

Qatar and the Gulf Crisis

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Summary

- Since June of 2017, Qatar has been subject to an international boycott by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt - the Quartet. Saudi Arabia has closed Qatar's only land-border, and Doha was prevented from access to the sea in the territorial waters of the four states. Furthermore, the Quartet banned Qatar from using their airspace and imposed restrictions on Qatari residents, in all cases except Egypt ordering their own citizens to leave Qatar within 14 days.
- Qatar has for some time positioned itself as a mediator and safe-haven for dissidents. HAMAS moved its offices to Doha after its political troubles forced it out of Damascus, the Taliban has its diplomatic presence in Qatar, and many Muslim Brotherhood members and supporters fled to Qatar in 2013 after the violent military coup liquidated the elected government of Egypt. But the role of mediator, already intended to further Qatar's soft-power and political influence in the region, has long since crossed over into support for groups like HAMAS and other Brotherhood-affiliated or -inspired Islamists. This policy aggravated Qatar's neighbours, and Qatar's habit of hosting wanted individuals from the other Gulf states and providing them citizenship and air time in its region-wide media redoubled the fury of neighbouring states that view Qatar's behaviour as subversive.
- Though the Quartet accused Qatar of a number of things that were exaggerated or fabricated, it also levelled a lot of accusations that are true.
- A number of state-linked Qatari individuals have been implicated in financing the rise of al-Qaeda in Syria, partly openly through support for Ahrar al-Sham which operated in a military alliance with Jabhat al-Nusra, and partly more ambiguously through purportedly private individuals who funded al-Nusra directly. Qatar has, in direct opposition to the policies of the Quartet, given support to Islamist forces in Libya, though Qatar formally supports the international political settlement that the Emirati and Egyptian proxies are challenging by force on the ground.
- Qatar has been central to a range of hostage releases, particularly with al-Nusra, providing or facilitating the payment of ransoms on a scale that is operationally important for these terrorist groups. Cast in the best light, this is a dangerous and destabilising policy born of emotion, and Qatar's neighbours view it as a more sinister policy designed to fund terror by stealth.
- Given that Qatar presents its support for many of these extremists, at home and abroad, as a defence of human rights for people persecuted by authoritarian regimes, Qatar might be expected to have an impressive domestic human rights record. This is not the case. Qatar is ruled by the same conservative interpretation of Islamic law as Saudi Arabia. Though Qatar is socially and politically somewhat more open than its large neighbour, on any number of issues - from the status of women to the treatment of foreign workers, who make up 80% of the people living in Qatar - is also a cause for concern.
- Britain should avoid publicly taking sides in the broader dispute between the Gulf states, and should work for reconciliation to provide for regional stability, particularly in the face of the aggression from revolutionary Iran. Behind the scenes, however, there is room to continuing to press Qatar on the issues like terror finance where the Quartet's grievances are legitimate and dovetail with British interests.

1. Introduction: The GCC Schism

A diplomatic crisis erupted on the Gulf on 4 June 2017: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt severed diplomatic relations with Qatar. Saudi Arabia closed the only land-border Qatar had; all the states banned Qatar from using their airspace and territorial waters. The four governments imposed restrictions on Qatari residents and would-be entrants, and all except Egypt ordered their own citizens to leave Qatar within 14 days.¹

Coming a day after the hacking of the Bahraini Foreign Minister's Twitter account,² some interpreted the actions of the Saudi-led bloc as an overreaction to an act of online piracy. Subsequent analysis laid stress on Qatar's more cordial relations with the Iranian revolution.³ Qatar's restoration of full diplomatic relations with Iran on 24 August,⁴ a calculated snub to its rivals, increased this tendency.

The lens of the Saudi-Iran rivalry, however, is not the driving force of this standoff. Qatar's more conciliatory relations with the Iranian theocracy are not in and of themselves the problem. Qatar shares a gas field with Tehran, so has to have a degree of economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic. Other states and entities within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Oman and Dubai most obviously, retain economic ties with Tehran. Oman also has functioning diplomatic relations with revolutionary Iran, despite its misgivings about the regime, and has been a broker for the West in dealing with Tehran.⁵ There is no objection to these policies from the GCC.

The primary direct point of contention is Qatar's instrumentalisation of Islamists as part of Doha's bid for influence in a way the Saudi-led "Quartet" find threatening to regional stability, and indeed their own internal security.⁶ This dynamic has been particularly salient since the "Arab Spring" uprisings descended into extended armed revolts in places like Syria and Libya, where Qatar's enthusiastic embrace of the revolutions – or, rather, factions within them – mobilised the other Gulf states to blunt Qatar's policies.⁷ In Syria, the consequences of the intra-Gulf competition harmed the opposition in a manner that it did not recover from.⁸ The origins of this long-simmering dispute are much older, however, going back to Qatar's move toward not just an independent, but a competitive, anti-Saudi foreign policy in the 1990s.

There have been serious tensions in the Saudi-Qatar relationship since the coup in Qatar in June 1995 that brought Hamad al-Thani, the father of the current emir, Tamim al-Thani, to power.⁹

¹ Kabbani, N., 'The high cost of high stakes: Economic implications of the 2017 Gulf crisis', *Brookings Institution*, 15 June 2017, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/06/15/the-high-cost-of-high-stakes-economic-implications-of-the-2017-gulf-crisis/>, last visited: 13 October 2017.

² 'Bahrain says Twitter account of its foreign minister hacked', *Reuters*, 3 June 2017, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-cybercrime/bahrain-says-twitter-account-of-its-foreign-minister-hacked-idUSKBN18U07E>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

³ Erdbrink, T., 'For Iran, Qatar Crisis Is a Welcome Distraction', *The New York Times*, 4 July 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/04/world/middleeast/for-iran-qatar-crisis-is-a-welcome-distraction.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁴ 'Qatar restores diplomatic ties with Iran amid Gulf crisis', *BBC*, 24 August 2017, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-41035672, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵ Coffey, L., 'As the US Restores Credibility in the Middle East, It Should Not Ignore Oman', *Heritage Foundation*, 26 April 2017, available at: www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-us-restores-credibility-the-middle-east-it-should-not-ignore-oman, last visited: 30 October 2017.

⁶ Alyahya, M., 'The Rift with Qatar as Seen in Riyadh', *The Atlantic Council*, 13 June 2017, available at: www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-rift-with-qatar-as-seen-in-riyadh, last visited: 30 October 2017.

⁷ Stephens, M., 'The Arab Cold War Redux', *The Century Foundation*, 28 February 2017, available at: <https://tcf.org/content/report/arab-cold-war-redux/>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

⁸ Weiss, M., 'The Syrian Gulf war', *NOW Lebanon*, 27 March 2013, available at: <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/the-syrian-gulf-war>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

⁹ 'Qatar Leader Is Sent Packing by His Son', *The New York Times*, 27 June 1995, available at: www.nytimes.com/1995/06/27/world/qatar-leader-is-sent-packing-by-his-son.html, last visited: 22 October 2017.

Prior to that, Qatar had been something of a Saudi dependency. Under Hamad's leadership, Doha sought to chart its own course. There were attempts to come to terms, with old disputes over land settled in 2001,¹⁰ but ultimately Qatar's policies necessitated a collision. One of Qatar's chosen methods for trying to reshape the political environment in its favour – and, by implication, against the Saudi-led bloc – was by founding a satellite television station, Al-Jazeera, to carry Qatar's message across the Arab world. It was this channel that led to a breakdown in relations in September 2002, with the Saudis withdrawing their ambassador over coverage on Al-Jazeera deemed defamatory.¹¹

When this crisis last burst into public in March 2014, and the three Gulf states withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar, their primary charge against Qatar was interfering in their internal affairs by harbouring wanted men and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood – and reneging on an agreement, signed in November 2013, by which Doha had promised it would cease doing so.¹²

Qatar has supported Islamists throughout the region, accelerating this policy during the Arab revolts that began in 2010 in Tunisia and spread throughout the region. When the Gulf states presented a framework agreement to Qatar in April 2014 for the restoration of relations, a key demand was the *implementation* of the 2013 agreement that would end Qatar's support for Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood specifically.¹³ Qatar was to halt its support for the Brethren, in Syria, Libya, Egypt, and elsewhere; Brotherhood operatives were to be expelled from Qatar; and Qatar was to cease naturalising Islamists who had left other Gulf countries and providing them with platforms to agitate against the Gulf countries. Indeed, Qatar's media in general was to be reined in.¹⁴

In June 2017, the Quartet issued its initial list of 13 demands through Kuwait to Qatar,¹⁵ a maximalist opening gambit that Doha leaked to the press. In July 2017, a formal list of six principles was issued by the Quartet.¹⁶ From both documents, one intended to be private and one public, it was once again clear that Iran was not the main issue. Qatar could maintain minimal diplomatic and all economic relations with Iran; the price of reconciliation was to eliminate any military relations with Tehran and to expel members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the arm of the Iranian state that orchestrates international terrorism.

The demands focused on: shuttering media channels, specifically Al-Jazeera, regarded as promoting terrorism; severing ties with terrorist organisations, which in the GCC conception includes the Muslim Brotherhood; cutting off all funding, state and private, that flows from Qatar to individuals and organisations designated by GCC states and the United States as terrorist; hand over “terrorist figures”, those wanted by GCC states for subversion and other activities; cease interference in the internal affairs of other GCC states by, for example, granting citizenship to

¹⁰ 'Saudi and Qatar End 35-Year Border Dispute, Sign Accord', *Al-Bawaba*, 21 March 2001, available at: <https://www.albawaba.com/news/saudi-and-qatar-end-35-year-border-dispute-sign-accord>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

¹¹ Sharp, J.M., 'Qatar: Background and US Relations', *Congressional Research Office*, 22 March 2005, available at: <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/coir/legacy/2013/06/13/Qatar%20Background%20and%20US%20Relations.pdf>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

¹² 'Translation of Agreements [made in 2013 and 2014]', *CNN*, 11 July 2017, available at: [i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf](https://www.cnn.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf), last visited: 30 October 2017.

¹³ Hassan, H., 'Making Qatar an Offer It Can't Refuse', *Foreign Policy*, 22 April 2014, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/04/22/making-qatar-an-offer-it-cant-refuse/>, last visited: 13 October 2017.

¹⁴ 'Translation of Agreements [made in 2013 and 2014]', *CNN*, 11 July 2017, available at: [i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf](https://www.cnn.com/cnn/2017/images/07/10/translation.of.agreementsupdated.pdf), last visited: 30 October 2017.

¹⁵ Wintour, P., 'Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/close-al-jazeera-saudi-arabia-issues-qatar-with-13-demands-to-end-blockade>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶ Khan, T., 'Arab countries' six principles for Qatar "a measure to restart the negotiation process"', *The National*, 19 July 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/gcc/arab-countries-six-principles-for-qatar-a-measure-to-restart-the-negotiation-process-1.610314>, last visited: 20 October 2017.

citizens on the run from GCC governments, and ceasing all contact with the political opposition in the four states.¹⁷

The Qatari government defends its relations with non-state actors, including Islamist groups, from Syria to Libya, and with the wanted individuals from Gulf states, as a humanitarian and progressive policy of engagement with opposition and dissident figures to the regional despotisms. This unity of internal and external policy is detected on the other side, where Saudi Arabia and the others have cracked down on the space for extremist expression within their own borders, regarding this domestic policy as an extension of the effort to change Qatar's behavior.¹⁸ Because Qatar is opposed to the authoritarian status quo upheld by the Quartet – which often uses the cover of counter-extremism to indiscriminately constrict dissent¹⁹ – and because Qatar presents its activities in the language of liberalization and humanitarianism, Doha has attracted support for its policies from unusual quarters, such as Western human rights organisations, one of whom recently referred to Qatar as charting a “path of progress for the Arab world”.²⁰

This report will seek to examine the charges made against the Qatari government, to determine if it is indeed pursuing a progressive path, sheltering and giving space for expression to political dissidents hunted unjustly by autocratic governments, as it claims, or whether Qatar is engaged in power politics, bolstering groups and individuals, many of whom are dangerous radicals, that undermine its neighbours.

The report will examine these issues by focusing on three matters:

- Qatar's alleged hosting of subversives under the cover of providing asylum to dissidents. That Doha allows wanted individuals from neighbouring states to live on its territory, grants a considerable number of them citizenship, and allows them space in the media to promote their views and criticise neighbouring governments is not in doubt. The question is whether this is an act of humanitarian mercy, or the promotion of individuals who spread hatred and endanger regional security.
- Qatar's support for terrorist groups. The accusation is often made that Doha supports terrorism, and the list of groups the Qatari government is alleged to support is extensive, including: the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, Lebanese Hizballah, the Yemeni Huthis, and various violent Shi'i groups in Bahrain and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. For reasons of scope, this section of the report will not deal with, for example, Qatar's support to controversial figures like the wealthy businessman Khamis al-Khanjar in Iraq, whom some regard as a source of instability.²¹ It will focus solely on those who have – or are alleged to have – received Qatari support and can fairly be described as terrorist.

¹⁷ Wintour, P., 'Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2017.

¹⁸ Hassan, H., 'New Saudi policy will ensure clerics fall in line', 13 September 2017, *The National*, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/new-saudi-policy-will-ensure-clerics-fall-in-line-1.628123>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹⁹ Khashoggi, J., 'Saudi Arabia wasn't always this repressive. Now it's unbearable', *The Washington Post*, 18 September 2017, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/09/18/saudi-arabia-wasnt-always-this-repressive-now-its-unbearable/>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁰ Whitson, S.L., 'For Qatar the Gulf crisis is a human rights opportunity', *Middle East Eye*, 3 August 2017, available at: www.middleeasteye.net/columns/qatar-gulf-crisis-human-rights-opportunity-1054931766, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²¹ Khamis al-Khanjar is a deeply polarizing figure. Accused of looting his wealth from the Iraqi people as the Saddam regime collapsed and helping to finance the Iraqi insurgency, before switching to support the US-backed “Awakening” forces, al-Khanjar's main effort in recent years has been to create a federal Sunni Arab zone akin to the Kurdistan region within Iraq. Al-Khanjar works to promote this cause in and through foreign states, lobbying in the Gulf and in the West, and working inside Iraq with Turkey's clients – Atheel al-Nujayfi, the former governor of Ninawa, and his brother Usama al-Nujayfi, one of Iraq's vice presidents. Al-Khanjar also works with Sunni politicians like Rafi al-Issawi, the former finance minister who was purged soon after the US withdrawal by the Iranian-aligned Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and even Shi'a politicians. Some Sunnis bristle at al-Khanjar's self-promotion, but the options are limited. To many Shi'is, al-Khanjar is a sponsor of terrorism and a sectarian, and his proposal for a “Sunni region” is

- Qatar's domestic human rights situation. Given that Qatar frames the sanctuary it provides to citizens on the run from neighbouring governments in terms of human rights, the report will examine how well such rights are defended internally. This should provide an indicator of Qatar's sincerity.

Qatar hosts a significant American airbase at Al-Udeid, which has helped with counterterrorism and other Western interests around the region. Qatar is a major supplier of natural gas. And Qatar can also potentially provide useful support to the regional and international effort, should one be mounted, to contain the Iranian revolution. The ideal solution, therefore, is one that restores Gulf unity and preserves Qatar as an ally, while bringing negative aspects of her policy to an end. This report will explore this possibility.

nothing short of treasonous. See: Parker, N., 'Could a millionaire businessman save Iraq's Sunnis?', *Reuters*, 1 June 2016, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-khanjar-insight/could-a-millionaire-businessman-save-iraqs-sunnis-idUSKCN0YN4XF>, last visited: 7 November 2017; Mansour, R., 'The Sunni Predicament in Iraq', *Carnegie*, 3 March 2016, available at: carnegie-mec.org/2016/03/03/sunni-predicament-in-iraq-pub-62924, last visited: 7 November 2017.

2. Promotion of Extremism

2.1 Troubling Dissidents

At the outset of the 2017 round of the crisis, the Quartet and its surrogates disseminated a lot of old accusations against, and facts, about Qatar and its relationship with various extremists. The 9/11 planner, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, was given a job at the Water Department in Qatar in 1996 as he planned the prototype for that atrocity in the Far East, the so-called Bojinka plot.²² A member of the Qatari royal family, who did not have an official position in the government, allegedly hosted the founder of the Islamic State (IS), Ahmad al-Khalayleh (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi), after he was evicted from Afghanistan in 2001.²³ Usama bin Ladin was said to have thought Qatar a suitable refuge for his family,²⁴ and in the aftermath of Bin Ladin being killed in 2011 his sons, Othman and Muhammad, *did* seek refuge in Qatar, joining their brother, Umar bin Ladin, who had left al-Qaeda in 2000; Umar's onetime-wife, Zaina al-Sabah; and Umar's mother, Najwa Ghanhem, Usama's first wife.²⁵

The Qatari response, quite reasonably, has been to point to the conduct of its accusers, and it is true that the Saudi Arabian government funds enabled al-Qaeda in places like Bosnia in the 1990s in a manner that was and remains deeply destructive, though even in that most serious circumstance it was Iran's spies that orchestrated and controlled the most egregious jihadist behaviour against Westerners and Western interests.²⁶ More to the point, the Saudis admitted their problems²⁷ – from insufficient regulation of charities and the banking sector, the freedom extremists had to preach in mosques, the troubling material in the education curriculum – and reformed their policies in the mid-2000s.²⁸ Has Qatar similarly reformed? The evidence suggests there is work to do.

The Quartet published a list (reproduced in full in the appendix) on 9 June 2017 of 12 entities and 59 people that it considered terrorists. Most of the individuals, who hail from nine countries – Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen – are alleged to have received support from the Qatari government.²⁹

The list contained the names of individuals who are undoubtedly terrorists but have unclear connections to Qatar, certain Shi'a Islamist groups in particular (see section 2.2), and people who are involved in terrorist finance and have not met with anything like the full weight of Qatari law (see section 3.1).

²² Clarke, R.A., 'We always knew Qatar was trouble, as the 1990s escape of terror mastermind Khalid Sheikh Muhammad showed', *The New York Daily News*, available at: www.nydailynews.com/opinion/knew-qatar-trouble-article-1.3306729, last visited: 22 October 2017; Al-Ansari, S., 'How the 9/11 mastermind found safe harbor in Qatar', *The Hill*, 5 August 2017, available at: thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/345437-how-the-9-11-mastermind-found-safe-harbor-in-qatar, last visited: 22 October 2017.

²³ Tyler, P.E., 'Intelligence Break Led US to Tie Envoy Killing to Iraq Qaeda Cell', *The New York Times*, 6 February 2003, available at: www.nytimes.com/2003/02/06/world/threats-responses-terror-network-intelligence-break-led-us-tie-envoy-killing.html, last visited: 22 October 2017.

²⁴ Al-Saleh, H., 'What Bin Laden documents reveal about his relations with Qatar', *Al-Arabiya*, 26 May 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2017/05/26/What-Bin-Laden-documents-reveal-about-his-relations-with-Qatar.html>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

²⁵ Levy, A. & Scott-Clark, C., *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p. 456.

²⁶ Orton, K., 'From Bosnia to Guantanamo', *The Syrian Intifada*, 23 January 2016, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2016/01/23/from-bosnia-to-guantanamo/>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

²⁷ 'In Conversation with HE Adel al-Jubeir, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia (full session)' [23:10 to 23:45], *Chatham House*, 25 October 2017, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw4AWD_7Dl4, last visited: 6 November 2017.

²⁸ Hassan, H., 'Old myths perpetuate poor analysis of Saudi', *The National*, 17 January 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/old-myths-perpetuate-poor-analysis-of-saudi-1.181003#full>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

²⁹ 'The full list of designated terrorist individuals and entities', *The National*, 9 June 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-full-list-of-designated-terrorist-individuals-and-entities-1.46479>, last visited: 13 October 2017.

In between was a more difficult category: of extremists who have some measure of support, passive or active, from the Qatari state, but are not openly and explicitly involved in terrorism. These individuals threaten disseminate hatred and incitement, and at their worst can threaten regional order. They also fall into a legal and moral gray area covering issues from the rights of refugees to free expression.

Probably the most prominent figure in this category is Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars. An Islamist cleric of unrivaled influence, al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian by birth and resident in Qatar, is associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, including in the West (al-Qaradawi is the president of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, for example). For many years, al-Qaradawi had a prime-time show on Al-Jazeera. Al-Qaradawi long positioned himself within a moderate religious current, *al-wasatiyya* (the middle way),³⁰ advocating for Muslims to make their way in the modern world, with democracy and without things like female circumcision.³¹ But al-Qaradawi also had a habit of supporting extremist political positions, and this combination of mainstream religious authority and political radicalism has helped entrench extremist ideas throughout the region.

The most infamous example is al-Qaradawi's April 2001 fatwa permitting suicide-attacks during the Second Intifada against Israel (2000-05). The suicide bombers were "heroic" operations, not driven by despair but a righteous need to "cast terror and fear into the hearts of the oppressors", said al-Qaradawi.³² Classical Islam strictly forbids suicide,³³ and the traditionalist clergy have upheld this prohibition. Indeed, al-Qaradawi's licensed for suicide bombing came in response to Abdul Aziz ibn Baz, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, where the clerical establishment adheres to an austere form of state salafism that is often called "Wahhabism", ruling - against considerable popular pressure - that suicide bombing was incompatible with the tenets of Islam.³⁴ Al-Qaradawi expanded his fatwa in 2014 to permit suicide attacks as part of the war in Syria - provided the operative was acting within the confines of a group and not as an individual - and then revoked it in July 2016.³⁵ But it was too late. In the first place, al-Qaradawi walked back his edict by insisting that it had only ever been specific to the circumstances of the Palestinians at that moment in the early 2000s. Al-Qaradawi refused to disavow suicide bombing in general and did not mention Syria at all.³⁶ And, more importantly, al-Qaradawi had breached a traditional barrier that could not now be repaired. Suicide bombing has been normalised in a way it could not have been without the support of someone with al-Qaradawi's stature.

³⁰ Schenker, D., 'Qaradawi and the Struggle for Sunni Islam', *The Washington Institute*, 16 October 2013, available at: www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/qaradawi-and-the-struggle-for-sunni-islam, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³¹ Radwan, M., 'Qaradawi Calls On Ending Female Circumcision, Considers It Banned In Islamic Law', *Ikhwan Web*, 23 March 2009, available at: www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=19661, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³² Slackman, M., 'Islamic Debate Surrounds Mideast Suicide Bombers', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 May 2001, available at: articles.latimes.com/2001/may/27/news/mn-3226, last visited: 7 November 2017.

³³ The Qur'an prohibits suicide, e.g. 4:29 and 6:151, and the Hadith is even more explicit. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, one of *al-Sihah al-Sittah* (The Authentic Six [Books of Hadith]), the Prophet Muhammad is quoted saying that anyone who commits suicide is condemned to repeat the act forever in hell: "He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire (forever) and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell-Fire."

³⁴ Paz, R., 'The Saudi Fatwa against Suicide Terrorism', *The Washington Institute*, 2 May 2001, available at: www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-saudi-fatwa-against-suicide-terrorism, last visited: 7 November 2017.

³⁵ 'Sheikh Al-Qaradawi Retracts Fatwa Permitting Palestinian Suicide Bombings: No Need For Them Anymore', *MEMRI*, 17 November 2016, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/sheikh-al-qaradawi-retracts-fatwa-permitting-palestinian-suicide-bombings-no-need-them-anymore>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³⁶ Hassan, H. and Salem, O., 'The Brotherhood must not be seen as moderates', *The National*, 12 February 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/the-brotherhood-must-not-be-seen-as-moderates-1.5612>, last visited: 16 November 2017.

The political and revolutionary understanding of the religion promoted by al-Qaradawi dovetails with Qatar's foreign policy, especially since the Arab revolts swept the region in 2011, and this vision – combined with al-Qaradawi framing his 2013 call for Muslims to assist their persecuted brethren in Syria the most starkly sectarian terms³⁷ – meant that al-Qaeda, which saw in the “Arab spring” an ideological and security vacuum it could exploit, also viewed al-Qaradawi as a congenial force, as Usama bin Ladin's diary reveals.³⁸

Another man listed by the Quartet is Wajdi Ghonaim, another Egyptian preacher and supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood. Ghonaim resided in the US until 2005, when he was expelled for overstaying his visa and thereafter banned from re-entry because of his advocacy and fundraising on behalf of HAMAS.³⁹ Ghonaim has regularly encouraged hatred against Egypt's Coptic Christians, celebrating the death of the Coptic Pope in 2012 by asking God to exact “revenge” from an “accursed criminal” who was the “head of unbelief”,⁴⁰ and in April 2017 said IS's bombings of the Coptic churches in Tanta and Alexandria were just retribution for the Christians' support of Egyptian tyrant Abdelfattah al-Sisi.⁴¹ Ghonaim documented some “disagreements” with IS but said he would not support the US-led Coalition against them. “I shall never join hands with a Crusader to attack my fellow Muslim”, Ghonaim said, having denounced “criminal America” for killing the “heroic” Usama bin Ladin and throwing his body into the sea.⁴² Ghonaim criticised IS in Libya for fighting with other Muslims, rather than combining forces to wage war against non-Muslims, whom Ghonaim believes are allowed to live in Muslim-majority states, provided they are subjugated.⁴³

In September 2014, Ghonaim left Qatar, ostensibly in order to avoid “discomfort ... to the dear Brethren”, and in reality under Saudi pressure.⁴⁴ Ghonaim went to Turkey. While in Qatar, Ghonaim had appeared on Al-Jazeera and he would continue to appear on the network from exile. In August 2017, the Turkish government prosecuted Ghonaim for his disruption of Turkey's diplomatic relations after Ghonaim declared the president of Tunisia to be an “infidel”.⁴⁵

Tarek al-Zumar, also Egyptian, is secretary-general of al-Hizb al-Banna wal-Tanmiya (The Construction and Development Party), the political wing of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, a US-registered terrorist organisation.⁴⁶ Having been in prison since 1981, picked up in the dragnet after Egyptian ruler Anwar al-Sadat was assassinated, al-Zumar was released as part of the Egyptian revolution in

³⁷ Hassan, H., ‘Hatred, violence and the sad demise of a Muslim scholar’, *The National*, 28 January 2014, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/hatred-violence-and-the-sad-demise-of-a-muslim-scholar-1.305107>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³⁸ Hassan, H., ‘Bin Laden journal reveals he was shaped by the Muslim Brotherhood’, *The National*, 2 November 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-americas/bin-laden-journal-reveals-he-was-shaped-by-the-muslim-brotherhood-1.672646>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³⁹ ‘Wagdy Ghoneim on a new terrorist list by Arab states’, *Al-Bawaba*, 9 June 2017, available at: www.albawabaeg.com/93148, last visited: 13 October 2017.

⁴⁰ ‘Egyptian Cleric Wagdi Ghoneim Praises Allah For The Death Of Pope Shenouda III: “May Allah Exact Revenge From Him In The Hellfire”’, *MEMRI*, 18 March 2012, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/egyptian-cleric-wagdi-ghoneim-praises-allah-death-pope-shenouda-iii-may-allah-exact-revenge-him>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴¹ ‘Egyptian Islamist in Exile Wagdi Ghoneim: Churches Attacked Because Coptic “Crusaders” Supported “Despicable-Sisi”’, *MEMRI*, 8 April 2017, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/egyptian-islamist-exile-wagdi-ghoneim-churches-attacked-because-coptic-crusaders-supported/transcript>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴² ‘Exiled Egyptian Cleric Wagdi Ghoneim: No to Crusader War against ISIS’, *MEMRI*, 16 September 2014, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/exiled-egyptian-cleric-wagdi-ghoneim-no-crusader-war-against-isis/transcript>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴³ ‘Wagdi Ghoneim Criticizes ISIS For Fighting Libyan “Rebels”: “Go Fight The Infidels ... We Should All Unite And Join Hands”’, *MEMRI*, 26 February 2016, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/wagdi-ghoneim-criticizes-isis-fighting-libyan-rebels-go-fight-infidels-we-should-all-unite-and>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴⁴ Al-Sherbini, ‘Expulsion of Brotherhood from Qatar downplayed’, *Gulf News*, 14 September 2014, available at: gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/expulsion-of-brotherhood-from-qatar-downplayed-1.1384766, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁴⁵ ‘Turkey Prosecutes Wajdi Ghoneim After His Attack on Tunisian Political Figures’, *CNN*, 25 August 2017, available at: <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/2017/08/25/tunisia-wagdi-ghoneim>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁴⁶ ‘Foreign Terrorist Organisations’, *US Department of State*, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

2011 and spoke of abandoning violence as a means of politics.⁴⁷ Al-Zumar fled Egypt after the violent military coup against the elected Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013, and took shelter in Qatar. Al-Zumar has appeared on Al-Jazeera to condemn the putschist Egyptian regime.

Al-Zumar is an acute case of the difficulties involved. On the one hand, some of his statements are radical and perhaps even inciting to violence against the Egyptian regime. On the other hand, much of what is said about the repression in Egypt is not in itself wrong, and al-Zumar does have a well-grounded fear of persecution in his home state. Qatar can therefore make a reasonable case to be upholding humanitarian norms by sheltering al-Zumar from Cairo's extradition demands, and in political terms it is not clear that allowing al-Zumar to spread his toxic ideological views is more damaging than the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf states helping to orchestrate the coup in Egypt,⁴⁸ which has not only ushered in the most brutal government in Egypt's modern history, but has permanently destabilised the country, opening up space for terrorists and insurgents like IS in the Sinai.

2.2 Shi'a Islamists

The accusation that Qatar supported Iranian-controlled or -backed Shi'a Islamist leaders and groups, specifically in Bahrain, was among the most unexpected parts of the Quartet's indictment – and the most damning, popularly-politically in the region.

Qatar's connections with the Bahraini opposition are said to be demonstrated by four telephone conversations between the then-Qatari Emir's Special Advisor, Hammad bin Khalifa Abdullah al-Attiya, and Hassan Ali Muhammad Juma Sultan, once a parliamentarian for al-Wefaq,⁴⁹ which were leaked. Sultan's citizenship was stripped in 2015.⁵⁰ During the conversations, al-Attiya made reference to being in contact with Ayatollah Shaykh Isa Ahmed Qassim, the spiritual leader of al-Wefaq, and one of the most radical voices in the Bahraini opposition, who has also lost his citizenship and is currently on trial for corruption.⁵¹ Al-Attiya says that Qatar is doing the bare minimum to meet its GCC obligations in terms of the collective, Saudi-led response that garrisoned key installations and institutions in Bahrain as it was rocked by protests in 2011. (In fact, this is not quite true: while Al-Jazeera feigned neutrality over Bahrain, it largely did not cover the 2011 anti-government protests and when it did adhered to the government line, portraying the protesters as controlled by Iran.⁵²) And al-Attiya solicits from Sultan the name of somebody who can appear on Al-Jazeera to represent al-Wefaq's point-of-view. Sultan directs al-Attiya to Taher al-Musawi, the head of al-Wefaq's media operation.⁵³

⁴⁷ Perry, T., 'In free Egypt, Jihad leader says time for gun is over', *Reuters*, 18 March 2011, available at: www.reuters.com/article/uk-egypt-islamist-militancy/in-free-egypt-jihad-leader-says-time-for-gun-is-over-idUKTRE72H63F20110318, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴⁸ Ketchley, N., 'How Egypt's generals used street protests to stage a coup', *The Washington Post*, 3 July 2017, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/03/how-egypts-generals-used-street-protests-to-stage-a-coup/>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁴⁹ 'Bahrain: NSA Targets Mohamed Sultan, Son of Opposition MP', *Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain*, 26 June 2017, available at: www.adhrb.org/2017/06/bahrain-nsa-targets-mohamed-sultan-son-opposition-mp/, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵⁰ 'MOI Statement: 72 individuals stripped of citizenship', *Bahrain News Agency*, 31 January 2005, available at: bna.bh/portal/en/news/651916, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵¹ 'Bahrain to try top Shi'ite cleric for money laundering', *Reuters*, 16 July 2016, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-cleric/bahrain-to-try-top-shiite-cleric-for-money-laundering-idUSKCN0ZW11U>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵² Erdbrink, T., 'Al-Jazeera TV network draws criticism, praise for coverage of Arab revolutions', *The Washington Post*, 14 May 2011, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/al-jazeera-tv-network-draws-criticism-praise-for-coverage-of-arab-revolutions/2011/05/08/AFoHwS2G_story.html, last visited: 8 November 2017.

⁵³ 'Exclusive: Recordings show Qatar conspiring against Gulf policy in Bahrain', *Al-Arabiya*, 17 June 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2017/06/17/Behind-the-scene-Recordings-show-Qatar-conspiring-against-Gulf-policy-in-Bahrain-.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

It is worth noting two things in relation to these telephone calls. First, Sultan fled Bahrain in 2011 and now lives under the protection of Iran's most successful overseas project, Hizballah, in Lebanon. And second that the circumstances of these calls is contested. One version says that al-Attiya was actually in Bahrain when he made the calls, because he made them at the behest of the Bahraini monarchy, which was looking for channels to the opposition during the crisis. As such, the Quartet is misrepresenting what al-Attiya was up to.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Bahrain denies that it ever allowed the Qataris to speak to the opposition on the island in any way.⁵⁵

There are accusations that Qatar has ties to the Huthis in Yemen. Sometimes these accusations are said to be financial and logistical,⁵⁶ and some go as far as to say that without Qatari assistance, in collusion with Iran, the Huthis would have been defeated already and the internationally-recognized government of Yemen restored.⁵⁷ The visible links Qatar has to the Huthis pre-date the March 2015 Saudi-led intervention and take the form of Qatari mediation efforts with the Huthis and the granting of citizenship to Huthi militants.⁵⁸ Doha's role in prior attempts to reach a settlement between the now-fallen government and the opposition in Yemen was always somewhat controversial since the government accused Qatar of inciting the protests against it via Al-Jazeera.⁵⁹ Qatar deployed 1,000 troops in September 2015 as part of the Yemen operation,⁶⁰ many it seems in the Saudi city of Najran near the Yemeni border,⁶¹ though Qatari troops have been killed inside Yemen during the war.⁶² Qatar's involvement in the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen was suspended after the crisis began in June.⁶³ There is no evidence Qatar has armed the Huthis and there is no hard evidence of other support, either – whether in terms of funds or intelligence – though there is a belief among some Emirati officials that Qatar provided coordinates to the Huthis that led to the deaths of servicemen.⁶⁴

There is no public evidence of Qatari support for Saudi Arabian Shi'i opposition groups, and no evidence is proffered during private repetition of these claims by Gulf officials and surrogates.⁶⁵ There primary piece of evidence to emerge so far that Qatar at least *has* supported Saudi oppositionists, though not Shi'is, is a telephone conversation between Qatar's then-emir, Hamad al-Thani, and Libya's ruler, Muammar al-Qaddafi, which was leaked in May 2014.⁶⁶ "We have connections with all the opposition [groups in Saudi Arabia]", says al-Thani. "We are the country that caused Saudi Arabia a lot of trouble". The Qatari emir boasted of hosting Saudi oppositionist

⁵⁴ Author interview, October 2017

⁵⁵ Author interview, November 2017

⁵⁶ Sayed, N., 'Uncovered secret ties between Qatar and Houthis', *Egypt Today*, 21 July 2017, available at:

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/13003/Uncovered-secret-ties-between-Qatar-and-Houthis>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵⁷ Habor, A.H., 'Analysts: Qatar Backed Yemen's Houthis with Iranian Coordination to Target Saudi Arabia', *Asharq al-Awsat*, 24 July 2017, available at: <https://english.aawsat.com/abdul-hadi-habtoor/news-middle-east/analysts-qatar-backed-yemens-houthis-iranian-coordination-target-saudi-arabia>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵⁸ '20,000 Houthis Given Qatari Citizenship', *British Middle East Centre for Studies and Research (BMCSR)*, 12 May 2014, available at: <http://bmcsr.com/20000-houthis-given-qatari-citizenship/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁵⁹ 'Yemen's Saleh says objects to Qatar at peace signing', *Reuters*, 28 April 2011, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-saleh-qatar/yemens-saleh-says-objects-to-qatar-at-peace-signing-idUSTRE73R5XU20110428>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

⁶⁰ 'Yemen crisis: Qatar "deploys 1,000 troops"', *BBC*, 7 September 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34173544>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁶¹ Kovessy, P., 'Defense minister visits Qatar troops near Yemen border', *Doha News*, 19 June 2016, available at: <https://dohanews.co/defense-minister-visits-qatar-troops-near-yemen-border/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁶² 'Three Qatari soldiers killed in Yemen', *Reuters*, 13 September 2016, available at: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/09/13/Three-Qatari-soldiers-killed-in-Yemen-.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁶³ 'Qatar pulls out of Saudi-led coalition on Yemen', *TRT World*, 7 June 2017, available at: <http://www.trtworld.com/mea/qatar-pulls-out-of-saudi-led-coalition-on-yemen-374372>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁶⁴ Author interview, September 2017

⁶⁵ Author interviews, September-October 2017

⁶⁶ It is unclear exactly when the conversation was recorded; some reports suggest 2003 and some say after 2008: 'Leaked recording between Qaddafi and Hamad al-Thani, Qatar's Former Emir', *Al-Arabiya*, 7 June 2017, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoHHvhs6nm8>, last visited: 7 November 2017.

Sa'ad al-Faqih on Al-Jazeera. Al-Faqih and his Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) were designated in 2004 by the U.S. Treasury and the United Nations for providing material support to al-Qaeda,⁶⁷ a designation that was revoked in 2012.⁶⁸ Al-Thani went on to say that the Saudi monarchy was destined to be overthrown and Qatar's policy was to assist this by fostering an "axis" of opposition groups inside the Kingdom – a provocative statement and policy in any context. In an interview on 26 October 2017, Hamad bin Jassim appeared to confirm the authenticity of this leaked conversation between al-Thani and al-Qaddafi.⁶⁹

2.3 Extremism in the Media

Among the demands made by the Saudi-led bloc were that Qatar cease using media platforms that Doha financially supports to promote extremist ideology and other threats to the internal stability of the Quartet. Specifically, it was demanded that Qatar close Al-Jazeera satellite channel and shut down websites that Qatar allegedly supports, directly or indirectly, including: Arabi21, Rassd News Network (RNN), *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed* (The New Arab), and Middle East Eye (MEE).⁷⁰ Qatar rejected this demand as one that trespassed on its "sovereignty and foreign policy", saying it would only discuss matters related to the "collective security of the GCC".⁷¹

These online outlets vary in appearance. RNN hardly hides its Qatar links and is openly run by sympathizers if not members of the Muslim Brotherhood. RNN has been responsible for releasing stories that embarrass the Quartet, perhaps most saliently the recordings showing that the street demonstrations that precipitated the coup in Cairo in 2013 were not a spontaneous, revolutionary, outpouring but part of an orchestrated campaign between the Egyptian military, the opposition *Tamarod* (Rebellion) movement, and the Saudi and Emirati monarchies to bring down the elected government.⁷² At the other end of the spectrum, MEE has an editorial line favourable to the Qatari government and the Muslim Brotherhood, while flatly denying any links to Qatar at all.⁷³ Somewhere in between is The New Arab, which has public links in its funding to the state, even as it claims total independence of operations. As with MEE, the pro-Doha coverage, real or perceived, at The New Arab is, for the West, not as troubling as these outlets providing a platform for anti-Western conspiracy theories and propaganda, such as that IS was created by the West to justify military intervention in the Muslim world.⁷⁴ Interesting as these cases are, there can be no doubt that Al-Jazeera was the most important target.

⁶⁷ 'Treasury Designates MIRA for Support to Al Qaeda', *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 14 July 2005, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js2632.aspx>, last visited: 7 November 2017.

⁶⁸ Charbonneau, L., 'Exclusive: Saudi dissident set to come off U.N. al Qaeda blacklist', *Reuters*, 30 June 2012, available at: www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-dissident-un/exclusive-saudi-dissident-set-to-come-off-u-n-al-qaeda-blacklist-idUSBRE85T0L020120630, last visited: 7 November 2017.

⁶⁹ 'Former Qatari PM under attack after TV interview', *Egypt Today*, 31 October 2017, available at: <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/30265/Former-Qatari-PM-under-attack-after-TV-interview>, last visited: 7 November 2017.

⁷⁰ Wintour, P., 'Qatar given 10 days to meet 13 sweeping demands by Saudi Arabia', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2017.

⁷¹ 'Qatari FM: We will not negotiate al-Jazeera or our foreign policy with Gulf countries', *The New Arab*, 10 June 2017, available at: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/6/10/qatar-says-al-jazeera-foreign-policy-are-sovereign-non-negotiable-matters>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁷² Daragahi, B., 'Recording reveals Sisi's political ambitions in Egypt', *Financial Times*, 16 October 2013, available at:

<https://www.ft.com/content/e5c8f42e-359b-11e3-952b-00144feab7de?mhq5j-e5>, last visited: 15 October 2017; Giglio, M., 'A Cairo Conspiracy', *The Daily Beast*, 12 July 2013, available at: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/a-cairo-conspiracy>, last visited: 15 October 2017; Frenkel, S. and Atef, M., 'How Egypt's Rebel Movement Helped Pave The Way For A Sisi Presidency', *BuzzFeed*, 15 April 2014, available at:

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/sheerafrenkel/how-egypts-rebel-movement-helped-pave-the-way-for-a-sisi-pre>, last visited: 15 October 2017; Kirkpatrick, D.D.,

'Recordings Suggest Emirates and Egyptian Military Pushed Ousting of Morsi', *The New York Times*, 1 March 2015, available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/02/world/middleeast/recordings-suggest-emirates-and-egyptian-military-pushed-ousting-of-morsi.html>, last visited: 15

October 2017; Hertzgaard, M., 'Secret Tapes of the 2013 Egypt Coup Plot Pose a Problem for Obama', *The Daily Beast*, 10 May 2015, available at:

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/secret-tapes-of-the-2013-egypt-coup-plot-pose-a-problem-for-obama>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁷³ "An attack on free thought": Middle East Eye responds to Saudi demands', *Middle East Eye*, 23 June 2017, available at:

www.middleeasteye.net/news/attack-free-thought-middle-east-eye-responds-saudi-demands-1572259574, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁷⁴ Kila, S., 'Its End Has Come, But Where Will ISIS Go?', *The New Arab*, 4 August 2017, available at: syrianobserver.com/EN/Commentary/33104,last visited: 22 October 2017.

The discontent of the Arab states with Al-Jazeera goes back a long way. Al-Jazeera was set up in 1996 and provides, by regional standards, an open and lively debate on many matters that are otherwise taboo in the region, such as government relations with the West, domestic corruption, and political repression – except as these things apply to Qatar. Many commentators have condemned Arab states from the set of Al-Jazeera for their collaboration with the West, particularly if Arab governments – such as Iraq, in the mid-2000s – host Western troops. The presence of the massive American Al-Udeid Airbase, within walking distance from Al-Jazeera’s studios in Doha, is not a subject on which Al-Jazeera’s staff and guests dwell. This is not by edict of the Qatari government, exactly. Though censorship was formally lifted in 1995, penalties remain in place for expression deemed insulting to the state or Islam, and self-censorship therefore remains endemic.⁷⁵

In December 1998, the Arab governments passed a resolution in the Arab States Broadcasting Union banning Al-Jazeera from membership on the grounds that the channel violated the “code of honour of the Arab media” that “promotes brotherhood between Arab nations”. In August 2002, Jordan withdrew its ambassador from Qatar after comments were made disparaging the royal family, and the next month the Saudis pulled their ambassador after the Saudi government was accused of betraying the Palestinians on an Al-Jazeera program.⁷⁶ The Saudis did not send an ambassador back to Qatar until 2007.⁷⁷

The events in Egypt, from the fall of Egyptian ruler Hosni Mubarak in 2011 through to the election of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Muhammad Morsi as president, were bitterly opposed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates at every stage. Qatar, by contrast, embraced the Egyptian revolution, and the rise to power in the most populous Arab country of an allied movement was one of Doha’s signal successes in the “Arab spring”. The violent military coup against the Brotherhood, supported and partly orchestrated by the Saudis and U.A.E. in 2013, was deeply resented by Qatar, and Al-Jazeera’s coverage reflected this.⁷⁸ Al-Jazeera made consistent reference to the illegitimacy of the putschist regime in Egypt, and provides space to Egyptian oppositionists, many of whom are members or supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. This has been a primary irritant in this round of the dispute. In December 2013, the Egyptian government arrested three Al-Jazeera staff members in Cairo: Australian Peter Greste, Canadian Mohamed Fahmy, and Egyptian Baher Mohamed, sentencing them to many years in prison on under terrorism legislation for alleged connections to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁹ And Al-Jazeera as a whole was banned in Egypt in May 2017.⁸⁰

Once the crisis was underway, at the end of July, Al-Jazeera ran a report calling for the Two Holy Mosques to be separated from politics,⁸¹ an audacious demand from a philo-Islamist platform. Demonstrating the link between Al-Jazeera and Qatari foreign policy, a day later the Qatari government filed a complaint with the United Nations accusing Saudi Arabia of politicizing the

⁷⁵ Sharp, J.M., ‘Qatar: Background and US Relations’, *Congressional Research Office*, 22 March 2005.

⁷⁶ Rugh, W.A., *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics*, (Praeger, 2004) p. 233

⁷⁷ Kirkpatrick, D.D., ‘3 Gulf Countries Pull Ambassadors From Qatar Over Its Support of Islamists’, *The New York Times*, 5 March 2014, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/06/world/middleeast/3-persian-gulf-states-pull-ambassadors-from-qatar.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁷⁸ Stephens, M., ‘The Arab Cold War Redux’, *The Century Foundation*, 28 February 2017.

⁷⁹ ‘Al Jazeera staff sentenced to jail in Egypt’, *Al-Jazeera*, 29 August 2015, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/verdict-expected-egyptian-trial-al-jazeera-staff-150829041359781.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁸⁰ ‘Egypt bans Medium as media crackdown widens’, *Al-Jazeera*, 12 June 2017, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/egypt-bans-62-news-websites-latest-media-crackdown-170612164646323.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁸¹ Al-Jazeera Arabic, Twitter post, 28 July 2017, available at: <https://twitter.com/AJArabic/status/891055683876962304>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

haj.⁸² The Saudi government interpreted this as a call for internationalising the governance of part of its territory, “an aggressive act and a declaration of war against the kingdom”.⁸³ The other states of the Quartet condemned Qatar’s demand and laid blame for the problems of Qatari citizens performing the pilgrimage at Doha’s door.⁸⁴

Al-Jazeera largely came to Western attention in the wake of the 9/11 atrocity. One scholar noted, after extensive viewing of the channel in October 2001, that while Al-Jazeera “may not officially be the Osama bin Laden Channel ... he is clearly its star”.⁸⁵ The channel’s anti-Western animus could be subtle. Al-Jazeera was always lexicographically careful: Afghanistan was the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, the name given to the areas of the country the Taliban had controlled; the War on Terror was “so-called”; the Americans were waging a “war *on* Iraq”; and the terror-insurgency of the IS movement in Iraq was a “resistance”.⁸⁶ Other times the channel could be blatant, as in its coverage of the Iraq invasion itself, when Al-Jazeera and its staff openly agitated for a Saddam Husayn victory.⁸⁷ There were efforts by the US government to engage the channel, but they came to little, and US rage at the slanted coverage of the channel led on one occasion to an off-colour joke by President Bush about destroying its headquarters.⁸⁸

Al-Jazeera’s reporting on the uprisings in the Arab world that began in late 2010, amid very minimal coverage in the Arab press, gained the channel some grudging admiration even from former critics, East and West, and almost certainly played a role in the contagion of revolution spreading from country to country, pulling down one dictatorship after another.⁸⁹ From the outset, Al-Jazeera’s coverage was partial, clearly favouring the opposition over the governments, bringing attention to social media and other means of mass-mobilisation, while building a narrative in which the station was the voice of the voiceless.⁹⁰ The repressiveness and illegitimacy of these regimes meant that Al-Jazeera’s favourability to the oppositionists was not perceived by many as much of a criticism.

The problem arose as the brief initial revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, consisting mostly of street protests with the violence only originating with the regimes, gave way to protracted armed insurrections in Libya and Syria. At that point, Al-Jazeera’s coverage began favouring strands within these insurgencies, specifically the Islamists.⁹¹ In Syria, this meant Ahrar al-Sham and in Libya it meant figures like Abdelhakim Belhaj (see Section 2). Groups like al-Qaeda also saw the advantage they could take of this situation. Usama bin Ladin in the diary found with him at Abbottabad wrote, “Al Jazeera, thank God, carries the banner of revolutions”.⁹²

⁸² ‘A Qatari Complaint to the United Nations Accuses Saudi Arabia of politicizing the haj’, *CNN*, 29 July 2017, available at: <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/2017/07/29/qatar-saudi-un-pilgrimage>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

⁸³ ‘Saudi FM: Qatar call to internationalize holy sites an “act of war”’, *Al-Arabiya*, 30 July 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/07/30/Saudi-Arabia-rejects-Qatar-s-attempts-to-politicize-pilgrimage-.html>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

⁸⁴ Toumi, H., ‘Qatar call to internationalise Haj operations tantamount to a “declaration of war”’, *Gulf News*, 30 July 2017, available at: gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-crisis/qatar-call-to-internationalise-haj-operations-tantamount-to-a-declaration-of-war-1.2066623, last visited: 22 October 2017.

⁸⁵ Ajami, F., ‘What the Muslim World Is Watching’, *The New York Times*, 18 November 2001, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/18/magazine/what-the-muslim-world-is-watching.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁸⁶ Pearl, J., ‘Another Perspective, or Jihad TV?’, *The New York Times*, 17 January 2007, available at: www.nytimes.com/2007/01/17/opinion/17pearl.html, last visited: 15 October 2015.

⁸⁷ Noujaim, J. [director]. *Control Room* (2004). Magnolia Pictures

⁸⁸ ‘Bush al-Jazeera “plot” dismissed’, *BBC*, 22 November 2005, available at: news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4459296.stm, last visited: 13 October 2017.

⁸⁹ Miles, H., ‘The Al Jazeera Effect’, *Foreign Policy*, 9 February 2011, available at: foreignpolicy.com/2011/02/09/the-al-jazeera-effect-2/, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁹⁰ Stephens, M., ‘The Arab Cold War Redux’, *The Century Foundation*, 28 February 2017.

⁹¹ Carlstrom, G., ‘What’s the Problem With Al Jazeera?’, *The Atlantic*, 24 June 2017, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/al-jazeera-qatar-saudi-arabia-muslim-brotherhood/531471/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁹² Hassan, H., ‘Bin Laden journal reveals he was shaped by the Muslim Brotherhood’, *The National*, 2 November 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-americas/bin-laden-journal-reveals-he-was-shaped-by-the-muslim-brotherhood-1.672646>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

There have been issues surrounding editorial independence even at Al-Jazeera English,⁹³ though in general the channel has gotten increasingly professional over time. Al-Jazeera Arabic remains deeply troubling in terms of both its employees and its guests,⁹⁴ who promote generalised conspiracy theories, with a strong tendency toward anti-Americanism and antisemitism, alongside a Sunni victimology, chauvinism, and sectarianism that has blended very easily into advocacy for Islamism.⁹⁵

The most high-profile case is Faysal al-Qassem, the host of *Al-Itija al-Muakis* (The Opposite Direction), himself a Druze, who has engaged in the most lurid sectarian incitement. In November 2014, Hussein Muhammad Hussein, an Islamic scholar, pledged allegiance to IS live on al-Qassem's program.⁹⁶ In May 2015, al-Qassem organised an opinion poll asking whether Alawis, the sect from which Syrian tyrant Bashar al-Asad hails, had "brought genocide upon themselves", and then turned to his guests and suggested that this was a "weak question": The question should rather, al-Qassem said, about "wip[ing] out these Alawites in their entirety, including their children".⁹⁷ Al-Qassem was accused of pro-IS broadcasting during the mid-2016 offensive by the Iraqi government and Iranian-run militias to get IS out of Falluja.⁹⁸ This was an emotional moment of charged sectarian passions in the region at large, partly because Iran's proxy militias really did behave appallingly toward Sunni civilians in Falluja. Rather than seek to calm the situation, al-Qassem chose to inflame it. This is a habit of Al-Jazeera's: playing back the most ruinous passions among its Arab, particularly Sunni, audience, instead of trying to challenge their thinking. In late 2016, al-Qassem returned to an earlier theme by encouraging attacks on Alawi areas and the ethnic cleansing of pockets of minorities, particularly Shi'is, within the zones held by the largely-Sunni insurgency in Syria.⁹⁹ Al-Qassem remains an employee at Al-Jazeera and continues to host one of its most influential shows.

The leader of al-Nusra, Ahmad al-Shara (Abu Muhammad al-Jolani), gave his first public interview to Ahmed Mansour in 2015, which was broadcast by Al-Jazeera.¹⁰⁰ Al-Shara was not seriously challenged, though he did nonetheless give some interesting details about his organisation. Al-Shara, for instance, spoke of al-Nusra's ideological kinship with Sayyid Qutb, the most important Muslim Brotherhood ideologue after its founder, Hassan al-Banna. Qutb, who was executed in Egypt in 1966, left behind notions – particularly the idea that the Islamic world has fallen into a state of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic ignorance) that Islamists must rectify by implementing religious rule "so that [Islam] seeps into the depths of the human soul",¹⁰¹ and the concept of *hakimiyya* (god's sovereignty) – that continue to shape the discourse of jihadi-

⁹³ 'Al Jazeera employees complain of editorial bias with Egypt coverage', *Doha News*, 5 September 2013, available at: <https://dohanews.co/al-jazeera-employees-complain-of-editorial-bias-with-2/>, last visited: 7 November 2017.

⁹⁴ Carlstrom, G., 'What's the Problem With Al Jazeera?', *The Atlantic*, 24 June 2017.

⁹⁵ Kessler, O, 'The Two Faces of Al Jazeera', *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2012, available at: www.meforum.org/3147/al-jazeera, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁹⁶ 'Islamic Scholar Pledges Allegiance To Isis Emir Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi Live On Al-Jazeera TV', *MEMRI*, 2 November 2014, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/islamic-scholar-pledges-allegiance-isis-emir-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-live-al-jazeera-tv>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁹⁷ 'Aljazeera Arabic: Should We Kill All Alawites?', *You Tube*, 9 May 2015, available at: <https://youtu.be/ULtNYSUqYHw>, last visited: 17 October 2017.

⁹⁸ 'Faisal al-Qassem depicted as Daesh member on Twitter', *Al-Bawaba*, 31 May 2016, available at: <https://www.albawaba.com/loop/faisal-al-qassem-depicted-daesh-member-twitter-846706>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

⁹⁹ 'Al-Jazeera TV Host Faisal Al-Qassem Incites to Ethnic Cleansing of Shiites in Sunni Regions in Syria', *You Tube*, 21 September 2016, available at: <https://youtu.be/qIVYwhPFGuc>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁰⁰ 'Nusra leader: Our mission is to defeat Syrian regime', *Al-Jazeera*, 28 May 2015, available at: www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/nusra-front-golani-assad-syria-hezbollah-isis-1.50528044857528.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁰¹ Qutb, S., *Milestones*, (Kazi Publications, 1964; reprinted: Islamic Book Services, 2002), p. 32.

salafism.¹⁰² Al-Shara said Qutb's works were taught in al-Nusra's schools and other indoctrination centres to prepare new members.¹⁰³

In the interview, Mansour appeared eager to present a positive image of al-Nusra,¹⁰⁴ and, long before al-Nusra claimed to have disaffiliated from al-Qaeda, Al-Jazeera's staff were instructed to cease referring to al-Nusra as "al-Qaeda" or even "al-Qaeda affiliated".¹⁰⁵ The US government has previously assessed that certain members of Al-Jazeera are members of al-Qaeda or other Islamist groups.¹⁰⁶ The very first interview with al-Shara, in late 2013, was conducted by Tayseer Allouni, who has been convicted and imprisoned in Spain for facilitating financial support to al-Qaeda.¹⁰⁷ In the mid-2000s, the years of the American regency in Iraq, there is no doubt that Al-Jazeera gave very sympathetic coverage to the IS movement. Mansour, who is regarded as being personally sympathetic more to the Muslim Brotherhood version of Islamism, has a long history of abetting jihadists with his coverage on al Al-Jazeera, most famously in Falluja in 2004,¹⁰⁸ when IS made its first attempt at governance.¹⁰⁹ To the present, Mansour continues to make extremist statements, such as that the Egyptian despot, Abdelfattah al-Sisi, is a Zionist who wars against Islam and Muslims.¹¹⁰ An arrest warrant has been issued by the Egyptian government for Mansour, which has placed Western states in a very difficult situation.¹¹¹

In sum, Al-Jazeera can be regarded as both among the freest media spaces in the Arab world, able to ventilate matters that are taboo on nearly all other media, and a station that gives succor to Islamists and other authoritarians, whether in government or the non-state realm. This double game of tolerance and terror-promotion has left the West somewhat befuddled in trying to deal with Al-Jazeera, often falling back a posture that looks solely through the lens of press freedom.¹¹² This is a mistake because Al-Jazeera, particularly the Arabic channel, cannot be thought of simply as a media outlet: it is firmly oriented to comply with Qatari state interests.¹¹³ As part of Qatar's toolkit for the promotion of its soft power and its foreign policy, it is therefore within others states' rights to regard the Qatari government as accountable for Al-Jazeera's output.

¹⁰² Maher, S., *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, (Hurst, 2016).

¹⁰³ Fareed, A., 'Nusra Front leader admits ideological links to Muslim Brotherhood in Al Jazeera interview', *Arab News*, 5 July 2017, available at: www.arabnews.com/node/1124681/middle-east, last visited: 5 November 2017.

¹⁰⁴ Lister, C., *The Syrian Jihad: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency*, (C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2015), pp. 353.

¹⁰⁵ 'Al Jazeera instructs staff to refrain from calling al-Nusra Front "al-Qaeda"', *Middle East Eye*, 22 September 2015, available at:

www.middlecasteye.net/news/al-jazeera-instructs-staff-refrain-calling-al-nusra-front-al-qaeda-1671552331, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Currier, C. Greenwald, G., and Fishman, A., US Government Designated Prominent Al Jazeera Journalist As "Member Of Al Qaeda"', *The Intercept*, 8 May 2015, available at: <https://theintercept.com/2015/05/08/u-s-government-designated-prominent-al-jazeera-journalist-al-qaeda-member-put-watch-list/>, last visited: 20 October 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Joscelyn, T., 'Head of Al Nusrah Front interviewed by journalist convicted in Spain on controversial terror charges', *The Long War Journal*, 27 December 2013, available at: https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/12/head_of_al_nusrah_fr.php, last visited: 28 October 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Lynch, M., 'Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 15 September 2009, available at:

www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576101003752622?src=recsys&journalCode=uter20, last visited: 20 October 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Orton, K., 'The Leader of the Islamic State in the 2004 Fallujah Battles: Umar Hadid', *The Syrian Intifada*, 30 January 2017, available at:

<https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2017/01/30/the-leader-of-the-islamic-state-in-the-2004-fallujah-battles-umar-hadid/>, last visited: 20 October 2017.

¹¹⁰ Ahmed Mansour, Twitter post, 22 September 2017, available at: <https://twitter.com/amansouraja/status/911270551242530816>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹¹¹ Alsaafin, L., 'Mansour: Egypt targeted Al Jazeera, Qatar with arrest bid', *Middle East Eye*, 25 June 2015, available at: www.middlecasteye.net/news/mansour-egypt-targeted-al-jazeera-qatar-arrest-bid-1392170345, last visited: 28 October 2017.

¹¹² Fernandez, A.M., 'Defending And Attacking A Mythological Version Of Al-Jazeera Television', *MEMRI*, 30 June 2017, available at: <https://www.memri.org/reports/defending-and-attacking-mythological-version-al-jazeera-television>, last visited: 16 October 2017.

¹¹³ Samuel-Azran, T., Assaf, I., and Salem, A., 'Is there a Qatari-Al-Jazeera nexus? Coverage of the 2022 FIFA World Cup controversy by Al-Jazeera versus Sky News, CNN and ITV', *Global Media and Communications*, 4 November 2016, available at: journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1742766516676208, last visited: 28 October 2017.

3. Sponsorship of Terrorism

3.1 *Financiers of al-Qaeda's Rise in Syria*

“There are eight to twelve key figures in Qatar raising millions of pounds for the jihadis”, a local Western diplomat told *The Daily Telegraph* in 2014. “There’s not even much attempt to keep quiet about it”.¹¹⁴ Almost all of these donors were supportive of Jabhat al-Nusra/HTS, though during the period of chaos as al-Nusra split from its parent organisation, IS, in 2013-14 it is possible resources went astray.

At the centre of the Qatar-based web of financiers of al-Qaeda in Syria is Abdurrahman al-Nuaymi,¹¹⁵ an individual sanctioned for terror financing by the U.S. Treasury in December 2013.¹¹⁶ In 2003 and 2004, al-Nuaymi acted as a supporter of the Iraqi insurgency in general, and specifically al-Nuaymi had “facilitated significant financial support to [IS’s predecessor] al-Qaeda in Iraq, and served as an interlocutor between al-Qaeda in Iraq leaders and Qatar-based donors”, Treasury noted. In 2012, al-Nuaymi sent funds to Mukhtar Robow and Shaykh Hassan Aweys Ali, both then-sanctioned operatives of al-Qaeda’s Somali branch, al-Shabab, and in the same year sent money to Abdulwahhab al-Humayqani, who runs a charity in Yemen that finances AQAP. In 2013, al-Nuaymi “ordered the transfer of nearly \$600,000 to al-Qaeda” via “al-Qaeda’s representative in Syria”, Muhammad al-Bahaya (Abu-Khalid al-Suri), and “intended to transfer nearly \$50,000 more”. Al-Bahaya was the then-deputy of Ahrar al-Sham, who had been appointed as al-Qaeda’s representative in the Levant by al-Qaeda’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, to mediate the dispute between al-Nusra and IS.¹¹⁷

Al-Nuaymi’s ties with the Qatari government are numerous and important. Al-Nuaymi had been a history professor at Qatar University until 2009,¹¹⁸ despite an arrest for extremism in the 1990s. Al-Nuaymi is also a former president of the Qatar Football Association and was a founding member of the Shaykh Eid bin Mohammad al-Thani Charitable Foundation, one of the biggest charities in the Middle East, created in 1995 and named for a member of the Qatari ruling House.¹¹⁹ Also on the board of the Eid Charity Foundation is Hashim al-Awadhi, a Qatari businessman who runs the Retaj Hotels and Hospitality real estate company. The Eid Charity has been accused of supporting terrorism in the past, and German intelligence believes Eid supports Islamist extremism in Germany.¹²⁰ Al-Awadhi’s son, Muhammad bin Hashim al-Awadhi, was killed fighting in Syria. The Quartet say Muhammad al-Awadhi was killed in the ranks of IS,¹²¹ though this is contested. Al-Nuaymi was also a founder of the Switzerland-based al-Karama, an

¹¹⁴ Gilligan, A., “The “Club Med for terrorists””, *The Telegraph*, 27 September 2014, available at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Med-for-terrorists.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹¹⁵ Blair, D. and Spencer, R., ‘Former head of human rights charity accused of leading double life as terrorist fundraiser’, *The Telegraph*, 20 September 2014, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11110928/Former-head-of-human-rights-charity-accused-of-leading-double-life-as-terrorist-fundraiser.html, last visited: 8 November 2017

¹¹⁶ ‘Treasury Designates Al-Qa’ida Supporters in Qatar and Yemen’, *US Department of Treasury*, 18 December 2013, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2249.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹¹⁷ Orton, K., ‘Al-Qaeda Rules on the Dispute Between ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra’, *The Syrian Intifada*, 3 April 2014, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2014/04/03/al-qaeda-rules-on-the-dispute-between-isis-and-jabhat-al-nusra/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹¹⁸ ‘Al Nuaimi was promoting Brotherhood ideals’, *Gulf News*, 19 December 2013, available at: <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/al-nuaimi-was-promoting-brotherhood-ideals-1.1268824>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹¹⁹ Warrick, J. and Root, T., ‘Islamic charity officials gave millions to al-Qaeda, US says’, *The Washington Post*, 22 December 2013, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-charity-officials-gave-millions-to-al-qaeda-us-says/2013/12/22/c0c53ad6-69b8-11e3-a0b9-249bbb34602c_story.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹²⁰ ‘Gulf state groups are “supporting Salafists in Germany”: report’, *The Local*, 13 December 2016, available at: <https://www.thelocal.de/20161213/gulf-state-groups-are-supporting-salafists-in-germany-report>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

¹²¹ ‘Qatar-linked people, groups on terror list’, *Gulf News*, 9 June 2017, available at: <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-linked-people-groups-on-terror-list-1.2040686>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

organisation that – under the cover of human rights and civil advocacy – agitates for the release of Islamist prisoners worldwide.¹²² Al-Karama recently had its consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) withdrawn because of the allegations about its connections to terrorism.¹²³

After the Saudi-led bloc moved against Qatar in mid-2017, al-Nuaymi made his support for Qatar clear in two Twitter posts on 4 June. “This *fitna* [sedition] must be opposed by the sensible, [who should] ignore the media propaganda. I ask God to protect our country and the believers”,¹²⁴ al-Nuaymi wrote, adding: “The latest developments in our region have proven that a state of abomination [Saudi Arabia] is the one inciting the West to sanction states [Qatar] and individuals”.¹²⁵ Among other things, this indicates that despite being designated as a terrorist by the UN and US, al-Nuaymi remains free in Qatar.

It is important to note that while there are state-related and private individuals in Qatar acting to support jihadists at their own initiative, al-Qaeda has people who are effectively agents operating in Qatar to transfer resources from al-Qaeda’s bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan, through the group’s “core pipeline” in Iran, which operates under a “secret deal” with the Iranian government,¹²⁶ to al-Qaeda’s branches in the Middle East and North Africa – al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Shabab, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and previously what is now IS when it was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

Al-Nuaymi was one such agent. The Treasury designation notes that al-Nuaymi “oversaw the transfer of over \$2 million per month to al-Qaeda in Iraq for a period of time”. This period of time was just after Usama bin Ladin had been killed, and that money came from Ezedin Khalil (Yasin al-Suri),¹²⁷ the head of al-Qaeda’s network in Iran that operated with the permission of, and under the close watch of, General Qassem Sulaymani, the commander of the expeditionary Quds Force within Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), who answers only to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamene’i.¹²⁸ Khalil worked closely with at least three other important funders – another one in Qatar, one in Kuwait, and one in Iraq.¹²⁹ The other Qatar-based funder is Salim al-Kuwari, whose contributions funded terrorist operations abroad and secured the release of al-Qaeda prisoners. Al-Kuwari also provided logistical support for jihadi fighters transiting Qatar. Whether men or materiel, al-Kuwari received these “primarily through al-Qaeda facilitators in Iran”. Working alongside al-Kuwari in Qatar is Abdallah al-Khawar, who also facilitated the movement of extremists, and helped “deliver money, messages, and other material support to al-Qaeda elements in Iran”.¹³⁰

¹²² Lake, E., ‘Terrorists for Human Rights’, *The Daily Beast*, 20 December 2013, available at: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/terrorists-for-human-rights>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹²³ ‘Alkarama Denied ECOSOC Consultative Status Following A Draft Resolution By The UAE’, *Al-Karama*, 28 July 2017, available at: <https://www.alkarama.org/en/articles/alkarama-denied-ecosoc-consultative-status-following-draft-resolution-uae>, last visited: 20 October 2017.

¹²⁴ Al-Nuaymi, A., Twitter post, 4 June 2017, available at: <https://twitter.com/binomeir/status/871577190986633220>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹²⁵ Al-Nuaymi, A., Twitter post, 4 June 2017, available at: <https://twitter.com/binomeir/status/871356009322692608>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹²⁶ ‘Treasury Targets Key Al-Qaeda Funding and Support Network Using Iran as a Critical Transit Point’, *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 28 July 2011, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1261.aspx>, last visited: 8 November 2017. Further details about al-Qaeda’s deal with Iran were released a year later: ‘Treasury Further Exposes Iran-Based Al-Qaeda Network’, *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 18 October 2012, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1741.aspx>, last visited: 8 November 2017. And again in 2014: ‘Treasury Targets Networks Linked To Iran’, *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 6 February 2014, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2287.aspx>, last visited: 8 November 2017. The last State Department report on global terrorism, in mid-2017, reaffirmed that the Iranian government was knowingly hosting al-Qaeda’s “core facilitation pipeline” on its territory: *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016: Chapter 3: State Sponsors of Terrorism*, U.S. Department of State, 19 July 2017, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272235.htm>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹²⁷ Levy, A. & Scott-Clark, C., *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p. 462.

¹²⁸ Levy, A. & Scott-Clark, C., *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p. 104.

¹²⁹ Levy, A. & Scott-Clark, C., *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), p. 458.

¹³⁰ ‘Treasury Targets Key Al-Qaeda Funding and Support Network Using Iran as a Critical Transit Point’, *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 28 July 2011, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1261.aspx>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

Al-Nusra was crippled in 2013 by the schism with its parent organisation, IS, which had to that point contributed half of al-Nusra's running costs.¹³¹ Al-Qaeda stepped in to cover the gap. Partly this was done through Muhammad al-Bahaya, a commander in a separate Syrian Islamist group, Ahrar al-Sham (see below), and partly this was done by the movement of funds through Ahmad Salama Mabruk (Abu Faraj al-Masri), one of al-Zawahiri's most important deputies.¹³² The money to al-Nusra via Mabruk was transferred by al-Qaeda "central" (AQC) in Pakistan through the Iran network into Qatar and then Syria.¹³³

In April 2014, the US Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, David Cohen, gave a speech in which he lamented those states that provide "financial support for terrorist organisations", and gave Qatar as the "most notabl[e]" example. While Qatar had in some "respects ... been a constructive partner in countering terrorism", it was openly funding HAMAS and all indications were that it was "supporting extremist groups operating in Syria". Cohen went on to note that where Qatar was not funding extremists as state policy, it had become a "permissive terrorist financing environment", and was converging with similar networks in Kuwait.¹³⁴

The US State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism for 2013, released the same month as Cohen's speech, noted that Qatar had robust legislation on its books, the Combatting Terrorism Law (2004) and the Combatting Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Law (2010), but while there had been "aggressive" enforcement internally, maintaining Qatar's historically low levels of domestic terrorism, the enforcement of these anti-terror financing laws was "lacking" when it came to the international sphere. The Qatari government's "lack of outreach ... [and] referrals" to the Middle East North Africa Financial Action Task Force to ensure that blacklisted activities were not taking place in its jurisdiction were "significant gaps", the State Department report noted.¹³⁵

Unlike Kuwait, where there are at least half-a-dozen sanctioned jihadi fundraisers,¹³⁶ there are far fewer designations to work from in the case of Qatar, but a significant amount of nefarious activity is undisguised, and US and international designations do not seem to result in arrests further, blurring the distinction between state-approved and non-state-approved activity.

A salient case is Ahrar al-Sham, a group the government of Qatar has - in collaboration with Turkey - long openly supported,¹³⁷ but which also receives funds from many donors based in, and working through, Qatar. Ankara provided Ahrar with military support: weapons, logistics, intelligence, and so on. And Doha provided Ahrar with copious funds and media exposure that long made Ahrar seem more central to the Syrian insurgency than it truly was.¹³⁸ Qatar's influence

¹³¹ Orton, K., 'The Announcement of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria', *The Syrian Intifada*, 2 April 2014, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/the-announcement-of-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-syria/>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹³² Orton, K., 'The Demise of Ahmad Mabruk: Al-Qaeda in Syria and American Policy', *The Syrian Intifada*, 4 October 2016, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2016/10/04/al-qaeda-in-syria-and-american-policy/>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹³³ Levy, A. & Scott-Clark, C., *The Exile: The Flight of Osama bin Laden*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 477-78.

¹³⁴ Cohen, D., 'Remarks of Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen before the Center for a New American Security on "Confronting New Threats in Terrorist Financing"', *US Department of Treasury*, 4 March 2014, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2308.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹³⁵ 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2013', *US Department of State*, April 2014, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organisation/225886.pdf>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹³⁶ Orton, K., 'Analysis: Western Allies and Terrorism Financing', *The Henry Jackson Society*, 18 March 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2017/03/18/analysis-western-allies-and-terrorism-financing/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹³⁷ Zelin, A.Y. and Lister, C., 'The crowning of the Syrian Islamic Front', *Foreign Policy*, 24 June 2013, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/24/the-crowning-of-the-syrian-islamic-front/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹³⁸ Hassan, H., 'Ahrar Al Sham and the myths that surround it', *The National*, 11 December 2016, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/ahrar-al-sham-and-the-myths-that-surround-it-1.175361#full>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

over Ahrar has waned as Turkey has taken a direct hand in northern Syria, but its past actions warrant scrutiny because of the nature of Ahrar.

Ahrar eschewed the revolutionary iconography and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) branding of the mainstream Syrian armed opposition, but by 2015 Ahrar was attempting to present itself as part of Syria's moderate mainstream rebellion – a counterweight to both the Shi'a jihadists that prop up the Asad regime and extremists like IS. But the connections between Ahrar and al-Qaeda's network – from its very foundations, with al-Bahaya and the pro-al-Qaeda seed financiers – are visible.¹³⁹ Days after Ahrar wrote op-eds in international newspapers in the summer of 2015, presenting itself to Western audiences as the legitimate Sunni Arab force that could be worked with to counter both forms of extremism in Syria,¹⁴⁰ Ahrar marred the effect by releasing a statement of condolences for Mullah Muhammad Umar, citing the Taliban movement he had founded as a model of how to build an Islamist polity.¹⁴¹ Before the end of the year, Ahrar's leadership would again cite the Taliban, in public, as a model for governance.¹⁴²

Ahrar has been “the greatest enabler of Jabhat al-Nusra's sustained rise in influence in northern Syria”.¹⁴³ Whatever the exact nature of Ahrar's relationship with al-Qaeda's network, Ahrar's main effect has been to give al-Qaeda and its descendants a portal through which to infiltrate and co-opt the insurrection in northern Syria, driving the opposition cause into a political dead-end.¹⁴⁴

That there has been a flow of resources between Ahrar and al-Nusra, allowing al-Nusra to access state funds while avoiding direct interactions with governments it considers “infidel” and giving Ahrar access to non-state funds that continue to operate even when governments have scaled back their support to the insurgency, cannot be doubted. Ahrar provided potentially existential support to al-Nusra,¹⁴⁵ at al-Bahaya's behest, when al-Nusra was cut off from IS in 2013.¹⁴⁶ Al-Nusra fighters have said the group has relied on weapons from Ahrar for some battles.¹⁴⁷ The extent of this deniable channel between Doha and al-Nusra/HTS via Ahrar is difficult to gauge, either in extent or importance.¹⁴⁸ A former official in al-Nusra said that in addition to indirect finance and logistics, the “coaching” in matters of governance and image-management that Qatar gave to allies Ahrar, which was then passed on to al-Nusra, was “priceless” in preparing the organisation to entrench itself and govern areas of Syria.¹⁴⁹ It is worth noting, however, that the Jaysh al-Fatah insurgent coalition formed to coordinate the takeover of Idlib City in March 2015 received Qatari – and

¹³⁹ Orton, K., ‘Al-Qaeda Rebrands, Marches on in Syria’, *The Syrian Intifada*, 2 August 2016, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2016/08/02/al-qaeda-marches-on-in-syria/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Nahhas, L., ‘The deadly consequences of mislabeling Syria's revolutionaries’, *The Washington Post*, 10 July 2015, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-deadly-consequences-of-mislabeling-syrias-revolutionaries/2015/07/10/6dec139e-266e-11e5-aae2-6c4f59b050aa_story.html, last visited: 15 October 2017; Al-Nahhas, L., ‘I'm a Syrian and I fight Isil every day. It will take more than bombs from the West to defeat this menace’, *The Telegraph*, 21 July 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11752714/Im-a-Syrian-and-I-fight-Isil-every-day-We-need-more-than-bombs-from-the-West-to-win-this-battle.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴¹ Zelin, A.Y., ‘Statement from Ahrar al-Sham: “Condolences on the Death of Mullah Omar”’, *Lawfare*, 1 August 2015, available at: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/statement-ahrar-al-sham-condolences-death-mullah-omar>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴² Hassan, H., ‘Jihadist Legacy Still Shapes Ahrar al-Sham’, *The Tahrir Institute for the Middle East Policy* (TIMEP), 3 June 2016, available at: <https://timep.org/commentary/jihadist-legacy-still-shapes-ahrar-al-sham/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴³ Lister, C., ‘Profile Jabhat al-Nusra’, *Brookings Institution*, July 2016, p. 26, available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/iwr_20160728_profiling_nusra.pdf, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Heller, S., ‘Syria's Former al-Qaeda Affiliate Is Leading Rebels on a Suicide Mission’, *The Century Foundation* (TCF), 1 March 2017, available at: <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/syrias-former-al-qaeda-affiliate-leading-rebels-suicide-mission/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁵ Author interview US intelligence official, June 2016

¹⁴⁶ Heller, S., ‘Muhammad al-Amin on Ahrar al-Sham's Evolving Relationship with Jabhat al-Nusra and Global Jihadism’, *Jihadology*, 9 December 2014, available at: <http://jihadology.net/2014/12/09/guest-post-muhammad-al-amin-on-ahrar-al-shams-evolving-relationship-with-jabhat-al-nusra-and-global-jihadism/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Karouny, M., ‘Resilient insurgent group Ahrar al-Sham to play bigger role in Syria’, *Reuters*, 22 September 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-syria-crisis-ahrar-insight/resilient-insurgent-group-ahrar-al-sham-to-play-bigger-role-in-syria-idUKKCNORM0EZ20150922>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Weiss, M., ‘Renewed talks’, *NOW Lebanon*, 14 April 2014, available at: <https://now.nmedia.me/lb/en/commentary/543215-renewed-talks>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Interview, November 2017

Turkish and (reluctantly) Saudi – support, despite openly containing al-Nusra.¹⁵⁰ And the former prime minister of Qatar has confessed the possibility that his government had a “relationship” with al-Nusra, but insisted that any links were severed once al-Nusra’s nature was understood.¹⁵¹

The formation of HTS drew many of Ahrar’s most al-Qaeda-friendly operatives away from the organisation, and one potential reading of the situation was that this was clarifying within the organisation as between the “green” (revolutionary) trend and the “black” (jihadist).¹⁵² In this telling, Ahrar would now fall on the “green” side of the ledger, having tried to straddle this divide. But, first, this would not undo what had happened – Ahrar functioning as a door-opener for the jihadi conquest of Idlib – and, secondly, to the extent there was ideological confusion within Ahrar that had paralysed it from acting against al-Nusra/HTS aggression it was because the organisation had been unable to shed its self-definition within the jihadi-salafist world.¹⁵³ The concept of *ikhwat al-manhaj* (brothers on the right path), among other things, had stayed Ahrar’s hand when al-Nusra moved to neutralise other factions.¹⁵⁴ Only once it was too late did Ahrar realize that its turn, too, would come, as it did in July 2017.¹⁵⁵

Qatar evidently had contact directly with al-Nusra. The hostage negotiations are the clearest evidence of this, but al-Nusra’s rebranding programme was being encouraged by Qatar with promises of aid in exchange for breaking away from al-Qaeda,¹⁵⁶ something that has it seems gone into effect with the formation of HTS, even if the initial announcement of dissociation from al-Qaeda was insincere.¹⁵⁷ Al-Nusra unencumbered with al-Qaeda ties would also have been a lever for Qatari influence in Syria. Members of al-Nusra have said senior al-Nusra officials met directly, in Turkey and in Doha, with Qatari intelligence chiefs.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, there is the strange case of Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Attiyah – a former member of Qatar’s state Olympics Committee and a cousin of a former Qatari prime minister who oversees the anti-terror finance system – who is accused of, among other things, having delivered \$20,000 in person to Abdulmalik Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam (Umar al-Qatari) in Lebanon.¹⁵⁹

Al-Salam, a Jordanian citizen, facilitated the transfer of men and money to al-Nusra, according to the US sanctions.¹⁶⁰ In 2011, al-Salam delivered thousands of dollars to Muhsin al-Fadhli, one of al-Qaeda’s senior commanders who was then based in Iran and later became known as part of the “Khorasan Group”. Later, al-Salam collaborated with Qatari national Ibrahim Isa Haji Muhammad al-Bakr, who is also a specially designated global terrorist (SDGT) by the US State Department for his role as a jihadi fundraiser for al-Qaeda and the Taliban all the way back to the early 2000s, and for plotting terrorist strikes against American bases and citizens in Qatar in 2006.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Turkey unlikely to drop Syria rebels in latest realignment’, *The Associated Press*, 9 August 2016, available at:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/08/09/turkey-unlikely-to-drop-syria-rebels-in-latest-realignment.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁵¹ ‘Qatar “maybe” supported al-Qaeda in Syria, says former PM’, *Middle East Eye*, 31 October 2017, available at: www.middleeasteye.net/news/qatar-maybe-supported-al-qaeda-syria-says-former-pm-1280907406, last visited: 6 November 2017.

¹⁵² Thanks to Ryan O’Farrell for the green-vs.-black phraseology; a very useful shorthand.

¹⁵³ Haid, H., ‘Why Ahrar al-Sham couldn’t stand up to HTS’s attack in Idlib’, *Chatham House*, 15 August 2017, available at:

<https://syria.chathamhouse.org/research/why-ahrar-al-sham-couldnt-stand-up-to-hts-attack-in-idlib>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Hassan, H. and Weiss, M., *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, (Regan Arts, 2015), p. 224.

¹⁵⁵ Lund, A., ‘Black flags over Idlib: The jihadi power grab in northwestern Syria’, *IRIN*, 9 August 2017, available at:

<https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2017/08/09/black-flags-over-idlib-jihadi-power-grab-northwestern-syria>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁵⁶ Karouny, M., ‘Insight - Syria’s Nusra Front may leave Qaeda to form new entity’, *Reuters*, 4 March 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-nusra-insight/insight-syrias-nusra-front-may-leave-qaeda-to-form-new-entity-idUKKBN0M00G620150304>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁵⁷ Orton, K., ‘Whither Al-Qaeda in Syria?’, *Henry Jackson Society*, 15 August 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2017/08/15/whither-al-qaeda-in-syria/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews, November 2017

¹⁵⁹ Gilligan, A., ‘Minister’s family ties to terror’, *The Telegraph*, 1 November 2014, available at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11203140/Ministers-family-ties-to-terror.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Treasury Designates Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators’, *US Department of Treasury*, 24 September 2014, available at:

<https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2651.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

Al-Bakr was close to Mustafa Hajji Muhammad Khan (Hassan Ghul), the first successful conduit between AQC and the IS movement, then known as AQL. Khan was operating at the instruction of Nashwan Abdulbaqi (Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi), who would later try to take up the role of AQC's regional manager in Iraq himself. Both Khan and Abdulbaqi were arrested.¹⁶¹ When Khan was arrested in 2004 he was in possession of the letter by IS's founder, Ahmad al-Khalayleh (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi), laying out his plan to defeat the Americans' project in Iraq by igniting a sectarian war.¹⁶² Information gleaned from Khan led the US to a Kuwaiti courier and thence to Usama bin Ladin in Abbottabad.¹⁶³

Khan had been provided a fake passport to travel to Qatar by Abdullatif al-Kawari, a Qatari-based al-Qaeda financier and security official. Al-Kawari was sanctioned by the US Treasury in 2015 at the same time as al-Bakr and Sa'd al-Ka'bi, a Qatari al-Nusra financier whom the group had requested act as intermediary on hostage trades. Al-Ka'bi "was seen as the organiser of donations for al-Nusra in Qatar, but these were not the most important thing", said one al-Nusra-linked jihadist. "The sums of money involved to free hostages could never have been raised from individual donors in Qatar. That money came from the Qatari government, but Sa'd used his charity campaigns as a front to conceal government funding".¹⁶⁴

Al-Kawari and al-Bakr used to travel with Khan to and around Qatar. In early 2012, al-Kawari "facilitated the international travel of a courier who was carrying tens of thousands of dollars earmarked for al-Qaeda", Treasury notes, and later that year he "worked with al-Qaeda facilitators to coordinate the delivery of funding from Qatari financiers intended to support al-Qaeda and to deliver receipts confirming that al-Qaida received foreign donor funding from Qatar-based extremists".¹⁶⁵

Al-Salam and al-Bakr combined with associates in Lebanon, where al-Salam would soon be imprisoned, "to procure and transport weapons and other equipment to Syria with the assistance of a Syria-based al-Qaeda associate".¹⁶⁶ In 2012, al-Salam, as part of his role in procuring funds for al-Qaeda's senior leaders in Waziristan, was in receipt of funds from Khalifa Muhammad Turki al-Subaiy, a Qatari citizen. Al-Subaiy is on the United Nations sanctions list and was sanctioned by the United States for providing financial support to AQC in Pakistan, including 9/11 planner Khalid Shaykh Muhammad before his arrest in 2003.¹⁶⁷ Having been temporarily arrested, al-Subaiy was released on the understanding a watch was being kept on him; his activities in 2012 suggest Qatar failed at this. Al-Subaiy remains free in Qatar, and, despite allegedly being under a travel ban, his passport was renewed in 2017.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Fishman, B., *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹⁶² Orton, K., "The Islamic State Planned For Sectarian War in Iraq From the Beginning", *The Syrian Intifada*, 13 October 2017, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2017/10/13/the-islamic-state-planned-for-sectarian-war-in-iraq-from-the-beginning/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶³ "The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program", *US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, 13 December 2012, p. 284, available at: https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/7/c/7c85429a-ec38-4bb5-968f-289799bf6d0e/D87288C3A6D9FF736F9459ABCF83210.sscistudy1.pdf, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, November 2017

¹⁶⁵ "Treasury Designates Financial Supporters of Al-Qaida and Al-Nusra Front", *US Department of Treasury*, 5 August 2015, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0143.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶⁶ "Treasury Designates Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators", *US Department of Treasury*, 24 September 2014.

¹⁶⁷ "Treasury Designates Gulf-Based al Qaida Financiers", *US Department of Treasury*, 5 June 2008, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1011.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁶⁸ US Treasury sanctions gave al-Subaiy's Qatari ID number as 26563400140. This can be checked on the Qatari Interior Ministry's website, <https://portal.moi.gov.qa/wps/portal/MOIIInternet/services/inquiries/others/officialdocuments/tut/p/a1/jZDdc>, which discloses that his passport expires on 12 June 2022. Qatari passports last for five years.

The conviction against al-Attayah comes from a Lebanese government that operates significantly at the pleasure of the Iranian cutout Hizballah, so has to be taken with some caution. Even so, al-Attayah did present a video in support of the Qatar-based Madad Ahl al-Sham (MAS) campaign, which al-Nusra had instructed its followers – from its official Twitter page – to contribute to in order to assist them.¹⁶⁹ This was in August 2013, after al-Nusra had made its allegiance to al-Qaeda public.¹⁷⁰ MAS had al-Ka’bi among its staff while in operation, with his name and telephone number included on “every single flyer that has been attributed to the campaign, typically as the first name listed”.¹⁷¹ Al-Kawari appears to have been involved in MAS, too.¹⁷²

Sanctioned at the same time as al-Salam was Ashraf Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam, who had been an al-Qaeda member since 2005 and provided funds to the IS movement in 2007, while facilitating their communications. In 2012, Ashraf “and an Iraqi explosives expert worked with [al-Nusra] and also sought to use explosives in acts of terrorism”. The same year, Ashraf also worked with al-Subaiy “to facilitate the transfer of hundreds of thousands of dollars ... intended for al-Qaeda in Pakistan”.¹⁷³

David Weinberg, in an extensive report on Qatar and terror funding, revealed that Abdulmalik al-Salam and Ashraf were brothers whose father was Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam (Abu Abdulaziz al-Qatari or Muhammad Yusuf al-Filistini), a Jordanian of Palestinian descent, who founded a jihadi group, Jund al-Aqsa, in 2013 as a proxy group intended for al-Nusra’s leadership to retreat to if al-Zawahiri ruled against them and gave Ibrahim al-Badri (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) dominion over both IS and al-Nusra. Muhammad worked with al-Zarqawi soon after Saddam Husayn’s regime came down and was, it seems, among the advance party of IS agents that moved into Syria in 2011 to form al-Nusra. It is also reported, intriguingly, by Masar Media, an outlet that was close to Jund, that Muhammad initially joined Ahrar al-Sham.¹⁷⁴ Later, Muhammad would be a senior associate to one of the IS operatives crucial in knitting together the caliphate in Syria, Abdurrahman al-Qaduli (Abu Ali al-Anbari).¹⁷⁵ Muhammad tried to act as a mediator between IS and al-Nusra once conflict erupted between the two in late 2013.¹⁷⁶ In this, Muhammad did not succeed and was killed by Syria’s rebels in January 2014. Jund, though it was sanctioned by the State Department as a terrorist organisation,¹⁷⁷ evolved into a somewhat independent force with heavy backing from Gulf donors,¹⁷⁸ before it joined IS after many months of warnings from the mainstream rebels that Jund was coming under IS’s sway.¹⁷⁹

¹⁶⁹ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Analysis: Qatar still negligent on terror finance’, *The Long War Journal*, 19 August 2015, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/analysis-qatar-still-negligent-on-terror-finance.php>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁰ Orton, K., ‘Jabhat al-Nusra Rejects the Islamic State of Iraq’s Takeover’, *The Syrian Intifada*, 2 April 2014, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/jabhat-al-nusra-rejects-the-islamic-state-of-iraqs-takeover/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷¹ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Analysis: Qatar still negligent on terror finance’, *The Long War Journal*, 19 August 2015.

¹⁷² Khan, T., ‘US designates Qataris terror financiers over Al Nusra “support”’, *The National*, 6 August 2015, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/us-designates-qataris-terror-financiers-over-al-nusra-support-1.47555>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷³ ‘Treasury Designates Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators’, *US Department of Treasury*, 24 September 2014.

¹⁷⁴ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Qatar and Terror Finance Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria’, *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, January 2017, available at: http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717_Weinberg_Qatar_Report.pdf, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Orton, K., ‘The Islamic State’s Official Biography of the Caliph’s Deputy’, *The Syrian Intifada*, 18 December 2016, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2016/12/18/the-islamic-states-official-biography-of-the-caliph-deputy/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Orton, K., ‘The Structure of Al-Qaeda’, *The Syrian Intifada*, 14 August 2016, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2016/08/14/the-structure-of-al-qaeda/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁷ ‘State Department Terrorist Designation of Jund al-Aqsa’, *US Department of State*, 20 September 2016, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266479.htm>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁸ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Analysis: Jund al Aqsa’s deep Gulf roots’, *The Long War Journal*, 18 November 2016, available at: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/11/analysis-jund-al-aqsas-deep-gulf-roots.php>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Search for the dead begins in Idlib after Islamic State-linked brigade leaves for Raqqa’, *Syria Direct*, 22 February 2017, available at: <http://syriadirect.org/news/search-for-the-dead-begins-in-idlib-after-islamic-state-linked-brigade-leaves-for-raqqa/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

Because just one Qatari in Qatar has been sanctioned for officially supporting al-Nusra,¹⁸⁰ this can “seem to imply that Doha’s problems regarding the group are minor”, Weinberg notes. “But while this figure is technically accurate, it also dramatically underestimates the number of individuals who were based in Qatar and accused of funding the group”, as the above sketches of al-Kuwari, al-Khawar, the Abd al-Salam family, al-Ka’bi, al-Kawari, al-Bakr, and al-Subaiy make clear.

Despite the claims from the Qatari government that “[a]ll individuals on UN and US sanctions lists in Qatar have been arrested, prosecuted, banned from travelling, and had assets frozen”,¹⁸¹ that does not appear to be so. In the summer of 2017, the U.S. State Department noted that while there has been “progress on countering the financing of terrorism, ... terrorist financiers within the country are still able to exploit Qatar’s informal financial system”.¹⁸² And, though it is difficult to ascertain the fate of people like al-Kuwari and al-Khawar – who are presumed to be free – there is clear evidence indicating that al-Nuaymi and al-Subaiy, two of the most dangerous sanctioned terrorists in Qatar, are still on the loose.

3.2 Activities in Libya

During the revolution that overthrew Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya in 2011, Qatar contributed aircraft to the NATO mission that imposed a no-fly zone over the country and sent hundreds of troops and intelligence officials to help train and direct sections of the insurrection.¹⁸³ This was a new method of operations for Qatar, so openly and actively getting involved on one side of a conflict.¹⁸⁴

Qatar backed Islamist elements within the Libyan insurgency and Doha’s critics point to one beneficiary of this policy in particular: Abdelhakim Belhaj (Abu Abdullah al-Sadiq). This is because Belhaj had been the emir of the Libyan branch of al-Qaeda, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). The LIFG did battle with the Qaddafi regime in the mid-1990s, until it was suppressed and its leadership, including Belhaj, driven into exile in Taliban Afghanistan in 1998.¹⁸⁵ This migration is why there were so many Libyans in senior positions around Usama bin Ladin. Belhaj was arrested in March 2004 at the airport in Kuala Lumpur,¹⁸⁶ and soon handed back to Qaddafi’s Libya.¹⁸⁷

In 2010, Belhaj was released as part of a de-radicalisation program run by Qaddafi’s son, Saif al-Islam. Belhaj was assisted in making his case for release by Muslim Brotherhood preacher Ali al-Salabi. After the outbreak of the revolt against Qaddafi, Belhaj worked with Qatar as part of the

¹⁸⁰ Lister, C., ‘Profile Jabhat al-Nusra’, *Brookings Institution*, July 2016, p. 31.

¹⁸¹ Al-Thani, S., ‘Qatar and Terrorism’, Letter to *The London Times*, 13 July 2017, available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-proposals-to-encourage-fluency-in-welsh-qspk7j8v8>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

¹⁸² ‘Chapter 2. Country Reports on Terrorism 2016: Middle East and North Africa’, *US Department of State*, July 2017, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272232.htm#QATAR>, last visited: 30 October 2017.

¹⁸³ Black, I., ‘Qatar admits sending hundreds of troops to support Libya rebels’, *The Guardian*, 26 October 2011, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/26/qatar-troops-libya-rebels-support>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Roberts, D., ‘Behind Qatar’s Intervention In Libya’, *Foreign Affairs*, 28 September 2011, available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-09-28/behind-qatars-intervention-libya>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Profile: Libyan rebel commander Abdel Hakim Belhadj’, *BBC*, 4 July 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14786753>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁸⁶ Ayad, C., ‘“We Are Simply Muslim”: Libyan Rebel Chief Denies Al-Qaeda Ties’, *Time Magazine*, 4 September 2011, available at: content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2091744,00.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁸⁷ Robertson, N., ‘Former jihadist at the heart of Libya’s revolution’, *CNN*, 3 September 2011, available at: edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/09/02/libya.belhaj.profile/index.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

February 17 Brigade, one of the most capable insurrectionary militias.¹⁸⁸ After the fall of Tripoli, Qatar's state-run Al-Jazeera television station hosted Belhaj, who declared, to the astonishment of the liberals, that he was in control of the interim government, the so-called National Transitional Council (NTC).¹⁸⁹

Ansar al-Shari'a in Libya (ASL), a US-designated terrorist organisation,¹⁹⁰ essentially al-Qaeda's rebranded presence in North Africa, carried out the terrorist attack on the US consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012, murdering four Americans – Ambassador Christopher Stevens, diplomat Sean Smith, and two former Navy SEALs, Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods, who were serving in an intelligence capacity.¹⁹¹ ASL had “close operational links” to LIFG.¹⁹² Belhaj was, by this time, separated from LIFG, and there is no suggestion Qatar had any foreknowledge of this attack, but it was a troubling reminder of the company Qatar was choosing to keep.

Qatar's support for Belhaj has waned in the years since. Belhaj is currently a leading figure in Hizb al-Watan (The Homeland Party), an Islamist political outfit. But Belhaj has become marginal to Libya's political and military trajectory. Most of Belhaj's current effort appears to be pressing his legal case against British officials he alleges were involved in “rendering” him in 2004.¹⁹³

Qatar's role in Libya has been scaled back in general. Gone are the days of trying to drive the agenda. At present, Doha plays a more limited and defensive role: to stave off an outright victory by the Libyan allies and clients of the United Arab Emirates, which has Egypt and to a degree Saudi Arabia in its corner.

Qatar formally backs the UN-supported proposal for a Government of National Accord (GNA), which would combine the House of Representatives (HoR), the final remnant of the last elected government that is now based in Tobruk, and the General National Congress, the legislature of the Islamist Libya Dawn militias that took over Tripoli in 2014, forcing HoR to flee. This position is supported by the European Union and the West more broadly. The U.A.E., meanwhile, supports the Tobruk government.

The HoR has recognized General Khalifa Hiftar and his Libyan National Army (LNA) militia, which controls substantial areas of eastern Libya and is making inroads in the west, as the national army, lending its legitimacy to the LNA. Hiftar is aligned closely, militarily on the ground, with Egypt and the U.A.E., as well as politically and economically with Saudi Arabia and Russia.¹⁹⁴ In the east, the LNA has been battling for influence with Saraya al-Dafa al-Benghazi (The Benghazi Defence Brigades or BDB), which is made up of various Islamist militias, some of which have received support from Qatar and Turkey. BDB forces participated in the operation to drive IS

¹⁸⁸ 'Abdelhakim Belhaj, The militia leader turned international businessman', African Intelligence, 28 April 2016, available at: <https://www.africaintelligence.com/aia/insiders/libya/2016/04/28/abdelhakim-belhaj-the-militia-leader-turned-international-businessman/108146782-be1>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁸⁹ MacDonald, A., 'Analysis: As Libyans wrangle, Qatar in wings', *Reuters*, 18 November 2011, available at: www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-qatar/analysis-as-libyans-wrangle-qatar-in-wings-idUSTRE7AH1R120111118, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁹⁰ 'Terrorist Designations of Three Ansar al-Shari'a Organizations and Leaders', *U.S. Department of State*, 10 January 2014, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266560.htm>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹⁹¹ Joscelyn, T., 'Senate report: Terrorists “affiliated” with multiple al Qaeda groups involved in Benghazi attack', *The Long War Journal*, 15 January 2014, available at: https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/_intelligence_on_al.php, last visited: 8 November 2017.

¹⁹² Stephens, M., 'The Arab Cold War Redux', *The Century Foundation*, 28 February 2017.

¹⁹³ 'Libyan wins right to sue ex-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw', *BBC*, 17 January 2017, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38649683, last visited: 28 October 2017; Syal, R., 'Rendition case against Jack Straw must be held in secret, judge rules', *The Guardian*, 21 July 2017, available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/21/rendition-case-against-jack-straw-libya-must-held-secret-judge-rules>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

¹⁹⁴ Orton, K. and Pigman, L., 'Inside Putin's Libyan Power Play', *Foreign Policy*, 14 September 2017, available at: foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/14/inside-putins-libyan-power-play/, last visited: 15 October 2017.

out of its de facto Libyan capital, Sirte. There are BDB elements that have ties to al-Qaeda, and Qatar largely keeps its distance from those.¹⁹⁵ In general, it is notable that Qatar has exerted much less influence in Libya through its Islamist allies than the Egyptian-led bloc has through Hiftar.¹⁹⁶

The GNA is not an ideal vehicle for Qatar. Many of the Misratan Libya Dawn militias loyal to the GNA have a transactional relationship with Doha because they need resources. Additionally, in both the GNA and Hiftar camp the lower levels are dominated by Madkhalis, the salafi strain that follows the thought of Rabi al-Madkhali, a Saudi theologian. Al-Madkhali counselled a strictly apolitical approach, which is why he was helped to prominence in the 1990s by the Saudi government as a counterweight to clerics like Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda, the leaders of the oppositional *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement in Saudi Arabia.¹⁹⁷ The Sahwa movement combined salafi precepts with Muslim Brotherhood-style political-revolutionary activity,¹⁹⁸ and in time this trend became one of the central building blocks of the jihadi-salafist movement.¹⁹⁹ The Madkhali connection to Saudi Arabia concerns Qatar, as does the as-yet-unclear nature of the connections between the Madkhalis on either side: because of their apolitical stance, the Madkhalis will render to whoever rules, and might perhaps even form a conduit for helping Hiftar access GNA areas.²⁰⁰

Qatar has tried to offset these concerns by cultivating closer relations with individuals in the GNA, especially the defence ministry, though this has provoked opposition from senior officials in the GNA, including its prime minister, Fayez al-Sarraj.²⁰¹ Qatar has invested heavily – as has the U.A.E. – in the media sector of post-Qaddafi Libya. There are questions about the efficacy of this since popular reaction largely went against Qatar after the Quartet announced the boycott. And Qatar does also have legacy contact with certain militias, primarily through Ali al-Salabi, an Islamist cleric based in Qatar, who spent considerable time in Qaddafi's prisons.

Al-Salabi is close to the Qatari ruling House, an important member of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, and a spiritual authority for Libya's Islamists more broadly. Al-Salabi is an ally of Belhaj's, though al-Salabi's exact relationship with Hizb al-Watan is unclear, and a close associate of Yusuf al-Qaradawi.²⁰² Al-Salabi also had a practical role in supporting Islamists on behalf of Qatar via his brother, Ismail al-Salabi, a militia commander previously with Belhaj's February 17 Brigades and now with BDB.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ Author interview, October 2017

¹⁹⁶ Toaldo, M. and Fitzgerald, M., 'A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players', *European Council on Foreign Relations* (ECFR), 15 June 2016, available at: http://www.ecfr.eu/mena/mapping_libya_conflict, last visited: 15 October 2017.

¹⁹⁷ The Saudi Arabian government moved against al-Awda, specifically, and a number of other clerics related to the Sahwa movement that it designates as extremist as part of the home front of the foreign policy adopted toward Qatar. See: 'Saudi Arabia: Prominent Clerics Arrested', *Amnesty International*, 15 September 2017, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/15/saudi-arabia-prominent-clerics-arrested>, last visited: 28 October 2017. It is also interesting to note that the Sahwa link, and the different attitudes toward it, were highlighted when Muhammad Surur died in Qatar in November 2016.

¹⁹⁸ Lacroix, S., *Awakening Islam: Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, (Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁹ Hassan, H., 'The Sectarianism of the Islamic State: Ideological Roots and Political Context', *Carnegie*, 13 June 2016, available at: carnegeendowment.org/2016/06/13/sectarianism-of-islamic-state-ideological-roots-and-political-context/j1iy, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁰ Author interview, October 2017

²⁰¹ Mustafa, A., 'Row over Misrata military delegation in Qatar', *Libya Herald*, 15 August 2017, available at: <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/08/15/row-over-misrata-military-delegation-in-qatar/>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰² Spencer, R., 'Libyan cleric announces new party on lines of "moderate" Islamic democracy', *The Telegraph*, 10 November 2011, available at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8879955/Libyan-cleric-announces-new-party-on-lines-of-moderate-Islamic-democracy.html, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰³ McGregor, A., 'Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why', *Jamestown Foundation*, 14 July 2017, available at: <https://jamestown.org/program/qatars-role-libyan-conflict-whos-lists-terrorists/> last visited: 28 October 2017; Sullivan, J., 'Top Confidential [sic] - Important Message to Forward [to Hillary Clinton]', 28 February 2011, available at: <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/28627>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

3.3 Palestine

Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Resistance Movement), better known by its acronym HAMAS, was founded in 1987 as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁰⁴ Committed to the destruction of Israel and the use of violence to accomplish its aims, HAMAS was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation by the US State Department in 1997.²⁰⁵ HAMAS played a leading role in the Second Intifada, most notably with suicide bombings against Israeli civilian areas. This tactic was licensed by, among others, Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

After HAMAS won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 and seized power violently in Gaza in 2007, Israel instituted a blockade to contain HAMAS and much of the world sought to isolate the group. Qatar, by contrast, provided a political opening to HAMAS and considerable financial resources to the group.²⁰⁶ When HAMAS's political leadership was forced out of Syria in 2012, they went to Qatar, and Khaled Meshal and his deputies have been allowed to travel and fundraise without hindrance.

“We believe HAMAS is a very important part of the Palestinian people”, Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani said in late 2014. “[HAMAS] believes in peace and they want peace. But it's for the other party [i.e. Israel] to believe in peace as well and to be more realistic”.²⁰⁷ This statement came just months after the US had made its displeasure with Doha's stance on HAMAS plain. In a speech on terror finance in March 2014, Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen bluntly stated: “Qatar, a long-time US ally, has, for many years, openly financed HAMAS, a group that continues to undermine regional stability”.²⁰⁸

Qatar's emir became the first head of state to visit the HAMAS-ruled enclave in 2012, and pledged \$400-million in aid.²⁰⁹ In 2016, Qatar once again solved HAMAS's budget issues with tens of millions of dollars.²¹⁰ The reality is that much of the world accepts Doha paying for the civilian, administrative bureaucracy of Gaza, and the basic needs of that captive population, even at the expense of bolstering the HAMAS dictatorship, because there is no evident political alternative: the most visible opposition forces to HAMAS are jihadist in orientation and even if they did not assume power upon the toppling of HAMAS, the result would likely be chaos and a humanitarian calamity.²¹¹ The primary goal, therefore, has defaulted to keeping resources out of the hands of HAMAS's military units, the Izzadeen al-Qassam Brigades, and the other explicitly terrorist-linked sections of the HAMAS organisation.

Here, Qatar's role remains troublesome. The guarantees about where Qatari aid into Gaza is going are hard to monitor. Moreover, as well as moving its political and economic wings to Qatar,

²⁰⁴ ‘The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement’, HAMAS, 18 August 1988, available at: avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁵ ‘Foreign Terrorist Organisations’, *US Department of State*, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁶ Amer, A.A., ‘Hamis Ties to Qatar Have Cost’, *Al-Monitor*, 22 April 2013, available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/04/hamas-qatar-relationship-independence.html>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁷ Krever, M., ‘Qatar's Emir: We don't fund terrorists’, *CNN*, 25 September 2014, available at: edition.cnn.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/qatar-emir/, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁸ ‘Remarks of Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen before the Center for a New American Security on “Confronting New Threats in Terrorist Financing”’, *US Department of Treasury*, 4 March 2014, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2308.aspx>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²⁰⁹ Rudoren, J., ‘Qatar's Emir Visits Gaza, Pledging \$400 Million to Hamas’, *The New York Times*, 23 October 2012, available at: www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/middleeast/pledging-400-million-qatari-emir-makes-historic-visit-to-gaza-strip.html, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²¹⁰ ‘Qatar says gives \$30 million to pay Gaza public sector workers’, *Reuters*, 22 July 2016, available at: www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-gaza-qatar/qatar-says-gives-30-million-to-pay-gaza-public-sector-workers-idUSKCN1021AQ, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²¹¹ Author interviews, October 2017

HAMAS is, it seems, able to plan terrorist attacks in Israel from this exile.²¹² Among other things, an Izzadeen al-Qassam Brigades commander, Talal Abdurrahman Sharim, is believed to be based in Qatar, and Sharim is involved in financing HAMAS cells on the West Bank.²¹³

3.4 Ransom Payments

A recurring source of tension between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc is Doha's payment, or facilitation of payments, to terrorist organisations in order to release hostages. Qatar flatly denies that it engages in this policy. Qatar's former Foreign Minister, Khalid al-Attiyah, has stated "Qatar does not pay ransoms ... This is another way of fueling [terrorism] ... [Y]ou may call it supporting through the backdoor, and this we don't do". However, al-Attiyah himself cryptically referred to Qatar being prepared to "mediate to save another life",²¹⁴ and Western diplomats in Doha are in little doubt about what this means in practice.²¹⁵ And indeed, it appears that one such ransom payment, to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the former al-Qaeda branch in Syria,²¹⁶ was the "final straw" that determined the timing of the current round of the crisis with the other Gulf states.²¹⁷

A hunting party - consisting of two-dozen Qatari citizens, among them members of the royal family, and two Saudi citizens - was kidnapped near Layya in the Muthanna governorate of southern Iraq, close to the Saudi border, on 16 December 2015.²¹⁸ All 26 individuals were released on 22 April 2017 in a deal, negotiated by Qatar and Iran, that tied together the fate of four towns in Syria and the progress of a number of extremist groups in the Levant, specifically HTS and Iran's proxies.²¹⁹

The Qatari hunters' hostage deal built on an earlier set of negotiations, which collapsed in August 2015, between the hardline Syrian Islamist insurgent organisation, Ahrar al-Sham, and the pro-Asad coalition, which was notable for Ahrar directly engaging with Iran, specifically the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Lebanese appendage, Hizballah, about the fate of Syrian towns. In May 2015, Hizballah-led pro-Asad forces began an offensive in the Qalamun area between Damascus and the Lebanese border.²²⁰ After sweeping gains, the pro-regime forces began attacking the rebel-held towns of Zabadani and Madaya in July 2015, quickly imposing a siege. Several efforts were made to get a ceasefire,²²¹ until September when a ceasefire took hold.²²² The ceasefire agreement left insurgents in control of the urban areas of Zabadani and Madaya, while Hizballah held the surroundings, and this compact was complemented by a commitment

²¹² 'IDF & ISA Uncover Hamas Terrorist Assets in Hebron', *Israeli Defence Forces*, 31 January 2013, available at: <https://www.idfblog.com/2013/01/31/idf-isa-uncover-hamas-terrorist-assets-in-hebron/>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²¹³ Schanzer, J., 'Assessing the US-Qatar Relationship', *Testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee*, 26 July 2017, available at: docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA13/20170726/106329/HHRG-115-FA13-Wstate-SchanzerJ-20170726.pdf, last visited: 28 October 2017.

²¹⁴ Kovessy, P., 'Foreign minister: Qatar does not pay ransoms', *Doha News*, 30 September 2014, available at: <https://dohanews.co/foreign-minister-qatar-pay-ransoms/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²¹⁵ Bakr, A., 'Qatar pares support for Islamists but careful to preserve ties', *Reuters*, 2 November 2014, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-qatar-insight-idUSKBN0IM07B20141102>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²¹⁶ Orton, K., 'Whither Al-Qaeda in Syria?', *Henry Jackson Society*, 15 August 2017.

²¹⁷ Killalea, D., 'Qatar: Royal family ransom deal, hacking, terrorism behind diplomatic crisis', *News.com.au*, 7 June 2017, available at: <http://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/world-economy/qatar-royal-family-ransom-deal-hacking-terrorism-behind-diplomatic-crisis/news-story/5cf7483d1598e72cd904bbbc52c0d9d2>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²¹⁸ 'Qatar hunters abducted in Iraq desert by gunmen', *BBC*, 16 December 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-35112774>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²¹⁹ "I felt like life was beginning again": Qataris kidnapped in Iraq speak of joy at release', *The National*, 23 April 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/i-felt-like-life-was-beginning-again-qataris-kidnapped-in-iraq-speak-of-joy-at-release-1.31208>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁰ Smaha, N., 'Why Qalamoun matters for Hezbollah', *Al-Jazeera*, 11 May 2015, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/150511085809867.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²¹ Karouny, M. and Perry, T., 'Turkey, Iran help broker rare truce in Syria', *Reuters*, 12 August 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ceasefire/turkey-iran-help-broker-rare-truce-in-syria-idUSKCN0QH1CQ20150812>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²² 'Syria army, rebels reach deal on Zabadani, Idlib villages: source', *The Daily Star (Lebanon)*, 24 September 2015, available at: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Sep-24/316543-hezbollah-syria-army-reach-deal-with-rebels-on-fate-of-zabadani-idlib-towns-sources.ashx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

from the insurgency to not enter two regime- and Hizballah-held towns, al-Fua and Kafraya, which insurgents had besieged in the Idlib Province of northern Syria at more or less the same time the pro-Asad coalition moved against Zabadani and Madaya.²²³ The negotiations broke down over a proposal for a population exchange, what critics would call mutual ethnic cleansing, which would have removed the largely-Sunni residents of Zabadani and Madaya into insurgent-held areas in the north, and moved the largely-Shi'a residents of al-Fua and Kafraya into regime-held areas in the south. Iran favoured this; Ahrar rejected it.²²⁴ With the end of negotiation, this never came about and the frontlines more or less held, with civilians dying in the regime-sieged areas,²²⁵ until the deal over the Qatari hunters.

Hussam al-Shafi'i, a senior political official within HTS, went to Qatar on 26 March 2017, and the deal over the "four towns" and the Qatari hunters was finalised with Iran's representatives two days later.²²⁶ The new deal revived elements of the old deal, including a ceasefire on the four towns (lasting nine months this time), a ban on the use of airstrikes in certain areas, and humanitarian access. Additionally, the regime was required to release 1,500 political prisoners, mostly women, though it appears the regime released mostly low-level criminals, rather than opposition activists.²²⁷ The deal, however, also codified the sectarian demographic change the Iranians wanted; 20,000 people from al-Fua and Kafraya and 40,000 people from Zabadani and Madaya are to be moved.²²⁸ To get HTS and Ahrar to accede to this required payment. Moreover, since the Qatari hunters were taken by Kataib Hizballah, an Iranian proxy militia and US-designated terrorist organisation²²⁹ that has fought as part of the Iranian-orchestrated Shi'a jihad in Syria to save Asad,²³⁰ it required that Kataib Hizballah be paid, too. The Qataris sent a plane to Baghdad on 15 April 2017, with operatives onboard carrying tens of millions of dollars. The Iraqi government claimed to be unaware of the deal – though Qatar insisted that Iraqi authorities had "full knowledge"²³¹ – and impounded the plane.²³² Nearly simultaneously, a terrible suicide bombing massacred more than 100 people evacuating Fua and Kafraya,²³³ further delaying the implementation of the deal. Ultimately these issues were resolved and within a week the deal was done.

Qatar's rivals on the Gulf would later claim it had paid \$700 million to Iran's proxies in Iraq and \$300 million between the two Islamist groups in Syria, Ahrar and HTS, with the majority going to HTS.²³⁴ The Syrian Islamists called this figure "ridiculous".²³⁵ They are almost certainly correct;

²²³ Itani, F. and Barabandi, B., 'In Zabadani, Signs of a New and Worrying Iranian Strategy in Syria', *Huffington Post*, 15 September 2015, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/faysal-itani/in-zabadani-signs-of-a-ne_b_8097416.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁴ 'Ahrar ash-Sham Ends Negotiations With Iran Over Zabadani Ceasefire', *Enab Baladi Online*, 6 August 2015, available at:

http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/29624/Ahrar_Shams_Ends_Negotiations_With_Iran_Over_Zabadani_Ceasefire, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁵ 'Despite truce with regime, two more Madaya residents die of starvation', *Syria Direct*, 11 January 2016, available at: <http://syriadirect.org/news/despites-truce-with-regime-two-more-madaya-residents-die-of-starvation/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁶ Mardasov, A., 'Why was deal to evacuate Syrian towns brokered by Qatar and Iran?', *Al-Monitor*, 7 April 2017, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/iran-russia-qatar-conflict-syria-deal-turkey.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁷ 'On sidelines of "Four Towns" Agreement, some pro-opposition Syrians disappointed by prisoner release', *Syria Direct*, 24 April 2017, available at: <http://syriadirect.org/news/on-sidelines-of-four-towns-agreement-some-pro-opposition-syrians-disappointed-by-prisoner-release/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²²⁸ 'On sidelines of "Four Towns" Agreement, some pro-opposition Syrians disappointed by prisoner release', *Syria Direct*, 24 April 2017.

²²⁹ 'Designation of Kata'ib Hizballah', *US Department of State*, 26 June 2009, available at: <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/143209.htm>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³⁰ Smyth, P., 'The Shiite Jihad in Syria and Its Regional', *The Washington Institute*, February 2015, available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-shiite-jihad-in-syria-and-its-regional-effects>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³¹ 'Qatar says Iraq had "full knowledge" of hostage deal', *AFP*, 26 April 2017, available at: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/qatar-says-iraq-had-full-knowledge-of-hostage-deal-672064.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³² Chulov, M., 'Qatari royals released from captivity as part of Syria population swap deal', *The Guardian*, 21 April 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/21/qatar-royals-released-iraq-syria-four-towns-deal>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³³ 'Syria war: "At least 68 children among 126 killed" in bus bombing', *BBC*, 17 April 2017, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-39613313>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³⁴ Solomon, E., 'The \$1bn hostage deal that enraged Qatar's Gulf rivals', *Financial Times*, 5 June 2017, available at:

<https://www.ft.com/content/dd033082-49e9-11e7-a3f4-c742b9791d43?segmentid=acce4131-99c2-09d3-a635-873e61754ec6>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³⁵ Lister, C., Twitter post, 5 June 2017, available at: https://twitter.com/Charles_Lister/status/871795176418705409, last visited: 15 October 2017.

one jihadi activist from Idlib claimed that the real figure was \$35 million.²³⁶ But it is still true that in exchange for the return of the Qatari and Saudi hunters and some time-limited, geographically-limited, and unenforceable de-escalations of the pro-Asad coalition's campaign, the Qataris had secured a sectarian population transfer and the transfer of tens of millions of dollars, at a minimum, to Sunni and Shi'a extremists. The deal had demonstrated the power of Iran across the Levant and the impotence not only of Asad, but of the Iraqi government, which had a deal made over its head by Iran about foreign nationals who had been kidnapped by Tehran's proxies in Iraq while in possession of official Iraqi permits.²³⁷ And in Syria it had provided results, i.e. political legitimacy, and resources to HTS at a time when the mainstream rebellion was struggling for support and survival.

This was hardly the first time Qatar had helped channel money to terrorists in Syria as part of a hostage negotiation.

In December 2015, Qatar negotiated the release of 13 Lebanese security forces, who had been kidnapped by HTS's predecessor organisation, Jabhat al-Nusra. Al-Nusra officials say that among Doha's envoys was Ahmad al-Khatib, who has been misreported as the son of the first leader of the Syrian political opposition, Moaz al-Khatib (they are close relatives but not father and son). Ahmad had long been a channel for official and unofficial funds to Syrian insurgents.²³⁸ Qatar was accused by pro-Asad sources of paying \$25 million as part of the deal to free these soldiers. Qatar's ambassador in Beirut stated: "Qatar did not pay one dollar".²³⁹ Al-Nusra said in a public statement that 123 relief cars were delivered,²⁴⁰ and Al-Araby reported that the payment was \$30m and was to release 16 soldiers.²⁴¹

There are indications that Qatar paid \$15 million to secure the January 2015 release of two Italian aid workers, Vanessa Marzullo and Greta Ramelli, who had been abducted by al-Nusra in August 2014.²⁴²

The release of 45 Fijian peacekeepers in September 2014, taken prisoner on the Golan Heights by al-Nusra, was certainly coordinated with Qatar. The United Nations insisted that "no ransom was paid".²⁴³ But Syrian opposition sources claimed that Qatar paid \$20 million in order to secure the release of the hostages,²⁴⁴ and Israeli sources claimed that al-Nusra received \$25 million from Qatar.²⁴⁵

²³⁶ Author interview, November 2017

²³⁷ Hassan, H., 'The complex backstory of the Qatari hostage deal', *The National*, 23 April 2017, available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/the-complex-backstory-of-the-qatari-hostage-deal-1.12336>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²³⁸ Author interviews, November 2017

²³⁹ 'Qatari Ambassador to The Republic: We did not pay the money for the hostage exchange deal', *Al-Joumhouria* (The Republic), 2 December 2015, available at: <http://www.aljoumhouria.com/news/index/276227>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁰ Weinberg, D.A., 'Wrong Way: The Problem With Al Qaeda Prisoner Swaps', *National Interest*, 4 January 2016, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/wrong-way-the-problem-al-qaeda-prisoner-swaps-14794>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴¹ 'Lebanon and Nusra "hostage exchange" reaches final steps', *The New Arab*, 5 August 2015, available at:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/8/5/lebanese-army-general-announces-end-of-negotiations-with-nusra>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴² 'Syria conflict: Italian aid worker hostages freed', *BBC*, 16 January 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30838375>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴³ Blake, B. and Associated Press, 'Fijian peacekeepers hailed as "heroes" as they are released by Syrian al Qaeda group which captured them on Israeli border', *The Daily Mail* and *The Associated Press*, 12 September 2014, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753229/Fijian-peacekeepers-hailed-heroes-released-Syrian-al-Qaeda-group-captured-Israeli-border.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁴ 'Qatar officially announces its role in mediating the release of soldiers from Jabhat al-Nusra', *Asharq al-Awsat*, 13 September 2014, available at: <https://aawsat.com/home/article/180471>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁵ 'Report: UN Had Qatar Pay Off Al-Qaida Fighters for Release of Fiji Peacekeepers', *Haaretz*, 11 October 2014, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.620228>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

Also in September 2014, then-Qatari Foreign Minister Khaled al-Attiyah reportedly told a Lebanese delegation that Doha had tried to intercede with al-Nusra to secure the release of Bishop Boulos Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church in Aleppo and the Syrian Orthodox archbishop of Aleppo, Yohanna Ibrahim, both of whom had been seized in Damascus in April 2013. But, said al-Attiyah, the two bishops had fallen into the hands of IS, and negotiations for their release had therefore broken down.²⁴⁶ The two clerics are still missing.

American journalist Peter Curtis was released from al-Nusra's custody in August 2014 after Qatar acceded to the Curtis family's request to mediate. The Curtis family deny that there was any cash transfer involved in getting Curtis released.²⁴⁷ But US officials quoted in the media said that Qatar had paid a ransom to get Curtis released.²⁴⁸ Curtis' family have stated that al-Nusra made ransom demands of between \$3 million and \$25 million.²⁴⁹

Qatar negotiated the release of 13 Greek Orthodox nuns and three other women held by al-Nusra in March 2014. The nuns deny that anything was paid.²⁵⁰ Al-Nusra reportedly demanded \$50 million and "the release of more than 100 people detained by the [Asad] government, including women".²⁵¹ Sources within the Hizballah-dominated Lebanese state claimed that \$16 million was paid by Qatar for the nuns' release.²⁵²

In all, al-Nusra/HTS might have received about \$200 million from ransom payments by some accounts;²⁵³ between \$50 million and \$60 million per year according to others.²⁵⁴ All agree that the majority of these payments facilitated or made directly by the Qatari government. This is an operationally significant amount of money, helping towards HTS not only outcompeting the mainstream rebellion on the battlefield but, even more importantly over the long term, helping HTS to gain political legitimacy – for its governance and its ideology – by meeting the basic needs of civilians.

It should be noted, however, that by now, kidnapping and the ransoms are no longer the most important source of income for HTS: the organisation invested its funds in ways that have created a self-sustaining economic model.²⁵⁵ HTS invested in real estate, some of it stolen from Syrians who were evicted from HTS-held areas for infractions of their religious code, and is able to sell such properties. The key figure in the creation of this business model is allegedly Abu Ahmed Zakour, the General Director of Economic Affairs, who defected in January 2017.²⁵⁶ HTS also

²⁴⁶ Aziz, J., 'Qatar foreign minister believes abducted bishops still alive', *Al-Monitor*, 8 September 2014, available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/bishop-abducted-syria-alive-qatar-mediation.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁷ Ackerman, S., 'US denies paying ransom as Qatar secures release of journalist in Syria', *The Guardian*, 24 August 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/24/us-denies-ransom-qatar-peter-theo-curtis-syria>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁸ Harris, S., 'US Pays Off Hostage Takers', *The Daily Beast*, 29 April 2015, available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/us-pays-off-hostage-takers>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁴⁹ Foster, P., 'Did Qatar pay ransom for release of US journalist Peter Curtis?', *The Telegraph*, 25 August 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11055049/Did-Qatar-pay-ransom-for-release-of-US-journalist-Peter-Curtis.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁵⁰ Fisk, R., 'Qatar paid Syrian rebels £40m ransom to free nuns - or did it?', *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 March 2014, available at: <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/qatar-paid-syrian-rebels-40m-ransom-to-free-nuns-or-did-it-30104907.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁵¹ Barnard, A. and Saad, H., 'Nuns Released by Syrians After Three-Month Ordeal', *The New York Times*, 9 March 2014, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/10/world/middleeast/nuns-released-by-syrians-after-three-month-ordeal.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁵² Knickmeyer, E., 'Al Qaeda-Linked Groups Increasingly Funded by Ransom', *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 July 2014, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/qatar-ransom-fills-terrorist-coffers-1406637010>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁵³ Interview with Idlib-based jihadi activist, November 2017

²⁵⁴ Interview with Syrian oppositionist, November 2017

²⁵⁵ Interview with a former Jabhat al-Nusra finance official, November 2017

²⁵⁶ Haid, H., 'The Core Reason for the JFS Fight Against Syrian Rebels is Competition Over Resources', *The Atlantic Council*, 7 March 2017, available at: www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/the-core-reason-for-the-jfs-fight-against-syrian-rebels-is-competition-over-resources, last visited: 24 November 2017.

controls most of the money exchanges, including the largest in northern Syria, the Qasyoun bureau. HTS controls the staples – food and fuel – and is able to impose, mafia-style, a “tax” or protection racket on businesses in areas it rules. And finally, there are investments being made by HTS in Turkish-controlled zones of Syria and Turkey itself.²⁵⁷

Qatar was involved in a number of other hostage trades in Syria.

In October 2013, Qatar negotiated the release of nine Lebanese Shi’is who had been captured by the Northern Storm Brigade, a nationalist, Free Syrian Army-branded armed opposition group.²⁵⁸ The Lebanese might or might not have been Hizballah operatives. An official in the Hizballah-subservient Lebanese security apparatus claimed that Qatar paid a ransom to secure the release of the “pilgrims”.²⁵⁹ Local and Turkish media estimated the ransom paid by Qatar at up to \$150 million,²⁶⁰ though this presumably includes alleged compensation money paid to both Lebanese and Turkish hostages.²⁶¹ It was reported by Qatar’s own state media that the hostages returned to Lebanon on a private jet with al-Attiyah.²⁶²

Qatar, with Turkey, was successful in negotiating the release, in January 2013, of 48 Iranians captured by the Syrian rebellion. Tehran and Damascus described the captives as “pilgrims”; everybody else believes them to have been intelligence and/or paramilitary operatives of the Iranian theocracy. The Assad regime released 2,130 prisoners from Syrian jails in exchange for the release of these Iranians.²⁶³

It seems that Qatar had enough contacts to attempt negotiations for the release of three Americans – Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig, and Kayla Mueller – captured and later murdered by IS. The demands by IS were reportedly too extreme to countenance.²⁶⁴

Outside of Syria, probably the most high-profile prisoner trade in which Qatar was involved relating to jihadists was the May 2014 swap of five Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo Bay detention facility – Mohammad Fazl, Norullah Noori, Muhammad Nabi, Khairullah Khairkhwa, and Abdul Haq Wasiq – for the captured American soldier, Bowe Bergdahl. Doha was the point of contact between the US and the Taliban, and agreed to host the Taliban detainees after they were released.²⁶⁵

In Yemen, in February 2013, a Swiss national, Silvia Eberhardt, was released after she had been kidnapped by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) about a year earlier. Qatar was involved in the release, and Yemen’s Foreign Minister, Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, minced no words about his view

²⁵⁷ Interview with an Idlib-based Free Syrian Army activist, November 2017

²⁵⁸ ‘Freed Lebanese Pilgrims Arrive in Beirut, Turkish Pilots’, *Nahamet*, 19 October 2013, available at: <http://www.nahamet.com/stories/en/102674>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁵⁹ Prothero, M., ‘Lebanese pilgrims held for year by Syrian rebels back in Beirut’, *McClatchy*, 19 October 2013, available at: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24757552.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁶⁰ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Terrorist Financing: Kidnapping, Antiquities Trafficking, and Private Donations’, *Congressional Testimony*, 17 November 2015, p. 9, available at: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA18/20151117/104202/HHRG-114-FA18-Wstate-WeinbergD-20151117.pdf>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁶¹ Prothero, M., ‘Lebanese pilgrims held for year by Syrian rebels back in Beirut’, *McClatchy*, 19 October 2013.

²⁶² ‘Syrian rebels free Lebanese hostages’, *Al-Jazeera*, 19 October 2013, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/lebanese-hostages-syria-freed-20131018203058110445.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁶³ ‘Syrian rebels free Iranian hostages in swap’, *Al-Jazeera*, 9 January 2013, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/01/201319102949949456.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁶⁴ Weinberg, D.A., ‘Terrorist Financing: Kidnapping, Antiquities Trafficking, and Private Donations’, *Congressional Testimony*, 17 November 2015, p. 11.

²⁶⁵ Glenza, J., ‘US soldier Bowe Bergdahl freed by Taliban in Afghanistan’, *The Guardian*, 31 May 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/31/bowe-bergdahl-free-taliban-us-pow-afghanistan>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

of the Qatari government's role. "These arrangements made by Qatar ... may have led to a disaster", al-Qirbi said. "Yemen constantly rejects the handling of the release of kidnapped hostages through the payment of ransoms." Other Yemeni officials blamed the ransom payments for reviving AQAP, which had been struggling previously. AQAP was "having crazy money problems before the kidnap ransoms. They were having to sell their guns", said Yasser al-Awadhi, the then-deputy head of Yemen's parliament.²⁶⁶ Between 2008 and 2014, al-Qaeda and its affiliates took in revenue from kidnapping totalling at least £125 million, mostly from European governments, with a sixth of that paid through Qatar and Oman to AQAP.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Knickmeyer, E., 'Al Qaeda-Linked Groups Increasingly Funded by Ransom', *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 July 2014.

²⁶⁷ Callimachi, R., 'Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror', *The New York Times*, 29 July 2014, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/world/africa/ransoming-citizens-europe-becomes-al-qaedas-patron.html>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

4. Qatar's Human Rights Record

4.1 Social and Political Freedom

While the Qatari Constitution enshrines human rights, in practice there is significant limitation to their exercise.

Freedom of expression is sharply curtailed, often under the banner of laws against blasphemy and profanity, which carry heavy sentences. The implementation of “morality” laws has involved the imprisonment of Muhammad al-Ajami for 15 years for ostensibly violating shari’a ordinances in the Wahhabi monarchy via a poem critical of the ruling House.²⁶⁸

The press is “guided” heavily by the state through mechanisms, formal and informal, which induce a high degree of self-censorship. The foreign media in Qatar is directly interfered with when the state feels it necessary. Users of social media can incur heavy penalties if they post content deemed politically offensive by the government.²⁶⁹

Freedom of religion, while there in theory in the constitution, is not available in practice. All imported religious literature is strictly vetted by the government. All religious groups must register with the foreign ministry. While non-Muslim minorities can and do live and work in Qatar – though Buddhism and Hinduism, among others, are not recognised as religions by the state – any attempt to convert people away from Islam can result in ten years in jail if done as part of an organized effort, or five years if it is an individual enterprise.²⁷⁰

The right to free assembly and association is limited legally and even more limited in practice by both public order and morality legislation. Public demonstrations are rare. Non-governmental organisations need state permission to operate, and no permissions have ever been granted for independent monitors of the human rights situation in Qatar. There is a single trade union in the country, the General Union of Workers of Qatar, which is closed to foreign workers and the legal restrictions on the ability to strike further curtails the cause of workers’ rights. Professional associations are not banned, technically, but the hurdles, in terms of regulation and finance, largely deter their formation.²⁷¹

The Qatari state punishes “illicit sexual relations”, which covers activity between consenting adults such as same-sex interactions and adultery, and can also be interpreted to punish victims of sexual violence. Consumption of alcohol is punished by lashes. Citizenship continues to be denied to al-Murra, a tribe believed to have been involved in the attempted coup in 1996.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ El-Ghazzali, K., ‘Oral statement’, United Nations Human Rights Council, 22 September 2014, available at: <http://iheu.org/religious-law-prison-for-blasphemy-severe-sexual-inequality-qatars-human-rights-review/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁶⁹ ‘Freedom in the World 2017: Qatar’, *Freedom House*, 31 January 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/qatar>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁷⁰ ‘Country Reports: Qatar’, *U.S. Department of State*, 2010, available at: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171743.pdf>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁷¹ ‘Freedom in the World 2017: Qatar’, *Freedom House*, 31 January 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/qatar>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁷² ‘Annual Report 2012 – Qatar’, *Amnesty International*, 24 May 2012, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/4fbc391669.html, last visited: 15 October 2017.

Qatar formally retains the death penalty in legislation, including as a punishment for homosexuality²⁷³ and apostasy,²⁷⁴ though in practice it is rarely used.²⁷⁵

There is a 45-seat parliament in Qatar. It does not have much power and 15 of its seats are directly appointed by the emir, who wields executive authority on everything from foreign policy to the budget, checked only by familial and tribal barriers within the ruling family, the operations of whom are nearly totally opaque. The other 30 seats of the parliament are elected, but elections were postponed for three years in 2016. All candidates, when there are elections, must run as independents, because political parties are banned. There are local mechanisms of seeking redress, though the decreasing participation in municipal government suggests that such institutions are not an effective means of registering protest.²⁷⁶

The judiciary in Qatar is theoretically independent – as the state often reminds foreign interlocutors who ask why certain individuals have been freed despite accusations of terror-related offences – but in practice the courts adhere to the will of the political elite on matters that concern them. Arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture, were outlawed in 2002, but are still known to occur.²⁷⁷

4.2 Women's Rights

Qatar not only retains significant social inequality between the sexes, but has enshrined this in its legal code. A United Nations report in 2011 documented a number of these discrepancies:²⁷⁸

- Despite becoming a signatory to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* in 2009, Qatar retains reservations about the Convention on a number of articles, specifically: gender equality in domestic laws and policies; equality with regard to nationalities; equality before the law; and equality in marriage and family life. Qatar has raised these objections as national, traditional, religious and/or cultural matters, insisting the full implementation is incompatible with its nominally theocratic governing system, based on the interpretive method of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab;
- Having ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* in 1995, Qatar documented reservations about the applicability of certain provisions, which Doha said were inconsistent with the *shari'a* (Islamic law). Qatar later partially withdrew these objections, though retained them as regards “non-discrimination” and “freedom of thought and religion”. In 2001, Qatar signed onto the Optional Protocol of the CRC, banning the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, though initially with reservations about aspects of the Optional Protocol that might contradict the *shari'a*.

²⁷³ Bearak, M. and Cameron, D., 'Here are the 10 countries where homosexuality may be punished by death', *The Washington Post*, 16 June 2016, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/13/here-are-the-10-countries-where-homosexuality-may-be-punished-by-death-2/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁷⁴ Ohlheiser, A., 'There Are 13 Countries Where Atheism Is Punishable by Death', *The Atlantic*, 10 December 2013, available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/13-countries-where-atheism-punishable-death/355961/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁷⁵ 'Death Penalty Database: Qatar', *Cornell Law School*, available at: www.deathpenaltyworldwide.org/country-search-post.cfm?country=Qatar, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁷⁶ 'Freedom in the World 2017: Qatar', *Freedom House*, 31 January 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/qatar>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁷⁷ 'Freedom in the World 2017: Qatar', *Freedom House*, 31 January 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/qatar>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

²⁷⁸ 'Qatar Gender Equality Profile: Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa', *The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)*, 2011, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Qatar-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

Qatar is a signatory to the CRC Optional Protocol banning the use of child soldiers, and has never had reservations about it.

- A notable inequality in Qatari citizenship is that women who marry non-Qatari spouses cannot pass their Qatari citizenship to their husband or their children, while Qatari men can pass their citizenship foreign wives after five years of marriage and to their children.
- The right to divorce in Qatar is highly uneven between the sexes. Men may divorce their wives for any reason, whereas a Qatari woman can only divorce her husband under specified circumstances and bearing the burden of proof. If a female seeks divorce without evidence, she can attain one - only by surrendering her financial rights and returning her dowry, and even then only if the husband accedes to it. If the husband objects, mandatory reconciliation will be ordered by the state, which might later grant a divorce if it judges that the reconciliation has failed.
- The guardianship laws, which make the father the legal guardian of children, lead to discriminatory outcomes in custody battles. Should a divorced woman win custody of her children, such is only granted until the males are 13 and the females are 15. Qatari women have been, since 2007, able to travel abroad without the say-so of a male guardian, though drivers' licenses are still only available to women of a male relative permits it.
- The inheritance laws in Qatar grant women only half the share of men.²⁷⁹
- There are loopholes in the legal protections against child marriage. Though formally, the minimum age of marriage is eighteen for men and sixteen for women, courts can allow the marriage of under-age females if their male guardian permits it. Polygyny - the marriage of one man to numerous women - is legal in Qatar.
- The protections against gender-based violence are weak in Qatar. A 2006 law grants women the right to be free from physical and mental harm inflicted by a husband, but there is no specific legislation against domestic violence.²⁸⁰ Likewise, while rape is illegal, there is no law to address marital rape, and in practice the recognition of such is difficult. Most seriously, "honour" crimes are punished very lightly.

4.3 Labour Conditions

"We have been isolated because we are successful and progressive." So said the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs soon after the crisis with Qatar's neighbours erupted.²⁸¹

In relative terms, it can be noted that, as against its accusers, Qatar is considerably more politically open than Saudi Arabia²⁸² and Bahrain,²⁸³ though it is not significantly different to the United Arab Emirates²⁸⁴ or Egypt.²⁸⁵ It can also be added that Qatar does not have a record of attacks on

²⁷⁹ Beydoun, N.M. and Baum, J., *The Glass Palace: Illusions of Freedom and Democracy in Qatar* (Algora, 2012), p. 37-9.

²⁸⁰ 'Qatar: Events of 2015', *Human Rights Watch*, 2016, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/qatar>, last visited: 16 October 2017.

²⁸¹ Wintour, P., "There is no trust": Gulf states give up hope on Qatar', *The Guardian*, 9 June 2017, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/09/qatar-united-arab-emirates-diplomacy>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸² 'Country Profile: Saudi Arabia', *Freedom House*, 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/saudi-arabia>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸³ 'Country Profile: Bahrain', *Freedom House*, 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/bahrain>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸⁴ 'Country Profile: United Arab Emirates', *Freedom House*, 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/united-arab-emirates>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

peaceful demonstrators, as both Bahrain²⁸⁶ and Egypt do, let alone of sanguinary repression such as the massacre at Rabaa by the Egyptian state in 2013.²⁸⁷

Taken objectively, however, Qatar's record of defending domestic human rights and freedom is not impressive.

Probably the signal human rights failure of the Qatari government has been the conditions under which guest workers have labored in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Since late 2013, reports, first in the press,²⁸⁸ and then from human rights organisations,²⁸⁹ have documented that migrant workers, particularly from Nepal, Bangladesh, and India, who are doing most of the work to build the stadiums for the tournament, are subject to systematized abuse, including the withholding pay, coercion to work in the heat while being denied water, squalid living conditions in cramped camps, and the confiscation of passports upon arrival to prevent workers having the option to leave, even if they could somehow raise the cash to do so. This amounts to forced labour or, more polemically, slavery. Despite the exaggerations about the numbers of people these conditions have killed, the death toll among young men, screened specifically to ensure their fitness, is alarming.²⁹⁰

Qatar claims it has taken steps to rectify this situation.²⁹¹ But there is every indication that much remains to be done. The clearest example is work-related deaths. The number of such fatalities among Indian nationals in Qatar between 2011 and 2015 was an average of 255 per year. Since then, though cases continue to be reported, numbers have become more difficult to track because of steps, such as altering the process of issuing a death certificate, by which Doha seeks to suppress the availability of politically-harmful information.²⁹² The act of concealment is itself suggestive of what this evidence would show.

Qatar - and Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates - have also faced questions about an even more politically charged concern with their foreign labourer practices, namely the employment of North Korean citizens. About 6,000 North Koreans work in the Gulf: 2,500 in Kuwait, as many as 1,500 in the U.A.E., and 2,000 in Qatar. North Korean labourers are believed to have helped expand the Western airbases in the U.A.E. that are key to the anti-IS war. Within these expatriate communities are North Korean spies. More importantly, of the \$1,000 paid to workers each month, they only receive about \$200: \$300 goes to construction company managers, and around \$500 is taken by the North Korean regime. This lifeline of hard cash, which also comes in the form of restaurants in the U.A.E., helps undermine the sanctions imposed on Pyongyang over its nuclear-weapons policy.²⁹³

²⁸⁵ 'Country Profile: Egypt', *Freedom House*, 2017, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/egypt>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸⁶ 'Bahrain: Systematic Attacks on Medical Providers', *Human Rights Watch*, 18 July 2011, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/18/bahrain-systematic-attacks-medical-providers>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸⁷ 'Egypt: Rab'a Killings Likely Crimes against Humanity', *Human Rights Watch*, 12 August 2014, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/12/egypt-raba-killings-likely-crimes-against-humanity>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸⁸ Pattison, P., 'Revealed: Qatar's World Cup "slaves"', *The Guardian*, 25 September 2013, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/25/revealed-qatars-world-cup-slaves>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁸⁹ 'Qatar: End corporate exploitation of migrant construction workers', *Amnesty International*, 17 November 2013, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/11/qatar-end-corporate-exploitation-migrant-construction-workers/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁹⁰ Stephenson, W., 'Have 1,200 World Cup workers really died in Qatar?', *BBC*, 6 June 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33019838>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁹¹ 'Fifa World Cup 2022: Qatar "to act on worker rights"', *BBC*, 18 November 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24992982>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁹² 'Qatar: Take Urgent Action to Protect Construction Workers', *Human Rights Watch*, 27 September 2017, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/qatar-take-urgent-action-protect-construction-workers>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

²⁹³ Gambrell, J., 'Thousands of North Korean laborers in US-allied Gulf nations', *The Associated Press*, 28 July 2017, available at: <https://apnews.com/67a55cc6c21e41218770b98a9d5bdd89>, last visited: 22 October 2017.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no British interest in getting publicly embroiled in, let alone appearing to take sides in, the intra-Gulf dispute. Qatar is a British security partner, and an important source of foreign direct investment. There is, therefore, mutual interest in ensuring that Qatar is neither diplomatically isolated, nor economically weakened.

It is also true that the Saudi-led bloc has exaggerated and even fabricated charges against Qatar, as this paper has outlined; that under the cover of security concerns about Qatar's support for Islamists, the Quartet states are repressing dissent more generally; that the authoritarian counter-revolutionary trend the Quartet are leading, particularly in the case of Egypt, puts regional stability at risk at least as much as anything Qatar has done; and that on matters like terror-finance there are hypocrisies to be found.²⁹⁴ The timing of the Quartet's move was unfortunate, given the urgent crisis in trying to formulate a coordinated policy to contain and roll back the Iranian revolution.

Nonetheless, there has to be a recognition that a number of the accusations made against Qatar by the Quartet are legitimate, and British interests would be served if Doha addressed these issues.

Qatar is within the alliance camp and should therefore be afforded certain sensitivities that are not applicable to hostile governments. Moreover, Britain has well-established channels of communication with Qatar to deal with troubling policy issues, and Qatar has a record of being responsive to concerns raised in these diplomatic and intelligence channels.²⁹⁵

Qatar has taken some steps to address some of these issues already, notably the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the United States,²⁹⁶ the opening up of the Qatari banking system to U.S. Treasury officials, the amendment of laws to allow the use of evidence provided by foreign governments, and pressured HAMAS to accede to an Egypt-brokered reconciliation agreement with the Palestinian Authority and relinquishing points of strategic control in the Gaza Strip.²⁹⁷

Areas where London could press for more action include:

- **Neutralising designated terrorists.** Whether this involves arresting or expelling the individual will be handled case-by-case. A minimum interim step would be preventing such people appearing on state media.
- **Closing down terror finance.** This would include enforcing the laws on the books, ensuring that any legal loopholes are closed, and preventing the use of Qatari institutions

²⁹⁴ Weinberg, D., 'Qatar Is Worst In The Region On Counterterrorism, But Other Gulf Monarchies Are Not Off The Hook', *Huffington Post*, 2 August 2017, available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/qatar-is-worst-in-the-region-on-counterterrorism-but_us_598236b7e4b03d0624b0abcc, last visited: 6 November 2017.

²⁹⁵ Author interview, October 2017

²⁹⁶ The MOU signed between the U.S. and Qatar on 11 July 2017 did permit some additional technical measures to be taken by the U.S., though it was mostly a political instrument designed by the U.S. to help defuse Gulf tensions and promote reconciliation, Author interview, October 2017.

²⁹⁷ 'In Conversation with HE Adel al-Jubeir, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia (full session)' [19:00 to 21:00], *Chatham House*, 25 October 2017, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw4AWD_7Dl4, last visited: 6 November 2017.

by externally-based operatives, such as those al-Qaeda members operating in Iran under the protection of the revolutionary government. Very specifically, Doha has to be pressured to prevent any repeat of the ransom payments. Since Qatar has issues of capacity, as well as will, London can continue offering specialist and technical assistance in this area, which will also improve trust by giving greater transparency.

- **Curbing hate speech and incitement in the media.** Al-Jazeera has to be considered as part of Qatar's foreign policy, which makes it a matter than can be raised with the government. The argument from Doha that Al-Jazeera is independent and/or a matter of its own internal affairs is simply not credible. But there is still the difficulty that state regulation of the media is incompatible with a free media, and as such the British government cannot and must not press for such an outcome. Still, there is an argument to be made that allowing the wide dissemination and legitimization of jihadi narratives and ideology is a form of material support to these terrorist groups. Even if that argument cannot be made in a legalistic sense, it can be made politically and morally. And there are mechanisms of regulation – such as OFCOM – that avoid direct government control of the press and prior restraint, yet which can penalise and ultimately terminate channels that traffic in hatred and incitement. Some Al-Jazeera officials have expressed an openness to some form of “code of conduct”, though they insist that their critics at other Arab media stations are also bound by it.²⁹⁸

- **Continued pressure for improvements in human rights.** The notable issues are the status of women and the treatment of migrant workers. As Britain increases its engagement with the Gulf states after the vote to exit the European Union, this should be used as an opportunity to raise matters such as press and political freedom, which contribute to stability and thus a better market environment for British investors.

²⁹⁸ Author interview with a former U.S. diplomat in the region, 20 November 2017.

Appendix: Quartet List of “Qatar-linked” Individuals

The list of fifty-nine ostensibly Qatari-linked individuals designated as terrorists is documented below, with brief profiles of the individuals where possible, and an assessment of their links to the Qatari government, which range from clear to tenuous to unsubstantiated.

1. **Murtadha Majeed Ramadan Alawi (Murtadha Majeed al-Sindi) (Bahraini):** a senior member of the Bahrain-based, Iranian-backed militant group, Saraya al-Ashtar,²⁹⁹ though Alawi is actually based in Iran. The U.S. State Department designated Alawi as a terrorist in early 2017.³⁰⁰ There is no available evidence of a Qatari state connection with Alawi or Saraya al-Ashtar.
2. **Ahmad al-Hassan al-Daski (Bahraini)**
3. **Yusuf Abdullah al-Qaradawi (Egyptian):** one of the most prominent religious figures in the Sunni Muslim world, based in Qatar, and associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Qaradawi is featured regularly on Al-Jazeera Arabic and is one of the most individually contentious cases, with the Quartet states demanding he be removed from the airwaves.
4. **Tarek Abdulmaujood Ibrahim al-Zumar (Egyptian):** the secretary-general of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya’s political wing, currently residing in Qatar. Egypt has demanded al-Zumar’s extradition.
5. **Wajdi Abdulhamid Muhammad Ghonaim (Egyptian):** an Islamist preacher and supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, long a resident in Qatar and now under arrest in Turkey for extremist incitement.
6. **Yahya Aqeel Salman Aqeel (Egyptian):** a prominent Muslim Brother, it is alleged by the Quartet that Aqeel is involved in transferring instructions and money from Qatar to members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, a jihadi insurgent group in Aqeel’s native Sinai that swore allegiance to the Islamic State in September 2014.³⁰¹
7. **Mohamed Ahmed Shawqi al-Islambuli (Egyptian):** the younger brother of Khalid al-Islambuli, who murdered Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat in October 1981 and was executed in April 1982, Mohamed al-Islambuli has been involved in Islamist militancy since the 1980s, in Afghanistan against the Soviets and then against the regime in his native country. Driven from Egypt by the 1990s, al-Islambuli retained a senior role in al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya and became tied into al-Qaeda’s networks. In 2011, al-Islambuli was forced out of Iran, where many of al-Qaeda’s leaders were sheltered by the Islamic

²⁹⁹ Smyth, P., ‘Saraya al-Ashtar: Bahrain’s Illusive Bomb Throwers’, *Jihadology*, 4 March 2014, available at: jihadology.net/2014/03/04/hizballah-cavalcade-saraya-al-ashtar-bahrain-illusive-bomb-throwers/, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁰⁰ Orton, K., ‘Analysis: America Pushes Back Against Iranian Subversion on the Gulf’, *The Henry Jackson Society*, 17 March 2017, available at: henryjacksonsociety.org/2017/03/17/analysis-america-pushes-back-against-iranian-subversion-on-the-gulf/, last visited: 30 October 2017.

³⁰¹ Al-Hameed, A.A., ‘Profiles of five Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers’, *Al-Arabiya*, 11 June 2017, available at: english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/06/11/Profiles-of-five-Egyptians-on-the-terror-blacklist-issued-by-Arab-powers.html, last visited: 3 November 2017.

Republic after the fall of the Taliban, and was deported to Egypt where he was arrested.³⁰² Released in 2012 by the interim military junta, al-Islambuli was forced to flee Egypt again after the sanguinary military coup in 2013, ending up in Turkey, where he worked with various operatives affiliated with al-Qaeda,³⁰³ and possibly had a leading role in the so-called “Khorasan Group”, the external operations division of al-Qaeda’s branch in Syria.³⁰⁴ In February 2017, al-Islambuli spoke in Qatar at a Gamaa al-Islamiyya event mourning the death Umar Abdurrahman (“The Blind Shaykh”), who was convicted in the US of terrorism offences relating to the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre. Al-Islambuli spoke alongside other leaders of al-Hizb al-Banna wal-Tanmiya (The Construction and Development Party), the political wing of Gamaa al-Islamiyya, who are based in Qatar, and the whole event was carried live on Al-Jazeera Arabic.³⁰⁵

8. Muhammad Abdulmaqsud Muhammad Afifi (Egyptian): a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, who is accused of organising civil disobedience after the violent coup d’état in 2013 toppled the elected Brotherhood government. Afifi is now said by the Quartet to reside in Qatar and to have issued inciting and extreme fatwas.³⁰⁶
9. Muhammad al-Saghir Abdulrahim Muhammad (Egyptian): a staff member at Al-Azhar University and the endowments minister during the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, Muhammad is allegedly a member of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya and now moves between Qatar and Turkey.³⁰⁷
10. Ayman Ahmed Abdulghani Hassanein (Egyptian): an engineer and former member of the executive committee of the Muslim Brotherhood’s now-liquidated political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, Hassanein is accused of inciting riots on university campuses and of funding the Helwan Brigades, a small splinter group of the Brotherhood that engages in violence against the Egyptian state. Hassanein allegedly fled to Qatar after the Rabaa massacre.³⁰⁸
11. Assem Abdulmaged Mohamed Madi (Egyptian): said to be a member of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, involved in the assassination of Anwar al-Sadat, and currently resident in Qatar.³⁰⁹
12. Muhammad Hamada al-Sayed Ibrahim (Egyptian): a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, according to the Quartet, who escaped the savage massacre by the current Egyptian government at the Rabaa encampment, and now works from abroad to support the militant cells of the Brethren in Egypt.³¹⁰

³⁰² ‘Egypt arrests militant linked to string of attacks’, *Reuters*, 28 August 2011, available at: www.reuters.com/article/egypt-militant-idAFL5E7JS07R20110828, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁰³ Warrick, J., ‘Double game? Even as it battles ISIS, Turkey gives other extremists shelter’, *The Washington Post*, 10 July 2016, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/double-game-even-as-it-battles-isis-turkey-gives-other-extremists-shelter/2016/07/10/8d6ce040-4053-11e6-a66f-aa6c1883b6b1_story.html, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁰⁴ Temple-Raston, D., ‘Al-Qaida Reasserts Itself With Khorasan Group’, *NPR*, 3 October 2014, available at: www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/10/03/353498827/al-qaida-reasserts-itself-with-khorasan-group, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁰⁵ ‘A condolence gathering for Shaykh Umar Abdurrahman organised by the Egyptian Construction and Development Party’, *YouTube*, 21 February 2017, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0Z5_LmZ9Q, last visited: 27 October 2017.

³⁰⁶ ‘Your guide to Qatari-linked terrorist list revealed on Friday’, *Egypt Today*, 9 June 2017, available at: <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/7064/Your-guide-to-Qatari-linked-terrorist-list-revealed-on-Friday>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³⁰⁷ ‘Your guide to Qatari-linked terrorist list revealed on Friday’, *Egypt Today*, 9 June 2017.

³⁰⁸ ‘Your guide to Qatari-linked terrorist list revealed on Friday’, *Egypt Today*, 9 June 2017.

³⁰⁹ ‘Your guide to Qatari-linked terrorist list revealed on Friday’, *Egypt Today*, 9 June 2017.

³¹⁰ Al-Hameed, A.A., ‘Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?’, *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2017/06/13/Profiles-of-Egyptians-on-the-terror-blacklist-issued-by-Arab-powers.html>, last visited: 7 November 2017.

13. Abdurrahman Muhammad Shukri Abdurrahman (Egyptian): said to be a friend of Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Muhammad Badie, Abdurrahman is accused of organising a number of arson attacks against government buildings after the Rabaa massacre.³¹¹ It is not clear how Abdurrahman is supposed to be connected to Qatar.
14. Hussein Mohamed Reza Ibrahim Youssef (Egyptian): a Muslim Brotherhood member, according to the Quartet, and one of those who tried to protect the Brotherhood activists and civilians who gathered at Rabaa to peacefully protest the ouster of Egyptian president Muhammad Morsi by the Egyptian military.³¹² Where Youssef went after Cairo's mass-slaughter of the protesters in August 2013 and Youssef's connections to Qatar are unclear.
15. Ahmed Abdulhafiz Mahmud Abdelhadi (Egyptian): a Muslim Brother involved in financing the militant cells of the Brotherhood, such as Hasm, that emerged after the Rabaa atrocity by the Egyptian military, according to the Quartet.³¹³ A direct link to Qatar is not in evidence.
16. Muslim Fouad Tafran (Egyptian): a Muslim Brother involved in attacks on property and security forces in Egypt, according to the Quartet.³¹⁴ Any connection to Qatar remains opaque.
17. Ayman Mahmoud Sadeq Rifat (Egyptian): a Muslim Brother and member of parliament until the Sisi coup did away with elected state institutions, Rifat is accused by the Quartet of having orchestrated protests against the putschist authorities and of providing funding from the outside for militant cells of the Brotherhood.³¹⁵ Any link to Qatar is not visible on the current evidence.
18. Muhammad Saad Abdulnaim Ahmed (Egyptian)
19. Muhammad Saad Abdulmuttalib Abdo al-Razaki (Egyptian): a property manager for the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Razaki allegedly fled to Qatar after the Egyptian coup and from there has financed and incited violent Brotherhood groups, including Hasm.³¹⁶
20. Ahmed Fouad Ahmed Jad Beltaji (Egyptian): a radiologist - the owner of Sama Scan Centre - in Fayoum, where it is alleged he funded terrorist attacks by the Muslim Brotherhood.³¹⁷ It is not clear how Beltaji is connected to Qatar.
21. Ahmed Ragab Ragab Soliman (Egyptian): alleged to be involved in cells of the Muslim Brotherhood that have returned to violence in Egypt, and to have been sentenced to death for such activity.³¹⁸ There is no visible direct connection to Qatar.

³¹¹ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Profiles of five Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers', *Al-Arabiya*, 11 June 2017.

³¹² Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

³¹³ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

³¹⁴ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

³¹⁵ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Profiles of five Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers', *Al-Arabiya*, 11 June 2017.

³¹⁶ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Profiles of five Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers', *Al-Arabiya*, 11 June 2017.

³¹⁷ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Profiles of five Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers', *Al-Arabiya*, 11 June 2017.

³¹⁸ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

22. Karim Muhammad Muhammad Abdulaziz (Egyptian): the Muslim Brother responsible overseeing the violent campaign against the security forces in the Beheira Province of Egypt, according to the Quartet.³¹⁹ Abdulaziz's Qatari connections are not visible.
23. Ali Zaki Muhammad Ali (Egyptian)
24. Naji Ibrahim al-Azouli (Egyptian)
25. Shehata Fathi Hafez Muhammad Soliman (Egyptian)
26. Muhammad Muharram Fahmi Abu Zayd (Egyptian)
27. Amr Abdunasser Abdulhaq Abdulbari (Egyptian): accused of arson, terrorism, and murder on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood in the wake sanguinary clearance of the Rabaa and al-Nahda encampments.³²⁰ No evident Qatar links.
28. Ali Hassan Ibrahim Abduldhaher (Egyptian)
29. Abd al-Maliki Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam, a.k.a. Umar al-Qatari (Jordanian): the son of Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam (Abdul Aziz al-Qatari), Abd al-Malik facilitated the transfer of resources to Jabhat al-Nusra, and earlier worked with a Qatari national, Ibrahim al-Bakr, a US-designated terrorist, to move money and weapons for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, activities which landed Abd al-Malik on the US sanctions list.³²¹ Abd al-Malik holds Qatari identification papers.³²²
30. Ashraf Muhammad Yusef Othman Abd al-Salam (Jordanian): the brother of Abdulmalik,³²³ and an al-Qaeda member for more than a decade, previously providing support to IS when it was under al-Qaeda's banner and since 2014 in Syria fighting with Jabhat al-Nusra.³²⁴ Ashraf has residency rights in Qatar.³²⁵
31. Hajjaj bin Fahd Hajjaj Muhammad al-Ajmi (Kuwaiti): a haraki-salafi shaykh and one of the most prominent supporters of militant Islamists in Syria. Hajjaj al-Ajmi worked separately but in parallel with a younger relative, Shafi al-Ajmi, to fund Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in Syria. Hajjaj was a key funder for the August 2013 insurgent offensive – led by IS, al-Nusra, and Ahrar – into the Alawite-majority areas of Syria's coast that resulted in terrible atrocities.³²⁶ In August 2014, al-Ajmi was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury³²⁷ and the United Nations³²⁸ for funding al-Nusra. The U.S. designation noted

³¹⁹ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

³²⁰ Al-Hameed, A.A., 'Who are the Egyptians on the terror blacklist issued by Arab powers?', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017.

³²¹ 'Treasury Designates Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators', *US Department of Treasury*, 24 September 2014, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2651.aspx>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

³²² 'Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Adds Four Names to Its Sanctions List', *United Nations Security Council*, 23 January 2015, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11750.doc.htm>, last visited: 6 November 2017.

³²³ Weinberg, D.A., 'Qatar and Terror Finance Part II: Private Funders of al-Qaeda in Syria', *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, January 2017, available at: http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/11717_Weinberg_Qatar_Report.pdf, last visited: 15 October 2017.

³²⁴ 'Treasury Designates Twelve Foreign Terrorist Fighter Facilitators', *US Department of Treasury*, 24 September 2014.

³²⁵ 'Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Adds Four Names to Its Sanctions List', *United Nations Security Council*, 23 January 2015, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11750.doc.htm>, last visited: 6 November 2017.

³²⁶ Orton, K., 'Analysis: Western Allies and Terrorism Financing', *The Henry Jackson Society*, 18 March 2017, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2017/03/18/analysis-western-allies-and-terrorism-financing/>, last visited: 15 October 2017.

³²⁷ 'Treasury Designates Three Key Supporters of Terrorists in Syria and Iraq', *U.S. Department of Treasury*, 6 August 2014, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2605.aspx>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³²⁸ 'Hajjaj bin Fahd al-Ajmi: Narrative Summary of Reasons for Listing', *United Nations Security Council*, 15 August 2014, available at: https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa_sanctions_list/summaries/individual/hajjaj-bin-fahd-al-ajmi, last visited: 8 November 2017.

that al-Ajmi “travel[ed] regularly from Kuwait to Syria to engage in financial activity on behalf of [al-Nusra] and deliver money to the group”. Later that month, al-Ajmi moved from Qatar back to Kuwait, and was arrested for one day, before being released.³²⁹ Al-Ajmi largely disappeared from public view after this, though he continued to use Twitter – until October 2016, when representatives of certain Christian groups who accuse al-Ajmi of abetting genocidal violence against them served a writ against al-Ajmi on the platform.³³⁰

32. Hamid Abdullah Ahmed al-Ali (Kuwaiti): an Islamist cleric based in Kuwait, listed since 2006 by the US as an al-Qaeda facilitator,³³¹ and added to the United Nations sanctions list in 2008.³³² “Al-Ali’s efforts to promote radical ideology include the provision of material support for terrorist organisations, including those in Iraq that are affiliated with al-Qaeda.” He also accused of “recruiting for” al-Qaeda-affiliated cells in Kuwait. The UN states that he has issued fatwas justifying “the permissiveness, and sometimes necessity, of suicide operations on the conditions of crushing the enemy (or causing moral defeat to the enemy), to obtain victory”. In 2012, four years after he was designated, al-Ali was invited by the Qatari Ministry of Endowment to deliver the Friday sermon at the Qatar Grand Mosque in Doha.³³³ Al-Ali has voiced support for Qatar in its dispute with its neighbours.³³⁴
33. Hakim Ubaisan al-Hamedi al-Mutayri (Kuwaiti): a graduate in religious studies from Birmingham University, Hakim al-Mutayri founded the Umma Party in 2008, a transnational movement of political or activist (*haraki*) salafists.³³⁵ Most of Kuwait’s salafis fled to Saudi Arabia during the occupation by Saddam Husayn’s Iraq (1990-91), and in Saudi Arabia encountered the Sahwa movement that fused together traditional salafi concepts with the activist-revolutionary methods of the Muslim Brotherhood. Upon return to Kuwait, these salafis—such as al-Mutayri, Hamid al-Ali (also on the GCC list), and Abd al-Razzaq al-Shayji—brought these ideas with them.³³⁶ Al-Mutayri’s doctrine, in its call for the acceptance of elections as a vehicle to come to power, the removal of foreign troops and influence in the Gulf, and even recasting the Gulf monarchies as an ongoing legacy of Western colonialism, demonstrates the debt it owes to the thinking of the Brotherhood. Al-Mutayri endorsed an armed revolt in Syria in September 2011, at a time when the uprising was still largely peaceful, and later led the People’s Commission for the Support of the Syrian Revolution, which supported Islamist groups in Syria, apparently including units led by Libyan-Irishman Mahdi al-Harati. Al-Mutayri led the Commission with Irshad al-Hajri and the notorious haraki-salafi agitator and jihadist fundraiser, Hajjaj al-Ajmi. That body included Mubarak al-Ajji, a Qatari fundraiser for

³²⁹ ‘Kuwait releases detained cleric suspected of financing militants’, *Reuters*, 21 August 2014, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-kuwait-cleric/kuwait-releases-detained-cleric-suspected-of-financing-militants-idUSKBN0GL1X120140821>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³³⁰ Floum, J., ‘Social media: a tool or a risk for courtrooms?’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 November 2016, available at: www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Social-media-a-tool-or-a-risk-for-courtrooms-10592248.php, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³³¹ ‘Treasury Designations Target Terrorist Facilitators’, *US Department of Treasury*, 7 December 2006, available at: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp191.aspx>, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³³² ‘Hamid Abdalla Ahmad al-Ali’, *United Nations Security Council*, 16 January 2008, available at:

https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa_sanctions_list/summaries/individual/hamid-abdallah-ahmad-al-ali, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³³³ Qatar Dawa Ministry, Twitter post, 1 March 2012, available at: https://twitter.com/dawa_tweet/status/175270849597808642, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³³⁴ Al-Ali, H.A.A., Twitter post, 31 May 2017, available at: https://twitter.com/Hamed_AlAli/status/869955932549255168, last visited: 28 October 2017.

³³⁵ Al-Rasheed, M., ‘Kuwaiti activists targeted under GCC security pact’, *Al-Monitor*, 20 March 2015, available at: <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/saudi-gcc-security-dissident-activism-detention-opposition.html>, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³³⁶ Pall, Z., ‘Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant’, *Carnegie*, 7 May 2014, available at: carnegieendowment.org/2014/05/07/kuwaiti-salafism-and-its-growing-influence-in-levant-pub-55514, last visited: 5 November 2017.

Syrian Islamists.³³⁷ Al-Ajji was affirmed to be under al-Ajmi's supervision in Qatar, where al-Ajji made no secret of his adoration of Usama bin Ladin and his hatred of Shi'is, while soliciting donations for armed insurgents like Ahrar al-Sham in Syria.³³⁸ Another of al-Ajmi's cut-outs in Qatar, Shaqer al-Shahwani, worked for the Ministry of Endowments and preached regularly at the Grand Mosque.³³⁹

34. Ali Muhammad al-Salabi (Libyan): a cleric and a Muslim Brother, based in Qatar, who is probably the most important remaining conduit – albeit indirectly – between the Qatari ruling House and Islamist groups in Libya opposed to the proxies of the U.A.E. and Egypt.

35. Abdulkhakim Belhaj (Libyan): currently the leader of the Islamist al-Watan party, Belhaj did receive support from Qatar during the rebellion that brought down Qaddafi, though that support is much less now and Belhaj himself has been side-lined. While the Quartet surely do have concerns that Belhaj can again frustrate their projects in Libya in the future, the primary reason for Belhaj's inclusion on the list appears to be political. Bringing up Belhaj, who is well-known because of his role as the former emir of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, al-Qaeda's branch in Libya until its destruction in the 1990s, the Quartet tie Doha to al-Qaeda at one step removed (at best).

36. Mahdi al-Harati (Libyan): a Libyan-Irishman and former co-commander of the Tripoli Brigade, which was key in pulling down Qaddafi's regime and then moved onto Syria to participate in the revolution against Bashar al-Asad under the banner of Liwa al-Umma, al-Harati received money from donors based in, and working through, Qatar, at various points in the conflict. Al-Harati was at the softer end of the Islamist spectrum; his motivations for being in Syria were primarily as an extension of the anti-authoritarian wave that had toppled the dictator in his home country.³⁴⁰

37. Ismail Muhammad al-Salabi (Libyan): a militia commander in Libya and Muslim Brother, whose clerical sibling, Ali, works to provide spiritual and temporal support that is usually channelled through Ismail.

38. Sadiq Abdurrahman Ali al-Ghariyani (Libyan): the grand mufti of Libya since 2012, al-Ghariyani had been in Britain, where he completed a PhD at Exeter University, until August 2014 when he fled to Qatar after the Home Office began examining broadcasts made by al-Ghariyani in support of the coup in Tripoli against the elected government by the Islamist militias in the Libya Dawn coalition. Al-Ghariyani is said to have made transmissions in support of the Islamist takeover via Tanasuh TV, a Libya-based television channel, and on his website, Tanasuh.com, which is registered to his son's terraced house near Exeter city centre.³⁴¹ Al-Ghariyani's fatwas and statements – on

³³⁷ Dickinson, E., 'Playing with Fire: Why Private Gulf Financing for Syria's Extremist Rebels Risks Igniting Sectarian Conflict at Home', *Brookings Institution*, December 2013, pp. 6, 9-10, available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/private-gulf-financing-syria-extremist-rebels-sectarian-conflict-dickinson.pdf>, last visited: 4 November 2017.

³³⁸ Dickinson, E., 'The Case Against Qatar', *Foreign Policy*, 30 September 2014, available at: foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/30/the-case-against-qatar/, last visited: 4 November 2017.

³³⁹ Gilligan, A., 'The "Club Med for terrorists"', *The Telegraph*, 27 September 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/qatar/11125897/The-Club-Med-for-terrorists.html>, last visited: 4 November 2017.

³⁴⁰ Fitzgerald, M., 'The Syrian Rebels' Libyan Weapon', *Foreign Policy*, 9 August 2012, available at: foreignpolicy.com/2012/08/09/the-syrian-rebels-libyan-weapon/, last visited: 4 November 2017.

³⁴¹ Halliday, J., Stepgen, C., Morris, S., 'Libya's spiritual leader leaves UK after directing Islamist takeover of Tripoli', *The Guardian*, 31 August 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/31/libya-spiritual-leader-leaves-uk-islamist-tripoli-exeter>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

everything from matters of personal status to Libyan politics – have long been on the extreme end of the spectrum. Several months after he left Britain, the Home Office completed its review of al-Gharyani’s broadcasts and issued a Risk and Liaison Overseas Network (RALON) order, banned al-Gharyani from returning for fostering hatred and promoting terrorism.³⁴² Where al-Gharyani is now is unclear: he was said to have travelled to Turkey soon after landing in Qatar in 2014, and rumours have placed al-Gharyani in Libya at various times.

39. Abdurrahman bin Umayr al-Nuaymi (Qatari): the most recognisable Qatar-based figure in the web of Gulf financiers to al-Qaeda in Syria because of the sanctions levied against him by the United States. Al-Nuaymi is a long-time funder of al-Qaeda, working in tandem with al-Qaeda’s Iran-based network headed by Ezedine Abdel Aziz Khalil (Yasin al-Suri), directing funds to the jihadi group’s branches in Somalia and Yemen in years past, as well as to the IS movement in Iraq, both when it was openly under al-Qaeda’s banner and during the period of ambiguity between 2006 and 2013. Al-Nuaymi is deeply tied to the Qatari government, serving as a history professor at Qatar University until 2009, despite prior legal trouble for being an extremist; heading up the Qatar Football Association; and running various charities connecting to the ruling House in Qatar. Al-Nuaymi tweeted his support of Qatar after the crisis began in June 2017, suggesting he is still free.
40. Salim Hasan Khalifa Rashid al-Kuwari (Qatari): a financier and facilitator for al-Qaeda based in Qatar, funnelling money and operatives from Ezedine Khalil’s Iran-based al-Qaeda network. Al-Kuwari is presumed to be at liberty since no counter-announcement has been made.
41. Abdullah Ghanim Mafuz Muslim al-Khawar (Qatari): a collaborator with Salim al-Kuwari to finance and facilitate al-Qaeda’s operations between Afghanistan, through Iran, to the Arab world. Believed to be freely operating in Qatar with a passport and national identification papers.
42. Khalifa Muhammad Turki al-Subaiy (Qatari): a financier and facilitator for al-Qaeda, including working with Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, the operational planner of the 9/11 massacre. Al-Subaiy was once arrested in Qatar, but was released. Al-Subaiy at times provided funds to Abdulmalik Muhammad Yusuf Abd al-Salam (Umar al-Qatari), and worked with Abdulmalik’s brother, Ashraf Muhammad Yusuf Uthman Abd al-Salam, to send money to al-Qaeda in Pakistan in the mid-2000s. Supposedly under a travel ban, al-Subaiy’s passport was renewed by Qatar in 2017.
43. Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Attiyah (Qatari): once a member of the Qatar Olympic Committee, al-Attiyah is closely connected to Qatar’s elite – he is a cousin of Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah, Qatar’s former energy minister and deputy prime minister, who went on to oversee the anti-terrorism and -money laundering “administrative control and transparency agency”. Abdulaziz al-Attiyah was openly involved in the Madad Ahl al-Sham, which Jabhat al-Nusra told its members to get behind; praised Usama bin Ladin publicly

³⁴² Halliday, J. and Stephen, S., ‘Libya’s highest spiritual leader banned from UK over support of Islamists’, *The Guardian*, 30 October 2014, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/30/libya-spiritual-leader-banned-uk-islamists>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

on his Twitter page; and is accused of delivering \$20,000 in person to Abdulmalik Muhammad Yusuf Abd al-Salam. Al-Attiyah remains at large in Qatar.

44. Ibrahim Issa al-Hajji Muhammad al-Bakr (Qatari): also a collaborator with Abdulmalik al-Salam, al-Bakr was designated as a global terrorist by the Treasury Department in July 2015 for al-Qaeda fundraising activity back to the early 2000s. Al-Bakr transferred significant quantities of money through Qatar from the Iran-based al-Qaeda network to the branches in the Arab world. In 2006, al-Bakr is alleged to have planned terrorist strikes against US military installations in Qatar. There is no clarity about al-Bakr's current location; he could be in the Middle East or Southeast Asia.
45. Abdullatif bin Abdallah Salih Muhammad al-Kawari (Qatari): a Qatar-based financier and security official for al-Qaeda. Al-Kawari once provided a false passport for Mustafa Khan (Hassan Ghul), the point-man for al-Qaeda "central" in its dealings with the IS movement until his capture in 2004. Al-Kawari was sanctioned at the same time as al-Bakr for, among other things, his involvement in the Madad Ahl al-Sham campaign that sent money to Jabhat al-Nusra.
46. Sa'd bin Sa'd Muhammad Shariyan al-Ka'bi (Qatari): sanctioned by the US Treasury at the same time as al-Bakr and al-Kawari, al-Ka'bi was a staff member at Madad Ahl al-Sham and had his name and number on most of the promotional literature.
47. Abdul Raheem Ahmad al-Haram (Qatari): the Quartet says al-Haram is a close associate of Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani, a member of the ruling House in Qatar known for extremist connections.³⁴³
48. Muhammad Jassim al-Sulaiti (Qatari): the Quartet accuse al-Sulaiti of being an "aide" to Khalifa al-Subaiy, and thus involved in the financing of al-Qaeda in Syria. In service of jihadi financing, al-Sulaiti is also accused of links to Sa'd al-Ka'bi and Abdullatif al-Kawar.³⁴⁴
49. Jaber bin Nasser al-Marri (Qatari)
50. Muhammad Saeed bin Helwan al-Saqatri (Qatari)
51. Khalifa bin Muhammad al-Rabban (Qatari): an important business tycoon in Qatar, the manager of Al-Rabban Holding Company and Qatar Primary Materials Company (QPMC). Al-Rabban was also one of the founders of al-Karama, an Islamist advocacy organisation based in Switzerland that poses as a human rights group. Al-Karama's consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was recently revoked amid the allegations of connections to terrorism. Among the founders of al-Karama were Abdurrahman al-Nuaymi and Abdulwahhab al-Humayqani, both of them sanctioned for terrorist finance by the US Treasury. Al-Rabban has alleged ties to Safar al-

³⁴³ 'Know the ruling Qatari family member who supported al-Qaeda', *Al-Arabiya*, 13 June 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2017/06/13/Know-the-ruling-Qatari-family-member-who-supported-Al-Qaeda.html>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³⁴⁴ 'On the terror list: Mohammed Jassim al-Sulaiti, an al-Qaeda associate', *Al-Arabiya*, 12 June 2017, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/06/12/Who-is-Mohammed-Jassim-al-Sulaiti.html>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

Hawali, a Saudi cleric and leader of the Sahwa movement that combined political Islam with Wahhabism – one of the building blocks of the jihadi-salafist movement.

52. Abdullah bin Khalid al-Thani (Qatari): a former Qatari interior minister and a prominent member of the Qatari royal family, Abdullah al-Thani is a known collaborator with extremists. It was at al-Thani's suggestion in 1993, when he was the minister for endowments and Islamic affairs, that Khalid Shaykh Muhammad moved to Qatar. Al-Thani is accused of tipping off KSM when U.S. authorities tried to seize him in Qatar in the early 1990s, and al-Thani allegedly bankrolled KSM when he moved on to jihad in Bosnia. Al-Thani also supposedly met Usama bin Ladin himself, twice, between 1996 and 2000. Al-Thani was known to shelter and facilitate other jihadists passing through Qatar.³⁴⁵ Al-Thani nominally remained in place at the head of the interior ministry until June 2013, but he had been contained and marginalised long before that; the failure to formally remove him related to sensitive matters of tribal politics among the Qatari elite.³⁴⁶
53. Mubarak Muhammad al-Ajji (Qatari): functioned as the Qatari wing of Hajjaj al-Ajmi's operation, which funded Islamists in Syria, including Jabhat al-Nusra. Al-Ajji made no secret of his affinity for Usama bin Ladin, nor his hatred of Shi'is.
54. Ali bin Abdullah al-Suwaydi (Qatari): the managing director of the Shaykh Eid bin Mohammed al-Thani Charitable Foundation, which has been accused of supporting terrorism and extremism, including in Europe. Al-Suwaydi rejected any links between the Eid charity and terrorism, noting that Abdurrahman al-Nuaymi had not been on the board since 1999.³⁴⁷
55. Hashim Saleh Abdullah al-Awadhi (Qatari): a board member of the Eid Charity Foundation and a businessman in control of the Retaj Hotels and Hospitality real estate company. Al-Awadhi's son, Muhammad bin Hashim al-Awadhi, was killed fighting for Islamist insurgents in Syria.
56. Hamad Abdullah al-Fattis al-Mari (Qatari)
57. Abdallah Muhammad Sulayman al-Muhaysini (Saudi): a senior official for a long time in al-Qaeda in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra,³⁴⁸ al-Muhaysini has left al-Nusra since its evolution into Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.³⁴⁹ Al-Muhaysini has issued genocidal incitements against Alawites.³⁵⁰ At the public outbreak of the crisis, al-Muhaysini did put out a message in support of Qatar,³⁵¹ and it is conceivable that al-Muhaysini was one channel of communication between Doha and al-Nusra/HTS.

³⁴⁵ Weinberg, D.A., 'Qatar and Terror Finance, Part I: Negligence', *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, December 2014, pp. 11-12, available at: https://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/publications/Qatar_Part_I.pdf, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³⁴⁶ Author interview, October 2017

³⁴⁷ 'Ali Al Suwaydi: Eid Charity Foundation is a humanitarian organization, and it condemns terrorism in all its forms', *Shaykh Eid bin Mohammed al-Thani Charitable Foundation*, June 2017, available at: <https://www.eidcharity.net/en/site/web/index.php?page=article&id=2302#.WgOuCsZl9PY>, last visited: 8 November 2017.

³⁴⁸ Orton, K., 'Analysis: America Escalates the War Against Al-Qaeda in Syria', *The Henry Jackson Society*, 11 November 2016, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2016/11/11/america-escalates-the-war-against-al-qaeda-in-syria/>, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁴⁹ Orton, K., 'The Campaign to Weaken An Al-Qaeda-Affiliated Group in Syria', *The Syrian Intifada*, 12 September 2017, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2017/09/12/the-campaign-to-weaken-an-al-qaeda-affiliated-group-in-syria/>, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁵⁰ Heller, S., 'Abdullah al-Muheisini Weighs in on Killing of Alawite Women and Children', *Jihadology*, 12 May 2015, available at: jihadology.net/2015/05/12/guest-post-abdullah-al-muheisini-weighs-in-on-killing-of-alawite-women-and-children/, last visited: 3 November 2017.

³⁵¹ Orton, K., 'Al-Qaeda-Linked Jihadi in Syria Comments on the Gulf Crisis', *The Syrian Intifada*, 6 June 2017, available at: <https://kyleorton1991.wordpress.com/2017/06/06/al-qaeda-linked-jihadi-in-syria-comments-on-the-gulf-crisis/>, last visited: 13 October 2017.

58. Hassan Ahmed Hassan Muhammad al-Doqi al-Houti (Emirati): accused by the Quartet of forming a secret Muslim Brotherhood organisation within the U.A.E. and being involved in recruitment for, and the commission of, terrorist attacks.³⁵² Any Qatar link is not evident.
59. Abdulwahhab Muhammad Abdurrahman al-Humayqani (Yemeni): ran a charity in Yemen that supported AQAP, facilitating financial transfers to AQAP within Yemen and from neighbouring Saudi Arabia. Al-Humayqani was sanctioned by the US Treasury alongside Abdurrahman al-Nuaymi, from whom he also received money. Al-Humayqani occupied a senior post within AQAP and acted as a public spokesman.³⁵³

Simultaneously, the Quartet designated twelve entities it claimed were associated with Qatar.

Five of these entities were in Qatar itself:

1. Qatar Volunteer Center, Qatar
2. Doha Apple Company (Internet and Technology Support Company), Qatar
3. Qatar Charity, Qatar
4. Sheikh Eid Al Thani Charity Foundation, Qatar
5. Sheikh Thani bin Abdullah Foundation for Humanitarian Services, Qatar

One was in Libya, and as the report makes clear has *some* connections to Qatar:

6. Saraya al-Dafa al-Benghazi (The Benghazi Defence Brigades), Libya

And six of the entities were in Bahrain, and the evidence of a Qatari connection is lacking:

7. Saraya Al-Ashtar, Bahrain
8. February 14 Coalition, Bahrain
9. The Resistance Brigades, Bahrain
10. Hezbollah Bahrain, Bahrain
11. Saraya Al-Mukhtar, Bahrain
12. Harakat Ahrar Bahrain, Bahrain

³⁵² 'Your guide to Qatari-linked terrorist list revealed on Friday', *Egypt Today*, 9 June 2017.

³⁵³ 'Treasury Designates Al-Qa'ida Supporters in Qatar and Yemen', *US Department of Treasury*, 18 December 2013.

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