# Qatari Mediation in a Changing Global Landscape after the 7 October War

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## Introduction

Over the course of just three decades, Qatar has become a leading actor in conflict mediation on the global stage. Starting in the 1990s and intensifying in the mid-2000s, the country has mediated in numerous regional and international conflicts and crises, establishing Doha as a major centre of dialogue and diplomacy. Since 2020, Qatar has engaged in efforts to resolve disputes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Somalia in Africa, between the United States and Venezuela in Latin America and over Taliban rule in Afghanistan in Central and South Asia. Its path offers valuable insight into the changing landscape of global mediation, particularly the growing influence of small states and the opportunities arising from the shift towards a more multipolar world order.

The rapidly transforming regional and global political landscape since the outbreak of the 7 October War in the Gaza Strip has had major implications for Qatar's evolving role in conflict mediation. Qatar led the multiparty mediation between Hamas and Israel, bringing unprecedented attention to the country's peacemaking profile. Qatari mediation was also instrumental in de-escalating the Iran-Israel "12-Day War". These and other mediation roles have gained prominence in an increasingly high-stakes geopolitical landscape marked by great power competition, rising nuclear risks and the looming threat of all-out war in the Middle East.

This chapter provides an analysis of Qatar's evolution as a mediator in this changing global environment. It begins with a brief overview of its mediation trajectory over the past three decades.

## Qatar's Trajectory as a Mediator

Qatar has become one of the most proactive mediators globally, transforming from a small Gulf state with a low diplomatic profile into a leading global mediator.[1] Its trajectory in peacemaking has progressed from an initial phase involving mediation efforts in Lebanon and Darfur (2006–2010), through a decade of strategic reorientation during the Arab Spring

[1] Sansom Milton and Ghassan Elkahlout, *Gulf to Global: The Rise of Qatar in Conflict Mediation* (London, Hurst Publishers, 2025).

and the Gulf Crisis (2011–2020), to a post-2020 re-emergence as an effective mediator operating in an increasingly multipolar and dynamic global landscape.

## Emergence of Qatari mediation

In the early 2000s, Qatar engaged in several high-profile mediation initiatives. It helped broker a ceasefire between the Yemeni government and the Houthis in 2007–2008, hosted talks that successfully resolved the Lebanese presidential crisis in 2008 and led multiparty mediation efforts between the Sudanese government and various rebel groups in Darfur.[2] As it took on more cases, Qatar was perceived as a culturally attuned mediator with diplomatic influence and financial resources, enhancing its potential as an intermediary. At the same time, Qatari mediation also came to be seen as lacking institutional capacities and prone to opportunism, often undertaken without addressing the underlying causes of conflicts.

Qatar's rise as a mediator was enabled by multiple factors, including its abundant resources, strategic investments, the active involvement of its leadership in diplomacy, an ambitious foreign policy, perception of Qatari neutrality and a long-term domestic transformation. Driven by LNG exports, the Qatari economy grew at a remarkable rate from the 1990s onwards. By 2006, Qatar was the world's leading exporter of LNG, which enabled it to pursue ambitious development projects across different sectors, with significant investments in education, culture and sports. Domestic security was also strengthened with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US in 1992 and later the establishment of Al Udeid Air Base in 1996, which allowed Doha to pursue a more independent foreign policy in the Gulf region.

This growing strategic autonomy created the diplomatic space for Qatar to pursue an active mediation agenda, distinct from that of other actors in the region. As such, it was well-positioned to establish and maintain communication channels with both state and non-state actors such as Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Taliban. By cultivating diplomatic ties and maintaining an impartial stance, Qatar emerged as a sought-after mediator in an increasing number of conflicts and crises. Gradually, mediation became a cornerstone of its foreign policy, as it built credibility and carved out a distinct niche in contemporary international relations. While Qatar's proactive diplomacy enabled it to take on prominent roles in mediation, its financial and institutional resources helped it establish an extensive role in providing humanitarian aid, development assistance and post-conflict reconstruction support, which was sometimes used strategically alongside its mediation efforts.

## Mediation during the Arab Spring and the Gulf Crisis

The Arab Spring, which began in late 2010, had a profound impact on the trajectory of Qatari foreign policy. Doha provided backing to the revolutionaries demanding political and socioeconomic change and also mobilized support for the uprisings through Al Jazeera media network. Qatar's neutrality and policy of non-intervention were challenged by regional dynamics and came to be characterized as proactive and interventionist.[3]

The Arab Spring upended the regional landscape, and Qatar became embroiled in the

[2] Robert F. Worth, "Qatar, playing all sides, is a nonstop mediator", *The New York Times*, 9 July 2008. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/09/world/middleeast/09qatar.html (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[3] Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *Qatar and the Arab Spring* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014).

political dynamics of many crises in which it might have otherwise been called upon to mediate. These changing geopolitical shifts gave rise to bitter internal competition within the Gulf, leading to the blockade of Qatar from 2017 to 2021. From 2011 to 2020, mediation was no longer the central activity of Qatari foreign policy, although the country did not abandon its practice altogether. Instead, Qatar maintained its diplomatic engagement in several key crises, notably through the establishment of the political offices of Hamas and the Taliban, in addition to continuing to broker prisoner releases and mediate localized conflicts in Libya, Syria and elsewhere. Qatar also continued to support the Darfur peace process through aid and subsequent attempts to garner additional signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which belied narratives of Qatar's short-termism.

While the overall geopolitical climate was unfavourable for Qatar to play a significant role as a mediator, it nonetheless quietly built institutional infrastructure. It established the Office of the Special Envoy for Counterterrorism and Mediation in Conflict Resolution in 2016 and invested in non-state capacities, including the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies that same year. For Qatari mediation, this period was part of a strategic shift towards longer-term engagement and a more institutionalized mediation structure, which kept Doha on the map as a diplomatic hub.[4]

## Re-emergence of Qatari mediation in the 2020s

Building on the institutional foundations laid during the Arab Spring and Gulf Crisis, Qatar has deepened and expanded its mediation architecture. Since the 2020 US-Taliban agreement, a long-term approach has become a defining aspect of Qatari mediation. Marking the end of almost two decades of US military involvement in Afghanistan, the agreement was the result of years of sustained diplomatic engagement through close coordination with the US, the United Nations and other actively involved states, such as Germany and Norway.

Since then, Qatar has provided mediation assistance in a wide range of contexts, including in tensions between Somalia and Kenya, the Somali presidential crisis, the political agreement in Chad, talks to kickstart the Libyan political process and an agreement between the DRC and Rwanda. Several of those post-2020 processes involved the US as a major party to the negotiations, such as the US-Venezuela talks and US-Iran prisoner releases. Qatar has thus re-emerged as a top global mediator since the Afghanistan agreement.

These achievements would not have been possible without Qatari leadership, which envisioned and implemented the steady transformation of the country's mediation strategy. Unlike in the 2000s, when limited staffing, logistics and on-the-ground capacity constrained its ability to sustain engagement, monitor agreements or accept all offers to mediate,[5] Qatar has since built more institutional depth to match its ambitions. The expanded mediation portfolio in the 2020s witnessed the active involvement of professionalized and experienced staff, cross sector coordination within Qatar and agile cooperation with international actors. Qatar has successfully mobilized whole-of-society efforts for multifaceted conflict response, as seen in the humanitarian evacuations from Afghanistan after the takeover of Kabul by the

[4] Sansom Milton, Ghassan Elkahlout and Sana Tariq, "Qatar's evolving role in conflict mediation", *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 30, No. 1 (2025), pp. 53–77.

[5] Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari foreign policy", *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 65, No. 4 (September 2011), pp. 539–556.

Taliban, as well as in the Gaza Strip.[6]

Most notably, Qatar has been called upon to serve as a key mediator in response to the Israeli war in Gaza since 7 October 2023. Since 2014, Qatar has operated in the multiparty mediation architecture for the Gaza Strip alongside Egypt, the US and the UN. The post-2023 attempts to reach a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have brought global attention to Qatari mediation and with it, persistent smear campaigns by some Israeli and US media and politicians intent on tarnishing Qatar's reputation.

## The Gaza Genocide

The war in Gaza has become one of the defining issues of our time. Previously deemed a peripheral theatre in the broader Middle East conflict, it has moved to the forefront of international diplomatic and humanitarian attention. The military campaign launched by Israel in response to the 7 October attack has escalated into what many international experts and scholars have described as a genocide, killing over 65,000 people in Gaza, destroying more than 90 per cent of the infrastructure and displacing the entire population.[7] Qatar has maintained a consistent and principled stance on the war, both condemning Israel's atrocities and maintaining communication channels with all sides as negotiations ebb and flow.

Qatar played a key role in reducing tensions between Israel and Hamas. Throughout the war in Gaza, a multiparty mediation framework was employed, with Qatar primarily coordinating with Egypt and the US.[8] Qatar leveraged the presence of the Hamas political office in Doha and years of experience mediating between Hamas and Israel to broker ceasefires and push for de-escalation. It adopted a highly centralized approach led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Amiri Diwan and several advisors.

As a result of the multiparty mediation efforts, a four-day ceasefire took effect on 24 November 2023,[9] although the agreement collapsed as Israel resumed its daily assaults on civilians in Gaza. Mediation efforts persisted nevertheless, aiming to establish a longer-term ceasefire. The framework proposed in May 2024 by Qatar, Egypt and the US laid the foundation for a ceasefire in January 2025 based on a three-phase plan.[10] That ceasefire, too, collapsed after Israel resumed bombardments, continuing to decimate infrastructure across the Gaza

[6] Sansom Milton and Ghassan Elkahlout, "Qatar's multifaceted humanitarian role in Afghanistan since August 2021", *Development Policy Review*, vol. 43, No. 1 (2025).

[7] UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, "UNRWA situation report #182 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Including East Jerusalem", 1 August 2025. Available at https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-182-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[8] Bethan McKernan, "US, Qatar and Egypt call on Israel and Hamas to resume urgent ceasefire talks", *The Guardian*, 9 August 2024. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/09/israel-gaza-war-ceasefire-talks-us-qatar-egypt (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[9] Isabel DeBre, "In West Bank, Palestinians rejoice over release of women and minors from Israeli Prisons", PBS News, 25 November 2023. Available at https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/in-west-bank-palestinians-rejoice-over-release-of-women-and-minors-from-israeli-prisons (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[10] The New Arab, "What is the Israel-Hamas Gaza ceasefire deal presented by Joe Biden?" 1 June 2024. Available at https://www.newarab.com/news/what-gaza-ceasefire-deal-presented-joe-biden (accessed on 25 November 2025).

Strip and killing civilians seeking aid, while creating famine-like conditions.[11] In the days leading up to the collapse, Qatar and Egypt intensified their diplomatic efforts in a last-ditch attempt to preserve the agreement, but to no avail.[12] In parallel, Qatar continued to work with international partners to address the worsening humanitarian crisis, as demonstrated by the UK–Qatar Joint Humanitarian Framework for Gaza[13] and the direct delivery of Qatari aid through the World Food Programme via the Rafah and Zikim crossings in late July 2025 amid widespread starvation in Gaza.[14]

Qatar's role in multiparty mediation in Gaza drew unprecedented attention to the country's diplomatic efforts. While Qatari mediation often occurred behind the scenes during other conflicts, the Gaza genocide was covered daily in the global media. In the context of the 7 October War, consistent attacks originating from US and Israeli media have accused Qatar of spreading propaganda supporting Hamas and inciting anti-Israel rhetoric through Al Jazeera, while claims re-emerged that Qatari humanitarian aid to Gaza was a cover for bankrolling Hamas.[15]

Commenting on the criticism by Israeli officials and some US politicians, Majed Al-Ansari, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, noted that there is a "political cost" to acting as a third party in conflict resolution. He emphasized, however, that Qatar, remained committed to the mediation process and that "campaigns of distortion and political pressure will not deter Qatar from standing with oppressed peoples, defending the rights of civilians regardless of background and upholding international law without selectivity or exception".[16] Overall, the post-7 October landscape has drawn greater public attention to Qatar's mediation efforts, bringing with it criticism and highlighting Qatar's role in peacemaking.

[11] Merve Gül Aydoğan Ağlarcı, "UN reports nearly 400,000 displaced after Gaza ceasefire collapse", Anadolu Agency, 7 April 2025. Available at https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/un-reports-nearly-400-000-displaced-after-gaza-ceasefire-collapse/3530910 (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[12] Lazar Berman and Jacob Magid, "Witkoff lands in Doha as talks resume with aim of extending fragile Gaza truce", *The Times of Israel*, 11 March 2025. Available at https://www.timesofisrael.com/witkoff-lands-in-doha-as-talks-resume-with-aim-of-extending-fragile-gaza-truce/ (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[13] Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Qatar, UK send first joint humanitarian aid shipment to Gaza", 25 January 2025. Available at https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/1445/07/13/qatar-uk-send-first-joint-humanitarian-aid-shipment-to-gaza (accessed on 25 November 2025); Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Second Qatar-UK strategic dialogue 2025 joint communiqué: partners for the future", 27 April 2025. Available at https://mofa.gov.qa/en/latest-articles/statements/second-qatar-uk-strategic-dialogue-2025-joint-communiqu%C3%A9--partners-for-the-future (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[14] Qatar News Agency, "49 Qatari aid trucks Arrive in Egypt, Jordan on way to Gaza Strip", 27 July 2025. Available at https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2025-7/27/49-qatari-aid-trucks-arrive-in-egypt-jordan-on-way-to-gaza-strip (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[15] Barak Mendelsohn, "Understanding Qatar's relationship with Hamas: a critical exploration of state sponsored terrorism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (July 2025), pp. 1–22; Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, "Israel's campaign against Qatar over its support for Gaza and a ceasefire", 24 February 2025. Available at https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/the-israeli-campaign-against-qatar-because-of-its-role-in-supporting-gaza-and-the-ceasefire.aspx (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[16] Asmahan Qarjouli, "Qatar slams Netanyahu's 'inflammatory' remarks on mediation efforts", Doha News, 4 May 2025. Available at https://dohanews.co/qatar-hits-back-at-netanyahus-inflammatory-remarks-over-its-mediation-efforts (accessed on 25 November 2025).

## New Responsibilities in a Global Crisis Landscape

The post-7 October landscape has drastically reshaped the geopolitical and security dynamics of the Middle East. The devastation in Gaza has created an urgency to promptly resolve the conflict, underscoring Qatar's peacemaking role in the process. Qatar's diplomatic power has come as a surprise to some observers. Its cultivation of long-standing relationships with both state and non-state actors in the region, expertise in ceasefire negotiations and provision of humanitarian assistance elevate mediation beyond a mere survival strategy for Qatar to a critical contribution to global peace and security. Qatar's rise as a sought-after mediator in high-stakes crises has been praised worldwide, but it also means the country must carefully navigate a delicate path, taking on new and unexpected responsibilities.

## Qatar amid Iran-Israel conflict

Qatar undertook a high-stakes mediation initiative between Iran and Israel during the 12-Day War. Its acceptance as an intermediary was facilitated by Qatar's quiet diplomacy in US-Iran talks over the renewal of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was seen as providing a solid platform for its role as a mediator. Qatar and Oman were reportedly in contact with both sides, calling for de-escalation.[17] The involvement of the US in the attacks and its bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities posed a significant risk to the neighbouring Gulf states. Qatar itself came under attack when Iran launched missiles at the Al Udeid Air Base, the majority of which were intercepted.[18] In response to this attack and violation of its sovereignty, Qatar proceeded with a diplomatic approach to resolve the conflict between Iran and Israel.[19] In an effort to avert escalation, a preceding round of face-to-face diplomatic communication was convened in Geneva between Iran's foreign minister and diplomats from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the European Union on 20 June, but it yielded no immediate, concrete results.[20] Qatar's diplomatic efforts following the attack led to a ceasefire, earning praise from Iran, the US and the broader diplomatic community. The approach adopted by Qatar demonstrated that prospects for regional peace can be advanced through dialogue and mediation.

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[17] Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "Iran appeals to Qatar, Oman to revive nuclear talks", 15 June 2025. Available at https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/06/15/iran-appeals-to-qatar-oman-to-revive-nuclear-talks/ (accessed on 25 November 2025); Parisa Hafezi, Samia Nakhoul and Andrew Mills, "Iran sought US pressure on Israel for ceasefire via Gulf states, sources say", Reuters, 16 June 2025. Available at https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-asks-gulf-arab-states-have-trump-press-israel-immediate-ceasefire-sources-2025-06-16/ (accessed on 25 November 2025); Asmahan Qarjouli, "Iran tells mediators Qatar, Oman it will not negotiate 'while under attack'", Doha News, 16 June 2025. Available at https://dohanews.co/iran-tells-mediators-qatar-oman-it-will-not-negotiate-while-under-attack/ (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[18] Hafsa Adil, "Calm returns to Qatar following Iran's attack on Al Udeid Airbase", Al Jazeera, 24 June 2025. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/24/calm-returns-to-qatar-following-irans-attack-on-al-udeid-airbase (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[19] Qatar, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Advisor to prime minister and official spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Qatar strongly condemns attack that targeted Al-Udeid Air Base', 23 June 2025. Available at https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/2025/06/23/advisor-to-prime-minister-and-official-spokesperson-for-ministry-of-foreign-affairs--qatar-strongly-condemns-attack-that-targeted-al-udeid-air-base (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[20] Patrick Wintour, "Iran says diplomacy with US only possible if Israeli aggression stops", *The Guardian*, 20 June 2025. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/20/iran-says-diplomacy-with-us-only-possible-if-israeli-aggression-stops (accessed on 25 November 2025).

## Israeli airstrikes on Doha

On 9 September 2025, Israeli airstrikes targeted a residential compound in Doha that housed the Hamas negotiation team. This made Qatar a direct target in the conflict – an unprecedented instance of an active mediator's capital being struck during ongoing indirect talks, particularly one hosting negotiations at the request of the US. Reportedly, at the time of the attack, the Hamas delegation was discussing a new ceasefire proposal presented by the American side.[21]

Initially, the attack cast doubt over Qatar's willingness to continue serving as a mediator in Gaza, but statements made hours after the attack and in the following days by senior political figures emphasized Qatar's continued commitment to work towards an end to the war in Gaza.[22]

Although the efforts to reach peace persisted and the Hamas office in Doha was not permanently closed, the incident transformed the international mediation architecture within the Palestinian context. Traditionally, mediators are afforded a certain level of protection, whether it is formally guaranteed or supported through mutual recognition of the importance of third-party peace intervention and facilitation. Prior to 9 September, the parties involved in the ongoing talks operated with a degree of trust and under the rational assumption that the negotiation teams would not be targeted in a mediating country. This assumption was based on the multiyear engagement of Qatar, Egypt and the US in talks involving Israel, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority over ceasefires, prisoner exchanges, political arrangements and humanitarian matters.

Since 9 September, the already low level of trust has further declined, and Israel's strike on Doha has further complicated conflict dynamics. It prompted discussions about the involvement of alternative mediators, such as Türkiye or Oman, and raised the prospect of Hamas relocating its political office to more remote locations, which would significantly complicate future communication with the group and undermine the well-established Doha backchannel.[23] The attack also weakened potential for peaceful conflict resolution in this conflict or elsewhere in the world by demonstrating that any sovereign state would have to factor in the risk of strikes on its territory when hosting peace negotiations. The erosion of mediator protection in the case of Gaza set a concerning precedent for the international

[21] Tim Hume and others, "Updates: Hamas says leaders survived Israel's attack on Qatar's Doha", Al Jazeera, 9 September 2025. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2025/9/9/live-israel-pounds-gaza-city-as-netanyahu-tells-residents-to-leave-now (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[22] Reuters, "Qatari prime minister says nothing will deter Qatar's mediation role", 9 September 2025. Available at https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/qatari-prime-minister-says-nothing-will-deter-qatars-mediation-role-2025-09-09/ (accessed on 25 November 2025); Qatar, International Media Office, "His Highness the Amir's speech at the 80th session of the UN General Assembly", 24 September 2025. Available at https://imo.gov.qa/state-of-qatar/his-highness-the-amir/his-highness-the-amir-s-speech-at-the-80th-session-of-the-un-general-assembly (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[23] Sansom Milton, "After Israel's strike, will Qatar continue Gaza mediation?" Middle East Eye, 13 September 2025. Available at https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/after-israels-strike-will-qatar-continue-gaza-mediation (accessed on 25 November 2025); CGTN Africa, "Hamas considers relocating political office from Qatar after Israeli strike", video, 16 September 2025. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_Fytl2KPYw (accessed on 25 November 2025).

community, where diplomacy no longer shields but instead endangers those who pursue it.[24]

Meanwhile, the events also exposed Washington's failure to restrain an attack on a fellow facilitator by its closest ally. Given the significant American security presence in the region, the Gulf security formula had been assumed to protect Qatar and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The events of 9 September – and the shortcomings of the US response, whether intentional or not – demonstrated the contrary. Consequently, the attack revived intra-Gulf security cooperation aimed at the activation of joint defence agreements.[25] In search of supplemental or alternative security partnerships with more clearly defined defence treaties, the Gulf states opted to explore closer ties with Türkiye, Iran and Pakistan.[26] These new partnerships may bring alternative forms of mediation support, including logistical, intelligence or diplomatic assistance, introducing more comprehensive security protocols and requesting third-party guarantors besides the US.

Gulf countries are now adopting more assertive, collectively self-interested and diversified diplomatic behaviour, shaped by internal economic reforms, demographic trends and the strategic pursuit of autonomy.[27] In this context, and within the first week after the attack, Qatar organized the Emergency Arab-Islamic Summit in Doha, bringing together regional and Islamic actors to condemn the Israeli action and coordinate a unified response.[28] The summit mobilized regional consensus and placed Qatar at the forefront of shaping Arab-Islamic diplomacy amid shifting global alliances, thereby reaffirming Doha's important role in the region's geopolitics.

## Raised expectations of Qatari mediation

Qatar's mediation efforts have gained positive recognition both regionally and internationally. Its involvement in addressing the Gaza genocide, securing a ceasefire between Israel and Iran and mediating in several high-profile cases has put Qatar in the global spotlight. This highlights the country's increasingly proactive and worldwide role in conflict mediation, fostering hopes that it can help resolve some of the world's most enduring conflicts. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that, despite facing numerous challenges, Qatar has remained central to backchannel diplomacy and de-escalation efforts, further raising expectations of its mediation influence.

[24] Middle East Council on Global Affairs, "Israel's strike on Doha: what it means for the region", 11 September 2025. Available at https://mecouncil.org/blog_posts/israels-airstrike-on-doha-what-it-means-for-the-region/ (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[25] General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council, "Statement of the extraordinary session of the Joint Defence Council", 18 September 2025. Available at https://www.gcc-sg.org/en/MediaCenter/News/Pages/news2025-9-18-5.aspx (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[26] Bader Al-Saif, "What can the Gulf do after the attack on Qatar?" Arab Gulf States Institute, 25 September 2025. Available at https://agsi.org/analysis/what-can-the-gulf-do-after-the-attack-on-qatar/ (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[27] Lakshmi Priya, "The changing foreign policy dynamics of GCC states: a study through the lens of positive interdependence", *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, vol. 18, No. 1 (2024), pp. 32–47; Ahmed A. Shahbaz and Allan Hassaniyan, "The growing autonomy for GCC states' foreign policy and structural changes in the balance of power in the region", *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, vol. 18, No. 4 (2024), pp. 321–339.

[28] Qatar News Agency, "Final communique issued by Arab-Islamic emergency summit in Doha", 15 September 2025. Available at https://qna.org.qa/en/news/news-details?id=final-communique-issued-by-arab-islamic-emergency-summit-in-doha&date=15/09/2025 (accessed on 25 November 2025).

Public reactions to Qatar's diplomatic posture have challenged long-standing stereotypes. Even figures from traditionally critical parts of the political spectrum, such as Steve Bannon, acknowledged that the Iran-Israel ceasefire in June 2025 was achieved "with the help of Qatar", which had also "stepped in the middle of the situation in Gaza".[29] In an interview with Tucker Carlson, Trump's special envoy to the region, Steve Witkoff, echoed this sentiment, vigorously defending Qatar's motives and credibility. He emphasized that the country seeks stability, has significantly moderated its foreign policy over time and remains a trusted US ally. He also stated that accusations portraying Qatar as an "agent of Iran" are "preposterous" and that "people know they are good, decent people."[30]

Reportedly reflecting a broader appreciation within key American security circles, General Michael Erik Kurilla, then-commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM), referred to Qataris as "special people" in recognition of their constructive regional engagement.[31] Similarly, Western media outlets like *The Guardian*, which have regularly criticized Qatar in the past, have since published more balanced perspectives, praising Qatar's proactive and effective diplomacy in responding to the evolving geopolitical order.[32]

This shift in perception has coincided with – and been amplified by – a deteriorating global security environment that has dramatically increased demand for mediation capacity. One alarming trend is that the world in the 2020s is becoming less peaceful.[33] Tectonic shifts have occurred in numerous chronic conflicts. The 7 October War has brought massive devastation to Palestine and pushed the region to the brink of all-out war. In Sudan, the breakdown of the post-revolution transition process led to a ruinous internal war between rival military factions. Wars in the Sahel region, Ethiopia, the DRC, Myanmar and elsewhere have underscored the urgency of protecting civilians and advancing humanitarian diplomacy in response to global crises.

With this rising tide of conflicts and widespread recognition of its track record, Qatar has experienced demand for its mediation role that exceeds its capacity.[34] In the first half of 2025 alone, Qatar was engaged in multiple efforts, including in Gaza, Iran-Israel de-escalation, Rwanda-DRC talks and attempts to reduce tension between India and Pakistan. Qatar's embedded and collaborative approach to mediation is also reflected in its participation in international conflict management frameworks, such as working with the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Egypt and Lebanon as part of a coordinated

[29] Real America's Voice, "The War Room with Stephen K. Bannon episode 4582 Part 1", video, 4 June 2025. Available at https://americasvoice.news/video/9WDvwNkzE61PBy3/?related=playlist (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[30] The Tucker Carlson Show, "Steve Witkoff's critical role in negotiating global peace, and the warmongers trying to stop him", video, 22 March 2025. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acvu2LBumGo (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Nesrine Malik, "The go-between: how Qatar became the global capital of diplomacy", *The Guardian*, 22 July 2025. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/22/how-qatar-became-the-global-capital-of-diplomacy (accessed on 25 November 2025); Patrick Wintour, "Caught in the crossfire, Qatar again finds itself Middle East peace broker", *The Guardian*, 24 June 2025. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/24/qatar-middle-east-peace-broker-iran-israel-us (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[33] Institute for Economics & Peace, "Global Peace Index 2025: identifying and measuring the factors that drive peace" (Sydney, Institute for Economics & Peace, 2025).

[34] Malik, "The go-between".

regional de-escalation initiative in August 2024.[35]

## Qatar's Peacemaking in a Multipolar World Order

Qatar's emergence as a mediator on the global stage has occurred in a multipolar landscape of peacemaking increasingly characterized by transactional diplomacy and the erosion of international norms governing conflict response. In the 2020s, mediation is frequently viewed as a tool for states' "strategic positioning" in the changing world order, with new actors engaging in the "political marketplace" of peace processes.[36] Early research on Qatari mediation often overlooked the evolving institutional landscape and the growing strategic depth of its diplomacy, characterizing it as highly transactional, focused on short-term peace deals and lacking capacities for long-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This portrayal is evident in claims that "when the tension is reduced, Doha finishes its job".[37] Yet, this observation no longer reflects the reality of Qatari mediation, and the transactionalist critique of Qatari mediation paints a one-dimensional, reductive picture of a complex interplay of strategic leverage and diplomatic engagement. Instead, Qatar has expanded its peacemaking capabilities and blended aid and mediation in progressively more sophisticated ways.

The multipolar landscape is also marked by the rise of a diverse mediation field crowded with new entrants from the Gulf and elsewhere. Qatar has been operating in an evolving regional environment where other Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, alongside Türkiye and China, have advanced their own mediation initiatives in high-stakes conflicts.[38] Their diplomatic footprints have expanded in Afghanistan, Libya and the Horn of Africa, demonstrating a diversification of engagement beyond traditional Western-led formats. Recent years have witnessed Saudi mediation in Sudan, Omani mediation in Yemen and between the US and Iran, and Emirati mediation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. When any crisis escalates, such as the recent flaring of tensions between India and Pakistan, it is now common to see headlines speculating on which Gulf actor may step in to mediate, and Qatar is often the first to be called on. Meanwhile, the Saudi-Iran détente in 2023 signalled a realignment in Gulf politics, with China playing the crucial role in brokering the landmark agreement.[39]

The return of great power competition has also resulted in the collapse of long-held norms governing mediation and conflict response. The erosion of international humanitarian law, attacks on mediators and the weakening of multilateral frameworks have created an increasingly hostile environment for diplomatic intervention. Yet it is precisely within

[35] UN, "Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on the risk of regional escalation", 2 August 2024. Available at https://www.un.org/unispal/document/statement-by-unsco-02aug24 (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[36] Sara Hellmüller and Bilal Salaymeh, "Transactional peacemaking: warmakers as peacemakers in the political marketplace of peace processes", *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 46, No. 2 (2025), p. 313.

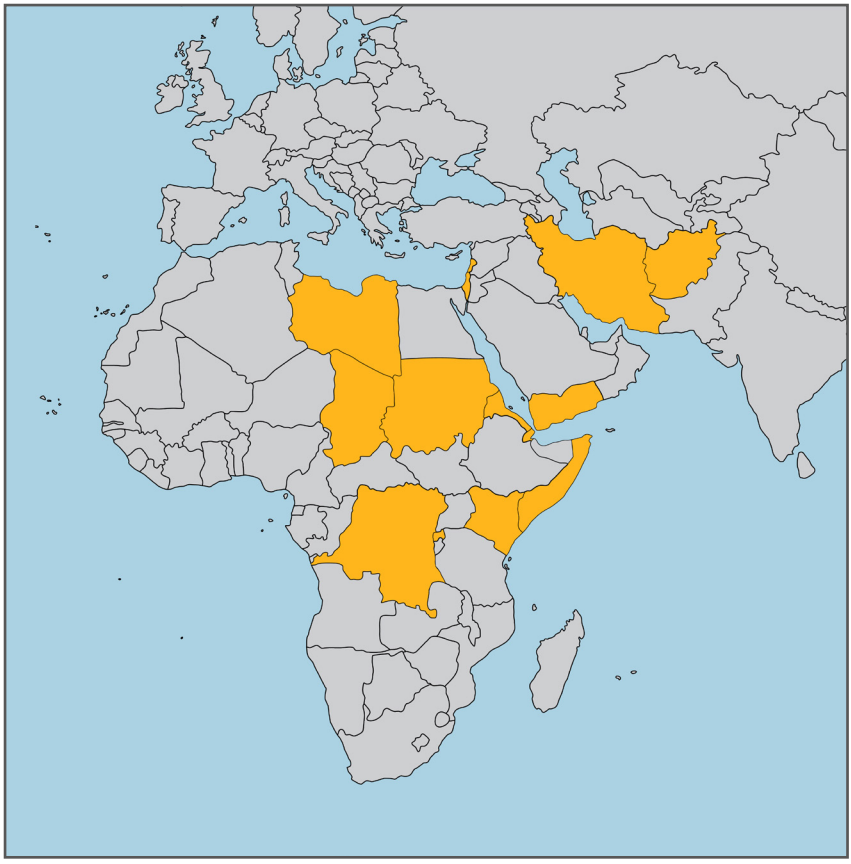
[37] Ruslan Minich, "Conflict mediation: the Qatari experience", *Historia i Polityka*, vol. 14, No. 21 (2015), p. 121.

[38] Oxford Analytica, "Mediation by the Gulf States will increase", 7 August 2024. Available at https://doi.org/10.1108/OXAN-DB288822 (accessed on 25 November 2025).

[39] Yun Sun, "Forecasting China's strategy in the Middle East over the next four years", Brookings Institution, 19 December 2024. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/articles/forecasting-chinas-strategy-in-the-middle-east-over-the-next-four-years/ (accessed on 25 November 2025).

this deteriorating context that Qatar's principled and steadfast commitment to mediation has gained strategic value. While transactional diplomacy characterizes much of the contemporary mediation marketplace, Qatar's continued engagement – even after direct attacks on its sovereignty – signals a form of diplomatic persistence that transcends short-term calculations. This commitment positions Qatar and other Gulf mediators as a hybrid alternative that bridges strategic positioning with sustained engagement, reflecting an adaptive model responsive to the demands of multipolar crisis diplomacy while maintaining credibility through demonstrated resilience in the face of unprecedented challenges.

**Annex 1. Geographic reach of Qatar's mediation through peace and ceasefire agreements (1995–2025)**



## Annex 2. Qatari mediation in peace and ceasefire agreements (1995–2025)[40]

| Year | Mediation context | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| 1995 | Territorial dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over the Hanish Islands | Arbitration agreement between Eritrea and Yemen (3 October 1996) |
| 2007–2008 | Armed conflict between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels | Ceasefire agreement between Yemeni government and Houthi rebels (in force since 16 June 2007) Doha Agreement (signed on 1 February 2008) |
| 2008 | Lebanon political crisis | Doha Agreement (signed on 21 May 2008) |
| 2009 | Cross-border tensions between Sudan and Chad | Doha Agreement between Chad and Sudan (signed on 3 May 2009) |
| 2010 | Border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea | Agreement between Eritrea and Djibouti (signed on 6 June 2010) |
| 2009–2017 | Sudan-Darfur rebel movements conflict | Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (signed on 14 July 2011) and a series of ceasefire and framework agreements (signed between 2009 and 2017) |
| 2012 | Intra-Palestinian political division | Doha Agreement between Fatah and Hamas (signed on 6 February 2012) |
| 2014–2023 | Escalations in Gaza wars | Series of ceasefire agreements in 2014, 2021, 2022 and 2023 |
| 2015 | Tuareg-Tebu conflict in Libya | Doha Peace Agreement between Tuareg and Tebu (signed on 23 November 2015) |
| 2020 | Afghanistan peace process | Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan (signed on 29 February 2020) |
| 2021 | Diplomatic crisis between Somalia and Kenya | Communique on the Resumption of Diplomatic Relations between Kenya and Somalia (issued on 6 May 2021) |
| 2022 | Chad conflict | Doha Agreement for Peace and Involvement of Political-Military Movements in the Sovereign and Inclusive National Dialogue in Chad (signed on 8 August 2022) |
| 2023-2025 | Israel's war on Gaza | Ceasefire agreement/humanitarian pause (24–28 November 2023; extended to 30 November 2023) Ceasefire agreement (in force since 19 January 2025) |
| 2025 | 12-Day War between Israel and Iran | Ceasefire agreement between Iran and Israel (in force since 24 June 2025) |
| 2025 | Eastern Congo conflict | Peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda (signed 27 June 2025) |

[40] This table includes only peace and ceasefire agreements mediated or facilitated by Qatar, independently or in multiparty processes. It does not include prisoner or hostage exchanges. For further information, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, "Qatar's Mediation Efforts". Available at https://mofa.gov.qa/en/foreign-policy/mediation/mediation