teams made up of Qatari Foreign Ministry employees and diplomats.

This relative depersonalization of the mediation process may well be related to a second feature involving the Yemeni case, namely the weighty presence of Saudi Arabia in the conflict, oftentimes behind the scenes but at times also overtly.⁵⁴ Sharing a long

49. ICG, *Yemen*, pp. 21–22.

50. On the government side, there appear to have been discrepancies between the positions of the Sana‘a government and the armed forces, the latter not always following the orders of the former.

51. One member of the Yemeni parliament, Muhammad Bin-Naji al-Shayif, for example, accused Qatar of acting on behalf of Iran and being eager to save the Huthis from complete defeat. “The truth is that they are mere messengers from Iran in a desperate attempt to rival the Saudi position in the region and in the world.” Sultan Al-Awbathani, *Al-Hayat* (London), July 30, 2007, p. 2.

52. ICG, *Yemen*, p. 22.

53. Mohammad Bin Sallam, “Government and Houthis Sign New Peace Deal in Qatar,” *Yemen Times* (Sana‘a), August 31, 2010.

54. Ginny Hill and Gerd Nonneman, “Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States: Elite Politics, Street Protests and Regional Diplomacy,” *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, May 2011, pp. 8–11.

and porous border with Yemen, and with a host of historical, sectarian, and ideological interests at stake, Saudi Arabia has followed the Huthi rebellion with considerable alarm, and, on more than one occasion, has even launched bloody assaults against Huthi rebels within Yemeni territory.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, participants in and observers of the Yemeni conflict have long known of the Saudis' general disapproval of Qatari mediation efforts in Yemen.⁵⁶ To ensure the defeat of the Huthis and to also counter a potential rise in Qatari soft power in its southern neighbor, Riyadh has poured "money into the Yemeni military and allied tribes. At the same time, Saudi media [has] portrayed Qatari intercession as guided by Iran, suggesting that its timing reflected a joint bid to save the rebels from looming defeat."⁵⁷ Saudi efforts aimed at undermining potential Qatari influence in Yemen have often taken the form of incentives for badly needed economic aid and investment, or, at times, outright funding of Yemeni tribes that are supportive of Riyadh's strategic agendas.⁵⁸ In August 2010, just as Doha once again re-engaged itself in Yemeni mediation efforts, Saudi Arabia pledged \$1 billion worth of investments in the war-ravaged country.⁵⁹ At other times Saudi intervention aimed at influencing the course of Qatari mediation efforts has been much more direct. The day before the Emir and President Salih were to announce a new round of negotiations to be held in Doha in August 2010, for example, Saudi King 'Abdullah reportedly called President Salih and asked that a new stipulation be added to the agreement giving the Saudis the right to veto any agreement with the Huthis. The Emir of Qatar could hardly contain his frustration. "We, Qatar and Yemen, agreed upon reviving the Al-Doha agreement, which consists of only five points," he told a press conference in Sana'a. President Salih's response was equally revealing: "We agreed to revive the agreement with its five points with the Qatari side and added a sixth point regarding Yemen and Saudi Arabia."⁶⁰

These two features of Qatar's Yemeni mediation efforts — comparative depersonalization and Saudi interference — appear to have combined to undermine the efficacy of the emirate's mediation efforts insofar as the Huthi rebellion is concerned. Since 2009, Doha has made a concerted effort to improve its "stakeholder management" insofar as Riyadh and its interests in Yemen are concerned.⁶¹ Whether or not this will trans-

55. Mohammed Bin Sallam, "Yemeni-Saudi Forces Attack Houthis from Saudi Arabia," *Yemen Times* (Sana'a), (December 7, 2009).

56. According to one of Yemen's main opposition figures, for example, "Saudi Arabia does not accept the role [of] Qatar in resolving the conflict in Yemen, as it didn't before when it caused the Qatari mediation to fail." "Unless there is coordination between Doha and Riyadh," he continued, "the fighting in Saada will regenerate." Shuaib M. al-Mosawa, "Yemen Opposition Accuses Saudi Arabia of Provoking Sa'ada War," *Yemen Observer* (Sana'a), July 26, 2010.

57. ICG, *Yemen*, p. 22.

58. Ulf Laessing, "Saudi Funds Undercut Government in Yemen," *The International Herald Tribune*, December 9, 2010, p. M1.

59. "Saudis to Pump \$1b Investment into Yemen," *The Saudi Gazette*, August 13, 2010. Not to be completely left out, in December 2010 Kuwait also pledged \$500 million in aid and investments. "Kuwait Donates \$500m for East Sudan Development," *Arab Times* (Kuwait City), December 2, 2010, p. 1.

60. Mohammad Bin Sallam, "Disagreement over Yemeni-Qatari Truce," *Yemen Times* (Sana'a), July 15, 2010.

61. Consistent with a general improvement in ties between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Doha has sought to better inform Riyadh of its initiatives in Yemen. Hill and Nonneman, "Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States," p. 12.

late into better chances for Qatar to succeed in the long term in its mediation efforts in Yemen remains far from certain, especially as the internal crisis of the Salih regime pushed the country deeper into turmoil in the spring and summer of 2011. Clearly, at certain junctures, some conflicts are more intractable and less amenable to mediated solutions than at other times or compared to other conflicts.

QATARI MEDIATION: A BALANCE SHEET

Despite setbacks in Yemen, and the fact that political dynamics in Lebanon and Sudan remain fluid and far from settled, Qatar has indeed had notable successes in mediating complex conflicts, and, in the process, capitalizing on those successes as apparent diplomatic coups.⁶² There is no golden formula for mediation success.⁶³ Qatari leaders have, however, exhibited the adaptability and diplomatic dexterity, as well as the resources, that are needed in all successful mediation efforts. Mediators are generally valued not for their institutional capacity but rather for their functional contribution.⁶⁴ Three general characteristics of mediators affect their chances of success: their perceived impartiality, leverage, and status.⁶⁵ Similarly, successful mediators often exhibit characteristics such as competence, personal commitment and integrity, empathy, patience, independence, flexibility, and negotiating skills.⁶⁶ These characteristics are all found in abundance among Qatar's chief negotiators, particularly the Emir, Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim, and Deputy Minister al-Mahmud. The Qataris have also successfully capitalized on a number of other dynamics that are conducive to successful mediation efforts, most notably common cultural ties⁶⁷ and unofficial, or track II (behind the scenes), diplomacy.⁶⁸ Additionally, Qatar has successfully employed what one observer calls "business diplomacy" — combining diplomacy with massive infusions of investments — to secure agreement among disputants and, equally importantly, among potential spoilers (such as Syria or Libya).⁶⁹

But Qatar's relative successes have been in conflict *mediation* rather than conflict *resolution*, critical differences separating the former from the latter. Mediation is a necessary but by itself insufficient component of conflict resolution. Mediation "takes away the negative, destructive consequences of violent conflictual behavior," whereas conflict resolution effectively addresses the underlying causes of the conflict.⁷⁰ The long-term endurance of mediated peace is far from guaranteed. The political scientist Kyle Beardsley has gone so far as to argue that "mediation does well to secure short-

62. Lyon, "Qatar Pulls off Mediation Coup in Lebanon Crisis."

63. Kleiboer, "Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation," p. 375.

64. Giessmann and Wils, "Conflict Parties' Interests in Mediation," p. 7.

65. Kleiboer, "Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation," p. 368.

66. Giessmann and Wils, "Conflict Parties' Interests in Mediation," pp. 7–8.

67. Carnevale and Choi, "Culture in the Mediation of International Disputes," p. 108.

68. Bohmelt, "The Effectiveness of Tracks of Diplomacy Strategies in Third-Party Intervention," p. 168.

69. Andres Gulbrandsen, "Bridging the Gulf: Qatari Business Diplomacy and Conflict Mediation," MA Thesis, Georgetown University, 2010.

70. Marieke Kleiboer, "Understanding Success and Failure of International Mediation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 1996), p. 382.

term peace but leaves much to be desired in the long run.”⁷¹ Mediators facilitate the exchange of information, use leverage, and hold out the promise of the benefits of peace. But they generally do not remain involved after the conflict, and they tend to promote settlements that are not self-enforcing. The actors’ bargaining positions also tend to change after the mediation process concludes, upsetting the previous balance of interests on which the mediation agreement was premised. All in all, mediated settlements in international conflicts tend not to have the endurance generally ascribed to them by outside observers. In fact, although “mediation has a strong short-term impact ... [it] can often inhibit long-term peace.”⁷²

Whereas Qatar has amassed an impressive arsenal of conflict mediation skills and resources, it appears to have few, if any, of the resources or the opportunities needed for successful conflict resolution. Although all three instances of Qatari mediation examined here required significant commitment of resources and time, especially on the part of the country’s negotiating teams, conflict resolution requires a much more in-depth and sustained level of commitment, especially insofar as time and resources are concerned. Mediation requires fostering an environment that is conducive to discussion and dialogue among bitterly divided disputants. This is often done through structuring political, diplomatic, and financial incentives in ways that make compromise solutions palatable and consensus possible. Resolving conflicts in the long run requires on-the-ground knowledge and influence. It requires the ability to project power and to either directly enforce the terms of the negotiations or to at least continue to shape the behaviors and preferences of the disputants long after they have left the negotiating table. For local alliances and allegiances to last beyond instrumentalist pleasantries and strategic concessions during negotiations, mediators need to have sustained presence within and access to local conditions and resources. Qatar can host the disputants in Doha, house them for weeks or even months in one of the city’s five-star hotels, and, through a combination of diplomacy and investment promises, entice them to sign a peace accord. But it simply does not have the history of engagement with local — often extra-state — actors across the region, the capability of sustained power projection, or the institutional means and depth required for resolving conflicts.

The course of developments in Lebanon within a few months of the conclusion of the Doha Accord highlight the limitations that Qatar faces in resolving deep-seated, communally entrenched conflicts. In the final months of 2010, as tensions once again began to rise in Lebanon on rumors that Hizbullah was likely to be implicated in the bombing assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, Qatar was conspicuously absent from influencing the course of events on the ground. Instead, it was Syria and Saudi Arabia, both with much deeper ties to Lebanon’s confessional communities and longer histories of involvement in its politics compared to Qatar, that proactively involved themselves in the country’s affairs.⁷³ In 2010, as Lebanon once again inched closer to crisis, Qatar, the peacemaker in 2009, was nowhere to be found.⁷⁴ The dip-

71. Kyle Beardsley, “Agreement without Peace? International Mediation and Time Inconsistency Problems,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (October 2008), p. 723.

72. Beardsley, “Agreement without Peace?,” p. 737.

73. International Crisis Group, *Trial by Fire: The Politics of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon* (London: ICG, 2010), pp. 14–16.

74. This was not a planned-on absence — Qatar was simply not asked to participate by the Lebanese. Rather than lose face, they absented themselves from the process.

lomatic coup, and the attendant prestige that came with it, appear to have been quite ephemeral. Neither had the billions of dollars worth of Qatari investments, both promised and actual, enabled Qatar to supplant Syrian and Saudi patronage of local Lebanese elites and to exert its own influence over the country's fractious politicians.

Although Lebanon is only one of the three examples discussed here, there is no evidence to suggest that Qatar's efforts will not encounter similar setbacks in Yemen and Sudan. In each of these cases, the communal conflicts plaguing the disputants have deep historical, ethno-racial, and sectarian roots that go beyond the mollifying consequences of Qatar's "dollar diplomacy" of the last few years.⁷⁵ In Sudan, in fact, although Qatari mediation did put a stop to the bloody violence that had ravaged the country for years, the absence of a meaningful resolution to the conflict ultimately resulted in the country's break-up, albeit through a largely peaceful referendum, in January 2011. And, in Yemen, Saudi influence over both the government and some of its allied Sunni tribes remains pervasive despite Qatar's concerted efforts to carve out a place for itself within the Yemeni political sphere.⁷⁶

The extent to which Qatari negotiators appreciate the subtle complexities and differences separating each case, and therefore the specialized care and attention demanded by the case at hand, is difficult to determine. Seldom does successful negotiation lend itself to simply bringing together the disputants and fostering dialogue between them. Qatar's careful attention to detail in the Sudanese case has been well documented. But the prestige and hype generated by the successful summit in Doha of the contentious Lebanese factions appears to have overshadowed the ongoing care and the attention to detail that conflict mediation demands. In Yemen, for example, the state is practically broken, prompting one observer to comment that the country is "a chronically malfunctioning entity, patchily governed with the acquiescence and to the satisfaction of a rapidly shrinking percentage of the population, home to two domestic insurgencies as well as Al-Qaeda by the end of 2009."⁷⁷ Lebanon is altogether different, simmering beneath a democratic façade with factional tensions that seem to be ready to erupt at the slightest provocation. Similarly, Sudan has its own uniqueness and idiosyncrasies. In the Lebanese case, Qatar benefited from fortuitous timing, launching its mediation efforts at just the right time, when both the Lebanese factions and the international stakeholders — especially the Saudis, Syrians, and Iranians — wanted to see a containment of the country's brewing hostilities. But, for the time being at least, the same luck appears to have eluded Qatari negotiators in relation to Sudan and Yemen.

Ultimately, determining the successes or failures of Qatari mediation depends on the goals and intentions against which the country's mediators judge themselves. They have, by all accounts, succeeded in negotiating reductions to national and international tensions and reducing the chances of violence. If *tension reduction* has been the primary goal of Qatari mediation, then in this sense it has been an unqualified success. But

75. Sudan, for example, "has been at war with itself since the day it emerged from colonial rule," with conflict between the north and south actually breaking out before formal independence from Britain in 1956. Dan Connell, "Peace in Sudan: Prospect or Pipe Dream?," *Middle East Report*, No. 228 (Autumn 2003), p. 3.

76. ICG, *Yemen*, p. 22.

77. Victoria Clark, *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 234.

if the mediators' intended purpose has been to *resolve* the conflicts that they mediate and to foster lasting peace among the disputants, then their record leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, the important role of Qatari diplomacy in general and its mediation efforts in particular cannot be understated, especially in a region accustomed to diplomatic and domestic tensions and frequent political saber-rattling. Even in those cases where lasting peace is elusive, successful mediation is often measured in terms of the reduction of hostilities rather than the effectiveness of a lasting agreement.⁷⁸ As such, Qatari mediation has indeed had a successful record.

CONCLUSION

Mediation has emerged as one of the central pillars of Qatari foreign policy, with the country deliberately positioning itself as a peacemaker in a region renowned for its wars and international conflicts. As such, mediation is part of a carefully devised strategy that suits the country's diplomatic and foreign policy objectives on multiple levels. At the most basic level, mediation helps cultivate an image of Qatar as an honest broker interested in peace and stability and acting out of altruism. To its own population and to the Arab street at large, this brings Qatar a more visible profile, enhanced stature, and international prestige. But garnering prestige and visibility are not the only driving forces behind Qatar's mediation efforts. Just as important is the imperative of competition and rivalry, with Qatar using mediation to further its own interests and influence in countries and areas where some of its competitors have been influential before.⁷⁹ Qatar's attempts at mediating the Huthi conflict in Yemen, for example, appear to be informed as much by its desire to complement, if not altogether supplant, Saudi influence in the country as it is by altruism and prestige. In Sudan, making inroads in a country historically and diplomatically close to Egypt has been an equally important motivating factor, as is the tangible benefit of buying up farm land for purposes of future food security. And, in Lebanon, the advantages of emerging as a peacemaker in a country long victim to regional and international machinations are obvious to both the Lebanese and to the international actors vying for influence in the country.

Perhaps the biggest source of strength for Qatari mediation is also its biggest weakness. Qatar's mediation efforts have been intensely personal, capitalizing on the personalities of the Emir and other chief policymakers who have acted as objective, dispassionate, well-informed, and well-intentioned mediators interested in turning intractable disputes into win-win scenarios. This has been extremely effective in getting the disputants around the negotiating table and motivating them to move the negotiations forward. But the personalization of the mediations has also had its drawbacks, especially insofar as on-the-ground implementation, continued confidence building, and follow-up are concerned. By itself, the personal intervention of chief policymakers is not detrimental to the success of mediation. But its efficacy is undermined when it becomes the only, or even primary, means of fostering reconciliation. Successful me-

78. Sinvier, "Power, Impartiality and Timing," p. 808.

79. For Qatar's rivalry with Egypt and Saudi Arabia see, Y. Yehoshua, "The Doha Summit — A Defeat for the Saudi-Egyptian Camp," *MEMRI*, Inquiry & Analysis Series Report No. 510, www.memri.org.

diation needs to be followed up with various institutional means, such as diplomats and personnel who can monitor the progress of the issues after the negotiations are over. Personalities may successfully navigate difficult foreign policy issues. But then a professional diplomatic corps is needed to translate those successes into long-term policies and priorities. Qatar's small size, its lack of an in-depth corps of professional diplomats, and the relative youth of its diplomatic initiatives do not make this possible.

As a small state in a rough neighborhood, much of Qatari diplomacy, including the country's mediation efforts, is informed by a broader survival strategy that is aimed at ensuring the security of the ruling Al Thanis. Mediation has helped carve out an image of Qatar as a proactively neutral state in the multiple national and cross-border conflicts raging across the Middle East. At the same time, and to reinforce regime security, Qatar seeks to maintain open lines of communication between disparate disputants in an effort to ensure that its regional and global opponents remain as few as possible. The substance of the country's mediation efforts may be lacking in depth and long-term resilience, but by its very hyper-activism, Qatar has begun to shape global perceptions of itself as regional peacemaker, an honest broker, a proponent of mediated peace and reconciliation in a region long ravaged by war. In diplomacy, appearances are seldom any less important than substance. These perceptions are only likely to be strengthened by Qatar's highly visible, and eventually successful, involvement as a major player in the Libyan civil war that ended Colonel Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi's decades-long reign. For a small country without a long history of involvement in regional and global affairs, the image of the Qatari flag hoisted by Libyan rebels on Qadhafi's compound when it was overrun bespeaks the rapid ascent of the small shaykhdom's popularity and its soft power throughout the Arab world. Mediation has emerged as one of the central tools for enhancing Qatari soft power and global image. On that score, at least insofar as its image is concerned, Qatar's successes are indeed impressive.