



HISTORY, POLITICS, PRIMARY SOURCE STUDIES

ისტორია, პოლიტიკა, წყაროთმცოდნეობა

Qatar - The New US Outpost in the Middle East

Zviad Tkabladze

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor.

Georgian Technical University,

Department of Politics and International Relations,

Georgia, 0160, Tbilisi, M. Kostava 77

+995 551 01 08 08; tkabladze.zviad@gtu.ge

ORCID: 0009-0009-4347-6299

Maia Manchkhavili

Doctor of Political Science, Assistant Professor.

Georgian Technical University,

Department of Politics and International Relations

Georgia, 0160, Tbilisi, M. Kostava 77

+995 557 32 32 27; Manchkhavilimaia07@gtu.ge

ORCID: 0000-0002-4321-977X

Abstract

The paper is devoted to a very interesting topic: “Qatar - the new US outpost in the Middle East”.

US President Joe Biden declared Qatar a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA or Non-NATO Ally) outside of NATO, making it the third country in the Arabian/Persian Gulf region after Kuwait and Bahrain to achieve this status and one of 18 countries in the world.

The MNNA status provides its holders with significant benefits and advantages, including privileged access to advanced US military technologies and defence equipment. Although Qatar already had close ties with America, the adoption of this title indicates a deepening of bilateral relations between Qatar and the US, close cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance in solving regional and global challenges.

Some politicians are sceptical about granting Qatar the status of MNNA, since the emirate has close ties with non-state actors in the Middle East - "Hamas", "Hezbollah", "Muslim Brotherhood", as well as "Taliban", which are in conflict with the US/West and Israel. However, this situation allows Qatar to position itself as a "permanent mediator" and negotiator in the settlement of the conflict between the above-mentioned parties. Qatar also played a key role in the safe evacuation of US troops from Afghanistan.

All of the above contributes to the deepening of Qatar's cooperation with the US, NATO and the transition to a new level after granting the status.

Keywords: Qatar, USA, NATO, Middle East conflict.

Introduction

The small monarchy of Qatar is an important partner of the United States in the Middle East. Bilateral relations between the countries are currently stable, and the two countries are in close coordination on a wide range of regional and global issues.

In general, it should be said that even small states can actually go beyond the framework of simple stability and become influential, both in the region and on the larger global stage. According to Georgetown University professor Mehran Kamrava, this is exactly

what happened with Qatar, which became a major player in the Persian/Arabian Gulf¹ and the Middle East, despite the predominance of much larger and more influential players there (Kamrava, 2017).

On January 31, 2022, US President Joe Biden² declared the Arab state of Qatar a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), making it a major ally in the Gulf region.

MNNA grants its holders significant benefits and advantages, including privileged access to advanced US military technology and equipment. While Qatar has long had close ties with the US, the status marks a push to deepen bilateral security and trade cooperation between the countries.

It also sends an important signal to other regional actors, strengthening Doha's military capabilities and its strategic position vis-à-vis other US allies in the region. The inclusion of MNNA in the list was timely, given the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis and recent talk of Qatar's potential role as a future energy supplier to Europe, in the context of a possible rejection of Russian energy flows (Gosselin-Malo, 2022). As the US President stated during a meeting with the Emir of Qatar at the White House, "I will grant Qatar the status of a major non-NATO ally. It reflects the importance of our relationship. I think this decision should have been made a long time ago. The designation of a major non-NATO ally is a powerful symbol of the close relationship that the United States shares with these countries and expresses our deep respect for the friendship ... Pursuant to Section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2321k), I am

¹ In the Arab world, only the term **Arabian Gulf** (Arabic: الخليج العربي; romanized: Al-Khaleej al-Arabia) is used. Internationally, the phrase Gulf is also used.

² Joseph (Joe) Robinette Biden, Jr. (born 1942) is an American politician, member of the Democratic Party, President of the United States from 2021 to 2024. He was Vice President of the United States from 2009 to 2017, and from 1973 to 2009, he was a U.S. Senator from Delaware.

designating Qatar as a Major Non-NATO ally,” his letter to Congress reads.

The US leader explained that the decision was made “in recognition of Qatar’s longstanding contributions to the United States’ area of responsibility, as well as in the US national interest to deepen bilateral cooperation with Qatar in the areas of defence and security” (Nur, 2022). Israel, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Thailand, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, New Zealand, Argentina, Bahrain, the Philippines, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tunisia, and Brazil currently hold MNNA status.

Method

The presented scientific article is based on theoretical methodology: cause-and-effect analysis, synthesis, comparison, search and processing of various scientific literature. The publications of competent researchers and experts working on this issue were studied, and the main scientific material necessary for us was reflected in the article.

Result

As a result of working on the research issue, the importance of Qatar's cooperation with the USA and granting this small state the status of MNNA was revealed. Based on the study of scientific literature, the article answered the questions of why the USA granted Qatar the above-mentioned status. It was also established that Qatar has a special role in dealing with new challenges in the Middle East, on the example of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Discussion

Qatar (officially: State of Qatar; Arabic: دولة قطر; Romanised: Dawlat Qaṭar) is a small country on the Arabian Peninsula, bordering Saudi Arabia. The capital is Doha (Arabic: الدوحة; Romanised: ad-Dawḥah).

Qatar has an area of approximately 11,586 sq km, and a population of 3,118,214 as of January 2024 (Planning and Statistics Authority, 2024). Of these, 11.6% are Arab Qataris, while 88.4% are expatriates. The country's official religion is Islam, which is practiced by 65.2% of the population. The official language in the emirate is Arabic, with English being used as a second language.

Qatari citizens have the highest income in the world. Qatar's GDP per capita in 2022 was \$96,600 (CIA, 2025).

The country has the third-largest proven natural gas reserves in the world and is the sixth-largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), as well as a major exporter of crude oil and petroleum products (Blanchard Christopher, 2014).

The form of government of the state is an absolute monarchy, where power is hereditary among the sheikhs, emirs, of the Al Thani (Arabic: آل ثاني; English: House of Thani) dynasty, who have ruled the emirate since 1825.

Qatar has transformed from a poor pearl-mining protectorate of Great Britain into a wealthy state, with significant revenues from gas and oil extraction. The country was a protectorate of Great Britain from 1916 to 1971, and gained independence on September 3, 1971.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972–1995), heir to the throne and prime minister, abrogated the 1916 treaty and declared an independent state, heralding a new era in the country's history (Amiri Diwan, 2024).

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Hamad bin Abdullah bin Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani (b. 1952) has elevated the small, energy-rich country to global prominence since succeeding his father in a 1995 palace coup. Since the 1990s, Qatar's leaders have focused on economic growth, diplomatic engagement, and limited political liberalization.

The current Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (b. 1980), began his rule in June 2013 when his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, abdicated, marking the first voluntary and planned transfer of power in Qatar since independence.

In 1995, the monarchy founded Al-Jazeera³, the first Arabic-language satellite television network, which over time has proven to be as influential and sometimes controversial as its founders, especially during the unrest of the Arab Spring⁴.

Diplomatic relations between the United States and Qatar were established in 1972. Bilateral relations have developed gradually, and since the mid-1990s, Qatar has become a partner state of the United States. In recent years, "Qatar has played a constructive and significant financial, political, and military role in resolving regional disputes and, in partnership with the United States, promotes progress and stability in the region" - this is stated on the official website of the US Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2025). They also cooperate in the field of security in the Gulf region, in particular in the largest and most important in the Middle East, the Al-Udayd Gulf.

³ **Al-Jazeera** (Arabic: الجزيرة) is an international television network (headquartered in Doha) that became known to the world after covering coalition air and missile strikes on Afghanistan and broadcasting statements by the number one terrorist, Osama bin Laden. "Al-Jazeera" means "island" in Arabic and is an abbreviation of the full name of the Arabian Peninsula, "Al-Jazeera Al-Arabiya".

⁴ **The Arab Spring** (Arabic: الربيع العربي) is a wave of protests and uprisings that have taken place in the Arab world since the beginning of 2011. Revolutions took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Djibouti, and Western Sahara, with clashes on the Israeli border. It all began on January 4, 2011, with the suicide (self-immolation) of Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, who was outraged by police corruption and brutality, which sparked the Tunisian revolution.

Through the military air base, with the support of NATO and US military operations from Qatar⁵.

Interestingly, the US has invested more than \$ 8 billion in the expansion of the Al-Udeid base. The base is partially home to the headquarters of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), the US Air Forces Central Command, the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force-Syria, and the headquarters of the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing of the US Air Force. More than 13,000 American military personnel are stationed at the base and more than 100 aircraft carry out combat missions from this facility, which is the launch pad for the operation against the "Islamic State"⁶. Qatar has been an important staging ground for coalition operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria for several years.

In addition, Qatar is expanding its military training capabilities with US assistance and purchasing weapons from the US. In 2014, Qatar signed an \$11 billion contract with the US for Apache attack helicopters and other air defence systems. Later, in 2016, Washington sold 72 F-15QA fighter jets to its Gulf partner for \$21.1 billion (Goselin-Malo, 2022).

⁵ Al Udeid Air Base is one of two military bases southwest of Doha, also known as Abu Nakhla Airport, which is home to Qatari and US air forces.

⁶ **The Islamic State** (Arabic: الدولة الإسلامية; romanized: ad-Dawlat al-Islamia; also known as IS, ISIL or ISIS; Arabic acronym Daesh/Da'ish) is the world's No. 1 Salafi-jihadi, fundamentalist-Islamist terrorist organization, which became known in 2014 when it captured significant territories in Iraq and Syria. It existed as a quasi-state and declared a caliphate on June 29, 2014, with its capital in the Syrian city of Ar-Raqqa. By the end of 2015, it ruled a territory of 110,000 sq. km. and 12 million people, where it used a distorted interpretation of Sharia law, with an annual budget of more than \$ 1 billion. The number of "Daesh" terrorists It ranged from 50,000 to 100,000. Daesh was finally defeated in Syria in early 2019, fought by the US-led Global Coalition against Daesh, but it still poses a threat. The fifth and current leader of Daesh is Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, who was declared caliph on August 3, 2023.

Thousands of Qatari students study at US universities, and six of the largest US universities have campuses in the country.

Qatar has been significantly involved in resolving the Darfur conflict in Sudan, as well as in the conflicts in Somalia, between the Houthis⁷ and the Yemeni government, in the Horn of Africa, and in Libya. In Iraq, it is in contact with all factions and forces (Al-Tamimi, 2023). Qatar has become a key platform for communication and coordination of efforts by anti-Assad forces in Syria (Frolovsky, 2017).

A demonstration of strong bilateral relations was the declaration of 2021 as the Qatar-USA 2021 Year of Culture.

The two countries have extensive economic ties. The United States is the largest foreign direct investor in Qatar, and Doha is the second largest U.S. partner in foreign military sales (FMS) in the world. More than 120 U.S. companies operate in the country. In recent years, U.S. exports to Qatar have amounted to \$6.5 billion.

The United States is a leading partner and supplier of equipment to Qatar's oil and gas industry, and American companies have played a major role in the development of the country's energy sector. In addition to energy, American companies supply Qatar with equipment needed in defence, aviation, healthcare, engineering/construction, food, and other sectors. U.S. imports from Qatar include liquefied natural gas, aluminium, fertilizers, and sulphur.

The countries have also signed a framework agreement on trade and investment, and the countries participate in annual bilateral strategic dialogues. Qatar has announced \$45 billion in investments in the United States, in addition to other multi-billion-dollar contracts (U.S. Department of State, 2025).

⁷ **The Houthis or Houthi movement** (Arabic: الحوثيون; official Arabic: أنصار الله; English: *Ansar Allah* or Ansarullah) are a Shiite Zaydi paramilitary group operating in Yemen.

President Biden cited Qatar's continued assistance in the evacuation of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and in the Gaza Strip during the conflict between Israel and Hamas as a key reason for including Qatar in the MNNA list. In both situations, Doha served as a liaison and mediator between the United States, the Taliban, and Hamas.

It was during the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2021 that Qatar's role was particularly recognized internationally. The Afghan crisis "allowed Qatar to strengthen its position in the international community by acting as a mediator between the West and the Taliban."⁸ Qatar's access and ties to both Washington and the Taliban, as well as its reputation as a neutral mediator, played a special role in making it a significant player" (Al-Tamimi, 2023). Qatar saved the remaining US citizens in Afghanistan and those Afghan refugees who were fleeing the incoming "Taliban" regime by airlifting them and becoming a temporary host country while the US issued visas for the Afghans.

Regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Qatar has been playing an important role in the return of illegally deported and internally displaced Ukrainian children to their homeland. Carrying out such a humanitarian mission helps Qatar penetrate big politics and enhance its image.

⁸ **The Taliban movement/Taliban** (Pashto: طالبان; meaning students) is an Islamist religious and political paramilitary movement that is recognized as a terrorist organization in many countries of the world and the UN (since 2003). It was founded in 1994 in Afghanistan by the Pashtuns, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 and the North Waziristan region of Pakistan since 2004. In 2021, after the US announced the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban began an offensive and by August established control over most of the country, and on August 15 they captured the capital Kabul and announced the creation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Since 25 May 2016, the current leader of the Taliban is Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhunzada (b. 1961), a religious scholar, Deoband (a Sunni movement from India) theologian, Afghan military and political figure. Since 15 August 2021, he has been the de facto emir of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

According to Ukrainian expert Reiterovich, the Qataris could not avoid the Russian-Ukrainian war, because it is a very good opportunity for them, including through contacts with the United States, to offer their mediation to the opposing sides. In addition, Qatar is perceived by the Russians better than any other country that has offered mediation, because it is at an equal distance and is not openly pro-Ukrainian or pro-Western. Therefore, the emirate, as a mediator, is quite acceptable to all parties (Reiterovich, 2023).

US government officials have stated that the MNNA status is not related to energy issues, however, before the expected tensions with Russia and the energy crisis, talks about granting Qatar this status began as early as 2020⁹.

While the MNNA does not provide direct security and defence guarantees like NATO, it remains a powerful symbol of the country's closeness to the United States.

As an MNNA country, Qatar now has the right to station advanced American military equipment on its territory and outside U.S. military installations; receive \$3 million for counterterrorism research, focusing on surveillance technology; purchase depleted uranium munitions (used to create Armor and anti-tank weapons); can borrow materials from U.S. companies for joint processing on credit; and Qatar will receive preferential access to military and commercial space technology, creating a multimillion-dollar business opportunity

⁹ The issue of sanctions on the Russian oil and gas sector was discussed by Western countries after Russia recognized the independence of the so-called DPR and LPR enclaves in Ukraine. After Russia's attack on Ukraine, the West has already clearly decided to find alternative routes for natural gas supplies, with Qatar being named as one of the candidates, as a country with large reserves of liquefied gas. This would also help enforce strict sanctions against Russia, while at the same time avoiding the threat of an energy crisis, since 40% of Europe's gas is of Russian origin. However, the Qatari side states that it is currently unable to replenish the volume of gas that Russia supplies to European countries.

for Qatari defence companies to service and repair U.S. weapons platforms.

According to Elizabeth Gosselin-Malo, a researcher at the Italian ISPI Institute, Biden's decision to include Qatar in this program was clearly driven by strategic considerations. Qatar already had relatively free access to arms and military cooperation with the United States and, as such, did not necessarily need this different status, given the advantages it already enjoyed. Therefore, according to the expert, its inclusion in the MNNA likely meant Washington's further consolidation of its common ties with its key Gulf partner in order to bring greater stability to the region. For Doha, this decision also has positive consequences, in terms of increasing its domestic defence industrial base and national security capabilities, as well as providing access to a previously closed defence market (Gosselin-Malo, 2022). This move could help Doha in its efforts to secure the purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles (UACVs) from the US.

The Qatari government has been waiting for several years for a US response to its request to purchase four MQ-9B Predator drones for \$600 million to boost the country's defence capabilities. The sale has met with some resistance in Washington, where there are concerns that it could shift the balance of power with other regional allies, such as the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Hadzhich, 2022).

The US would also benefit from the participation of local Qatari companies in defence contracts, which would make prices more competitive and ultimately cost Washington less. The MNNA would give the US more assurance that Qatar, as the world's leading exporter of LNG, could become an energy supplier to the West.

"By making Doha a key non-NATO ally, Biden has elevated Qatar's status as a strategic partner and laid the foundation for a

multi-year process of bilateral relations...” says Middle East expert Christian Coates Ulrichsen (Coates Ulrichsen, 2022).

“Across the spectrum, the Qataris want to demonstrate that they are acting in a way that will advance U.S. interests,” adds Coates Ulrichsen (Coates Ulrichsen, 2022).

The Qatari leader arrives in Washington after his country’s prestige has increased following its key role in Afghanistan. As a result, he has become the U.S. diplomatic representative in the country, which is ruled by the Taliban.

In his article, Jakub Hadzhich, a columnist for the Kremlin’s opposition Islamic website, argues that the small emirate of 3 million people in the Gulf, which is one of the world’s leading LNG producers, is now poised to play another role on the global stage – “ensuring the stability of global energy supplies”.

However, on the energy front, Qatar has warned that its ability to increase supplies to Europe is limited by long-term contracts, mainly with Asian countries. “We have exhausted our capabilities,” said Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, the state minister for energy, even before Russia’s aggression in Ukraine.

The main buyers of Qatar’s LNG are Japan, South Korea, and India – all of which are favoured U.S. allies in the region, with long-term contracts for gas supplies. But the focus on energy security comes at a good time for Qatar, as it is implementing plans to expand its North Field, the world’s largest liquefied natural gas project. The expansion is estimated to cost about \$30 billion and is expected to increase the country’s LNG production by 40% per year by 2026 (Hadzhich, 2022).

It turns out that if Qatar develops this field in the future, it will have the opportunity to meet European demands if they move away

from Russia. They have a fleet of tankers, production costs are low, and they are investing in increasing capacity.

At the same time, the agenda of Qatari-US relations is not limited to the military and energy spheres. Some experts believe that the Biden administration has shown special interest in Qatar because of the country's warm relations with Iran.

Qatar is seen as a potential US partner in relations with Iran, where the US and European actors are negotiating to bring Iran back into the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA)¹⁰. By this logic, the Biden administration believed that Qatar would be a way to improve its position vis-à-vis Iran, facilitate cooperation in the JCPOA negotiations, and improve relations with the Islamic Republic.

On the other hand, Qatar's influence over Iran may be overstated; Doha and Tehran have their own differences, and it is unlikely that Iran will stop antagonizing the US simply because of a common ally (Theros, 2025).

In Kabul and Tehran, Doha has maintained its influence and can freely engage in dialogue on the most complex and sensitive issues, which the states lack-and desperately need-a channel for sending confidential messages. Qatar is ready to create it and support it on a regular basis.

Times are changing. In the Gulf region, once-traditional allies Saudi Arabia and the Emirates have been replaced by Qatar, becoming

¹⁰ **The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** – also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal – is a political agreement between Iran and a group of countries known as the P5+1. The group consists of the United States, China, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia – the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) – and Germany. In 2018, US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the deal and imposed additional sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran suspended two parts of the deal in 2019.

the first state whose leader was invited to the White House to discuss US strategic interests.

There is another side to Qatar's rise to prominence. How will this decision affect US relations with the aforementioned players, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which came close to receiving MNNA status but failed to do so (Gosselin-Malo, 2022).

"How calmly will these countries face this news? However, they do not have much choice. They have already tried to put pressure on Doha once and nothing worked. They will probably have to find a new global partner, for example, China. But how this will happen in reality - no one knows," says columnist Ikram Nour (Nur, 2022).

Before Trump returned to Washington, the pan-Arab media noted that Saudi Arabia had decided to join the new alliance of Russia and China. The rift between Washington and Riyadh has intensified during the Biden presidency, which has refused to cooperate with the de facto ruler of the kingdom, the crown prince, and accused him of human rights violations (Rai Al Youm, 2022).

Some politicians in the United States are sceptical of granting Qatar MNA status, expressing concerns about Qatar's ties to radical, pan-Islamist, and often terrorist organizations. There has already been talk of reviewing the status in 2024. House Republicans Ann Wagner, Jared Golden, and Ted Budd have called on the State Department to carefully examine U.S.-Qatar relations, including whether Qatar supports Hamas, and have introduced legislation to review Qatar's MNA status (The Reviewing Qatar's Major Non-NATO Ally Status Act (H.R. 8190 and S. 4093) (AIPAC Bill Summary, 2024).

Earlier, Congresswoman Ann Wagner said she had personally told the Qatari prime minister that they should stop protecting the perpetrators of the brutal October 7 terrorist attack on Israel. Qatar

has been sheltering Hamas¹¹ terrorists for too long, while Hamas' leadership has repeatedly rejected Israeli attempts to reach an agreement and release the hostages... If they do not do so, the United States should seriously examine whether Qatar still deserves the privileges of a major non-NATO ally" (Wagner, 2024).

The emirate has established political alliances and close ties with non-state actors in the Middle East, such as Hamas (whose leaders officially lived and worked in Qatar), Hezbollah¹², the Muslim Brotherhood¹³ in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, which have tense or

¹¹ **The Islamic Resistance Movement/Hamas** (Arabic: حركة المقاومة الإسلامية; romanized: Harakat al-Muqāwamah al-'Islāmiyyah; Arabic acronym Hamas [Arabic: حماس] is a Palestinian, Islamist-fundamentalist organization and political party. Hamas controls the Gaza Strip in Palestine. The organization has a military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (IQB). The first leader of Hamas was Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (Ahmed Yassin; 1936–2004). Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organization by Israel, Canada, the United States, Britain, Japan, the European Union, the OAS, and other countries. At the same time, it is not considered a terrorist organization in Norway, Russia, Turkey, China, Qatar, India, Iran, and many OIC countries. In late 2024, a Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the Hamas office was no longer operational, but stressed that it had not been closed permanently. Although the official denied reports that Qatar had formally asked Hamas to leave, the Gulf state appears to be treading carefully to avoid any tension with the administration of newly elected President Donald Trump. See more: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c86qd99nqgyo>

¹² **Hezbollah/Party of Allah** (Arabic: حزب الله) is a paramilitary Lebanese Shiite organization and political party that advocates the creation of a state similar to Iran in Lebanon. It is recognized as a terrorist organization in Canada, the United States, Israel, Egypt, the LAS since 2016, the Gulf Arab monarchies, partially in the European Union, Australia and the United Kingdom. It enjoys the support of Iran and Syria. The founder of the movement is the Lebanese Shiite cleric Subhi al-Tufayli (born 1948). It was created in 1982. After the Lebanon War, by Lebanese clerics. The political wing of Hezbollah, represented in the Lebanese parliament. Since 1992, its leader has been the third Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah (born 1960).

¹³ **Muslim Brothers/Muslim Brotherhood** (Arabic: الإخوان المسلمون; in full Arabic: الإخوان المسلمين; جماعَة; romanized: Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn; English: Society of the Muslim Brothers, MB; often referred to as "al-Ikhwān" (Arabic: Brothers). An old, religious-political, pan-Islamist Sunni radical organization, founded by the teacher, imam and sheikh Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) in Egypt in 1928. The MB has many followers around the world and is

conflicting relations with the West. At the same time, Qatar maintains peaceful relations with Israel, the enemy of the above organizations, which has allowed Qatar to position itself as a “permanent mediator” and negotiator in conflicts (Brannagan, Giulianotti, 2023).

Qatar is actively involved in the settlement of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict¹⁴ and plays a mediating role in the release of hostages, ceasefires, and truces. The relationship between Islamist groups and Qatar is an important approach within the framework of Qatar’s “soft power” strategy. The indirect political alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood is a clear example of such a strategy. The Muslim Brot-

influential in Muslim countries. Its status is mixed - it is legally present in the political systems of 17 Arab countries, and its affiliated parties have seats in parliament, and at the same time it is considered one of the first It is a terrorist organization and is banned in many countries, primarily in Egypt, Syria, as well as in the Gulf countries - Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Bahrain. Since 1949, its ideologist has been the theologian, poet, and teacher Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who was persecuted in Egypt and even executed. The organization became active in 2011 during the "Arab Spring", and in 2012. For the first time in Egypt's history, in a democratically held presidential election, the representative of the winning party of the "Brotherhood" Muhammad Morsi (1951-2019) was overthrown in 2013. On July 3, a military coup led by current President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (born 1954) led to a wave of protests and violence in the country. MB supporters attacked Coptic churches, government buildings, etc. After that, an Egyptian court declared MB a terrorist organization, and Morsi, captured and tortured, like many of his party members, died of a heart attack during a court hearing.

¹⁴ The commander of Hamas's military wing, the IQB, Mohammed Deif/Diab Ibrahim Masri, announced the start of **Operation Al-Aqsa Flood** or **Deluge** (Arabic: **عملية طوفان الأقصى**; romanized: *ʿamaliyyat ṭūfān al-ʿAqṣā*) against Israel. Hamas called this operation revenge for the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The operation began on the morning of October 7, with the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip with up to 5,000 rockets and the infiltration of more than 2,500 militants by land, sea and air. Approximately 1,200 Israelis were killed, another 253 Israelis and foreigners were taken hostage; in addition to the massacre of the population, numerous cases of sexual violence against women and men were recorded. The attack was the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and the largest act of Palestinian terrorism in history. In response, the Israeli government declared martial law for the first time since 1973 and launched Operation Swords of Iron (Haravot Barzel) in the Gaza Strip.

herhood is the largest organization, whose political parties often dominated elections in many Arab countries after the events of the Arab Spring. Accordingly, Qatar sought their support and alliance to promote its interests in the region. The connection with the Ikhwan has led to conflict with Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, which consider the Ikhwan to be an imminent threat to their internal security and regional influence. Saudi Arabia and the Emirates have been trying to encircle Islamist governments since the Arab Spring.

Despite all of the above, Qatar's cooperation with NATO member states is expanding and moving to a new level after the granting of status. Thus, in April of this year, the NATO Military Strategic Partnership Conference 2025 was held in Qatar, which was attended by more than 300 military representatives from 57 countries, which became an important platform for efforts to strengthen the partnership and address growing challenges - be it hybrid warfare or global instability (NATO, 2025).

Earlier, in February of this year, Qatar and NATO signed an agreement on the opening of a Qatari mission and military representation at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, within the framework of the implementation of the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP).

The opening of the Qatari Mission offices at NATO Headquarters represents a significant step forward in the long-standing special relationship between the parties, which has encompassed political and practical cooperation and reached the level of partnership between the State of Qatar and NATO (Qatar MFA, 2025).

Conclusion

The status of Major Non-NATO Ally is a powerful symbol of the close relations that the United States shares with such countries and demonstrates Washington's special attitude and friendship tow-

ards the countries to which this status applies. In addition, although the MNNA status provides for military and economic privileges, it does not oblige the United States to provide security for the country with this status.

Some politicians are sceptical about granting Qatar MNNA status, since the emirate has close ties with non-state actors in the Middle East - "Hamas", "Hezbollah", "Muslim Brotherhood", as well as "Taliban", which are in conflict relations with the US/West and Israel. However, this status allows Qatar to position itself as a "permanent mediator" and negotiator in the settlement of the conflict between the above-mentioned parties. Qatar also played a key role in the safe evacuation of US troops from Afghanistan.

All of the above contributes to the deepening of Qatar's cooperation with the US, NATO, and the transition to a new level after the granting of status.

References:

- Ambassador Patrick Theros (2025): *Major Non-NATO Ally*: What did Qatar Get in Washington? Gulf International Forum; Accessed [02.05.2025]:<https://gulfif.org/major-non-nato-ally-what-did-qatar-get-in-washington/>.
- Blanchard Christopher M. (2014, November 4). *Qatar - Background and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service. p. 20; Accessed [02.05.2025]:<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>.
- Coates Ulrichsen Kristian (2022, February 3). How Qatar emerged as the US partner of choice. *The New Arab*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/how-qatar-emerged-us-partner-choice>.

- Congresswoman Ann Wagner (2024, May 21). Golden Introduce Bill to Pressure Qatar, Evaluate Status as Major Non-NATO Ally. *Wagner House*; Accessed [02.05.2025]. <https://wagner.house/media-center/press-releases/wagner-golden-introduce-bill-pressure-qatar-evaluate-status-major-non>
- Founding of the State (2024). *Amiri Diwan*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://www.diwan.gov.qa/about-qatar/history-of-qatar>
- Frolovsky Dmitry (2017, May 11). The Grey Eminence of the Middle East. How Little Qatar Conquered a Large Region. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/?fa=69917>
- Gritten David, Abualouf Rushdi (2024, November 19). Hamas leaders no longer in Doha but office not permanently closed, Qatar says. *BBC News*; Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://www.bbc.Com/news/articles/c86qd99nqgyo>
- Gosselin-Malo Elisabeth (2022, February 3). The Future of Qatar as Major Non-NATO Ally to the US. *Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI)*, Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/future-qatar-major-non-nato-ally-us-33071>
- Hadzhich Yacoub (2022, February 1). Qatar to be US's main ally outside NATO. *Golos Islama*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=40468>
- Kamrava M. (2017). Qatari Foreign Policy and the Exercise of Subtle Power. *International Studies Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2 (54), pp. 91-123. Accessed [02.05.2025]: https://www.isjq.ir/article_89904_d41d8cd98f00b204e9800998ecf8427e.pdf
- NATO Flagship Partnership event underway in Qatar (2025, April 8). *Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), NATO*;

- Accessed[02.05.2025]:<https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2025/nato-flagship-partnership-event-underway-in-qatar>
- Nawaf Al-Tamimi, Azzam Amin, Nourollah Zarrinabadi (2023). *Qatar's Nation Branding and Soft Power. Exploring the Effects on National Identity and International Stance*. Doha Institute for Graduate Studie Springer, p. 100. Accessed [02.05. 2025]: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-24651-7>
- Paul Michael Brannagan, Richard Giulianotti (2018, September). The soft power–soft disempowerment nexus: the case of Qatar. *International Affairs, Volume 94, Issue 5*, pp. 1139–1157; Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/94/5/1139/5092085>
- Nur Ikram (2022, February 1). Qatari party exposes US 'Ukrainian adventure'. *Haqqin.az*, Accessed[02.05.2025]:<https://haqqin.az/news/233316>
- Qatar Signs Agreement to Open Its Mission Offices, Military Representation at NATO Headquarters in Brussels (2025, February 14). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar*, Accessed [02.05-.2025]:<https://mofa.gov.qa/en/qatar/latest-articles/latest-news/details/1442/07/02/qatar-signs-agreement-to-open-its-mission-offices-military-representation-at-nato-headquarters-in-brussels>
- Qatar. The World Factbook (2024). *CIA*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/qatar/>
- Rai Al Youm (2022, March 24): Saudi Arabia turned its back on the US and joined Russia. *CMIO International*, Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://cmio.org/en/world/641810-rai-al-youm-saudi-arabia-turned-its-back-on-the-us-and-joined-russia-2>

- Reiterovich Igor, Bedrak Victoria (2023, November 23). We will remember often. What role does Qatar play in the Russian-Ukrainian war, *Facti*, Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/svit/20231123-budemo-zgaduvaty-chasto-yaku-rol-vidigraye-u-rosijsko-ukrayinskij-vijni/>
- Total Population inside State of Qatar (2024, March 18). *Planning and Statistics Authority*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/Pages/default.aspx>
- The Reviewing Qatar's Major Non-NATO Ally Status Act (2024, May 1), *AIPAC Bill Summary*, Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://aipac.org/app.box.com/s/0wtvr5s7qwurene3tdlnlf4pcchzhose>
- U.S.-Qatar Relations. (2025). *U.S. Department of State*. Accessed [02.05.2025]: <https://2021-2025.state.gov/countries-areas/qatar/>